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Max Kade Institute Friends Newsletter

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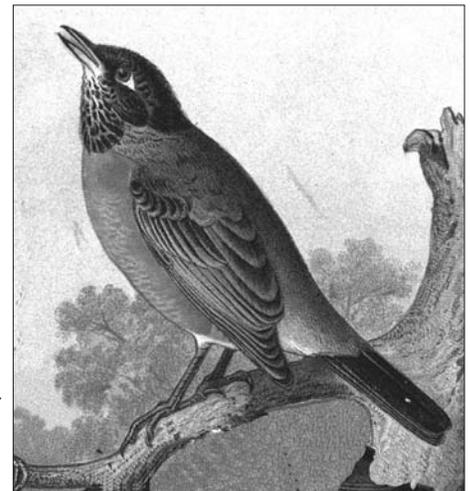
Collection Feature

Henry Nehrling's *North American Birds of Song and Beauty*

by Kevin Kurdylo, MKI Librarian

In *Land without Nightingales: Music in the Making of German-America* (Madison, Wis.: Max Kade Institute, 2002), one learns that some sophisticated immigrants from

nineteenth-century German-speaking Europe invoked the metaphor *Land ohne Nachtigall* to express their dismay at the lack of arts and culture in the United States. For them, the lovely song of the nightingale represented the myriad elements necessary to comfort the soul of a civilized person. But there were other immigrants who defended their new *Heimat*, many expressing themselves through poetry to celebrate the natural and man-made pleasures evident in America. Henry Nehrling (1853–1929), an internationally renowned ornithologist and horticulturist, delighted in the wonder and elegance of the birds and plants found on our continent, and in 1891 he published *Die nord-amerikanische Vogelwelt* with George Brumder in Milwaukee (and published in English in two volumes in 1893 and 1896, also with Brumder). Born to German parents in the town of Herman, near Howard's Grove, Sheboygan County, Wisconsin, Nehrling was a naturalist with a poetic heart, and *Vogelwelt* allowed him to sing the praises of America and its birds. He begins his book with a poem by Wilhelm Müller, "Das Lied der neuen Welt," which addresses an individual not content with what America has to offer. Here is a portion of that poem, whose last stanza below provides the response:



Die Wanderdrossel. Robin.
(*Merula migratoria*)

*Ihr sagt, es mangle Blumenschein/
Dem Ährenfeld im Westen;/
Und Düfte sanken nicht im Hain/
Von blütenschweren Ästen./*

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Director's Corner

by Cora Lee Kluge, MKI Director

Greetings, Friends and Readers!

Successful summer events included MKI's joint participation with the Museum of Wisconsin Art at Milwaukee's German Fest and Kevin's participation in the Beaver Dam German Fest; a visit from guest scholar Nicole Konopka from the University of Rostock, who spent six weeks at the MKI Archives to study immigrants from Mecklenburg; and various MKI outreach presentations for genealogical societies, educators, and students. We are also happy to announce that our 2007 publication, *Other Witnesses: An Anthology of Literature of the German Americans, 1850 to 1914* (ed. Cora Lee Kluge), appeared in June.

Fall at the Keystone House is beautiful—but we are almost too busy to notice. We will present the MKI's 2006 publication *Wisconsin German Land and Life* (ed. Heike Bungert, Cora Lee Kluge, and Robert C. Ostergren) at the Wisconsin Book Festival on October 10-14; there are a number of upcoming lectures; and the "Wisconsin Englishes" outreach series has scheduled events in Wausau (October 17) and in Stevens Point (November 13).

Meanwhile, our normal work proceeds. Kevin hopes to finish the long-term project to digitize

recordings for the *Dictionary of American Regional English* by the end of the year—despite problems with our back-up disk drive. And Mark Loudon, this year's Resident Director of the Academic Year in Freiburg, is fully involved in the project "German Words/American Voices," supported by the German Consulate in Chicago, which will produce a CD of sound clips with an accompanying brochure. A new member of our staff is Adam Woodis, a graduate student in the German Department, who joins us as a PA for the current academic year to work on the German Theater Scripts project.

All of this is enough to make our heads spin. But we nevertheless hope to see you again before very long. Please visit our Web site frequently (<mki.wisc.edu>) for information about upcoming events, and stop by whenever you can.

Best wishes!

—Cora Lee

Notes from the Board

by Greg Smith, Treasurer

"Schoene Stueck" (Nice play) say my Schafskopf tablemates, all too seldom to me. Playing sheephead for money is usually a fairly cheap lesson, which becomes less expensive as I learn from the men at the table. I am forty years junior to the senior. Some of them grew up speaking German in Kiel, WI, some hearing it from locals in Jefferson or Waterloo.

Through stories told by my card-playing companions, who recall stories told by others as much as forty years *their* senior, the late nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries come alive. I should add that it brings the situation of German Americans during that time to life as well.

Stories of the Hurdy-Gurdy girls and the breweries of Dodge County contrast with information about the work of architect Adolf Cluss and the literary criticism of Karl Knortz. Such things are shared around the table of the *Friends Newsletter*. Schoene Stueck.

But the publication of these articles is not all that the Friends organization can do to draw attention to the work at the Keystone House. Just as the mission of the University is to reach out to the borders of the

Max Kade Institute

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

Nehrling continued from page 1

*Ihr klagt, der Wald sei liederarm/ Und stünd' in
totem Schweigen;/ Es zwitsch're nicht der Vögel
Schwarm/ Auf maiengrünen Zweigen.*

...

*Und wenn die Nachtigall nicht klagt/ Im Epheu
alter Festen,/ Der Robin singt, sobald es tagt,/
Ein Lied dem weiten Westen.*

You say that in the west no flowers/ Shine
among the fields of corn;/ And no fragrances
descend in the grove/ From blossom-heavy
branches.

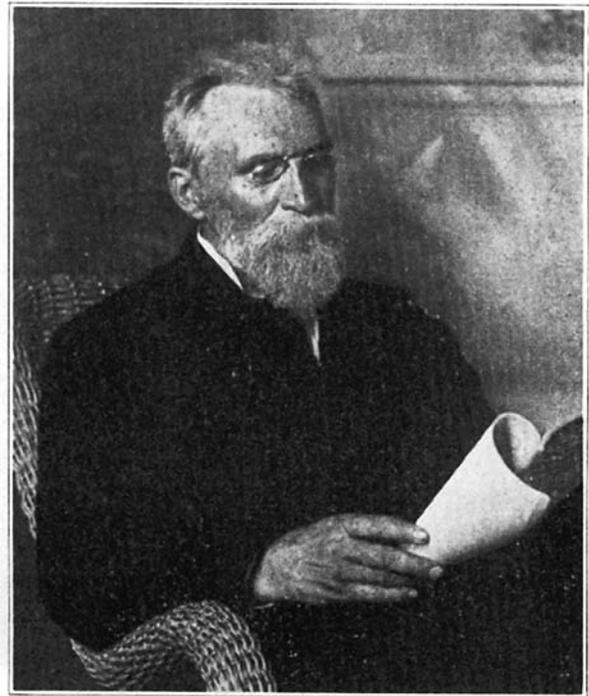
You complain the forest is bereft of song/ And
stands in deathly silence;/ No flocks of birds
twitter/ Upon May-green branches.

...

And if the nightingale does not sing/ Amidst the
ivy of old castles,/ The robin sings at the break
of dawn/ A song to the distant west.

Nehrling's work reveals the enthusiasm of this German American for the beauty of his American homeland. His Foreword contains a great deal of information about himself and his work, and even the descriptions of individual birds reveal a very personal tone, as we shall see.

He begins his Foreword: "Angeregt durch die idyllische, damals noch halb wilde Umgebung meines Geburtsortes, empfand ich schon in meinen Jugendtagen eine innige Liebe zu den Schönheiten der Natur, und besonders zog mich die Vogelwelt mächtig an." (Stimulated by the idyllic—and at that time still half-wild—surroundings of my place of birth, I felt in my youth a passionate love for the beauties of nature, and the feathered world especially held a powerful attraction for me.) He describes how the works of the great ornithological masters such as



Henry Nehrling

Wilson, Audubon, and Nuttall were largely unknown to him as a boy, and later the high cost of their books kept them beyond his reach, so that he made do with small manuals that at least taught him the names of the birds he observed. At one point, "Brehms *Leben der Vögel* erschloss mir die ganze Poesie der Vogelwelt. Mit welchem Entzücken wurden diese Schilderungen gelesen und wiedergelesen!" ([Alfred] Brehm's *Bird-Life* opened to me the full poetry of the world of birds. With what delight were these descriptions read and read again!)

Nehrling relates that, beginning in 1875, he began writing about birds and working with George Köppel, the editor-in-chief of Brumder's German-language newspaper, *Germania*. In 1877 Nehrling had the pleasure of adding *A History of North American Birds* by Baird, Brewer, and Ridgway to his library, a gift from his publisher, Brumder;

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The Friends of the Max Kade Institute Board of Directors

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and not long after that he was able to purchase the works of Wilson and Audubon. He writes that “Es litt mich bald nicht mehr im Norden. Die glühenden Schilderungen Audubons entfachten eine sich immer mehr steigende Sehnsucht nach dem Süden.” (Soon I could not bear to remain in the North. Audubon’s glowing descriptions inflamed within me an ever increasing longing for the South.”) While this bird-inspired passion may be one of the reasons for Nehrling’s move, M. Wegener writes in “Short Biographies of Some Outstanding Teachers of the Missouri Synod” (*Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly*, vol. 20, no. 4, Jan. 1948) that “After teaching in Chicago for some time, [Nehrling] was compelled by poor health to go South.” In 1879 Nehrling went to Texas, and later to southwestern Missouri, spending more than eight years in the south. In 1882 he published in the *Bulletin of the Nuttall Ornithological Club*, over the course of three issues, a “List of Birds Observed at Houston, Harris Co., Texas and Vicinity and in the Counties Montgomery, Galveston and Ford Bend.” Other travels took him throughout the South, but wherever he went he was drawn to birds. He came to believe that one could only really understand a bird if one also were familiar with the trees, flowers, seasons, climate, and other conditions of the environment in which it lives, and by 1880 had decided to write a popular work on the birds of North America.



Der Schildammer. Black-throated Bunting.
(*Spiza americana Bonaparte*)

Nehrling attracted a great deal of interest among prominent German-Americans. In 1885 the “Verein deutscher Journalisten und Schriftsteller” (Society of German Journalists and Writers) in Milwaukee passed a resolution and collected signatures to advocate the publication of his work. Among supporters from the *Verein* were the editor Köppen; the famous poet Konrad Krez; and the American General Consul in Vienna, Julius Goldschmidt. Both Krez and Hermann Ruhland in Chicago wrote poems to drum up financial assistance in the form of subscriptions, and Krez further came to Nehrling’s aid in 1887 by appointing him deputy customs collector of the port of Milwaukee. At first, apparently, this position left Nehrling enough free time to read and continue to work on his book! In his Foreword, Nehrling also thanks ornithologists, poets, and writers in both America and Germany for their encouragement and assistance, including such well-known individuals as Theodor Kirchhoff in San Francisco (see both this issue and the Spring 2007 issue of the *Friends Newsletter* for articles by and about Kirchhoff) and Heinrich Rattermann in Cincinnati. In 1904, Rattermann published *Nord-amerikanische Vögel in Liedern: Für Familien- und Schulgebrauch*, a book of poetry celebrating America’s birds that he dedicated to Heinrich Nehrling.

By 1889 Nehrling had nearly finished his book, but his customs job was demanding more of his energies and illness frequently hindered him. Two friends from childhood, Fräulein Hedwig and Fräulein Else Schlichting, prepared a large part of the manuscript for printing, constructed the index (with English, German, and Latin scientific names), and read a portion of the corrections. For this work, and for their long-standing friendship, Nehrling dedicated *Vogelwelt* to them.

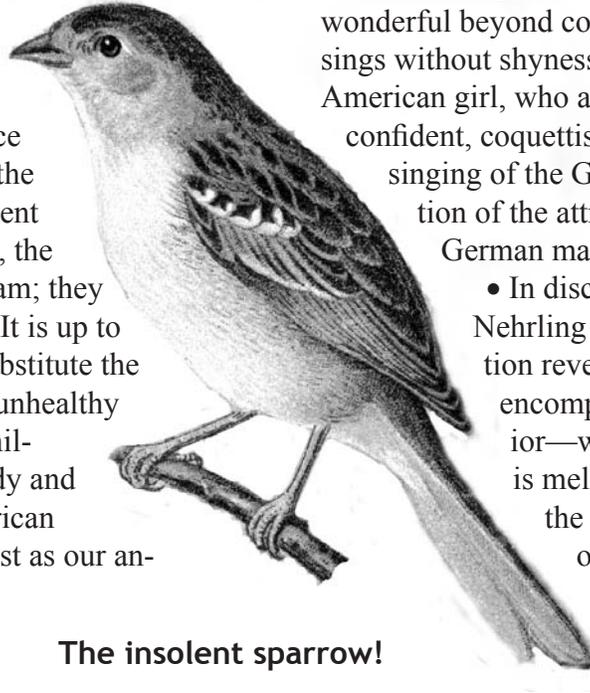
Nehrling writes that his work is “intended for everyone who appreciates and is inspired by the beauty and ideals of our American homeland.” Realizing how much of what he had been taught in school proved to be “Gedächtniskram und Ballast” (odds and ends of memory and unnecessary padding) and how little care goes into teaching children about America’s natural beauty, he desires that his book should find its way into the hands of

parents, teachers, and especially children—although at 638 pages and with a size of 12 inches by 9 inches, such a big book as *Vogelwelt* would require some large hands! Nehrling quotes at length from an article by a Frau Anna in the *Sonntagsblatt der New Yorker Staatszeitung* who states that while Germans “honor their little patch of [European] homeland above all else, . . . American youth know no love of nature. And this American homeland certainly does not lack for beauty as possessed by the native German soil. The sun also shines here upon waving fields and greening forests, shimmering water and blooming meadows. But our children, they have no appreciation for the divine presence of nature; they saunter through the woods and do not hear its eloquent rustling, the delightful birdsong, the mysterious murmurs of the stream; they see but nevertheless are blind.” It is up to the parents, she continues, to substitute the joys of nature for this nervous, unhealthy bustling about, and then “our children will be strengthened in body and spirit, each small patch of American earth becoming dear to them, just as our ancestors long ago grew to love our German homeland.” It is to help with this that Nehrling wrote his book, and he hopes that it—with the help of color illustrations by Robert Ridgway, A. Goering, and Gustav Mützel—will bring many new admirers to the wonders of the world of birds.

After the Foreword comes the Introduction, which touches upon such topics as Birds in General, Distribution, Colorful Birds, Outstanding Singers, Nestbuilding and Eggs, Bird Personalities, Daily Life, Migration, Humans and Birds, Acclimatization Attempts with Foreign Birds, Enemies of Birds, and Bird Shelters. From this wealth of information, only a few highlights can be mentioned here:

- Here is Nehrling lyrically describing spring months while living on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico: “When the grandly blooming magnolia unfolds its wax-white, exquisitely fragrant blossoms there, when tea roses, gardenias, night jasmine . . . and a

host of other flowers fill the night air with intoxicating aromas, then one wishes to be a poet, so that one could be invested with the entire splendor of words. . . . Cool and refreshing blows the air from the nearby Gulf. A mysterious stillness spreads over nature. But soon we become aware of incomparably charming notes from all around.” The song of “the celebrated Philomel of the South, the mockingbird,” fills the air, and this brings to mind words written by his friend Adolf Meinecke in a letter from the highlands of Georgia: “The singing of the mockingbird is wonderful beyond compare. It becomes evident she sings without shyness. She is like the independent American girl, who appears in dazzling beauty, self-confident, coquettish, brazen. By comparison, the singing of the German nightingale is a reflection of the attractive, modest, tender-hearted German maiden.”



The insolent sparrow!

- In discussing the character of birds, Nehrling indicates that close observation reveals how each bird is different, encompassing the gamut of behavior—where one is cheerful, another is melancholy; this kind is social and the other solitary; here one is curious and the other withdrawn; and so on. The common sparrow, he says, is the very image of insolence, craftiness, and rowdiness—a very

evocative description!

- Elaborating upon the poem by Müller with which he begins his book, Nehrling comments that “the German, chiefly a sentimentalist, was ever aware that there are no suitable substitutions here for the birds of his homeland. With longing he thinks back to those times when the nightingale’s song permeated the grove, the rejoicing trill of the lark rang down from the blue heaven, and the fluting tones of the blackbird, the love song of the blackcap, and the call of the chaffinch resounded from mountain and valley. This love for the old homeland and for the songbirds that brightened one’s younger days motivated the founding of so-called acclimatization societies [*Einbürgerungsvereine*] in several locales.” Despite objections raised by several prominent

Respected Pioneer Henry Herzog Tells of Early Days in Sheboygan County, Wisconsin

From *The Sheboygan Press*, January 18, 1918

The following is a brief account of the early days in Sheboygan County as narrated by Henry Herzog, 1914 N. 12th Street, who with his wife had recently celebrated their golden wedding anniversary:

I came to America with my parents when I was seven years old, leaving Hamburg, Germany, in the spring of 1852. There were several people of my native town in Saxony on the same ship in which we crossed the Atlantic. The voyage was one that will be remembered as one of the most eventful occasions of my life. After passing the British Isles our ship, a sailing boat, ran into a bad storm, and the cook was washed overboard. For two days we fed the crew and many passengers from our own private larder until an improvised fireplace could be constructed of a mortar made of flour and water. We were driven before the storm for two weeks, and expected at any moment to go down.

Arriving at Quebec we came to Niagara Falls by train, and from thence to Buffalo in street cars drawn by mules. At Buffalo we again took to the boats, coming through the lakes to Sheboygan.

When we landed here practically everything was a wilderness. There were two stores, a lodging house, and five or six log cabins. With my parents we went to a settler about five miles north of Sheboygan where we stayed for a week. I purchased sixty-two acres of land along what is now the Lake Shore Drive. During that time Sheboygan County exported much wheat.

The dense forests were filled with game. Deer were plentiful and squirrels were to be had by the hundreds. Scores of sailing ships were always coming and going from the piers. It was no uncommon sight to see forty or fifty ships on the lake just in front of our place preceding a storm. The harbor offered ample protection from the winds.

Indian villages were numerous. They were of

the Chippewa and Menomonee tribes and lived peaceably and happy among the white settlers. Their wigwams were made of bark and in some cases, especially during the winter, were covered with hides and furs. The Indians of those days didn't use firearms, but relied entirely on their flint pointed arrows, with which they were excellent marksmen. Shooting matches were often held, in which someone would place a penny upright on the stump of a tree and the arrow that knocked it off won the coin. Many remarkable shots from long ranges were often made. At twenty paces the Indian seldom missed the mark. Even today flint arrow heads are found on farms near here.

Indian dances were often held in our village, the ceremony not infrequently taking place in the lot adjoining the store. The Indians—men, women, and children—would all gather in a large circle and dance to the monotonous beat of the tom tom. Young braves, painted in their gayest color and decked with flowing streams of feathers, presented a truly impressive sight. Their ponies were also gotten up with a large assortment of colored feathers and leather strips.

The Indian of the days of the early settler in this district was not the warlike savage of the present day movie. They were quiet and unobtrusive. We never had any trouble with them in this region. There were always quite a number of them in the village, especially in the spring when they brought in their maple sugar for trade. They raised their own corn and potatoes, shot their own game and lived apart by themselves. They often visited us and many times brought game and fish. Their numbers, however, gradually dwindled away as their forest hunting ground went before the white man's ax.

During the first few years we were here, we used very little actual money. What we wanted we paid for in cord wood or shingles. Cord wood dur-

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Luanne von Schneidemesser: A Love of Language

by Antje Petty, MKI Assistant Director

Luanne von Schneidemesser is not only a lifetime member of the Friends (together with her husband Mike), but she also works closely with the Max Kade Institute on various undertakings, most recently the “Wisconsin Englishes Project.” (For more information, see: <http://csumc.wisc.edu/wep/>). Luanne received her Ph.D. in German from UW-Madison, and now is senior editor of the *Dictionary of American Regional English*, housed on the campus of UW-Madison. *DARE* is a unique reference tool that documents the varieties of English that are *not* found everywhere in the United States—words, pronunciations, and phrases that vary from one region to another, that are learned at home rather than at school, and that tend to be part of the nation’s oral rather than its written culture. *DARE*’s Web site may be viewed at: <http://polyglot.lss.wisc.edu/dare/dare.html>.



Luanne and friend at Schloss Philippsruhe in Hanau, Germany.

Luanne loves language, especially words. She is particularly intrigued by the way words change meaning across cultures and time. At *DARE* her work includes working on entries and mapping words with German etymology. Says Luanne: “I had already studied German for over two years before I realized that *Gesundheit* does not mean ‘God bless you’.” A native of Kansas who moved to Wisconsin many years ago, she noticed that English words and phrases she used in her home state were not necessarily understood in Wisconsin. Conversely, asking for a ‘bubbler’ would get her immediate directions to the nearest water fountain in Wisconsin, but only generate empty looks in Chicago.

Another pivotal experience in Luanne’s life was a

study-abroad stay in Giessen, Germany. There she not only realized that the German she had learned in college did not help much in daily conversations, but she also noticed that the colloquial German she heard varied significantly depending on the age of the speaker. Her interest piqued, she later did work for a project led by former UW professor and MKI Director Jürgen Eichhoff. The project studied colloquial German speech, and led to Eichhoff’s publication of the *Wort-atlas der deutschen Umgangssprachen*.

Eventually “Umgangssprache” became the topic of Luanne’s dissertation. She fondly recalls the many classes she took with Smokey Seifert, UW Professor of German, an advocate of German-American studies, and a legend in the field of German dialect studies.

Considering her own experiences, it is no

surprise that Luanne is also a strong supporter of study-abroad programs and international exchanges. Her own children, Erika and Dirk, both took part in the UW’s Academic Year in Freiburg, and Dirk is now teaching English on a Fulbright in Austria. Luanne and Mike are active supporters of “Madison Friends of International Students,” a group of local residents who help international students with the transition to life in America, and they also regularly attend MKI events. “The Max Kade Institute puts on excellent program lectures that we enjoy going to,” says Luanne. “This is just one more reason why we are happy to be members of the Friends.”

ornithologists, efforts to introduce German songbirds proceeded in Cincinnati, St. Louis, Boston, and New York. Of the many birds released in these venues, Nehrling reports that only goldfinches in Boston and New York, and perhaps also larks in some places, were successfully domesticated. However, the 1889 attempt to bring German songbirds to Portland, Oregon, immediately had quite different results. There the climate is uncommonly mild, never very cold. It is similar to England, only sunnier, and storms are unheard of. A report by Mr. Pflüger, the Secretary of the "Verein zur Einführung nützlicher deutscher Singvögel in Oregon" (Society for the Introduction of Useful German Songbirds in Oregon), indicates that 300 pairs of German songbirds were imported and introduced to the area, including nightingales (*Nachtigallen*), blackcaps (*Schwarzplättchen*), blackbirds (*Schwarzamseln*), larks (*Stieglitzen*), song thrushes (*Singdrosseln*), bullfinches (*Dompfaffen*), siskins (*Zeisigen*), quail (*Wachteln*), crossbills (*Kreuzschnäbeln*), and various types of *Sylvia* (*Grasmücken*). After the birds had recovered from the long journey, they were released in different places around Portland. Attempts were made to place birds in environments that would be suitable for them: larks, for example, were set free in meadows and wheat fields. Close observation showed that while some birds remained around the city of Portland, others spread into surrounding counties. So many reproduced successfully that the European birds were found all over the state within a few years, and with the mild climate, many did not even migrate for the winter months. Pflüger writes that "in the spring of 1890 a little snow fell. One saw blackbirds flying around socially with American robins. Many of the native Americans stared in astonishment at the black birds with yellow bills, which otherwise closely resembled robins; they had never seen anything like them before. . . . One also now hears the singing of song thrushes on a daily basis. Chaffinches were observed for the first time this spring on Sunday, 15 March by Mr. F. Bickel. This gentleman is a great bird lover, and he was as happy as a young child when he saw them again. The larks are more elegantly and beautifully colored than in Germany, which may be due to diet and the mild climate." Despite this overwhelming success, it is

generally believed the nightingales died out, as few survived the long trip and none have been seen since.

- "Let's consider the daily existence of our feathered singers. No other animal knows to live as light-heartedly and cheerfully and fully as do the birds. To them the longest day doesn't last long enough, the shortest night can't end soon enough. All birds awaken early from their short slumber, while deep darkness still lies over fields and meadows. The merest gleam of light reveals the break of dawn in the far east and they are already greeting the new day with charming song."

Nehrling's love of birds is clearly revealed, and while one has no doubt that, if he were he living in Germany, he would rejoice in the feathered fauna there, we are grateful that we share in his enjoyment of the beauty to be found in America.

A few notes in conclusion: A search of Mad-Cat, the University of Wisconsin's online library catalog, reveals that a copy of *Our Native Birds of Song and Beauty*, the English translation of *Vogelwelt*, is in the Department of Special Collections at Memorial Library. A note in the record indicates this copy has the bookplate of "E. Birge" and thus probably belonged to Edward Asahel Birge of the University of Wisconsin. Among his many accomplishments and positions, Birge was professor of zoology from 1879 to 1911, dean of the College of Letters and Science from 1891 to 1918, and served as president of the university from 1918 to 1925. Birge Hall was named for him.

The Henry Nehrling Collection of manuscripts, correspondence, pamphlets, photographs, and memorabilia is held by the Department of Archives and Special Collections at Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida. Images of Nehrling, his family, and his home may also be viewed online at the Web site of Rollins College's Archive : <<http://web.rollins.edu/~bjackson/archives/nehrling.htm>>. In later years Nehrling devoted himself more to horticulture and, according to A. B. Faust's *The German Element in the United States* (New York: Arno Press, 1969, vol. 2, p. 701), his son, A. H. Nehrling, inherited his love of flowers and became Professor of Floriculture at Cornell University.

Pages from the Past continued from page 6

ing those times sold for twenty-five or fifty cents a cord. Later on we made shingles and got a better price for our products.

Our home was a log cabin, two stories high. On the first floor in the front part of the house was the general living room and kitchen. In the back part of the same house the cows and oxen were kept. We boys slept upstairs. The cracks between the logs were filled up with mud and clay. Not infrequently have I had to shake the snow off my bed before retiring. The floors were at first on bare ground, but later when a sawmill came in we were able to get boards on the floor and the cracks more effectively stopped up.

Clothing was of the crudest kind. Clean blue overalls and a bright red shirt were Sunday garments. Shoes, except those we brought from the old country, were unknown, until some time later when a shoemaker came to the village. Anything that would stay on the head was worn for a cap. Underwear was entirely unknown, its place being taken by having the overalls lined with heavy white goods. Jackets were worn over the shirts in the winter time.

Our principal social events were the gatherings of farmers at some designated place for a dance. We furnished the lunches and lights, which were tallow candles and lard burning lamps, somewhat resembling our present day lanterns. Lunch seldom consisted of more than black coffee and a piece of bread.

Passing from the early fifties, during which time the village of Sheboygan rapidly grew into a town, we come to the period of the Civil War. The Sheboygan and Fond du Lac railroad began construction on its line, the first to be built out of Sheboygan, in 1856. I worked with a grading crew of this road for some time. It was completed in 1860 and shortly after sold out to the Chicago & North-Western. In 1859 Hiram Smith started the first cooperative cheese factory in the county. He had some difficulty in disposing of his product but finally succeeded in doing so in Chicago for eight cents a pound.

A few years later Crocker & Sons started to make chairs by hand. During this period I hauled logs for the Crocker boys. Gradually Sheboygan began to

grow. A year or so later a foundry came in and other businesses found their way to the city. Needless to say Sheboygan sent a volunteer company to the Civil War.

Five or six years after its formation, the Crocker works burned out and the following year another company was formed which went into the chair making business. Five years later the Mattoon Company was formed and began the manufacture of chairs. It was from this beginning that Sheboygan has become famed as a city of chair makers. One thing gradually led to another and factories became varied and numerous. Steamships replaced the sail boat; tall brick structures have sprung up on the ground not long ago occupied by the bark wigwam; the automobile has almost eliminated the beast of burden; ponderous steam engines pull heavy loads over the same roads where our oxen dragged the timber; electric lights have forced our crude tallow candle method of lighting into oblivion. The evolution of living conditions has been almost complete within the pace of one short life time. At an equal rate of progress, what does the future hold out?

Upcoming University/MKI Lecture

Thursday, October 25, 4 p.m. , Memorial Union
 Anke Ortlepp: "German-American Women's Clubs: Constructing Women's Roles and Ethnic Identity"
 Dr. Ortlepp is a leading German historian working on German immigration to the United States and a Research Fellow at the German Historical Institute in Washington, DC. Her presentation will discuss how German-American women in Milwaukee established their own organizations to move beyond the gender roles that had restricted them, realize their potential as social agents, and make an important contribution to their ethnic community.

Supported by the University Lectures Committee; sponsored by MKI, and co-sponsored by the UW-German Department and the Women's Studies Program.

N.B.: Dr. Ortlepp will also be the guest speaker at the 156th annual Stiftungsfest on October 28, 2007, at the Free Congregation (Freie Gemeinde) of Sauk County, Wisconsin.

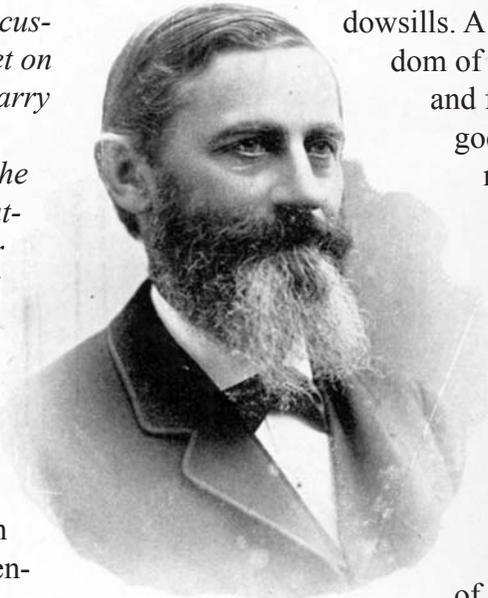
A Court Scene in Texas, by Theodor Kirchhoff

Translated by Cora Lee Kluge, MKI Director

The following narrative by Theodor Kirchhoff is one of the selections that appears (in German) in the fourth chapter of Other Witnesses: An Anthology of Literature of the German Americans, 1850–1914, edited by Cora Lee Kluge (Madison: MKI, 2007). It previously appeared in book form in the first volume of Kirchhoff's Reisebilder und Skizzen aus Amerika (Altona and New York, 1875). Just before the outbreak of the Civil War, Kirchhoff lived in Clarksville, the town referred to here, which lies in the northeastern part of Texas not far from Texarkana. His descriptions of the court's legal improprieties and uncouth customs, where lawyers put their feet on their desks, chew tobacco, and carry loaded revolvers, are especially hilarious when juxtaposed with the court's other—perhaps feeble—attempts at maintaining respect for the courtroom and the dignity of the law.

Attending a court session in Texas is a capital pleasure I seldom missed whenever the opportunity presented itself during my stay in that country. In addition to the enjoyment of listening to the lawyers' speeches, often delivered with brilliant eloquence, the entire courtroom ensemble offers a picture whose faithful representation would give a Hogarth* material for immortal masterpieces.

First of all, the judge sits on his exalted chair in as lackadaisical a position as possible, his feet before him on his desk at the same altitude as his nose and a solid piece of genuine Virginia tobacco in his mouth, from which he sends forth golden fountains every half minute, to the left and to the right. Before him stands a bucket of water, from which he occasionally rinses his mouth and sprays brownish streams across his desk and onto the floor.



Theodor Kirchhoff

The lawyers—most of them with loaded revolvers under their coattails and the whole lot of them energetically chewing tobacco and, when not pleading, turning pages in thick folios—use the same bucket of water to dispose of their tobacco, whenever one of them wants to deliver a speech. Those in attendance at the court session, likewise with revolvers at their sides and almost all chewing tobacco, often in shirtsleeves and their trousers stuck into their boots, sit and lie all around on the benches in picturesque positions, balance on the backs of their seats, or lie on the broad windowsills. A few allow themselves the freedom of smoking short-stemmed pipes, and from time to time one of them goes into the area surrounded by a railing in which the judge and the lawyers reside, rinses his mouth out at the bucket, and takes a drink. All of those present have taken off their hats out of respect for the law and keep relatively quiet, since every noticeable noise is immediately and harshly punished by the judge with a fine, as something violating the dignity of the court.

At such a court session, which I attended in the small town of Clarksville in northern Texas, a hearing was taking place in the matter of a family dispute, presided over by a justice of the peace who was a master tailor. The case was as follows:

A particularly quarrelsome Texan, who was crimping his mustache and surveying the red-headed judge and the prosecutor with a sneer, had beaten his wife and chased his mother-in-law, who had come to her daughter's assistance, around the house while wielding the leg of a chair, then pursued her into a cornfield with a loaded double-barreled shotgun, and finally threatened that he would

Nils Langer: “German Identity in American School Grammars”

by Kevin Kurdylo, MKI Librarian

Nils Langer of the School of Modern Languages at the University of Bristol spoke on Friday, July 9 about his research into why German Americans (the largest ethnic group in the United States) lost their language and “submerged” their cultural identity. Hypothesizing that German lessons in American schools transmitted cultural knowledge as well as teaching language, he recently spent many hours examining the Ellis Collection of German Textbooks at the UW–Madison’s Memorial Library. He scrutinized prefaces and reading passages from more than one thousand American textbooks published between 1860 and 1970 to discern how German-American life and identity were perceived and conveyed. He hoped to learn why, for today’s German Americans, “almost everything German in their ancestors’ lives has been lost.”¹

Langer quoted several contradictory views about immigrant Germans and both the preservation and loss of their *Muttersprache*. According to some, bilingual school programs in the nineteenth century “actively promoted German language maintenance and cultural preservation. At the same time, however, they heavily stressed the mastery of English.”² Americans had such a high regard for German educational methods that even some students whose mother tongue was English “enrolled in the German-English bilingual programs in large numbers.”³ He noted that despite laws requiring all lessons in public schools to be taught in English, many states did not or could not enforce these laws until much later, and lessons taught in German persisted well into the 1930s.⁴

However, M. D. Learned wrote in 1899 that “German youths in this country have been discarding and even despising the *Muttersprache*, thus imperiling the

future of the German language and life in America.”⁵ Langer reminded us that primarily German-speaking parents were eager to maintain the language and culture, whereas—in the words of a minister in Nebraska in 1896—“the children want to speak English. . . . The truth is that children born and raised in America do not love German.”⁶

Some answers to questions about German Americans’ self-perceived identity may be found in school grammars, Langer maintains. The reading passages reveal the authors’ perceptions of the old and new homelands, while the prefaces (where they exist)

reflect the changes in readership. He showed numerous examples, of which these are but a few: Louis Klemm writes that “this book should also serve as an educational device for the home and family. This is particularly important here, where the influence of the English language is so powerful that it



Depiction of an American flag from Rhoades, Lewis Addison and Lydia Schneider. *Erstes Sprach- und Lesebuch: A German Primer* (New York: Henry Holt, 1906).

requires special efforts for our German-speaking children to obtain the *Muttersprache*” (*Sprachbuch für die amerikanische Jugend*, 1877). The essays in this book are about general topics in Germany, but also about such distinctly American subjects as the Gold Rush in California, *die Mammuth-Höhle* in Kentucky, or cotton. An 1881 reader⁷ has this dialogue: “I will stay with my cousin for awhile, so as to learn how to handle the work, and after that I will work for an American so that I learn this country’s language more quickly.” The *Drittes Lesebuch für Evangelisch-Lutherische Schulen* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1893) responds to the “justified demand for American reading material, and it will be immediately obvious that this material is of a German-American nature,” presenting essays which examine the new natural environment of America.

While even a 1911 textbook points out that the

The Wisconsin Natural History Society

by Antje Petty, MKI Assistant Director

On May 6, 1857, nine years after Wisconsin became a state, a group of Milwaukee citizens got together to found the “Naturhistorischer Verein für Wisconsin,” the “Wisconsin Natural History Society.” Similar societies had sprung up in other Midwestern cities, but the one in Milwaukee was unique.

By the mid-nineteenth century, many well-educated German immigrants had settled in Milwaukee. Some had left Europe during the turbulent years that ended in the failed revolutions of 1848/49; others had come from the urban centers of the East coast. They were eager to reproduce in Milwaukee the culture and the learned societies they were used to, but they also strove to imple-

ment new and progressive ideas. They believed in *Volksbildung*, the concept that every person—no matter what age or social class—should receive a high quality education, and were convinced that an educated population will elevate society in general.

In the young city of Milwaukee, neither the existing public schools (overcrowded and ill equipped, low academic standards) nor the parochial schools (indoctrinating and limited in the subjects taught) lived up to their educational standards. Thus in 1851, the German-English Academy, a primary and secondary school and teacher academy, was founded. Subjects were taught in both German and English, learning through practice and inquiry rather than rote memorization was emphasized, and—in addition to the three Rs—music, literature, art, physical exercise,

and above all science were included

Initially it was the school’s need for a collection of natural specimens and a science lab that motivated those Milwaukee German professionals, artisans, and business people to found the Wisconsin Natural History Society. The Society’s goal, however, went beyond “assisting the school

in creating a cabinet filled with objects from nature.” Instead, it strove to “excite people for the science of natural history, and in particular the detailed exploration of the natural-historical and ethnological materials of Wisconsin.”

The Society’s members

included many prominent men and a few women who were active across the city’s cultural spectrum. Some were scientists by profession, other were amateur scientists and nature enthusiasts—for example, co-founder Peter Engelmann, the first principal of the German-English Academy; first president Dr. Friedrich August Lünig, a prominent medical doctor and co-founder of the Wisconsin Medical Society; banker Rudolph Nunnemacher; and Charles Dörflinger, teacher/farmer/publisher and owner of an artificial limb company who later became the first director of the Milwaukee Public Museum.

For a small annual fee, members could hear two academic papers per year at general meetings, read these papers in published form, use books and



The German-English Academy building in Milwaukee as it appears today.

magazines in the Society's growing library, and "contribute natural specimens from their own collections to the Society's 'museum'," as the collection soon was called. It did not take long for the museum to become the Society's most important feature. Housed in the German-English Academy, it was not only a resource for the school, but was also open to the public on weekends. Exhibits were divided into four sections: zoology, mineralogy, botany, and ethnology. Detailed section reports given at the general meetings show how the collection grew through individual donations. In 1878, for example, the ethnology section received numerous items, including:

- One arrow head from the Mequon river, donated by Wenzel Bernhard
- One nose-ring, donated by Jos. Baldauf
- One "Wanderbuch" (apprentice's travel book) from 1827
- Two buckets from the Milwaukee fire department (1838/1839) donated by Mr. Lippet.

At the same time, the zoology section counted the following items among 94 new donations:

- One hammerhead shark, donated by Ad. Meinecke
- Two beetles, donated by Dr. A. Wadgymer, TX
- One snipe, donated by M. Steward
- One tapeworm, donated by Mrs. M. Pietsch.

Again emulating scientific societies that had existed in Germany for centuries, the Milwaukee Society engaged in a lively exchange of ideas on a wide variety of scientific and technical topics. Presentations given at member meetings such themes as "Meteorites," "Natural Phenomena in Conjunction with the Northern Lights as Observed in Milwaukee on the Night of August 9-10," "Geological Proof for the Old Age of Humankind," "The Use of Lead Pipes for Water Conduit," "The Life of Eskimos," "Migrating Doves of North America," and "Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution."

There had been two other attempts at creating natural history societies in Wisconsin. In 1848, Wisconsin's most prominent scientist, Increase A. Lapham, founded the "Wisconsin Natural History Association" for "the improvement of knowledge of the natural sciences; the study and develop-

ment of the natural productions of Wisconsin; and the encouragement and diffusion of a taste for the pursuit of those ennobling sciences among them." It only had a few members and—probably because of a lack of activities and practical goals—it faded away within a few years. In 1853 another "Wisconsin Natural History Association" was founded in Madison for the sole purpose of establishing a natural history museum in the state capital. The museum opened to the public in March of the same year as the first institution of its kind in the state. Initially very popular, it could not be sustained on admission fees alone and was forced to close after only a few years.

The Wisconsin Natural History Society not only outlasted the other natural history societies in Wisconsin, but operated almost entirely in German: membership meetings were held in German, and presentations and publications were in German, while items in the collection catalog were listed in Latin, German, and English. Some members of the two previous societies joined the Milwaukee Society. I. A. Lapham, for example, became an honorary member in 1861. In July 31, 1879, officers of "Der Naturhistorische Verein für Wisconsin, an unincorporated society existing in the City of Milwaukee during the past twenty-two years" appeared before a notary public and officially "associated themselves together for the purpose of forming a corporation . . . whose business and purpose shall be to arouse and sustain an interest in the Study of Nature, and especially to explore and search out the facts and materials pertaining to the natural history and ethnology of the State of Wisconsin." Still operating mostly in German, the Society now also had an official English name. One of the more interesting aspects of the corporation document is Article VII Sec. 4 which notes that "all the collections and property of this corporation may, by vote of a majority of all members, be donated to the city of Milwaukee."

Over the years the numbers of the museum's specimen and exhibit pieces had increased so much that it had outgrown the space available in the Academy building. Initiated by Society member and City Alderman August Stirn, the state of Wisconsin provided legislation in 1882 enabling

Milwaukee to accept the collection and take necessary measures to establish “a free public museum.” On May 25, 1884, the “Milwaukee Public Museum” opened in rented space in the municipal Industrial Exposition Building, and in 1898 it moved into the newly built neoclassical structure that still houses the Museum today. From the beginning the Milwaukee Public Museum, following the philosophy of the Natural History Society, put equal emphasis on the use of the collections for study and research and the importance of public education through exhibits. Thus the Milwaukee Public Museum is one of very few major museums in the United States that was instituted without wealthy benefactors; instead it began as a people’s museum and remains a people’s museum to this day.

The Wisconsin Natural History Society existed for another twenty years, still publishing a yearly bulletin and holding meetings. In the twentieth century, as science became more departmentalized and specialized, and universities and government agencies became the centers for research, most popular science societies around the nation disappeared, many without a trace. While very few people today remember its existence, the Wisconsin Natural History Society, however, left a lasting legacy by planting the seed that grew into one of the larger public natural history museums in the nation.

Notes from the Board continued from page 1

state, so too can Friends be part of the outreach of the Max Kade Institute. You can show up at MKI and CSUMC events, such as presentations of the Wisconsin Englishes project, meet the latest guest lecturers, or volunteer at our Milwaukee German-fest booth. While you are there, talk about MKI and all it encompasses. Email, voicemail, and use all means possible to convince others that being a Friend of MKI becomes less expensive—and far more valuable—as one learns from the players at our table.

—Greg

scalp her if he got his hands on her.

The judge and the public had apparently sided with the ladies, and two lawyers, who had been hired to defend the ungallant backwoodsman, whom ten men had been able to arrest only after a lively skirmish, were having a hard time, since the judge interrupted them at every turn. One of them, nevertheless, who had put his feet comfortably on a table in front of him, did not let himself be deterred from driving the mother-in-law into a corner by means of cross-examination, to the extent that she began to tremble and contradict herself so that the outcome of the case became uncertain for the prosecutor.

Our master tailor, the justice of the peace, who seemed to hold particular malice toward the defendant, who was mustering him with scorn, suddenly, after violently rinsing out his mouth at the bucket, and with a slam of his fist on his desk, demanded “Silentium!” of the lawyer who was disconcerting the mother-in-law. He climbed down from his lectern, took a seat next to her, and said: he would protect her, she should not be afraid, but rather speak freely and from her gut.

He commanded the secretary who was compiling the records to throw away the whole messy transcript of the hearing and gave him half a dollar to buy better paper and to begin the documentation again in accordance with his directions—“And as far as your contorted speeches are concerned,”—he continued, turning fiercely to the lawyers—“I understand not a single word of all that nonsense. I also have something to say. What is written there in your thick books is completely inconsequential; I know already who is in the right, as well as anyone. And if there were forty such cases, I would find every one of the scoundrels guilty, in spite of all your speeches and pernickiness.—Hello! My tobacco is all gone! Doesn’t anyone have a plug for me?”

Endnote

* William Hogarth (1697–1764) was an influential British painter and printmaker who depicted scenes from life as he knew it, commenting satirically on style, taste, and issues of his time.

Lecture continued from page 11

reader's parents, or grandparents, may have come from Germany, the emphasis is now on the fact that "wir leben in Amerika; es ist unsere Heimat."⁸ After 1900 readings focus more on life in Germany, with less information about life in America. Langer believes that authors of earlier texts (1850–1900) were for the most part schoolteachers and native speakers, while later the authors were more often non-native university and college professors.

Endnotes

¹ Brent Peterson, "From *Kultur* to Cliché: German-Americans and Ethnicity," 1998, <http://csumc.wisc.edu/mki/Resources/Online_Papers/Proceedings/Peterson.html>.

² Paul Fessler, "The Political and Pedagogical in Bilingual Education:

Yesterday and Today," in *German-American Immigration and Ethnicity in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Wolfgang Helbich and Walter D. Kamphoefner (Madison, Wis.: Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies, 2004), p. 278.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 279.

⁴ Joseph C. Salmons, "The Role of Community and Regional Structure in Language Shift," in *Regionalism in the Age of Globalism*, vol. 1, ed. Lothar Hönninghausen et al. (Madison, Wis.: Center for the Study of Upper Midwestern Cultures, 2006), p. 136.

⁵ Quoted in Louis Viereck, *German Instruction in American Schools* (New York: Arno Press, 1978), pp. 531-708.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 646.

⁷ Louis R. Klemm, *Lese- und Sprachbuch für die amerikanische Jugend. Übungen im Lesen, Sprechen, Schreiben und Übersetzen mit Berücksichtigung der deutschen Grammatik in concentrischen Kreisen geordnet. Sechster Kreis—Sechstes Schuljahr* (New York: Holt, 1877).

⁸ Hermann Fick, *Neu und Alt. Ein Buch für die Jugend* (New York: American Book Company, 1911).

Lecture by Angelika Sauer: "The German-Canadian Family of Otto Hahn" by Kevin Kurdylo, MKI Librarian

On September 24th, Dr. Angelika Sauer, former Chair for German-Canadian Studies in Winnipeg and currently associate professor of History at Texas Lutheran, engaged her audience in an intimate conversation about Otto Hahn (1828–1904) and his family. Not to be confused with the recipient of the 1944 Nobel Prize in Chemistry, this Hahn was a fascinating man of varied interests who developed unique theories on the psychology of immigration and German identity, and who was the father of two well-known Canadian artists, a painter and a sculptor. His life's story—that of a person who lived, studied, and worked in Württemberg through years of political troubles, economic hardship, and mass emigration to eastern Europe and to the New World—gives vivid illustration to the area's situation. Concerned with the plight of the poor, he was a member of a religious commune in Reutlingen where agricultural and industrial training was provided for destitute young men. He pushed for the establishment of an agricultural settlement in Costa Rica, and he directed Württemberg emigrants to the United States before finally becoming interested in, visiting, and ultimately moving his family to Canada.

Hahn's life contained several transnational elements: his associations with the Swedenborgian church and with prominent members of the worldwide scientific community enabled him to think beyond political borders; he believed that German identity was not tied to territory but was instead defined through German creativity and productivity, which allowed one to establish a new "fatherland" wherever one went; and he was convinced that one could live in one country and stay connected to another through family ties, intellectual interests, and cultural pursuits.

Ultimately Hahn himself was not a successful immigrant. He had received an expenses-paid trip to North-eastern Ontario, and he used this trip to collect fossils and write information for new settlers. Although most Germans of the 1870s and 1880s viewed Canada as a frozen wilderness, Hahn's enchantment with its rugged beauties allowed him to "translate" the environment into that of a landscape similar to that around Lake Constance. In 1888, unwilling to agree with a definition of "German" that involved his sons serving in the military, he moved his family to Canada. Here he found no opportunities for employment, and became frustrated and disillusioned. Meanwhile his oldest son, Gustav, supported his family from his work as a commercial designer, painter, and art teacher. In late 1903 Hahn took his youngest son, Emanuel, the sculptor, back to Stuttgart for a visit, and while there he died of a heart ailment, possibly a broken heart.

Hahn's views are strongly Euro-centric and patriarchal—Sauer would like to discover more about his wife, Rosa, who bore him seventeen children and apparently never learned English—but he was in many ways a forward-thinking man who succeeded in establishing a new *Heimat* for his descendants.

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