

## CHAPTER 3

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# Immigrant Languages and Education

## *Wisconsin's German Schools*

ANTJE PETTY

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Wisconsin landscape was dotted with public, private, and parochial schools where children and grandchildren of immigrants were taught in German, Norwegian, Polish, or other older immigrant languages that are described in chapter 2. Today, the language of instruction in Wisconsin schools is almost exclusively English, but the state still has large immigrant communities with families who speak Hmong or Spanish (chapters 8 and 9), and the question of how to teach immigrant children is as current as it was 100 or 150 years ago. While the languages have changed, basic issues remain: Should Wisconsin children be taught in English only, in their native tongue, or in a bilingual setting? How important is the language of instruction for “quality education” and content learning? What role does the school language play in the integration, acculturation, and “Americanization” process? And how important is the language spoken in the classroom for the maintenance of ethnic identity and cultural heritage? This chapter explores the example of schooling among German-speaking immigrants and their descendants in Wisconsin, the largest non-English-speaking population in the state’s early history.<sup>1</sup> Education patterns in some other language communities such as Norwegian or Polish were generally similar, although the populations were smaller populations.<sup>2</sup> Still smaller groups, though, such as West Frisians, who numbered only a few hundred, lacked institutional

support and infrastructure like church services or a press and did not have schools teaching their language.

As detailed in chapter 2, the numbers of settlers in Wisconsin—first Yankees from the eastern states and later European immigrants—increased rapidly in the mid-nineteenth century. German-speaking Europeans came to the state in three large waves. The first significant wave arrived in the early 1850s from southwestern German states such as Bavaria, Württemberg, Hessen, and the Palatinate, as well as the German-speaking regions of Switzerland and the Austrian Empire; a second wave, which originated mostly in the northwestern and central German states of Westphalia, Prussia, and Saxony, came after the Civil War; and the last and largest group of German-speaking immigrants arrived from the northeastern German lands of Pomerania and East Prussia in the 1880s (see fig. 3.1).

The timing was fortuitous: in the early 1850s, at the same time when many southwestern Germans were planning to leave their homeland, the young state of Wisconsin was eager to increase its small population. Southwestern Germans, mostly small farmers, craftspeople, and merchants, who sold their property at home to acquire land in America, filled the bill. In addition, a number of intellectuals fled the failed revolutions of 1848–49 and came to America hoping to implement their political and social ideas there (see fig. 3.2 for the distribution of German immigrants in Wisconsin by county).<sup>3</sup>

To lure emigrants who might otherwise have gone to other U.S. states, Brazil, or Canada, the state of Wisconsin launched an all-out recruitment effort, establishing the Wisconsin Office of Emigration, a state agency that from 1852 to 1855 tried to influence potential emigrants' choice of destination even before they had left their home country. This agency also had an office in New York; representatives there would meet arriving immigrants who might not have yet decided on a place to settle. To attract immigrants, the Wisconsin Office of Emigration published advertisements in German papers and distributed pamphlets and posters—all in German—that boasted of Wisconsin not only as the state with the cheapest land, the best geography, climate, soil, waterways, and the greatest supply of timber and other natural resources but also as a state fostering religious and political freedom, where “the

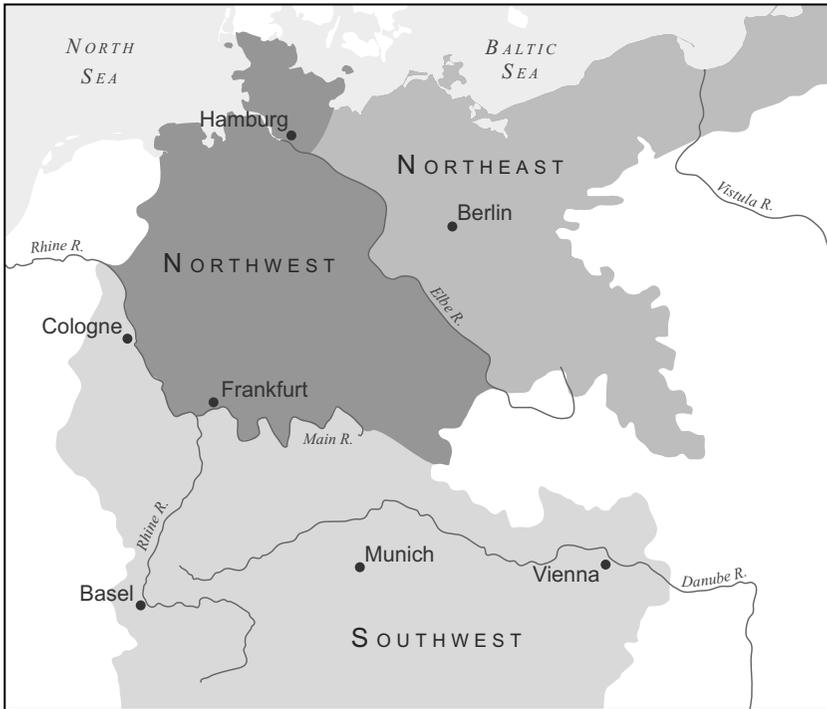


FIGURE 3.1. Central European origins of German-speaking immigrants to Wisconsin (Based on maps by Wisconsin Cartographer's Guild 1998 and König 2007)

immigrant can keep his old nationality as long as he wants to . . . and, after one year, has the same political and voting rights as the native" (Wisconsin Staats-Einwanderungs-Behörde 1853, 2) (see fig. 3.3).

The publications point out that as of 1853 already one-third of the Wisconsin population had come from German lands and that "the significant number of Germans already living here, especially in the more populated areas, has contributed greatly to the establishment of a real German life style and the continuation of the traditions from the fatherland. . . . German music, song, theater, and educational societies can be found in many places. . . . Yes, [Wisconsin] will be a new German Fatherland. Right in the middle of America, it will become a second happy homeland." Furthermore, "free public schools and an

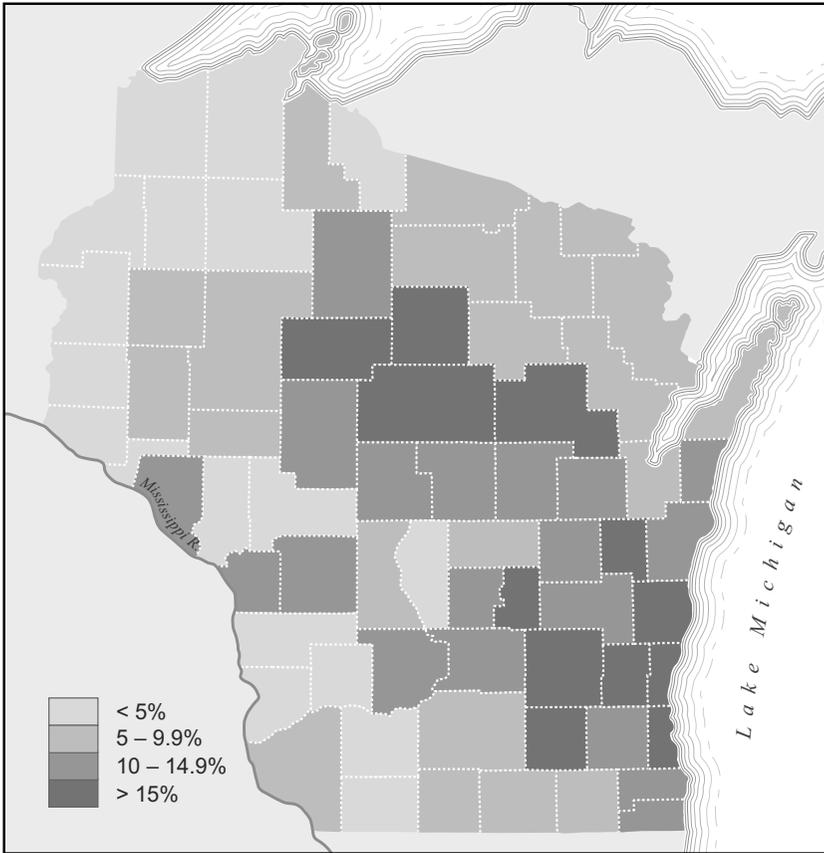


FIGURE 3.2. Percentage born in Germany, 1900, by county (Data from the 1900 U.S. census)

educational system of the best kind will be provided for” (Wisconsin Staats-Einwanderungs-Behörde 1853, 3, my translation). Between 1867 and 1887 and once more from 1895 to 1901, the agency (later called the “Wisconsin Board of Immigration”) again took up the recruitment effort.<sup>4</sup>

The propaganda of the Office of Emigration played directly to the concerns and priorities of these emigrants, and once in Wisconsin, one of the first actions new German settlers took was to establish schools. Back in the German states, seven years of school attendance had been

# Wisconsin.

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Bevölkerung, Bodenbeschaffenheit und Klima  
im Norden Wisconsin's.

Handbuch zum Nutzen und Besten der Einwanderer.

Erste Auflage.



Herausgegeben

von der

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Mitglieder der Behörde.

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Henry Casson, Staats-Sekretair, } ex officio.

Henry L. Besse, James J. Nelson, Ole Larson.

Henry L. Besse, Präsident. G. W. Bishop, Sekretair.

FIGURE 3.3. Booklet in German by the Wisconsin Board of Immigration, ca. 1895 (Courtesy of the Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison)

mandatory since the eighteenth century—in Wisconsin, seven years of at least twelve weeks per year became mandatory only in 1879. In Germany, the literacy rate was high, education was held in high esteem, and big strides had been made in pedagogy and academic teaching from early childhood to university education. Now the German settlers tried to replicate the schools they had become used to while at the same time taking advantage of the organizational freedoms they found in America.

Most German American children went to public schools. While no comprehensive record of school attendance or language use exists for the early decades of public education in Wisconsin, community publications, state superintendent reports, and personal accounts paint a vivid picture. In rural German communities during the early settlement years, especially in grade schools, public school instruction was mainly in German. Teachers were hired from Germany, and German-language textbooks were first imported and later published in the United States. The Wisconsin School Law of 1848 had stated that “the population of a school district can decide to have other languages taught in connection with the English language,” but it did not specify the language of instruction (Wisconsin State Legislature 1848, 247). A new law in 1854 required that all “major subjects” (without specifying which) should be taught in English. However, since schools were under local control and locally financed, state education laws in these early years had an advisory character and were not enforced, and individual school districts determined their own language of instruction.

In later years, different arrangements developed. For example, families from Württemberg and Hanover, who founded the district school in the town of Honey Creek in Sauk County in 1855, arranged for the first four years of instruction to be exclusively in German. Between 1859 and 1885, “winter school” was taught in English for five months of the year, while “summer school” was taught in German for two months. After 1885, English became the language of instruction all-year round, while German was taught as a language class one hour a day (Jacobi-Dittrich 1988, 150–51).

English-speaking families who found themselves in the minority in German communities often learned and used German and sent their

children to German public schools. Sometimes this led to conflict, as for example when a few Yankee families in Herman, Dodge County, complained to the state superintendent in 1851 that their district school teacher “did not talk plain English” and that their children deserved an “English school and not a forked tongue one” (Jacobi-Dittrich 1988, 124). This particular teacher was replaced for a different reason, but another German-speaking teacher was hired, and it is not known where the Yankee children in question subsequently attended school. On the other hand, Balthasar Meyer, who was born in 1866 in Mequon, Ozaukee County, and went to an English district school for a few years before he attended a German Lutheran school, remembers: “We talked German at home. The trouble [in the district school] was with the language. We had Irish teachers who knew no German and German pupils who knew no English. The Irish families represented by children in school all understood German and their children could talk German. German was the language of the playground. We learned English words, but did not know their meaning” (Jacobi-Dittrich 1988, 159). In other districts—for example in Addison, Washington County, in 1852—there was debate over what books in what language should be purchased for the school library (Jacobi-Dittrich 1988, 127–28).

In general, evidence suggests that the language question was worked out at the community level and that German instruction had a significant role in public education—sometimes for decades after immigration—if there was a critical mass of German-speaking families. For example, in his annual report on the 1863 school year, the superintendent of Ozaukee County, which was largely settled in the 1840s, wrote (Horn 1864, 624):

Not a little trouble and difficulty I had to encounter in many districts where the people desired to have an exclusive German school, or where such school should be kept a portion of the time. You are perhaps aware that nearly one-third of the districts in this county are peopled exclusively with Germans, while in the other districts, with one here and there an exception, the Germans outnumber the other inhabitants by nine to one. All applications for the employment of such [German-speaking] teachers . . . I have made dependent upon the unanimous

wish of the people in the district, after being satisfied that the applicant was otherwise qualified.

In Milwaukee, with a large German-speaking population (one-third were German born in 1867), most German American children went to public school. German parents favored having their language taught in the public schools, but they were even more interested in the improvement of public education and were represented on the district school boards. They were concerned with overcrowding, shortage of equipment, and the limited number of subjects taught, as well as the shortage of trained teachers. In Milwaukee's early years, many teachers with a formal education had been trained in Germany. In the following decades, education initiatives developed at the city level contributed significantly to the establishment of requirements for state-wide teacher certification, the implementation of educational standards and mandatory school attendance, and the addition of subjects such as biology, geography, art, music, and physical education to the curriculum. While the teaching of German was also important to German parents, German never became the language of instruction in Milwaukee public schools. In 1857, the school board passed a resolution "where the need for German education was felt," and in the late 1860s, another resolution stated that German-language classes must be offered as an optional subject in all schools. This proved to be popular with Milwaukee families. As late as 1899, 73 percent of all students in the Milwaukee public school district (including many children who did not have a German background) took German as an optional subject (Goldberg 1995, 178).

Some German families in Milwaukee (mostly businessmen and better-educated immigrants) were looking for a more academic education and more German instruction for their children than the public schools provided. In 1851, they started a *Schulverein* (education society), and in 1853, the German-English Academy, a bilingual school with a broad curriculum and a focus on natural sciences and hands-on and inquiry-based learning, in which all subjects were taught in both languages, was founded. Other such schools opened in the city, but even during their peak year (1867), these schools combined had not more than a

thousand students out of the more than twenty-two thousand school-age children in the city of Milwaukee that year (Pomeroy 1867, 158).<sup>5</sup>

Advancing the education of children, however, demanded improving the education of teachers. In 1866, the state of Wisconsin opened its first four normal schools, but many German Americans, especially in Milwaukee, wanted more. Thus in 1878, a group of German American teachers from around the nation—including those involved in the founding of the German-English Academy—established the National German-American Teachers Seminary in Milwaukee, which strove to provide American schools with well-trained teachers who could teach all subjects in both German and English.

Parochial schools offered another option for German-speaking Americans in nineteenth-century Milwaukee. In 1867, the city had three German Catholic schools and seven German Lutheran schools, all following a traditional faith-based curriculum. Together they served about three thousand students. Instruction in these schools was in German and in English, with generally more German in the Lutheran schools than in the Catholic schools.

Parochial schools were even more popular among German Americans in the countryside, particularly where no German instruction was available in the district schools.<sup>6</sup> In fact, the parochial schools—especially the Lutheran ones—often maintained German the longest, sometimes into the mid-twentieth century.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, Wisconsin's Catholic Church and Lutheran synods established their own German-language school systems. Catholic schools were mostly run by nuns with teaching experience who in the beginning had come from Germany but who were later recruited from among the Sisters of St. Dominic in Racine and the Sisters of St. Francis in Milwaukee. The Lutheran synods, after initially importing teachers from Europe, eventually also established their own teaching academies in the Midwest, of which Northwestern College in Watertown was the most prominent in Wisconsin. Here young men were trained to become teachers and pastors.

While many students attended an all-German parochial school for the entire school year, others joined (mostly) English public schools in the winter and only attended German parochial schools in the summer.

1907

# Zeugnis

- der -

## Evang.-Luth. Friedens-Schule.

- in -

MENOMONIE, WISCONSIN.

für *Frieda Hoerig*

Erklärung: 100 bedeutet ausgezeichnet. 80 bedeutet gut. Unter 70 bedeutet ungenügend.  
 90 sehr gut. 70 befriedigend.

|                           | April | Mai | Juni | Juli | Aug. | Sept.             | Okt. | Nov. | Dez. | Jan. | Feb.              | März             |
|---------------------------|-------|-----|------|------|------|-------------------|------|------|------|------|-------------------|------------------|
| Betragen                  |       | 99  |      |      |      | 98                | 95   | 90   | 96   | 96   |                   | 98               |
| aufmerksamkeit            |       | 97  |      |      |      | 98                | 98   | 98   | 98   | 98   |                   | 98               |
| Fleiß                     |       | 100 |      |      |      | 95                | 100  | 96   | 98   | 99   |                   | 99               |
| Fortschritt               |       | 99  |      |      |      | 98                |      |      | 98   |      |                   | 99               |
| Zuge gefehlt              |       |     |      |      |      |                   |      |      |      | 3    |                   |                  |
| Zu spät gekommen          |       |     |      |      |      |                   |      |      |      |      |                   |                  |
| Vor Schluss entlassen     |       |     |      |      |      |                   |      |      |      |      |                   |                  |
| Rechenräumnis             |       | 100 |      |      |      | 99                | 100  | 98   | 100  | 100  |                   | 100              |
| Biblische Geschichte      |       | 99  |      |      |      | 90                | 95   | 95   | 99   | 95   |                   | 98               |
| Rechnen                   |       | 96  |      |      |      | 96                | 96   | 95   | 95   | 96   |                   | 96               |
| Deutsch                   |       | 100 |      |      |      | 97                | 100  | 100  | 96   | 98   |                   | 100              |
| Englisch                  |       | 97  |      |      |      | 95                | 95   | 95   | 94   | 96   |                   | 96               |
| Schön schreiben           |       | 97  |      |      |      | 95                | 95   | 85   | 85   | 85   |                   | 95               |
| Geographie                |       | 90  |      |      |      | 90                | 100  | 90   | 95   | 95   |                   | 95               |
| Geschichte                |       |     |      |      |      |                   |      |      |      |      |                   |                  |
| Unterschrift der Eltern:  |       |     |      |      |      | <i>J. Hoerig</i>  |      |      |      |      | <i>B. Hoerig</i>  | <i>J. Hoerig</i> |
| Büchergeld:               |       |     |      |      |      |                   |      |      |      |      |                   |                  |
| Unterschrift des Lehrers: |       |     |      |      |      | <i>M. Metzger</i> |      |      |      |      | <i>M. Metzger</i> |                  |

FIGURE 3.4. Report card from the Evangelical Lutheran Peace School in Menomonie, 1907 (Courtesy of the Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison)

In Freistadt, Ozaukee County, a town founded in 1839 by immigrants from Pomerania and considered the oldest German settlement in Wisconsin, Trinity Lutheran Church School served both as a parochial school (in the morning) and district school (in the afternoon), an arrangement that seems to have lasted at least into the 1870s. According to G. R. Brueggemann's church history (1964, 69), "The morning at school was devoted to religion, German, reading, and Arithmetic. In the afternoon English was studied, and the children were strongly encouraged to speak English outside the classroom. High German [standard German] was spoken in the school; however, Plattdeutsch [Low German] was the language spoken in the homes of Pomeranian families, and on the school playground."

In the second half of the nineteenth century, there were many rural communities in Wisconsin whose population largely spoke only German, often in the second or even third generation after immigration, and whose community members could speak both German and English but still preferred to conduct their personal and business life in German. A resident of Lebanon, Dodge County, claimed that in the late 1880s "very few of the second generation understand a word of English" (Jacobi-Dittrich 1988, 161), and in 1910, in Hustisford, Dodge County, U. S. census data and other community documents still identified almost a quarter of the population as monolingual German speakers—more than fifty years after major German immigration to the town had ceased (Wilkerson and Salmons 2008).

In some instances, speakers of German were resented by Anglo-Americans, who blamed the German private schools, particularly the parochial schools, for the stubborn holdouts and "backwardness" of German-speaking communities in Wisconsin. Complaints began to surface in the 1860s, such as in this 1864 report from the Fond du Lac County superintendent for public education (Cundall 1865, 23–24):

A part of the localities of foreign population, especially German, very unwisely as it seems to me, withhold their children from English schools and send them to German schools. In one day I visited three schools containing 11, 4, and 3 pupils respectively, and yet these districts draw public money on 498 scholars. The children were in German

schools! Their love for their vernacular is commendable, and yet it is plain that the German schools thus patronized are a great detriment to the public schools. They ought to retain their language, since a man who can speak two languages is worth two men; but the interests of the State demand a law requiring the presence of all children under a certain age in Public School until they shall have mastered the rudiments of an English education.

In the 1870s and 1880s, as anti-immigrant sentiment grew throughout the country, the call for “Americanization” and education in English grew stronger. In 1889, the Wisconsin legislature passed a law introduced by Dodgeville assemblyman Michael Bennett (Republican), which among other things included more stringent requirements for school attendance and stated that “no school shall be regarded as a school, under this act, unless there shall be taught therein, as part of the elementary education of children, reading, writing, arithmetic and United States history, in the English language” (Wisconsin State Legislature 1889, 729–33). The purpose of the law was ostensibly to set higher education standards across the state, as expressed in the *Madison State Journal* in 1890:

The Bennett Law was conceived by American patriotism to protect and bless the poor boy by assuring him the largest advantages of citizenship, especially by affording him, if the son of foreign parents, an equal chance in life. . . . It is American patriotism to provide that every child born in the land shall have one of the chief attributes of an American—a knowledge of the language of our people. . . . It is American patriotism . . . to demand that no boy, however obscure, shall grow up ignorant of the universal laws of communication in this land; that tongue in which the laws are written that govern him.<sup>7</sup>

German Americans, Norwegian Americans, and other immigrant groups, however, were incensed. They interpreted the Bennett Law as an affront to their culture, their language, and—since by 1889 most German and Norwegian instruction occurred in parochial schools—their religion. They considered themselves as American as any other

citizen and felt their patriotism questioned on the basis of their ethnic background and the language they spoke. In fact, many a father or grandfather had fought earlier in the American Civil War, in some cases in entirely German regiments. They also resented the notion that a German-language education was inferior to an English-language education in public schools or that their children were assumed to be “poor” and disadvantaged in America simply on account of their language. Last but not least, remembering the time when immigrants were promised free expression of their culture and language in Wisconsin, they now saw an infringement of their basic American freedoms. In the end, Wisconsin’s ethnic populations banded together: the Republican Party was voted out of office in 1890, and the Bennett Law was repealed the same year.

But what was it like for a German American child to go to school in nineteenth-century Wisconsin? Learning Standard German was the first challenge for most children. At home, many of them spoke German dialects, often radically different from the German taught in school, and for many children learning to read, write, and speak Standard German meant learning a foreign language. This was expressed by a Pomeranian Low German speaker born in 1903 in Hamburg, Marathon County:

Most of [us here] spoke Low German, but some also spoke High German [standard German]. And when we went to school, most of our pastors came from Germany, and they spoke High German, . . . but all the people in the neighborhood spoke Low German. When we used to go to summer school, then we had to speak High German. We weren’t used to that at home and were always trembling in school when we had to answer [the teachers]. For that reason I decided that my children shouldn’t have to go through that, so I spoke High German with them, but nowadays the summer school and religious instruction are all in English.<sup>8</sup>

Thus children who went to bilingual schools or English winter schools and German summer schools not only had to learn two new spoken languages but also had to deal with two different scripts. German books were printed in the old *Fraktur* style (often called “Gothic”

type in English), while English texts were published in roman type. Writing was even more challenging. For compositions in German, students had to learn a form of the old German script—a way of writing that is so different from the modern version that it is unintelligible for most native speakers of German today—while English texts had to be written in modern cursive.

Educators responded to these challenges, and teaching materials were produced in America specifically for American German-language schools. Many examples can be found in the library and archives of the Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies at the University of Wisconsin–Madison and some can be seen on the institute’s website ([mki.wisc.edu](http://mki.wisc.edu)). Primers for first graders frequently included both languages as well their print types and scripts, such as that shown in figure 3.5, a page from *Witter’s Deutsch-Englische Schreib- und Lese-Fibel* (1905), here introducing the letter *G*. There were special exercise books to learn the German script, such as *Krone’s Deutsche Schulvor-schriften*, published in the late nineteenth century.

Different types of schools published different textbooks in accordance with their teaching philosophies. The textbooks of parochial schools focused on moral upbringing and church doctrine and included Bible passages, prayers, and hymns. The teaching materials for the secular, private German-English schools reflected their founders’ ideals of “inquisitiveness, tolerance, and a free spirit.” Here the German literary classics dominated language instruction; biology and earth sciences were taught with hands-on methods in the field; and music, theater, art, and physical education were integral parts of the curriculum. German-language classes in public schools, especially in the 1880s and 1890s, were often seen by school authorities as the best way to reach new immigrant children and turn them into good American citizens, and the German texts used in public schools reflect this goal in their focus on American themes, history, and values.

Whatever the type of school, textbooks were proudly written for Americans by Americans. For example, when the letter *F* and the word *Fahne*, meaning “flag,” are introduced in *Das ABC in Bildern* (*The ABC in Pictures* [ca. 1905]), the drawing shows an American flag (see fig. 3.6).





FIGURE 3.6. Page from *Das ABC in Bildern*, alphabet book for German American children, ca. 1905 (Courtesy of the Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies at the University of Wisconsin–Madison)

Math problems in the 1870 *Arithmetisches Exempelbuch* use examples from the American world, such as addition questions that ask how many dollars a merchant has spent on his wares. And the *Viertes Lesebuch für die deutschen katholischen Schulen in den Vereinigten Staaten von Nord-Amerika* (*Fourth-Grade Reader for German Catholic Schools in the United States*) published in 1874 includes texts in German on cities “in unserem Vaterland,” which means “in our fatherland,” from Baltimore to Milwaukee, as well as a five-page story on the newly established “national park in the territories of Montana and Wyoming” (Yellowstone National Park, established in 1872), which proudly concludes with “Thank you to Congress, which made this park the property of our nation and [provided a place] where we hope many people will find time to relax and improve their health” (*Viertes Lesebuch* 1874, 298–302, my translation).

At the turn of the twenty-first century, 42.6 percent of Wisconsinites claimed “German” as their primary ancestry, but less than 1 percent spoke German at home (U.S. Census Bureau 2000) (see fig. 3.7).

Anti-German sentiment during World War I has often been blamed for the demise of the German language in America, for the disappearance of German schools, and the decline of German-language instruction. Indeed, in Milwaukee’s public schools enrollment in German classes dropped from thirty thousand students in 1917 to twelve thousand students in 1918 after anti-German propaganda began, and in 1919, all foreign-language instruction (not just German) was banned from city elementary schools. In 1917, the German-English Academy felt pressure and changed its name to Milwaukee University School. Several years earlier, however, it had already dropped its bilingual teaching model and was offering German only as an optional language class. World War I-era anti-German reactions thus only accelerated a process of language decline that was already well under way (Nollendorfs 1988, 184).

Immigrant languages often do not survive into future generations, especially if there is no continuing immigration. They may last longer in homogeneous rural settlement areas and in tight-knit ethnic city neighborhoods, but eventually they disappear there, too.<sup>9</sup> By 1919, more than one generation after the last major wave of German-speaking

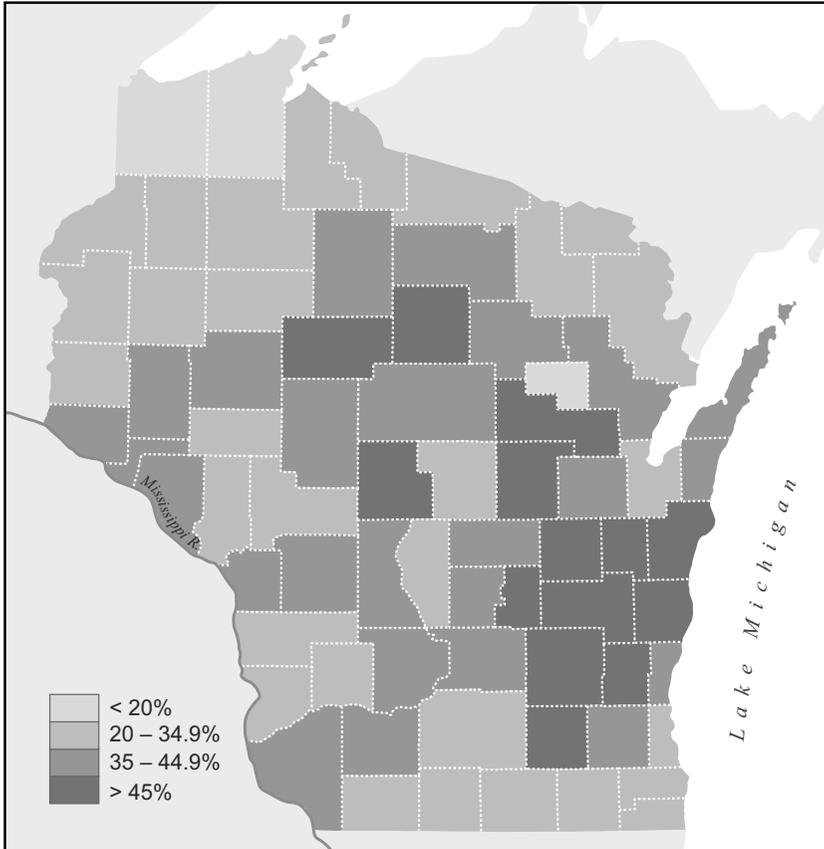


FIGURE 3.7. Percentage reporting German as first ancestry in 2006–10, by county (Data from American Community Survey 2006–10, table B04001, “First Ancestry Reported”)

immigrants had arrived in Wisconsin, most German Americans in urban areas had assimilated to such a degree that they did not insist on German education for their children anymore, even if they still spoke German at home and in their clubs and churches and still read German papers and books. Furthermore, already two decades earlier, teachers who taught in bilingual programs and programs in which German was an option (such as in the Milwaukee public schools) noticed differences among their pupils with a German background: those who were fluent

speakers, on the one hand, and those who benefited from “formal grammar and translations” like the Anglo-Americans, on the other (Toth 1990, 73–76). Nevertheless, despite anti-German sentiment in the rest of the country, many parochial schools in rural Wisconsin continued to teach at least part of their curriculum, summer school, or Sunday school in German, in some cases until the 1940s. In this environment German Americans were often bilingual, but the German language continued to be central to the fabric of local society.

The history of German schools in Wisconsin reminds us that education in immigrant languages has a long tradition here. It refutes the myth that immigrants in the past immediately gave up their native tongues in favor of English and casts doubt on the notion that instruction in languages other than English or bilingual instruction is of lower quality. The German American experience also shows that it takes a critical number of people as well as certain community structures and dynamics to keep ethnic cultures and languages alive. The role of the German language in the larger community established the basis for its use in schools. Still, those who had hoped that formal school instruction in and by itself would help maintain German among second- and third-generation German Americans were disappointed to see it give way to English. Nowadays, there are no longer substantial groups of children in Wisconsin who speak German at home. When German is taught in Wisconsin schools today, it is neither to support language maintenance nor to maintain ties to a community’s heritage but to enrich the education of monolingual English-speaking children and to introduce them to cultures other than their own.

#### NOTES

1. In 1890, at the height of German language presence in the state, 519,000 Wisconsinites (31 percent of the population) were foreign born, half of them hailing from German-speaking countries (U.S. Census Bureau 1890).

2. Small Norwegian Lutheran schools were scattered around the countryside and dominated education in many Norwegian American rural settlements in Wisconsin (such as Koshkonong, Muskego, and Trempealeau), in some cases to the end of the nineteenth century (Paulson and Bjork 1938, 76). One example in the Polish American community is Sacred Heart Polish Catholic

Parish and School in the town of Polonia in Portage County founded by Polish immigrants between 1872 and 1874. Until the mid-1890s, five Franciscan Sisters from Cracow, Poland, taught children from Portage and neighboring counties in Polish, while one American teacher provided English as a second language instruction (Goc 1992, 50–51). The use of Polish in the school and church services was slowly phased out, and by 1950, Sacred Heart had dropped the Polish language completely (Goc 1992, 136).

3. In 1848, popular uprisings led by students, intellectuals and workers spread through the thirty-nine German states. The revolutionaries opposed the aristocracy and fought for representation, German national unity, living wages, and freedom of the press, assembly, and religion. By 1849, however, their efforts had failed, the existing autocratic structures remained in place, and many disillusioned participants left Europe.

4. A detailed account of the first “Wisconsin Office of Emigration” can be found in Strohschänk and Thiel 2005.

5. According to the superintendent’s report of that year, 9,424 students were enrolled in public schools and 6,429 in private schools. Since not all enrolled students actually attended school, the daily attendance rate in all city schools was estimated at 52 percent. In 1869, Milwaukee had twenty public schools (grades 1 through 9), one public high school, and thirty-seven private schools (Pomero 1869, 107).

6. In Norwegian American communities, Lutheran schools that provided instruction in Norwegian predominated. Norwegians who chose parochial over public schools gave three main reasons: the parochial schools taught in Norwegian (unlike in early German settlements, Norwegian teachers were rare in public schools), they provided religious instruction, and the quality of education offered by them was far better than that offered by the public schools. Lutheran schools dwelled on the high quality of the teaching in order to attract those Norwegian families who were otherwise tempted by the “free” public schools. According to Koshkonong resident A.C. Preus, writing in the Norwegian weekly *Emigranten* in 1858, “To secure good schools it is not enough to have good laws, good school buildings, and plenty of money. . . . The most important thing is to have good teachers. . . . No external advantages can make a poor teacher into a good one and therefore a poor school into an efficient school. Now throughout the whole West where the Norwegians have settled I am acquainted with the condition of the American schools, . . . and I maintain without reservation that in general they are as bad as it is possible for them to be and still deserve the name of schools. Why? Because nine out of ten teachers are totally incapable of conducting a decent school. For the most part the teachers are young people who themselves are just out of school—perhaps a few years too soon—often lacking in knowledge, but more often lacking in those qualities which are necessary for guiding and teaching a group of children. . . .

If the school were able to retain these young people . . . , they could perhaps through experience and diligence improve and become useful teachers. But . . . rarely does a teacher remain for more than one term—that is, from three to six months. . . . Let it be said that one occasionally finds really capable teachers, and sometimes we are fortunate enough to have Norwegians who are able to conduct an English school. But as long as we see it in the hands of thoughtless timeservers, . . . we regard it with fear and suspicion and do not send our children there. For a bad school is worse than no school at all” (Paulson and Bjork 1938, 76–77).

7. A clipping of this article can be found in the Wisconsin Historical Society Library Collection, Bennett Law Scrapbook, 1889–90.

8. The interview was conducted by Jürgen Eichhoff on June 18, 1968, and is located in the Max Kade Institute North American German Dialect Archive, EIC 20. The region was settled by immigrants from Pomerania in the late 1860s, and the dialect is spoken in some homes still today.

9. Exceptions are cases in which the language is integral to a religious community, as in the cases of Pennsylvania Dutch in Old Order Amish communities and Yiddish in Hasidic communities.