

Max Kade Institute

F R I E N D S N E W S L E T T E R

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF THE MAX KADE INSTITUTE. VOL. 7 NO 1 . WINTER 1997-98

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MKI to Host Conference on The German Experience in Wisconsin

To the rest of the nation, particularly in the wake of the football exploits of the Green Bay Packers, the culture and lifestyle of the state of Wisconsin seems to be summed up by "Beer and Bratwurst." While this reflects the influence of German culture on our state, the image conveyed fails to capture the dynamism and vitality of the experience of German immigrants in Wisconsin; their relationships with other immigrant groups; and particular transformations, adaptations, and struggles to maintain Old World culture and ideals.

A Max Kade Institute project, a conference entitled "Defining Tensions: A Fresh Look at Germans in Wisconsin" attempts to reexamine the place of Germans in Wisconsin over the span of the state's history.

The project is a key part of the Institute's efforts to advance studies of German immigration in the United States and our attempts to foster a vital German-American Studies community in Wisconsin and beyond.

The conference, to be held on the UW campus and hosted by the Max Kade Institute on October 16-17, 1998, will investigate the influence of German immigrants on the state of Wisconsin. In particular, we seek to move beyond clichés and stereotypes to look at the tensions that define our understanding of Germans in Wisconsin. Speakers from Germany and across the United States will participate in discussions on important topics, including the subject of mutual transformation; the process of immigration, including demographic shifts, the idea of ethnicity and its reinvention, notions of dominant culture and the location of Germans within that culture; and efforts to maintain the German language and its dialects in the New World. Other topics include a discussion of diversity among German immigrants, especially in terms of gender, politics, religion, and regionalism. Finally, the conference will consider inter-ethnic relations with Native Americans, Anglo-Americans, and other Europeans and will investigate portrayals of Germans by others, portrayals of others by Germans, and German self and group portrayals.

We invite submission of abstracts, maximum of one page (single-spaced, 12 point font) which will be reviewed by

specialists in relevant fields. Electronic submissions are also welcome, to mmdevitt@facstaff.wisc.edu. Abstracts may be mailed to the Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Deadline for submission is June 1, 1998.

On Being German in America: MKI To Bring Author Ursula Hegi to Madison

Ursula Hegi, Professor of English at Eastern Washington University, best-selling author, and winner of numerous literary awards will visit the University of Wisconsin at Madison in April 1998. The Max Kade Institute, in cooperation with several other groups, has invited Hegi to deliver a University Lecture at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin on Thursday April 2, 1998. In addition to the lecture, which is open to the public, Hegi's visit will include an open question and answer session with UW students in creative writing, and an interview on Wisconsin Public Radio.



Author Ursula Hegi. Photo by Gordon Gagliano.

The author of the best-seller, *Stones from the River* and several other novels, Ms. Hegi has turned most recently to non-fiction. Her award-winning book, *Tearing the Silence: On Being German in America*, deals with the silence surrounding the Holocaust from the perspective of a generation of Germans who were young children during or shortly after World War II and who subsequently immigrated to America. She interviews a range of men and women who, like her, learned nothing of the atrocities of the Holocaust for millions of German school children, the end of the school year always came before it was discussed in history class and who, like her, were affected by the silence, the denial, the justifications, which came in response to their questions. Hegi uses the interview to weave a captivating story that resonates not only with German-Americans, but ultimately with all of us, as we are challenged to examine our own attitudes about the Holocaust. Approaching the interviews as a novelist, Hegi searches for connecting themes within each story and lifting them to the surface by selecting significant material. The words are, however, entirely those of the women and men who tell about their lives with amazing openness. Hegi focuses on understanding the character and story of the individuals in all their complexity. *Tearing the Silence* contributes to a more complex picture of a time period we are still struggling to understand. Hegi's book provides a compelling and original perspective on the way the Holocaust has been remembered and forgotten in the United States.

During her visit, Hegi will discuss the experience of writing her award-winning book, the process of representing the interview experience on paper, and her own experience as a German immigrant in post-war America. For the Max Kade Institute, Hegi's visit emphasizes the Institute's mission to study the historical and cultural dynamics surrounding German immigration to America and its commitment to examine the German-American experience in a broad context. The visit is co-sponsored by the Creative Writing Program, UW Departments of Comparative Literature, German and History, and by UW-Madison's B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation with additional funding provided by University Lectures, the Anonymous and Humanistic Funds. Tickets are free and can be obtained by calling the MKI.

Daniel Goldhagen to Visit UW During Holocaust Remembrance Week

As part of the 1998 Holocaust Remembrance Week, Professor Daniel Goldhagen, author of *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (1996), will speak at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The best-selling book has become the subject of considerable scholarly debate surrounding the politics of German identity in the post-war world, particularly within the United States. Goldhagen's speech, the keystone event of UW-Madison's Holocaust Remembrance Week, is scheduled for Sunday, April 26, 1998. The following events are scheduled for the remainder of the week. Details can be obtained by calling UW-Madison's B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation at (608) 256-8361.

Thursday, April 23

- Opening Ceremony and start of 24-hour reading of names in Library Mall
- Holocaust Survivor Walter Peltz to speak at 7 p.m. TITU

Friday, April 24

- Lunchtime Roundtable Discussions
- Shabbat Dinner followed by a reading by Joseph Skibell from his book

Saturday, April 25

- A reading of creative and personal literature and poetry about the Holocaust, Survival, and Hope at Canterbury Booksellers, 7-8:30 p.m.(free coffee with the purchase of a pastry)

Sunday, April 26

- Aish Hatorah Discovery Workshop Antisemitism: Why the Jews? 1-2:30 p.m. Hillel
- Keynote speech and book signing by Daniel Goldhagen, author of Hitler's Willing Executioners, Grainger Hall

* Specific dates, times, and places will be publicized at a time closer to the events.

MKI Hosts Workshop on Reading Old German Script

This Semester, The Friends of the Max Kade Institute are offering a workshop designed to teach transcription of old German scripts, including Sütterlin. The workshop, led by UW Professor of German and Linguistics Donald Becker is meeting every Wednesday evening in February at the Max Kade Institute. In this four week workshop participants examine various types of German handwriting, learning how to decipher and write them. Participants will also gain exposure to Becker's self-designed computer fonts, tools which provide clear, uniform examples of various scripts.

This workshop is open to anyone interested in learning to transcribe original documents in handwritten script. It is designed for both academic researchers and genealogists. The workshop offers those with a reading knowledge of German an opportunity to broaden the scope of their experience, providing a valuable resource for an important portion of the community for a minimal fee. Given the large turnout, we hope to be able to offer the course again next year. Please contact the Institute if you would be interested.

German Language Course

Come join retired German professor Rosemary K. Lester for an eight week course entitled:

["Deutsch sprechen, lesen und schreiben!"](#)

MKI Research on Pommersch Dialect Underway

When Don Zamzow of the Pommerscher Verein of Central Wisconsin called the Max Kade Institute last fall, asking for help documenting and preserving the Pommersch of Marathon and Lincoln Counties, Director Joe Salmons was surprised but very excited. Surprised, because Don described a dialect known and even used by far more people than most German-American communities have today. Excited, because the Institute was looking for opportunities like this to work with communities in the state on projects important to them; very excited, because for a linguist, this kind of project is a dream. This project should prove beneficial for both parties:

For linguists, it presents the opportunity for unique and exciting field work. For Pommersch speakers participating in the project, it will help to make a significant step in the preservation of their dialect.

"Thanks to the UW German Department," said Joe Salmons, "we were able to fund a graduate student to record Platt in central Wisconsin." Mike Lind, a graduate student in German Linguistics at the University of Wisconsin, was selected to conduct the field work for the project.

After discussions with members of the Pommerscher Verein, Lind and Salmons set some concrete goals for the project. In order to document the dialect for the future, Lind will tape record conversations and interviews with as many Platt speakers as possible.

A second immediate goal is to design a writing system which uniquely reflects the Pommersch dialect. While much has been written in Platt, the many and often great dialect differences make it useful to have a spelling developed specifically for Pommersch.

Third, Lind plans to put together a brief glossary (and pronunciation key) of several hundred words which will be made available on the World Wide Web and in print for those interested. Says Salmons, "We have the opportunity to not only document the dialect, but to ensure its accessibility to an extremely wide base of interested people."

Pommersch is interesting for other reasons as well. For example, the differences from one family to another (and even within one family sometimes) often go back to the different towns and villages original settlers came from. More importantly, since Pomerania is no longer German speaking, central Wisconsin provides one of the best remaining sources of information on the dialect, meaning that linguists in Europe will benefit from Mike's work with the Pommerscher Verein of Central Wisconsin as well.

The Verein's recent newsletter, *Dat Pommersche Blatt*, expresses the excitement created by the project, celebrating the fact that it will permit those who have retained some knowledge of Pommern Platt to leave a legacy for future generations. In early sessions of the project, Lind has begun to explore the nuances of vocabulary and translation with Verein Platt speakers. Lind has already begun to distribute questionnaires to group members, asking them to document their experience and involvement with Standard German and/or Platt.

When asked about his research project, Lind stated, "I'm really looking forward to this project. It's a great chance to put to practical use some of the things I've been studying. In addition, the very limited amount of work done with this dialect to date presents both a challenge and an excellent opportunity for some original research." To follow the project's progress, visit the MKI's Web Page at <http://www.wisc.edu/mki/>.

New Library Acquisitions

The Max Kade Institute has recently received a significant addition to its library through the generosity of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG). The following titles, published in Germany, are evidence of the broad interest in German-American studies within German universities and institutions. These titles will greatly enhance the library collection of the MKI, making important works available to a broader readership within the University and the broader Wisconsin community.

Bade, Klaus J. 1994. *Homo Migrans Wanderungen aus und nach Deutschland Erfahrungen und Fragen*. Essen: Klartext.

Bott, Katharina. 1996. *Deutsche Künstler in Amerika 1813-1913/Amerikanische Künstler in Deutschland 1813-1913*. Weimar: Verlag und Datenbank für Geisteswissenschaften.

Brinck, Andreas. 1993. *Die deutsche Auswanderungswelle in die britischen Kolonien Nordamerikas um die Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner.

- Geldmacher, Achim. 1993. *Die Deutschen in Ann Arbor: Eine Studie über das Leben deutscher Einwanderer in den USA, 1810-1918*. Essen: Die Blaue Eule.
- Gellinek, Christian. 1996. *"Those Damn' Dutch" The beginning of German immigration in North America during the thirty years war*. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag.
- Herrmann, Dietrich. 1996. *"Be an American!" Amerikanisierungsbewegung und Theorien zur Einwandererintegration*. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag.
- Holtmann, Antonius, ed. 1995. *"Ferner thue ich euch zu wissen..." Briefe des Johann Heinrich zur Oesveste aus Amerika (1834-1876)*. Bremen: Temmen.
- Horvath, Traude and Gerda Neyer, eds. *Auswanderungen aus Österreich von der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zur Gegenwart*. Wien: Böhlau.
- Kindermann, Wolf. *Man unknown to himself: Kritische Reflexion der amerikanischen Aufklärung: Crèvecoeur, Benjamin Rush Charles Brockden Brown*. Tübingen: Günter Narr.
- Klinger, Monika. *Hermann Broch und die Demokratie*. Berlin: Duncker Humbolt.
- Knoll Schuetze, Sabine. *Friedrich Hoffmann (1832-1904) in New York und die 'Pharmaceutische Rundschau': Ein Beitrag zu den deutsch-amerikanischen Beziehungen in der Pharmazie*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- Müller, Thomas J. 1994. *Kirche zwischen zwei Welten: Die Obrigkeitsproblematik bei Heinrich Melchior Müllenberg und die Kirchengründung der deutschen Lutheraner in Pennsylvania*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.
- Neubauer, Paul. *Die Diskussion der US-amerikanischen Erz.,hliteratur der Postmoderne in der deutschsprachigen Amerikanistik*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- Paul, Roland and Karl Scherer, eds. 1995. *Pfälzer in Amerika*. Kaiserslautern: Institut fuer pfälzische Geschichte und Volkskunde.
- Pumroy, Eric L. and Katja Rampelmann, Compilers. 1996. *Research guide to the Turner movement in the United States*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press.
- Reppmann, Joachim. *Freiheit, Bildung und Wohlstand fuer alle: Schleswig-Hosteinische Achtundvierziger in den USA 1847-1860*. Wyk auf Foehr: Verlag für Amerikanistik.
- Schäfer, Peter and Karl Schmitt, eds. 1993. *Franz Lieber und die deutsch-amerikanischen Beziehungen im 19. Jahrhundert*. Weimar: Böhlau.
- Vollmar, Rainer. *Wohnen in der Wildnis: Siedlungsgestaltung und Identität deutscher Auswanderer in den USA*. Berlin: Reimer.

Genealogy Corner: Through the Eyes of a Translator

by Kerstin Kuentzel

In my first year of high school in Germany, I was obliged to take a Sütterlin class in which we learned how to decipher and read this archaic German handwriting. Who would have thought then that 25 years later this ability would contribute to opening the door to the Max Kade Institute in the New World for me? Certainly not I, expecting in 1970 that the only advantage of taking that class would be that of finally being able to decipher letters of old relatives without my parents' assistance.

It took me 25 years to understand that taking this class had not been a waste of time at all (as we students believed),

rather that it had provided me with a unique and special tool for the translator I later became, a tool that opened up, at least for me here in the States, a very intriguing occupation: Genealogy. Since I started working for the Max Kade Institute two years ago, my interest in and fascination with genealogy has grown stronger with every excerpt from a church book, with every entry from a parish register, with every diary, and with every personal letter I transcribed or translated, until it became a real passion, almost an addiction.

If you have some knowledge of German, are genealogically inclined and in addition to that, maybe even are able to read Sütterlin, you have probably tried by yourself to decipher an old document or letter from an ancestor, with the help of just a dictionary. How far did you get? Were you really able to decipher all the words? And if so, did your dictionary provide you with satisfactory translation suggestions for the words you looked up? Judging by some of the letters I have received asking for help, such self-translation attempts are often frustrating.

As a translator, I am very aware of how time-consuming transcribing from Sütterlin can be. Even if the document seems to be flawless, without any signs of aging or ink spots or corrections on the original text, there are plenty of obstacles one might have to overcome before even a short sentence begins to make sense. Obsolete words, antiquated sentence structure, incomplete sentences, expressions in dialect, or changes from German to English within the same sentence are only a few of the possible hurdles one encounters. In such cases, transcribing from the native language is without any doubt a huge advantage, as is experience. The above-mentioned obstacles challenge the transcriber's or translator's imagination and flexibility, and once in a while, even experienced professionals are unable to find all pieces of the puzzle.

Once the transcription is done, the translation challenge begins. And that is the point where most amateurs, who don't have solid knowledge of the subtleties and intricacies of the German language, have problems. Regardless of how voluminous a dictionary might be, it won't provide completely satisfactory solutions for such problems as recognizing and understanding dialect forms and tone of speech.

When launched into the middle of a family's history, I feel a mixture of respect and thrill, which is almost impossible to describe to someone who lacks the same "addiction." At some point during each translation, I pause a moment, nearly forgetting that the faceless heroes or victims I am reading about are, in most cases, long deceased. I always ask myself during a genealogical translation, "What must it have been like living in those days, dealing with the given circumstances of destiny, and what were the characters of the persons really like, whose fortunate or unfortunate story I am translating?" And I wonder whether if, centuries from today, someone who might come across my family's records or letters will ask the same questions. I have found this sort of special human touch in scarcely any other translation category (besides literature), and that is exactly what makes genealogical translations unique.

Max Kade Institute Spring Lectures 1998

The Max Kade Institute announces its [spring lecture series in German-American Studies](#).

For more information, updates, abstracts for these papers, or to be added to our mailing list, please consult our web site (<http://www.wisc.edu/mki/>), email maxkade@macc.wisc.edu or call 608/262-7546.

MKI Publications Available from UW Press

Beginning December 1, 1997, the UW Press assumed the distribution of all Publications of the Friends of the Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies, making our publications available to a wider audience. Our publications are available through the UW Press. Orders may be placed by calling the UW Press toll free at 1-800-829-9559. Information about the UW Press may also be obtained on their web site: <http://www.wisc.edu/wisconsinpress/>

News in German-American Studies

West Bend Art Museum Celebrates Wisconsin Sesquicentennial. In 1988, the West Bend Art Museum committed to the development of an Early Wisconsin Art Collection. During 1998, the year of our state's sesquicentennial, the West Bend Art Museum unveils its collection of Wisconsin Art which spans time from Euro-American settlement in Wisconsin to 1950. Through generous gifts of art from patrons and financial contributions from the Friends of the West Bend Art Museum, the collection has now become historically and aesthetically significant. Watch future newsletters for information about a Friends of the MKI Excursion to the Museum. Information about the exhibit may be obtained by calling the West Bend Art Museum at (414) 334-9638.

Yiddish Literature in UW-Madison Libraries. In December, Memorial Library unveiled an exhibit of books drawn from approximately 1,000 volumes in the Library's Comprehensive Collection of Yiddish Literature. Yiddish, a close linguistic relative of German with many words borrowed from Hebrew and Slavic and written in Hebrew characters, was spoken chiefly as a vernacular in eastern European communities and by Jewish immigrants to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The library's Yiddish literature collection contains reference works, essential history, biography, ethnography, social theory and other nonfiction, together with literary anthologies and major works of Yiddish prose, poetry, drama, and literary criticism. Also referenced are the 11,000 texts of the Hebrew and Yiddish collections of Harvard College Library reproduced on microfiche. Acquisition of the Yiddish literature collection was made possible by gifts from Paul Martin Wolff (UW Class of 1963) and his wife Rhea Schwartz and from Stuart (Class of 1964) and Toni Holden. Each volume in the collection has a special bookplate. The gift was motivated by a speech given at a class reunion by UW Professor Emeritus of History, George Mosse, who fled Nazi Germany in the 1930s. Through a gift from the Rita J. and Stanley H. Kaplan Foundation, New York City, Memorial Library was able to purchase the full Hebrew and Yiddish collections of Harvard College Library on microfiche. These financial gifts have also made it possible to employ a Yiddish Language and Literature Bibliographer in Memorial Library. Queries related to the new collections may be directed to Jill Rosenshield, Assistant Curator, Special Collections, Memorial Library (265-2750). Both acquisitions demonstrate the importance of charitable giving to the promotion of scholarly research and the extent to which libraries, large and small, rely on financial gifts to supplement their collections.

As the story on page 5 indicates, The Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies likewise relies on gifts of books and financial support to enlarge its collection. To this end, the MKI works closely with UW Foundation Development Director Cindy Kahn to increase awareness of and support for the Institute's scholarly and outreach efforts. Any questions about charitable giving to benefit the work and/or library collections of the Institute may be directed to Ms. Kahn by email at cindyk@uwfound.wisc.edu, by phone at (608) 262-6242, or by mail at the UW Foundation, 1848 University Avenue, Madison, WI 53708.

German-American Educators Exhibit in Milwaukee. As reported in our last newsletter, on April 4, 1998, the Milwaukee Public Museum will open an exhibit on three German-Americans who made important contributions to the educational foundation of Milwaukee Mathilde Anneke, Peter Engelmann and Oscar Werwath. Anneke, an important figure in the US women's suffrage movement, founded a school for girls in Milwaukee in the 1860s. Engelmann was the first director of the German-English Academy, the present-day University School of Milwaukee. Werwath founded the Milwaukee School of Engineering, modeled on the German educational system. The exhibit will be accompanied by a number of publications, including a study packet for school groups.

Director's Corner: The MKI and the Community

If you're reading this, you probably already know that the Max Kade Institute is dedicated to research and outreach on topics related to the history, culture and language of German-speaking immigrants to North America, especially in Wisconsin. But why should the Max Kade Institute really matter to the University and the state? One reason is that the Max Kade Institute serves as a seam between university and non-university communities, one that offers us a chance to connect the University to the state in vital ways for all concerned. Our research mission centers on training graduate students to work across a variety of disciplinary boundaries in ways directly relevant to contemporary society, but we want that research to be closely connected to serving the state. We are working now to fund graduate student research driven by the concerns of communities around the state, projects reflecting the interests and needs of a broad swath of

the state. Let me give two examples of how graduate student work at the Institute can connect with the state, the first through schools and the other through a request from a community.

First, Catherine Plum, a graduate student in History, working at the MKI, has prepared an exhibit, "Children in a New Land," showing the situation of immigrant children in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The exhibit has found an eager audience: it has been displayed in various local schools and requests for it continue to come in. Catherine is now working on a larger exhibit for the Madison Public Library on immigrant children in Wisconsin. Catherine's work is helping teachers in the area (and we hope eventually around the state) convey the importance of the immigrant experience to their students.

Second, as the story on page 4 explains, the Pommerscher Verein of Central Wisconsin has asked us for help documenting and preserving their Low German dialect. Mike Lind, a graduate student in German Linguistics, is currently assisting them in developing a practical spelling system for the dialect and assembling a short dictionary, in addition to recording as much of the dialect as possible. Mike is already finding new and exciting material for his own research while he provides technical assistance to the Pommerscher Verein.

In both of these cases, students are doing independent research connected to their academic interests in ways that serve a real outreach function. The MKI is currently preparing a number of grant applications (and has already submitted several others) that would support projects similar to those described above. If you have ideas for new projects please let us know.

Joseph Salmons

Director

Annual Friends' Membership Meeting to be Held in Milwaukee

The annual meeting of the Friends of the Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies will be held on May 14, 1998 at Milwaukee's Turner Hall, 1034 North Fourth Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Dinner will be served following a brief business meeting at 5:30 pm.

The evening's program, dinner menu, and further details will be announced in a forthcoming, separate mailing to Friends of the MKI members.

If you are not already a member of the Friends but would like to receive information about the annual meeting, please contact Mary Devitt at the Max Kade Institute at (608) 262-7546 or by email at mmdevitt@facstaff.wisc.edu.

Archival Information
This event occurred in 1998

Deutsch sprechen, lesen und schreiben!

Professor Rosemarie K. Lester

Come join retired German professor Rosemarie K. Lester for an eight week course entitled: "Deutsch sprechen, lesen und schreiben!"

Date:	Time:	Location:
Thursday evenings Jan. 28-March 18, 1998	6:30 - 8 pm	Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies 901 University Bay Drive; Madison, WI 53705*

This is an ongoing intermediate level course for people who want to improve their conversational skills, review grammatical problems as they occur, build vocabulary and read a variety of German literary and non-literary texts. Videos will be included as well and most classroom materials are provided.

*Parking across the street in the First Unitarian meeting house parking lot.

[Back to the Max Kade Institute](#)

Archival Information
These events occurred in 1998

German-American Lecture Series

Spring 1998

The Max Kade Institute is happy to announce the Spring 1998 lecture series in German-American Studies. Talks will cover popular as well as academic topics. All lectures are free, open to anyone and you are invited to attend.

Thursday Jan. 22 7 pm	Dr. R. Lester UW-Extension	Milwaukee: The German Athens on the Kinnickinnick; see abstract	MKI
Saturday Mar. 21 10 am	E. Goss, M. Lind UW-Madison D. Nuetzel Uni Bayreuth	Miniconference on German Dialects in the Midwest Topics: English-German Language Mixing in 19th Century Wisconsin German, Pomeranian Low German in Wisconsin, Grammatical Change in Indiana East Franconian	MKI
Thursday April 2 7 pm	U. Hegi	"Tearing the Silence: On Being German in America" See news release	SHS
Wednesday April 15 7.30 pm	G. Shellman	"The Electoral Triumph of Milwaukee's Evolutionary Socialism: Its German Origins and Revolutionary Heritage"; see abstract	MKI

Abstracts

Milwaukee: The German Athens on the Kinnickinnick

Dr. Rosemarie K. Lester
UW-Madison Extension

Early German immigrants had experienced moderate success as farmers, craftsmen and trades people. With the age of industrialization and the rapid growth of cities came a chance for the big time and German prosperity and cultural presence grew - but nowhere as strikingly as in the city of Milwaukee.

Miniconference on German Dialects in the Midwest

In spite of the large numbers of German speakers in the Midwest, it has been decades since solid research has been conducted on the many dialects found across the region. While large comparative projects have been carried out on German in Texas and on Pennsylvania German, this conference will be the first of its kind to have a significant

historical component. This mini-conference represents a point of departure for the exploration of problems like language change in a bilingual setting, the role of Standard German versus dialect in America, and how and why communities eventually switched from German to English.

Archival Information **These events occurred in 1998**

"Tearing the Silence: On Being German in America"

News Release:

Author Ursula Hegi to speak in Madison

Growing up amid evidence of war in 1950s Germany, Ursula Hegi found an uneasy silence surrounding the Holocaust. When she tried to ask questions, adults gave vague and reluctant answers about the war and said nothing about the Holocaust. Hegi immigrated to the United States in 1964, where she is now an award-winning novelist and professor of creative writing at Eastern Washington University. She has recently returned to this troubling topic: How could she have learned so little about this recent chapter in her own homeland's history? It drove her to write *Tearing the Silence: On Being German in America* (1997), a book of interviews with people born in Germany during or shortly after World War II now living in the United States. The interviews describe how the subjects found out about the Holocaust and how they have -- or haven't -- come to grips with it.

Hegi will discuss that topic in a public lecture at the **University of Wisconsin-Madison April 2**. On March 30 at 10 am, she will be on Wisconsin Public Radio with Jean Feraca.

The Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies is the principal sponsor of Hegi's visit. Institute director Joe Salmons finds the topic compelling. "In some sense, immigrants always live between two worlds. *Tearing the Silence* documents how German-born Americans define themselves in relation to this German legacy, but in a broader, distinctly American context."

Hegi also has written several novels, including *Stones from the River*, another response to that silence from her childhood, a book chosen by Oprah Winfrey for her book club last year. Kaukana high school teacher Kari Nelson assigned *Stones* in an English Literature class, on Justice Law and Mercy. I felt that this book would make them think in a way they've never thought before. The book challenged her students to see how a singular event becomes an injustice. A final exam option allowed students to write to Hegi about the book. She wrote back to the class. The students were thrilled, Nelson says. Consequently she is bringing 15-20 of those students to hear Hegi speak. Educationally, Nelson hopes the experience will inspire the students to keep tackling thematically difficult literature and taking contemporary fiction seriously.

Free tickets to Hegi's lecture are available through the Max Kade Institute, (608) 262-7546. *The lecture begins at 7 p.m. in the State Historical Society auditorium, 816 State St.* The UW-Madison Creative Writing program; the departments of German, Comparative Literature and History; and the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation will cosponsor the visit and lecture. University Lectures and the Anonymous and Humanistic Funds are providing additional funding.

The Electoral Triumph of Milwaukee's Evolutionary Socialism: Its German Origins and Revolutionary Heritage

G. Shellman

Milwaukee was the scene of American socialism's greatest electoral triumph in 1910. Socialists swept the municipal elections in the spring, the general elections for state office in the fall, and sent Victor Berger to the U.S. Congress, the

first socialist to enter the House of Representatives. Milwaukee in 1910 was also the "most German" city in the United States. Refugees from the revolutions of 1848 found the largest municipality in Wisconsin an agreeable place to settle; as Turners, Free Thinkers, and abolitionists, Milwaukee became "the deutsche Athen der Westen," the scene of fevered cultural activity and passionate political discussions. As both Germany and Wisconsin went through their industrialization, German immigrants filled the demand for a skilled labor force in Milwaukee. Cognizant of socialist ideology, many of these fled Germany feeling heat from Chancellor Otto von Bismarck's anti-Socialist laws. Consequently, German workers and professionals provided the cadre for a comprehensive reform socialist movement. Linked to the revolutionary past by environment and to the Socialist Party of Germany by a bridge of both ideas and people, German Milwaukee scored a socialist triumph in 1910. This presentation will trace the heritage and cross the bridge.

Archival Information
These events occurred in 1998