

## Traces in the Landscape: Immigration from Mecklenburg to Middleton, Wisconsin

Antje Petty



Map by Mark Livingood

### INSIDE

- Annual Meeting
- Genealogy Workshop
- German Lutheran Church (Middleton, Wisconsin)
- Lecture Report: Diaspora and Nationalism
- Lecture Report: A Global Approach to the Civil War
- Book Review: *Putting Down Roots*
- Book Review: *The Great Heart of the Republic: St. Louis*

Traveling west on Old Sauk Road from Madison through Middleton, about a mile past a little white country church surrounded by an old cemetery, one finds among rolling hills a public park called Pope Farm Conservancy. Consisting of about a hundred acres, the conservancy is a microcosm of the physical and human geography of South Central Wisconsin. Interpretative trails and educational signs guide the visitor through a terrain shaped by glaciers. Woodlands, old oak savannah, and different types of

prairie are a reminder of the pre-settlement landscape. Traces of an old Indian trail hint at the history of Native Americans in the area. Several acres planted in rotation with twelve agricultural crops, a European and a Native American vegetable garden, and old rock walls—fences made of the rocks found in the field—all represent two centuries of agricultural cultivation. A concrete spillway is evidence of work undertaken in 1938 by the Civilian Conservation

*Continued on page 8*

## Greetings, Friends and Readers!

We are delighted to announce that the long-planned renovations to the fourth floor of the University Club are to begin late this summer. When we settle into our new home there—probably not before the end of the year—students and colleagues will find us more easily accessible, and we will have both more space for our activities and also better contact with other main libraries on campus.

We are grateful to our many supporters who have made this work: above all, the Max Kade Foundation, whose gift of \$500,000 was announced late in the year 2010 and whose assistance became the cornerstone of our efforts. We are indebted to the University of Wisconsin for its willingness to cover design and contingency costs, and also to match, dollar-for-dollar, the funds we could raise from outside sources by the end of the year 2011. And we appreciate more than words can express the very generous response of our many Friends and supporters. Through your contributions you have become partners to our undertaking, and we thank you and congratulate you on your success.

The purpose of the MKI Library Project was not only to renovate new quarters, but also to provide financial support for our library's staff; and with this in mind, we applied for one of the prestigious Challenge Grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities. At the end of last year, we were informed that we had been named a recipient of a

Challenge Grant in the amount of \$300,000, most of which is to help establish a partial endowment for the MKI librarian/archivist position. We are very pleased, of course, but the key word here is *challenge*. The three-to-one match to which we have been challenged by the NEH means that fundraising efforts will continue: over the next four years, we must raise the final \$300,000.

Meanwhile, despite our success with fundraising, we face the realities of state budget cuts, as we announced in February, which force us to make adjustments in our staffing and programming. While we hope to find long-term solutions to the problem of how to support our very able, energetic, and dedicated staff members, we are for the moment exploring sharing them with other campus units. This will unavoidably mean that we will have to cut back on some of what we do.

It has been a good spring, full of activities and events that you can read about in the current issue of our Newsletter. Our final event was the Annual Meeting of the Friends in Watertown, which took place early in May, and for which we owe

special thanks to Ed Langer, who was in charge of the local arrangements. Now we wish you a good summer—come to see us at German Fest in Milwaukee if you get a chance. Work hard, be successful, and do stay in touch!

—Cora Lee and Mark

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## Annual Meeting of the Friends of the Max Kade Institute in Watertown, Wisconsin

Antje Petty

On Saturday, May 5, 114 members of the Friends of the Max Kade Institute came together in Watertown, Wisconsin, for the annual meeting. The day began with a tour of Watertown's famous Octagon House and the first kindergarten building in America, expertly guided by volunteers from the Watertown Historical Society.

As the Octagon House story goes, John Richards, a young man from Massachusetts, arrived in the Wisconsin Territory in 1837 looking for land and opportunity. He found the perfect place on the east bank of the Rock River in what is now Watertown and built himself a log cabin. In 1840 Richards returned east to

marry his sweetheart Eliza Forbes. Eliza, however, was not keen on the pioneer life. So Richards convinced her to accompany him into the Wisconsin wilderness by promising her the finest house in the Territory. He kept his promise. In 1854, after years of planning and construction, the Richards moved into a three-story octagon-shaped house built high on a bluff on the west side of the Rock River. It is presumed to be the largest pre-Civil War single-family dwelling in Wisconsin.

From the Octagon House, the Friends went to the Kindergarten, a small building that was moved in 1956 from its original place in the center of Watertown to the Historical

Society's grounds. Here, Margarethe Meyer Schurz, a recent immigrant from Hamburg, Germany, and wife of the prominent German-American politician and journalist Carl Schurz, taught the first American kindergarten class in 1856. Mrs. Schurz's first students were her own two daughters, their cousins, and another child from the neighborhood. While in Europe, Margarethe Schurz had become familiar with the methods of Friedrich Fröbel—an early-childhood education pioneer—and wanted her children and other youngsters in Watertown to benefit from his insights. Today the interior of the house has

*Continued on page 14*

### Genealogy Workshop

The Max Kade Institute is pleased to offer another German genealogy workshop in collaboration with the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS).

#### Tracing Your German-American Roots: Resources Here and There

This four-hour hands-on computer workshop (offered twice, on two different dates) will introduce materials and research techniques that address the unique challenges faced by genealogists looking for their ancestors from German-speaking Europe. The first half of the workshop will provide a general overview of resources—online and off—on this side of the Atlantic; and the second half will focus on records available in historic German-American communities and in Europe. Instructors: Lori Bessler and Antje Petty

**Saturday, October 20 or 27, 9am–1pm**

UW–Madison Memorial Library, Room 231

Fee: \$35 for members of Friends of MKI and WHS; \$40 for non-members

Registration begins *after* August 1, 2012.

Please contact Lori Bessler at the Wisconsin Historical Society:

Lori.Bessler@wisconsinhistory.org or 608-264-6519.

# The History of the First German Evangelical-Lutheran Congregation in the Town of Middleton, Dane County, Wisconsin

Antje Petty

In September 1902, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the First German Evangelical Lutheran Congregation by immigrants from Mecklenburg in the Town of Middleton, Pastor E. F. Scherbel published a little booklet in German about the history of his church and the early immigrant community. Pastor Scherbel had served the community—which also included the Lutheran churches of the Towns of Berry, Roxbury, Cross Plains, and Martinsville—since 1884. In 1924, the Madison *Capital Times* honored the Pastor with an article, stating that “to have served through 40 springs, winters, summers, and falls, in a territory that required nearly 60 miles of riding each Sunday to serve each congregation, must require love of fellow men, especially when the pioneers of the region could only afford

to pay their minister \$65 a year.”

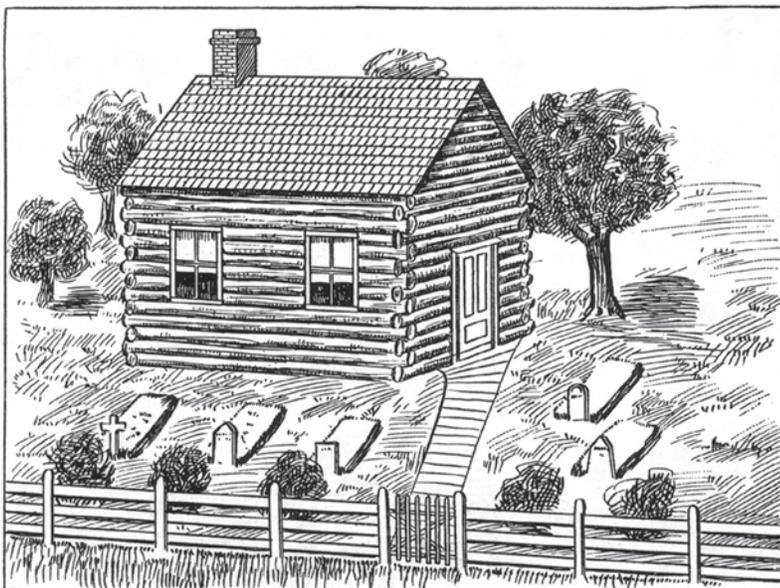
The following are excerpts from Pastor Scherbel’s church history.

*As immigration increased in the 1840s and 1850s, many Europeans—especially Germans—decided to build a home in the far West, especially in Wisconsin, which had just been opened for settlement. The city of Milwaukee, which was not bigger than a German village, could not accommodate all the new arrivals; our compatriots longed to farm, which meant going further west. After enduring weeks and months on sailing ships crossing the ocean and more travel on boats and occasionally by train (there were not many of those back then!), they were happy finally to have reached Milwaukee, the last outpost of civilization. Now they had to figure out how to move on. One or two wagons were rented, loaded with trunks, boxes, and*

*bundles, wife and children, and then the little family went over hill and dale until it reached Madison several days later. Madison back then was still a small country town. The beautiful meadows of Dane County were such a joyful sight to our German immigrants that they did not travel further. A few homesteads owned by Americans from the East were already scattered across the area, but there was still plenty of room for the Germans.*

[The first thing the new settlers did was lay claim to a piece of land.] Then they built a log cabin with the help of neighbors. It had one room—which served as a house for the whole family, as a guest room for visitors, as a dining room, and as a bedroom, too. The cabin was made from hand-hewn tree logs and had only a very basic floor. A ladder led upwards to the attic, which was a very small place. The furniture was very minimal and usually consisted of a home-made table, a few benches cut from wooden blocks, and the trunk which had made the long journey across the sea, which held the family’s possessions. Now it served as closet, desk, and cupboard, and as a place where all valuables were kept.

The first task was to cultivate the virgin land to receive God’s reward from the rich soil. Under the powerful ax of the farmer, the trees fell to the ground. His wife and child collected branches and twigs and burned them, so that the plough (pulled by between six and twelve oxen) could do its work. It took two to three strong men to get the stubborn horned beasts moving



**Erste Kirche, errichtet im Frühjahr 1854.**

The first church, built Spring 1854

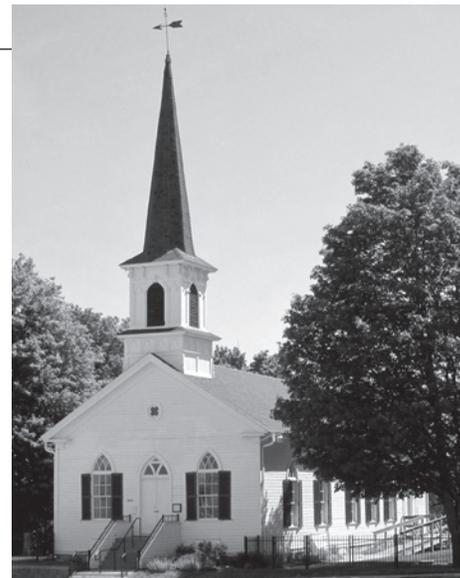
and to keep the plough [...] in the furrow. The men were screaming “Shi” and “Ha,” and were all hoarse in the evening. However, bacon and potatoes and a pipe filled with home-grown tobacco cleared their throats quickly. [...] With great effort, crowned with God’s blessings, the jungle was soon cleared and the wilderness turned into a small paradise.

[...] Gradually, more settlers arrived, especially from Mecklenburg. One person followed another. Among the first few, a need was soon felt for a spiritual life. People had brought Bibles and songbooks from the homeland and now wanted to share them in their new community. Thus, one Sunday in 1852, one of the oldest settlers, Gustav Polkow, invited his neighbors to his house and delighted them with a sermon, which also included beautiful songs from the songbooks. Mr. Polkow then offered Sunday services regularly, which were held either in his log cabin or in the log cabin of his neighbor Friedrich Niebuhr. Occasionally a preacher by the name of Schnaker came from Cottage Grove and held a sermon.

However, people couldn’t warm up to [Preacher Schnaker’s] Methodist leanings; they preferred the old service under Polkow’s direction, and soon fourteen men officially established a new congregation. [They were] Gustav Polkow, John Elver, John Prien, Henry Prien, John Niebuhr, Carl Böck, John Voß, Fritz Mühlenbruch, Friedrich Niebuhr, Joachim Benn, Joachim Harloff, John Lübcke, Carl Pierstorff and Christian Pierstorff. [...] After more settlers arrived in the following years, the decision was made to build a little church, even if it had to be very simple and small. Early in 1854, it

was resolved that each family should contribute one short and one long log. Mr. Niebuhr donated one acre of land for the church and a cemetery. Then the day came when the members of the congregation all arrived with their horse-drawn wagons, each bringing two logs. Everybody put the logs together to build the walls. Mr. Voß, who was an expert wagon maker and owned a hammer, a saw, and other useful tools, was asked to build the door and the window. Shingles for the roof had to be bought, and it took a while to raise the necessary funds. Meanwhile the interior of the church was not furnished at all. Thus it was decided that every family had to bring its own bench, and since there was no plan, the benches all looked very different.

[For several years, the congregation was led by its own members and the occasional traveling priest. In 1856, it finally managed to hire a teacher from Germany, Wilhelm Elver, who not only taught the children, but also took over pastoral duties.] In 1859, Wilhelm Elver was replaced by Pastor T. Schenck, who had had a pedagogical education in Germany and who had moved from Mecklenburg to the Town of Berry with some friends in 1853. [...] Pastor Schenck established regular school lessons, and held a service every two weeks. As ever more people arrived in the community, a bigger church building became necessary. [...] In May 1866, a new church was opened which measured 52X32 and had a tower with a little bell. The old building was used as a school house. 31 families contributed to the new church building. [...] All families had to help transport materials from Madison and contribute \$82. Lots



First German Evangelical Lutheran Church today

were assigned in the cemetery. [...] In the fall of 1884 [after Pastor Scherbel had begun to lead the congregation] the church was extended by forty feet; a new and better-looking bell tower was built; and the old bell was sold, and a new and bigger one was installed. Private donations made it possible to purchase an organ. By now the congregation also had two choirs—a mixed choir and a men’s choir—which greatly improved services and funeral ceremonies. Beneath the new addition, a new school room was constructed, because the old school house by now was collapsing. In 1891, the interior of the church was finally refurbished and beautifully painted, too. [...]

Now our congregation looks back on [five decades] of happy gatherings, but millions of tears have also been shed. Of the original founding members only four are still with us. [...] Our elders, those who brought us here, now rest in eternal peace, relieved from their toil. Do we live up to their example? We shall honor and remember them and shall preserve the Word of God as it is spoken in our dear Lutheran Church: in the language of our ancestors and the language of Luther—in German. 🇩🇪

## The German Diaspora and Nationalism before World War I

Kevin Kurdylo

Stefan Manz (Aston University, Birmingham, UK) began his presentation on April 26th by describing the 1911 inaugural celebration at a Kaiser Wilhelm Schule where all the students received commemorative pictures of Germany's imperial couple. The school had been founded "to implant in all children a proud awareness that they belonged to a powerful fatherland whose cultural achievements compare well with those of any other folk," but it was not located in Cologne or Hanover—this school was established for the offspring of the German population in Shanghai, China. This example set the stage for an examination of the connections between diaspora and nationalism for German-speaking immigrants around the globe. Dr. Manz's research portrays these far-flung communities as "active participants within a transnationally conducted and multi-directional discourse" that sought both to disseminate a supposedly "superior" Germanic culture among "inferior" host societies and to legitimize territorial claims for Imperial Germany.

Until recently, most migration scholars have found German immigrant communities to be predominately heterogeneous and dispersed, with no strong bonds or connectedness. Certainly before the unification of the German nation in 1871, the reference point for emigrants was a region or religion, rather than a German nation, and within

German-speaking Europe those who left were referred to as *Auswanderer* (emigrants). After unification, however, the discourse changed and now concerned a worldwide imperial "German community," and individuals and groups outside of the Empire were referred to as *Auslandsdeutsche* (German citizens living abroad).

A latecomer to nationhood, Germany was anxious to ensure its position and establish its "place in the sun" on the global scene. By 1914, when Germans had established communities in nearly all regions of the world, there developed a number of transnationally operating organizations that shifted the concept of immigration from one of settlement and assimilation to a network of global interactions promoting commitment to the maintenance, restoration, and prosperity of the homeland. Manz focuses on three groups involved: Protestant churches, German Navy Clubs (*Flottenvereine*), and German schools abroad.

Intriguingly, immigrant communities in the United States were the exception. The German-American Lutherans did not maintain close connections to churches in German lands, perhaps because they had established their synods early. Likewise, German Navy Clubs were not organized in this country, and German schools were neither financially supported nor otherwise directly associated with organizations in the homeland. The situation in the United States and the reasons



Stefan Manz

for this difference were not the topic of Manz's lecture, though they are an exciting part of his ongoing research.

German Protestant congregations organized in immigrant communities in other countries often became formally attached to one of the state churches in the homeland, the Mother Church assuming responsibility for her scattered flock. Manz reports that the number of congregations with connections to the Prussian State Church, for example, rose from 21 in 1861 to about 200 in 1914. In addition to certain financial benefits, these affiliations brought pastors from Germany to serve the congregations abroad. Educated and ordained in Germany and steeped in Reich-affirming ideas, these pastors encouraged the preservation of Germanness and fought against a sense of homelessness, as well as the loss of the mother tongue. Manz points out that celebrating the Kaiser's birthday was a significant event in congregations in many regions, from Glasgow

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to Cairo to Tokyo. In these areas, where the Protestant churches were actively promoting nationalistic ties, problems sometimes developed. In Brazil, for example, the older immigrants worried that the Pan-German agitation of newer *Reichsimmigranten* would disrupt relations with the host society. While some felt it was best to come under “proper Prussian command,” others feared the militaristic image of the Prussian spiked helmet.

German Navy Clubs to support a stronger naval force in Germany were also promoting the new nation’s global influence and dominance: By 1912 nearly 180 clubs with some 9,500 members had been formed worldwide. They were most active in European countries where German communities had been established, such as Spain; in Central and South America; and in Asia and Africa. In addition to collecting dues to help finance German naval projects, the clubs shared news through a German-language journal, *Die Flotte*, and held exuberant celebrations when German warships called at local ports. Such visits were a show of solidarity on the part of the fatherland with its citizens living abroad, emphasizing feelings of unity and nationalism. As Manz indicates, German merchants usually felt greater connections with other German merchants across the globe than with compatriots living in their own communities. Even though Navy Clubs were not organized in the United States, Manz notes evidence that German merchants in San Francisco voiced support for a strong imperial navy. And German-American newspapers—such as one published in Appleton, Wisconsin—often

reported on the activities of Naval Clubs throughout the world.

Manz identifies as his final networking group the German schools, whose goal was to preserve the German language among Germans abroad as a marker of transnational belonging. The idea that a common language expresses the essence of a people’s soul and is intrinsic to ethnic identity has its origins in German Romanticism. The preservation of language was therefore crucial both in terms of nationalistic goals and for perpetuating a transnational community. School associations abroad, such as the one founded in 1899 in Victoria, Australia, were applauded in Germany as a sign that “our countrymen [...] are leading a brave fight for the preservation of the German mother tongue,” thus lifting up the spirit of Germanness and displaying Germany’s cultural achievements on distant shores.

Some 5,000 German schools were founded abroad to prevent the “de-Germanization” and assimilation of the young in German immigrant and colonial communities. Many of these were supported by the German state with direct financial contributions, pedagogical assistance, and school books. By 1914, of the 2,600 German instructors teaching in schools abroad, about 700 had been sent out by the German Foreign Office. Like the networks of Protestantism and the Navy Clubs, schools provided a transnational flow of information among Germans scattered across the globe. Again, Germans in America proved the exception, training their own teachers and establishing few formal contacts with Germany. However, Manz believes that the

lack of formal attachment among German Americans to these transnational organizations does not remove them from the connections between nationalism and diaspora. German Americans were still committed to the prosperity of their former homeland, with particular displays of enthusiasm in evidence at the time of Germany’s unification and again at the outbreak of war in 1914.

Germans across the world—from Shanghai to Glasgow, from Santiago de Chile to Melbourne—were involved in a process of developing “a common set of metaphors and symbols to describe their diasporic identity.” The networking groups Manz examines were integral in this endeavor and led to feelings of patriotism and nationalism that were at times quite pronounced, and at other times tempered by pragmatic concerns. Manz notes that ideas of imperial ideologists found fertile ground—especially in German communities in South and Central America, and in countries such as Spain, France, and Britain. The situation in European nations is particularly in need of additional scholarly attention and promises to yield rewarding results. 

*Continued from page 1*

Corps to prevent soil erosion. And the footprint of an old settler cabin ties the land to German immigrants who inhabited the area in the mid-nineteenth century.

For the last six months the Max Kade Institute has worked with the Conservancy to find out more about the early German settlers. Mel Pope, whose family owned the land before it became a public park, had already learned from local residents that the family of a farm laborer from Mecklenburg named Joachim Goth lived on the site in the late 1860s and 1870s. A grandniece of Joachim, Mae Goth Hartwig, who still lives in the Town of Middleton, has shared the story of her family as well as historic documents, including letters written by Joachim. Using this material, census data, and other records, we were able to put together some of the history of this Mecklenburg-German settlement, a history that is typical

for early Wisconsin, but whose details have all but been forgotten.

As was the case all over Southern Wisconsin, the first Europeans who purchased land and built homesteads in what would become the Town of Middleton were Yankees from the Northeastern United States and immigrants from the British Isles who arrived in the 1840s. According to U.S. Census data, only 233 people lived in the township in 1850. Of these only one family (three individuals) came from “Germany.” By 1860, the town’s population had more than quintupled to about 1,300 residents. That year, the Census lists 321 people as born in the Northeastern States, 158 born in the British Isles and Ireland, and 382 born in Wisconsin (almost all young children). But new as a category are 188 persons born in Mecklenburg and another 121 born in other German states (mostly Prussia and “Germany”). Only 19 individuals were born in other countries (Denmark, Norway, Switzer-



Left to right: Carl Goth, his wife Sophia, Joachim Goth, Hanne Sophie Goth (mother of Carl and Joachim)

land, France, and Canada), most of whom seem to have had family ties with the immigrants from Mecklenburg and the other German states. Furthermore, the “dwelling numbers” reveal that Mecklenburgers and other German-speakers lived close together within the township.

The Census offers more intriguing information about this new German-speaking community. Many of the Mecklenburgers had arrived between 1852 and 1855, almost all coming as young couples and families, many of which were related. Only four different occupations are listed for the heads of households (all male): 44 were farmers who owned land valued between \$400 and \$3,000 dollars; 16 were day laborers, who lived independently with their families (one-third owned land valued between \$100 and \$600); nine were farm laborers (young men who lived and worked on someone else’s farm—none of which were owned by Mecklenburgers); and two men were

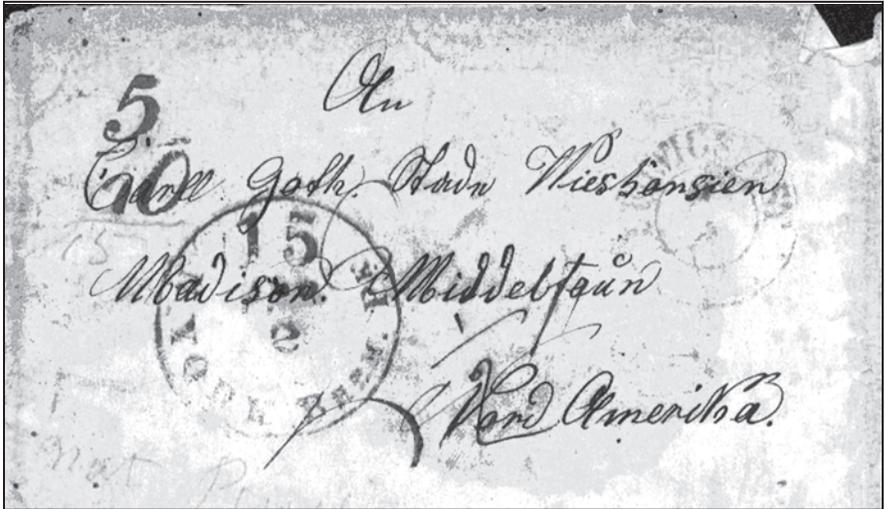


Carl and Sophia Goth, posing in front of the log cabin that in earlier years was their first home in the Town of Middleton (photo ca. 1890)

self-employed blacksmiths.

But why did these families leave their homeland and choose to settle in Middleton? Letters from the Goth family and other documents fill in some of the picture. We do not know when exactly the very first Mecklenburger arrived, but we know that by 1852 several families had gathered to establish the First Evangelical Lutheran Congregation of Middleton. They had left their homeland for economic reasons and chose to settle in Wisconsin because of the affordable, quality land available there. Once the first person had chosen a specific location, others from his hometown followed to purchase land nearby, and several wrote letters back home to encourage family and friends to join them. The Goth family is an example of this chain migration.

In 1855, “Uncle” Jürgen (John) Goth from the village of Picher in Mecklenburg-Schwerin purchased land in the Township of Middleton. Two years later, his nephew Carl (Charles) Goth and a young woman from a neighboring village, Maria Grandt, arrived. Their journey was financed by Jürgen’s brother, a well-to-do farmer in Mecklenburg. Shortly after that, Maria married Jürgen, and Carl began working on the farm of another immigrant from Picher: August Stolte. In 1859, August Stolte died, and Carl married his widow, Sophia. Meanwhile, Carl’s brother Joachim and other relatives and friends from Mecklenburg wrote to him and voiced their interest in coming to America, too. Finally, in 1867, Joachim (James) made the journey with his wife and son and his mother. He worked as a day laborer for another immigrant from



An envelope addressed to Carl Goth from relatives in Mecklenburg: *An Carl Goth, Stade Wieskonsien, Madison, Middeltaun, Nord Amerika*

Mecklenburg, Fritz Elver, living with his family in a small cabin on land owned by Elver—the land that today is Pope Farm Conservancy.

In April of this year, three educational signs were installed where the cabin once stood. Created with elementary school students in mind, who at the fourth-grade level in Wisconsin study state history, the signs give an overview of German immigration to America, depict an early settlement log cabin, and describe what life may have been like at this location in the second half of the nineteenth century. A map lays out the journey of two to three months from Mecklenburg to Middleton, and the names of early settlers are listed, many of which can still be found in the community today.

The Max Kade Institute will work with elementary school teachers to create additional classroom and outreach materials. We know that a strong German-speaking community was sustained in the Town of Middleton for a number of decades, but many questions remain: Who was the very first settler from Mecklenburg?

Where did the German-speaking children go to school? What clubs and organizations existed in the community? How many descendants of the early settlers still live in the area? And what other stories and documents are yet to be found? Vivid descriptions of the early years in the community can be found in the “History of the First German Evangelical Lutheran Congregation in the Town of Middleton,” written in German in 1902 on the occasion of the church’s fiftieth anniversary (see page 4). If you are in the vicinity, visit Pope Farm Conservancy and experience a taste of German-American history in the landscape. 🌿

## The American Civil War As a Transatlantic Event

Kevin Kurdylo

Andrew Zimmerman's March 21st presentation concerning the American Civil War and its aftermath expands our horizons beyond our borders and casts a transnational light upon the subject. His multi-disciplinary approach—using political, economic, social, and anthropological ideas—shows the global interplay of revolution and counterrevolution, modernization, and imperialism, as he strives to comprehend developments of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

Distilling a large and complex amount of information into one lecture, Zimmerman spoke of a world of this era where events taking place on both sides of the Atlantic, specifically in the United States, the German Empire, and West Africa, also crisscrossed the Atlantic, involving revolutionaries and workers, enslaved and free, white and black. These encounters could be stimulating or incendiary, with outcomes that were liberating or oppressive for entire peoples.

As Zimmerman points out, the role played by German-speaking “Forty-Eighters” in the American Civil War has been the subject of much investigation and is well known. In Europe, the revolutions of 1848–1849—though unsuccessful—led to an awakening of political awareness among the bourgeoisie and proletariat; and not only the revolutions’ refugees, but also many who were

dissatisfied with the ensuing status quo left for America in search of freedom. Those who ended up in the American Midwest may initially have felt cut off from pressing political issues, but it was exactly there—particularly where free states bordered slave states—that the simmering issue of slavery came to a scalding boil. The passing of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850 was especially galling, as it required these idealistic immigrants to support what they believed to be an unjust system.

German immigrants joined the Union Army in droves, and a number of the leading Forty-Eighters were given positions of military authority. The veterans from Europe had learned that moderation was disastrous to the success of a revolution, and they knew that abolition had to be an aim of the war. Therefore, they energetically promoted the use of revolutionary strategies such as emancipating and arming Blacks, and began to do so without the official sanction of other political and military leaders in the North. This form of war by means of popular uprising proved successful: Leaders in the field knew that emancipated slaves would fight to maintain their freedom; and, as an added advantage, former slaves who worked abandoned plantations along the rivers denied Confederate guerillas the opportunity to assault Union ships.

Throughout the world, America's Civil War attracted much attention,



Andrew Zimmerman

and Europeans took a variety of positions vis-à-vis the issues here. The majority of the citizens in Prussia enthusiastically supported the Union cause, while the nobility and army officers were adverse to revolutionary movements; Napoleon III sought common cause with the Confederacy; and Karl Marx, now living in exile in Britain, praised Lincoln as the anti-Napoleon and hero of the workingman. But as the war itself came to an end, debates over Reconstruction and universal rights continued within the United States, and, surprisingly, some of the Forty-Eighters themselves began to take more conservative and even reactionary positions, including Carl Schurz.

Zimmerman reveals similar and related changes in Africa as he shifts

*Continued on page 15*

## Nourishing the Heritage: Immigrant Gardens in Wisconsin

Marilyn Herman



**PUTTING DOWN ROOTS**  
Gardening Insights from Wisconsin's Early Settlers

Marcia C. Carmichael

*Putting Down Roots: Gardening Insights from Wisconsin's Early Settlers.* By Marcia Carmichael. Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2011.

Gardens today are as much a living testimony to our hopes, way of life, and family values as they were for Wisconsin's early settlers, who could also honor their heritage and build a connection to their past by planting vegetables, herbs, and fruits from their homeland. Newcomers felt pride and confidence as they made for themselves a successful life in Wisconsin, feeding hardworking family members, storing fresh produce in root cellars, or preparing jams and jellies, honey and maple syrup for their table. And plants and flowers, both familiar and new, brought a touch of color and fragrance to many settlers' gardens.

The decision to seek a better economic, social, or civic life in another country could not have been an easy one. Potential immigrants in many

European countries read advertisements or got information from published reports and personal accounts sent back home; and they put faith in their own ability, stamina, health, and hard work, believing that it would be worthwhile to leave family and friends behind.

German immigrants from the 1840s to mid-1860s came mainly from southern Germany; from the mid-1860s to late 1870s from northern Germany; and in the final wave, from the late 1870s to 1890, from northeastern Germany. Among Wisconsin's nineteenth-century immigrants, the group from German lands was largest; and they were known for their sense of order, practicality, and aesthetic sense. Early garden beds allowed for efficient hoeing, and sawdust walkways held down the weeds. Unlike farmland in Germany, which had been at a premium, land holdings in Wisconsin were large, and they had to be cleared of trees, stumps, and rocks. Intensive and rotational cropping, composting, animal and pest control, and food storage techniques like root cellar-ing were embraced by German immigrants. Equipment advancements like hand cultivators transformed the earlier bed gardens to row gardens for efficiency. German gardens boasted a wider variety of plants than most other immigrant gardens, including root vegetables (beet, carrot, celeriac, horseradish, potato, summer or winter radish, and turnips), cole crops (red and green cabbage, kale,

and kohlrabi), alliums (onion, garlic, and leek), greens (corn salad, endive, lettuce, or spinach), legumes (such as beans and peas), and herbs (caraway, dill, parsley, summer savory, marjoram, and thyme). A German garden could easily be identified by its cucumber vines for fresh and pickled treats to spice up family meals.

Marcia Carmichael is a historical gardener on the staff of Old World Wisconsin, a living history museum encompassing more than 500 acres, which is operated by the Wisconsin Historical Society. In this work, she provides real-life stories and photos of settler homes and gardens, drawing the reader into each chapter with glimpses into the family life, the values, and the homes built in this country by various ethnic groups, as well as their occupations, the roles of men, women, and children, and their beloved gardens. Book chapters focus on Yankee, German, Norwegian, Irish, Danish, Polish, and Finnish settler gardens. Each group had a unique approach to gardening, different planting techniques, and different varieties of vegetables grown, fruits cultivated, herbs for flavoring, and medicinal plants and flowers to lift the spirits. Each chapter also includes hearty recipes that highlight the tastes and cooking talents of the industrious people who made Wisconsin so special. 🌱

*Marilyn Herman is the Family Living Educator at UW-Extension in Waupaca County. She learned to garden with her German grandmothers.*

## Spotlight on St. Louis in the Civil War Era

Cora Lee Kluge

*The Great Heart of the Republic: St. Louis and the Cultural Civil War.* By Adam Arenson. Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 2011.

Focusing on the city of St. Louis, Arenson presents a study of mid-nineteenth-century America, which is both impressive, sound scholarship and also enjoyable reading for broad audiences. The city lay at the intersection between the North and the South—as students of the period know. But the author adds another dimension, as St. Louis was also aware of the central role it could play vis-à-vis the developing

West, whose territories had recently been augmented by the vast lands of the Mexican Cession. Thus in the aftermath of the massive city fire of 1849, which destroyed large portions of the original French settlement along the Mississippi River, it saw an opportunity to reorient itself from “the world of the Caribbean and its slave society” to a new position as “Gateway to the West.” It attempted to attract and develop and hoped to profit from the most important railroad lines connecting the East with the West, and it took steps to become a major cultural center: Washington University was established, the St. Louis Mercantile Library became an

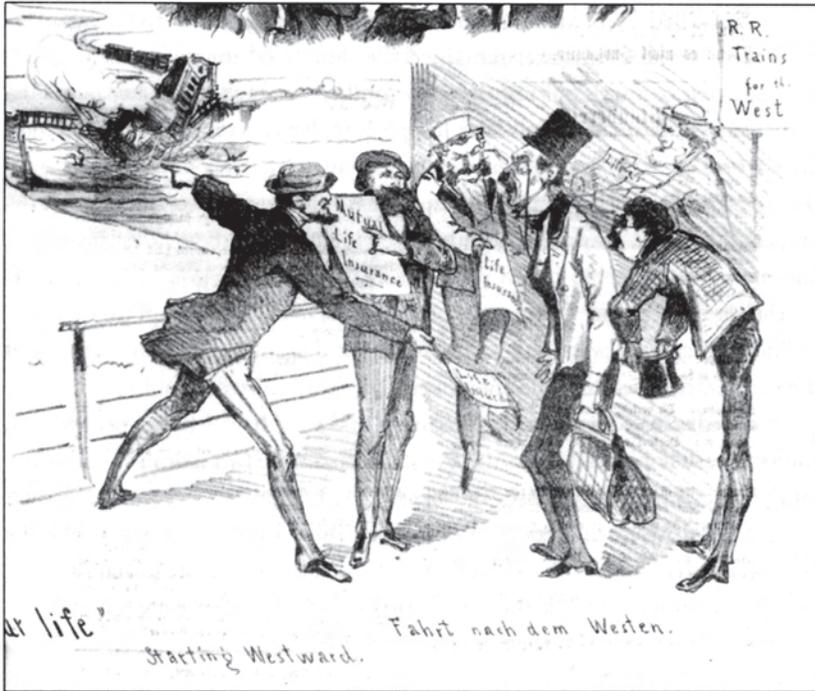
institution of national significance, and the magnificent Court House was completed—and remodeled. After the end of the Civil War, some even promoted a plan to have St. Louis replace Washington, D.C., as the capital of the United States; and with the creation of Forest Park, whose size and elegance was to rival New York’s Central Park, the city’s image was enhanced still further.

Arenson narrates the story of St. Louis in this period of growth and grandiose plans and dreams. The two main figures, both advocates of a central role for St. Louis within the nation, are Thomas Hart Benton, long-time senator from Missouri and champion of westward expansion, and William Greenleaf Eliot, educator, Unitarian minister, and civic leader in St. Louis. But there are other important participants, too, including Frank Preston Blair, Jr., and Charles Drake, and events such as the Dred Scott case, which attracted the attention of the nation. Because the spotlight is on St. Louis, national political figures such as Abraham Lincoln, and even the Civil War itself, remain more in the background; and yet this urban and cultural history of a city succeeds in weaving its story together with regional and national events.

In the central chapter entitled “Germans and the Power of Wartime Union,” Arenson highlights the key part played by the St. Louis German Americans in keeping the city firmly under Union control. He sorts out the



Logan Reavis, right, promoted a plan to move the U.S. capital to St. Louis. Missouri’s two U.S. senators, Carl Schurz, left, and Charles Drake, center, seem here to take different points of view. This cartoon by Austrian-American artist Joseph Ferdinand Keppler appeared on May 21, 1870, in *Die Vehme*, a humorous weekly published in St. Louis.



In this cartoon, insurance salesmen offer travel policies to potential clients, reminding them of the Gasconade railroad bridge disaster of 1855. Cartoon by Joseph Ferdinand Keppler, *Die Vohme*, June 18, 1880.

stance they took toward the presidential candidates in the election of 1860, as well as the importance of Carl Schurz and Gustav Körner in campaigning for Lincoln. The rift within the state became apparent with the election results: Missouri was the only state won by Douglas, while St. Louis became the largest city in a slave state to vote for Lincoln. Arenson narrates the events of May 1861, when the struggle for control of the U.S. Arsenal in St. Louis ended in the surrender of the state militia at Camp Jackson and skirmishes that resulted in fatalities. Governor Claiborne Jackson and his followers traveled to Jefferson City, burning railroad bridges along the way to impede pursuing Unionist troops—as was, incidentally, described in Otto Rupprius’s short story entitled *Bill Hammer*. (See the *MKI Friends Newsletter*, Winter 2009.)

And after the end of the Civil War, the influential (if short-lived) Liberal Republican Party began in St. Louis under the leadership of Carl Schurz, making the area again the focus of American political power.

Arenson’s monograph is a first-class example of how much richer American history can be when it takes into account the German-American point of view. The author includes six German-language publications among the newspapers and magazines listed in his Archival Bibliography, and not only a number of the well-known German-American individuals, such as Heinrich Börnstein, Emanuel Leutze, Joseph Pulitzer, and Carl Schurz, as well as many less familiar ones, but also the German Americans as a group figure prominently in his narrative. Among the important contributors to America’s history, as we know,

there are immigrants and immigrant groups too often forgotten because they communicated in a foreign tongue.

St. Louis did not become the nation’s railroad center: Its hopes were dashed with the collapse of the bridge over the Gasconade River in November of 1855, which plunged dignitaries on the first train trip from St. Louis to Jefferson City to their deaths. The Civil War also took its toll on the city’s successful development: Washington University was nearly closed, the Mercantile Library struggled with financial problems, and in the aftermath of the Chicago fire of 1871, investment shifted to the rebuilding of that city. But Arenson’s work is not the narrowly conceived story of the rise and fall of St. Louis. Instead, it succeeds in contributing to our understanding of the evolution of the country as a whole in the thirty years following the great St. Louis fire.

Arenson’s innovative monograph is the well-deserved winner of a Charles Redd Center Book Award. Its lengthy notes and Archival Bibliography point the scholar toward a wealth of materials, including government documents and records of businesses, churches, and historical societies; and it will inspire new approaches and further research for years to come. At the same time, it is to be recommended as a fascinating, even suspenseful text, beautifully written, and an excellent book for summertime reading. 📖

Continued from page 3



Ed Langer in front of the Octagon House

been restored and decorated to show a mid-nineteenth century kindergarten class in progress. Also on display are the age-appropriate toys developed by Fröbel (“Fröbel’s gifts”) that were revolutionary at the time, variations of which can now be found in many a child’s toy box.

The afternoon continued at Lindberg’s on the River restaurant with the annual business meeting. Jim Kleinschmidt and Gary Gisselman were elected for a second term on the Board of Directors, and Pamela Tesch (Oconomowoc) and Hans Bernet (Monroe) joined as new members. Hans, now retired from the Swiss Colony in Monroe, has served as a Board member once before, from 2005 until 2011. There is more information about Hans in the Fall 2005 Friends Newsletter. Pam, who holds a Ph.D. in German Literature from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, has been a Friend of the Institute for a long time. For more information

about Pam see the summer 2010 Newsletter.

The Friends thanked outgoing members Peter Monkmeyer and Sandy Casterline for their dedicated service on the Board and to the MKI. For many years, as assistant to the Treasurer, Peter has dealt with the Friends’ nitty-gritty business details; and Sandy most recently has been the Board’s Secretary.

Following the annual meeting, the new Board elected officers for the 2012–2013 term. They are: James Kleinschmidt (President), Charles James (Vice President), Elizabeth Greene (Treasurer), and John Pustejovsky (Secretary).

The evening concluded with a presentation by Professor Jeffrey Wallman, whose father Charles Wallman wrote the MKI publication *The German-speaking 48ers of Watertown, Wisconsin*. Professor Wallman not only recounted the fascinating history of those German-speaking immigrants who settled Watertown after the failed European revolutions of 1848, but also told stories about his father and his own upbringing



Max Gaebler, originally from Watertown, former Board member and lifetime Friend

there. Because many in the audience have their own personal connections to Watertown, the unique history of what once was Wisconsin’s second largest city was a welcome part of our gathering. We thank Ed Langer for organizing this great event and look forward to the Friends’ next annual meeting in May 2013 in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. 🇺🇸



A full house at Lindberg’s on the River

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- Membership covers the calendar year (January–December). Payments received after November 1 of the current year will be credited for the full succeeding year.

*Continued from page 10*

our attention to the situation in Togo. After the worldwide decline of the slave trade, the Ewe people of the region had developed an autonomous and democratic political economy where women were not dependent upon men. Their liberal, classless society came to an end when Togo became a German colony, and in 1901 the colonial administrators brought a delegation of African Americans from Alabama's Tuskegee Institute to introduce American methods for growing cotton. This imposed the unequal social model of the New South on West Africa, and is an example of how the United States' revolution and counterrevolution on its own continent played a role on the other side of the Atlantic. Zimmerman is extending his research into additional regions, such as the southern Atlantic.

Andrew Zimmerman's work is both intriguing and thought-provoking, as was shown by the lively discussion that followed his lecture. Through his original approach, he has opened up new and exciting ways to understand history—within a global context. 

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