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Max Kade Institute Friends Newsletter

VOLUME 16 NUMBER 2 • SUMMER 2007

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

Frederick Pabst: From Sea Captain to Beer Baron

by John Eastberg, Senior Historian, Pabst Mansion

The life of Captain Frederick Pabst is one that could have been considered ideal by many in the nineteenth century. His rise from the fields of Saxony to center stage in international business seems the very definition of the American Dream. Yet this man was mortal, and along with his success came heartbreaks and difficulties. Perhaps it was his level head and sense of humor that allowed him to reach beyond what he was given at birth. Or was it his tremendous drive to achieve something better, or his boundless sense of honor? All of these attributes have been ascribed to Captain Pabst at one point or another. His life is one worth remembering, as it holds so much of what our immigrant ancestors experienced in establishing their place in the New World.



Captain Pabst as a young man.

Johann Gottlieb Friedrich Pabst made his debut on March 28, 1836, in the small village of Nikolausrieth, then in the Province of Saxony, Kingdom of Prussia. Friedrich—or Frederick, as he later called himself—was the second child of Gottlieb Pabst, a local farmer, and his wife, Johanna Friederike. The Pabsts were neither rich nor poor, but had created a modest existence for themselves in this small hamlet of 200 or so inhabitants. By the time Frederick reached the age of twelve, his parents had decided to liquidate their holdings and set their sights on a new beginning. The year was 1848, a time when political strife and revolution were sweeping across Europe, but the Pabsts were not particularly religious or interested in politics. Like so many others, they

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Summer Thoughts

by Cora Lee Kluge, MKI Director

Greetings, Friends and Readers!

Folks are on summer vacation now, but activities at the Keystone House don't really let up. The MKI will have a presence at Milwaukee's German Fest in late July, and we continue to attend to business and welcome visitors. Particularly Kevin Kurdylo and Hope Hague will be holding the fort, with assistance from time to time from Antje Petty and Mark Loudon. I myself will be absent for two of the summer months to visit my husband in Germany and to help once again with the Sommerschule Wust, a summer school/camp for English language and literature in Sachsen-Anhalt. Please visit our Web site at <www.kitanic.de> to check into my activities there.

While I am abroad, I will be in touch with some of our European academic contacts to promote the MKI's new anthology (*Other Witnesses: An Anthology of Literature of the German Americans, 1850 to 1914*). After all, this collection of German-language texts may be well received there, and our publication series is dependent on healthy sales. We feel that *Other Witnesses* will prove to be an important

collection as well as a gold mine of information for students in the Federal Republic who are interested in German-American Studies.

My work convinces me more and more that our field is an important part of American history and serves to put me in touch with my own American background. My translations from Paul Oeker's 1878 article on the Black Hills and the proposed reorganization of this area as the Lincoln Territory, which you will find beginning on page 12 of this issue, sent me back not only to the work done by American historians of the Great Plains, but also to earliest memories from my childhood.

This time the connection for me is through Comanche, according to tradition Custer's horse and the only survivor of the Battle of the Little Bighorn. Though Comanche was in the battle, he was not the sole survivor, nor was he Custer's mount. He was in fact injured there, but he eventually regained his health and spent the last decade or so of his life taking part in American parades and patriotic gatherings. When Comanche died in 1891, his remains were preserved by L. L. Dyche of the University of Kansas in Lawrence, my hometown. He was shown at the Chicago Exposition of 1893 and since that time has been kept at the KU Museum of Natural History (the Dyche Museum)—an institution we used to call the "Dead Animal Zoo."

In my mind's eye I see myself as a small child standing at the glass case which was Comanche's home, looking up at him from all sides: from the front, from between the hind legs. I learned the words "spurs" and "saddle" at his side, and my parents pointed to tattered spots in his hide that were bullet holes from his injuries. Years later, these memories came back again when I took my own children to see Comanche; I think they had not expected to see a whole large horse at the museum's entrance; and I saw in their faces that they experienced the same sense of amazement. Historian Stephen E. Ambrose wrote of *Crazy Horse and Custer*, but I knew that the story should bear the title "Comanche and Custer" and that, of the two, Comanche definitely

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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World Wide Web at:
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emigrated to find a better life for themselves.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, emigration to America was a dangerous and expensive undertaking. The Pabsts' assets allowed for passage across the Atlantic Ocean and then on to Milwaukee, but the fledgling frontier town was not to their immediate liking, and so they traveled to Chicago to look for better opportunities. The following year, Friederike Pabst died in the cholera epidemic. Her final resting place is unknown.

With the tragic loss of a wife and mother, Gottlieb and Frederick, now short on funds, had to find work where they could. The two found employment in several Chicago hotels, Gottlieb as a waiter and Fred as a busboy. This work allowed them to survive, not necessarily thrive. Young Fred, now fourteen, was intrigued by the ships that weighed anchor in the harbor of Chicago. He had relished the voyage that he and his parents had taken to America a few years earlier. Before long, he literally threw in the towel as a busboy and signed on as a cabin boy aboard a Great Lakes steamer.

It was aboard the Great Lakes vessels that Frederick Pabst grew into adulthood, cultivating a reputation for fairness and honesty that endeared him to the passengers as well as to the owners of the shipping line. By the age of twenty-one, he had attained his maritime pilot's license and the right to be called Captain.

Captain Pabst continued to develop a sterling reputation as he plied the waters between Chicago, Milwaukee, Port Washington, Sheboygan, Manitowoc, and Two Rivers. He was associated with some of the finest vessels in the Goodrich Transportation fleet during the 1850s and 1860s, including *Traveler*, *Sunbeam*, *Comet*, and *Sea Bird*. Phillip Best, owner of a small but growing lager beer brewery in Milwaukee, was a frequent passenger on Pabst's



Captain and Mrs. Pabst shortly after their marriage, ca. 1865.

ships. When he had business in Chicago, he would sometimes take his eldest daughter Maria along for the voyage. It was on such a trip that Frederick and Maria met. After a two-year courtship, the couple was married on March 25, 1862.

Pabst continued to stay in the wheelhouse for another year and a half, until a winter storm helped to change his mind. In mid-December 1863, while he was trying to pilot the *Sea Bird* back into the Milwaukee harbor, the ship ran aground off the shore of Whitefish Bay. Captain Pabst may have reconsidered his chosen career, especially now that he was a married man. Decisions made in 1864 affected not only the lives of the Pabst family, but

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The Friends of the Max Kade Institute Board of Directors

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the American brewing industry for all time.

When Phillip Best first became acquainted with Captain Pabst, he must have viewed him not only as a suitable match for his daughter, but also as someone who would be well equipped to take over his brewing company. In 1864, Best and Pabst came to an agreement that one-half of the brewing company would be sold to Pabst for the consideration of \$21,057.05—a tremendous amount of money in the 1860s. For the next two years, Pabst learned the brewing business under the guidance of his father-in-law. In 1866, Best sold the other half of the company to his new son-in-law, Emil Schandein, who had married Best's other daughter, Lisette. Phillip Best retired from business at this point, leaving Fred Pabst as president and Emil Schandein as vice-president.

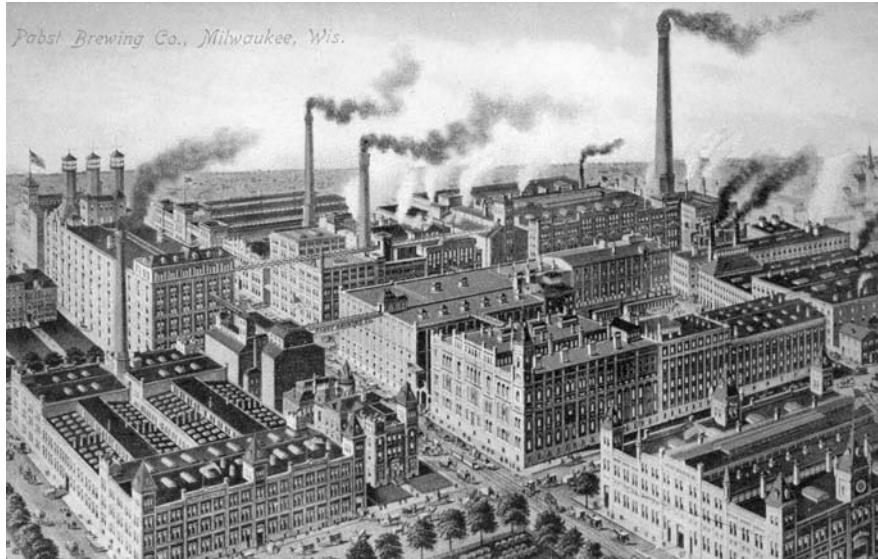
Captain and Mrs. Pabst raised their family in the shadow of the brewing company. The couple had eleven children; only five, however, survived to adulthood. Since nineteenth century executives usually lived right next to their work place, the family home stood in the middle of the brewing complex. The sights, sounds, and smells of the large brewery were part of daily family life. Not until 1892 did the Pabsts move into their new mansion on quiet Grand Avenue.

With Pabst and Schandein at the helm, progress was made at a breakneck pace. Many elements came together to propel them to great success. First of all, transportation and mechanization were steadily improved during the post-Civil War period, facilitating the movement of raw materials and the finished product. Pabst as a former ship captain and Schandein as a former traveling salesman both understood the movement of products to a more distant clientele.

One has to appreciate what a novel concept this was, especially for the brewing industry. As beer was a fragile commodity to transport, it was not until the appearance of refrigerated railcars and better methods of containerizing beer that wider distribution was possible.

By 1888, the Phillip Best Brewing Company was operating on a national scale and was poised for international greatness. A large network of "branch offices" that handled the wholesale distribution of the company's product and "tied houses" or taverns that

sold the product to eager patrons had been established. Dozens of railcars left Milwaukee every day loaded to the brim with cases of Ph. Best beer. With the sudden death of Emil Schandein in July of 1888, Captain Pabst took charge of the entire brewing operation. In March of the following year, a vote



Pabst Brewing Company, Milwaukee, Wis.

was called to change the company's name from Best to Pabst. The corporate logo of a "B" on a hop leaf was retained, to honor the company's years as the Best Brewing Company.

The 1890s are often referred to as the Pabst Decade in Milwaukee, because Captain Pabst influenced so many aspects of the city's landscape and society. In 1889, the Pabst Whitefish Bay Resort was opened to throngs of visitors who traveled to the north of the city to enjoy a day's recreation and refreshment while drinking Pabst beer amidst the lush atmosphere of the city's newest pleasure ground.

Pabst acquired the Nunnemacher Opera House in 1890, remodeled it, and opened it as the Stadt Theater. Both Captain and Mrs. Pabst generously supported Milwaukee's German Stock Theater Company, which made the Stadt its home. When a fire broke out in January 1895 and destroyed the theater, what we today know as the Pabst Theater rose from the ashes

in a matter of only six months.

In 1891, Captain Pabst helped to lay the cornerstone of what was to become Milwaukee's first skyscraper. The Pabst Building eventually rose to a staggering sixteen stories and dominated the city's skyline for decades to come.

To provide heat and electricity for the aforementioned buildings along with two hotels, Captain Pabst inaugurated the Pabst Heat, Light, and Electric Company, which was a power plant devoted to providing energy to Pabst-owned buildings downtown.

A number of Pabst properties could be found in Milwaukee, and Captain Pabst also sought restaurant and hotel leases in New York City, Chicago, and San Francisco to promote the name Pabst and make it synonymous with upscale urban living. The Pabst Hotel stood briefly at the intersection

of Broadway and 42nd Street in Manhattan, only to be torn down three years later to make way for the subway. What was built in its place has become part of American iconography—Times Square.

As the Pabst Brewing Company reached its zenith as the world's largest lager beer brewery, Captain Pabst's health began to decline. Years of smoking cigars had led to emphysema and pulmonary edema compounded by a decade-long struggle with diabetes, and in 1903, while vacationing in Southern California, he suffered two strokes that badly weakened his already fragile health.

When Pabst returned to Milwaukee in the summer of 1903, he put his business affairs in order. To each of his four surviving children and to his eldest granddaughter, he gave one million dollars worth of Pabst Brewing Company stock. At this time, the average working class salary was only about \$600

per annum.

Captain Pabst died on January 1, 1904, surrounded by his wife and family. At the funeral a few days later, thousands of mourners surrounded the Pabst Mansion to pay tribute to the man who had done so much to improve his community. Newspapers around the world lamented the death of the kind and generous Captain Pabst.

The printing of Captain Pabst's death notices drew the attention of those who wanted a piece of the Pabst estate.

An amusing story regarding those who sought a share of Pabst's untold riches was recently uncovered by Peter Arvedson, Pabst Mansion volunteer extraordinaire. While researching the early years of Captain Pabst in Nikolausrieth, Arvedson found a remarkable correspondence buried in the records of the local church.



Pabst Mansion in Milwaukee.

In early 1904, having read of the death of the town's famous prodigy, the local pastor wrote to Captain Pabst's two sons. He suggested that they should commemorate their father by building either a new church or a new road connecting Nikolausrieth to the neighboring judicial seat of Artern. The road of course would be named Pabst Straße. The reply from America was unfavorable: the Pabsts believed there were ample charitable opportunities in Milwaukee. Undeterred, the pastor then approached the potentially more charitable family member, the widowed Mrs. Pabst. He was turned down once more. Pabst's hometown or not, you will not find Pabst Straße on the map of Nikolausrieth.

Captain Pabst's legacy has survived through more than one hundred years since the beer baron's

Hattie Big Sky: Kirby Larson's Story of Life on the Montana Prairie in 1918

Reviewed by JoAnn Tiedemann

Larson, Kirby. *Hattie Big Sky*. New York: Delacorte Press, c2006. 289 pages. Includes bibliographical references, recipes, and author's note. Ages 10-13. Newbery Honor Book, 2006.

This somewhat peculiar title heads a somewhat peculiar children's book, but one that reveals a rather unknown situation in early twentieth-century U.S. history involving German Americans.

Sixteen-year-old Hattie Brooks is an orphan who lives with her Aunt Ivy and Uncle Holt in a small town in Iowa. The book opens with her letter to a classmate, Charlie, who has left town to fight in World War I. Hattie herself then receives a letter written by her mother's long-lost brother, Chester, recently deceased, announcing that he has left his Montana homesteading claim to her.

The rest of the book is Hattie's first-person narration of her year in Montana trying to prove on the claim. It includes additional letters to Charlie and to her Uncle Holt, and eventually also short articles she writes for a newspaper back in Iowa.

Hattie's experiences reveal the problems of prairie pioneers, involving fencing, planting, childbirth, epidemic disease, etc. But in addition, life during World War I is thematized by references to War Savings Day, Liberty Bonds, a County Council of Defense, the Montana Loyalty League, and food rationing. Hattie witnesses the harassment and vio-

lence against people who criticize America's involvement in the war, and particularly against her neighbors, the Muellers, because Karl, the husband and father, is an immigrant from Germany. By the end, the war is over, Hattie loses her claim, the Muellers move to Seattle, and Charlie sends a marriage proposal.

Because it condenses so much into Hattie's year and employs various stylistic devices, the book reads somewhat disjointedly, and it becomes difficult to bond with the characters and the flow of their lives. Nevertheless, the situations taken individually ring true.

Larson's story was inspired by her great-grandmother, who held a Montana claim. As the author explored her family history, she realized that the international situation of 1918 needed to be a part of her text.

It is the author's intention to reveal, and an insightful reader will be able to see, parallels

between the prejudice and hatred of Hattie's story and immigrant and international situations today.

JoAnn Tiedemann, a member of the Board of the Friends of the MKI, is completing her twelfth year as a librarian/media specialist for the Madison Metropolitan School District. She has taught German language and culture in schools in Madison, Milwaukee, and Minnesota, as well as at the Waldsee German Village of the Concordia Language Villages programs in Moorhead, MN.



Peter Arvedson, Intrigued by History

by Antje Petty, MKI Assistant Director

The Friends of the Max Kade Institute are excited to welcome Peter Arvedson as a new member of the Board of Directors. Peter moved to Elm Grove, Wisconsin, three years ago when he retired after

35 years of working as pastor in the Episcopal Church in Illinois, Okinawa, Wisconsin, and New York. Wherever his job took him and in the many other locations around the world he visited over the years, Peter has always been interested in local culture and history. Thus, when he moved to the Milwaukee area, he immediately immersed himself in the city's history.

It was not long before he began to volunteer as a researcher and docent for the Captain Frederick Pabst Mansion. This Flemish Renaissance Revival Mansion, built by the famous brewery owner in 1890–92, was considered the jewel of Milwaukee's famous "avenue of mansions" and represented the epitome of America's Gilded Age Splendor in Milwaukee. Today it is the only building of its kind still standing on Grand Avenue, serving as a museum, exhibit space, and meeting venue. Peter has developed a virtual tour of the Pabst Mansion, as well as a number of presentations such as "From the Bests to the Pabsts: Milwaukee, the Pabst Brewery, and the Best/Pabst Family." At the same time he has researched the Captain's personal background, especially his childhood and family ties in Germany.

Work at the Pabst Mansion also stirred Peter's interest in German and German-American art. He is conducting research on pieces by famous Milwaukee artists that belonged to the Blaatz Founda-

tion and are now hanging in the Mansion. He has studied the architecture and history of Milwaukee and volunteers as a trained tour guide for Historic Milwaukee Incorporated.



Peter Arvedson

Although his interest in German-Americana peaked with his recent move to arguably the most German-American region in the country, Peter has always been interested in Germany, German history, and the German language. As a chemistry major at the University of Illinois in the 1950s, he took German classes and sought every opportunity to practice the language. One day, a janitor in the University library,

a WWII veteran who had become a friend, gave Peter two diaries he had found in a ruined building in a German town at the end of the war and brought home to the States. The diaries were written between 1939 and 1942 by a young boy; they chronicle the war and the progress of the German forces with personal entries and newspaper clippings. Now Peter had his first German history research and translation project.

Since Peter received a Ph.D. in inorganic chemistry from the University of Wisconsin in Madison, he has taken many trips to Germany and elsewhere in Europe. These days, he is often accompanied by his wife Joan, Professor and Program Coordinator of Feeding and Swallowing Services at the Children's Hospital of Wisconsin in Milwaukee. Their next trip will take them to Ireland and Greece. And then, some day, Peter would like

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death. The product that carries his name is still among the most popular beer brands in America, his theater never fails to impress audiences, and, of course, the Captain Frederick Pabst Mansion continues to pay homage to one of the nineteenth century's most influential immigrants.



Pabst Hotel, which once stood at 42nd and Broadway in New York City.

Friends of the Max Kade Institute

The Friends of the Max Kade Institute organization supports the activities of the Institute, including the publication of this Newsletter. Individual members also assist the Institute through financial contributions, endowments, and planned giving, as well as by donating historical and other relevant materials to the MKI library and archives. To join the Friends, please see the last page of this Newsletter. To donate materials, please contact the librarian at kkurdylo@wisc.edu or call (608) 262-7546.

Two Letters Requesting Charitable Contributions from the Pabst Estate, 1904

Translated by Antje Petty

All crossed-out words and underscores appear in the original documents.

LETTER 1

Evangelical Rectorate Catharinenrieth near Allstedt (S.W.), Germany, Kingdom of Prussia, Province of Saxony.

January 12, ~~1903~~ 1904

Re: The Evangelical Church in Nicolausrieth
Enclosed: 1 document, 1 newspaper clipping

To the *Herr Junior* of the Pabst family in Milwaukee.

Highly esteemed Sir;

A few days ago I received the enclosed newspaper clipping recounting the life of your recently deceased father. According to this—as subsequently confirmed in our church records and the enclosed birth certificate—your father was born in Nicolausrieth; only his birthday is not May 28, but rather March 28, 1836. The article tells in great detail of the benevolent and charitable public spirit the deceased exhibited, and it also duly appreciates his good German and evangelical disposition.

I would like to appeal to this good spiritual legacy of the departed in his family when I take the liberty of approaching you, highly esteemed sir, and thus all surviving family members with an utterly selfless request. The church in Nicolausrieth—in which your father was baptized and which he attended until leaving his homeland—is in an unspeakably poor and ignoble condition. When I was assigned this parish a year ago and was asked to hold my inaugural sermon in Nicolausrieth, the church left me with an exceedingly depressing impression. Even the church council

of our parish readily admitted that changes were desperately needed. A partial renovation, however, is totally out of the question. Due to the condition of the building both inside and out only a new building will do. ~~In order to accomplish this~~ In order to make possible the construction of a dignified new building, I am ~~now~~ drawing on the well-known ~~German-Evangelical~~ charitable spirit of your highly regarded family for the birthplace of your dear father. I am doing this most especially for this purpose, as the school was renovated by the congregation ten years ago, and the parsonage was renovated 15 years ago by the congregations of Catharinenrieth and Nicolausrieth, which naturally removes these two buildings from consideration.

[The following paragraph is added in the margin] The congregation would be willing to place a plaque on the new church building to keep alive the memory of your father, the honorable son of our parish.

There is another pressing need in the community of Nicolausrieth: the improvement of the road from N. to Artern (the judicial seat an hour from here) on the Nicolausriether end. The government authorities concur with this assessment. Only Artern is still causing problems regarding its share of the road. . . [illegible end of sentence]. It would also be desirable to create an endowment fund for the rectorate which would generate interest in covering travel costs [between the parish churches]. The parish of Nicolausrieth is an hour away from here, and the path on the bank of the [river] Helme passable only in good weather; otherwise the parish can be reached only via a 1 ¾ hour detour—at the expense of the pastor. But I would happily rescind this unusual wish in favor of the construction of a new church. I leave my request and the hometown of your dear father in your benevolent hands.

I remain respectfully yours.
Schröer, Pastor

LETTER 2

Evangelical Rectorate Catharinenrieth near Allstedt (S.W.), Province of Saxony, Germany

March 29, 1904

Postscript to petition of the 28th of this month

To Ms. Marie Pabst Best
Milwaukee, Wis.,
2000 Grand Avenue

Dear Madam,

I asked you in the above mentioned petition for a donation to benefit the construction of a new church in Nicolausrieth to keep alive the memory of your dear husband in his hometown. But our rectorate, too, would be prepared to do its part to ensure that the memory of the deceased will not be lost to future generations in Nicolausrieth.

In 1837 the widowed Mrs. Kessler made a donation of 13 Morgen [about ten acres] worth about ~~13,000~~ 15,000 M[arks] to the church in Catharinenrieth. Out of gratitude we commemorate her every year on a Sunday either before or after the anniversary of her death (March 30) in a special sermon by the Pastor from the pulpit right after the church service. Thus her memory stays alive in the community. Similarly the church of Nikolausrieth could commemorate your dear husband with thanks and intercessions on a Sunday before or after his birthday or the anniversary of his death for all times.

I offer this suggestion—which was my wife's idea—for your consideration after I already mailed my letter of the 28th of this month.

I am obliged to you and remain respectfully yours.
Schröer, Pastor

Stuck in the Mud: Teacher Th. Finds That the Road Really Does Need Improving!

by Antje Petty, MKI Assistant Director

Pastor Schröer of the churches of Nikolausrieth and Katharinenrieth was not the only person from Frederick Pabst's hometown who, after the Captain's death, approached the family in Milwaukee for support of community projects. The following is an article that appeared in the *Sangerhäuser Zeitung*, a regional paper, on Wednesday, March 2, 1904. Special thanks go to Marlene Sorms (Nikolausrieth), Helmuth Bartsch (Wildenhain), and Peter Arvdeson (Milwaukee) for researching the project and providing this and related documents.

Nikolausrieth—Artern

The improvement of a stretch of dirt road [between Nikolausrieth and Arten] has long been a high-priority need of both towns. Support for this project was sought through a creative application to the estate left by beer-king Pabst, who recently died in America, and who—as is generally known—was a son of Nikolausrieth. Unfortunately the application did not succeed. We are told the following:

Artern: When just before Christmas¹ German papers all over the country carried obituaries of Milwaukee beer-king Pabst (who was born only an hour from here in Nikolausrieth), praising among other things the man's remarkable charitableness, teacher Th. in Artern had a bright idea: He would direct the attention of the [beer-king's] now extremely rich heirs to their father's town of birth. In the name of the township of Nikolausrieth, Mr. Th. made a rather curious request to the bereaved family, to create an eternal monument to their father's memory in his hometown by building a beautiful "Chaussee" (to be called *Pabst Street*) between Nikolausrieth and Artern. Such a road—only four kilometers long—has been the most eager wish of the people of Nikolausrieth, and there is no hope that the county of Sangerhausen will be able to build it in the foreseeable future.

Teacher Th. was encouraged by news from his son that a certain lady was staying at an inn in Sondershausen who had been a private tutor in the Pabst

household in Milwaukee for two years. When approached, Miss St.—the aforementioned tutor—suggested not to contact the sons but rather the mother, the widow of the brewery owner P., who is known to be a generous woman. After all plans had been made, on a sunny and frosty February day at Carnival time, teacher Th. rode his bike to N[ikolausrieth] and presented all the documents to the town council for signatures. The petition read: "Maybe it was Nikolausrieth surrounded by water and fields of golden barley that already in his youth inspired Mr. Pabst to pay attention to those two major ingredients in the beer making process. And maybe it was the exceptional energy, endurance, and tenacity he inherited from his ancestors, hardened through the tumultuous history of their little town Nikolausrieth that brought his early plans to fruition. Henceforth for psychological considerations alone it would be appropriate if a certain gratitude could be shown to his hometown, etc., etc."

Thus equipped Mr. Th. rode back to Nikolausrieth. Carnival festivities being held by the threshers of Kalbsrieth however caused a delay. In the meantime the ground began to thaw and Mr. Th.'s mood—which up to that point had been excellent—began to sour. After only a short ride on the Helmeriet levy, the muddy clay became so thick that his wheels ceased to turn and he had to carry the bike on his shoulders. His earlier satisfaction with the schemes for the public good gave way to a subdued mood and eventually led to curses: "To hell ['Ins Pfefferland'?] with all these castles in the air and these unrealistic plans!" Finally, after a grueling march, Th. reached N[ikolausrieth] drenched in sweat, exhausted, and covered in dirt. Here a letter from one Mr. Schulz had arrived, which at this low point really could not have depressed him any further: A Pastor Sch. from Catharinenrieth had had the same idea as teacher Th. and had made a request to the sons of Mr. Pabst "for support of the church and the street from Nikolausrieth to Artern," only to

MKI Annual Meeting and Dinner in New Glarus

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by Hope Hague, MKI Administrative Assistant



Above: Barbara Jean Rippley, Prof. La Vern Rippley, Karyl Rommelfanger, Roman Rommelfanger, and Antje Petty.
Right: Peter Monkmeyer. *Photos courtesy of Charles James.*



The Friends of the Max Kade Institute held their 2007 Annual Meeting and Dinner on May 12 in New Glarus, WI, also known as “America’s Little Switzerland.” The Saturday events, coordinated by Board member Hans Bernet, began in brilliant early spring sunshine with a guided tour of the many old buildings and impressive collections at the Swiss Historical Village Museum. The tour leaders were well-informed and dedicated to the continued good work of the Green County Historical Society.

At the business meeting that followed in the Chalet Landhaus, President Ed Langer paid humorous tribute to the outstanding six-year service of outgoing Board officers Bob Luening (Treasurer) and Charles James (Secretary and “Official Photographer”). JoAnn Tiedemann introduced the new candidates for the Board of Directors: Peter Arvedson (see profile, p. 7), Karyl Rommelfanger (returning to the Board after a year’s absence) and Ted Wedemeyer (returning for a second term on the Board). All three candidates were confirmed in a unanimous vote.

The reports of the President and Treasurer of the Board, as well as the MKI Director and Assistant Director, indicated that the Friends organization is in good financial health and that the MKI has been extremely busy and successful with dozens and dozens of projects and activities.

After the annual meeting, a brief Board of Directors meeting was held, and officers were elected: President: Ed Langer; Vice President: Don Zamzow; Treasurer: Greg Smith; Secretary: Karyl Rommelfanger. Also, Peter Monkmeyer agreed to serve as an assistant to the Treasurer for cash flow activity at the Madison bank.

While the Directors were meeting, other attendees renewed old acquaintances and made new ones while sampling the fine New Glarus brews at Puemple’s Olde Tavern while anticipating a Swiss-style dinner at Chalet Landhaus.

The dinner program began with a spirited invitation to next year’s Annual Meeting and Dinner in Marathon county from hosting members of the “Pommersche Verein,” who also provided some musical examples of the convivial spirit Friends can expect to find at the 2008 event.

Guest speaker Duane Freitag, retired reporter and editor for *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* and a New Glarus native with a longstanding interest in genealogy and Green County history, gave a lively talk about the history of Swiss immigration to Wisconsin, illustrated with historical slides from his collection.

Everyone agreed that it was a most pleasant day, and the Friends of the MKI are grateful to our New Glarus hosts for making us feel welcome.

American History through the Eyes of German-American Commentators: The New Lincoln Territory, 1878

by Cora Lee Kluge, MKI Director

The discovery of gold in the Black Hills of today's South Dakota led to one of the most complicated and problematic chapters in the development of the American West. In 1868, the Fort Laramie Treaty had reserved the land for the Sioux tribe of American Indians; but by 1875 the U.S. government, having received reports of minerals and natural resources there, was attempting to purchase the area. General George A. Custer, who had led a first expedition to the Black Hills in 1874, died at the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876. Because gold had been discovered, and despite efforts by the Army to keep them out, whites poured into the Black Hills. Boomtowns sprang up, the most famous of which was Deadwood, and with them appeared characters about whom novels could be—and have been—written. Economic pressures, including the depletion of the buffalo, led to a new treaty, that of 1877, in which the Lakota ceded the land to the United States. That treaty has been a source of contention since.

In the 1870s, the *New Yorker Belletristisches Journal* published several articles on the Black Hills, revealing (and fueling) interest among German Americans. There were, for example, Udo Brachvogel's 1874 report of Custer's first trip (included in the new volume entitled *Other Wit-*

nesses: An Anthology of Literature of the German Americans, 1850 to 1914, ed. Cora Lee Kluge [Madison: MKI, 2007]), and also Paul Oeker's 1878 article entitled "Das künftige Lincoln-Territorium" (The Future Lincoln Territory), from which the following excerpts were taken.¹

Information about Oeker is almost non-existent; in the 1880s he may have been a businessman in San Francisco. Because the subtitle of his report

indicates that he used American sources, it is possible he had no first-hand experience of the Black Hills. Nevertheless, he comments on the wealth, culture, history, and political situation of the area, beginning with information about Black Hills separatists who at the time were eager to break off from the Dakota Territory and establish a territory called Lincoln.

Our illustration is a detail from Feodor A. Fuchs's



Detail from *Custer's Todes-Ritt* (Custer's last charge).
Lithograph by German-American painter/lithographer
Feodor Fuchs. Milwaukee Litho. & Eng. Co., 1876.
Courtesy Library of Congress, LC-USZC4-512.

work entitled "Custer's Todes-Ritt" (Custer's Last Charge). Fuchs was a German-American painter and lithographic artist who was in Milwaukee in 1876; and his lithographic work, known as the first classic color lithograph of the Battle of the Little Bighorn, was issued by the Milwaukee Lithographing and Engraving Company in that year. Another well-known illustration depict-

ing the battle, an adaptation of Cassilly Adams's painting by the Milwaukee German-American artist Otto Becker, was produced by the same lithographic company in 1895 and was widely distributed as advertising by the Anheuser-Busch brewery of St. Louis.

Excerpts from Oeker's report:

In this country not only cities, but also territories spring out of the ground overnight and like mushrooms. The Black Hills are setting themselves up in all seriousness to become an independent territory. At this moment there are debates in congressional committees concerning the separation of this newest El Dorado from the mother territory "Dacotah" and its reconstitution as the Lincoln Territory. On hand are delegates from the Hills, armed to the teeth, but not—as is sometimes still the case in their home areas—with murder instruments, but rather with statistical instruments. And waiting at home with excitement about the things to come are hundreds of incipient governors, senators, secretaries, etc. The troops of these honorable persons were recruited for the most part from disappointed office-seekers from Colorado whom the Centennial State [=Colorado] let go. . . . Let us look at the statistics more carefully. They reveal that despite incessant Indian attacks and the difficulties settlers in such remote locations have to cope with, there are more than 40 cities (what one calls cities here) with a permanent population of 18 to 25 thousand and an additional 10 to 15 thousand who are present only in the summer. There is regular mail and express service with Cheyenne and Sidney, the next stations of the Union Pacific Railroad. Some of the cities or spots or settlements have a county organization (and what kind!), and several enjoy churches, schools, daily newspapers, telegraph, mail, and express offices. The yield of noble metal, because of which this embryo-state has magically appeared, is estimated at four million dollars in the last twelve years. At this point the numerous mountain springs with sand containing gold are said to lead in quantity, but the yield from gold quartz mined by ca. 40 steam- or water-driven mills with ca. 600 stampers supposedly outweighs the results of panning for gold. Judging from previous results and with proportional increase in the number of workers and stamp-works, a yield of ca. six million dollars within the next year from quartz mines alone is to be expected. . . .

Already a competition has broken out among the "cities" of the Black Hills concerning hegemony, the honor of becoming the capital of the new territory. At this point Deadwood, built in the northern part of the mountain range at the confluence of the Deadwood and Whitewood Rivers, claims the first place. As long as no depletion can be perceived in both these rivers, which are the main sources for placer mining in the Black Hills, or as long as no more productive gold fields have been discovered, Deadwood City would not have to fear a rival. However, as is known, such streams are washed out sooner or later; and this easy source of the valuable metal will run dry and in its place will come the more difficult and complicated shaft mining, the ransacking of the bowels of the Rocky Mountains that contain quartz. And thus a dangerous competitor is already arising for Deadwood (which is dependent on the placer mining of the two rivers), namely Central City, built three miles further south in the gorge, where the real gold-quartz region begins and where most of the stamper mills have been established. . . .

The fact that under such conditions the Hills deserve their Bret Harte,² that there is no lack of problematic natures, lusty figures, wildly romantic situations and events—who could doubt it, if he has read the chronicles of the gold territories? Would not Miss Kitty, the jig-dancer with the Roman nose and the cold gray eyes—who was first the Danaë of a good-tempered German, and after the source of his gold rain had run dry married two others, only to be shot by her third husband, who then immediately committed suicide—would she not be the most delicious heroine and central figure of a novel of manners? Or the graceful little Hurdy-Gurdy ballerina with the promising and ominous name "Calamity Jane," whose eyes glistened emerald green in anger, with the Amazon-like antecedents, she, the one-time Indian scout in a soldier's jacket, who galloped over the mountains and was the much-feared pursuer of the Redskins. And then there is Monte Verde with the dark eyes and locks, who made a triumphant entrance into Deadwood, standing on a board that was carried by four broad-shouldered gold-prospectors, and who now plays the alluring siren and banker at the tables in Saloon Twenty-One ("Vingt-et-un-Tische"). . . .

John B. Pearson, a Belgian by birth, one of the Californian argonauts of forty-eight, a longtime pioneer, gold-seeker, traveler of the world, calls himself the Columbus

to visit a few little towns in Thuringia and Sachsen-Anhalt, villages like Nikolausrieth, Mönchpiffel, Katharinenrieth, Allstedt, or Sangershausen—an area off the beaten tourist track, but nevertheless the ancestral home of Frederick Pabst and his family. Here Peter will be able to continue his research on the Pabsts—and practice his German.

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[of the Deadwood mines]. He was one of the band that was politely ushered out of the forbidden paradise of the Black Hills by Custer's blue-coats in the spring of 1875. Wiser because of this experience, Pearson made a second attempt in another, more arduous way. Accompanied by a few companions and equipped with pack horses instead of wagons, he set out in August from Fort Pierre, moving directly west over the plains toward the irresistibly luring area, prudently remaining 140 miles away from Custer City. The small band spared no efforts; blithely its members entered the mountain range, climbed over the steepest mountains, and cut a path through the most overgrown canyons, prospecting everywhere, carefully investigating every rock, every cliff, every stream. After only three days in the Hills, they came across a small stream now called Deadwood. Here, as Pearson, exhausted and thirsty, bent down to the spring to drink from his hollow hand, he noticed a brightly glistening rock. It was quartz, and to be sure the only piece that they were to find in this area. That was the discovery, the beginning of today's Deadwood City. The place is still called Discovery, and all the claims along Deadwood are named according to their respective distance from this first claim (claim number 1, 2, 3, etc. above or below Discovery). The later findings at this place were more valuable. But the supplies of the group of seven were used up; five went back and left Pearson and one comrade to their fate. Six weeks the two held out, fighting with almost superhuman deprivation, and obtained convincing proofs of the riches that were hidden here. When they finally returned to Fort Laramie, the two, who had been given up for dead, were stared at like legendary animals. The two bold entrepreneurs wanted to return once more to the magical area, this time with 28 recruits and via hidden pathways. But 23 of them chose an easier route and were caught and sent back by

the military authorities. Only the remaining more fortunate seven Swabians reached their goal, where they discovered new mines on the Deadwood and Castle Creek and placed their claims. Today Pearson counts as one of the nascent millionaires of the area. . . .

The Badlands stretch out only twenty-five miles from the beginning of the Hills, a desolate nothing without wood, grass, water, or farmland, and they contribute considerably to increasing the difficulty of approaching this island in the mountains, which is thus so securely barricaded by nature and is a genuine oasis in this unfruitful wasteland. Almost every halfway-good piece of land would remind one of a paradise after such a purgatory. But regardless of that, the future Lincoln Territory has such incomparable advantages in itself, other so endlessly fertile sources of treasure—like California—that guarantee it a thriving future, even if the supply of metals is exhausted. The beauty and diversity of the landscape, the excellent composition of the earth for agriculture and stock-breeding, the luxuriance of the timber and stones for building, are attractions that engrave themselves upon the minds of settlers who are moving west. . . .

The portions of Oeker's report that we have included here in English translation represent only about one-third of the entire article. Like many of the pieces published in the *New-Yorker Belletristisches Journal* and other German-American newspapers, it proves itself to be a clear, fair, and factually accurate account. Today's students who read the story of the Black Hills in works such as historian Stephen E. Ambrose's *Crazy Horse and Custer*³ will find that the contributions of Brachvogel and Oeker are in substantial agreement with the story told by modern scholars, while at the same time presenting a relatively unknown perspective: that of immigrant "outsiders" whose insights and attitudes both reflected and shaped the development of their new homeland.

Notes

¹ Paul Oeker, "Das künftige Lincoln-Territorium: Unter Mitbenutzung amerikanischer Stoffquellen," *New-Yorker Belletristisches Journal* 26, no. 46 (11 January 1878).

² Bret Harte (1836–1902), American writer best known for his accounts of early life in California.

³ First published in New York by Doubleday, 1975.

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be rejected with the comment that the Pabst family “had to take care of more important obligations closer to home”—just as the fine psychologist Miss Stephany had predicted.

Thus all great hopes went up in smoke and the only outcomes of the whole endeavor were a useless trip, a badly damaged bike, and a ruined suit. And everyone was reminded again of the age-old lesson: Don’t count your chickens before they are hatched!

Note

¹ This is an error: obituaries did not appear until after Pabst’s death on January 1, 1904.

News Brief

New Chair in German-American Studies Announced

The Department of World Languages and Cultures at Indiana University-Purdue University-Indianapolis (IUPUI) invites applications for the Hoyt-Reichmann Chair in German-American Studies and German Language and Culture, a position to be filled by Fall 2008. The holder of the endowed chair should be a tenured faculty member at the rank of associate or full professor, with a distinguished record of scholarship in German-American Studies, a secondary area of expertise in German Literature, Linguistics, or Translation Studies, and evidence of excellence in teaching German at all levels. He or she will also serve as Director of the Max Kade German-American Research and Resource Center at IUPUI, established to facilitate research and teaching in German-American Studies; will be actively involved in the Center’s publishing program; and will coordinate educational and cultural activities and exchanges in cooperation with the German Program and the Indiana German Heritage Society.

A letter of application, curriculum vitae, and six letters of recommendation should be sent to: Professor Gabrielle Bersier, Chair, Search and Screen Committee, Department of World Languages and Cultures, Indiana University-Purdue University-Indianapolis [IUPUI], IN 46202.

Review of applications will begin on November 1, 2007, and continue until the position is filled.

Upcoming Lectures

Friday, July 6, 3 p.m., Red Gym. Dr. Nils Langer: “German Identity in American School Grammars, 1860–1918.”

Dr. Langer teaches various aspects of German linguistics at the University of Bristol, England; he is a specialist in the relationship between language use and language attitudes (i.e., the difference between what people think they say and what they actually say). His talk will focus on how German settlers in the second half of the nineteenth-century taught German and American culture and how the teaching of German took a crucial turn around 1900, giving strong signs of the imminent decline of the language in the United States.

Thursday, October 25, 4 p.m., Memorial Union (see TITU for room). Dr. Anke Ortlepp: “German-American Women’s Clubs: Constructing Women’s Roles and Ethnic Identity.”

Dr. Ortlepp is a leading German historian working on German immigration to the United States and a Research Fellow at the German Historical Institute in Washington, DC. She will also be the guest speaker at the 156th annual *Stiftungsfest* on October 28, 2007, at the Free Congregation (*Freie Gemeinde*) of Sauk County, Wisconsin.

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played the nobler part.

Paul Oeker—and before him Udo Brachvogel—wrote of the Black Hills, the discovery of gold there, Custer’s two expeditions, and the development of this part of the Great Plains. Brachvogel and probably Oeker, too, were immigrants from German lands whose “outsider” reports concerning the goings-on in the Dakota Territory reveal somewhat the same feelings of wonder I knew as a child when I learned about my country’s history. Texts by our immigrant writers are additional reports, providing more commentary to go along with what we find in the works of Anglo-American writers. But they also take a different perspective and provide us with a different view of our past, one that should not be neglected.

Keep on going, do enjoy your summer—and stay in touch!

—Cora Lee

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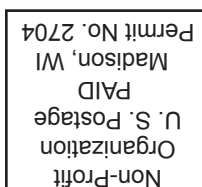
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