

ABSTRACTS

Kirsten Belgum, Associate Professor of Germanic Studies, University of Texas at Austin

Networks and Mutual Reception: German-Jewish Writer Berthold Auerbach, Abolitionism, and the Civil War

As we dig deeper into perspectives on the Civil War that percolate through German literary discourse, we find that what we might initially take to be “German views” in actuality reveals interference from other corners—particularly from the object of these views: from America itself. The example selected here is the 1869 novel *Das Landhaus am Rhein* by the German-Jewish writer Berthold Auerbach. With a focus on the contemporary German situation, the novel grapples with issues of class, education, and family that were central to social change in Germany in the second half of the nineteenth century, but it also borrows heavily from American sources (including Longfellow’s *Hiawatha* and Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*), and even promotes a number of American figures (Benjamin Franklin and Theodore Parker) as guideposts for a German future. Despite its focus on Germany, the novel attracted considerable attention in the United States. It witnessed several translations in the year of its German publication and—because of its stance towards slavery and the Confederacy—was criticized in the South. This paper suggests that this work, in addition to illustrating how members of one nation view another’s political and social developments, shows the interaction between the two (or more) cultures, the back and forth of views, counter views, and altered views, thereby revealing pervasive aspects of transnational cultural reception.

Alison Efford, Assistant Professor of History, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Beyond Forty-Eighters and Draft Rioters: Wisconsin Germans and the Politics of Race in the Civil War North

During the Civil War, German immigrants made news in Wisconsin for two quite different reasons. Many refugees from the Revolutions of 1848 joined the Radical Republican drive to emancipate African-American slaves and enfranchise African-American men. Other immigrants, however, actively opposed the Union war effort, especially its goals of emancipation and black suffrage. Thus while most Forty-eighters proudly followed Carl Schurz’s rise to national prominence, the war’s detractors made their own mark with violent draft riots. To reconcile these two strands of the German-American experience, the contours of Wisconsin’s German debate as a whole must be examined. Reading the ethnic press against correspondence, reports of public demonstrations, and election results reveals a German-language public sphere characterized by the vibrant interplay of competing political and racial ideas. This paper outlines the conditions under which constructions of immigrant identity might have benefited the interests of African Americans. At the same time, it also suggests the distinct limitations of a notion of racial justice driven by white Americans’ conceptions of themselves.

Manfred Höfert, historian, Freiburg, Germany

The Baden Revolution and the American Civil War: A Crossover?

The French revolution of February 1848 was the signal for uprisings all over Europe. In the State of Baden Friedrich Hecker and Gustav Struve had fought as early as September 1847 for popular participation government. In April 1848, disappointed about democratic progress, Hecker tried to force the establishment of a republican government in Baden with his march to power (the *Heckerzug*). When this failed, Struve marched to Karlsruhe in September, but his “Struwwelputsch” there also aborted. The short-lived democratic movement in Baden was toppled by Prussian intervention in May 1849, and the revolutionary forces led by Franz Sigel were defeated. Thereafter, the failed revolutionaries fled and eventually emigrated to the United States, where they played significant roles in American society in the years leading up to and during the Civil War. This paper looks at the specific Baden background of Friedrich Hecker, Gustav Struve, Franz Sigel, and Andreas Lenz, and investigates how their revolutionary experience in Baden influenced and informed their involvements in the American Civil War.

Mischa Honeck, Associate Professor of American Studies, University of Heidelberg, Germany

Why Continue to Be the Humble Maid? The Transnational Abolitionist Sisterhood of Mathilde Franziska Anneke and Mary Booth

This paper focuses on two women writers, one German and the other New England bred, who challenged notions of slavery, freedom, citizenship, and womanhood in the age of the American Civil War. The friendship of Mary Booth and Mathilde Franziska Anneke was uniquely transnational, a sisterhood that drove them to raise their voices against private and social injustices. In an intimate, ocean-spanning journey that led them from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to the Swiss Alps and back, the two women wrote a collection of abolitionist stories in which they bound together their personal longings for woman’s emancipation with those of America’s oppressed black population for freedom.

Walter Kamphoefner, Professor of History, Texas A&M University, College Station

What German Americans Fought for in the Civil War: Insights from Their Letters and Ballots

Drawing upon letters that German immigrants, soldiers, and civilians wrote during the Civil War, this lecture focuses on one important question: what was the attitude of the letter-writers toward the political parties, the cause of the Union, and slavery? The overall picture that emerges shows that Republican idealism—for example as it applied to the race question—was by no means restricted to liberal Forty-eighters such as Carl Schurz. Instead, common farmers, artisans, and the small strata of industrial workers, especially if they were Protestant, were often sympathetic to such ideals. The struggle for freedom in America was understood by many German Americans at various levels of society to be in close relationship with the ideals of 1848 and their hopes for a democratic Europe, echoing Lincoln’s characterization of the Union as “the last, best hope of earth.”

Christian Keller, Associate Professor of History, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania

The German-American Response to the Battle of Chancellorsville

Stigmatized as cowards, plunderers, or simply sub-standard fighters, German-American soldiers in the highly ethnic Eleventh Corps of the Army of the Potomac found themselves under heavy criticism following the battle of Chancellorsville in May 1863. Anglo soldiers and the English-language press blamed German-American officers and enlisted men alike for the Union defeat, as the country experienced a resurgence in anti-immigrant nativism. German-American civilians reacted first with shock, then with indignation, and finally with a steely resolve to defend their men in uniform and unite against what they perceived as a xenophobic threat against their culture. Although anti-German invective subsided somewhat in the last two years of the war, the aftershocks of the battle of Chancellorsville continued for German Americans well into the postwar period, affecting their assimilation into American society. This paper looks at what it meant to be “the other” in Civil War America, arriving at a different conclusion from those scholars who have viewed war in the “melting pot” paradigm and agreeing with recent scholarship that points towards an anti-assimilationist tendency among the North’s ethnic groups at the time of war.

Antje Petty, Assistant Director, Max Kade Institute, University of Wisconsin–Madison

Creating Memory: Milwaukee-German Artist F. W. Heine and the American Civil War Battle Cycloramas

In the late-nineteenth century, a visit to the “panorama” or “cyclorama” was a popular pastime. Huge rotunda buildings dominated American cityscapes. They housed large 360 degree paintings and installations which strove to transport the visitor into famous landscapes, mythological scenes, and historical events. In the United States, the most popular panoramas were those of major battles of the Civil War. They were painted by expert artists from Europe who were specifically recruited by American entertainment companies to create cycloramas. One such artist, Friedrich Wilhelm Heine, came to Milwaukee in 1885 with a group of German panorama artists to form the “American Panorama Company” under the ownership of Chicago businessman William Wehner. The company produced some of the most popular Civil War cycloramas, such as “Battle of Atlanta” and the “Battle of Missionary Ridge.” Today most of the rotundas are dismantled and little is remembered about the panorama phenomenon in America. This paper, drawing on newly discovered material from the diaries of F. W. Heine, looks at the memories of the Civil War created a generation after the actual conflict, as Civil War battles were filtered through the lens of late-nineteenth century sensibilities and the cyclorama mass media. Meanwhile, the cycloramas themselves—an art form that is part of American cultural history—have slipped from American memory, largely because most of the documentation about them was not in English, but in an immigrant language: German.

Joseph Reinhart, historian and author, Bradenton, Florida

“A Jewish Company in a German Regiment: Company C of the 82nd Illinois Volunteer Infantry”

Approximately 125,000 Jews were living in the Union states at the time of the American Civil War, most of whom were natives of Germany or of German ancestry. An estimated 5,000 to 7,000 Jews fought for the North during the conflict, but less than three percent of these soldiers banded together in separate Jewish companies. Only the 82nd Illinois Infantry and 149th New York Infantry Regiments contained a Jewish company. This presentation will discuss the unique Jewish company of the 82nd Illinois Infantry: the reason it was created, the role of Jewish civilian leadership in its organization, its combat leaders, anti-Jewish prejudices, and some of the incidents reported in letters published in the *Illinois Staats-Zeitung*, Chicago’s leading German-American newspaper. The 82nd Infantry was originally commanded by Forty-eighter Friedrich Hecker; later, Lt. Col. Edward S. Salomon, a Jew, headed the combat unit. The regiment fought at Chancellorsville in Virginia and Gettysburg in Pennsylvania, and it participated in Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman’s Atlanta Campaign, the March to the Sea, and the Carolinas Campaign.

Lynne Tatlock, Professor of Germanic Languages and Literatures, Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri

Transatlantic Romance in the Wake of Loss: Translating German Women’s Fiction in Post-Bellum America

This paper examines the translations by two American women of popular novels written by German women. Both translators were Southerners who turned to translation in the face of economic necessity after the Civil War: Ann Mary Coleman, the daughter of the Kentucky senator J. J. Crittenden, and Mary Stuart Smith, daughter, granddaughter, and wife of professors at the all-male University of Virginia. It shows how these women attempted to “cash in” on their culture and education and to expand the boundaries of domesticity through translation, as well as how they in the process mediated Germany for American readers of domestic fiction and historical romance. Examining Coleman and Smith as readers as well as translators, it also suggests how the German novels they translated appealed to post-bellum American readers’ longing for a version of history, nation, and home different from the one they had recently experienced, which for decades remained broken. In this version, femininity aided in the production of ideas of both masculinity and nation in which the individual and the home mattered. German fiction in translation invited American readers to imagine Germany as a place where some of their fondest wishes for the real power of love, virtue, and sentiment could be pleasurably realized—even if arbitrarily and only in the imagination.

Adam Zimmerli, Librarian, Wilder Library and Learning Resource Center, Virginia Union University, Richmond, Virginia

A German in the Stacks: Francis Lieber, the Confederate Archives, and the Legacy of the Civil War

Francis Lieber, a Prussian émigré who fled political persecution in 1821 to become a publisher, political advisor, and renowned political theorist in the United States, is one of the most influential yet unknown figures in Civil War history, and his work still has far-reaching effects on both this dynamic field and that of library science. As captured Confederate Archives streamed piecemeal back to Washington in 1865, U.S. Secretary of War Edwin Stanton asked Lieber to arrange and catalog the disorganized boxes and barrels of documents into a usable record for prosecuting ex-Confederates. The bulk of Lieber's work provided a foundation for the proposed cases against Jefferson Davis, created a reference tool for researching the validity of pension claims, and ultimately formed the basis for the *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion*, one of the most influential and comprehensive resources on the Civil War. As the official archivist of the Confederacy's records for over two years, Lieber's arrangement of the documents shaped the way that historians have considered and interpreted the Civil War.

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