

Max Kade Institute Friends Newsletter

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UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON, 901 UNIVERSITY BAY DR., MADISON, WI 53705

Collection Feature

“*Dies schrieb Dir zur Erinnerung. . .*” From *Album Amicorum* to Autograph Book

By Antje Petty, MKI Assistant Director



Some of the beautiful and intriguing items in the Max Kade Institute's collection are little autograph books and small, decorative boxes containing loose leaf poems and personal dedications.

They represent a centuries-old German tradition of the *Album Amicorum* [book of friends], also called *Stammbuch* or, more recently, *Poesiealbum*.

Stammbücher appear for the first time in the 16th and 17th centuries in the German- and Dutch-speaking areas of Europe, where it had become fashionable among graduating university students to have one's personal bible signed by classmates and instructors. Soon inscriptions went beyond simple signatures to include reminiscences of common experiences, good wishes for the future, or a favorite passage from literature or poetry. Publishers foreseeing a lucrative market printed bibles with empty pages and soon also turned out small decorated books with only empty pages.

Eventually these albums were not only passed around at graduation but accompanied a student throughout his life, gathering entries from relatives, friends, and important acquaintances. Others also took up the custom, especially those who traveled as part of their training or social upbringing, such as aristocrats, tradesmen, military officers, poets, or musicians. *Stammbücher* were usually circulated at a time of parting and served the bearer not only as a sentimental remembrance but as a collection of references by association in his pursuit of a professional or social career. Inscriptions were personal, yet frequently included

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Mark your calendars!
Make your reservations!

MKI Friends Annual Meeting and Dinner on May 12, 2007 in New Glarus.

Bring a friend, make a Friend!

Still Going . . .

By Cora Lee Kluge, MKI Director

Greetings, Friends and Readers!

The winter has changed into spring, and we have been hard at work. However, as I see from reviewing last winter's issue, we promised then that we would be up to quite a bit in these intervening months. So, for openers, I offer a little report about our activities and accomplishments.

Our new MKI publication *Wisconsin German Land and Life*, which appeared in October, has already sold out of its first printing! —and we are now negotiating a reprinting. In addition, the MKI lecture series has continued with two more lectures: a talk in February by Karyl Rommelfanger on the letters of a German Confederate soldier; and a presentation in March by Joe Salmons and Miranda Wilkerson on how fast German immigrants learned English. Furthermore, in March Antje Petty held a workshop on “The Challenges of Citizenship and Literacy in a Global Society” at the International Education Conference in Middleton. Meanwhile, Kevin Kurdylo keeps on doing more work than is humanly possible: running the Library

and Archive, incorporating new items such as Andreas Gommermann's collection of Milwaukee Donauschwaben sound recordings into our digital collection, expanding data base entries on previously catalogued library items, and—believe it or not!—also producing this wonderful Newsletter. Finally, Cora Lee Kluge's course on “The German Immigration Experience” (German 278, spring semester) is moving along with a solid enrollment of 27 students. Beyond this, there is an impressive list of our recent outreach presentations. All of this is the bread-and-butter part of our mission and the salt of our earth.

But then there is the part of our job that seems always to be a kind of wishful thinking or pie-in-the-sky enterprise. This is our grant writing, on which we spend a great deal of our time and effort. It's fun, too, and very educational for us—but it lives in a kind of unreal universe and on the level of “what we would do if we had the money.” Still, even here there are real and positive and statistically-measurable down-to-earth accomplishments to report. Since last fall, we have written six such applications, of which one has been rejected, three have been funded, and we still wait for word on the other two. Not bad, we think!

Success of the first application—the project concerning German Theater Scripts—we announced in the winter 2006 Newsletter, and now we report on the success of the other two. First, the Wisconsin Humanities Council has provided funding for our “Wisconsin Englishes” project (application and project by MKI staff, Joe Salmons and other UW linguists, and people from the *Dictionary of American Regional English*); this grant supports fourteen outreach presentations throughout Wisconsin, as well as an expansion of the *Wisconsin Englishes* Web site. Secondly, the German Consulate in Chicago is supporting our publication of “German Words/American Voices,” an audio CD illustrating German dialects spoken in America, together with an accompanying brochure (application and project by former MKI Director

Max Kade Institute

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Max Kade Institute
for German-American Studies
901 University Bay Drive
Madison, WI 53705

Phone: (608) 262-7546 Fax: (608) 265-4640
Any submissions via email may be directed to
kkurdylo@wisc.edu

Visit the Max Kade Institute on the
World Wide Web at:
<<http://mki.wisc.edu>>.

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literary quotes, showing the writer's—and by extension the bearer's—social and intellectual standing. The messages emphasized values such as intellectual and political freedom, hard work, honesty, forthrightness, self-reliance, and friendship. Good wishes for happiness, health, good fortune, and prosperity were always included.

Though they fell out of favor for a while beginning in the late 17th century, *Stammbücher* resurfaced in the first half of the nineteenth century.

As earlier, they circulated among university students, especially fraternity members, but they now also became popular among the emerging educated middle class. These books were testaments to the values of the *Biedermeier* age (friendship, loyalty, family ties, domesticity, religious piety) and were passed around by women as well as men. Towards the mid-nineteenth century, *Stammbücher* became almost exclusively the domain of young women, and fifty years later, they were mostly kept by young girls. In Germany today, *Poesiealben*—as the books are now called—are still a fad among elementary-school-age girls.

In nineteenth-century America, high school and university graduates kept autograph books, a custom probably introduced by German immigrants and American students who had studied at German universities. However, they never acquired the widespread popularity they had in Germany, and yearbooks soon replaced autograph books even among American students.

The changes in German-language *Stammbücher* are wonderfully reflected in the MKI collection. Early *Stammbücher*, often leather-bound and elabo-

rately decorated, featured intricate artwork sometimes done by hired artists. Later, at the height of the friendship cult, writers often added their own drawings, pressed flowers, delicate needlework, locks of hair, or commercially available glossy glue-on pictures. These *Lackbilder* or *Oblaten* themselves became collector items. Common motives were wreaths, hearts, and the favorite flowers of remembrance: forget-me-nots, roses, and carnations.

In addition to bound books, little 2.5-inch by 6-inch memory boxes containing loose-leaf paper were also popular; they came in elaborately decorated cardboard sleeves. Memory boxes had advantages: a single page could be handed to a friend to sign, or individual sheets could be given to several friends simultaneously; pages could be arranged selectively; and—if found undesirable for whatever reason—they could be discretely discarded.

The oldest *Stammbuch* in the MKI archives is such a memory box. The box itself is bound in brown leather with the words *Denkmal der Freundschaft* (Memorial to Friendship) engraved in gold on its spine. The front cover is a colored print of a stage coach departing from a bucolic village scene, framed in gold and behind glass. The box has a cardboard sleeve and can be shelved like a book. Inside, single sheets of paper are held together by a broad green ribbon. We do not know the name of the young man who kept this *Stammbuch* between 1829 and 1832, but he had family in the Cologne area and traveled around northern Germany. Many entries are adorned with drawings or needlework. Johanne Ehser (Voerde, May 1830), for example,



Forget-Me-Nots

Continued on page 4

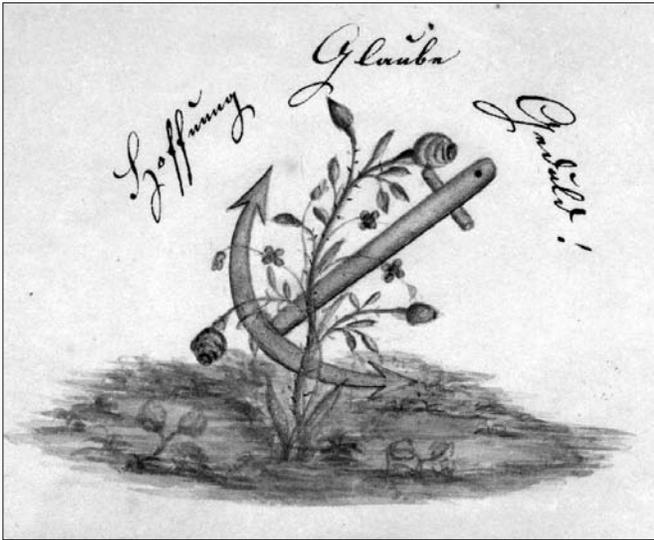
The Friends of the Max Kade Institute Board of Directors

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stitched a forget-me-not onto her piece of paper with delicate bright green and purple thread; Caspar Quambusch (Voerde, May 1830) embellished his note with a watercolor of two hands emerging from clouds and clasping in friendship a bunch of flowers; and I. H. (Rade, September 1830) simply writes the words



Hope, faith, patience.

Hoffnung, Glaube, Geduld (hope, faith, patience) under the colored-pencil drawing of an anchor entwined by tiny roses and forget-me-nots. Most inscriptions are rather clumsy inspirational verses composed by family members, friends, and teachers, which pertain to the young man's only vaguely defined future.

*Sei immer Mann und groß durch innere Kräfte,
Und überlaß nie andern ein Geschäfte,
das du noch selbst zu enden magst;
Zeig [?] Harmonie in Wort und That, und weiche
kein Haar breit, stark wie eine Königseiche;
Und felsenhaft sei, was du sagst.
Gewidmet von Ihrem Freund und Vetter*

O. W. Küpper

Wermelskirchen im April 1829

Be ever a man, stand tall through inner strength,
Never leave work for others
That you yourself are able to finish;
Show harmony in word and deed, and yield not
Even one hair's width, be strong as a royal oak;
And may what you say be unshakeable.
Dedicated by your friend and cousin

O.W. Küpper

Wermelskirchen, April 1829

*Was wären wir Menschen ohne die Hoffnung!
Die Hoffnung leite auch Sie mein junger Freund!
Und führe Sie in eine glückliche Zukunft!—
Freundlich erinnern Sie sich stets:
Ihres Lehrers und Freundes*

A. Pieper, Stiftsprediger

St. Bassum, den 26ten Febr. 1829

What would we people be without hope!
Hope may guide you, too, my dear young friend!
And lead you to a happy future!—
Kindly always remember
Your teacher and friend

A. Pieper, Seminary Preacher

Stift Bassum, February 26, 1829

Stammbücher often marked the beginning of a new stage in the bearer's life. Sophia Baass' *Album Amicorum* in the MKI collection marked her impending emigration from Mecklenburg to America. Between March and May 1851, Sophia circulated her album—a pretty white memory box decorated with delicately embossed and colored flowers—among her family and friends who would stay behind. While their entries include good wishes for Sophia's journey, they also express a sense of sadness about the impending separation, together with hope that love and friendship will prevail across great distances. Many pages are adorned with drawings. Franziska Haacke sewed (!) an extremely delicate paper cutout of a green wreath onto her page. Maria Langhof included a lock of her hair with a pink ribbon, and "Cousin Wilhelmine" wrote:

*Weil uns fremdes Landt soll trennen,
und wir nicht beisammen sind,
Laß nie aus dem Gedächtniß kommen,
Daß auch wir Verwandte sindt,
Denk in gut und schlechten Tagen,
hier zu Deiner Verwandten her,
Wenn Dich trübe Stunden plagen,
Rufe meinen Gruß zur Wehr
Zur Erinnerung an Deine dich ewig liebende
Cousine Wilhelmine*

Since foreign lands shall separate us,
And we cannot be together,
Never forget
That we are relatives, too.
Remember on good and bad days,
Your relative here,

Letters by Leo Lesquereux: Scientist, Immigrant, Observer

Reviewed by Cora Lee Kluge, MKI Director

Lesquereux, Leo. *Letters Written from America 1849–1853*. Translation from the French by H. Dwight Page; Biography and Illustrations by Donald G. Tritt; Introduction and Editing by Wendy Everham. Rockton, ME: Picton Press, 2006. xiv + 466 pages. Published under the auspices of the Swiss American Historical Society.

Leo Lesquereux was a native of the French part of Switzerland, and his letters describing America were written in French. Though our *Newsletter* usually deals with German Americans and their experiences, this volume about and by Lesquereux, a Swiss-American scientist, is a valuable contribution. Furthermore, it provides an extra dimension of context to help us understand the lives and views of nineteenth-century immigrants in America.

Part I is Donald G. Tritt's biography of Leo Lesquereux (1806–1889). The son of a Swiss watchmaker, Lesquereux grew up in a small village in Canton Neuchâtel and attended an academy nearby before moving to Eisenach to teach French. There he met his future wife Sophia, the Baroness von Wolffskeel von Reichenberg. After their marriage, he taught school in Switzerland—until, at the age of 26, illness left him totally deaf and unable to teach. He then supported his family by engraving watches and making watch springs, while pursuing studies of the local peat bogs; and in 1844 his research was awarded a prize by the Prussian government. Because of his growing fame, he was appointed to commissions whose task was to drain swamps in the area. But when the European revolutions of 1848 led to Neuchâtel's no longer being

a Prussian protectorate, he was released—as were all those who had been appointed by the Prussian authorities.

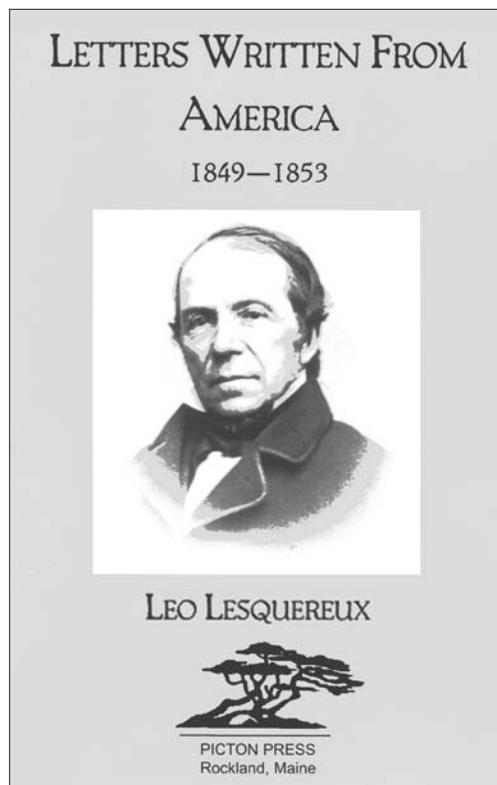
Lesquereux was invited to America by his friend and compatriot Louis Agassiz, a professor at Harvard University, and in 1848 he moved with his wife and his five children to Columbus, Ohio, where he spent the rest of his life. He was engaged in research with William Starling Sullivant

and others, published numerous papers in American scientific journals, and achieved fame as a botanist, a pioneering paleobotanist, and particularly a specialist in mosses—all despite his total deafness. When he was first confronted with English, a language he had never learned, his wife would translate things into French for him; but eventually he could lip-read English as well as French and German. Because he needed to supplement his family's income, he—together with two of his sons—operated a watchmaking and jewelry business.

Part II is a Historical Introduction consisting of two essays by Wendy Everham:

“Leo Lesquereux's *Letters* as Colonial Discourse” and “Leo Lesquereux's Intellectual Milieu: The Rise of Racial Science in Western Culture.”

This section comes to grips with Lesquereux's outdated—even appalling—ideology of cultural and racial superiority, which becomes obvious to readers of the letters. Everham herself is critical of Lesquereux's position, but she is nevertheless too ready to explain his ideas as the normal attitude of that era's scientists. She argues that if Lesquereux



If cloudy hours trouble you,
Recall my good wishes to defend against them.
In memory of your forever loving

Cousin Wilhelmine

Aunt Sophie added:

Auch in weiter Ferne, denke zuweilen Deiner
Dich liebenden Tante

Sophie Kniesch geb Dusch

Even in faraway lands, remember at times
Your loving aunt

Sophie Kniesch, nee Dusch.

On May 30th, 1851, Charlotte Walter in Schwerin wrote the last entry from Germany in Sophia Baass' album:

Nehmen Sie, liebe Sophie, zum Andenken meine besten Wünsche für Ihr Wohl und Glück! Der Himmel beschütze Sie und Ihre lieben Angehörigen und möge er seinen Segen zu dieser Überfahrt Ihnen allen verleihen! Diese wenigen Worte kommen aus treuem Herzen, und verbinden damit noch den Wunsch nicht zu vergessen Ihre Charlotte Walter

Dear Sophie, take as remembrance my best wishes for your wellbeing and happiness! May Heaven protect you and your dear family and grant all of you his blessings for the [transatlantic] passage. These few words are coming from a loyal heart, and extend the wish that you not forget your Charlotte Walter.

But Sophia Baass' album is not just an old-world memento. She continues to collect inscriptions soon after her arrival in America. Accompanied by a color-pencil drawing of garden scene with a willow bent over a pedestal inscribed *Andenken* (in memoriam), the very next entry reads:

*Edle Freundschaft nur verbindet
Seelen zu der schönsten Pflicht.*

Und die Kränze die sie windet

Welken selbst im Grabe nicht

Robert Hintz a. Prussia. State Wisconsin.

Milwaukie, the 10th February 1852

Only noble friendship connects

Souls in most beautiful obligation [?]

And the wreaths it twines

Will not wilt even on a grave.



A wreath of hair from Sophia Baass's souvenir album.

It is interesting to note that Robert Hintz writes the above verse in German and in the old German script, but signs it in English. His English, however is a literal translation, still showing German grammatical structures.

Another (undated) entry in Sophia's album—adorned with a crocheted wreath of brunette hair—is entirely in English, but also seems to be the work of a non-native speaker:

Life is onward try it ere the day is lost
It hath virtue buy it at whatever cost

Louisa L Keith To Mrs. Sophia Bass

While *Stammbuch* entries in the mid-nineteenth century included inspirational verses that may or may not have been composed by the writer, they tended to be personalized texts. This changed in the second half of the nineteenth century when almost all entries took the form of rhymes which were frequently copied from now popular "*Stammbuch* poetry collections" and magazines.

A good example is the album of Amande Lorenz from Niederröblingen, who in 1906 at the age of 20 immigrated to Milwaukee to join her uncle, the famous panorama painter Richard Lorenz. Amande's album has the bigger (5-inch by 8-inch) size of the *Poesiealben* popular in Germany today. Most entries are from 1900, written by her classmates, parents, and siblings. Almost all end in

The Swiss Heritage of Green County, Wisconsin

by Duane H. Freitag, New Glarus Historical Society

More than a century and a half has passed since a unique immigration project first brought German-speaking Swiss to Wisconsin's Green County, but the impact of that migration is still very much in evidence.

The county—and most especially New Glarus—hosts a successful tourism business that mixes real ethnic foods, festivals, and history with a little ersatz foreign flavor. The residents' strong pride in what their Swiss ancestors achieved is evident everywhere in the county.

New Glarus has its annual outdoor production of Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell* (in German and English), an annual stage production of Johanna Spyri's *Heidi* story, and an annual *Volksfest* to mark Swiss Independence Day (August 1). A *Mannerchor*, Yodel Club, and *Kinderchor*, as well as alphorn players, continue a long tradition of ethnic entertainment. And a delightful 14-building museum, the Swiss Historical Village, puts the unique history of this area on display from May 1 to October 31.

At Monroe, where the radio station at times strays from its country format to bring polkas, waltzes, and yodeling, the strong Swiss presence is centered at the Turner Hall, believed to be the only surviving Swiss Turner organization from the 1800s. When the "foreign type" cheese industry took root in Green County after the Civil War, Monroe became a major cheese warehousing and sales center. Monroe still celebrates Cheese Days every other September and sports a fine cheese-making museum. The Swiss music tradition is also kept alive in Monroe by a number of individuals and the community's Swiss Singers.

Both communities have played host to the North

American Swiss *Sängerfest*; New Glarus was most recent in 2003.

The Swiss influx began in 1845, when the Canton of Glarus (southeast of Zurich) organized an Emigration Society and sent 193 of its poorer citizens to the New World. The immigrants' *heimat* (hometown) paid for travel and, in many cases, farmland. Two men were sent ahead to what we now call the Upper Midwest to select a site for a Swiss colony.

They purchased 1,200 acres in northern Green County, most of which is now the Village of New Glarus. The main group, full of high hopes for a new life and new opportunities, arrived in August, but attrition had reduced the number to 135. Despite some difficult early years, the "Swiss Colony," as it was informally known, continued to draw immigrants from Switzerland. Another larger group arrived in 1847, including two brothers, one of whom founded the Village of Monticello in 1851.

By that time other Swiss were also heading to the central and southern parts of Green County, especially from Canton Bern, some of whom had originally settled in Ohio. The Swiss were

never totally isolated as an ethnic group since there were other Swiss nearby in Galena, Madison, and Milwaukee, as well as significant settlements in Sauk, Winnebago, and Buffalo Counties.

In spite of intermarriage over the years with the Yankee, German, Irish, and Norwegian population, the Swiss have always remained a significant group in Green County. Census reports from 1850 through the early 20th century show a steadily increasing number of households where the parents were born in Switzerland.



Fridolin's Stab was a gift to New Glarus from friends in Switzerland.

the formulaic signature “Dies schrieb dir zur Erinnerung...”. (This was written for you as a memory by...) The verses chosen are standard sayings without any direct connection to a specific person, time, place, or event. Some even appear more than once. For example, the following verse was selected both by “Mitschüler Otto Knote” (a classmate) as well as “Schwester Hilda” (her sister).

*Sei deiner Eltern Lieb' und Lust,
im Alter einst ihr Stab
Und tiefen Dankes in der Brust,
Besuche oft ihr Grab.*

Be your parents love and joy,
Their support in old age
And with deep thanks in your heart,
Visit often their grave.

The *Stammbuch* tradition continued in German-American communities, even among people who had never lived in Europe. Here the albums often show an interesting mix of language and cultural adaptation. An interesting example is the “Album Souvenir” of Theresa Graettinger. The 6-inch by 8-inch book was printed in New York as a scrap book for “selections, sketches, autographs, etc.” Empty pages are interspersed with art prints that—like beads on the thread—depict the different stages on the path to adulthood expected from a young pious and virtuous woman. The first images in the books depict religious scenes (the Holy Family) and family bliss (a grandmother reading to her granddaughter). Towards the end they show depictions of coming of age and female friendship (three young ladies taking a boat ride), finally culminating in marriage (a wedding scene in front of a church).

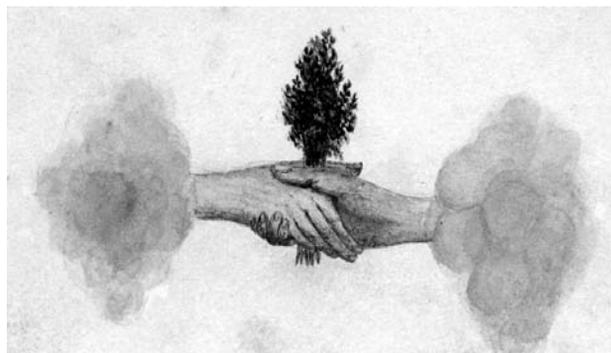
Entries in Theresa’s album range from 24-line poems in the old German script (Anton Thormählen, Milwaukee 1881) to simple sentences in English: “Remember your friend Frank Brand” (Milwaukee 1880). There are a number of verses in English or German that refer to womanly virtues such as patience, modesty, and love for music; most were written by Theresa’s friends and teachers at St. Catherine Academy in Milwaukee. On the other end of the spectrum, brothers Michael (in English) and Alois

(in German) added more humorous verses:

*Liebe Schwester, ich sann her und hin
Was wohl im Stammbuch schicklich wär
Da fiel der kleine Spruch mir ein:
Du mögest ewig glücklich sein.*

Dear sister, I pondered over and over
What would be proper for your autograph book
Then I thought of this little verse:
Be happy forever.

Long ignored and dismissed as trivial, the *Album Amicorum* has been re-discovered by community scholars, especially historians, in recent years. Universities and fraternities in particular have begun to appreciate the unique perspective *Stammbücher* offer on the history of their institutions. In 2004 the University of Göttingen Library even chose the *Stammbuch* of one Carsten Miesegeaes (1767–1846) from Bremen as its “Book of the Year” <<http://www.sub.uni-goettingen.de/archiv/hsd/buch/0504/index.html>>. Local museums—for example, the one in Herne <<http://www2.herne.de/kultur/poesie.html>>—have featured *Stammbücher* as unique documents of community history, culture, and self-presentation. The *Stammbücher* in the MKI collection bring a unique perspective, another piece in the puzzle that was the German-American experience. Additional images from the collection can be viewed on the MKI Web site.



Stammbuch watercolor by Caspar Quambusch, 1830.

Upcoming Events

Lecture

Tuesday, April 10, Prof. Dr. Jan Wirrer, Universität Bielefeld
“Plattdüütsch snacken—Low German, Past and Present”

7 p.m. at the Memorial Union, Madison

MKI at the Society for German-American Studies Symposium

Presentations of MKI staff and UW–Madison German Department members
 at the SGAS Symposium in Lawrence, Kansas in April:

Friday, April 27, 2:00 p.m.—Cora Lee Kluge, “The Pre-Kansas Background of Rosie Ise.”

Friday, April 27, 3:45 p.m.—Joseph Salmons, “‘Good Old Immigrants of Yesteryear’ Who Did Not
 Learn English: Evidence from Germans in Wisconsin.”

Saturday, April 28, 3:30 p.m.—Cora Lee Kluge & Kevin Kurdylo, “Documenting German
 Immigration to the American Midwest: Resources from the Max Kade Institute.”

Friends of the Max Kade Institute 2007 Annual Meeting

When: Saturday, May 12, 2007
Where: Chalet Landhaus, 801 Hwy 69,
 New Glarus, WI

Directions: Call 608-527-5234

7:00 – 7:15 Presentation by New Glarus Swiss
 Cultural Center

7:15 – 8:00 Presentation by Duane Freitag on
 “Swiss Immigration to Green County, WI”

Program

2:30 – 3:30 Guided tour of Swiss Historical
 Village Museum (\$7)
 3:30 – 4:00 Break
 4:00 – 5:00 Friends Annual Meeting at the
 Chalet Landhaus
 5:00 – 5:10 Meeting of Friends Board of
 Directors (election of officers)
 5:00 – 6:00 Puempe’s Old Tavern
 6:00 – 7:00 Dinner at Chalet Landhaus (\$25)

Cost: \$7 Tour / \$25 dinner

Dinner: Swiss-style platter or Vegetarian (Swiss
 Cheese Pie)

Registration: Required by April 27th deadline

Send check to:

Friends of the MKI
 901 University Bay Drive
 Madison, WI 53705

Bring a friend, make a Friend!

Dinner purchase includes free 2007 Friends of MKI membership for new Friends.

**For additional information, or if you are interested in carpooling from Madison or Milwaukee,
 please contact the MKI at (608) 262-7546.**

This Newsletter is a publication of the Friends of the Max Kade Institute, who support the work of the
 MKI and help promote interest in our communities’ German-American heritage.
 Please consider becoming a member of the Friends to help with this important work.

Theodor Kirchhoff and the German Scandal of the American West: Hurdy-Gurdy Dancing Girls from the Rhine by Cora Lee Kluge, MKI Director

It was the early days of the opening up of the Wild West, the 1850s and 1860s, and gold had been discovered. Many eager prospectors set out for California, the Oregon Territory, or British Columbia further to the north, hoping to find their fortunes. What they found was harsh living conditions and loneliness, far away from the society they had known, their friends, and above all—women.

Dance halls and saloons were opened in the mining communities, advertising that Hurdy-

Gurdy girls would be there for the miners' entertainment. Most of these women were from the "middle Rhine," from the Duchy of Nassau and the Darmstadt area. Questions about the circumstances under which they had come to America and what their role was in the West were hotly debated in German lands.

Reports about San Francisco protests against the Hurdy-Gurdy business made their way to Europe, and *Die Gartenlaube*, a popular and widely read German illustrated magazine, published a two-part article in 1864 that suggested certain German lands

were tolerating the sale of citizens into slavery or—in this case—into lives of prostitution. In response, the Nassau police denied this, stating that a law passed in 1862 had outlawed such things.

One of the readers of *Die Gartenlaube* was Theodor Kirchhoff, a native of Holstein, who had come to the U.S. in 1851 in the aftermath of the Revolution of 1848 and had lived in many parts of the country: along the entire Mississippi River from Minnesota to Daven-



The Hurdy-Gurdies, Dutch-German Dancing Girls at Barkerville.
(Photograph by Charles Gentile, 1865.)
Special Collections, British Columbia Archives, Image G-00817.

port, St. Louis, and New Orleans, in Texas, and, beginning in 1863 or 1864, in San Francisco and then Dalles, in the Oregon Territory. Kirchhoff sent *Die Gartenlaube* his eye-witness contribution to the discussion, which appeared in 1865. His account, which attracted a good deal of attention, essentially left the truth of the matter beyond a doubt. For modern readers it presents a unique picture of this often glamorized era of the American West.

The following is part of Kirchhoff's report. An English-language introduction to Theodor Kirch-

Enter “The Painted Forest” in Valton, Wisconsin, and Enter Another World

by Kevin Kurdylo, MKI Librarian

On a hillside in the small community of Valton, Wisconsin, nestled in the northwest corner of Sauk County, sits an unpretentious white frame building—Modern Woodmen of America [MWA] Camp 6190, completed in 1899 to serve as a fraternal lodge and local meeting hall. Within the 60 x 24 foot lodge is an open room with a tall arched ceiling and stage, and it is here where one may see “The Painted Forest,” a creative and captivating mural produced by itinerant German-born painter Ernst Hüpeden.

Ernst Hüpeden (other variations of his name include Ernest Hupenden and Ernest Hueppenden) was a German immigrant who had traveled throughout southern Wisconsin, often exchanging his services for lodging and meals. Reportedly an alcoholic, Hüpeden would offer to paint bottles in exchange for the contents therein. Much of his history is anecdotal: it is believed that he studied in German universities, had a wife and son in Germany, and worked as a bank teller until the day when a large sum of money disappeared. Hüpeden was accused of embezzlement, found guilty, and imprisoned for eight years, during which time he taught himself to paint. After a dying man confessed to the crime, Hüpeden was freed, and he then abandoned his family for America, arriving in New York City from Hamburg, Germany in 1878. Little is known of his activities for the next twenty years, although he apparently told people he had been in Chicago at some time prior to his arrival in Valton. Some believed he had relatives in southwestern Wis-

consin, although this has never been proven. He journeyed on foot, and is known to have painted in Platteville, Baraboo, La Farge, Hillsboro, Valley, Cazenovia, and West Lima—in addition to Valton—but most of his other works have been lost or destroyed.

According to some accounts (and the details differ among various tales), it was the spring of 1898, as construction on Camp 6190 was nearing completion, that Hüpeden first walked into Valton, looking for work. Having some knowledge of his reputation as an excellent painter, the camp found-

ers commissioned Hüpeden to decorate the stage curtain in exchange for room and board—including hard liquor—at the local hotel. Although Valton was a “dry” town, the artist was somehow supplied with all the alcohol he could consume.

Upon the curtain Hüpeden graphically illustrated the tumultuous sea battle off the coast of Ma-



Tall trees reach for the ceiling in *The Painted Forest*.
Photo courtesy of Julie VonDerVellen.

nila—in which Commodore Dewey defeated the Spanish Navy in the Spanish-American War—a battle that had occurred in the months just prior to his arrival, and in which many Modern Woodmen apparently lost their lives. (It is also the battle in which German-born Franz Itrich, then serving aboard the USS *Petrel*, became the first American to earn the Medal of Honor.) It is unknown if the idea for painting this historic event came from the artist or from the Woodmen, but the founders were so pleased with Hüpeden’s dramatic scene that they hired him to paint the interior walls of the

camp hall with scenes depicting Modern Woodmen's initiation rites, fraternal activities, and shared ideals.

Hüpeden painted erratically, disappearing from time to time under the influence of whiskey, only to return days or weeks later, with a hangover, to continue his work. By November or December of 1899 the work was finished, and what a work! Within the lodge, Hüpeden had covered every square inch of wall space—including the arched ceilings, window frames, wainscoting, and even curtains—with a spectacular panoramic mural, vividly portraying the numerous functions and activities of the order.

Hüpeden interpreted these rituals in his own imagination, setting them amid visionary forest landscapes that provide the site its name. There are harrowing scenes symbolizing isolation and death, with contrastingly peaceful scenes of domestic life and fraternal fellowship. In one area the artist painted a vision of Valton as he imagined it would look 100 years in the future—in 1999: a bustling city complete with a tavern and with meticulously painted liquor bottles in the windows of the General Store. In another scene a widow receives her beneficiary check for \$2,000 from the MWA bank—the MWA offers life insurance benefits to its members. Tall trees stretch upward onto the arched ceiling, reaching for the blue sky and white clouds. At one time the ceiling was covered with celestial scenes: a night sky with stars and a moon, storm clouds with lightning bolts, and sunset-tinted clouds. However, the ceiling was damaged by a leaking roof, and this part of Hüpeden's original work is lost.

After completing this mural, Hüpeden left Valton to continue his habit of walking and painting, until he was found frozen to death in 1911 in a snow bank near Hillsboro, Wisconsin—apparently intoxicated.

But Hüpeden's work endures, providing us with a rare view of rural Midwestern life in the 1890s. It can be said that stepping into the Woodmen's lodge is like stepping back in time.

The hall was purchased in the 1960s by local residents Ronald and Delores Nash, who named it "The Painted Forest." The couple maintained the building and allowed the community to use it for social and political functions. The building was saved from inappropriate alterations and destruction several times, until the Kohler Foundation purchased it in 1980 and began a major expert restoration. In October 2004, the site was given to Edgewood College of Madison. The College, committed to maintaining the site's role to the education of students, artists, researchers, and other visitors, has since opened an Art Studio and Study Center in Valton. For more information, especially concerning visits to "The Painted Forest," please contact Robert Tarrell, Chairperson of the Painted Forest Committee, at (608)



Initiation scene in which a new MWA recruit is made to "ride the goat."

Photo courtesy of Julie VonDerVellen.

663-4861 or rtarrell@edgewood.edu.

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hoff and his work, together with this entire text and others, in the German original, is included in our forthcoming anthology: *Other Witnesses: An Anthology of Literature of the German Americans, 1850 to 1914*, edited by Cora Lee Kluge (Madison, WI: MKI, 2007).

. . . from Kirchhoff's report (*Die Gartenlaube* 20 [1865]: 311–313).

The headquarters and central depot of all Hurdy Gurdies is in San Francisco, where occasionally new recruits are imported directly “from the Rhine” by unprincipled traffickers in human beings.

These merchants of souls show young, life-loving girls along the Father Rhine extremely seductive pictures of the fancy-free life and the treasures that can easily be earned in the magnificent gold country on the Pacific in order to encourage them to emigrate. The result of the negotiation is that they provide the ensnared girls with free transportation to San Francisco; and these, in return, obligate themselves by contract to pay back the advanced travel money after their arrival on the golden shores, i.e., to *dance off their debt*. These contracts, to be sure, are not valid in Germany or in America, but they are nevertheless fulfilled without exception by the girls, who find themselves completely abandoned in the foreign country. . . .

One need only to step into such a Hurdy-Gurdy saloon and one will understand that it does credit to the national pride of other peoples not to dispute the Germans' top rank in this business. Half-tipsy, crude gold-diggers, partly in shirtsleeves and with their hats on their heads, with loaded revolvers and long knives in their belts, and their pants mostly stuck into their boots, drag the girls around in a dance and occasionally push them at

each other, drink poisoned drinks with them, engage in dirty talk, and allow themselves all kinds of rough freedoms and impertinences, for which they, to be sure, do pay—pay with shiny gold! Golden treasures roll in this way into the laps of the Hurdies—and it goes without saying mainly for the benefit of the merchants of souls and the saloon keepers.

On this whole coast one will find scarcely a mining town—a *mining camp*—where there are not one or two, often three to four such Hurdy-Gurdy houses—here in Dalles currently three—which the author of this truthful description not only knows from hearsay, but has seen with his own eyes, since

he has gotten around quite far not only in Oregon, but also in California and Nevada. How many such depraved girls are on this coast is hard to ascertain; but the police authorities in Nassau and Hesse would very probably open their eyes wide with amazement if they were to hear the naked truth!

The only possibility of controlling this Hurdy-Gurdy enterprise that scandalizes the German name, is to put a stop to new supplies of girls coming from Germany. No one can help the girls who—unfortunately—are already here. People have repeatedly attempted to find them employment as house maids with a monthly wage of

30 to 40 dollars. But the wild life has so very much become second nature to them that they flatly reject all such offers. . . .

Here in golden Oregon a merchant of souls who attempted to export American girls as dancing merchandise and thus offend the national honor would simply be lynched, tarred and feathered, shot to death, stabbed to death, hanged, beaten to death—whatever. These reliable means are admittedly not to be recommended for Germany, but there must nevertheless be others that would render such scoundrels unharmed. . . .



Theodor Kirchhoff
(1828-1899)

New Glarus was administered by the Emigration Society of the Canton of Glarus for the first ten years of its existence, and thus in its early years it remained a more closed ethnic community. Although Monroe was a Yankee community, many of the Swiss migrated there because of job opportunities or chose to retire there. Therefore the Swiss left a lasting mark on the city.

Today Green County continues a strong relationship with Switzerland, and group tours often head to the homeland. Likewise, Swiss tourists are often among the visitors to the Historical Village at New Glarus. The new Swiss Center of North America is based in New Glarus, and Christian Kunzle was recently named its director. A symbol of the ongoing relationship with the Swiss homeland is *Fridolin's Stab*, a sculpture of St. Fridolin's walking stick placed prominently at the Highway 69 entrance to New Glarus' central business district. Fridolin is the patron saint of Canton Glarus and appears on its flag. The sculpture was a 1995 gift from friends in Canton Glarus to mark the sesquicentennial of the founding of New Glarus.

The county's tourism business is enhanced by the popular Sugar River bicycle trail and the soon-to-be opened Badger State bicycle trail from Madison to the Illinois State line. The eastern end of the multi-use, 47-mile Cheese Country Trail is at Monroe. The Green County Courthouse, on the square in Monroe, is a classic 1891 Romanesque gem. And while cheese can be purchased at some of the factories that still dot the countryside, many visitors nowadays enjoy a tasty cheese sandwich at local bars, including the notable Baumgartners on the courthouse square. Visitor information and ethnic links can be found online at <www.greencounty.org>.

Duane Freitag, a retired reporter and editor for the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel, is secretary of the New Glarus Historical Society and a board member of the Swiss Center of North America.

Mr. Freitag will be speaking at this year's MKI Annual Dinner on May 12th (see page 9 for further details).

had taken a different stance, "he would have been relegated to the status of outsider or heretic from the 'thought collective' to which he belonged as a mid-19th century naturalist" (170). This reviewer is not convinced. After all, there were many highly educated people at that time who firmly insisted on the equality of all races.

Part III consists of Lesquereux's letters themselves in H. Dwight Page's elegant English translation. Written between 1849 and 1853 and originally published in the *Revue Suisse*, then in 1853 in book form, the ca. 280 pages of text, divided into 27 sections (probably originally 27 separate "letters"), were intended for potential immigrants to the U.S. The letters are thus an example of emigration literature—travelers' writings about their experiences in the New World. What makes these letters valuable is above all Lesquereux's keen ability to observe and describe. His topics include the trip to America itself, the people (Americans, "savages," slaves), cities, religion, customs, the geology of various areas, crops, education, penitentiaries, newspapers, and so on.

One finds here some of the same information presented by other writers, but also much that looks fresh and new. Lesquereux is a good storyteller, adept at illustrating his ideas, occasionally with a humorous anecdote. For example, pointing to the Yankee's supposed "energy and avarice," he tells the following story. A man was shot and robbed of his money by an innkeeper, who left him for dead. Returning to the inn in considerable pain, the victim identified the innkeeper in a loud voice, stating "There is the man who killed me this morning; he has two thousand dollars of my money!" Then he collapsed and died. The innkeeper meanwhile, overwhelmed by the evidence, confessed his crime.

This volume is supplemented with appendices, illustrations, and indices. It can be read as literature, as biography, or as documentation of America in the mid-nineteenth century. I highly recommend it as an excellent resource; and at the same time it is a text that can be read for enjoyment.

Lecture Report: How Fast Did German Immigrants Learn English?

by Kevin Kurdylo, MKI Librarian

In a unique presentation that revealed how historical research can provide evidence concerning a present-day issue, Miranda Wilkerson and Joseph Salmons spoke to a packed room March 15th on the topic “Debunking a Myth: How Fast Did German Immigrants Learn English & Why Does It Matter Today?” They presented their findings from the 1910 U.S. census (the first to record whether residents could speak English), as well as evidence from Wisconsin court records, articles in the state’s German-language newspapers, and portrayals in German-language literature from around the same period. Their results show that in many Wisconsin communities there were substantial numbers of monolingual speakers of German well into the 20th century, often decades after immigration to those locations had ceased.

Wilkerson shows that in some locations—such as Hustisford in Dodge County; Schleswig in Manitowoc County; and Hamburg in Marathon County—over 20 percent of the residents reported that they spoke no English. In Germantown (Washington County), 18 percent of the residents reported themselves as monolingual speakers of German, and 43 percent of these were born in the U.S.! Indeed, even some children of Wisconsin-born parents remained monolingual.

Looking at self-reported occupations, Wilkerson found that monolingual German speakers in Wisconsin were not just potentially isolated farmers, but instead practiced a wide range of occupations that involved contact with the public, such as tailors, cobblers, painters, carpenters, blacksmiths, cheese makers, retail merchants, and yard foremen.

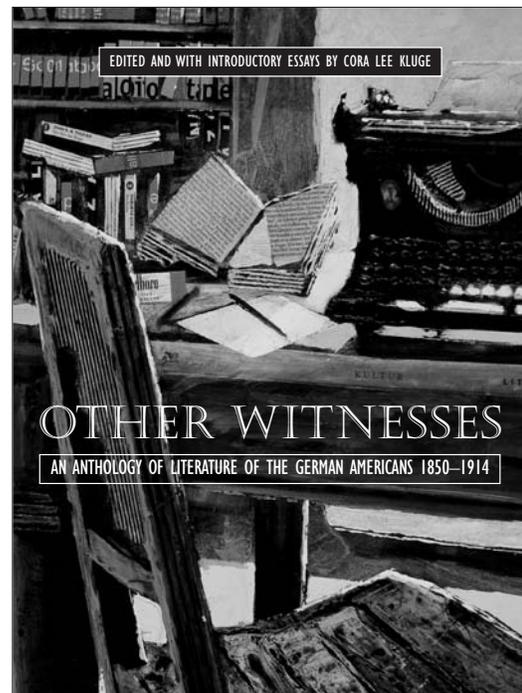
The picture formed by this evidence is one of a thriving existence of German immigrants in which the English language often played a minor role. Salmons stressed that today’s inflamed rhetoric concerning current immigrants and their “refusal to learn English, unlike the good old immigrants of yesteryear” is misinformed, inaccurate, and misleading. The myth that earlier immigrants quickly

mastered English needs to be tempered by evidence that shows otherwise, and claims that current-day immigrants are not learning English rapidly enough should also be questioned and subjected to more rigorous study.

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Mark Loudon and other MKI staff members). When we do well, projects that start in our dreams quickly move from there to the list of projects we are committed to. And then we do the work!

Finally, we also have a little list of events that will be held or projects that will be completed in the very near future. We are announcing—again—the Annual Meeting and Dinner of the Friends of the Max Kade



Institute, to be held in New Glarus on May 12. Please don’t forget, as we want to see you all—all our Friends—again. Send in your reservations early! Then comes the appearance of our next publication: *Other Witnesses: An Anthology of Literature of the German Americans, 1850 to 1914*, edited by Cora Lee Kluge, which is due out in June. Your appetite for this volume may be whetted a little by the sample piece on the Hurdy Gurdies that appears on page 10 of this Newsletter. After that comes the summer, and July’s German Fest! We will announce this again in the summer Newsletter. Meanwhile: stay in touch!
—Cora Lee

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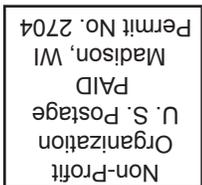
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