



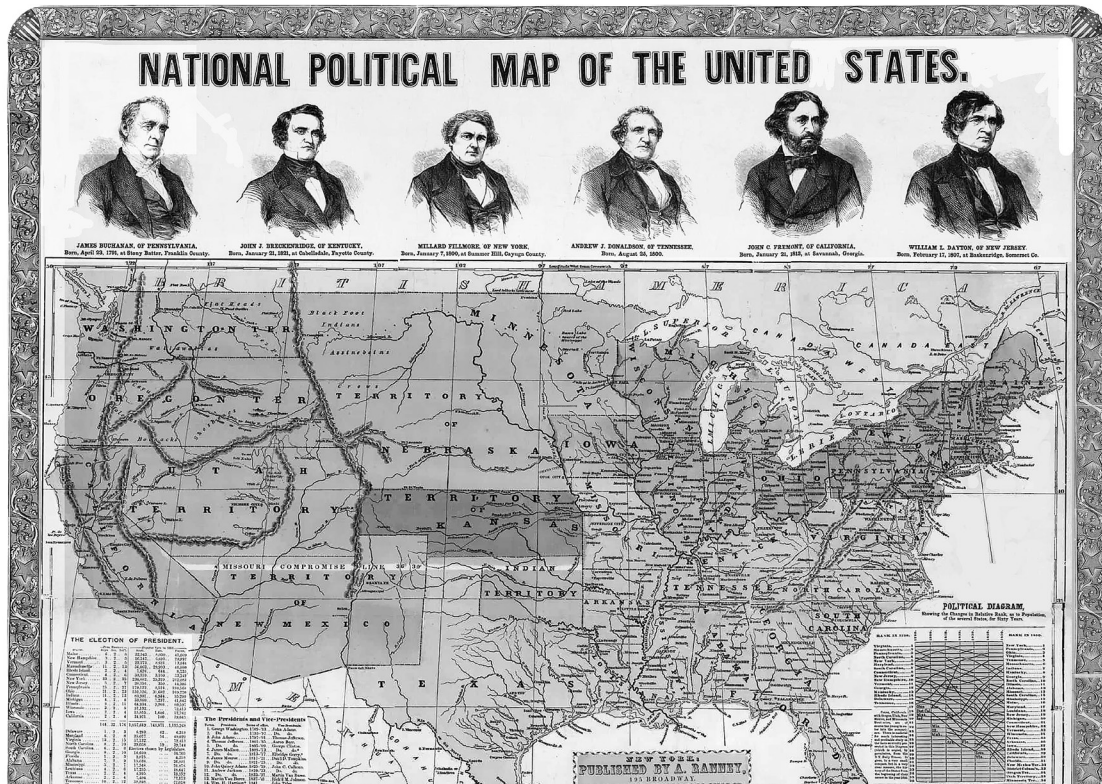
MAX KADE INSTITUTE

FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

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Two Rival German Immigrants and the Contentious Federal Election of 1856

Karyl Enstad Rommelfanger



National Political Map of the United States. New York: A. Ranney; Chicago: Rufus Blanchard, 1856

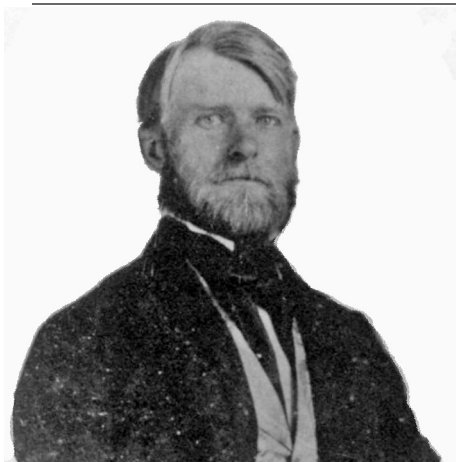
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In the years leading up to the Civil War, local politics in Manitowoc County, Wisconsin, were as contentious as on the national scene, including in the German-speaking population. This is exemplified by the conflict between two recent immigrants: Karl Pflaume and Karl Roeser. Both men had been politically involved in the 1848 Revolution in their home regions of Germany, both were known for their fiery personalities, and neither was an American citizen.¹ They also each

ran a newspaper: Pflaume published the short-lived *Der Buschbauer*, while Roeser was the owner of *Wisconsin's Demokrat*. By the time of the presidential election of 1856, the two German papers competed with three English papers in Manitowoc, each one firmly tied to either the Democratic or Republican party.

Karl Ludwig Wilhelm Pflaume was born in 1817 in Aschersleben, Saxony.² His family enjoyed some wealth and influence and was known for their involvement in civic causes.



Portrait of Karl Pflaume, from "A German Farmer Views Wisconsin, 1851-1863." *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, Winter, 1978-1979, Vol. 62, No. 2

Pflaume studied agriculture at the University of Jena, perhaps with the vision of becoming an *Oekonom*, or farm manager. He was also a writer who published a book of poetry before his emigration, but most of all, he was politically active. In the months leading up to the 1848 Revolution, Pflaume organized a local militia, founded a Turner society, and established a workman's association.³

On August 15, 1851, he set sail for America. The revolutions in Germany had failed, but Pflaume's personal motivations for leaving his homeland are not clear. Originally setting his sights on Missouri, he changed his mind at the prospect of living in a slave state⁴ and headed for Wisconsin, arriving in Manitowoc County in October 1851. Here he and two fellow travelers purchased land next to each other in the middle of a primeval forest roughly four miles southeast of the village and began hacking a farm out of the wilderness. After three rather lonely years of sweat and toil in the *Busch*, as the wilderness that surrounded Manitowoc was called, Pflaume returned to Germany to marry and, in early 1854,

accompanied by his young wife, Amalie Hornung Pflaume, returned to Wisconsin.

That same year, German immigrant Karl Roeser also arrived in Manitowoc. Roeser, a lawyer, had been imprisoned in Berlin for high treason during the German Revolution⁵ but with help from his wife had escaped. He and his family fled first to England and then to America, initially settling in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, where Roeser helped found the German newspaper *Anzeiger des Nordens*.⁶ In 1854, Roeser moved his family to Manitowoc, where he established Manitowoc's first German newspaper, *Wisconsin's Demokrat*. At the same time, Roeser became heavily involved in the newly founded Republican Party and was one of only two German delegates to the party's organizational convention in Madison in July 1854.⁷

The *Manitowoc Herald*, a backer of the Democratic Party, initially welcomed Roeser as a "courteous and gentlemanly man ... who will prove a pleasant and honorable contemporary."⁸ However, the *Herald's* tune changed rapidly when Roeser became a radical supporter of the new party, making a name for himself by being mean-spirited and insulting. The *Herald* soon wrote that the chief occupation of *Wisconsin's Demokrat* was to "vilify and traduce worthy citizens," calling editor Roeser "the personification of arrogance and ingratitude."⁹

With his staunch anti-slavery views, Karl Pflaume soon became active in the new Republican Party as well. In September 1854, at a local mass meeting of party supporters,



Karl Pflaume, his wife Amalie, and their three surviving children, 1872. *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, Winter, 1978-1979

Pflaume was elected as one of two Manitowoc County delegates to the Republican Congressional Convention in Waupun.¹⁰ Pflaume reported later that of the forty delegates present, he was the only German. At a gathering of Manitowoc County Republicans a month later, Pflaume spoke to the group about slavery and freedom. *Wisconsin's Demokrat* reported that the crowd responded to his speech *mit vielem Beifall*, with a large ovation.¹¹

Other Germans were becoming active in local politics as well. In the county-wide elections of 1854, there were sixteen candidates vying for six positions. Of these, three were German immigrants. Friedrich Salomon, another new Republican, lost to his opponent in the race for Register of Deeds and the other two, Karl Roeser and Karl Reuter, competed against each other for Clerk of County Board. Roeser won the election.¹²

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Greetings Friends and Readers!

The 2024–25 academic year got off to a great start for us at the Max Kade Institute with our symposium, “From Russia with German: Migration Experiences across Three Continents,” which took place on September 19 and 20, 2024. This was our first experience sponsoring a hybrid symposium, which posed a number of technical challenges. I am grateful to my wonderful colleagues, Antje Petty, Randi Ramsden, and Kevin Kurdylo, for all the work they put into the organization and execution of what was a very successful event. We were pleased at the sizeable number of attendees in person and virtually. You can read about the symposium on page 8 and find the link to the recorded presentations on our website.

The focus of our symposium on Germans from Russia is a nice example of how we at MKI expand the scope of our work to include new projects underscoring the diversity of experiences of German-speaking migrants globally. It is fascinating to examine how German speakers in the diaspora, past and present, forge dynamic identities through their interactions with other groups, indigenous and migrant. The history of Germans from Russia is a profoundly complex one that is very much playing out still today, in Russia, the Federal Republic of Germany, and across the Americas, from Canada to Paraguay.

Our success with hybrid and virtual programming over the past

few years has inspired us to continue to sponsor events in these modalities in the future. At the same time, we are grateful for the opportunity to engage in outreach events across Wisconsin and beyond in person. For some years now, we have partnered with Badger Talks, an organization on campus that sponsors public presentations by UW–Madison staff on topics of interest to communities across the state. This kind of public-facing work is in the spirit of the Wisconsin Idea, which is at the center of our mission at MKI.

Just as important as what we share with the public via our programming are the relationships we cultivate with community-based researchers such as Karyl Enstad Rommelfanger, a retired German teacher and longtime MKI Friend. Her story of a political conflict involving German immigrants in Manitowoc County, WI, in the mid-19th century, presented as the lead article in this issue,

is an excellent example of how local history can be thoroughly riveting and also cast light on larger issues in America's history. The synergistic loop between academic institutions like ours and the greater community drives much of our work and makes it so rewarding for us. We appreciate your interest and involvement!

We are deeply thankful for the many ways you, our Friends, make it possible for us to continue to thrive and grow. On behalf of all of us at MKI, I wish you and yours a peaceful and happy holiday season.

With gratitude,
Mark

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However, Roeser had made himself disliked by both Americans and Germans in the village and clamor arose for a second, more moderate German newspaper. So, in September 1855, Karl H. Schmidt began the publication of the *Nord-Western* as a less radical alternative to the *Demokrat*, but also espousing the principles of the Democratic Party. Roeser reacted sharply, accusing Schmidt, who had worked in the office of the *Demokrat*, of trying to drive him out of business.¹³ Sadly, most of the early issues of the *Nord-Western* no longer exist.

Meanwhile, having settled into farm and married life, Karl Pflaume found that his social circles in the village had expanded. The Pflaumes became friends with the Hottelmann and Salomon families. In 1862, Edward M. Salomon would become Wisconsin's 8th Governor, the first German American and Jewish American Governor of the state. His three brothers, including the aforementioned Friedrich, became prominent officers in the Union Army during the Civil War. The Hottelmanns ran a brewery, and like the Salomons and the Roesers, they came from Halberstadt, a neighboring city to Aschersleben.

The Pflaumes were invited to

Der Buschbauer.

Redakteur: K. Pflaume.

No. 3.

Manitowoc, Freitag, den 14. November

1856.

various social engagements, and they hosted guests as well. In October of 1854, after learning that three couples (Mr. and Mrs. Lüps, Klingholz, and Röser) would be visiting the next day, Amalie hastily prepared a meal that by today's standards would be considered a scrumptious feast, featuring roast beef, soup, cabbage, bratwurst dumplings, pudding with raspberry sauce, fried chicken, ribs, and stewed fruit. In a March 7, 1856, letter to her parents and siblings, Amalie describes her social circle as Frau Hottelmann, Frau Salomon, Dr. Müller's wife, Frau Rüdiger, a young woman from Magdeburg, and Frau Roeser.

But Karl Pflaume's views of editor Roeser were changing. In a letter back to Aschersleben, Pflaume concedes that the *Demokrat* certainly has its place in Manitowoc but he dislikes the editor's "holier-than-thou" attitude.¹⁴ He writes to Amalie's parents that he takes offense that the editor is not willing to publish

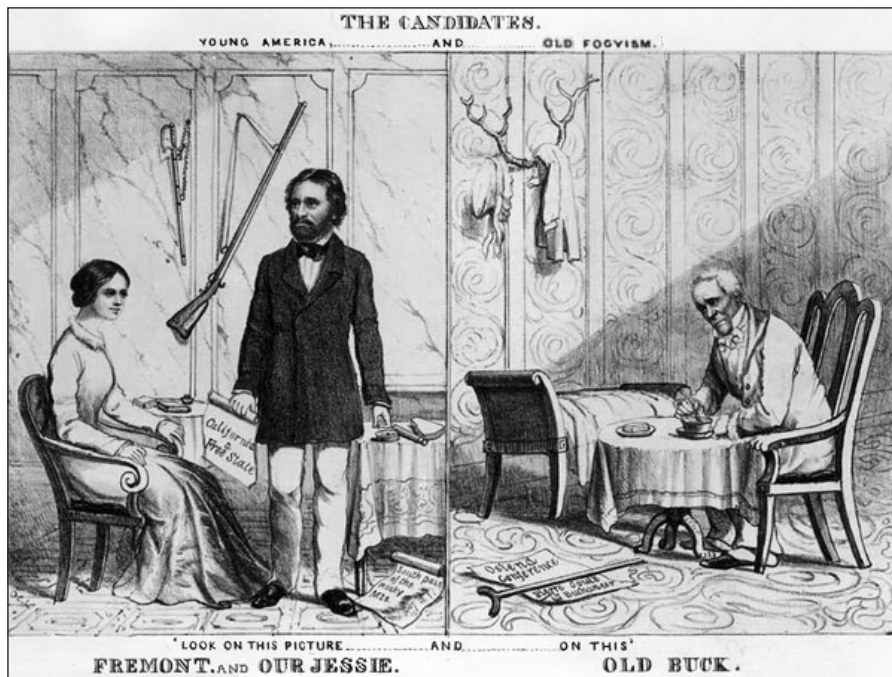
several poems he had submitted, even though publications in both New York and Milwaukee had accepted his work.¹⁵ Pflaume also reveals that Karl Roeser has suggested he begin an agricultural newspaper. Suspicious of Roeser's motives, Pflaume initially declines. However, as the 1856 presidential campaign heated up and slavery becomes a key topic, Pflaume published the first issue of his own newspaper, *Der Buschbauer*, i.e., "The Bush Farmer," in October 1856.¹⁶ Running over four pages, the paper covered agricultural as well as political topics. Although only two issues were published before the November 4th election, the editor of the Manitowoc *Weekly Tribune* called it a campaign newspaper for Republican presidential candidate John C. Fremont, who was running against incumbent President James Buchanan. Once Fremont's nomination was secure, Karl Pflaume began campaigning in earnest, both for Fremont and for himself, as he had decided to challenge incumbent Karl Roeser for the position of Clerk of County Supervisors.¹⁷

In the 1850s, campaigning was called "electioneering," which Pflaume wrote about in an unpublished manuscript where he quotes from a letter, likely written by fellow

Wisconsin's Demokrat.

Ein unabhängiges Organ der Fortschritts-Partei.
Verantwortlich und redigiert von Karl Roeser.

Manitowoc, Wisconsin, Donnerstag, den 26. October 1854.



Pro-Fremont, anti-Buchanan political cartoon, 1856

German and Manitowoc resident Karl Reuter. The letter describes the efforts of the height-compromised Reuter, who, as he rode through the countryside electioneering for Fremont, employed the largest horse he could find to make himself look taller and more imposing than he actually was. Reuter also humorously reflects that the country folk always knew when an election was drawing near, because the city folk would start appearing out in the *Busch*.¹⁸

But there was more to electioneering than riding around the countryside promoting a specific candidate. Electioneering was an important process in distributing ballots for the coming elections. These ballots were called “tickets,” from which comes the expression of a candidate being “on the ticket.” There was no secret ballot¹⁹ in the United States at that time and no formal printing of a comprehensive ballot, meaning

that someone who wanted to vote had to obtain the appropriate ticket that listed the candidates from their favored party. Karl Reuter stated he had a good day in the village of Centerville, where he had distributed 100 tickets.²⁰

Electioneering could be dangerous. Were the electioneer to ride into an area predominantly inhabited by those of the opposite party, he might have all his tickets ripped up or he might even be assaulted. Adding to the precarious, and expensive, nature of the job, an electioneer was expected to purchase drinks for those who supported his candidate, meaning that a gathering could become a raucous brawl.²¹ Adding to that, the electioneer often joined his supporters in a drink or two. Reuter describes himself becoming tipsy or outright drunk on several occasions.²²

There was also the problem of the tickets themselves, which were often

colorfully printed on both sides, making it easy to discern for which party a person was casting their ballot. Stalwarts of the opposing parties were known to stand around the ballot boxes and thereby pressure voters. Using tickets as ballots also opened the possibility of voting more than once. There were no regulations as to who did the printing of the tickets, and this led sometimes to the printing of “split tickets,” containing a mixture of candidates purposefully meant to confuse the voter.²³

The entire process caused confusion, suspicion, and sometimes even violence during the heated, pre-Civil War 1856 election in Manitowoc County. In some instances, votes did not line up with previous canvases, making it likely that there had been individuals who voted more than once. Concerning the election in the village of Manitowoc, the *Weekly Tribune* wrote that “men were seen ... to go to the polls and vote two or three times, and then get into a wagon and go towards Manitowoc Rapids, where they doubtless voted again.”²⁴

More unnerving in the village were the “ruffian bands ... who forced their ballots into the hands of the weak minded, intimidating them through threats,” wrote the *Weekly Tribune*. And in the Township of Maple Grove the same paper reported that an elderly, peaceable gentleman named Evans was brutally attacked and thrown to the ground while others yelled, “Kill him, kill him,” presumably for being of the wrong political persuasion.²⁵

How much electioneering Karl Pflaume did is not known, but it is

clear he was involved in the Republican push to elect John C. Fremont. Pflaume became a member of the German branch of the Fremont-Dayton Club and was a speaker at a joint gathering of the German and English clubs.²⁶ One newspaper was especially complimentary, writing that "the best feeling prevailed, and it is becoming evident that our German citizens are rousing their energies for the struggle in November."²⁷

Of course, Pflaume had his own political future to consider, in his challenge of incumbent Roeser for the position of Clerk of County Supervisors. At the party primary, Pflaume won the nomination, defeating Roeser by two votes. But Roeser, unhappy with the outcome, told Pflaume that he would bow out of the race if his opponent did the same. Pflaume refused. So Roeser, in his usual fashion, fired back at Pflaume in the *Demokrat*, labeling him a "bush farmer" who did not speak English well.²⁸

There was also gaiety and revelry during the fall campaigns, with both political parties holding large rallies in downtown Manitowoc on October 11. The gatherings drew huge crowds, with many coming in from the countryside to watch the parades and hear the speeches. Amalie Pflaume wrote: "The children and I attended a large political festival in the village. The speeches by the Republicans were held outside, while the Democrats held theirs in a large hall. At the Republican parade we saw thirty-two women on horseback, thirty-one of whom were dressed in white ... and one clothed in black. The thirty-one women in white represented the free states, and the woman in black epitomized Kansas, which is to become a slave state. Each horse had a ribbon on the right side of its head with the name of a state and each woman was accompanied by a gentleman on horseback. The men all wore broad red satin sashes, and the parade Marshall ... also wore

Republican Ticket.

For Congress,
CHARLES BILLINGHURST.

For Senator,
DAVID TAYLOR.

For Assembly,
JAMES BENNETT,

For Sheriff,
F. W. ADAMS.

For Treasurer,
GERARD KREMER.

For Clerk of the Court,
F. BORCHERDT.

For Clerk of the Co. Board,
CHARLES RÖESER.

For Register,
F. SALOMON.

For District Attorney,
W. H. HAMILTON.

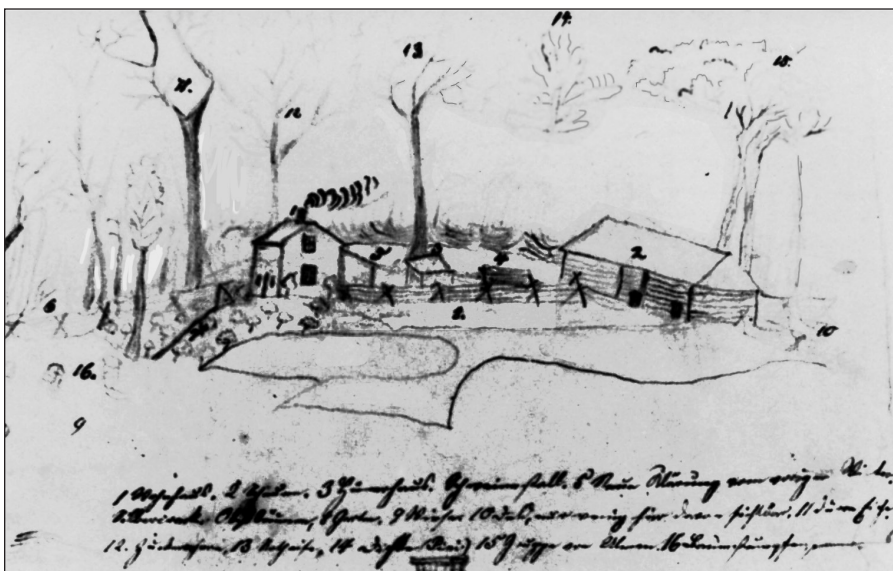
For Surveyor,
F. ARMSBY.

For Coroner,
STEPHEN BATES.

The 1856 Republican ticket in Manitowoc County, Wisconsin

a wide red, white and blue ribbon wrapped around him. There was also a large wagon adorned in green and pulled by a team of sixteen horses. It carried the Milwaukee *Musikchor* ... The parade was splendid ... winding through the streets until it came to the place where the speeches were held. This was a large and beautiful space with two platforms erected, one for the English speakers and one for the Germans. There were some great speeches, but the one that got the most applause was given by [Carl] Schurz ... He laid out everything so clearly."²⁹

In the final count the Democratic Party was the big winner in the county, reelecting James Buchanan and winning all but two townships: Manitowoc, where Karl Pflaume lived, and Eaton.³⁰ Pflaume made a good showing in his bid for Clerk of County Supervisors, coming in



Sketch by Karl Pflaume of his Manitowoc farmstead, undated.
Wisconsin Magazine of History, Winter, 1978-1979.

second to his Democratic challenger and defeating Roeser by 873 votes. Forever optimistic, Pflaume wrote in the third issue of the *Buschbauer*: “We are beaten, but not defeated.”³¹ Although not claiming to be a prophet, Pflaume’s words about slavery in the same issue proved alarmingly spot-on. “It seems to be the fate of the world, that all great ideas do not come to fruition quietly and peacefully, but rather in just the opposite way, after violent shuddering, in which ideas take on hands and feet that carry guns, and sabers, and cannons.”³²

In the wake of the 1856 election, the Wisconsin legislature passed new voting laws. The *Manitowoc Tribune* described the new law: “Its provisions are most strict, and make it a penal offense to offer, or to induce any other person to offer, an illegal vote; prescribes the duties of the inspectors, which duties, when faithfully performed are proof against ballot box stuffing and illegal voting.”³³ Breaking the law could result in a fine from \$100 to \$500 or a prison sentence of a few months up to three years.³⁴

Meanwhile, Karl Roeser had become a pariah in the community, using personal insults and name-calling to alienate the very people he wanted to influence, his fellow Republicans. In early October 1857, three prominent local Germans walked into his home and demanded redress for unfavorable comments made in a previous issue of his newspaper. When Roeser refused to print a retraction, Richard Klingholz beat Roeser with a cane, hitting his target three or four times, according to the editor. Roeser said he regretted not having a loaded

gun available.³⁵ Another local paper, responding to the incident, said it could not condone the act of the gentlemen, but stated, “we are free to admit that [Roeser’s] scurrility has the effect to lessen the sympathy which his case might otherwise excite.”³⁶

The problems Pflaume had with Karl Roeser continued post-election as well. When in early April 1857 Pflaume suspended publication of *Der Buschbauer* after twenty-two issues, the resulting abuse poured upon him by the *Demokrat* was cruel and mean-spirited. Valentin Wintermeyer, a friend of Roeser and a neighbor to Pflaume, as well as a self-styled poet, used his poisoned pen to scoff at the *Buschbauer* editor, writing a series of poems meant to belittle and offend.

Pflaume’s patience had reached its limits. He sent a note to Roeser, challenging him to a pistol duel, specifying a date, time, and place. This became fodder for more abuse, when Roeser printed the note in his newspaper.³⁷ The duel never took place, but when, a couple of years later, Pflaume encountered Karl Roeser on the street he beat the editor with a cane, causing injury. Pflaume was taken to court and fined.³⁸

Karl Pflaume never again entered politics. As a result of the heated political climate Amalie and her husband also found themselves virtually friendless. As early as 1856 the Pflaumes had indicated in their letters a desire to return to Germany. Hewing a farm out of the wilderness was work more suited for a younger man, Karl wrote.³⁹ Sadly, the downturn in the economy, which lasted into the 1860s, bound them to the land. Finally, in the spring of 1863, the Pflaumes were able to sell their farm

and return to the homeland. The family settled in Leipzig, Germany, where Karl practiced his true passion, writing, often penning stories of his experiences in America. He died in 1879.

Karl Roeser departed Manitowoc in 1861 to take a position in the U.S. Treasury Department under President Lincoln, likely a reward for his strong involvement in the early struggles of the Republican Party. In 1875 Roeser and his son-in-law founded a German newspaper in the U.S. Capitol. Titled *Der Volkstribun*, it ran until 1902.⁴⁰ Roeser enjoyed some years of retirement and died in Washington in 1897.

Amalie Pflaume gave birth to six children while in Manitowoc County, four of whom died in infancy. Before he left, her husband lovingly moved the bodies from their property and reburied them in the city cemetery, where they still rest today. The tiny frame house Karl Pflaume built on his farm in 1852 still stands. 

Karyl Rommelfanger, a retired teacher of German and MKI Friends member from Manitowoc, Wisconsin, has been transcribing and researching Pflaume’s journal and letters for several years.

Endnotes

¹ According to Wisconsin’s revised constitution and election rules of 1848, non-citizen white males over 21 years of age who had resided in the state for more than six months, could vote and be elected to office, if they declared their intention to become citizens. <https://content.wisconsinhistory.org/digital/collection/tp/id/71796/>

² Manitowoc newspapers refer to Pflaume as “Charles.” This article uses his birth name, “Karl.” Information on the Pflaume family is based on a large cache of letters

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Max Kade Institute Symposium: “From Russia with German”



Presenters at the symposium, clockwise from upper left: Stefan Manz, Aileen Friesen, Eric J. Schmaltz, Peter Rosenberg, Nancy Martin, Mark L. Louden, Travis Olson, Claudi Maria Riehl, Göz Kaufmann, and Ann Braaten

On September 19 and 20, 2024, the Max Kade Institute held its “From Russia with German: Migration Experiences across Three Continents” symposium at the UW–Madison Pyle Center. Altogether, nearly a hundred people attended in-person lectures, while an additional two hundred individuals registered to watch the lectures streamed live.

Our presenters covered a wide range of topics about the history, traditions, religions, socio-economic circumstances, as well as languages and dialects of German-speakers who for generations lived in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union and then migrated to Germany or the Americas. Many lively discussions ensued after each presentation.

All of the lectures listed below were recorded and are now available to watch online. Links can be found at <https://mki.wisc.edu/from-russia-with-german-presentations/>.

Keynote: *In the Fold of a “Greater German Empire”? ‘Russian Germans’ and Diasporic Connectedness before 1914* — **Stefan Manz**, Professor of Global History, Aston University, Birmingham, United Kingdom

“Voices Crying Out in the Wilderness”: Germans from Russia Transnational Networks across Eurasia and North America during the Soviet Dissident Period, 1972–1987 — **Eric J. Schmaltz**, Professor of History, Northwestern Oklahoma State University, Alva

A Brief Sociolinguistic History of Plautdietsch in the Altai (Russia) — **Peter Rosenberg**, Senior Scholar of Linguistics, European University Viadrina, Frankfurt (Oder), Germany
Russian Mennonites in North America: Three Countries – Three Identities? — **Göz Kaufmann**, Adjunct Professor of German Linguistics, Albert Ludwig University of Freiburg, Germany

When the Russlaender met the Kana-dier: Cultural Complexities of a Mennonite Reunion — **Aileen Friesen**, Associate Professor of History, The University of Winnipeg

“Making It” on the Edge of the Edge of the American West: The Prospective Landscapes of German Russian Settlers in Southwestern North Dakota — **Travis Olson**, Ph.D. candidate in Art History, University of Wisconsin–Madison

Ethnic Textiles and Clothing of the Germans from Russia — **Ann Braaten**, Associate Professor [retired], School of Design, Art, and Architecture, North Dakota State University

“A Stocky, Almost Round, Appearance”: An Analysis of German Russian Women’s Dress from 1850 to 1900 — **Nancy Martin**, Lecturer in Apparel Design, San Francisco State University

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Swiss Volhynian Mennonite German Voices from Kansas

Mark Loudon

This fall I purchased an LP with the intriguing title “Unsere Leit [Our People] in Swiss-German Dialect.” The album is in wonderful condition, offering a collection of readings in what is known by linguists as Swiss Volhynian Mennonite German. This language was spoken by the descendants of Mennonite migrants from Volhynia, once a region in the Russian Empire, who settled in Hutchinson and Turner counties, South Dakota, and McPherson and Harvey counties, Kansas, in 1874.

Though often referred to as “Swiss German,” Swiss Volhynian Mennonite German is actually derived from Palatine German (Pfälzisch). Swiss Volhynian Mennonites trace their ancestry to Switzerland, specifically Canton Berne. In 1670/71, Bernese Anabaptists, who suffered severe persecution for their faith, migrated northward, with many settling in the southeastern Palatinate. Within a generation or two, their descendants shifted from speaking Bernese Swiss German to Palatine German. Swiss Volhynian Mennonite German is thus a Palatine German-related language spoken by Mennonites of Swiss migration background.

During the first half of the 18th century, several hundred ethnic Swiss Anabaptists migrated from the Palatinate to colonial Pennsylvania along with tens of thousands of other Palatine German speakers, giving rise

to the development of Pennsylvania Dutch. In the 1780s and 1790s, Mennonites and Amish who remained in the Palatinate headed east and settled in the Russian territory of Volhynia, an area that today spans southeastern Poland, northwestern Ukraine, and southwestern Belarus. Owing to their shared Palatine German origins, Pennsylvania Dutch and Swiss Volhynian Mennonite German are close linguistic cousins.

The compiler of the recordings on “Unsere Leit” was Dr. J. O. Schrag. John Orlin Schrag was born on his family’s farm near Moundridge, McPherson County, Kansas, in 1924. Schrag attended Bethel College in nearby North Newton and later graduated from dental school in Kansas City. Dr. Schrag had a practice for over thirty years in the city of McPherson. He passed away in 2024 at the age of 100.

Dr. Schrag was the grandchild of Volhynian migrants to Kansas in 1874, including his paternal grandfather, Daniel Schrag (1842–1903), who was born in Horodyszcze, Volhynia. A lifelong speaker of Swiss Volhynian Mennonite German, Dr. Schrag wrote two plays in the language that were performed in both Kansas and South Dakota. In the 1970s, he produced “Unsere Leit,” which features the following readings by him on side A: “Introduction and Rhymes,” “Sprich Verter (Idioms and Folk Sayings),” “Wer bist du?



(Who Are You?) Nicknames,” and “Hundert Yohr Zurick (100 Years Ago),” which is a poem by Dr. Schrag in honor of the hundredth anniversary of the migration of Swiss Volhynian Mennonites to North America. The tone of the poem is upbeat: Dr. Schrag praises life in America, drawing a contrast with the hardships experienced by his ancestors in Russia. He comments on the changes over his lifetime, mentioning that now (that is, in the mid-1970s) “women now go around in slacks” and “men have large moustaches and long hair, sometimes over the ears.” While Dr. Schrag stresses the importance of preserving his community’s cultural heritage, his message is overall one of gratitude for the blessings he and his fellow Swiss Volhynian Mennonites enjoy.

On side B of “Unsere Leit” there are three readings by Arthur J. Goering (1910–1999): a lengthy poem, apparently by Goering, “Vun Russland uf America (From Russia to America)”; another poem “Fertzic(h) Yohr

Zurick (Forty Years Ago),” which is “attributed to Dr. Andrew Schrag”; and a translation by Goering of “The Night Before Christmas.”

Dr. Andrew D. Schrag was an interesting figure in Swiss Volhynian Mennonite history. Born in McPherson County in 1876 shortly after his parents, Daniel and Katharina (Stucky) Schrag migrated from Russia, Andrew Schrag was an uncle to Dr. J. O. Unlike J. O., Andrew left his Kansas community and later also the Mennonite fold. He began his post-secondary education at Bethel College, but in 1899 left for Haverford College, a Quaker institution in Pennsylvania, where he earned his bachelor of arts in 1902. Andrew then went to the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore to study German literature, philosophy, and history. In 1906, he completed his Ph.D. with a dissertation in German on the topic of *Dorfgeschichten* (village stories) in the writings of Immermann, Auerbach, Rank, and Gotthelf.

After one year as a German instructor at Adelbert College of Western Reserve University in Cleveland and another year of post-doctoral study (1907–08) at the University of Berlin, Andrew Schrag accepted a faculty position in German at the University of Nebraska. At the outbreak of World War I, Schrag publicly expressed views sympathetic to Germany that would become problematic for him. A short item in the *Lincoln Star* from June 17, 1915 (p. 18) reported on an address Schrag gave at his university’s German club:

The speaker of Friday evening was Dr. Andrew Schrag, who had as his

theme: Some general delusions in regard to German life and German government. Dr. Schrag made it clear that “Wurst” rather than “Sauerkraut” is the national dish of Germany.

He pointed out that instead of two Germanys, one the military Germany and the other that of the common man, there was a different division, one the Germany of a hundred years ago, weak and feeble, the Germany that everybody liked, and the other, the Germany of today, strong and vigorous, the Germany that everybody hates.

Two months earlier, in April 1915, Schrag had published an article in the scholarly journal *The Mid-West Quarterly* titled “German Versus English Aggression,” in which he claimed that Germany “finds herself in the position of the heretic in the Middle Ages, who was persecuted not for his immoral deeds but for his distasteful ideas.”

In 1918, Andrew Schrag, along with a number of other University of Nebraska faculty, was formally accused of disloyalty, but was fully exonerated after an investigation by the university’s board of regents. He left the university anyway since the German department was closed, and began a second, successful career as a banker in Davenport, NE. Schrag died in Nebraska in 1956.

It is unclear when Andrew Schrag wrote “Forty Years Ago,” but it was likely in the 1910s, four decades after the arrival of the Swiss Volhynian

Mennonites in Kansas, when he was a German professor in Nebraska. It is a curious poem whose message differs from that of his nephew J. O. in “100 Years Ago.” While Andrew praises the gains made by his people in the United States, especially with regard to education, he decries what he sees as a loss of traditional values. In his view, young people are no longer hard-working and thrifty, but lazy and materialistic. He concludes his poem by warning parents to “take care of [their] children”; “if things keep on going like this for the next forty years, then it is truly questionable if the world will endure.”

Swiss Volhynian Mennonite German is, like many other heritage varieties of German in North America, no longer widely spoken. However, due to the efforts of individuals and organizations such as the Swiss Mennonite Cultural and Historical Association, which was founded in 1973 in advance of the centennial of the 1874 migration, the history, culture, and language of the migrants and their descendants are being preserved and interpreted for future generations. 

“Forty Years Ago” as read by Arthur Goering on “Unsere Leit” is accessible with a transcription and translation on the MKI website (<https://language.mki.wisc.edu/swiss-volhynian-mennonite-german-kansas/>). The full album may be heard on the website of the Swiss Mennonite Cultural and Historical Association (<https://swiss-mennonite.org/audio-recordings/>).

Moravian Missions in the New World

William E. Petig

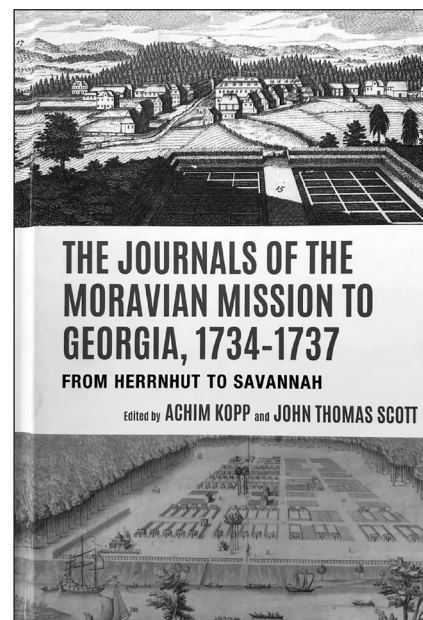
The Journals of the Moravian Mission to Georgia, 1734–1737: From Herrnhut to Savannah. By Achim Kopp and John Thomas Scott, eds. Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press & Rowman & Littlefield, 2023. vii + 284 pp. \$120.00.

For the first time in almost 300 years, readers have access to English translations of the German diaries and journals of the Moravian missionaries who settled in the Georgia Colony around Savannah in 1735. Because they are preserved in the Unity Archives of the Moravian Church in Herrnhut, a small village in Saxony, Germany, and written in minuscule handwriting in the often difficult-to-decipher eighteenth-century German *Kurrentschrift*, it is understandable these documents were rarely used by scholars and have remained relatively unknown until now.

Who were these Moravian missionaries who decided to go to Georgia? In 1722 a small group of persecuted followers of the Czech reformer John Hus had been invited by Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf to settle on his estate in Saxony, Germany. Here they established the community Herrnhut, which was to become not only a center of cottage industries, but also headquarters of the renewed *Unitas Fratrum* (Unity of the Brethren). Founded in Bohemia in 1457, six decades before the Lutheran Reformation, it is one of

the oldest Protestant denominations and came to be known in Germany as the *Brüderunität*, *Brüdergemeine*, or the *Herrnhuter* and as the Moravian Church in the English-speaking world. Only a decade after its founding, the Herrnhut community, which had grown to about 600 inhabitants, embarked on an ambitious undertaking by sending its first missionaries to the New World. This endeavor to bring the Gospel to neglected and enslaved peoples around the world was largely inspired by Zinzendorf, who during a visit to the Danish court in 1731 learned not only of the need for missionaries in Greenland, but also met a former Black enslaved person, Anthony, from the Danish West Indies, who described the terrible conditions endured by enslaved people there.¹

In 1732 the Moravian missionaries Leonard Dober and David Nitschmann arrived on the island of St. Thomas in the West Indies to minister to Black enslaved people on the sugar and tobacco plantations. The following year three Moravian missionaries from Herrnhut traveled to Greenland to support the mission effort begun there over a decade earlier by the Danish-Norwegian missionary Hans Egede. In June of 1734 Tobias Leupold and seventeen other missionaries arrived on St. Thomas to continue the work begun by Dober, who had been recalled to Herrnhut to become chief elder, and to begin mis-



sion work on the neighboring island of St. Croix. In 1735 three Moravian missionaries traveled to Suriname on the coast of South America to look into the possibility of establishing a mission there.²

In 1734 nine Moravian men left Herrnhut for London, England, to meet up with their leader August Gottlieb Spangenberg, who had made arrangements with the Georgia Trustees for the group, known as the “first party,” to sail to Savannah, Georgia, to become part of the Georgia Colony. The group boarded the ship *Two Brothers* on February 3, 1735, and disembarked in Savannah on April 8. The following year the “second party” of twenty-five more Moravians, including women and children, led by David Nitschmann, the first bishop of the renewed Moravian Church, set sail on the *Symmonds* on October 31, 1735, from

Gravesend, England, and arrived in Savannah, Georgia, on February 23, 1736. On board were also John and Charles Wesley, founders of the Methodist Church, and Benjamin Ingham, who established the Moravian Church in England.³ Impressed by the sober and industrious Moravians, the Georgia Trustees in January 1735 had granted the Moravians 500 acres in the Georgia Colony in Zinzendorf's name and promised to lend them the money to pay for their passage. The Moravians viewed the land in Georgia as a possible refuge should they be expelled from Saxony, as well as an opportunity to begin missionary work among the Creek and Cherokee Indians living there, although at the time the Trustees had not given them permission to evangelize the Native Americans. Five years after their arrival, the Moravians abandoned Georgia, mainly due to the unhealthy climate and their unwillingness to take up arms to defend Savannah from the Spanish in Florida.⁴

It was the custom of Moravian missionaries and pastors to keep detailed diaries or journals on their mission expeditions or assignments, not as personal accounts, but as reports sent to Herrnhut to inform church leaders about both spiritual and mundane difficulties encountered, as well as any progress they had made. These reports were read and often annotated by Zinzendorf and other church leaders and then shared with the community at large.⁵

From a number of journals written by Moravian settlers of the Georgia colony, Achim Kopp and John Thomas Scott selected those of August Gottlieb Spangenberg, David

Nitschmann, Johann Töltschig, and Johann Andreas Dober to translate and annotate. These journals, ranging from 29 to 55 pages in length, were chosen for their interesting content, the relative importance of the four leaders in the Moravian Church, and the fact that all four journals deal primarily with the period from 1735 to 1737, when the colonizing activity of the Moravians in the Georgia was at its height. The Spangenberg journals make up the first chapter and consist of two chronological segments. Part one begins with the first party's arrival in London on December 27, 1734, and ends when they reach Savannah, while the second part, written in early 1736, looks back to important events in Savannah in the summer of 1735 and up to Governor Oglethorpe's arrival with the second party in Georgia. Chapter two, the Nitschmann diaries, covers the second party's journey from Herrnhut to England, their voyage across the Atlantic, and their arrival in Georgia in February 1736. Chapter three, the Töltschig journals, begins shortly after Spangenberg and Nitschmann leave Georgia in spring 1736 and ends abruptly in fall of 1737, even though Töltschig remained in Georgia until spring of 1738. Töltschig's diaries reveal much about life in the Georgia Colony and the difficulties encountered by settlers, but they also cover the Moravians' interactions with John and Charles Wesley and Benjamin Ingham, the founding of the mission school for the Yamacraw tribe on the island of Irene north of Savannah, the Moravians' dispute with the authorities because of their refusal to take up arms in defense of the colony, and the dissolution of the

Moravian mission in Georgia.

The journal selections are exceptionally well documented with notes that identify people and places, explain unusual terms and phrases, reference all Scripture verses and hymn stanzas mentioned, clarify whether dates are in the Julian (Old Style) or Gregorian (New Style) calendar, and indicate when a word in the manuscript has been added, crossed out, or is illegible. The editors also place these journals in their historical context by including a thorough introduction, a Georgia Moravian timeline, a list of settlers, profiles of the Moravian journal authors, biographical sketches of the Moravian settlers, four pages of maps, two appendices, a comprehensive bibliography, and a complete index. Appendix A is a reprint of the article "We Have Come to Georgia With Pure Intentions" by George Fenwick Jones and Paul Martin Peuc[k]er, which appeared in the *Georgia Historical Quarterly* in 1998.⁶ This article contains the authors' translation of three letters by August Gottlieb Spangenberg from Savannah in 1735, which are held in the Unity Archives in Herrnhut. These three letters, accompanied by six images and a brief account of the Moravians' eventual departure from Georgia in 1740, chronicle the experiences of the first party on their journey to Georgia and complement the Spangenberg journals in chapter one. Appendix B lists alternate spellings of names and terms found in the Moravian journals.

These firsthand accounts are a rich source of cultural and historical information, from what life was like on the long voyage across the Atlantic to the everyday problems of

survival on the frontier. We learn, for example, how the settlers treated illnesses and dealt with death, how they got along with the civil authorities in Savannah, how they handled internal disputes and conflicts, and how they worked with the Native Americans and tried to learn their language. A theme throughout the journals is the importance Moravians attached to their religious beliefs and practices. Among these distinctive Moravian customs and rituals, for example, were the discussion and recording of the Daily Text (*Losung*), a daily practice instituted by Zinzendorf in 1728 of providing a Bible verse each morning that would become the watchword to live by for that day; the frequent holding of hymn services (*Singstunden*), a singing worship service in which various hymn stanzas form the sermon, another custom initiated by Zinzendorf; the celebration of religious holidays or special events with an *agape* “love feast” (*Liebesmahl*), a simple meal that originated with early Christians to demonstrate unity and equality; the use of the lot to seek divine guidance when confronting a difficult decision, a practice that goes back to Old Testament times; the creation of “classes” or small groups (*Banden*) of like-minded members, who would meet informally for prayer and to support each other spiritually; and the conducting of monthly meetings (*Bettag* or *Gemeintag*) devoted to prayer, the discussion of important matters to the congregation, and to the reading of letters or reports from missionaries. As large parts of the journals deal with the voyage across the Atlantic, readers are also introduced to geography, nautical terms,

and the methods used by captains of sailing ships to deal with the vagaries of wind and weather.

The journals also cover the interactions between the Moravians and fellow traveler John Wesley, who often worshiped with them and found their song services (*Singstunden*) especially appealing. He followed their missionary work with the local Indigenous people with great interest and carried on extensive theological discussions with Spangenberg, Nitschmann, and Töltschig. In fact, Wesley began to study German not only so he could converse with the Moravians in their language instead of university Latin, but to translate into English their hymns and chorals. At one point during his sojourn in Georgia, Wesley considered joining the Moravian Church, but Church elders suggested that he might not be quite ready yet.⁷

The editors are to be commended for overcoming considerable geographical, archival, and linguistic challenges in producing for the first time a highly readable English translation of the journals of the Moravian missionaries to Georgia and thereby filling a gap in the otherwise well-documented history of the British Georgia Colony. Exceptionally well edited and providing a significant amount of contextual historical information, these translations of the first-hand accounts of the Moravian missionaries to Georgia will be of interest to general readers as well as scholars, especially of American colonial history and religious studies. 

William E. Petig is retired from Stanford University, where he taught German for more than four decades.

Endnotes

¹ J. Taylor Hamilton and Kenneth G. Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church: The Renewed Unitas Fratrum 1722–1957* (Bethlehem, PA: Interprovincial Board of Christian Education, Moravian Church in America, 1967), 13–51, and John R. Weinlick, *Count Zinzendorf* (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 1956), 93–101. For the most recent study of the founding of Herrnhut, see Paul Peucker, *Herrnhut: The Formation of a Moravian Community, 1722–1732* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2022). On July 26, 2024, Moravian Church settlements of Bethlehem, PA, Gracehill, Northern Ireland/UK, and Herrnhut, Germany, were named UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

² Hamilton, 52–59.

³ Adelaide L. Fries, *The Moravians in Georgia, 1735–1740* (Raleigh, NC: Edwards and Broughton, 1905; reprint, Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1967). See also James Nelson, “John Wesley and the Georgia Moravians” *Transactions of the Moravian Historical Society* 23, no. 3–4 (1984): 17–46. Nelson used photostatic copies of the diaries of David Nitschmann and Johann Andreas Dober that are found in the Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, under “Germany, Herrnhut,” *Archiv der Brüder Unität*, R.14.A.6, see Nelson, note 7.

⁴ Hamilton, 82–85.

⁵ The best-known Moravian diary, translated by Kenneth G. Hamilton, *The Bethlehem Diary*, 2 vols. (Bethlehem, PA: Archives of the Moravian Church, 1971, 2001), documents Moravian missions not only in Bethlehem, PA, but throughout the New World and covers such topics as immigration to America, contact with Native Americans, theology, politics, religious controversies, music, architecture, weather, and important figures like Zinzendorf.

⁶ George Fenwick Jones and Paul Martin Peuc[k]er, eds. and trans., “‘We Have Come to Georgia With Pure Intentions’: Moravian Bishop August Gottlieb Spangenberg’s Letters From Savannah, 1735,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 82, no. 1 (1998): 84–120.

⁷ Nelson, 21–43.

Continued from page 7

written by Karl and Amalie to their families in Aschersleben, Saxony. The letters are available on microfilm at the Wisconsin Historical Society.

³ Keil, Hartmut, "A German Farmer Views Wisconsin 1851–1863," *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, volume 62, number 2, winter, 1978–1979.

⁴ Rough draft of letter that begins with "Liebe Landsleute." Date ca. 1852.

⁵ Zucker, A.E. *The Forty-Eighters: Political Refugees of the German Revolution of 1848*, Columbia University Press, 1950.

⁶ *Manitowoc Herald*, August 20, 1853.

⁷ Ibid: Zucker.

⁸ *Manitowoc Herald*, November 5, 1853.

⁹ *Manitowoc Herald*, November 18, 1854.

¹⁰ *Manitowoc Tribune*, September 23, 1854.

¹¹ *Wisconsin's Demokrat*, October 26, 1854.

¹² *Manitowoc Herald*, November 18, 1854.

¹³ *Wisconsin's Demokrat*, August 28, 1855.

¹⁴ Letter written by Amalie Pflaume dated March 7, 1856, and Karl Pflaume dated March 9, 1856.

¹⁵ Karl Pflaume letter to his wife's parents. March 9, 1856.

¹⁶ Of the twenty-two issues of the *Buschbauer* that were published, only four are accessible today. Three issues are part of the microfilm holdings of the Wisconsin Historical Society, and a fourth is described in detail in a January 5, 1912, *Manitowoc Post* article under the title "Eine alte Zeitung."

¹⁷ *Manitowoc Herald*, October 25, 1856.

¹⁸ *USA Damals*, Karl Pflaume. Chapter entitled "Electioneering." Unpublished, property of Stadtarchiv Aschersleben, Germany.

¹⁹ See: "Secrecy in Voting in American History: No Secrets There." <http://sociallogic.iath.virginia.edu/node/30>

²⁰ "Ich hatte Glück in Centerville und verteilte dort 100 Tickets." Quote from unpublished book, *USA Damals*.

²¹ One such brawl preceded a murder that occurred in downtown Manitowoc

on Sept 21, 1854, when Rahr Brewery employee Charles Rosstauscher killed Franklin House bartender and head of the local Turner Society, Jacque Kurzwelly. Both were German-speaking immigrants, known to have had longstanding disputes over beer sales and politics.

²² Ibid: *USA Damals*.

²³ See: *Manitowoc Pilot*, "Look for Bogus Tickets" November 2, 1860; *Manitowoc Tribune*, "Election tickets will be printed to order...", March 27, 1856; *Manitowoc Herald*, "To the Democratic Electors of Manitowoc County," October 18, 1860; *Manitowoc Tribune*, "Ballots!" November 9, 1959.

²⁴ *The Weekly Tribune*, November 6, 1856.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ *Manitowoc Tribune*, September 18, 1856.

²⁷ *Manitowoc Tribune*, October 2, 1856.

²⁸ *Manitowoc Herald*, October 25, 1856.

²⁹ Letter: Amalie Pflaume to her parents, undated, but judged to be in November 1856.

³⁰ *Der Buschbauer*, November 14, 1856, issue no. 3.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ *Manitowoc Tribune*, April 2, 1857.

³⁴ *Wisconsin's Demokrat*, April 3, 1857.

³⁵ *Wisconsin's Demokrat*, October 2, 1857.

³⁶ *Manitowoc Tribune*, November 17, 1858.

³⁷ *Wisconsin's Demokrat*, April 10, 1857.

³⁸ Letters to family in Aschersleben. January 31, 1860; February 11, 1860; February 12, 1860; June 20, 1860; June 21, 1860; *Manitowoc Herald*, May 3, 1860.

³⁹ Letter: Karl Pflaume to Amalie's parents, ca. November 1856.

⁴⁰ Wust, Klaus, "German Immigrants and their Newspapers in the District of Columbia." <https://loyolanotredamelib.org/php/report05/articles/pdfs/Report-30Wustp36-66.pdf>

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Being Volga German: Historical Background, Sociolinguistic Development, and the Formation of Identity — **Claudia Maria Riehl**, Professor of Germanic Linguistics, Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Germany

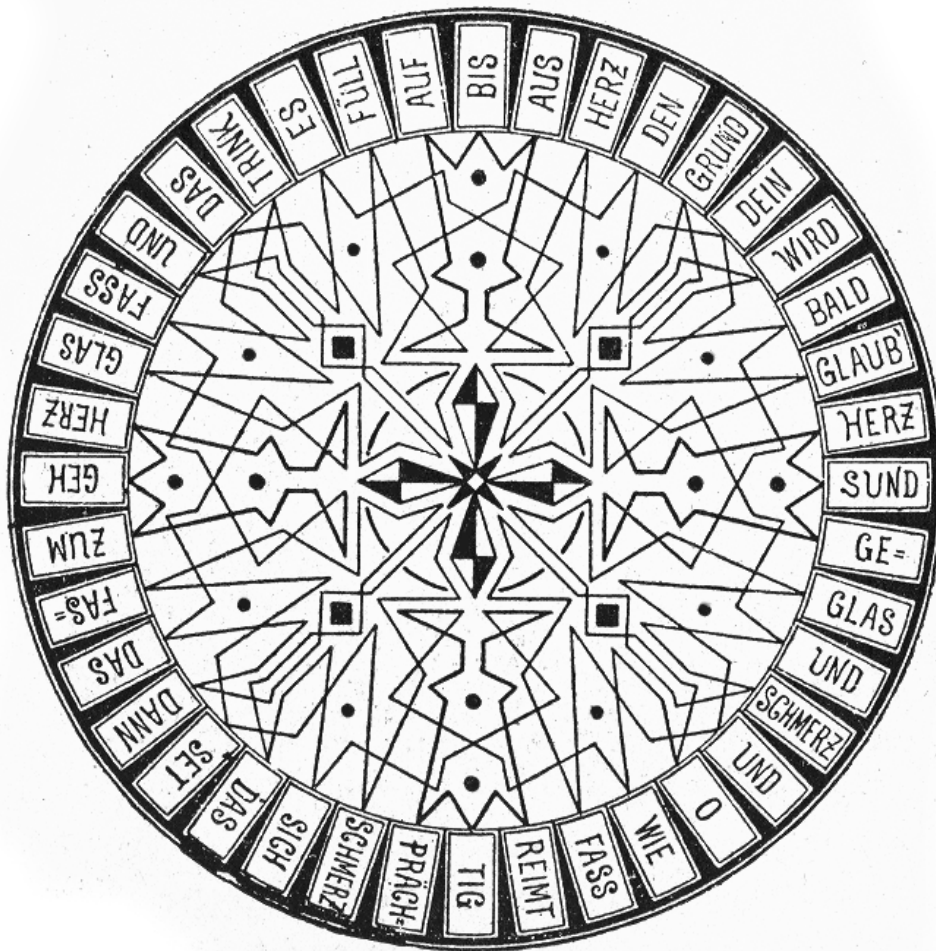
Germans from Russia and Diversity in German America — **Mark L. Loudon**, Professor of Germanic Linguistics, University of Wisconsin–Madison

The symposium was made possible through the generous financial support of the UW–Madison Anonymous Fund and significant contributions by our cosponsors: the UW–Madison's Center for European Studies; the Center for Russia, East Europe, and Central Asia; the Department of German, Nordic, Slavic+; and by the Friends of the Max Kade Institute. Additional funding for the keynote lecture was provided by the UW Lectures Committee and the Kemper K. Knapp Bequest Fund.

Below is both the *Bilderrätsel* (word puzzle) that appeared February 2, 1896, in *Scherz und Ernst*, a Sunday supplement to the *Illinois Staats-Zeitung*, and the six-line poem contained within. The poem translates roughly to: "Heart and pain, barrel and glass / Oh how splendidly they rhyme; / When misery grasps your heart, / Go to the barrel and fill your glass, / Empty it to the very bottom, / Your heart will soon feel better."

We here at the Max Kade Institute encourage our readers to drink responsibly.

Bilderrätsel.



Auflösung des Bilderrätsels Seite 505:

Herz und Schmerz, Faß und Glas,
 O wie prächtig reimt sich das;
 Fasset Schmerz dann das Herz,
 Geh zum Faß und füll das Glas,
 Leer es aus bis auf den Grund,
 Glaub dein Herz wird bald gesund.

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