

Germanism and medicinal bathing in the early days of health resorts in Rio Grande do Sul*

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Abstract

In the earliest days of thermal spring and seaside health resorts in Rio Grande do Sul, some German immigrants numbered not only among bathers but also among entrepreneurs in the fledging curism-tourism industry. Most members of this small group of immigrants of urban roots were familiar with the curative or restorative benefits of bathing from their experience at European health resorts. Among these German immigrants, physicians played a central role as transmitters of a scientific discourse that supported these resorts. Although the therapeutic practice of ocean bathing was brought to southern Brazil by European immigrants during the latter half of the nineteenth-century, the custom only became more widespread in the first half of the following century, when Rio Grande do Sul saw its first seaside health resorts come into being.

Keywords: seaside holidays, curism, health resorts, history, Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil).

In Brazil, medicinal bathing has played a role in the prevention of certain diseases and in caring for the body as required by a tropical climate. It dates back to the aristocratic culture brought to Rio de Janeiro (RJ) with the huge Portuguese migration of 1808. The courtly practice of medicinal bathing eventually moved beyond aristocratic circles and therapeutic purposes, acquiring a more bourgeois, leisure-oriented profile (Camargo, 2007). While its original therapeutic and prophylactic purposes did not vanish altogether, the acts of bathing and walking along the seashore gained hedonistic overtones that were part of a new lifestyle and found their way into romantic literature, especially urban novels.¹ Painters like the German artist J.M. Rugendas recorded ocean-side scenes in Rio de Janeiro and at other beaches where Latin America's urban elites went in hopes of curing their ills or for recreation. Painted by the French artist Jean Baptiste Debret and the German Hermann von Wendroth, the watercolors of the seacoast of Rio Grande do Sul (RS) predate the custom of taking seaside holidays, before scattered fishing villages had been transformed into seaside health resorts.

The nineteenth century also brought an appreciation for the 'virtuous waters' of hot springs in Brazil. Pedro Chernoviz's *Formulário ou Guia Médica* (Formulary or medical guide; 1864), for example, lists a number of Brazilian mineral spring resorts and provides detailed descriptions of the physical and chemical properties of their waters and their medical indications for certain diseases. But curism – that is, visiting mineral water resorts for health purposes – would only later foment the practice of ocean bathing in Rio Grande do Sul, where the first indications of seaside holidays date to the final quarter of the nineteenth century.

On February 18, 1878, a young German named Hans Hoffmann arrived in Porto Alegre. After a chaotic Transatlantic crossing where passengers suffered from seasickness and other ills related to the voyage, the young man traveled along the Brazilian coast from northern Recife down to the southern port of Rio Grande. After stopping a few days in the latter city, he boarded the steamship *Guahyba* for Porto Alegre, the capital of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil's southernmost province. The young adventurer disembarked in this city where many businesses had German names, and there he tracked down an uncle who owned a hardware store downtown.² When he finally got there, he learned that the owner and his wife would only return from the beach some days later (Noal Filho, Franco, 2004, p.168).

This excerpt from a 15-year-old's diary holds something of value to the study of seaside bathing in Rio Grande do Sul in the final quarter of the nineteenth century (Hofmann, 1878), since it indicates that some German immigrants were already in the habit of taking seaside holidays at a time when people bathed in the sea on doctor's orders.

We also find a reference in "Queda e redenção" (Fall and redemption), an excerpt from Aquiles Porto Alegre's novel *Hilda* (2002, p.126), which informs us that seaside bathing for medicinal purposes was a practice in the province:

During the months of December and January, some rich families and some poor take an ailing member and leave the capital to go to the seaside to bathe. The place becomes happier then, yet it is not long before sadness returns to despoil nature in this place. In March and April, at the first shivers of cold, the bathers do as the swallows, folding up the tents stretched out along the beach, heading back to Porto Alegre in their caravans.³

A third sign of seaside holidays is found in an advertisement from the newspaper *O Mercantil*, dated January 8, 1884, about bathing in Cidreira: "People who wish to travel to Cidreira for hygienic bathing can avail themselves of fine transportation in spacious wagons, located in Várzea of this city, early this coming January and at convenient prices; fine accommodations may be found there as well. Arrangements may be made now with João de Deus Gomes, at his place of business in Campo do Bonfim, at the corner of Azenha Street." In his book *Revivendo o passado* (Reliving de past), Archymedes Fortini (1953, p.71) also mentions the habit of seaside bathing, as well as the first seaside vacation hotel in Rio Grande do Sul. Called Hotel da Saúde (hotel of health) the establishment was founded in 1888 on Tramandaí Beach under the ownership of Leonel Pereira de Souza. But perhaps the oldest reference to a German summer vacationer at an ocean beach in Rio Grande do Sul is found in the magazine *A Gaivota* (1942, p.42), which in December 1941 reported the death of the longest-running vacationer at Cidreira Beach, Cristiana Schneiders, widow of Carlos Schneiders, a Porto Alegre businessman. She passed away at the age of 92, and for 75 years had spent her summer holidays in Cidreira; in other words, the Schneiders family had enjoyed seaside bathing in Cidreira since 1866.

In a monograph on the early days of the history of Cidreira, Myrthes Gonzales (n.d.) reports that in the late nineteenth century the cousins Leopoldo and Edmundo Bastian; Carlos Dauth; Ernesto Scheneiders; and the Bopp and Cristoffel families asked the locals to build straw huts just like those used by fishermen, where they would spend their summer season. This information corroborates the earliest literary references to seaside holidays in Rio Grande do Sul and confirms the presence of Germans among its pioneers.

As the above-cited *O Mercantil* ad tells us, summer vacationers traveled in caravans of wagons from Porto Alegre. From the last quarter of the nineteenth century through the 1920s, they followed a difficult route to get to the coast, passing through the cities of Agronomia, Passo do Vigário, Capão da Porteira, Capivari, and Palmares until finally reaching Cidreira. From there they could follow the shoreline to other seaside health resorts (Soares, 2000, p.21).

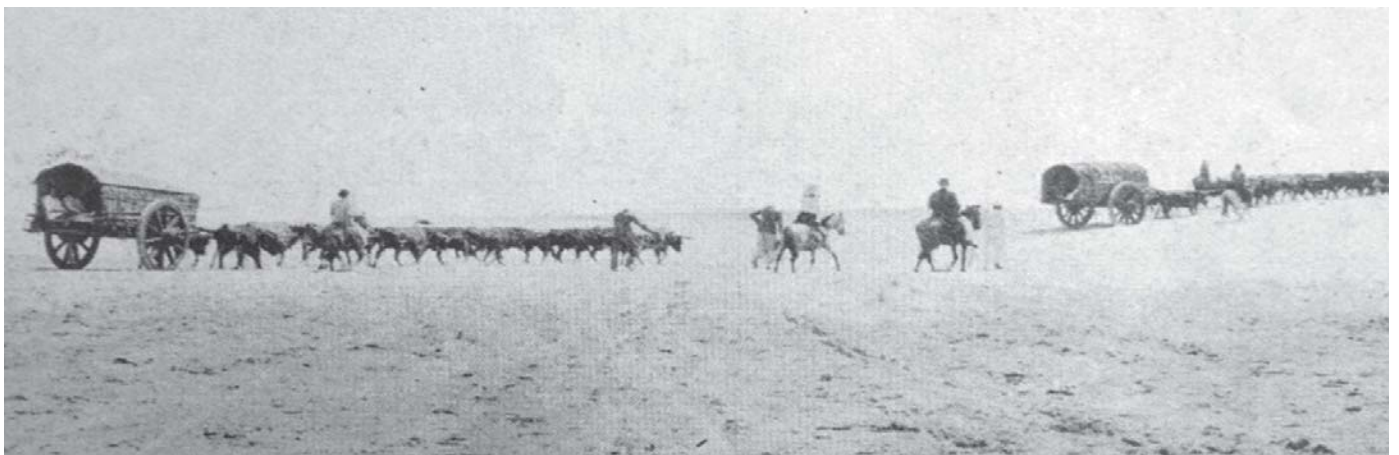


Figure 1: Ox carts. *Máscara*, Porto Alegre, 1919. (Museu de Comunicação Social Hipólito J. da Costa)

The German family Sperb was prominent among wagon makers.⁴ It was probably the summer vacationers' demand for transportation and supplies that prompted Jorge Eneas Sperb to set up a hotel on Tramandaí Beach in 1898.

Ox carts laden with cargo took eight days to travel from Porto Alegre to Tramandaí. Five days before Jorge Sperb and his family left their home in São Leopoldo for Tramandaí, he would go to Porto Alegre to dispatch the ox carts he owned, loaded with food, drink, and other things needed to maintain and run the Sperb Hotel. ... The horse-drawn wagon carrying Jorge E. Sperb's family would catch up to the ox cart laden with supplies, which had left Porto Alegre five days earlier. Everything was very well calculated. They would arrive at roughly the same time (Interview with Flávia Sperb Zinck, granddaughter of Jorge E. Sperb, in Soares, 2000, p.35).

The custom of seaside vacationing fostered a new relationship with the coast. The transition from curism to tourism and the study of its evolution in Rio Grande do Sul allows us to conclude that German immigrants and their descendants were among the main actors in the earliest days of ocean resorts.

Land, water, and air: a trio that benefitted immigrant health

In their reports, European travelers were unanimous when it came to the quality of Rio Grande do Sul's water, air, and land, especially for the purposes of agriculture, industry, and commerce. The fertile ground, healthy air, and navigable valley rivers teeming with fish bode well for a prosperous colonial venture. But because it was the soil of woods-covered lands that was considered fertile, deforestation became indispensable to agricultural colonization. There was little criticism of the crop-growing techniques used on farm settlements in southern Brazil.⁵ European settlement and immigration policies emphasized



Figure 2: German immigrants and their descendants at an ocean beach in Rio Grande do Sul in the 1920s. (Centro de Documentação da Universidade de Santa Cruz do Sul)

agriculture and industry, naturally enhancing the value of arable land in the interior. The region was rich in natural resources and its navigable rivers were vital to the marketing of products from immigrant colonies. On the other hand, the sandy soil of the ocean shore, where topography, winds, and currents hampered coastline shipping, was of little value. It was only in the final quarter of the nineteenth century that bathers were drawn to the waters of the ocean, and summer vacationers strolled along the foreshore.

During the first decades of German immigration into Rio Grande do Sul, the pure air of verdant hills, its sinuous valley rivers, and its lands covered by dense forests formed a contrast with the deserted, uncultivated, and inhospitable landscape of the coast. It should not be forgotten that most German immigrants were from the interior of their homeland, and the Atlantic crossing had been their first experience with the sea. Yet many others were not farmers. Some of the liberal professionals who immigrated had spent time vacationing at the sea, especially the Baltic, or at thermal springs. So different social groups among the German immigrants therefore perceived Brazilian nature in distinct ways. These perceptions were partly influenced by each group's prior relationship to nature in Germany. There was, for example, a tradition of ocean bathing in early nineteenth-century Pomerania, and many peasant children worked at seaside health resorts during the summer. But the post-Napoleon situation forced many Pomeranians to emigrate. It was then that Rio Grande do Sul began to receive its earliest German immigrants, who, at the end of a long ocean crossing, identified the coastal landscape of Rio Grande and the 'inland sea' with the scenery of the North Sea. German physician Robert Avé-Lallemant (1980, p.105 ff) underscored the similarities between Rio Grande do Sul's coastal landscape and northern Germany's. "The spit where the Rio Grande lighthouse is located looks exactly like the empty field of a lighthouse along the sandy Nordic coast. ... Lagoa dos Patos, apparently so tiny on our maps, is a huge, quite unique salt-water lake, almost comparable to our gulfs (*Haff*) on the Baltic Sea."

In Porto Alegre, Avé-Lallemant (1980, p.111) also drew comparisons to regions of Germany when he caught sight of the landscape of a hydrographic basin sliced through by forested floodplains:

I recall from the time of my youth a lovely picture of Lake Ukleisee and the whole region of Gutin and Plön, where the land, forest, fresh water, and countryside also truly merged together, as if the whole landscape were one gentle sheet of water. ... But these Nordic reminiscences are not limited only to the heights of Porto Alegre City, where one can gaze out over a great distance. They also extend down into the commercial district. There one sees people of the light-skinned race strolling about all over. At each and every moment, one can spot some German moving about; at each and every moment, one sees a German name above the doorway of a house and one hears the coarse German tongue of Holstein, the Pomeranian dialect, and Rhineland's Bavarian.

The German physician also pointed out how the trio 'water, air, and land' was important to the health of residents of southern Brazil, especially that of German immigrants. For him, the model colony of São Leopoldo owed much to the "fertile soil of a land blessed with a gentle climate," but the German contingent was what distinguished it from the province's other regions (Avé-Lallemant 1980, p.148). After all, "in this vast land, everything

suffers from the indifference, laziness, and negligence of man, who the more our good Nature heaps blessings upon him, the less he expresses his thanks" (p.386). The German physician thus saw a connection between the strong economic and cultural health of the Brazilian Empire's southernmost province and the arrival of his compatriots.

Based on Hippocrates' three main keys to health – air, water, and soil – Avé-Lallemant (1980, p.385-386) believed that Rio Grande do Sul was an "improved Germany." Another German doctor, Johannes Franz Epp (1864), went so far as to label Rio Grande do Sul the 'New Germany.' It should be said that as greater numbers of German immigrants came and settled, many physicians assisted their compatriots in adapting to tropical areas. When the German Reich took part in the slicing up of Africa under Bismarck's imperialist policy, studies on tropical diseases and their prevention through hygiene, physical activities, careful eating, vaccination, and so on gained importance.⁶ In southern Africa, the Germans also found a climate favorable to colonization and they endorsed the colonialist (and racist) discourse that tropical nature was not untamable – blacks were just lazy.⁷ For many Germans, black Africans and Brazilian *caboclos* were lazy and unworthy of these 'blessed' lands.

Curism-tourism in the early decades of the twentieth century

Heinz von Ortenberg was one of the German doctors who worked in southern Africa and southern Brazil as well. In 1908, a Berlin publishing house released a book on his experience as a German troop physician during the military campaign against the Hereros and Hottentots. By that year, the young von Ortenberg was already living in the Brazilian city of Santa Cruz do Sul, RS, where he was to practice medicine for many decades.⁸

During World War I, von Ortenberg returned to Germany, and once again served as a physician on the front. In 1916, he and some of his peers were sent to Bulgaria, where they spent months at a Black Sea health resort. Von Ortenberg reported that he enjoyed the practice of regularly taking Turkish baths during his stay in Burgas (Telles, 1980, p.84). He also visited the hot springs there, which were known to the ancient Romans; the German doctor claimed the waters were wonderful for curing "rheumatism, gout, sciatica, and female troubles" (p.88-89).

After the war, von Ortenberg returned to Rio Grande do Sul. Although he lived in Santa Cruz do Sul, he often spent time at the resort in Iraí in the 1930s, where other German 'curists' would spend some days or weeks of their summer. During his hydrotherapy stays, the doctor sent letters to his wife Hanna. In them, he mentioned German guests at the Hotel Descanso, whose owner, Bernhardt Maahs, was likewise German. Von Ortenberg's correspondence provides information on other facets of the hydrotherapy center, like hygiene and cleanliness.

At the Iraí mineral springs, curism also came to encompass recreation, with gambling playing an ever greater role as an additional lure for tourists. In 1941, the Guarani casino opened its doors in Iraí, following an international trend to expand tourist attractions at resorts. At the hot springs of Minas Gerais (MG), there were casinos at the Hotel Brasil in São Lourenço, the Hotel Glória in Caxambu, and the Grande Hotel Araxá in the city of the same name. The famous Urca and Atlântico casinos in Rio de Janeiro, then capital

of Brazil, and the casino at Hotel Quitandinha, in the mountain city of Petropolis, RJ, can likewise be considered reflections of modern life's newfound appreciation for entertainment and leisure, especially gambling (Rossini, 2001, p.64 ff).

Brazil sealed the fate of the nation's casinos when it outlawed gambling in 1946, when the Guarani casino was officially closed. As far as the study of medicinal bathing, any analysis of the popularity of the Iraí resort in the first half of the 1940s is hampered by the operations of this casino. According to Fischer (1954, p.61), visits to the health resort rose from 1941 to 1946, perhaps because of the inauguration of the gambling facility. Although the hot springs had provided the Iraí resort with substantial income since the late 1930s, gambling probably siphoned off a large part of this during the short lifetime of the Guarani casino.

During the first half of the 1940s, hydrotherapy and gambling were complementary activities for tourists who chose to stay at Iraí. Yet some guests, like the German physician von Ortenberg, disapproved of the increase in visitors to the resort, since gambling was seen as perverting the resort's therapeutic nature. Not only was the peace disturbed; the hygiene of the baths was also jeopardized. Furthermore, von Ortenberg did not seem to like rubbing elbows with a more heterogeneous clientele, whom he called "wretched plebes."

In a letter sent from the Iraí resort, dated December 3, 1931, von Ortenberg asserted that the thermal waters were miraculous (*ein geradezu wunderbares Wasser*). According to another physician, Heitor da Silveira (1932), Iraí's mineral waters boasted properties that minimized neuropsychic tension, toned muscles, and treated stress, thereby reinvigorating physical and mental functions. Furthermore, the waters supposedly helped accelerate cell

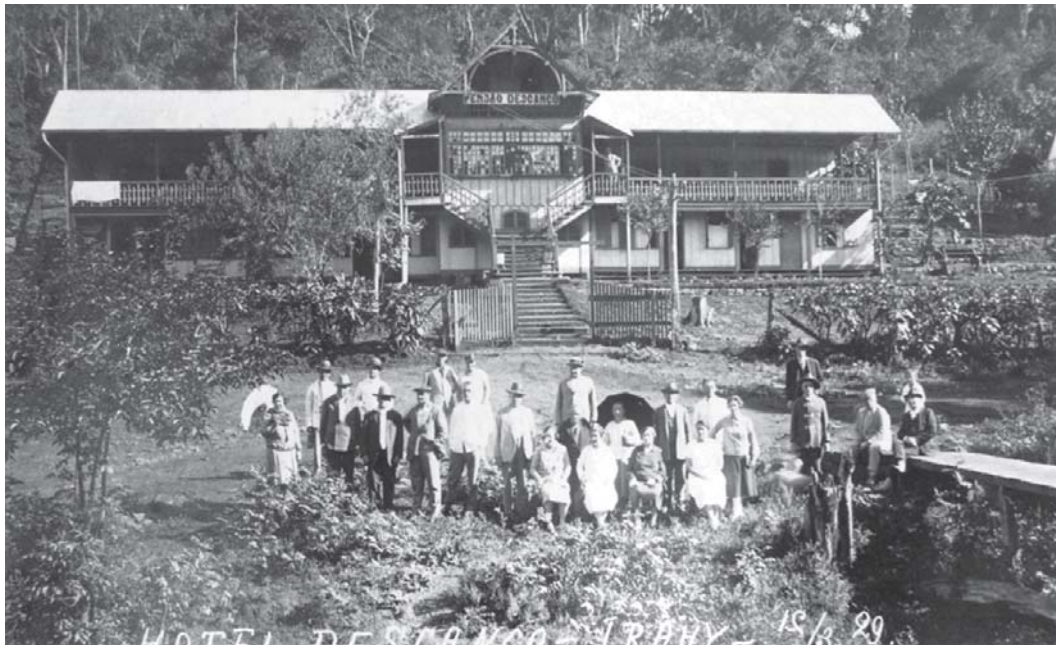


Figure 3: Descanso Hotel, Iraí, RS, 1929. Post card. Assorted documents. (Centro de Documentação da Universidade de Santa Cruz do Sul)

metabolism, eliminate uric acid, stimulate internal secretions, control blood pressure, and also had diuretic, anti-allergic, and sedative properties, with the latter improving sleep; above all, they were especially beneficial to nervous or neurasthenic people or those suffering from insomnia.

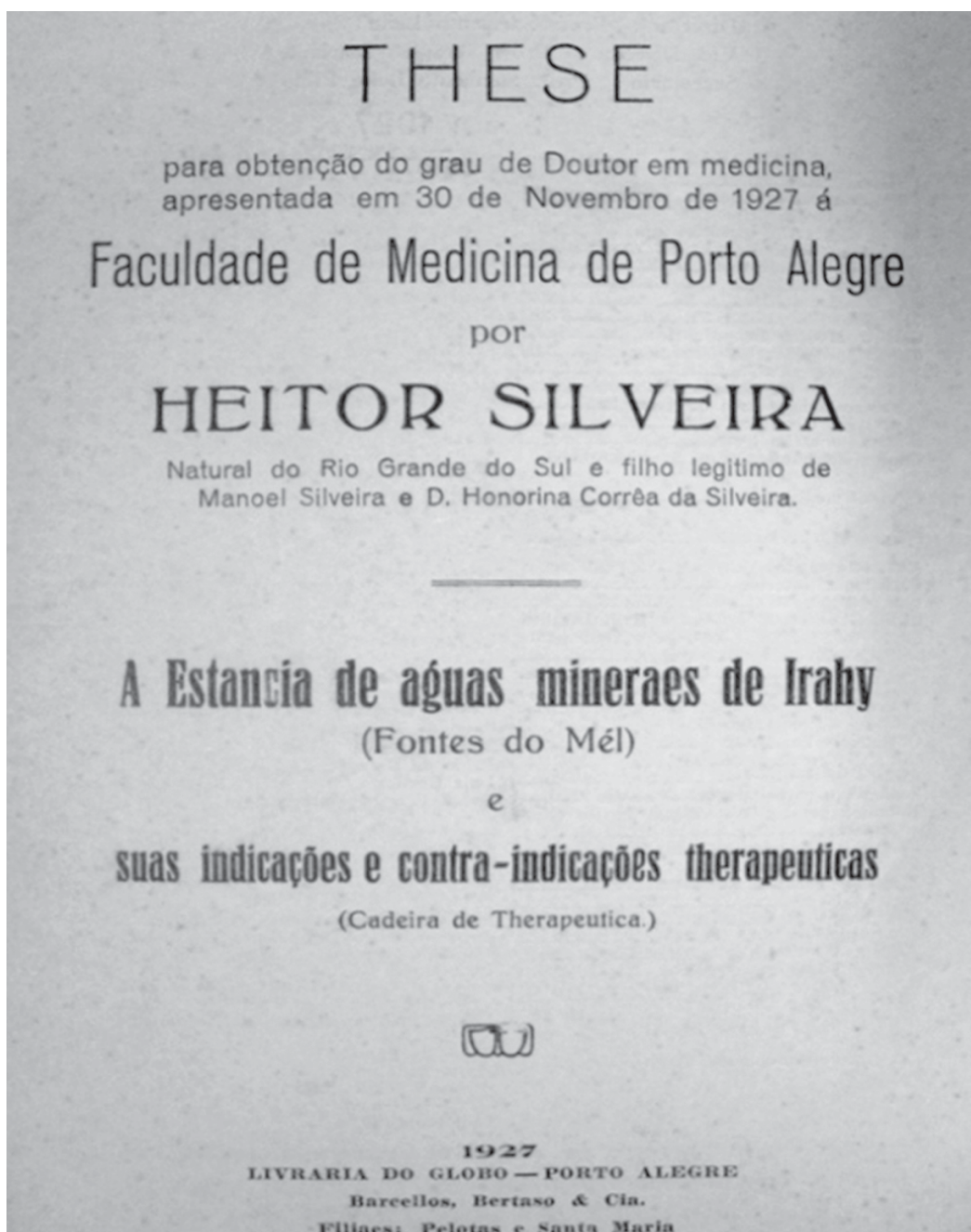


Figure 4: Thesis by Heitor Silveira on the waters of Iraí, 1927. (Biblioteca da Faculdade de Medicina da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul)

Von Ortenberg's letters offer a good deal of information about hydrotherapy in Iraí. The bath house was located close to the hotel where he usually stayed, and there was medical supervision of bathing. Many of the guests were German and they brought heaviest business in January, February, and March (Telles, 1980, p.139-140). Along with liberal professionals, German or German-Brazilian traveling salesmen also visited the health resort, in addition to other physicians (for instance, Doctor Bassewitz), especially naturalists (p.148).

In the 1930s and 1940s, the mineral spring resorts at Iraí, RS, and Araxá, MG, were Brazilian references. In Rio Grande do Sul, newspapers and magazines carried advertisements of resorts in Iraí and Ijuí, RS; Tubarão, Santa Catarina (SC); and Araxá and Caxambu, MG, among others. Starting in the late nineteenth century, some urban segments were drawn by the therapeutic value and other properties of mineral waters and they endorsed the success of hydrotherapy treatment.⁹

Curists from Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile also traveled to the Iraí resort, located in the hinterlands of Rio Grande do Sul (Rossini, 2001, p.37). The influx of curists was so heavy that the Brazilian airline Varig opened a flight between Porto Alegre and Iraí. But when business fell after the closing of the casino, Varig quit flying into the northern part of the state. Varig hydroplanes had in fact been offering regular flights between Porto Alegre and seaside health resorts ever since the late 1920s. In the 1930s, Ernesto Meyer, one of Varig's founders, established an air transport service between Porto Alegre and Torres, SC, using Junkers aircraft. The airline actually built a runway in Tramandaí (Soares, 2000, p.118). The broader gamut of travel options to ocean beaches suggest higher demand during the summer season, meaning that the Iraí hot springs faced competition from seaside resorts in Rio Grande do Sul.

Baths in the air, light, sun, and seawater

Generally speaking, those who wrote about the Iraí mineral springs or the Guarani casino – like Martin Fischer (1954) and Sirlei Rossini (2001) – cited the closing of casinos in Brazil as the main cause of the economic crisis that struck the municipality of Iraí in the mid-twentieth century. Yet no author devoted any attention to the evolution of air, light, sun, and especially seawater baths.

It should be remembered that the 1940s brought a series of infrastructural upgrades to Rio Grande do Sul's seaside health resorts, ranging from improved hygiene and hotel comfort for guests to better and more frequent transportation services to the state's coast. Hotel ads from this period tend to highlight the fact that their sanitary facilities met state health department requirements, while also mentioning amenities like fresh water showers, electric lighting, and access to radio waves. Transport companies publicized their daily and weekly summer schedules and routes. By then, real estate agencies were opening up subdivisions, buying and selling lots, and expanding urban infrastructure at the beach. In terms of entertainment, hotels along the Atlantic coast also began opening their own casinos in the late 1930s. In the 1940s, the newspaper *Correio do Povo* published a number of ads for casinos at beaches like Tramandaí, Imbé, and Cidreira.

While mineral springs were recommended for the therapeutic value of their waters, people also traveled to seaside resorts on medical advice. In an article in a magazine specializing in seaside resorts in Rio Grande do Sul, Raul Pilla (1943), a physician from that state, declared that “bathing, the salt air, and the cleanliness and bright luminosity of the atmosphere lend ocean beaches major, irreplaceable hygienic and therapeutic properties” (p.49).

Hydrotherapy had of course been practiced in Europe since ancient times. But there was some controversy over cold and hot water treatments. In the eighteenth century, Doctor Richard Smollet, a proponent of hydrotherapy, recommended cold baths (Corbin, 1989, p.72). It was around then that the therapeutic virtues of seawater were discovered and the fashion of cold seaside bathing appeared. For Doctor John Speed, “seaside bathing offers not just a cold bath but a cold medicinal bath” (p.77). This therapeutic project would be a boost to ocean bathing and seaside holidays in Europe (p.80-81).

As far as hydrotherapy, the practice of medicinal bathing came along later in southern Brazil than in Europe, concomitant with the arrival of German immigrants who were practitioners and the main advocates both of hot baths at inland thermal springs and of cold baths in the North and Baltic seas. To better understand the tie between German immigration and seaside holidays in Rio Grande do Sul, we must take into account certain cultural and scientific trends noted in Germany since the late nineteenth century, which led to a new health lifestyle (dubbed *Lebensreform* by the Germans).

The beaches of Rio Grande do Sul are the coldest along the Brazilian coast. So it was not long before German immigrants to southern Brazil began promoting seaside holidays,

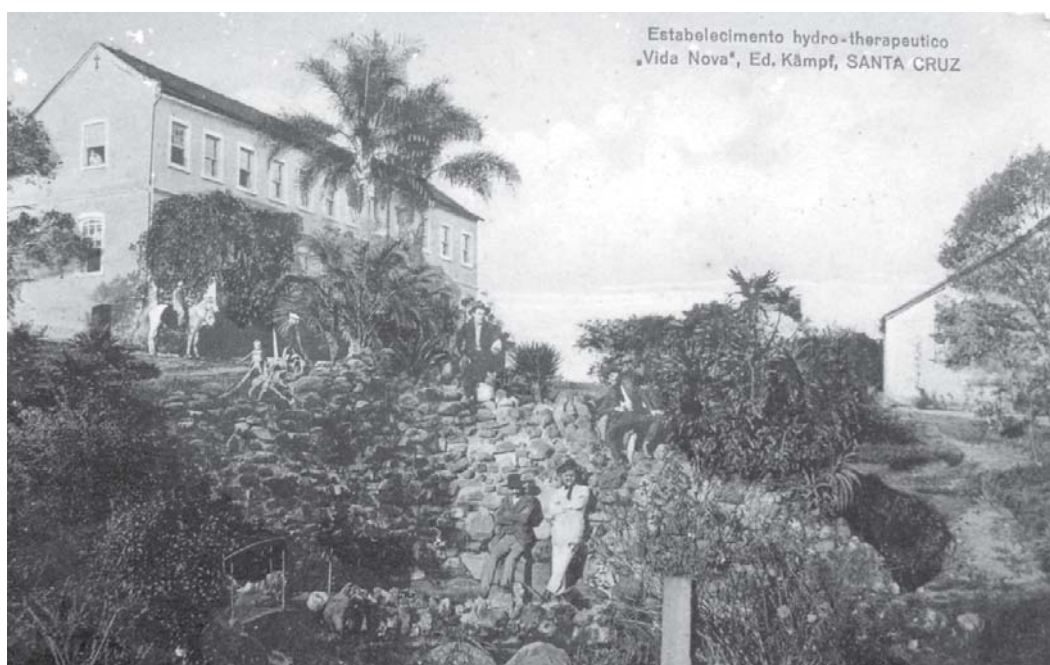


Figure 5: Advertisement for German physician Eduard Kämpf's health center in Santa Cruz, RS, published in Koseritz's Kalender, 1916. Benno Mentz Archives. (Instituto Latino-americano de Estudos Avançados, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul)

based on their experience with medicinal bathing in the cold waters of the North and Baltic seas. In Rio Grande do Sul, the reliance on seaside bathing to cure certain diseases competed with inland sanitariums, where hydrotherapy was practiced in accordance with German methods. After all, along with Silesia's Vincenz Priessnitz, the Bavarian Sebastian Kneipp was one of the pioneers of hydrotherapy in Germany, and his *Mein Wasserkur* (Kneipp, 1886) became a *vade mecum* on medicinal bathing.

Mein Wasserkur was widely read by physicians in Rio Grande do Sul, especially Germans. At the close of the nineteenth century, a health facility in Hamburger Berg employed Kneipp's hydrotherapy; the naturalist physician there, Leonardo Teschpoeke, had studied in Bad Worishofen, Germany.¹⁰ The German Eduard Kämpf, likewise in Santa Cruz, located a good spring where he could set up a sanatorium. In addition to Kneipp's hydrotherapy, Kämpf, who held a medical degree from Leipzig, adopted Schroth's technique. Sun baths and steam baths were used in addition to hot and cold baths, along with massages and a vegetarian diet (Kalender..., 1903). Von Ortenberg worked alongside his compatriot Eduard Kämpf at the latter's health center in Santa Cruz do Sul. In other words, the same doctor who was a steady client at the Iraí hydromineral springs also worked with hydrotherapy at the Vida Nova Sanatorium in Santa Cruz do Sul.

Other sanatoriums and health centers in Rio Grande do Sul were located along the river. In Porto Alegre, the physicians Protásio Alves and Sebastião Leão worked at the Casa de Saúde hospital in the early twentieth century. Its advertisements published in German suggest the importance of German clients to the institution. Doctor Von Kilbatchiche also ran a sanatorium in Taquara around that same time. In this regard, the historiography of German immigration in Rio Grande do Sul does not yet cover the appearance of sanatoriums in the early twentieth century and their relationship to the naturalist medicine and practices developed in Germany.



Figure 6: Post card for Eduard Kämpf's health center. Assorted documents. (Centro de Documentação da Universidade de Santa Cruz do Sul)

Besides the sanatoriums, health centers, and hospitals where Brazilian and foreign doctors prescribed medicinal bathing for certain diseases, a growing medical literature in both Portuguese and German recommended bathing. Women were one of the prime targets of this specialized literature – more specifically, housewives (*Hausfrau*) – as they were seen as vectors of preventive medicine. As German naturalists liked to say, a body that goes bathing – whether in the air, water, or sun – doesn't need to go to the doctor. Home hygiene and health should necessarily entail bathing practices and other precepts of naturalist medicine.

In scientific terms, naturalist medicine received much impetus in the mid-nineteenth century, especially in German-language spaces. In 1842, Doctor Johann Schroth was treating his patients with air, light, and water baths at his new facility in Lindewiese. In 1854, Hermann Brehmer founded a sanatorium in Gröbersdorf, Silesia, where air and sun baths were used to fight tuberculosis. The next year, based on his experience in the Alps, Swiss physician Arnold Rikli advocated light and sun baths as an efficacious therapy for curing the ailment (Andrieu, 2008, p.36). In 1903, another Swiss, Auguste Rollier, established a clinic in Leysin, in the Alps, where tuberculosis was treated through heliotherapy. His book *Die Heliotherapie der Tuberkulose (Heliotherapy for tuberculosis)* was published in German ten years later (Ory, 2008, p.67-68; Andrieu, 2008, p.61).

Atmospheric baths and heliotherapy contributed to a geographical shift in seaside holidays, originally concentrated along the English Channel and the North and Baltic seas. Starting at the close of the nineteenth century, curists were drawn to the Mediterranean's light, air, and beaches. The hydrotherapy and heliotherapy treatments employed at sanatoriums in Germany and Switzerland influenced French techniques for treating a number of skin, nervous, cardiovascular, respiratory, and other disorders.

According to medical advice, air, light, sun, and hot or cold water baths fostered a new relationship not only with the atmosphere (especially in the mountains or by the seashore) but also with other natural elements, above all hydromineral ones. The practice also exposed the human body. In Germany, naturalism thus stimulated nudism and the birth of the culture of the free body (*Frei Körper Kultur*) at the close of the nineteenth century. The first nudist periodical, *FKK-Zeitschrift*, made its debut in 1902 and would remain a literary reference for German naturalism until 1924 (Andrieu, 2008, p.38). Needless to say, naturalism came hand in hand with a new approach to hygiene and a new physical culture. At the dawn of the twentieth century, a renewed emphasis was placed on exercise and sports in Germany. This new physical culture was also transported to southern Brazil by German immigrants and their organizations, like the one that spawned the Porto Alegre Exercise Society, known by the acronym Sogipa (Sociedade Ginástica de Porto Alegre).

In the 1930s, a number of issues of the magazine *Revista do Globo* featured articles and photographs about sports in Germany and about exercise and sporting championships, where athletes from the private K-12 schools Instituto Porto Alegre (IPA) and Colégio Americano and from Deutscher Turnverein (now Sogipa) participated. So-called athletic parades provided an opportunity for athletes from different branches of sporting groups in the rural areas of the state to have personal contact with the Turnverein athletes in Porto Alegre. Furthermore, advertisements for cosmetics or pharmaceutical products for

the skin, waxing, and feminine hygiene signaled a new aesthetic perception of the body, which cannot be separated from the practice of seaside bathing.

It should be pointed out that the naturalism that flourished during Germany's *Belle Époque* had a cultural predecessor: romanticism. Created in 1896, one of Germany's naturalist movements, *Wandervögel* (migratory birds), manifested this romantic vein; rejecting the comfort of the city and the utilitarianism of industrial society, its followers went on outings where they contemplated nature (Rauch, 1995, p.112). Ever greater numbers of travelers flocked to Germany's woods, mountains, lakes, and seas. In 1895, young social democrats founded the tourist association Die Naturfreunde in the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Within just one decade, the association opened dozens of local chapters and received over eight thousand members, some from beyond Austria's borders, in Switzerland and southern Germany. This reencounter with nature engendered new sensibilities (p.115-116), like a positive perception of tanning. Through heliotherapy, hydrotherapy, and "atmospheric baths," skin color took on a new meaning. This new aesthetics emerged in the 1930s in step with medical precepts, with the aristocratic view of marble-toned skin giving way to the bourgeois view of tan skin. Undressed, the human body acquired a new value and a new tonality.¹¹

The ensuing cult of the body is understandable. After all, heliotherapy and hydrotherapy helped expose the body more and more not just to the open air but to the public eye. Many products meant to beautify this body on display were launched at that time. With people covered less and less, dresses, jewels, and other ornaments lost ground to the shapes, color, volume, proportions, and other features of the body itself. Bodybuilding gave a boost not only to gym exercise and sports but to the cosmetics and pharmaceutical industries as well.

One of the leading pioneers of the cosmetics field in Rio Grande do Sul was the company founded by Carlos Geyer, professor at the School of Medicine. Other German immigrants and descendents also taught at the School of Medicine or Pharmacy, like Alberto Goetze, Carlos Wallau, Carlos Hoffmeister, and Frederico Falk. René Gertz (2002, p.163) pointed out that "Germans and [German] descendents – which included Lutherans – were not really exotic creatures" at this college. Yet no studies have been done on the influence of German medicine within the scientific circles of Rio Grande do Sul in the early decades of the twentieth century.

Satisfying the desire to go to the sea

At the time that the physician Robert Avé-Lallemant traveled around Rio Grande do Sul, hot and cold medicinal baths were not yet in fashion in the province. The general trend in Brazil was for people to take holidays in the countryside, preferably in highland regions, as a way of treating maladies caused by living in unhealthy locations or by the modern way of life itself. If Petropolis was the destination for all the Rio de Janeiro convalescents who were "sick, feeble, debilitated by the hot climate, endangered by yellow fever, fatigued by worries" (Avé-Lallemant, 1980, p.94), German colonies nestled in the middle of forests served as restorative resorts or vacation spots in Rio Grande do Sul. For

Avé-Lallemant, the southernmost province did not suffer from a lack of resorts, with its colonies themselves boasting all the features necessary for restoring the bodies and minds of ailing urban residents, whether victims of miasmas or of an overall unhealthy environment. The provincial capital itself did not differ much from a village in the mid-1800s. Menino Deus, for instance, was a favorite spot for countryside vacations, while the beaches of the Guaíba River also offered places where people would go for leisure and rest. But another German doctor, Franz Epp, felt Porto Alegre needed a public resort (Noal Filho, Franco, 2004, p.131). Other European travelers (Baguet, Isabelle, Ambauer) pointed out Porto Alegre's resort potential, especially because of its climate and environs.

But industrialization and urbanization transformed these havens and retreats, and within a few decades, the Guaíba River beaches, the village of Menino Deus, and Caminho Novo, with its country houses, were no longer places for outings, relaxation, or rest. Moreover, a greater number of summer vacationers were heading off to the seashore, with the scientific discourse about the benefits of medicinal bathing being a decisive factor, as stated earlier.

Religious practices also reflected a belief in the miraculous cures provided by southern waters. Furthermore, bathers would often make appeals to divine providence, given the unpredictable nature of the sea. The religious festivals that were held at seaside health resorts establish a mystic relation between the sea and health. After all, the same bathers who went to the beach at their doctor's advice would request religious services as well. In Conceição do Arroio (now the municipality of Osório), vicar José Mencker issued an official document, dated January 26, 1924, informing that "bathers at Cidreira Beach would like to inaugurate a chapel on February 12" (cited in Soares, 2000, p.166). In a 1943 issue of the magazine *A Gaivota*, in a section entitled "Reminiscences," reference was made to a festival of Our Lady of Health that had been held on Cidreira Beach in the summer of 1931. This means that while the dunes were being stabilized, trees planted at resorts, salt marshes drained, the transportation network expanded, electric lights, plumbing, and sewers installed, and nature being otherwise tamed through modern technical and scientific methods, summer vacationers also turned to religion in 'colonizing' the beaches of Rio Grande do Sul's coast.

Starting in the 1940s, the contingent of summer vacationers at the beach was reinforced by the passage of labor laws giving the working class paid holidays. Thus began the democratization of the beaches. From that moment on, the first families to work in the fledgling tourist industry along the coast faced the challenge of meeting rising demand and investing more in services. At the same time, there was greater pressure for the government to intervene more effectively in the expansion and improvement of infrastructure and basic services at seaside resorts.

The bulk of the early beach hotels and restaurants were owned by German immigrants or their descendents, as shown by the predominance of German names in advertisements in *A Gaivota*. Sperb, Hoffmeister, and Kunz are some examples of the names of hotels on Tramandaí Beach. Newspaper ads also evince German entrepreneurialism in the seaside tourist sector in Rio Grande do Sul. Some ads even ran in German, given the substantial size of the German-Brazilian clientele. Beaches like Torres, Capão da Canoa, Tramandaí, Cidreira, Quintão, and Rio Grande offered seaside bathing packages for seven, 14, or 21

days, at prices that varied with the hotel. Starting in 1915, the Picoral hotel in Torres was a reference for curists and bathers; it highlighted a variety of medicinal baths, as well as the open-air exercising so fashionable in Germany since the early twentieth century.

Other businesses besides the hotel industry relied on the entrepreneurial spirit of German immigrants and their descendants in the sector of seaside holidays. These included the company Jaeger & Irmão, which offered daily transportation from Porto Alegre to Tramandaí, Cidreira, Capão, and Torres, according to an advertisement in *A Gaivota* (no.15, 1942, p.47). Another transportation firm, Edmundo Dreher & Cia., operated between Palmares and Torres. Max Geiss & Cia. Ltda., headquartered in Porto Alegre, built wooden bungalows and chalets on the beach (*A Gaivota*, no.3, 1931, p.67). German businessmen also had a presence in road construction; the Osório-Torres highway, for instance, was built by the firm Dahne & Conceição (*A Gaivota*, no.3, 1931, p.42). The series of ads placed in *A Gaivota* by construction, landscaping, and road, lake, and river transportation companies reflect a shift from family businesses to corporations or even state-owned firms, in turn a result of the sector's growth, which would eventually lead to the mass tourism of the second half of the twentieth century.

German immigrants and their descendants pioneered in yet another activity that had a big role in drawing people to the ocean: the production of images, especially in the form of posters, post cards, and photographs. The representation of seaside health resorts in Rio Grande do Sul through the reproduction of images and the impact of their circulation among recipients has yet to be duly studied. Another topic that warrants rigorous research is the representation of seaside resorts in the photographs published since the first half of the twentieth century in magazines like *Máscara*, *Kodak*, *Globo*, and *A Gaivota* and in newspapers such as *Correio do Povo*.



Figure 7: German-language advertisement for the Hotel Picoral, in Torres. *Volkstimme*, Santa Cruz do Sul, Dec. 28, 1933. (Centro de Documentação da Universidade de Santa Cruz do Sul)

Like certain inland mineral spring resorts, seaside resorts were also portrayed in social representations, symbolically tied to images that were reproduced by photographers and painters, many of German descent. In addition to the pictures on the front, the backs of post cards leave a record of summer vacationers' impressions, which circulated by mail during the summer. Post cards, telegrams, and letters conveyed a variety of images of resorts and contributed to a change in the social representation of the coast of Rio Grande do Sul.

Seebäder

Esprinter gelang es, beträchtliche Preisnachlässe für die Auto-Passagere der „Empresas Reunidas“ nach den Seebädern und gleichfalls bei den Hotels zu erzielen und hat deshalb beschlossen, die Preise für Aufenthalt von 7, 14 und 21 Tagen, die in den Prospekten aufgeführt sind, wie folgt zu ändern:

Bei den nachstehenden Preisen ist Autofahrt hin und zurück sowie Aufenthalt in den Hotels eingeschlossen:

Seebäder und Hotels	7 Tage	14 Tage	21 Tage
Torres:			
Picoral	261\$000	345\$000	436\$000
Capao da Canoa:			
Hotel Riograndense	160\$000	230\$000	300\$000
Hotel Atlantico	160\$000	230\$000	300\$000
Hotel Canoa	146\$000	202\$000	258\$000
Tramandaohy:			
Hotel Sperb	144\$000	228\$000	312\$000
Hotel Correa	187\$000	214\$000	291\$000
Hotel Straßburger	130\$000	200\$000	270\$000
Hotel Kunz	130\$000	200\$000	270\$000
Cidreira:			
Balneario Menegatti	144\$000	228\$000	312\$000
Robo Hotel	130\$000	200\$000	270\$000
Hotel Primavera	130\$000	200\$000	270\$000
Grande Hotel Atlantico	130\$000	200\$000	270\$000
Quintas:			
Hotel Grambi	130\$000	200\$000	270\$000
Rio Grande	Aufenthalt 10 Tage	17 Tage	24 Tage
Grande Hotel Casino	470\$000	650\$000	800\$000

(In die Preise für Grande Hotel Casino sind eingeschlossen: Hin- und Rückfahrt 1. Klasse, Ueberführung von Rio Grande nach Casino und volle Aufenthaltskosten.)

Porto Alegre
Andradás 1017

EXPRINTER

Tel. 4325 — 7204
 Caixa postal 375
 Tel.-Adr.: Exprinte

Figure 8: The newspaper *Kolonie*, Santa Cruz do Sul, n.d. (Centro de Documentação da Universidade de Santa Cruz do Sul)

Final considerations

Although inland and seaside health resorts at first shared the same therapeutic purposes, their fates differed. The twentieth century brought the popularization of seaside holidays in Rio Grande do Sul and with it, the need for more infrastructure services in the areas of transportation, basic sanitation, urban design of resorts, and so on. As early as the 1940s, Doctor Raul Pilla (1943) called attention to the need to ‘modernize’ resorts and called for the democratization of the health benefits of seaside bathing and of walks along the shore, thus tying the modernization of the coastline and its resorts to public health. The physician stated that “socially useful beaches are the most modest ones, where gambling is not exploited or where it merely constitutes a form of entertainment, because everyone can afford them and there one can fully enjoy the profound influence of the ocean climate.” The doctor asserted that “making ocean beaches available to everyone [was] a veritable social necessity” (p.49).

Given the considerable size of Rio Grande do Sul’s German community starting in the final quarter of the nineteenth century, especially among businessmen in commerce and industry in the capital and in cities like São Leopoldo and Santa Cruz do Sul, we can conclude that German immigrants were among the pioneers of seaside holidays in Rio Grande do Sul.¹² But this pioneering attitude should not be understood in terms of economic and cultural factors specific to the German community of Rio Grande do Sul. As Doctor Robert Avé-Lallemant (1980, p.415) pointed out in the mid-nineteenth century, German immigrants encountered liberal legislation favorable to private initiative in southern Brazil, something they rarely found in any part of Germany. Furthermore, the traveler noted that German immigrants, unlike the British or French, were not chauvinistic, which facilitated their business operations in Rio Grande do Sul.

Inarguably, German immigrants worked in more privileged fields or professional niches than others. Physicians, pharmacists, and other healthcare professionals enjoyed the professional freedom that was the rule in Rio Grande do Sul under the Old Republic. The practice of medicine was a topic of much debate back then. From its very foundation, the Porto Alegre Society of Medicine (Sociedade de Medicina de Porto Alegre) fought against charlatanism but also promoted corporativism with strong nativist overtones, as we can infer from the Bassewitz affair (Gertz, 2002, p.165 ff). It was during this time that sanatoriums flourished in the capital and elsewhere around the state. The German medical influence in the development of new concepts in hygiene and health and of the naturalist philosophy, which characterized the early years of these sanatoriums, hydromineral resorts, and seaside health resorts, warrants more thoroughgoing research.

The study of the early days of seaside holidays in Rio Grande do Sul also allows us to infer that the development of the coast was made possible by state laws that in many ways favored private initiative and, consequently, the modernization of society in southern Brazil. In this sense, seaside vacationing was part of a process of urbanization and industrialization that characterized the bourgeois society that emerged in southern Brazil in the early decades of the twentieth century.

This study has highlighted the presence of German immigrants and their descendants among the first curists, bathers, and tourists at health resorts in Rio Grande do Sul. These

individuals also produced scientific, literary, and journalistic discourses about the benefits of baths. Furthermore, the settlement of the coast and the taming of nature along the shore were not excluded from Rio Grande do Sul's modernization policies. By draining swamps, linking lagoons to improve their navigability, opening roads, stabilizing dunes, urbanizing seaside resorts, and planting trees at resorts through forest engineering – thereby humanizing the coastal landscape – the state government relied on the professional experience of a number of immigrants and their descendants to meet increasing popular demand for seashore vacations. The development of this custom in Rio Grande do Sul made mass tourism the typical form of summer vacationing as of the second half of the twentieth century. If the main actors during different phases of seaside holiday development can now be identified, the social, economic, and environmental impact on the shoreline have yet to be evaluated from a historical perspective.

NOTES

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¹ Going to thermal springs for baths was already then a custom in Portugal, in places like Estoril and Caldas da Rainha. In nineteenth-century Brazil, Portuguese immigrants and Brazilians of Portuguese descent went to the beach, where they took boat rides and strolled along the shore, as described in the 'urban novels' of José de Alencar and other romantic writers. But ocean bathing was rare. It is worth noting that ocean bathing serves medicinal purposes in Eça de Queirós' novel *O crime do padre Amaro* (*The crime of Father Amaro*).

² His uncle was most likely Francisco Xavier Friedrichs, a hardware merchant and importer with a store on Bragança Street (now Marechal Floriano). The year that young Hans Hoffmann arrived in Brazil, Francisco Friedrichs was also a settlement agent (1878-1879) (Gans, 2004, p.62).

³ All quotations from works and documents in Portuguese have been freely translated into English.

⁴ Magda Gans (2004, p.64-69) has identified three cart makers in the Sperb family: two had a factory on Rosário Lane (now Otávio Rocha Street) and the other had one on Rosário Street (now Vigário José Inácio), in Porto Alegre. All of them started operating businesses in this sector in the 1880s.

⁵ German geographer Leo Waibel was one of the few experts to call attention to the environmental and social impact of the crop-raising techniques predominantly used by European settlers in southern Brazil (Etges, 2000).

⁶ On the German presence in southern Africa at the time of Bismarck, see Wesseling, 1996, p.535-546.

⁷ On colonialist discourses and practices in the German experience in Africa, see Gronemeyer, 1991.

⁸ On Heinz von Ortenberg's trajectory, see Telles, 1980.

⁹ On Araxá, see Lima, 2006, p.227-250.

¹⁰ On the Kneipp establishment in Hamburger Berg, see the Brazilian edition of *Mein Wasserkur* (Kneipp, 1893).

¹¹ On changes in how tanning was perceived and its relation to the custom of bathing, see Andrieu, 2008, and Ory, 2008.

¹² On the demographic weight and economic, social, and cultural influence of the German and German-Brazilian community in Porto Alegre, see Gans, 2004.

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