

From *Evangelische Dreieinigkeitskirche* to King Solomon Missionary Baptist Church—The History of a Milwaukee Place of Worship

Antje Petty



Photo courtesy Alan Magayne-Roshak

Evangelische Dreieinigkeitskirche Milwaukee: stained glass window with inscription in memory of Christoph Baumgaertner

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On the corner of 4th Street and Meinecke, in the heart of Milwaukee's Harambee-Bronzeville neighborhood, two cream-colored brick structures stand out: an old church and an adjacent old school building. This is the home of the King Solomon Missionary Baptist Church. On Sundays the church comes alive with exuberant services. On other days, there may be public meetings addressing challenges in the neighborhood, performances by the KSMBC choir, or bible study classes. Sitting in century-old wooden pews under an

elegantly curved balcony, visitors are surrounded by tall, colorful, stained-glass windows that depict biblical figures and scenes. Many windows feature bible verses and personal dedications in the German language, recalling an earlier time in the building's history. On the outside, above the entryway, one can still see the name of the original church chiseled in sandstone: *Ev[angelische] Dreieinigkeitskirche*.

This church was built in the early 1890s for the *Evangelische*

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Greetings, Friends and Readers!

The fall semester is now well underway, and the biggest update to share is, of course, the retirement of our dear colleague, Cora Lee Kluge. Cora Lee's half-century of service to our University, the German Department, MKI, and the broader field of German-American studies has touched literally thousands of students and colleagues. Fortunately, Cora Lee is keeping her office in the University Club in order to continue her research and contribute her time and expertise to MKI in other ways. In addition, as our Friends know, we are deeply grateful to all our gifted volunteers, including JoAnn Tiedemann and Charles James, for helping us out!

As usual, MKI has been a hive of activity this semester. I am very grateful to Hope Hague for her hard work in so many areas that are crucial to the smooth operation of the Institute. Kevin Kurdylo has continued his good work to build and maintain our library and archive, an important component of which is the ongoing development of our website. Since we redesigned our virtual portal last year, the feedback about it from patrons around the world has been very positive—thanks to Kevin and Antje Petty for their hard work! Both Antje and I have been on the road quite a bit this fall with public presentations and workshops, a few highlights of which are worth mentioning. In October Antje led a genealogy workshop at the German American Heritage Center in Daven-

port, IA, which was very successful. Also that month I traveled to Holmes County, OH, to give a presentation on Pennsylvania Dutch at the annual meeting of the Amish and Mennonite Heritage Center. Almost 400 people attended, most of them Amish and Mennonite speakers of the language. Most of our outreach work this fall has been in Wisconsin, which has taken us to the Milwaukee metro area and as far north as Boulder Junction in Vilas County. This fall, the UW–Madison Speakers Bureau (speakers.wisc.edu) rolled out the Faculty Hometown Engagement Project, which aims to showcase the impact UW–Madison has across the Badger State. MKI's outreach mission is very much in line with this exciting and important project.

Here in Madison we have been pleased to sponsor three guest lectures, the first by our friend and colleague who leads the German program at UW–Whitewater, Matt Lange, who spoke last month on the topic of “Hermann Ahlwardt's Antisemitic Campaign in the United States, 1895–97.” This month, Viktorija Bilic from UW–Milwaukee delivered a lecture on “Translation and the German-American Experience: Historical Letter Collections.” And, looking toward the holiday season, we are excited to welcome MKI Friend Bill Petig from Stanford University and a native of Watertown, whose topic is “The History of the Moravian Star.” Check the Events page (mki.wisc.edu/events/all-events) on our website

for information on these and other events.

Good progress continues on our ongoing research projects. In connection with the German Immigrant Oral History Project, Antje has interviewed more first-generation immigrants who came from German-speaking Europe. On the Pennsylvania Dutch Documentation Project front, German Ph.D. student Joel Stark successfully defended his dissertation on the *Reading Adler* newspaper in May and is completing his revisions, while I continue to work with colleagues in the UW Medical School, nurses, doctors, and midwives to improve the delivery of health care to Wisconsin Amish and Mennonite families.

Thank you, our Friends, for *all* you do on behalf of MKI. Our second annual Oktoberfest at the University Club was another great success (and a lot of fun). A huge shout-out to Fran Luebke, John Pustejovsky, and Pamela Tesch, who worked hard with Antje and Hope to make everything happen. We could not do our work without your support, and for that we are deeply grateful. Warmest regards to all for a healthy and happy holiday season!

—Mark

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Join us for these upcoming Max Kade Institute programs — all free and open to the public.

For details check <http://mki.wisc.edu/events/all-events>

DECEMBER 14, 6pm

Lecture: “The History of the Moravian Star”

William E. Petig, Department of German Studies, Stanford University

UW–Madison, Union South

Stars have been part of Advent and Christmas celebrations from the earliest days of Christianity, but one star has become a ubiquitous decoration in Europe and America: the multi-point Moravian star. Petig’s presentation will trace the history of this ornament from its early beginnings in a Moravian Church school in Saxony to its many manifestations today.

FEBRUARY 15, 7pm

Lecture: “The German Harmonica and African-American Blues”

Reception follows.

Herbert Quelle, Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany / Chicago

UW–Madison, Pyle Center Auditorium

For about a century, the German harmonica or mouth organ was one of the most popular musical instruments in the United States. About one billion harmonicas were imported from Germany between the 1870s and 1980s. Cheap and portable, it was the pocket-sized companion of European immigrants, and—once introduced to the American South—it became the instrument of choice for many African American musicians. They developed a totally new way of playing it, ‘bending’ the harmonica’s notes to fit their traditional musical scale, and making the little instrument an integral part of the emerging and increasingly popular ‘blues.’

MARCH 30 – APRIL 1

Conference: “People of Faith, Voices of Tradition: Germanic Heritage Languages among Christians and Jews”

UW–Madison University Club and Pyle Center

Of the approximately 7,000 languages spoken around the world today, more than half are likely to no longer be spoken actively by the turn of the next century. In almost every case, these languages are spoken by groups of people, often indigenous, who are minorities in the larger societies in which they live. There is, however, a small group of minority languages that are not endangered and which in fact are enjoying robust vitality. In North America there are four such languages, which are spoken in conservative Christian and Jewish religious communities: Pennsylvania Dutch (Amish and Old Order Mennonites); Mennonite Low German (Old Colony Mennonites); Hutterite German (Hutterites); and Yiddish (Haredi Jews). This symposium will bring together an international group of researchers specializing in these languages with Amish, Mennonite, Hutterite, and Haredi community members to explore sociolinguistic aspects of the social-spiritual identities of these faith groups.

- On Thursday evening, March 30, the symposium will open with a panel discussion of community members moderated by MKI Director Mark Loudon, followed by a reception. (University Club)
- Friday morning and afternoon and Saturday morning will feature 45-minute presentations by the invited speakers. (Pyle Center)
- On Friday evening, we will have a reading of literary works in the four languages that evoke the themes of the symposium. English translations will be projected onto a screen for the benefit of the attendees. (Pyle Center)

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Dreieinigkeitskirche (Trinity Evangelical Church), which had been founded in 1862 by German-speaking immigrants. This group had separated itself from more traditional “Old Lutheran” and “Evangelical Lutheran” churches during a time when “quarrel and strife were ripe among the (German) Protestants in Milwaukee, and sectarianism flourished.”¹ As was common practice in many Protestant churches in Wisconsin, German was the language used by the *Dreieinigkeitskirche* well into the twentieth century. Its parishioners were first and second generation immigrants from German-speaking Europe, who lived in the surrounding neighborhoods and worked for the most part as laborers, tradesmen, teachers, or merchants.

According to Bobby Tanzilo’s “OnMilwaukee” article from April 24, 2014,² the congregation had erected a building on the same site in 1870, which was torn down to make room for the current structure. Only the cornerstone with the year “1870” was saved and embedded in the façade of the new building. The church as well as the adjacent two-story school were designed by the renowned Milwaukee architects Herman P. Schnetzky and Eugene Liebert and constructed for \$15,000 and \$5,000 respectively. The funds probably came from church members, and the names of some of the (presumably) more prominent donor families have been memorialized in the church windows. Who were these families? The following are some of the window memorials, written in



Evangelische Dreieinigkeitskirche Milwaukee—King Solomon Missionary Baptist Church

German or English.

*Gestiftet von Frau F. Mueller im
Andenken an den verst. Gatten H.
Mueller. Geb. 15. Aug. 1828. Gest. 6.
Aug. 1889*

[Donated by Mrs. F. Mueller in
memory of her deceased husband
H. Mueller. Born August 15, 1828;
deceased August 6, 1889]

The Muellers were a family of
carpenters. John Henry Mueller
and his wife Franziska had come to
America in 1849 from the German
state of Hessen-Nassau. Their son
Henry Phillip Mueller was born in
Milwaukee in 1857 and followed in
his father’s footsteps.

*Gewidmet von der Familie John W.
Goetzinger*

[Dedicated by the family John W.
Goetzinger]

John Goetzinger was born in
Wisconsin in 1862. His father was
a teamster and immigrant from
the German state of Baden. Young
John learned the glazing trade and
eventually opened his own small
business: Cream City Mirror & Plate
Company.

*In Memory of the The Henry J. Pauly
Family*

Henry J. Pauly was born in
Milwaukee in 1853, the son of
German immigrants from Prussia
who arrived in Wisconsin in the
mid-1840s. His father had been a
carpenter, and Henry J. also learned
the trade but focused on ship

building. He later owned his own vessels and worked as a merchant mariner on the Great Lakes.

In Memory of the A.C. Liepe Family

Among the German immigrants, Arthur C. Liepe was a late arrival. Born in 1854 in Nauen, Brandenburg, he was a pharmacist who came to Milwaukee in 1891 with his wife and two young children. Here he opened a successful drug store on 1412 Green Bay Avenue and was granted a number of patents, including those for “creosote

capsules” and “antiseptic tablets.”

Gestiftet von der Familie Baumgaertner zum Andenken an den verst. Vater Christoph Baumgaertner, geb. 20. Juli 1832, gest. 7. Juli 1888.

[Donated by the Baumgaertner family in memory of their deceased father Christoph Baumgaertner; born July 20, 1832; deceased July 7, 1888.]

(Johan) Christoph Baumgaertner II arrived in Milwaukee in 1854 at the age of 22 with his parents (Johan Christoph and Anna Maria (Schäfer) Baumgaertner, and his sisters



Photo: Antje Petty

Members of the King Solomon Missionary Baptist Church restoration committee: (back row from left) Charlene Bond, Melva Tatum, Virgie Bond; (front row from left) Rose Carter, Pastor Charles D. Watkins

(Erster Abdruck.)
 Der Anspanner, Christoph Baumgärtner, aus Tiefenort, nebst Ehefrau und drei Kindern und der Tagelöhner Constantin Schön, daher, nebst Ehefrau und einem Kinde, beabsichtigen nach Amerika auszuwandern und werden die hierzu erforderlichen Reise-Legitimationen ausgehändigt erhalten, falls nicht binnen vier Wochen, vom zweiten Erscheinen dieser Bekanntmachung an, Seitens einer Justizbehörde Einspruch dagegen erfolgt.
 Eisenach, am 26. November 1853.
 Der Großherzog: Direktor des III. Verwaltungs-Bezirks.
 K. Coubray, in Vertr.

Before citizens of the Duchy of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach were given permission to emigrate, they had to announce their intent twice in the local paper to protect potential creditors. The above is the “First Posting,” for the Baumgaertner and Schoen families in the *Eisenachisches Wochenblatt* on November 30, 1853. It reads: *The Anspanner* Christoph Baumgärtner, from Tiefenort, with his wife and three children and the day laborer Constantin Schön, same town, with his wife and one child, are planning to emigrate to America and will receive the necessary travel permits, if no court raises an objection within four weeks of the second posting of this announcement. Eisenach, November 26, 1853; The Director of the 3rd administrative district of the Grand Duchy.*

*An Anspanner was a farmer who owned a team of horses which he hired out.

Amalie (26), and Eva Margarete (17). Traveling with them on the same ship was another sister, Eva Elisabetha (25) with her husband Konstantin Schön and a daughter. They joined an older brother, Johannes (born 1818), who with his wife and two young sons Andreas (Andrew) and Heinrich (Henry) had immigrated to Wisconsin two years earlier. The extended family came from the small town of Tiefenort in the Duchy of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach (whose population was ~1,300) and was part of a chain migration pattern typical for the nineteenth century. Beginning in 1846, and over the

course of the next two decades, more than 400 people from little Tiefenort moved to America.³ Like many other members of the congregation, Christoph Baumgaertner II was a carpenter. He and his wife Friederike, an immigrant from Prussia, had 11 children. His nephew Henry also learned the carpenter trade, had a successful signage business, and represented Milwaukee's 10th Ward on the City Council from 1879 until 1888.

In July 1897, the *Evangelische Dreieinigkeitskirche* made national news when its pastor, the Rev. George Hirtz, officiated at the wedding of Gertrud Farun, a member of the congregation and white woman, and David P. Redd, a local veterinarian who was black. According to an article in the *Saint Paul Globe* from July 27, 1897,

The ceremony had no sooner been performed [...], than a storm broke loose among the large congregation of Trinity church. Rev. Mr. Hirtz was denounced in acrimonious terms by some of his leading parishioners, who threatened to withdraw from membership in the church unless the pastor made a suitable apology for the alleged affront. [...] Sunday a



Interior view of the church

Photo courtesy Alan Magayne-Roshak

faction led by [Prof. Althoff] met at Schmidt's hall for Christian devotions and fully 500 of the former attendants at Trinity were present. [...] Preliminary steps were taken toward the organization of a new church society, in which the unwritten law will place a ban upon the amalgamation of Ethiopians and Caucasians.

In the end, however, most members stayed with Trinity Evangelical Church, and the Rev. Hirtz led the congregation for another 15 years, which included celebrations of the congregation's 50th anniversary in 1912 that attracted 3,500 people from

near and far.

Each subsequent decade brought new developments and new residents to Milwaukee. People came from countries in Southern and Eastern Europe, Mexico and America, and across the U.S. Many African Americans made their homes in the neighborhoods surrounding the *Dreieinigkeitskirche*, and in 1977 King Solomon Missionary Baptist Church (KSMBC) purchased the property for its growing congregation. KSMBC had been founded as a mission church in 1958 by the Reverend F. L. Harper and now counts over 150 active members. Under the leadership of its current pastor, the Rev. Charles D. Watkins, KSMBC sees its role not just in its spiritual mission, but also as an anchor and provider of practical assistance in the larger community.

Through cultural and social events, the KSMBC choir, contributions to the "Shakespeare in the Park" festival, and other activities, the church adds vibrancy to the neighborhood. It also



runs a community food pantry, offers scholarships to select college-bound high school seniors, and participates in the discussion of pressing community issues through its SOULS program (Solomon Outreach and Urban Learning Sessions). Recently the program has featured meetings with city aldermen on topics such as how to provide economic opportunities and workshops on how to reduce crime and interact with law enforcement. KSMBC also actively participates in the city of Milwaukee’s “All Things in Common” initiative, which collaborates with local churches to deliver a variety of community programs and services on a neighborhood level.

In the meantime, the old brick structures are showing their age. Improvements and changes were made over the decades, but now the buildings are ready for a major overhaul. First priority is the restoration of the church itself:

the installation of a new roof, the removal of a drop ceiling and altar structure that were added in the 1970s, the repair and reconditioning of some of the glass windows, and more. The school house, too, is in need of repairs, including a new roof, but additional renovations are also planned that would turn the building into a neighborhood resource and support center. It is easy to see how the old classrooms could be renovated to serve as after-school tutorial rooms for area youth, to teach life skills to adult community members, or to offer computer access and training. A hall on the second floor with a stage and big windows invites larger community events, musical and theatrical performances, and private gatherings.

The preservation and restoration of the *Dreieinigkeitskirche* and the old school house is a major undertaking. The result, however, will have a profound impact on the

surrounding neighborhoods and beyond. The *Dreieinigkeitskirche* will stand as a symbol of the city’s settlement past and also be a sanctuary and community anchor for today’s residents. Or to paraphrase another nineteenth-century German-American architect, Adolf Cluss, who built many public buildings in Washington, D.C., students learn better in attractive, quality-built schools, and people in general rise to the level of their surroundings.

Representatives of KSMBC and the larger community have established an organization called “Rescue and Restore MKE,” which exists solely for the purpose of preserving and restoring the *Dreieinigkeitskirche* buildings. For more information, including how to help, go to the “Rescue and Restore MKE” Facebook page. And if you have any information and stories about the *Evangelische Dreieinigkeitskirche* or the people who worshipped there, please share what you know. 🗣️

NOTES

¹ Rudolph H. Koss, *Milwaukee* (Schnellpressen Druck des *Herold*, 1871) 248. Quote translated by Antje Petty.

² Bobby Tanzilo, “Urban Spelunking: Evangelische Dreieinigkeits Kirche/ King Solomon Baptist Church,” <http://onmilwaukee.com/history/articles/spelunkdreieinigkeits.html>

³ Astrid Adler, *Vergessene Menschen—Auswanderung im 19. Jahrhundert* (Tiefenort, 2013) 77–79. An English translation of this work will be published in November 2016 with the title *Our Ancestors Were German – Emigration in the 19th Century from the Duchy Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach*.



Photo courtesy Michael Zahn

Youth rally at King Solomon Missionary Baptist Church, in front of the historic building

Friends of the Max Kade Institute Second Annual Oktober Fest

Antje Petty

On November 4, we celebrated the second annual Oktober Fest, a fundraiser for the Max Kade Institute Library and Archive, which was organized by the Friends. An enthusiastic group of people gathered on the first floor of the University Club for an evening of fun, food, drink, and entertainment.

Guests were greeted with a buffet of German delicacies and beer. We thank Don Zamzow, a member of the Friends Board of Directors, and his son Mike for donating and serving several varieties of their tasty and award-winning Bull Falls Brewery beer. Brewed in Wausau, Wisconsin, according to German brewing practices, the beer was a great hit at our Oktober Fest. Equally popular were the German delicacies donated by Clasen's European Bakery, Freiburg Gastropub, Bavaria Sausage, Inc,

and the University Club restaurant. Thank you!

Everybody enjoyed the Swiss and German folk tunes played by accordion musician Bill Niederberger and got into the swing when Bill and ten members of the Madison Männerchor led the audience in a Schunkellied sing-along. And there was some *Bildung*, too, when Anita Auer, Professor of socio-historical linguistics at the University of Lausanne, introduced her "Swiss Islands in North America" project. Anita and one of her students, Alexandra Derungs, are visiting Wisconsin to interview immigrants from Switzerland or their descendants who still speak the language of their home country.

The event was rounded out by a silent auction featuring items contributed by many members of



Anita Auer speaking at the MKI Oktober Fest

the Friends and local businesses. At the MKI, we are very grateful for so much support. We had a wonderful time with our Friends and look forward to Oktober Fest 2017! 🍷



Audience listening to Anita's description of the project to interview Swiss speakers in Wisconsin



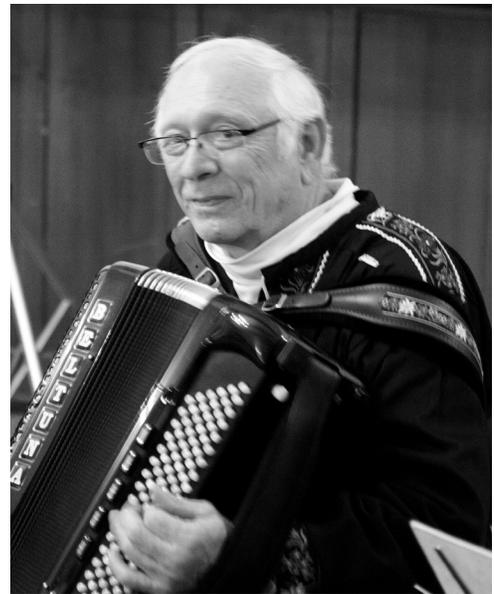
Don Zamzow and Mike von Schneidmesser at the Bull Fall Brewery table



The Madison Männerchor performing at the MKI Oktober Fest



Cora Lee and others enjoying the sumptuous buffet



Bill Nederberger providing music for the evening



John Pustejovsky, President of the Friends of the MKI



A selection of offerings at the silent auction

The Bennett Law, the *Germania*, and the Körner Pamphlet

Christopher Stohs

Wisconsin's Bennett Law of 1889 ignited a fiery debate regarding the merits of bilingual education, the proper degree of immigrant assimilation, and the extent of freedom of religion, conscience, and association vis-à-vis the State. Such issues are perennial in American politics. A look around the state and the nation today reveals many examples of these continuing conflicts, such as school voucher initiatives, religious freedom protections, and bilingual education bills (such as the one just recently passed in California). Understanding the Bennett Law and why it became such a huge issue can inform our understanding of contemporary controversies.

The Bennett Law passed with bipartisan support of the Wisconsin Legislature in late April of 1889. Ostensibly, the law would strengthen compulsory education in Wisconsin as well as help curb child labor. Opponents of the law saw it as an attack on private education, particularly the clause that required core subjects of reading, writing, math, and US history be taught in English. What particularly rankled was language in the law stating that schools that did not comply with the English requirement would not be recognized as schools, and that public school boards would decide who was in compliance. There was also the issue of districting. Since children would be required to attend a school in their own district, many

parochial schools could lose out-of-district students. The issue exploded over the next 19 months. Scandinavians and Germans, whether Catholic or Protestant, opposed the law. German Protestants, in particular, saw the law as an attack on freedom of religion, on freedom of conscience, and on German culture itself, the so-called *Deutschthum*. In response, the Democrats swept the April 1890 elections in Milwaukee. Then, the Republican governor, William Hoard, lost the November 1890 gubernatorial election to the Democrat, George Peck. For the first time since the 1850s, Democrats held sway in Wisconsin. Their sweep included the governorship, majorities in the state Senate and Assembly, and all but one congressional seat. Wisconsin's situation attracted national attention, as is shown by an article that appeared in the *New York Times* published on 25 September 1890.¹ Nationally, a tariff issue certainly played its part in sinking the Republicans that year, but in Wisconsin it was above all the

Bennett Bill issue that was decisive.

The German-language press played a major role in the Bennett Law controversy. To be sure, some Germans, like the Freethinkers who published in the *Amerikanische Turnzeitung*, or the Republicans who wrote for the *Herold*, were in favor of the law. Most Germans in Wisconsin, however, were against it. The majority of Wisconsin's German immigrants tended to be religious and traditional rather than agnostic or liberal, and many of them found voice in their press. Catholic papers like the *Columbia* and *Excelsior* encouraged their German-speaking readership to vote down those who supported the law, while most important paper representing the German Protestant perspective, the *Germania*, was vehemently opposed to the law.

When historians have examined the Bennett Law, they have for the most part focused on English-language versions of the events. Unfortunately, many references to the *Germania* and other German-language press

THE BENNETT SCHOOL LAW
WISCONSIN DEMOCRATS WHO SUPPORT IT VIGOROUSLY.
A REVOLT IN THE PARTY CAUSED BY THE ANTI-BENNETT PLANK IN THE STATE PLATFORM.

Headline from the *New York Times*, 25 September 1890

organs in Bennett Law histories are second-hand reports; the English press's translations of German passages are often cited instead of the German newspapers themselves. Fortunately, in addition to their stores of nineteenth-century Anglophone newspapers, the Wisconsin Historical Society has a vast treasure of German-language newspapers. Thus, it is possible to compare the variety of Bennett Law opinions in the two languages. This article is the beginning of a larger project that attempts to portray the German-language views on the controversy. The author is thankful to everyone who has helped him with this project so far, including Professor Mark Loudon, Professor Cora Lee Kluge, Professor John Sharpless, the Max Kade Institute, and the helpful staff of the Wisconsin Historical Society.

The *Germania*

The *Germania* may have had the greatest anti-Bennett influence among German language newspapers. Published in Milwaukee with both national and Wisconsin editions, the *Germania* boasted the widest circulation of any German weekly.² Indeed, by October of 1889, it had become popular enough to warrant a second national weekly edition.³ The *Germania* was influential not only because of its impressive circulation, but also because of its relentless anti-Bennett articles. It campaigned against the law in nearly every edition between April of 1889 and November of 1890. By means of editorials, guest articles, headlines, poetry, and special pamphlets, it made its case against the Bennett Law known to the public.

COUNTIES.	NAME DES PASTORS.	Schülerzahl.	Schulwochen im Jahre 1888 — 1889.	Englisch. Unterricht Stunden per Woche	Umgangssprache d. Schüler unter ein- ander.
City of Milwau-	R. Adelberg.....	405	43	6—17	D-E
“ [kee	Joh. Bading.....	361	44	15—17	D-E
“	Heinr. Bergmann...	120	43	12—15	D-E
“	Wm. Dammann.....	316	44	12—14	E
“	J. F. G. Harders.....	130	—	15	D-E
“	A. Hoenecke.....	370	42	12½	E
“	Theo. Jaekel.....	230	45	9—20	E
“	B. P. Nommensen ...	200	22	12—13	E
“	Geo. Reinsch.....	331	45	8—16	D-E
Milwaukee Co.	H. H. Ebers.....	50	25	10	D
“	Karl Gausewitz.....	33	—	0 [5]	D

Excerpt from a statistical page of Körner's pamphlet, indicating location of parochial school; name of the pastor; number of students; school weeks per year; hours of English instruction per week; and language used by pupils outside of class (D=German, E=English). The intent was to show that English was already taught in German parochial schools and in many cases was even the everyday language spoken by pupils.

The *Germania* understood the Bennett Law as a part of a wider national struggle of German Americans to preserve their rights and freedoms from attacks by tyrannical Nativist forces; they were defending *Deutschthum* (Germandom), their word for German culture in America. They took the Bennett Law to be an assault on the parochial school, the bulwark of German culture in America, without which they thought *Deutschthum* would fail along with all of its noble traditions and customs. According to the *Germania*, the present conflict with the state began with Governor Hoard's address in January of 1889. It then continued with the Pond Bill passed in February, which mandated the transmission of attendance statistics in parochial and private schools to local clerks, and finally reached its culmination with the Bennett Law in April.⁴

Many members of the *Germania* staff played a prominent role in the anti-Bennett cause. The owner,

George Brumder, had lent money to the Anti-Bennett Committee for the spring campaign, but later told the Anti-Bennett Committee that he did not need to be reimbursed.⁵ The chief editor, George Koeppen, constantly supported the anti-Bennett forces through articles he penned and articles he allowed to be printed. The business manager of the *Germania*, August Roß, also spoke out publicly against the Bennett Law, addressing the Anti-Bennett forces at their convention in June of 1890.⁶ Finally, Christian Körner, the legal editor of *Germania* and a Wisconsin-Synod Lutheran, himself headed the anti-Bennett Committee for the entire state. He also wrote a highly-influential pamphlet attacking the Bennett Law.

Körner's Pamphlet

Undoubtedly, the most important document produced by anti-Bennett forces was Christian Körner's *Das Bennett Gesetz und die deutschen*

protestantischen Gemeindeschulen in Wisconsin, (The Bennett Law and the German Protestant Parochial Schools in Wisconsin). Though often referred to in historical works on the Bennett Law, little is said about how it was developed or how widely it was distributed. The pamphlet includes a copy of the Bennett Law, arguments against it, and statistical tables concerning parochial schools throughout the state. The *Germania* saw to it that as many Wisconsinites as possible had access to the pamphlet.

The pamphlet probably originated at the 1889 joint meeting of the Wisconsin Synod and Wisconsin District of the Missouri Synod in Watertown. The pastors and teachers present decided to merge their individual anti-Bennett committees into a single executive committee.⁷ Eventually, Christian Körner would be the chair of that committee, but at that juncture, he was just a member of the statistics committee.⁸ We can assume that the tables in his pamphlet came out of his work on that committee.

The Körner pamphlet was ready before the Milwaukee election in the spring of 1890. On 4 February, the *Germania* announced its first printing of it, an English edition. It included arguments Körner had made in a recent *Milwaukee Journal* article, but added tables showing parochial school data in Wisconsin. The goal of the pamphlet was to prove to English speakers that English was already being taught in German parochial schools and, moreover, to show anglophiles that English-language newspapers like the *Sentinel* had not been telling the full truth. The *Germania* hoped that even the most ardent enemies of German parochial

schools would be convinced that the Bennett Law was totally unnecessary, noting that the pamphlet spoke in numbers, a language that Americans could understand. The pamphlet was sent to all newspapers in Wisconsin, state officials, members of the legislature, school superintendents, German pastors, teachers, and others. The cost was 5 cents per pamphlet or 100 pamphlets for \$3.35.⁹

By 25 February, the German edition of Körner's pamphlet was ready. The *Germania* said that its German translation was more precise than those made by other newspapers. It also asserted that it was the most important anti-Bennett document, suggesting that even those who supported the law would want a copy. Making a sales pitch that sounded like a public service, the *Germania* claimed that the price was just high enough to cover the cost of printing. Less than a month after first hitting the press, the English edition was already in its second printing. Even though many copies had already been sold, at this point the *Germania* still requested additional information about parochial schools from its readership for the statistical tables.¹⁰ Over the next month, thousands of pamphlets were bought and distributed, and the *Germania* reported about how many hundred pamphlets pastors of each congregation were giving their parishioners.¹¹ By 11 March, the *Germania* was boasting that the pamphlet was bearing fruit, and that no one could act on the Bennett Law without reckoning with the German Protestants.¹²

Conclusion

Today, descendants of Wisconsin's

German immigrants continue to maintain many of the churches and schools that their ancestors founded, but only a few of these descendants can still speak German. In questions of linguistic assimilation, patience seems more effective than legislation, and much political rancor could have been avoided if Hoard and his allies had simply waited for linguistic assimilation to take place. Instead, they pushed the State's right to oversee education too far for immigrants, who found their language, schools, and religion under attack, and pushed back, forcefully. 

NOTES

¹ See image, this article, pg 10.

² According to the *Germania*'s header.

³ *Germania*, 15 October 1889, national edition.

⁴ "Allerlei aus Milwaukee," *Germania*, 2 September 1889, national edition, pg 8.

⁵ "Endorsieren eine Plattform," *Germania*, 28 March 1890, national edition.

⁶ "Anti-Bennett Konvention (part 2)," *Germania*, 28 June 1890, national edition.

⁷ *Germania*, 14 August 1889, national edition, pg 1.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Germania*, 4 February 1890, national edition, pg 1.

¹⁰ "Allerlei aus Milwaukee," *Germania*, 25 February 1890, national edition, pg 8.

¹¹ "Das Bennetgesetz in den Gemeinden Milwaukee," *Germania*, 4 March 1890, national edition, pg 8.

¹² "Allerlei aus Milwaukee," *Germania*, 11 March 1890, national edition, pg 8.

Christopher Stohs grew up in Kansas City, took his Bachelor's degree at Valparaiso University, and is working towards his PhD in German at UW-Madison. His dissertation will investigate the German press's contributions to the Bennett Law controversy.

Charlotte Bleistein: A Century of Activism in a Family of Activists

Antje Petty

Now 101 years old, Charlotte Bleistein is not only the oldest Friend of the Max Kade Institute, but also one of the Institute's earliest supporters. At her home in Greendale, Wisconsin, a house designed by Frank Lloyd Wright that she built in 1953, the first thing a visitor sees is the shingle of her law practice: a testament to Charlotte's many decades of community activism and public engagement, as well as to the many "firsts" she herself accomplished as a woman in her profession.

"Looking out for those disadvantaged in society" ran in her family. Charlotte was born in January 1915, the daughter of Hugo Anschütz, an immigrant from Thuringia who became a prominent choral conductor in St. Louis, Missouri, and his wife Rosalind Elsner. Rosalind had grown up in Milwaukee as the daughter of German immigrants. Most members of the family were musical, including Charlotte's brother Richard, who became a famous concert violinist. Only Charlotte had no musical talents.

When time came for Charlotte to think about what to do after high school, her maternal grandmother Emma (Melster) Elsner suggested that she should become a lawyer. Emma Elsner was a great admirer and friend of Belle La Follette, the wife of progressive politician Robert "Fighting Bob" La Follette, who was a progressive lawyer and women's suffrage activist in her own right.

Like most women of her generation Emma Elsner had not herself received a higher education. Instead, she became a seamstress and supported her brothers' schooling with her work. Now Emma wanted her granddaughter to fight for women, arguing that women deserve legal representation by other women.

Charlotte was equally influenced by her grandfather Richard Elsner, especially after her father's death in 1931. Richard had come to Milwaukee in 1880 as a penniless young man from Ziegenhals in Silesia, where he had learned the brewer trade and had been a member of the Social Democratic movement. In Milwaukee he was employed by Pabst Brewery and joined the Freethinkers. In his new job, he was troubled by the treatment of factory workers, their long working hours, and their dismal working conditions. Thus he joined the Knights of Labor and later helped to create the Local No.9 Brewery Workers' Union. In addition, he attended night school law classes at Milwaukee Law College and later at the UW-Madison Law School; and after graduating in 1894, he opened a law practice "to help working people with the law." His business card read: "Deutscher Advokat und Notar, Richard Elsner, Lawyer." In 1897, Richard Elsner became one of the founding members of the Milwaukee Socialist Party, and in 1910 he was elected on the Socialist Party ticket to a four-year term as a judge on the new Civil Court. Stints followed as



Charlotte Bleistein, 2013

Registrar of Deeds and in the State Legislature, where he represented Milwaukee's 13th Ward. Throughout his life, Richard Elsner was a prolific contributor of articles and op-eds to Milwaukee newspapers, especially the Socialist paper, the *Milwaukee Leader*.

But back to Charlotte. Her family was thrilled when she won a four year scholarship to attend Washington University in St. Louis as an undergraduate. Once there, she immediately got involved in student causes. When she decided to continue at the Washington University Law School, her grandfather footed the bill. Charlotte was one of only two women in her class, and they were admitted only because they were expected to use their newly acquired knowledge of the law to do better "social work."



Richard Elsner, Charlotte Bleistein's grandfather, fall 1892

Charlotte, however, actually wanted to practice law. The only problem was that not a single law firm in Missouri in 1939 would hire a female lawyer.

In 1941, Charlotte finally found her first employment as a staff lawyer for the National Labor Relations Board in Washington, DC. But even there her activities were restricted. For example, she was discouraged from traveling across the country to observe labor conflicts that lay behind some of her legal cases. When she did manage to go to Detroit to observe union elections, local police would not allow her to enter the Ford Motor plant, arguing that they could not “protect women in the factory.” The irony, of course, is that only a few months later it was mostly women who worked at Ford, after the men had been sent to war.

In 1950, newly divorced and with a young daughter, Charlotte moved back to Milwaukee. Once again, she

attempted to find employment as a lawyer, and once again no law firm would hire a woman. She decided to set out on her own. In her new neighborhood in Greendale, Charlotte opened a general law practice and also got an insurance license. At the time, lawyers were not allowed to advertise; so Charlotte went from house to house selling home insurance and incidentally informing people about the new law firm in town. Indeed, her early clients were mostly neighbors and included many women. As her law practice blossomed, Charlotte did not forget those who could not afford legal representation. Thus in 1957 she was one of the first lawyers—and the only woman—to join a newly established volunteer-defender program in Milwaukee.

This was not the only way Charlotte helped the community. She volunteered for the Red Cross, was a Girl Scout leader, and became active in organizations such as the Greater Milwaukee United Nations Association, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and the National Organization for Women. Like her grandfather, Charlotte joined the Socialist party in Milwaukee, and she became a good friend of Milwaukee mayor Frank Zeidler and his family. She is a proud socialist and even though she has had to cut down on many of her activities, Charlotte continues to be engaged and informed, and lends her support to her favorite causes whenever she can.

Over the years, often in the company of Frank and Agnes Zeidler, Charlotte attended many of the annual meetings of the Friends of the Max Kade Institute. This year, she joined

us in Racine. We now look forward to seeing her at our next meeting and learning more about her fascinating life. 🍷

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