



MAX KADE INSTITUTE

# FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

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## German Immigrants, Silver Fox, and Ginseng: The Colorful History of Hamburg and Berlin, Wisconsin

DuWayne H. Zamzow



Images courtesy of the Marathon County Historical Society

Picking ginseng seed at the Fromm Brothers Farm, 1930

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*On May 5, 2018, the Friends of the Max Kade Institute will hold their Annual Meeting in beautiful Marathon County, Wisconsin, featuring a private tour of the historic Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm in the Town of Hamburg, followed by the annual business meeting and dinner at the Town of Berlin Center. We are grateful to the Fromm Brothers Historical Preservation Society and the Pommerscher Verein Central Wisconsin for cosponsoring our event. See pages 3 and 15 for registration details.*

In the first half of the nineteenth century, central Wisconsin and the area that would become northern Marathon County was one great forest. Not surprisingly, the first white settlers were lumbermen, attracted by the thick stands of majestic white pine along the Wisconsin River and its tributaries. Farming was not given a thought at the time. Indeed, the soil was believed to be unproductive, the climate too severe, and the winters too long for raising crops.

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## Greetings, Friends and Readers!

**A**s spring semester draws to a close, we look forward to the MKI Friends Annual Meeting in Marathon County on May 5, which is featured in the lead article for this newsletter. We are pleased to partner with the Fromm Brothers Historical Preservation Society and the Pommerscher Verein Central Wisconsin in preparing for this event. I want to acknowledge with gratitude all the good work that MKI Friends board member Don Zamzow and MKI Associate Director Antje Petty have put into what promises to be a very interesting and enjoyable meeting.

Last fall I shared the details of our successful Library Project Campaign in conjunction with our NEH Challenge Grant, the tangible outcomes of which are our new home in the University Club and the solid start of an endowment for our Librarian/Archivist position. In this newsletter we acknowledge with deep gratitude the generosity of so many individuals from Wisconsin, the nation, and around the world who helped us across the finish line last year (see pages 8–9). On behalf of all of us on the MKI staff, thank you so much for your support! Our success as an institute devoted to research and public outreach in equal measure, in the spirit of the Wisconsin Idea, is a direct result of the generous support—not just financial—from our Friends over many years. Vielen herzlichen Dank!

Looking to the future, a high priority for us will be to continue to build the Librarian/Archivist endowment so that the revenue it generates will one day be able to fund the position completely. Thanks to you, our Friends, we are off to an excellent start.

Each year, MKI sponsors approximately fifty public events, nearly all of which take place here in Wisconsin. These include mainly outreach presentations in communities across the state, as well as invited lectures, symposia, and workshops in Madison. It is deeply satisfying to Antje, Kevin, and myself to connect with individuals with wide-ranging interests in German-American studies. We enjoy sharing scholarship from the field with our patrons and public audiences, and in return, we learn much about what is meaningful to the people we serve. This dialog enables us to plan events that directly engage topics of broad interest. Feel free to contact us with suggestions for outreach presentations, and if you are affiliated with community organizations, including public libraries, where you think an MKI event would be welcome, let us know!

Complementing the work of MKI here in Wisconsin is our outreach across the country and indeed the world. One way this occurs is through our website, which serves as a visible and growing portal for a range of work in German-American studies. Many a Google search dealing with some German-

American topic brings users to our site. Another way we reach out is through connections with institutions, organizations, and individuals across the country. Already MKI staff members travel beyond the borders of the state to present the work of the Institute, to participate in German-American-themed conferences, and to collaborate on innovative research projects. Going forward, we aim to strengthen and broaden such connections by launching a new initiative we are calling MKI Across (German) America. The goals of this initiative are twofold: expanding the reach of our programming and building partnerships with other institutions, including libraries and archives, with an interest in German-American studies.

Through the MKI Across (German) America initiative we will connect directly with new audiences in the form of exhibits, presentations, and workshops. We will, of course, continue to build the content available over our website, however there are a number of advantages to being able to reach audiences directly in communities where there is interest in German-American studies and where UW–Madison alumni and many of our Friends live. According to the Academic Ranking of World Universities (also known as the Shanghai Ranking), our university occupies the 28th position out of 1,200 institutions worldwide, a truly

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**Friends of the Max Kade Institute Annual Meeting**  
**Saturday, May 5, 2018, in Wausau, Wisconsin**

**At the Historic Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm in Marathon County, WI**

This year the Friends of the Max Kade Institute will step back to the early days of the twentieth century by visiting the historic Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm in the Town of Hamburg, Marathon County. We will learn how four brothers, whose ancestors immigrated to Wisconsin from Germany in the 1800s, converted their traditional family farm into a multi-million dollar business empire by raising silver fox and growing ginseng for the Asian market. We will take a walking tour of the grounds and some of the original buildings and learn what brought fashion buyers from Manhattan's 5th Avenue to this remote corner of Wisconsin. Our hosts will be the Fromm Brothers Historical Preservation Society and the Pommerscher Verein Central Wisconsin. The day will conclude with a dinner at the Town of Berlin Center (catered by 2510 Restaurant of Wausau) and a lecture by William Thiel (Eau Claire) on "Why They Left: Transitions from Rural Germany to the Midwest in the 19th Century."

|             |                                                                                                                             |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 12:30–1:00  | Registration at <b>Fromm Brothers Historic Fur Farm</b> Boarding House<br><u>436 Co Rd F, Hamburg, WI</u>                   |
| 1:00 – 3:30 | Guided tour of Boarding House and grounds                                                                                   |
| 3:30 – 4:00 | Tour wrap-up and travel to Town of Berlin Center                                                                            |
| 4:00 – 5:00 | Friends annual business meeting (all members) at the <b>Town of Berlin Center</b> ,<br><u>11248 Berlin Lane, Athens, WI</u> |
| 4:00 – 5:30 | Socializing and tour of Pommerscher Verein Library<br>(Meeting of new Board of Directors, election of officers)             |
| 5:30 – 6:30 | Dinner                                                                                                                      |
| 6:30 – 7:30 | Presentation by William Thiel                                                                                               |

**PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED by APRIL 19**

Please fill out a registration form (**see page 15**) and mail it with your payment to Friends of the Max Kade Institute, 432 East Campus Mall, Madison, WI, 53706, or register online at <https://mkifriends.org/annual-meetings>  
**\$35 per person.**

**Bring a friend – Make a Friend!**

Dinner purchase includes Friends of the MKI membership for the year 2018 for new Friends.  
If you have questions, contact Antje Petty at the Max Kade Institute (608-262-7546) or [apetty@wisc.edu](mailto:apetty@wisc.edu)

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However, once it became clear that the exposed soil was of exceedingly high quality, the first farmers quickly came to settle in 1856 and 1857. They had come from Germany, specifically from the Prussian province of Pomerania. When the Pomeranians discovered maple trees in the forest, it gave them assurance of fertile land. Some of the first settlers told how their families were approached by the Chippewa Indians for food items such as bacon and flour, which they traded for items hand-crafted by the Indians.

As Louis Marchetti explains in his *History of Marathon County Wisconsin and Representative Citizens* (1913), German settlers who came to what is now the Town of Berlin focused on farming for their livelihood:

The heads of the families stayed on the land, clearing and planting, letting their sons work in the pinery for some time and with the money thus earned improved their holdings, by getting stock and getting up better buildings. In ten years after the first settlements in the town of Berlin, there were already a number of good farms, and a populous town, this town growing faster than any other one. But the ox team was still the team universally used, horses being at that time not much in use, because farmers thought they could not afford to pay the high price for them. In the size of cleared lands, the town of Berlin was far ahead of any other town in the first twenty years after settlement, but when



Fromm Brothers advertisement, 1937

Images courtesy of the Marathon County Historical Society

a farm was large enough, had cleared land enough, the farmer was careful to preserve the rest of the timber, and by doing so, obtained a good price after the railroads had come (542).

The area was soon settled densely enough that the farmers wished to establish their own township, and in February 1859, the Town of Berlin was created by the county board. Marchetti wrote further:

The first settlers have all gone now to their long rest, and the second generation is getting well along in years, but as a rule

the land first settled upon by the pioneers is still occupied by their sons or grandsons. The buildings are exceptionally fine, good houses and barns; houses with a heating apparatus and water supply are not a rarity; the roads are in good condition all the year around, and the land in a state of high cultivation. The number of cheese factories and creameries has caused the farmers to improve their stock greatly. [...] It is doubtful whether a single eighty acres is owned by anyone not an actual settler or occu-

pant. There are one creamery and five cheese factories in the town, two general stores with a good stock of merchandise. There is located in this town a large saw mill owned by the widow of Henry Sellin, which is well stocked with logs by the farmers from Berlin and Hamburg. It has been in operation for thirty years, sawing millions of feet of pine, and there is timber enough in the towns of Berlin and Hamburg to supply the mill for twenty-five years more. There are seven school districts, each with a good frame school-house, with a course of study up to the eighth grade, open eight months a year. There are three Lutheran churches in the town, one at Naugart in the center, one at or near the northwest corner and one on the south side of the town. These three congregations were originally one, founded about fifty-two years ago, but in later years they separated at least in two (543).

In early 1876, the farmers within the present Town of Hamburg applied to the Marathon County Board for a separate town organization, and on February 10 of that year the Town of Hamburg was set off from the Town of Berlin. Hamburg was not as densely settled as the rest of the Town of Berlin. White pine stood all through the hardwood forest, and thus logging became one of Hamburg's main industries. In the early 1870s, much of the virgin timber was chopped down to provide logs for dwellings, and to clear the land so that crops could be planted to sustain the settlers during the long

winter months. For a while, there was no market for logs or firewood. Huge logs were piled together and burned. This changed in the late 1880s and early 1900s, when sawmills were built to cut logs into lumber, so people could build houses and big dairy barns.

One of the early sawmill owners was Fred Sellin. For many years, he was the town clerk for the original Town of Berlin and later became the town clerk of Hamburg. He will always be associated with a successful lawsuit against the Wisconsin Central Railroad that was initiated in his name, opposing the issuing of \$250,000 in bonds bearing 10 percent interest.

The early settlers had to depend on the forests for many of the necessities of life when stores were few and far between and money was scarce. The land was good to these people and provided them with many of the basics in the form of wild game, fowl,

fish, berries, and more. Many tools were formed from forest products and medicines were made from wild plants. Sugar maples were abundant, and maple syrup was and continues to be an important commodity in Hamburg.

Today, there are still several farms in Hamburg that have been in family hands for over a century. One of these farms is the Fromm Brothers Farm. The Fromm/Nieman family had come from Mecklenburg, Germany, and farmed in the Town of Hamburg for decades. One day in 1901, thirteen-year-old Walter Fromm read aloud from a copy of the magazine *Hunter Trapper* to his brothers John, Edward, and Henry. The story he read was about a silver fox pelt that sold in London for \$1,200. The four brothers came from a family of nine children. Then and there they made a pact that they, too, would breed and raise silver fox on their family farm in Hamburg. An



Feeding foxes, 1929

Images courtesy of the Marathon County Historical Society

idea grew into a company, and over the next sixty years they made their mark on the fashion world. Starting with nothing but the conviction that the silver fox bore the world's most beautiful pelt, the Fromm brothers set out to raise these animals. They faced countless challenges and overcame numerous disasters, but eventually established the biggest silver fox fur ranch in the world.

When prices for fox fur fell in 1939, Fromm Brothers, Inc., branched out into the mink fur trade, developing a unique platinum color mink. In 1943, they decided to present the only platinum mink coat in the world to the American Theatre Wing to be auctioned off to benefit the Stage Door Canteen. Edward Fromm was the auctioneer and brought down the hammer when the bid reached \$18,000.

Closely intertwined with the fox farm was the Fromm brothers' ginseng operation. Trappers and Native Americans had long gathered the ginseng roots that grew wild in the deep woods. The trappers sold their harvest to Chinese traders for a handsome price, as ginseng was highly prized in Asia for its medicinal qualities. A neighbor showed the Fromm brothers how to recognize ginseng, and this free plant would provide the assets needed to purchase silver fox breeders and to begin their fur farm business. Soon the Fromm brothers decided to try to grow ginseng. This, however, proved to be a very challenging endeavor, as ginseng is subject to blight and root rot. It took five years before the first crop could be harvested. To make matters even more complicated, a ginseng plant grows only once on any piece of



Models wearing Fromm Brothers furs, 1930s

Images courtesy of the Marathon County Historical Society

land. The Fromms pioneered growing and drying methods, designed machinery to make cultivation and harvesting of the plants easier, and marketed their produce in China and Korea. For over fifty years, the Fromm Brothers Farm was the largest producer of ginseng in the United States.

Other byproducts resulted from this unique business, too. Perhaps the most important contribution was the distemper vaccine. After suffering extreme losses in their breeding pairs of silver foxes to this disease, the Fromm brothers sponsored Dr. Robert G. Green to research and eventually discover a vaccine for distemper. Later the vaccine was modified for use in canines.

Today the Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm is listed on the Na-

tional Register of Historic Places. To quote Lenore Fromm Wade, Edward Fromm's daughter:

Looking back from the vantage point of today, what do we see? Each generation is caught up in its own survival hardly aware that what it is doing is passed on for good or bad, to cripple or build the next generation, to leave to it a legacy. 🦊

*DuWayne H. Zamzow is a descendant of early Pomeranian settlers in Marathon County. He is a charter member of Pommerscher Verein Central Wisconsin and co-editor of "Dat Blatt," the PVCM's newsletter.*

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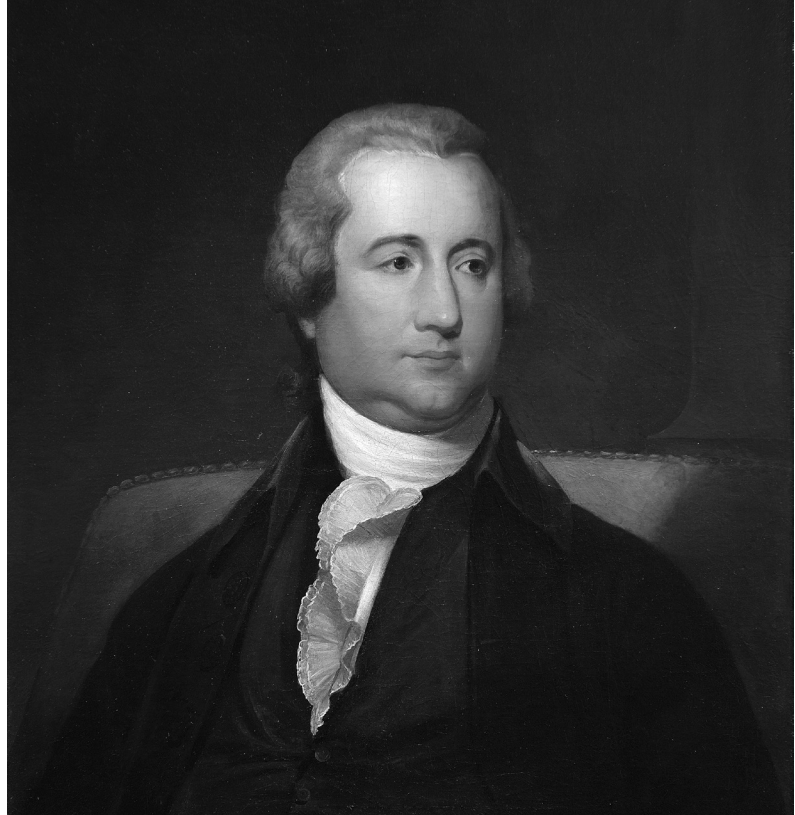
# Restoring The Speaker's House, Home of the first Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, Frederick Muhlenberg

Lisa Minardi

In the early 2000s, the house on 151 West Main Street in Trappe, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, faced the wrecking ball to make way for a chain drugstore. But this house was not just any old house. Built by a German immigrant, it was the home of Frederick Muhlenberg, a prominent Pennsylvania politician and judge who became the first Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives. In 2004 a group of dedicated local residents formed "The Speaker's House," a grassroots non-profit community organization dedicated to the restoration of the historic structure and the legacy of Frederick Muhlenberg.

The building now known as The Speaker's House is undergoing a dramatic restoration to bring back its appearance from the time when the Muhlenberg family lived there. The small town of Trappe, which is located about thirty miles from Philadelphia, has a rich German-American history. It was founded in 1717 by German immigrant Johann Jacob Schrack, Sr., who established a tavern there that he passed on in 1742 to his eldest son, John Schrack. In 1760 the business was described as having "the sign of the Three Crowns, but commonly known by the name of the Trap." The spelling was changed later to Trapp and, finally, Trappe.

In 1742, Lutheran pastor Henry Melchior Muhlenberg from Einbeck, Germany, immigrated to Pennsylvania and settled in Trappe



Portrait of Frederick Muhlenberg (1750–1801)

Image courtesy of The Speaker's House

after his marriage in 1745 to Anna Maria Weiser, daughter of the famed Indian treaty negotiator Conrad Weiser. Eight of the Muhlenbergs' eleven children were born in Trappe (including Frederick, on New Year's Day, 1750), before the family moved to Philadelphia in 1760. Three years later, Frederick and his brothers Peter and Henry, Jr., were sent to Germany for their education. Frederick spent seven years studying at the Francke Foundations in Halle before returning home in 1770 and being ordained a Lutheran minister like his father.

Frederick initially served a Lutheran congregation in Schaefferstown,

Lebanon County, Pennsylvania, before he was called to New York City. In 1771 he married Catharine Schaeffer, the daughter of a wealthy sugar refiner in Philadelphia. The young couple and their two small children fled New York in the spring of 1776 out of fear of the impending war. They returned to Pennsylvania where Frederick struggled to make ends meet. Finally, in 1779, he gave up the pulpit and entered politics, first as a member of the Continental Congress and then, from 1780 to 1783, as Speaker of the Pennsylvania

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## Donations to the Max Kade Institute Library Project Campaign

2017 marked an important milestone in the history of the Max Kade Institute, namely the conclusion of our six-year Library Project Campaign in conjunction with a Challenge Grant we received from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The goal of the campaign was twofold: to renovate the fourth floor of the University Club as a new home for the Institute where our unique library and archival resources would be adequately housed; and to start an endowment to help support the MKI Librarian/Archivist position. We are very pleased to report that we successfully raised over \$1,083,000, which includes a match of more than \$263,000 from the NEH. The greatest portion of the contributions, however, came from private donors, especially our Friends. We are very grateful to all of you who contributed to the Max Kade Institute Library Project Campaign. Without your help the Max Kade Institute would not be where it is today! The following is a list of those who donated directly to the MKI Library Project and Librarian Support fund at the UW Foundation before July 31, 2017. It also includes Friends who designated a campaign donation with their contribution to the Friends of the Max Kade Institute and became Life Members during this time. In addition, we thank those many Friends who increased their membership levels during the years of our campaign and made it possible for the Friends organization to make a large contribution to our Library Project Campaign. Thank you one and all!

### Max Kade Foundation: \$500,000

### Friends of the Max Kade Institute: \$82,460

### \$20,000 - \$26,000

Cora Lee Kluge  
Robert and Dorothy Luening  
Hans, Irene, and Sabine Schwark

### \$10,000 - \$19,999

Anonymous  
Heidi Gottman  
Margaret Lescrenier  
Fran and Neill Luebke  
Peter and Mary Monkmeyer  
Ruth and Kenneth Wright

### \$5,000 - \$9,999

Philip Graupner  
James Leary  
Renate Madsen  
Joseph Salmons and Monica  
Macaulay

### \$1,000 - \$4,999

Hans and Bobbie Bernet  
Rosemarie Blancke  
Ann Bolz  
Caryl Bremer  
Steve Buller  
Sandra Casterline  
Ray and Mary Evert  
Max Gaebler  
Henry Geitz  
German Interest Group—Wisconsin  
Elizabeth Greene and Ross Swaney  
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Christine Johnston  
James and Linda Kleinschmidt  
Edward Langer  
Ronald Marczak  
Todd Michalek  
Ruth Olson  
William Petig  
Antje and Grant Petty  
Gracia Schlabach  
William and Mary Seeger  
Maxine Triff  
JoAnn and Michael Youngman

### \$500 - \$999

Anonymous  
Anonymous  
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Peter Dorner  
Gary Gisselman  
Kenneth Graupner  
Dorothy Klinefelter  
Joan and Richard Leffler  
Mark Loudon and Jeanne Schueller  
Kaye and Douglas MacKenzie  
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Center, IUPUI  
Pommerscher Verein of Central  
Wisconsin  
John Pustejovsky  
Edward Raether  
Helmut Schmahl  
William and Barbara Thiel  
Luanne and Mike von Schneidmesser

### \$200 - \$499

Anonymous  
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Burton Barnard and Beatrice Bigony  
Dale Bartel

Joshua Brown  
 Mary Bucket  
 Mary Ann and John Dillon  
 Sabine Gross  
 Hayden Groy  
 Flores Gumz  
 Anna Guse  
 Phyllis Helmer  
 Jost Hermand  
 Sylvester Kreilein  
 Kevin Kurdylo and Shawn Brommer  
 Sylvester Marshall  
 Jacob Martens  
 Judy Mathison and William Stauffer  
 Francis and Rose Mary Matusinec  
 Frederick Merg  
 Richard Ralston  
 Karyl and Roman Rommelfanger  
 Jolanda Vanderwal and Gregory Taylor  
 Joel Zink

#### **\$100 - \$199**

Joan Arvedson  
 Kirsten Belgum  
 Dennis Boyer  
 Janet Brown-Lowe  
 Barbara Buenger  
 Corvin Degner  
 James Foust  
 Barbara and Heiner Giese  
 Peter and Dorothy Gross  
 Hope Hague  
 Joan and George Hall  
 Timothy and Diane Hughes  
 Walter Kamphoefner and  
   Anja Schwalen  
 Jennifer Kaufman  
 Viola Kuenzi  
 Hans Kuhn  
 Nils Langer  
 Thomas and Ellen Lidtko  
 Norbert Manthe  
 Stefan Manz  
 Jacob and Kathleen Martens  
 Susan McLeod  
 Detlef Moore

Stanley Pfrang  
 Anne Pryor and Steven Ackerman  
 Roland and Lonny Richards  
 Louise Robbins  
 Charles Ruedebusch  
 Karin Sandvik  
 Theresa and Alonzo Schenck  
 Patricia Stone  
 Johannes Strohschank  
 Pamela Tesch  
 Gary Umhoefer

#### **Up to \$99**

Arnold Alanen and Lynn Bjorkman  
 William and Margaret Amend  
 Charlotte Bleistein  
 Rudolph Boeckeler  
 Randall and Cynthia Braatz  
 David Braunschweig  
 Eric Brown  
 Lisa Christopherson  
 Robert Clodius  
 Sharon Cook  
 Larry and Debra Debbert  
 Janice Gary  
 William and Dorothy Gates  
 Steven Geiger  
 Sandra Granroth  
 Victor Greene  
 Dee Grimsrud  
 Mark Gross  
 Robert and Eppie Gruling  
 Carolyn and Lonnie Haas  
 Amy Hague  
 Robert Harsh  
 Olive Mae Hartwig  
 Carol Hassemer  
 Carolyn Hingst  
 Thomas Holme  
 Margaret and Charles Holzbog  
 James Hornung  
 John Hostage  
 H. John Huberty  
 Brian Joseph  
 Carol Jushka  
 Richard Kiley

S. Damon Kletzien  
 Nancy Kneer  
 Michael Koch  
 John Kulp  
 Richard Laun  
 Sheila Leary  
 Nancy Lee-Stratman and Frederick  
   Stratman  
 Thomas Lutz  
 Jane McLamarrah and Michael Kohl  
 William Meyer  
 Justus Paul  
 Pamela Potter  
 John Powell  
 Joseph Reinhart  
 Stephani Richards-Wilson  
 Richard and Lois Rossmiller  
 Lynn Rusch  
 Ronald and Kam Simonis  
 David and Diane Smidt  
 Daryn Straley  
 Inghilt Traenkle  
 Ruth Tsotsis  
 Kathleen Vos  
 Thomas and Linda Weisensel  
 George Werve  
 Christopher Wickham



Image courtesy of The Speaker's House

Artist's rendering of The Speaker's House from the northeast by Julie Longacre, 2017

*Continued from page 7*

General Assembly. In 1781, Frederick bought the house now known as The Speaker's House and moved there with his wife and children. When Montgomery County was established in 1784, Frederick was appointed the first President Judge, Recorder of Deeds, and Register of Wills, in addition to serving as a justice of the peace. At first there was no courthouse, so his Trappe home served as the seat of county government. In 1787, Frederick presided over Pennsylvania's constitutional convention. Elected as a representative to the first Federal Congress in 1789, Frederick Muhlenberg was the first Speaker of the U.S. House and first Signer of the Bill of Rights. He served in the next three congresses, becoming Speaker again during the Third Congress.

The restoration of The Speaker's

House to the period of the Muhlenbergs' ownership, from 1781 to 1803, began with a painstaking research effort that included architectural investigations, archaeological digs, and extensive documentary research. Significant architectural evidence was found to have survived—including original woodwork such as chair rails, paneled walls, floorboards, and even roof rafters—allowing the restoration to proceed with a high degree of accuracy. The first major hurdle was to rebuild the original pitched roofline, which had been replaced in the 1870s with a mansard roof, along with a massive stone chimneystack and four corner fireplaces. Red sandstone of the same color and type as the original house was procured from the ruins of a nearby barn. Working alongside a master mason, a team of volunteers helped between August 2016 and May 2017 to rebuild the

triangular peaks of the stone gable walls, the chimneystack, and the fireplaces. On June 10, 2017, a roof raising was held during which a 50-ton crane lifted off the mansard roof and then lifted up the rafter pairs for the new pitched roof, while hundreds of spectators watched from the safety of the rear lawn. Over the next three months, cedar shingles and lead-coated copper gutters were installed by professional roofers, while the restoration crew built and installed the pent roof and cornice trim.

Following the completion of the roof in September, a surprise donation enabled the bake oven to be reconstructed. It was erected on the original oven foundation, which had been excavated during the 2014 archaeology field school. Since the oven's squirrel tail flue (so called because it wraps on top of the oven, like a squirrel's tail wraps onto its



Image courtesy of The Speaker's House

The new roof of The Speaker's House under construction in summer 2017

back) draws through the back of the kitchen hearth, it cannot function until the kitchen fireplace and chimneystack are fully restored. Funds permitting, The Speaker's House hopes to complete the kitchen hearth restoration in 2018.

Future restoration projects include rebuilding a side porch, front door hood and flanking benches, well pump, and smokehouse. Long-term, there are also plans to reconstruct the general store operated by Frederick Muhlenberg in the 1780s; its roofline was discovered underneath layers of stucco, and its foundation was uncovered by the archaeology field school. To help visualize these long-missing features, the organization commissioned an artist's rendering to show them as restored. (See p. 10.)

The Speaker's House is open for tours by appointment and during special events throughout the year.

Guided tours take visitors behind the scenes of the restoration and also through the site's Pennsylvania German kitchen garden, installed in 2015. For more information, visit [speakershouse.org](http://speakershouse.org)

Visitors to Trappe enjoy strolling its mile-long Main Street, lined with many quaint colonial and Victorian houses. With advance reservations, one can also tour the Augustus Lutheran Church, built in 1743, whose congregation was led by Frederick's father Henry Muhlenberg and is now a National Historic Landmark, as well as the Henry Muhlenberg House. The latter site is fully restored and furnished as it had been in the year 1787, when Henry Muhlenberg and his wife Mary sold it to their oldest son, Peter. The elderly couple continued to live there after Peter and his family moved in, and thus visitors can experience life within a

multi-generational German-American household. Furnishings include many Muhlenberg family portraits, silver, furniture, and other treasures on loan from descendants, collectors, and other museums. To schedule a tour, contact [info@historictrappe.org](mailto:info@historictrappe.org) or call 610-489-2105. 🗺️

*Lisa Minardi is the Executive Director of The Speaker's House and author of Pastors & Patriots: The Muhlenberg Family of Pennsylvania.*

## Milwaukee's Experience in the WWI Era

Cora Lee Kluge

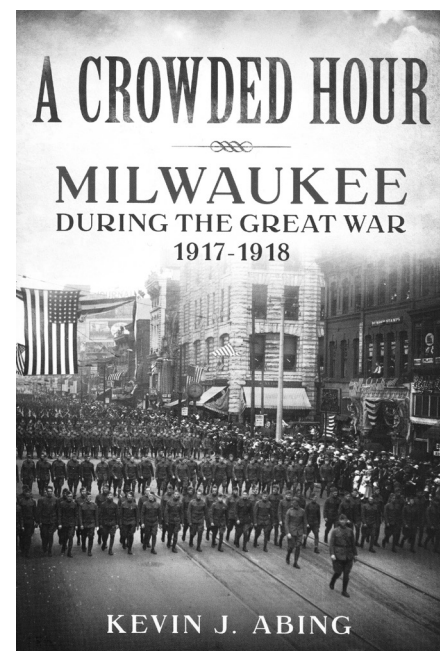
*A Crowded Hour: Milwaukee During the Great War, 1917–1918.* By Kevin J. Abing. Mount Pleasant, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2017. 239 pages.

This book concentrates on activities in Milwaukee during the period of the United States' involvement in World War I. Its author is Kevin Abing, who completed graduate degrees in American history at Marquette University and since then has worked as an archivist at the Milwaukee County Historical Society. It is well written and well researched, with 35 pages of notes and 11 pages of bibliography, and it was greeted with enthusiasm in the online news publication *Greater Milwaukee Today* and the *Milwaukee Magazine* (26 July 2017), as well as at

book signings and public lectures.

There is indeed much to praise in Abing's volume. The author admirably chronicles the development of and interaction between Milwaukee's various ethnic societies, religious organizations, neighborhoods, and political parties (such as the city's strong Socialist party), also putting into context the debates of the era over prohibition and women's suffrage, the large-scale entry of women into the work force, and the Spanish Flu epidemic of 1918. I particularly enjoyed the first chapter, which is a tale of Milwaukee's diversity and growth in the first two decades of the twentieth century, an exemplary contribution to the city's history.

Unfortunately, when it comes to anti-German sentiments in Milwau-



kee during the War era, Abing does not avoid a tendency to take sides with Milwaukee's native-born, extolling the city's enthusiastic and zealous pro-war patriotism, while treating the other side of the story with less sympathy and downplaying the illiberalism and intolerance with which its German-American community was confronted. This one-sidedness was caused at least in part by the fact that the author—though he makes liberal use of Milwaukee's major English-language newspapers (*Milwaukee Journal*, *Milwaukee Free Press*, *Milwaukee Leader*, and *Milwaukee Sentinel*)—consulted neither the large and influential German-language newspapers (*Milwaukee Herold*, *Germania*, *Germania-Herold*, *Vorwärts!*, and *Seebote und der Sonntagsbote*) nor any other primary or secondary



A scene from the German Austro-Hungarian Charity Bazaar at the Milwaukee Auditorium, March 1916, whose purpose was to benefit German, Austrian, and Hungarian war victims. The German Iron Cross and reproduction of a Viennese Cafe bear witness to the event's pro-German sentiment, which would have been unthinkable a year later.

sources in German. As a result, the voice of the city's large German element is disenfranchised; the difficulties of the German Americans are largely overlooked; and the narrative becomes somewhat skewed.

Some factual carelessness should be pointed out, which further distorts the situation. For example, Abing insists that "the German-American Alliance had 37,000 members in Milwaukee alone and more than 100,000 nationwide" (33). This would indicate that one-third of all members of the German-American Alliance were Milwaukeeans—whereas in fact the total membership in the U.S. in 1916 was an estimated 2.5 million, of which those in Milwaukee were a very small percentage. It also seems odd that Abing's illustration

of a "Water-Front Pass" (65), which supposedly is an example of government-issued "passes...to restrict the movement of German Americans" is not a pass for a German American at all, but rather for a man named Harry Belanger of American nationality, whose father and mother were born in Canada and Wisconsin and whose native tongues were French and English, respectively.

Abing's book would have been enhanced greatly by chapter headings, which could make clearer to the reader where he or she is in the story. Even more bothersome is the fact that there is no index, without which one cannot cross-check and find information. Nevertheless, these shortcomings are not major detractors, and they can be fixed in another

edition of the work. Meanwhile, *A Crowded Hour* is a significant contribution, recommended for the general reading public and scholars alike. 📖

*Cora Lee Kluge is a former Director of the Max Kade Institute and Professor Emeritus of German at the University Wisconsin-Madison.*



Milwaukeeans celebrating the end of the War, November 11, 1918. The "womanalls" worn by the women shown here give testament to their employment in Milwaukee factories during the war.

*Continued from page 2*

amazing achievement for a U.S. state of relatively modest size. Our university's strength is built on the ability to generate and disseminate knowledge among students and communities, both scholarly and public, across the state and beyond. Extending the reach of MKI beyond Wisconsin—without compromising our deep ties to the Badger State—not only strengthens us as an institution but also helps advance the brand of the university nationally and globally.

To be sure, it makes sense for MKI to look first to other states in America's German Belt for opportunities to build connections. And many UW–Madison alumni and Friends of the MKI live in places like Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, and Indiana, where the legacy of German immigration is especially evident. This spring, we are very pleased to host the exhibit “German Iowa and the Global Midwest,” which will be on display in our exhibit space in the University Club for most of April. The exhibit consists of twelve panels based on content produced by students and faculty from the University of Iowa. Its opening was marked by a presentation on April 5 by Prof. Glenn Ehrstine from the Iowa German department on the topic, “‘It’s a lot harder in Wisconsin than here’: The Contours of German-American Immigration to Iowa.” This event is a wonderful example of the kind of bridge-building we are aiming for with MKI Across (German) America.

Moving forward, we plan on expanding our own collection of display materials, especially high-quality posters, that showcase our work in

Wisconsin and our library and archival resources. In addition to sponsoring events related to these materials, we will also build closer ties to other research centers and libraries in the U.S. that have collections that complement our own, as well as to individual researchers working in German-American studies at various institutions. Recently I have been in contact with colleagues across the country to discuss specific ways we can partner with one another to develop shared real-time and virtual exhibits and to apply for grant funding. Longstanding partnerships with German universities have already led to many collaborations and exchanges. This spring Sarah Warchhold, a

master's student at the University of Freiburg, will do a three-month internship at the MKI, working with German-American language materials. MKI, as the most visible institution devoted to German-American studies, is well positioned to serve as a central clearinghouse for exciting research and creative public programming in our field.

In the meantime, once again, a very hearty thank you to you, our Friends, for your support of the work of the Max Kade Institute. We look forward to seeing many of you next month in Marathon County!

—Mark

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

**REGISTRATION – Friends of MKI Annual Meeting, May 5, 2018**

Return with payment by April 19 to Friends of MKI, 432 East Campus Mall, Madison, WI 53706

Catered dinner by 2510 Restaurant **at the Town of Berlin Center.**

All options are served with a side of potatoes and vegetables, and include bread, salad, and dessert.

Cash bar.

1) *Schweinshaxe* (pork shank)

Number of guests x \$35: \_\_\_\_\_

2) *Biermariniertes Huhn* (beer-marinated BBQ chicken)

Number of guests x \$35: \_\_\_\_\_

3) *Vegetable Alfredo* (vegetarian)

Number of guests x \$35: \_\_\_\_\_

Total amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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