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Max Kade Institute Friends Newsletter

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

MKI—Twenty-Five Years!

by Cora Lee Kluge, MKI Director



Carstens, Shain, and Markel in 1983.

The Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies will celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of its founding with a number of activities being planned for the coming academic year. Twenty-five years is a long time, but some of us still well remember the German-American Symposium held October 12 to 16, 1983, which marked not only the German-American Tricentennial, but also the founding of our MKI. Others may perhaps be interested in this historical report on events of those early days and the quarter-century we now have in our past. And certainly all of us should mark our calendars to save time for various activities on the agenda for the months ahead.

The MKI was officially dedicated at a ceremony that took place in the Wisconsin Memorial Union Theater at three o'clock on Wednesday, October 12. Because Dr. Karl Carstens, President of the Federal Republic of Germany, was in attendance, security was a major concern: members of the press to be present were checked in advance by the Secret Service, and no one was admitted without an invitation. What was taking place—namely, the dedication of the MKI—was widely viewed as having broad implications for modern German-American

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political relations. Thus demonstrators showed up in front of the Memorial Union to protest the deployment of U.S. missiles in Germany. It was a peaceful demonstration, at least compared with those the UW had known in the 1960s and 1970s: signs were displayed and statements read, most in support of peace, but a few alluding to Germany's Nazi past. Most onlookers viewed the founding of the MKI as an event that pointed to a productive common future.

The photograph featured on page 1, which can be found at the MKI, was taken at a reception following the dedication ceremony in what is today known as the Lakeshore Room of the Pyle Center. It shows, from left to right, Dr. Karl Carstens, President of the Federal Republic of Germany; Chancellor Irving Shain of the University of Wisconsin-Madison; and Dr. Erich Markel, President of the Max Kade Foundation, whose founding grant of \$600,000 made the new MKI possible.

The days that followed featured dinners, concerts, speakers, and panel discussions. Highlights included appearances by former U.S. senator J. William Fulbright and Frank P. Zeidler, former

mayor of Milwaukee. A wide range of topics was addressed: international relations, German-American scientific cooperation, *Auswandererlieder* (emigration songs), and more.

The purpose of the new MKI as reported in 1983 was "to serve as a base for those studying the

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Notes from the Board

by Fran Luebke

How exciting it is to have the annual MKI Friends meeting among the Pomeranians of the Wausau area this year, a visit that will include a tour of places like Naugart and Berlin. My husband should feel totally at home! After years of doing genealogical research on the German branches of my family, we hoped finally to take on his family last fall by visiting Naugard/Nowogard, one of the ancestral towns of the Brandenburg/Luebke family. Before our trip, we worked for weeks with a modern map of Poland that indicated the pre-World War II German names of towns. The gem I was looking for was the "Birkhof" (Birk=birch; Hof=farmstead) near Gross Dübsow/Dobieszewo where his great-great-grandfather was born. It was not on the map.

A search of the Web revealed the existence of a detailed older map that might be difficult to acquire. When I mentioned my frustration to Kevin Kurdylo, he said, "Oh, we have some maps that might be of help." He brought out exactly the map I needed, and the Birkhof was there, on a tiny, circular road! By comparing this with our present-day map, we saw where it *should* be.

Having arrived in Poland, we headed out towards Gross Dübsow. There was a small dirt lane in a grove of birch trees that led off to the right. That *had* to be it! At the end of the lane was a circle of houses and old Fachwerk barns surrounded by a birch forest. An older gentleman appeared in the driveway of his home. We showed him the old map, pointing to the word "Birkhof" and to the ground. He studied it for a minute, nodded "yes," pointed to the ground, and smiled. My husband was home. He was the first member of the Brandenburg family to set foot there in one hundred and thirty-five years.

Max Kade Institute

The Newsletter of the Friends of the Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies is published quarterly at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. It is edited and produced by Kevin Kurdylo with the assistance of the Newsletter Committee of the Board of Directors and is printed by Great Graphics, Inc. The Newsletter appears quarterly in March, June, September, and December. Submissions are invited and should be sent directly to:

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

background and history of German-speaking immigration and how it has influenced and enriched American culture.” Some of its goals were to be the establishment of a reference and research library; the collection, restoration, and displaying of artifacts of German-American culture; the preparation of material for schools and other audiences; conferences and workshops; and assistance for scholars.* This agenda reflects the notion that the mission of the MKI should be both to serve scholarship and research, and to raise awareness of America’s German heritage. Some felt that

the field of German-American studies was to focus on the stories and contributions of immigrants from German-speaking lands up to about World War I; others saw it as a new way to approach

America’s development through a multifaceted interdisciplinarity that characterizes much of what we do today.

Over the years, the varied interests of different MKI directors shaped the Institute in multiple ways. The directors (excluding several short-term acting directors) include: Jürgen Eichhoff (1983–1984), Charlotte Brancaforte (1984–1991), Henry Geitz, Jr. (1991–1997), Joseph Salmons (1997–2002), Mark Loudon (director 2002–2004, and co-director with Kluge 2004–2006), and Cora Lee Kluge (2006–present). Though all have been members of the UW Department of German, the general field of specialization of Eichhoff, Salmons, and Loudon is linguistics, while Brancaforte, Geitz, and Kluge work in areas of literature and culture.

Through the years, the MKI has sponsored or co-sponsored symposia and conferences on topics including: Mathilde Franziska Anneke (1984); The

Forty-Eighters (1986); The German-American Press (1987); Charles Sealsfield (1988); A Celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the Constitution of the German Federal Republic (1989); German Influences on U.S. Education to 1917 (1990); The German Language in America 1683–1991 (1991); Aldo Leopold (1994); Defining Tensions: Germans in Wisconsin (1998); German-Jewish Identities in America (2000); The German Experience with the Land in Wisconsin (2000); Sounds of Two World (2002); Tales of Contact and Change

(2004); and (co-sponsored with other groups) The German Language and Immigration in International Perspective (2006). In addition to this, numerous mini-conferences, workshops, lectures,

and exhibits have been held.

Our publications list includes—in addition to several collections of papers from our conferences—titles such as *Witness to History* (von Elbe, 1989); *The German-Speaking 48ers of Wauertown* (Wallman, 1992); *The Golden Signpost* (tr. Thomson, 1993); *German-American Artists in Early Milwaukee* (Merrill, 1997); *German-American Urban Culture* (Merrill, 2000); *A Word Atlas of Pennsylvania German* (Seifert, 2001); *Dictionary of German Names* (Bahlow, tr. Gentry, 2002); *Pickled Herring and Pumpkin Pie* (Davidis, 2002); *Land Without Nightingales* (ed. Bohlman and Holzappel, 2002); *German-Jewish Identities in America* (ed. Mauch and Salmons, 2003); *German-American Immigration and Ethnicity* (ed. Kamphoefner and Helbich, 2004); *The Wisconsin Office of Emigration* (Strohschänk and

We are honored by the presence of
the President of the Federal Republic of Germany
Prof. Dr. Karl Carstens
on October 12, 1983
on the Campus of the University of Wisconsin–Madison

From the 1983 German-American Symposium
brochure.

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“Kein Land der Erde bietet den deutschen Auswanderern mehr an. . .”: Duden in Missouri

by Kevin Kurdylo, MKI Librarian

The Library at the Max Kade Institute has many books published to help German-speaking immigrants understand various aspects of their new lives in America. Past “Collection Features” have looked at books that address farming, medicine, cooking, courtship and marriage, learning English, becoming a citizen, and legal issues. The Library also contains guidebooks intended for people who had not yet left Europe, to

encourage them to come to America (or to some other countries). These contain advice on choosing a destination, how to get from Europe to America and how to travel within America, what to bring, how to avoid unscrupulous characters along the way, buying land and equipment, and so on. These guidebooks were published in Germany, such as our 1829 edition of Gottfried Duden’s

Bericht über eine Reise nach den westlichen Staaten Nordamerika’s und einen mehrjährigen Aufenthalt am Missouri (in den Jahren 1824, 25, 26 und 1827) (“Report of a journey to the western states of North America and a stay of several years along the Missouri [during the years 1824, ’25, ’26, and 1827]”). This work has been called “the most important piece of literature in the history of German immigration” and a “masterpiece of promotional literature,” because of the effect it had upon the people living in German states at the time. Duden’s book helped create a favorable impression of America’s interior frontier, attracting thousands of Germans to the Midwest, and in particular to Missouri.

Duden was born May 19, 1785, in Remscheid, in today’s North Rhine-Westphalia, to a family of some prominence. He eventually became a lawyer and

attorney in the Prussian civil service, where his duties exposed him to the hardships experienced by the masses in his region. Moved by the plight of his countrymen, he investigated the causes of their suffering and came to the conclusion that the major problems of the German people were caused by overpopulation (*Übervölkerung*) and an assortment of related social forces, including poverty and political oppression.

While acknowledging that a certain population strength was crucial to maintaining a society, Duden felt that planned emigration could benefit both those who elected to leave and those who remained behind. America, he decided, was the best place for German settlers to make a new home.



“Duden’s Hill” in Warren County, Missouri.

Duden read all the travel literature and reports on America that were then available, seeking information about which area would be suitable for Germans with respect to climate, soil fertility, cost of land, and accessibility to waterways for transportation; details on establishing a settlement and the problems settlers would face; and other essential facts. He found information, but not the helpful instructions he had hoped for. He categorized the existing literature as either overflowing with “poetic embellishments and lavish praise” (*dichterische Ausschmückungen und verschwenderisches Lob*), usually in regard to America’s political institutions, or else colored by a depressing attitude, “the result of the author’s disappointed hopes” (*die Folge getäuschter Hoffnungen der Verfasser*).

Discerning from published reports that higher

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News Briefs

What's in Stettin, Hamburg, and Berlin?

We are! Join us—not in Europe, but in Marathon County [Wausau and environs], Wisconsin—for the 2008 **MKI Friends Annual Meeting and Dinner**. This year's event, graciously hosted by the Pommerscher Verein Central Wisconsin and the Marathon County Historical Society, includes a visit to the Historical Society's exhibit of *Early Wausau*, a tour of the Wausau area's unique Pomeranian and Pittsburgh-German settlement history, and a taste of how this heritage continues today.

Friends of the MKI Annual Meeting and Dinner

Saturday, May 17th, 12:00 p.m.–8:00 p.m.

Program:

12:00–1:30

Annual meeting of the Friends

1:30–6:00

Guided coach tour (site visits and refreshments)

Guides: Gary Gisselman and Don Zamzow

6:30–8:00

Dinner at Hereford & Hops, Wausau

Transportation from Milwaukee and Madison: For an additional fee of \$25, round-trip bus transportation will be available from Milwaukee and Madison.

Registration form with complete details have been mailed to MKI Friends; the form may also be printed on-line: <http://csumc.wisc.edu/mki/PDF/2008_Annual_meeting.pdf>
Questions? Call 608.262.7546

Bring a friend, make a Friend!
Dinner purchase includes free 2008 Friends of MKI membership for *new* Friends.

Final 2008 Wisconsin Englishes Presentations

Monday, May 19, at 6:30 p.m.

Rhineland District Library
(106 N. Stevens Street)

Thursday, May 29, at 6:30 p.m.

Appleton Public Library
(225 N. Oneida St.)

MKI 25th Anniversary Kick-Off

Thursday October 23, at 6:30 p.m.

in the Memorial Union
UW–Madison

Guest speaker: Prof. Emeritus Frank Trommler,
University of Pennsylvania

Reception to follow.

**Announcing the MKI Blog:
(Nearly) Everyone's an Immigrant
<http://maxkade.blogspot.com/>**

We've started a blog to celebrate our 25 years and showcase some of the work we're doing. We also hope this will help us all examine the influence immigrants have had on America—after all, except for the indigenous people of the Americas, we're all of immigrant stock.

We post some of the ideas that run through our heads;
if you find them to be of interest, please offer comments of your own.
Please visit our blog!

latitudes would be too cold and the southern regions too hot for settlers from central Europe, Duden theorized that the area along the Ohio River and the lower Missouri River might be an ideal location for new settlements, but he could find no comprehensive reports dealing with the region. Boldly, he made the decision to assess the situation personally, and in 1824 he set out with Ludwig Eversmann for America. They journeyed from Baltimore to Wheeling, then to Cincinnati and St. Louis, ending up in the frontier lands of Missouri and perhaps thinking the German equivalent of “show me.” Duden and Eversmann bought adjoining farms in what is now Warren County near the present-day town of Dutzow, Missouri. Duden began both to immerse himself in life on the western frontier and to write about it; his aim was to write a comprehensive guide based on his personal experiences that would supply new immigrants with practical and detailed information not found in other books. He presented his adventures in the form of thirty-six personal letters, a style that imparts a sense of immediacy and credibility. Filled with detailed descriptions of every aspect of life on the frontier—clearing the land, fencing, planting, harvesting, the danger of Indian attacks, the annoyances of ticks and plagues of mosquitoes, as well as a few snake stories and tales of hunting—Duden’s *Bericht* strikes readers today as realistic, though it was criticized in the nineteenth century as perhaps overly positive.

It turns out Duden was blessed with mild winters and temperate summers during his stay. He was also able to hire help on his farm, and thus his life as a gentleman farmer was a more idyllic experience than it would be for most new immigrants. Freed from much of the day-to-day drudgery of farm life, Duden was able to devote time to reading, writing, and walking among the forests and

meadows of Missouri. His romantic descriptions of an Eden-like landscape sometimes threaten to eclipse the practical advice which he conscientiously imparted. Indeed, it has been said that Duden’s life in Missouri was a prototype for the “Latin Farmers,” those highly educated German-speaking immigrants who often had little practical knowledge of working the land, but whose culture made them a significant group among the German-American population.

Duden’s *Bericht* is full of fascinating information, too much to mention here. One item of note is his somewhat troubling examination of slavery, which he writes of in the “Continuation of the Twentieth Letter.” Attempting to subject the issue to “calm investigation” (*ruhige Prüfung*), he lists numerous arguments—some favorably comparing the

Den 18. Juny 1826.

Sie werden sich schwerlich vorstellen, wie viel Vergnügen mir das wilde Gefieder dieses Landes macht. Daß es in Nordamerika keine gute Singvögel gebe, ist eine lächerliche Uebertreibung.

“You can scarcely imagine how much I delight in the wild birds of this country. That there are no good songbirds in North America is a laughable exaggeration.”

existence of American slaves to European peasant laborers—and concludes that he would not necessarily reproach Europeans who held slaves in lands where slavery exists (“*[Ich kann] nicht*

unbedingt tadeln, wenn Europäer in Ländern, wo Sklaverei besteht, Sklaven halten.”) A slave or two, he points out, would greatly reduce the amount of work required to farm the land successfully. Duden espouses other distasteful opinions on issues such as intermarriage among the races, the inadvisability of a mass emancipation of slaves, and the effects of climate upon intelligence. However, he finds the situation in the far southern states to be reprehensible because of the way slaves were treated on the large-scale plantations. This leads him to suggest that owning slaves, especially where mistreatment occurs, presents a danger to the moral nature of the masters. Although Duden is viewed as an apologist for slavery, the majority of the Germans who settled in Missouri were against it.

Duden favored agriculture as an occupation partially because he felt a relationship with nature cleansed and fortified the soul, but also from a practical perspective: a greater amount of land

Friends Profile: Hank Geitz

by Antje Petty, MKI Assistant Director

As we reflect on the Max Kade Institute's (and the Friends') first 25 years, we think of the people who were with us from the very beginning. Hank Geitz has not only been a Friend for all those years, but was also one of the members of the MKI's founding Executive Committee and a director of the Institute from 1990 to 1997.

It all started when his friend and colleague in the German Department at UW–Madison, Lester (Smoky) Seifert, had the vision of an Institute for German-American Studies on the Madison campus, outside of the German Department. Hank was on board immediately. A professor of German focusing on nineteenth-century German literature, culture, and history, he had been interested in German immigration for a long time—in part because of his own family history.

Hank grew up in Philadelphia, the son of an immigrant father from the German state of Hessen and a mother who had come to the United States from the Banat. His mother's family's history in particular had always fascinated him.

Arriving in 1926 as a young woman, she was the last one in her family to emigrate. This immigration to North America was not the family's first migration, however. A century earlier, Hank's great-grandfather had moved his extended family from Bohemia to the Banat. Hank does not know why, and the phenomenon of double migration that is actually not uncommon among immigrants to the United States became a strong research interest of his. His mother's immigration story had another wrinkle: she had originally come to Canada and decided a little later to join her brother and his family

in Philadelphia—just by walking over the border. In 1942 this came back to haunt her in the form of visits from the immigration authorities. Fortunately she was able to legalize her status and later became a naturalized citizen.

At home the Geitz family spoke German, but his mother also spoke fluent Hungarian, had many Hungarian friends, cooked Hungarian dishes, and kept various cultural traditions from the Banat.



Hank Geitz

Maybe it was this early exposure that awakened Hank's interest in different places and cultures around the world. Later in life, Hank led the UW International Studies Program in Budapest and traveled to India, Nepal, and Thailand. He is very appreciative, stating "I got to see and do things that I would have never been able to do otherwise."

Originally, his mother had planned that he should become a dentist, but Hank—by now an undergraduate at the University of Pennsylvania—"didn't really like to inflict pain" and majored in German instead. In 1952, having received a TAship

in German from the University of Nebraska, he and his young wife (and high school sweetheart) moved west. Two years later, with his M.A. in hand, they had to head back to Philadelphia: Hank had to answer the draft. Because of his language skills, he was initially placed with the Army Security Agency, but that assignment was short-lived, because he had close family members who were foreigners and lived abroad. Because he could not get a high-level security clearance, he spent his military service

Thiel, 2005); *Wisconsin German Land and Life* (ed. Bungert et al., 2006); *Other Witnesses: An Anthology* (ed. Kluge, 2007).

We look back and see that MKI has undertaken and supported a great number of projects and activities over the years. We look forward to changes: we need more room and hope to have a new headquarters before very much longer, and we continue to seek financial support for larger projects. At the moment, however, we celebrate. The first event will be on Thursday, October 23, 2008, and will feature a lecture by Professor Emeritus Frank Trommler of the University of Pennsylvania, a distinguished Germanist and foremost scholar on the study of German culture and history, followed by a reception. Then from April 2 to 4, 2009, we will host a symposium on German-American Studies. In addition to this, we are planning other activities throughout the coming academic year, all of which will be part of our big anniversary festivities. Please save us time, and mark these dates in your calendars!

Note

* *Wisconsin Alumnus*, vol. 85, no. 2 (January/February, 1984) 20. See also the Interdisciplinary Executive Committee's *Statement on the Mission of the Institute* (1983), which is quoted at length in a "Report of the MKI for German-American Studies ad hoc Review Committee" (March 30, 1989).

years in the personnel departments of the Army Headquarters Company in Massachusetts.

After his army stint, Hank was drawn back to academia, and in 1956 he entered the graduate program at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, receiving his Ph.D. in German in 1961. And after a short time at the University of Ridgmont, he returned to Madison as a faculty member. During his years as MKI Director, Hank especially enjoyed hosting symposiums on topics as diverse as "German Immigration and Double Migration" and "Aldo Leopold." He was also instrumental in moving the MKI monograph series forward with a number of different publications, including *The German-American Press*, (MKI, 1992), which he edited himself.

Now looking back at the years since his departure from the directorship, Hank says that he is "very happy with the way MKI has developed." He emphasizes that he is proud of what Joe Salmons, Mark Loudon, and Cora Lee Kluge have done at the Institute. He is also grateful to the Friends, who in his words have always been "enormously supportive, very interested, good people." We also appreciate what Hank has done for the MKI and the Friends. Thank you, Hank!



Exchange students from Germany meet President Karl Carstens, October 12, 1983.

Photo: UW News Service.

Collection Feature continued from page 6

could be purchased more cheaply in the country than in cities such as St. Louis.* Advising prospective German emigrants to organize emigration societies and, once in America, to establish close-knit farming communities, Duden envisioned the evolution of transplanted “homelands” that would serve as centers of German culture. Although he had originally hoped to help the struggling poor in his homeland, his advice in the *Bericht* especially encouraged monied and cultured Germans to emigrate, for money—as well as a sufficient number of cooperative individuals in a group—was a practical necessity to ensure success in the frontier of America.

Convinced that Missouri was the ideal place for German settlement, Duden returned home and, at his own expense, published the first edition of his report. It was an instant success, and it seemed to achieve exactly what Duden had hoped for—beginning in the 1830s, thousands of German immigrants arrived in the Midwest, and especially in the lower Missouri River valley. Indeed, German immigrants to Missouri are often called “followers of Duden.”

Unfortunately, not all of the immigrants read Duden’s *Bericht* in quite the same way. Lured into false expectations perhaps by the idyllic and romantic qualities of his writing, many failed to heed his practical and cautionary advice. Faced with the back-breaking work of clearing dense forests, with harsh winters and sweltering summers, some wrote negative reports blaming Duden for their misfortune. Early emigration societies failed to take root, and Duden was denounced as a dreamer. One prospective emigrant, the poet Nikolaus Lenau, was smitten by Duden’s writings, but the reality of life in America—the lack of familiar culture and the Americans’ devotion to material gain—instead induced him to write the famous lines “*Der Amerikaner hat keinen Wein, keine Nachtigall! Mag er bei einem Glase Cider seine Spottdrossel behorchen, mit seinen Dollars in der Tasche, ich setze mich lieber zum Deutschen und höre bei seinem Wein die liebe Nachtigall, wenn auch die Tasche ärmer ist.*” (“The American has no wine, no nightingale! Let him listen to his mocking-bird

while he drinks his glass of cider, with his dollars in his pocket. I’d rather sit down with a German while he drinks his wine and listen to a beloved nightingale, even if my pocket is poorer.”)

Duden was well aware of his critics, and he sought to answer them in subsequent editions of his *Bericht*. He restated his advice that successful emigration required advance preparation and organization, sufficient funds, and a select group of people, but he also suggested that emigrants who failed in America simply lacked common sense. He continued to believe that Missouri offered boundless opportunities for the German immigrant, right up to his death in 1855. While a “New Germany” never materialized in Missouri’s wilderness, Duden’s writings strongly influenced the development of such towns as Hermann, founded by the German Philadelphia Settlement Society. Often called “Little Germany,” the town prided itself on maintaining German culture well into the twentieth century.

Duden’s report of his time spent in America is a splendid example of how a non-English speaker saw America; it is American history in German. For those who would like to read more of Duden’s work, I highly recommend the skillful translation published in 1980 by the State Historical Society of Missouri and University of Missouri Press (see “Sources consulted” below).

Note

* Nevertheless, St. Louis became a refuge for many dispirited Germans who failed at pioneer farming in Missouri, as well as a desired destination for newly arriving Germans in the decades leading up to the Civil War. It was here that Germany’s poverty-stricken artisans and peasants could find employment, for the city needed brewers, cabinetmakers, tanners, saddlers, shoemakers, and blacksmiths.

Sources consulted

Duden, Gottfried. *Report on a Journey to the Western States of North America and a Stay of Several Years Along the Missouri (during the years 1824, ‘25, ‘26, and 1827)*. Edited and translated by James W. Goodrich, George H. Kellner, Elsa Nagel, Adolf E. Schroeder, and W. M. Senner. Columbia & London: The State Historical Society of Missouri and University of Missouri Press, 1980.

Schroeder, Adolf E. “To Missouri, Where the Sun of Freedom Shines: Dream and Reality on the Western Frontier.” In *The German-American Experience in Missouri: Essays in Commemoration of the Tricentennial of German Immigration to America, 1683–1983*. Marshall, Howard Wight and James W. Goodrich, eds. Publications of the Missouri Cultural Heritage Center, no. 2. Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri-Columbia, 1985, pp. 1-24.

New from MKI:

German Words—American Voices

Deutsche Wörter—Amerikanische Stimmen

“Deutsch zu sein, bedeutet für mich, Deutsch zu sprechen. . . .”
(What being German means to me is being able to speak German. . .)

Such is a typical response to the question “Was ist deutsch?” (What is German?) posed by the German weekly newspaper *Die Zeit* in a recent online survey. To be sure, the ability to speak German seems centrally important if one wants to feel a part of German society. But what does it mean to speak German outside of Europe?

In *German Words—American Voices* we listen to speakers of German from across the United States, Americans quite distant from their European roots in both time and space. Each is a fluent speaker of some variety of German, but as Americans at least two generations removed from immigration, all are also fluent English-speakers. Indeed, to speak a language other than English that has been passed down from one’s ancestors does not mean that one is somehow frozen in the past. Speakers of heritage languages are no less American than their English-monolingual fellow citizens; they merely have a somewhat deeper awareness of where they come from.

The sound clips featured in *German Words—American Voices* hail from the three regions of the United States where varieties of German have survived the longest after immigration: Wisconsin, Texas, and Pennsylvania. Wisconsin has the distinction of being the proverbial buckle on the “German Belt” across the American Midwest:

over forty percent of the state’s inhabitants claim German ancestry. Deep in the heart of Texas, German speakers in communities such as Fredericksburg and New Braunfels have also left an indelible mark on the cultural landscape. And Pennsylvania is where Pennsylvania Dutch developed, which is both the oldest German-derived language in North America

and one of the very few American heritage languages whose speaker population is growing.

...[W]hile is it true that many of our sound clips are now historical documents, the stories they relate are timeless and give us all, as listeners, a sense of the richness that characterizes the American ethnic experience, past and present.

(From the booklet accompanying the *German Words—American Voices* CD, compiled and edited by Mark L. Loudon.)

The CD and booklet are free, but we must charge a shipping and handling fee:

For mailings within the U.S.

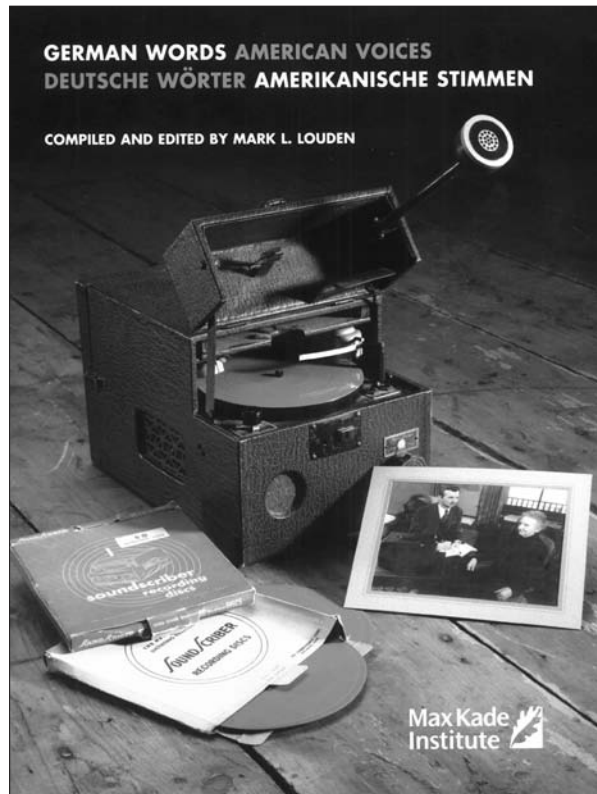
and to Canada, please send a check for \$3.00.

For all other international mailings, the cost is \$5.00.

Make checks out to:

Friends of the Max Kade Institute
901 University Bay Dr., Madison WI 53705
608-262-7546

Funding for this project was provided by the Federal Republic of Germany/Chicago Consulate General.



German-American Women's Organizations in Nineteenth-Century Milwaukee

by Kevin M. Kurdylo, MKI Librarian

In October 2007, Anke Ortlepp—then Deputy Director of the German Historical Institute in Washington, DC—presented a University Lecture on the UW–Madison campus entitled “German-American Women’s Clubs in Nineteenth-Century Milwaukee: Constructing Women’s Roles and Ethnic Identity.” Unlike past studies of German-American *Vereine* (social organizations) that focused only on men’s groups, Ortlepp’s research reveals that German-American women in Milwaukee established more than 300 organizations between 1844 and 1914. These organizations encompassed a wide range of activities, including charity clubs, school and kindergarten associations, labor unions, political associations, social clubs, singing and musical societies, mutual support groups, church organizations, and auxiliaries for Turner societies. They were influential in the process of identity formation among German Americans, providing a means for German-American women to participate in the public arena, positively affect their community, and contribute to the ways in which German Americans perceived themselves and were seen by others. Ortlepp highlighted a few examples of women’s organizational activism: in ladies auxiliaries of Turner societies, the Freethinkers, and political and labor organizations.

By the early 1890s Milwaukee boasted eight gymnastic societies, the oldest being the *Milwaukee Turnverein*, founded in 1853. Although the male *Turnvereine* in America promoted physical and mental fitness along with a political stance of liberty and equality for all citizens, their social attitudes were still patriarchal. Especially in Milwaukee, women were refused equal membership in the Turners up through the 1890s, and instead were idealized as mothers, housewives, and supporters of men. Rather

than organizing independently, women established women’s auxiliaries to affiliate with male *Turners*. The stated aim of the Ladies’ Auxiliary of the Milwaukee *Turnverein*, founded in 1882, was not physical fitness but instead to support the male organization “in all its ethical endeavors and matters of principle, to promote its school and to stand by its side in social and financial matters.” Fundraising was a major activity, and the auxiliaries hosted events from informal gatherings to lavish balls and theater performances. The records show that the “lion’s share of the money raised” from such activities was donated to support the *Turners*. In fact, Ortlepp claims the male organizations would have been hard-pressed to survive if it were not for the women’s efforts to raise financial support.

In addition, the women’s auxiliaries did play a significant part in promoting German heritage and celebrating ethnic community. It is evident the *Turners* were concerned that assimilation of German-Americans into the American mainstream would eventually

lead to the disappearance of their ethnic group. A clear manifestation of this loss was the increasing number of *Turner* youth who preferred to use the English language over German. Women, especially because of their roles as mothers, were seen as being the prime mediators of language, and so the auxiliaries developed plans for a language school that would, it was hoped, maintain the German language and with it, a sense of ethnic identity.

Auxiliary members also were involved in projects that went beyond those of the gymnastic societies. For example, they lent their support to both the Schiller-Goethe and the Steuben Memorial Associations, which sought to erect statues of Germany’s finest poets as well as Baron von Steuben, who helped George



Anke Ortlepp

Washington win the Revolutionary War. Such projects drew the attention of the public to German contributions to American history and culture.

Although ethnic identity among Milwaukee *Turners* was based on traditional interpretations of gender roles and relations, Milwaukee's large and diverse German community allowed women to organize in ways that transcended their roles as wives and mothers. The activities of the Freethinkers women's group illustrates this point.

The *Frauenverein der Freien Gemeinde von Milwaukee* was founded in 1867, shortly after the establishment of the Freethinkers' Congregation. The Freethinkers' philosophy of "enlightened humanism" stressed that all people were created equal and had the right to experience self-realization based on rational knowledge. This applied to both men and women, making the Freethinkers extremely attractive for those interested in women's rights. Beyond activities which benefited the congregation—such as hosting annual social events that showcased cultural heritage, intellectual traditions, and a religious *Weltanschauung*; or operating a Sunday school for children that focused on instruction in German language and literature and included classes on German history, the history of ideas, and science—members of the *Frauenverein* often used their regular meetings to discuss women's rights and status in society, and the progress of the suffrage movement was a prominent topic. Mathilde Franziska Anneke, who became an honorary member of the *Frauenverein* after settling in Milwaukee in 1865, became involved with the Wisconsin Woman's Suffrage Association and for many years maintained correspondence with Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth C. Stanton (many of these letters can be found at the Wisconsin Historical Society). Ortlepp maintains that German-American Freethinker women developed what would today be called a feminist consciousness, and they found support among the male members of their organizations who were ready to accept new roles for both men and women.

Two final examples from Ortlepp's research involve how the fight for equal rights and equal treatment in the workplace led some women of working-class background to become involved in politics

or seek labor union membership in the years between 1876 and 1886. The German community in Milwaukee is credited with having initiated many formative ideas that greatly influenced the socialist and trade union movements in this city. German-American socialist women were firm in their desire to be accepted as equals, believing that men and women must struggle together to abolish both class and gender differences. In 1886 the issue of the eight-hour work day resulted in strike activity across the nation; declaring their solidarity with the cause, the German-American women dressmakers of Milwaukee laid down their work in April 1886. But for them much more was at stake: in addition to the eight-hour workday, they demanded an end to discrimination against female workers as well as equal pay for equal work.

They formed their own union local, but only days later it split in two—a faction desired to ally with the Knights of Labor rather than the Central Labor Union, as the Knights had a large German-American following and a local president with German roots. Each of the two locals operated independently, carrying on its own strike activities. By mid-May the *Milwaukee Herald* announced an end to the dressmaker's strike, after employers agreed to pay equal wages for men and women and to establish a shorter workday. However, it became evident only weeks after the conclusion of the strike that the "gentlemen dressmakers" were negotiating with employers to re-establish distinctions between the genders. It is believed that the split in the women's union local, which occurred to emphasize ethnic identity, may have significantly reduced the leverage the dressmakers had created along gender lines.

Ortlepp concludes that through their various organizations, German-American women in Milwaukee were able to focus on several important issues, including gender roles, cultural attributes, practices, and values. Whether their organizations tended to reinforce traditional feminine roles, as in the case of the *Turner* auxiliaries, or promoted women's activism and gender equality, as with the Freethinkers or socialists, all of them recognized the idea that women had a crucial function as cultural mediators and contributed to a process that allowed German-American women to negotiate the relationship between the sexes.

Outrage Over German-Language Plays Divides Citizens of Milwaukee in February, 1919—Part II

by Cora Lee Kluge, MKI Director

Part I of this article (winter issue 2007) brought information about citizen protests in Milwaukee against a German-language theater production that had been scheduled for Sunday, February 16, 1919. The performance was to be a benefit for actors of the German Theater Company of Milwaukee, who had suffered long months of unemployment. After all, Milwaukee theaters had presented no plays in German since the United States' entry into the World War in 1917. Organizers anticipated that such a performance would be enthusiastically welcomed by many of Milwaukee's German-American citizens, who were hungry for German-language entertainment.

The play chosen was a farce entitled Hans Hucklebein (1897). It was written by Oscar Blumenthal and Gustav Kadelburg, a popular team of playwrights best known today for their musical comedy The White Horse Inn; and demand for the tickets was overwhelming. Never before, according to a report in the Milwaukee Sonntagspost, had a Sunday performance at the German theater been sold out by the previous Tuesday. The theater management responded by scheduling an additional performance for the following Wednesday, and at "Sunday prices," adding that a second full house might well be the result.¹

What happened, perhaps unforeseen in 1919, seems totally incomprehensible today. Groups of Milwaukee's Anglo-American community were indignant about the possibility that German-language

plays might be re-introduced in Milwaukee, and protests came swiftly. Aside from the fact that the word "German" still called up feelings of anger, it seems they also feared that the performance of plays in the German language would have a negative impact throughout the nation on the reputation of their city. In Part I we featured a resolution against such performances that was adopted by the Milwaukee



Franz Kirchner of the German Theater Company of Milwaukee, director of the ill-fated performance of "Hans Hucklebein."

Rotary Club and published in the Milwaukee Journal on February 15, as well as minutes of a mass protest meeting of Milwaukee citizens, which took place the same day.

In response to their pressure, neither of the promised performances of Hans Hucklebein took place. The German-language Milwaukee Sonntagspost published a notice in the Sunday newspaper that the performance scheduled for that evening had been postponed. However, no mention of a second postponement (or cancellation) was published, and—surprisingly—no commentary at all on the situation appeared in Milwaukee's German-language newspapers. There was neither discussion nor complaint.

Possibly editors of these newspapers were afraid to reveal attitudes that would not meet with the approval of the English-language majority; after all, foreign-language newspapers were still subject to the censorship of the U.S. Postmaster General. But perhaps the German-American citizens of Milwaukee had simply become so accustomed to perpetual hos-



The *Milwaukee Sonntagspost* notice of 16 February 1919. Translation: “Pabst benefit-performance postponed. Tickets remain valid. Refunds available upon request.”

tivity toward the German language that they understood the futility of protesting.²

Nevertheless, on the first page of the English-language Milwaukee Journal of February 18, one finds the full text of resolutions presented to Wisconsin Governor Emanuel L. Philipp by a Milwaukee “German Society.” The document came from a committee of the Schwaben Unterstuetzungs Verein (Swabian Support Society) and was signed by Dr. A. N. Baer, Andreas Buhler, and Christian Steger. The newspaper report states that Dr. Baer, when asked who had voted for the adoption of the resolutions, replied that there had been no vote, that the committee’s resolutions were merely “accepted.” One seems justified in believing that this was a pro-forma response to the situation issued without much hope of making a difference. The same newspaper account quotes Dr. Baer as having stated that about nine-tenths of the ca. 350 members of the group were citizens of the United States. Such statements were frequently made in this period to counteract suspicions about the loyalty of German Americans to the American nation.³

What follows is the entire text of the resolutions, as it appeared in the Milwaukee Journal.

Whereas, There have been previous attempts to intimidate and insult the citizens of German descent and to prevent them from exercising their rights guaranteed by the constitution of the United States and of the state of Wisconsin, and

Whereas, When the United States entered the world war the board of directors of the German Theater Co. stopped performances in the German language, so making the ac-

tors jobless, and

Whereas, In Chicago, New York and other cities German performances were properly permitted, and

Whereas, After the fighting ceased and the war was practically over the performers of the German Theater Co. intended to hold and actually made arrangements for a benefit performance to take care of their wants and needs, and

Whereas, The Milwaukee public in appreciation of these actors, took up the idea with enthusiasm and within a few days the 1,700 seats of the Pabst theater were sold, and

Whereas, A few organizations and a few individuals who have attempted to make trouble in the past called a meeting at the Pfister hotel, Feb. 15, 1919, and succeeded through their threatening and violent language to [sic] intimidating the actors from holding the benefit performance, thereby forcing said actors to cancel said performance, and

Whereas, The Milwaukee Schwaben-Unterstuetzungs-Verein, comprising a membership of 350, did collectively and individually do everything possible to help our government win the war, eight of their members being in the military service of the United States, and in purchasing [sic] bonds and War Savings stamps liberally and in assisting [sic] all other war work and war organizations, and

Whereas, The Milwaukee Schwaben-Unterstuetzungs-Verein believes in justice and fair play and in the enforcement of law and in the enjoyment and protection of human rights; now, therefore,

It is hereby resolved, That the Milwaukee Schwaben-Unterstuetzungs-Verein voices its protest against this un-American and unlawful interference with the personal rights of loyal inhabitants of German descent.

Be it further resolved, That the holding of German performances at this time is not contrary to the good and welfare of the United States or its citizens and is not detrimental to any American rights or principles while it furnishes enjoyment and education to many of its loyal and law-abiding citizens.

Be it furthermore resolved, That his excellency the governor of the state of Wisconsin be requested to do everything in his power to prevent such further attempts of mob rule and to protect the rights guaranteed to the inhabitants of the state of Wisconsin, and

Be it furthermore resolved, That copies of these resolutions be presented to his excellency, Emanuel L. Philipp, governor of the state of Wisconsin, and the Milwaukee

newspapers.

World War I did not mean the end of the German Theater Company of Milwaukee: it was resurrected and continued to perform—despite increasing financial difficulties—through the 1920s. By the 1930–1931 season, German-language performances were held only on Sundays, and the last one took place in March of 1931. Unable to become a viable enterprise again, Milwaukee’s last German theater stock company filed a legal notice of dissolution on June 7, 1935.

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By order of the President,
A. S. Burleson,
Postmaster General

Milwaukee

Den 16. Februar 1919.

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Postmaster General A. S. Burleson’s permit needed by all foreign-language newspapers of the era.

² In the *New York Times* of April 20, 1919, for example, a professor of German is quoted as stating: “...a language [is] no better than the people who speak it. On that basis, German is condemned as long as Germany continues as she is at present—unrepentant though defeated, uncleansed of her sins though chagrined, still plotting, still seeking by

every means ‘her place in the sun’” (p. X2). Even in Wisconsin, a bill known as the “Alex Johnson bill,” which would have prohibited the teaching of foreign languages in the state’s “graded and parochial schools,” came before the State Assembly on February 27, 1919. It was tabled because an amendment had been added to exempt high schools from the restrictions, and many Assembly members felt they could not support the bill as amended. See “Assembly Kills Language

Bill,” *Milwaukee Journal* (February 27, 1919), pp. 1 and 5.

³ “German Society in Protest,” *Milwaukee Journal* (February 18, 1919), front page.

Notes

¹ See “Deutsches Theater,” *Milwaukee Sonntagspost* (February 16, 1919), Section II, p. 3.

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