

Conference Program

Thursday, April 2, 2009, 9–12 a.m.

**America and Her Immigrants:
Ethnicity, Policy, Ideas**

Walter D. Kamphoefner

Texas A&M University, College Station

“Elvis and Other Germans: Some Reflections and Modest Proposals on the Study of German-American Ethnicity”

This paper uses the question “Was Elvis German?” as a springboard to the much more important issue: “So what?” The same questions can be applied to other famous “German Americans” such as Babe Ruth, but also to a number of prominent individuals who are seldom recognized as such. Upon closer examination, what stands out is the arbitrariness of such designations. Rather than the incidentals of birth or surname, what should be central to our enterprise of ethnic studies is the cultural, institutional, and linguistic heritage brought from abroad, and the way in which it was preserved, adapted, or transformed in the New World. In this enterprise, a combination of traditional sources with newly accessible census resources can be particularly productive.

Walter D. Kamphoefner earned his Ph.D. at University of Missouri-Columbia in 1978, has taught at Texas A&M University since 1988, and twice held Senior Fulbright Lecturships in Germany. He has published widely on immigration and ethnicity, with articles in four languages and three authored or co-edited books in German and English versions. Since the publication of his pioneering transatlantic study entitled *The Westfalians: From Germany to Missouri* (Princeton, 1987), he has worked extensively with immigrant letters and questions of bilingual education and the immigrant language transition.

Daniel J. Tichenor

University of Oregon, Eugene

“German Americans and the U.S. Immigrant Experience: Historical and Contemporary Significance”

Since the eighteenth century, Germans have been the largest European immigrant group in the United States after the English and the Irish. This presentation will explore how German Americans have been constructed in U.S. political discourse over time, sometimes valorized as model and easily assimilable newcomers and other times cast as dangerous “hyphenates” who enervated “100 percent Americanism.” These rival frames will be discussed

in relation to those of other immigrant groups in distinct periods: Germans and Irish during the nativist surge of the 1850s, Germans and “new” European immigrants in World War I and the 1920s, “enemy aliens” in World War II, and echoes of the German-American experience for today’s immigrants. The role of race, ethnicity, and security in shaping inclusive and exclusive views of newcomers informs this discussion.

Daniel J. Tichenor is the Philip H. Knight Professor of Political Science at the University of Oregon and Senior Fellow at the Morse Center for Law and Politics. He is the author of numerous publications on U.S. immigration policy, politics, and history, including *Dividing Lines: The Politics of Immigration Control in America* (Princeton, 2002), which won the American Political Science Association’s Gladys Kammerer Award for the best work in public policy. His forthcoming books include *Faustian Bargains: The Origins and Development of America’s Illegal Immigration Dilemma* (Michigan) and *The Oxford Handbook on International Migration* (Oxford).

Hartmut Keil

University of Leipzig

“The Americanization of Francis Lieber: Liberal Ideals and the Realities of the Slave South”

This paper sheds light on Francis Lieber’s ambivalent role during the years 1835 to 1856, when he was teaching at South Carolina College, in an intellectual and political environment that he found disingenuous and where as an outsider he was confronted with misgivings and mistrust. Given the general reputation of German immigrants as anti-slavery (even in black abolitionist circles), there were good reasons for political and intellectual elites in the slave states to view him with suspicion. Little, however, is known about his views on race and the institution of slavery, and even less about his practical experience with “the peculiar institution.” Why did he become a slaveholder himself, since he had voiced his principled anti-slavery attitude early and continued to attack the institution in private correspondence? This presentation argues that Lieber struggled to come to terms with his liberal convictions and the realities of living in the slave South; for him the process of becoming American involved taking a position on the issue of race and the institution of slavery.

Hartmut Keil, Professor of American History at the University of Leipzig, completed his doctorate and Habilitation at University of Munich. He served as Deputy and Acting Director at German Historical Institute in Washington, D.C. from 1992 to 1994, and as Director of the Chicago Project on German Immigrant Workers, 1850–1920. He held an ACLS fellowship at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (1975–1976), fellowships at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. (1984 and 1990), at the Huntington Library in San Marino, CA (2004), and presently at the Institute for Southern Studies, University of

South Carolina. His research and publications include work on McCarthyism, nineteenth-century social, immigration, and labor history, and, most recently, on the relationship between German immigrants and African Americans in the antebellum period.

Thursday, April 2, 2009, 3–5 p.m.
German-American Language and Literature

Daniel Nützel

University of Regensburg

“German Dialects on Different Paths to Extinction: The Examples of Haysville, Indiana and New Ulm, Minnesota”

The German dialects of New Ulm, Minnesota and Haysville, Indiana are suffering the same fate as most German-American varieties: they are in the final stages of language death. But while the German-Bohemian dialect in New Ulm, like most moribund languages, is undergoing massive grammatical decay, the East Franconian dialect of Haysville has remained free of such structural breakdown and is remarkably similar to its base dialect spoken in northern Bavaria. Based on fieldwork conducted in the U.S. and in Europe (Germany and the Czech Republic), this paper illustrates the structural differences between the two dialects and explores the reasons why Haysville East Franconian has remained so conservative, while the New Ulm dialect has been subjected to significant decomposition in its nominal and verbal systems.

Daniel Nützel studied Germanic Linguistics and German-American Dialectology with Joe Salmons and wrote his dissertation on the East Franconian dialect of Haysville, Indiana. After completing his doctorate, he worked on the linguistic atlases of Northeast Bavaria and Upper Bavaria at the universities of Bayreuth and Passau. Since 2001 he has been teaching in the Department of Germanic Linguistics at the University of Regensburg and conducting fieldwork for the *Atlas of German Dialects in the Czech Republic*. In August 2009 he will become Hoyt-Reichmann Scholar for German-American Studies at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis.

Lorie A. Vanchena

University of Kansas, Lawrence

“Taking Stock: The Disappearance of German-American Literature”

This paper will provide a brief historical overview of the role played by German-American literature within the disciplines of German and German-American Studies. It will then consider re-

cent evidence of renewed scholarly interest by both Germanists and Americanists in this significant body of literature. It will look at ways in which the growing importance not only of transnational, transregional, and transcultural approaches but also of migration studies offers a propitious opportunity to continue reassessing German-American literature and arguing for its value within German Studies, American Studies, and other broadly comparative disciplines. Finally, suggestions for keeping the momentum going and creating opportunities for collaborative research will be discussed.

Lorie A. Vanchena is Associate Professor of Germanic Languages and Literatures at the University of Kansas. Her English translation and edition of Reinhold Solger's *Anton in Amerika: Novelle aus dem deutsch-amerikanischen Leben* appeared in 2006. The author of *Political Poetry in Periodicals and the Shaping of German National Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century* (2000), she has also published articles on nineteenth-century German and German-American literature.

Friday, April 3, 2009, 9–12 a.m.
Creating the American Myth

Hugh Ridley
University College Dublin

“Sealsfield’s ‘Prärie am Jacinto’: The Half-Unfolded Spring of German and American Literature”

Called the poet of both hemispheres, Charles Sealsfield, an Austrian émigré and citizen of the United States, has long occupied a position between two languages and two literatures. The fact that his contribution has not been fully taken up into German-language literature or American literature has usually been attributed to an incorrect assessment of the quality of his work. This paper reconsiders his position and places his *Cabin Book* (1841) in the context of Walt Whitman’s relationship to the Texan Wars of Independence.

Hugh Ridley was Professor of German at the University College Dublin from 1980 to 2006, and was a frequent visiting professor in Essen. His books include studies of major German authors such as Thomas Mann (1987, 1995), Rainer Maria Rilke (together with Herbert Herzmann, 1992), and Gottfried Benn (1990), as well as titles such as *Industrie und Literatur* (together with Keith Bullivant, 1975), *Images of Imperial Rule* (1983), and *‘Relations Stop Nowhere’: The Common Literary Foundations of German and American Literature, 1830–1917* (2007). A work on Thomas Mann is forthcoming (together with Jochen Vogt). He is the author of essays on a wide variety of topics including the *Vormärz*, Nietzsche, the Weimar Republic, Walter Benjamin and the GDR, and the techniques and ideology of literary history.

Steven D. Hoelscher

University of Texas, Austin

“Performing the American Myth by Speaking German: Changing Meanings of Ethnic Identity Between the Wars”

Between the two World Wars many Americans changed their attitudes toward ethnic minorities and their place within American civic culture. States such as Wisconsin, with its dense concentration of diverse immigrant groups, came under especially harsh fire during the Great War years, only to be celebrated twenty years later as microcosms of a pluralist democracy. Although much has been written about this profound transformation of American ethnic identity from the perspective of “official culture,” or those governing elites in power, less is known about the role of immigrant communities themselves in this change. This presentation examines the intertwining of ideology with the social manifestations of cultural performance in one German-speaking Wisconsin community. In the case of two inter-war Swiss American cultural performances, a view of ethnic culture emerges that sought to refashion a more inclusive definition of what it meant to be American. As they redefined their own identity, third-generation Swiss strategically used such performance-based memory work. Their efforts not merely reflected, but shaped a discourse of ethnicity that became decreasingly antagonistic and gradually more open to ethnic and cultural difference.

Steven Hoelscher is Professor of American Studies and Geography at the University of Texas at Austin, where he is Chair of the Department of American Studies. His books include *Heritage on Stage; Picturing Indians*; and *Textures of Place*, which he co-edited with Paul Adams and Karen Till. A Senior Fulbright Scholar at the Nordamerikastudienprogramm at the University of Bonn, Hoelscher has taught urban studies in Vienna during the past several summers. His current research project examines historical memory in that city.

Kathleen Neils Conzen

University of Chicago

“Democracy and Diversity: German Theorizing in Tocqueville’s America”

Tocqueville in *Democracy in America* presented an America held together despite its weak government above all by the commonality of its mores, its habits of the heart. The common culture was so pervasive that he felt little need to explore the potential challenge of immigration. But immigrants themselves could not afford to ignore the pressures they encountered, and by the 1830s and 1840s Germans were seeking to construct a theory of viable democratic pluralism drawn from contemporary understandings of the

self and of nationhood—thinking that long predates the early-twentieth century origins usually ascribed to American pluralist theory.

Kathleen Neils Conzen is a Professor in American History at the University of Chicago, where she has taught since 1976; she has also been a visiting professor at the Free University of Berlin and the Flinders University of South Australia. She holds a doctorate in American History from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Much of her research has focused on immigration and western settlement, with particular emphasis on the German immigrant experience. The author of books on Germans in Milwaukee and Minnesota, she is currently exploring nineteenth-century German efforts to define and defend a pluralist vision of American democracy.

Friday, April 3, 2009, 2–5 p.m.
Learning From Each Other

Uwe Lübken

Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich

“Explorations into the History of Floods and Flood Control in the United States and Germany”

Over the course of the nineteenth century, industrialization, urbanization, rapid population growth, and technical innovations had profound impacts on nature in general and on rivers in particular. On both sides of the Atlantic Ocean natural waterways were dammed, straightened, confined to narrow channels, and required to perform a plethora of new functions. Nevertheless, river floods served as a constant reminder of nature’s destructive power, literally enacting what Theodore Steinberg has described as “the return of the suppressed.” This presentation explores the history of risk societies on the banks of major rivers in the U.S. and Germany. It looks at transnational connections—such as donations across the ocean or the dissemination of flood control knowledge—and explores similarities and differences in the ways these riverine societies managed environmental risk. It focuses particularly on physical structures such as dams, levees, and flood walls, social aspects like land use practices, financial mitigation practices (for example, flood insurance), and cultural encounters with disaster such as songs, poems, or photographs.

Uwe Lübken is a research fellow at the Amerika-Institut of the Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich, and is currently working on a research project on the history of flooding on the Ohio River. He was awarded a dissertation fellowship by the Gerda Henkel Stiftung and numerous research grants that allowed him to study in the U.S. and in the Netherlands. He received his doctorate from the University of Cologne in 2002 with a dissertation “Bedrohliche Nähe: Die USA und die nationalsozialistische Herausforderung in Lateinamerika” that was awarded the Erhardt Imelmann Prize and was

subsequently published in revised version (2004). Lübken has taught American history at the University of Cologne and postwar German and European history at the Cologne School of Journalism.

Louis A. Pitschmann

University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa

“Advancing German-American Studies in the Digital Age: Opportunities for Collaboration”

Technology continues to present new opportunities for making scholarly resources more readily available while at the same time enabling the development of new forms of teaching and research. This paper describes various technology-driven models for increasing interdisciplinary research in German-American Studies and concludes with a proposal for significantly advancing German-American Studies by creating a multi-institutional archive in which German-American collections would be virtually merged in a single digital repository.

Louis A. Pitschmann holds a Ph.D. in Germanic Languages and Literatures from the University of Chicago. He served from 1986 to 2001 as Associate Director of Libraries at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and has been Dean of Libraries at the University of Alabama since 2001. He has been Principal Investigator and Project Manager on various federally funded digitization projects at UW-Madison and the University of Alabama. He is the author of *Building Sustainable Collections of Free Third-Party Web Resources* (Washington, D.C.: Digital Library Federation and Council on Library and Information Resources, 2001). His current research interests include the development and sustainability of digital projects; and German Americans in the Deep South, ca. 1820–2000.

Panel Discussion, University of Wisconsin Faculty Members:

Klaus L. Berghahn (Department of German); **Charles J. James** (Department of German); **Mark L. Loudon** (Department of German); and **Marc Silberman** (Department of German, and Director, Center for the Study of German and European Culture).

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