

## Father Ambros Oswald and the Utopian Community of St. Nazianz in Wisconsin: Part I

Karyl Rommelfanger



Used with the permission of the Society of the Divine Savior – USA Province – Salvatorian Archives.

Undated photo of workers at St. Nazianz. The men are identified as: John Gramlich, for many years the “Hausvater” of the Old Brothers at the Seminary; Joe Gramlich; and Joe Hein, Farm Boss.

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*The following is the first of a two-part series about the utopian community of St. Nazianz, Wisconsin, and its founder, Ambros Oswald. The 2011 Annual Meeting of the Max Kade Institute (May 7, 2011) will include a visit to St. Nazianz, where visitors will tour the community and the religious property of this once very lively and successful colony.*

In 1854 Catholic priest Father Ambros Oswald led his followers across the Atlantic Ocean to New York, and then westward to Wisconsin, where he founded

the Catholic utopian colony of St. Nazianz. The community functioned successfully until the charismatic leader’s unexpected death in 1873, after which divisions arose and the once effective enterprise began to fail.

Ambros Oswald was born in 1801, at a time when the power of the Catholic Church in his homeland of Baden was fading rapidly. The previously intertwined relationship of church and state had been dissolved, and—though two-thirds of the population of Baden was Roman Catholic—a Protestant government

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## Greetings, Friends and Readers!

With a smile, we announce that the Max Kade Foundation in New York has given a big boost to our project to renovate the fourth floor of the University Club—with a grant of \$500,000. We are grateful to the Max Kade Foundation for its generous donation. It is one of the cornerstones of our Library Project, which was first announced in the *MKI Friends Newsletter* a year ago. This means our plans can move ahead to remodel, refurbish, and modernize our new space, making it a first-class facility for our library, our offices, and our visitors. We look forward to a ribbon cutting ceremony in the coming year!

In addition to renovating our new headquarters, it is our goal to endow a secure librarian position and make possible new acquisitions for our collections. We have submitted additional grant proposals, which will be successful only if we can show substantial commitment from our home base, including the UW, our Friends, and other private individuals. We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to you for your support over the last year. Your gifts have come from near and far and show us that the work of the MKI and its resources are valued not only in Madison and in Wisconsin, but across the nation and worldwide. Our Library Campaign has made tremendous strides, but we must continue to work hard to reach our goals. Your contributions will continue to be of utmost importance to our efforts and are very much appreciated.

Tax-deductible donations can be sent to the Friends or to the UW Foundation, always designated clearly "For the MKI Library Project."

At the same time, we would like to express once again our appreciation for your gifts in the form of books and other materials, which have always been the backbone of the MKI's library holdings. Thanks especially to Jim Dow, who has donated valuable research papers, recordings, and other materials to our library and sound archives. (See pp. 12 and 14.)

We also acknowledge with gratitude a grant from the Goethe Institute of Chicago, which allows us to reprint the popular "How German Is American?" brochure. Now in its third press run, this was created to go with our poster by the same title, which is still available. Please let us know if you need a copy.

We are planning a symposium entitled "German and German-American Dimensions of the U.S. Civil War," to take place in Madison on March 3–5, 2011. Several leading scholars from Europe and the U.S. will speak, and we have issued a call for additional twenty-minute papers that deal with the time before, during, and after the

Civil War, focusing particularly on the war's meaning here and abroad, especially for speakers of German. Please see p. 11 for details.

On another note, we announce that the *MKI Friends Newsletter*, which has in recent years appeared as a quarterly, will now be published only three times per year. The fall issue should appear at the end of October/beginning of November, the winter issue at the end of January/beginning of February, and the spring issue at the end of April/beginning of May. We realize that the current issue is arriving late, but we will do our best to keep on schedule in the future.

Because this is the last issue of the current calendar year, we would like to take this opportunity to wish you all the best for the coming holiday season. May good health, hard work, and a measure of success in what you attempt be yours in the coming year 2011. Stay in touch!

—Cora Lee

The Newsletter of the Friends of the Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies is published quarterly at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Submissions are invited and should be sent to:

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## MKI Represented at German Studies Association Conference in Oakland, CA

MKI Director Cora Lee Kluge and Assistant Director Antje Petty attended the annual German Studies Association conference in Oakland, California, in early October. This four-day event brought together scholars in various disciplines from all over the world, whose research interests converge in German studies. The Oakland conference included 320 sessions and over a thousand presentations, among which were Cora Lee Kluge's paper entitled "For Readers Abroad: German-American Eyewitness Reports on Civil War Issues" and Antje Petty's entitled "German Artists—American Cyclorama: a Nineteenth-Century Case of Transnational Cultural Transfer." Both were well received and garnered new interest in the work of the MKI.

## Announcement of a New Max Kade Institute Publication

We are pleased to announce that *Paths Crossing: Essays in German-American Studies*, edited by MKI Director Cora Lee Kluge (London: Peter Lang, 2010), is about to appear in the Peter Lang series entitled German Life and Civilization under the general editorship of Jost Hermand. Based on the symposium that was held in Madison in April of 2009 to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the MKI, it contains ten essays by European and North American scholars in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences.

The contributions, in brief, are the following: (1) Cora Lee Kluge and

Mark Loudon explore the long traditions in German-American studies at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, reaching back decades before the founding of the MKI—a chapter that is in itself an important historical document for our field; (2) Jost Hermand reflects on the impact in five separate fields made by refugees from Hitler's Reich who came to the UW–Madison; (3) Walter Kamphoefner discusses the question of how to approach German-American ethnicity; (4) Hartmut Keil addresses Francis Lieber and his encounter with slavery; (5) Hugh Ridley discusses the development of an American national literature, taking as his point of departure Sealsfield's *Kajütenbuch*; (6) Lorie Vanchena reports on recent work in the field of German-American literature; (7) Daniel Nützel addresses the issue of language death in two German-American communities; (8) Steven Hoelscher investigates the growth of ethnic identity in the Swiss-American community of New Glarus, Wisconsin, between the World Wars; (9) Uwe Lübken shows connections between river floods in Germany and the United States; and (10) Louis Pitschmann suggests

how collaboration between scholars in German-American studies can be promoted in the digital age.

Taken together, the contributions included in *Paths Crossing* display the scope of the field of German-American studies, correcting the once-prevalent notion that the field is restricted to the historical investigation of ethnic Germans in America in the period before World War I. They question previous understandings of German-American identity, ethnicity, language, and literature, and suggest new directions for the field. They help redefine German-American studies as the broad, interdisciplinary study of German-speaking immigrants and their descendants in a global, multicultural, and interdisciplinary context.

We expect that *Paths Crossing* will be available within a short time, and we recommend it to all friends of German-American studies. Order it from Peter Lang <<http://www.peterlang.com/>> or your favorite bookstore.

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was using its power to diminish the influence of the Catholic church. Church property was seized, monasteries and convents were closed, and seminary education was regulated by state authorities.

Nevertheless, for many families in Baden, Catholicism remained very much alive, and the Oswald family was no exception. Ambros's father Mathias, a devout Catholic, ran a mill in southern Baden; and in his late adolescent years the young Oswald felt a calling to serve his church. In 1833, after two years of seminary training, Ambros Oswald was ordained a Catholic priest.

Oswald had few needs, and he led a spartan life: he was more apt to spend his salary on the needs of his parish than on himself. The central theme of the Gospel message, he told his parishioners, was to love one's neighbor, and his compassion for the unfortunate as well as his charismatic personality continually drew people to him. But Oswald also found himself repeatedly in conflict with the church hierarchy, and he was transferred from one parish to another, often to remote areas of the diocese. The controversies had to do with three aspects of the young priest's ministry.

First, Father Oswald believed that he possessed special powers to heal the sick. Indeed, it seems probable that he had become familiar with homeopathic cures because his family had practiced them. He had shown an early interest in studying plants and herbs that could heal illnesses. However, he had also read Biblical accounts of people being restored to health through fervent prayer, the laying on of hands, and exorcism.



Portrait of Ambros Oswald from the 1929 St. Nazianz Diamond Jubilee book. The inscription reads: "Everyone should use his talents to advance the welfare of others." (Jeder befördere nach Kräften seines Nächsten Wohlfahrt.)

In 1843 Oswald openly declared that he had healed 3,160 persons, attributing his power to God. In one community, local doctors called him a quack and demanded both a civil and church investigation, but after a careful inquiry, Oswald was found innocent of any wrongdoing. This aspect of his ministry remained part of his work in Wisconsin, and there are those today who still believe he was able to perform miraculous cures.

The second controversy that involved Oswald concerned his belief in mysticism, his conviction

that he had a special relationship with God and could interpret dreams and visions and see into the future. In 1849 he published a book entitled *Mystische Schriften* (Mystical Writings), in which he predicted the second coming of Christ at the turn of the century and the establishment of a New Jerusalem in southwestern Germany. This would be followed by a thousand years of peace throughout the world. Religious authorities called the book heretical and a hodge-podge of nonsense. Some also questioned Oswald's mental

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stability. The Church, which could hardly tolerate a recalcitrant priest with crazy ideas, asked Oswald to pledge that he would publish no further books. Nevertheless, despite his promise, another book appeared within the year.

The third and final blow occurred in 1850 when the unmanageable priest founded a society called “Der geistlich-magnetische Verein” (Spiritual Magnetic Society). This attempt to organize his followers worried the Archbishop who, fearing the group would turn into a cult, composed a letter to each of the diocesan churches, warning parishioners of Oswald’s ideas. He then relieved Oswald of his parish and limited his priestly duties.

In 1852 Oswald retreated to Munich where he began studying medicine, a move he had contemplated for some time. Upon his return to Baden two years later, he informed the Archdiocese that he was giving up the priesthood in favor of medicine. He then requested and received permission from both civil and religious authorities to emigrate. His civil emigration papers recorded his profession as “a former priest.”

At the end of May 1854, Oswald and 113 of his followers boarded two ships at LeHavre, France, and began a five-week journey across the Atlantic Ocean. After arriving in New York, they journeyed on to Milwaukee, where Oswald used their pooled resources to purchase 3,840 acres of land in Manitowoc County. They christened their yet unseen village St. Nazianz, after St. Gregory of Nazianz, who centuries earlier had retreated into a contemplative life, just as they intended to do.

The long journey had taken its toll, and the number of those remaining with Oswald had dwindled. In New York some had refused to journey any further, and in Milwaukee others were too ill to continue. Only the strongest traveled on to the north to begin creating a new home out of the tangled, forested wilderness that made up eastern Wisconsin. By Christmas of 1854, only 70 of the original 113 were still members of the Oswald community.

Life was difficult in the initial years of settlement. The new immigrants experienced hardships in the form of hunger, fires, unexplained deaths, and severe winters, all of which led to dissension. Worst of all was their inability to make mortgage payments on the land: if it were not for the generosity of Ulrich Kunzweiler, a German outside the community, the new settlers would have lost their property. By 1860, however, St. Nazianz had begun to grow, and Oswald had formulated his ideas about how the village should operate.

Any German-speaking Catholic, single or married, or anyone wishing to become Catholic, was eligible to join the community, as long as the person adhered to its principal rules. Members agreed to share work, money, and food, live a life of humility, observe the sacraments, educate the young, and, above all, serve others—especially the infirm, the poor, widows, and orphans. Swearing, quarreling, fighting, unlawful conduct, impurity, boorishness, and rudeness could lead to expulsion, but a person was given three chances to reform before being ousted.

Initially, all members, married and unmarried, lived in the numerous

log houses built under Oswald’s directions. In time two convents were constructed for the unmarried, who became known as Brothers and Sisters. Additional houses were added as membership increased, and eventually also a hospital, an orphanage, several schools, and a short-lived seminary, as well as mills and businesses. Among the colony’s craftsmen were a shoemaker, a tailor, a baker, a weaver, a blacksmith, a mason, and carpenters. The Sisters made straw hats, felt shoes, and an artisan cheese that were sold outside the community, and they became some of the area’s first educators, as Catholic schools emerged throughout the county.

Community members were not paid for their work, but if they performed jobs for non-affiliated individuals, they were allowed to accept pay and keep their earnings. This money they often put back into their businesses to purchase needed supplies. Non-members could also reside in the village, usually individuals who possessed specific skills or sold goods the community needed, for which they were duly compensated.

Individuals joining the colony were expected to donate whatever money they could to the common treasury. In theory a member could leave the society at any time, taking along an amount of money or property determined in accordance with the work or money he or she had contributed. Some members who left were compensated as promised, but others apparently were not.

Members of the Oswald settlement enjoyed their meals together,

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## The American New South, Colonial Africa, and Prussia from a Transnational Perspective

Cora Lee Kluge

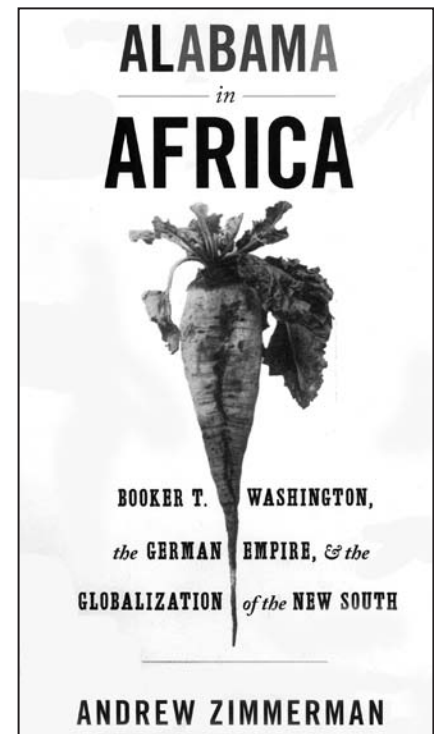
*Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, the German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South. By Andrew Zimmerman. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010.*


Andrew Zimmerman's study takes as its starting point the 1901 arrival in Togo of four African Americans from Alabama's Tuskegee Institute, who were brought there by German colonial authorities to introduce methods of producing cotton that had been successful in the American South. Parts of the story are widely known through the work of previous scholars such as Louis R. Harlan, Pulitzer Prize-winning historian famous for his biography of Booker T. Washington. But Zimmerman takes the tale a number of steps further, showing that this Alabaman expedition to Africa was much more than a relatively insignificant agricultural assistance program. It received widespread international recognition as a milestone in the worldwide production of cotton, was imitated elsewhere in African colonies, and led to the introduction and development of labor practices that have dominated the global South ever since. Zimmerman succeeds in connecting this expedition to three great social/economic transformations: those of the southern United States, eastern Germany, and colonial Africa.

Furthermore, the Togo expedition becomes the starting point for Zimmerman's careful investigation of

the transfer of modern sociological theories concerning labor, race, class, and culture—from Karl Marx's and Gustav Schmoller's reports concerning the American Civil War, to social and economic policies developed in connection with the situation of Polish migrant workers on the large agricultural estates in eastern Prussia, to ideas developed in colonial Togo and the New American South by Max Weber, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Robert E. Park. According to Zimmerman, Park, who studied in Germany, worked in Africa, and collaborated with Washington at the Tuskegee Institute before taking a position at the University of Chicago, "brought together the German and the southern traditions of sociological thought, thereby influencing American sociology and American racial thought to perhaps a greater extent than any other sociologist"; and he shows the intellectual and physical routes by which these ideas came together. Gems are available throughout the pages: information about who met whom at the International Congress of Arts and Science (in St. Louis, 1904), whose purpose was to promote exchange between German and American scholars, or about the development of the Chicago school of sociology.

Zimmerman's *Alabama in Africa* is an erudite study that is heavily annotated and includes an extensive bibliography. The notes, bibliography, and brief (perhaps too brief) index together comprise approximately



one-third of the book, which is nevertheless clearly written and easily approachable. It is a full-fledged, complex study of the intertwining of German, American, and African history that provides broad perspectives on economic and political development, social relations, and sociology in the period between the U.S. Civil War and World War I. Praised as a groundbreaking work in the field of global history, Zimmerman's undertaking succeeds in pushing back the boundaries of what can be accomplished in an interdisciplinary, transnational investigation of the cross-fertilization of people, methods, and ideas. 

## Research Team Collaborates on Austro-Hungarian Emigration: Symposium Report

Kevin Kurdylo

Audience members in Madison on November 16, 2010 attended a symposium entitled “Ethnicity, Identity, and Emigration from the Regions of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.” The three presentations were made by a group of researchers investigating the social and cultural consequences of migration both within Central Europe and between the Austro-Hungarian Empire and North America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Leading the project, which is based at the University of Minnesota, are Annemarie Steidl and Wladimir Fischer from the University of Vienna and James Oberly from the University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire. The research group is planning a monograph to be published in 2012, which will draw upon data and archival materials, including censuses from the United States, the Austrian Empire, and the Hungarian Kingdom; ship passenger lists from Bremen and Hamburg; parish records from both sides of the Atlantic; and newspapers, periodicals, manuscripts, autobiographies, and minutes of migrant societies.

Annemarie Steidl spoke about “Understanding the Transatlantic Migration Experience: The Inter-marriage of U.S.-Migrants from Austria-Hungary as an Indicator of Acculturation, 1910–1950,” using U.S. census data to analyze marriage patterns among various migrant groups. The Habsburg Monarchy of the early twentieth century provides

fertile ground for such an examination, since it was at the time one of the most economically, culturally, socially, and ethnically diverse regions in Europe, with nearly three million of its citizens emigrating to the U.S. between 1876 and 1910.

Examining eight different ethnicities (Ukrainians were excluded from the study as their immigration numbers were too low), Steidl concluded that there was a high correlation between migration and marriage, with 82 percent of all women recorded as married in

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**At the time, the Habsburg Monarchy was one of the most economically, socially, culturally, and ethnically diverse regions in Europe.**

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1900 having wed within ten years of their coming to the United States. She pointed to an overwhelming tendency for first-generation immigrants to marry within their own ethnic group (a trend that holds as true today as it did in the past) and stated that women were more likely to marry outside their ethnic group than men (although men were more likely to marry U.S.-born spouses); and that when marrying outside of their national affiliation (i.e., the Austro-Hungarian Empire), spouses usually spoke the same language (for example, Polish speakers from the Hungarian Kingdom married Pol-

ish speakers from Russia or from the German Reich). German-speaking immigrants from Austria-Hungary, of course, often married German-speakers already residing in or even born in the U.S. After the Quota Act of 1924 went into effect, however, when fewer potential marriage partners arrived from Austria-Hungary, more intermarrying took place. Indeed by 1950, over 90 percent of the second-generation migrant men were choosing U.S.-born spouses.

James Oberly’s presentation on “Census-Counting in the Kingdom of Hungary, 1870–1910, and in the United States, 1870–1950” provided insights into the politics behind census questions and how the data was used. Thus Hungarians (or Magyars) made up only 45 percent of the population in their own country, and government officials actively sought ways to foster the dominance of the Hungarian language and culture through their censuses. While Hungarian census forms in 1869 asked only for personal information (including religion, a question never asked in U.S. censuses), and literacy, it wasn’t until 1880 that respondents were asked to specify their mother tongue. Results over the following decades reveal only a small growth in the use of Magyar until 1910, when the census asked not only about a person’s mother tongue, but also whether he or she knew Magyar. By folding in these additional

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## Portraits of Swiss-American Immigrant Women

Antje Petty

Westward: Encounters with Swiss-American Women. By Susann Bosshard-Kälin, with a postscript by Leo Schelbert. Washington, DC: Swiss-American Historical Society, 2010.

In 2006, Swiss journalist Susann Bosshard-Kälin set out on a three-year quest to interview Swiss women who had emigrated to the United States. Her project was encouraged by Leo Schelbert, Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Illinois in Chicago. In his research on eighteenth and nineteenth century Swiss immigrants, Professor Schelbert noted that even though half of the ca. 400,000 Swiss who came to America in that time period were women, women's voices were rarely heard in the immigration narrative. Over the years Professor Schelbert collected their letters and other documents and conducted family interviews to get their history. Four of Schelbert's stories—two from the eighteenth and two from the nineteenth century—can be found at the end of the publication.

What Professor Schelbert did by reconstructing family records, Susann Bosshard-Kälin now accomplishes through interviews with immigrants themselves. The result is "Westward: Encounters with Swiss-American Women," a collection of essays that tells the stories of fifteen Swiss women who came to America in the twentieth century. Each story is unique and fascinating, but there are some common strands. Except for Margot Amman Durrer, who was

# WESTWARD



born in New Jersey the child of Swiss immigrants, all women came to the United States as adults, individually, and not part of a larger group. Seven were born in the 1920s, six in the 1930s, and two in the 1940s. None of them arrived before the end of World War II, only three came in the late 1940s, and the others in the 1950s and 1960s. Except for Linda Geiser, who lived and worked as an actress in both New York and Switzerland, none of the women had ever been to America before they decided to settle here. Most were single (7) or newly married (4). Only one emigrated with her husband and children and another as a single mother: a stark contrast to immigration patterns in earlier times.

The majority came from Swiss-German families, two were French-speaking, one spoke only Italian, and

two appear to have been bilingual French/German and Italian/German. Some grew up on farms in remote Alpine valleys, and others in cities like Zurich or Geneva. There are those who had a middle class upbringing in a caring home, while others experienced poverty, family loss, and displacement. For all of them, the war years had loomed large over their childhood or youth.

The reasons that motivated these women to move to America vary as much as their personal backgrounds. For some, like Marianne Burkhard, America offered a chance to shape their own lives outside of the confines of Swiss society (especially restrictive for women, as they perceived it) and to take advantage of educational and professional opportunities that they would not have had in Switzerland. Others left Swit-



zerland to join an American man, someone they had met in Switzerland, and in most cases a new or future husband. Three women married second-generation Swiss Americans before they emigrated. For most, the decision to emigrate seemed to have been rather spontaneous, as it was the case with Nelly Schleicher, who answered an ad for a nanny in New York, or Lillet Lee von Schallen, who took up an offer of support from a California couple she had met by chance on a train.

Once in America, the lives of these immigrant women took different turns, but all of them worked hard to get ahead in their new country. This might mean working on the family farm or being an integral part of the family business, like Elsbeth Bollier Büche, who with her husband had a popular confection store in Kansas City, Missouri, or Margrit Meier Sidler, who owns an inn in Hartland, Wisconsin, that she still operates even after her husband's death. Other women were the primary or even sole providers for themselves and their children. Many women furthered their education in America, like Marie Simone Pavlovich Ludwig, who got a Ph.D. in French literature and now teaches at Northwestern University, or Ellen Carney Ernst, who studied psychology and later had a private practice as a family therapist near Philadelphia.

In many respects these stories of immigrant life reflect the ups and downs of American society in general: happy marriages and divorce, economic success and bankruptcy, illnesses and loss, adventure and mobility, secure retirement and the need to work in old age. But for all

the women, their Swiss background remain important. When asked about their own identity, most say that they consider themselves American, but Swiss at heart. Some have been pillars of local Swiss-American communities, trying to keep Swiss heritage in America alive wherever they can, like Martha Bernet Zumstein, a member of a Swiss choir and host of a local Swiss radio program in Monroe, Wisconsin,—and incidentally the mother of MKI Friends Board of Directors member Hans Bernet. Many women kept Swiss traditions alive in their families and continued to speak their native language with their children. Some, on the other hand, have a more ambivalent relationship with their home country, like Rosa Schupbach Lechner, who had lost her Swiss citizenship when she married an Iranian citizen, and had experienced “living as a foreigner in my own country” before she emigrated to the U.S.

All the women have been back to Switzerland for a visit, and some have traveled there frequently. Only two women, however, have returned permanently in their old age. One is Marion Schlapfer Brandes, who as the daughter of a stateless Jew and a Swiss mother (who had lost her citizenship because of her marriage) grew up stateless and as an outsider in Zurich, and who had to go through the rigid Swiss naturalization process before she was allowed to become a Swiss citizen in the early 1950s.

*Westward* is a welcome contribution to the literature of first-person immigrant accounts. The juxtaposition of the fifteen featured twentieth century stories with eighteenth



Martha Bernet hosting a Swiss radio program in Monroe, WI.

and nineteenth century narratives highlights the similarities of all immigration experiences, and the timeless issues of identity, heritage, and acculturation. But it also shows what is unique about the immigration of this generation of Swiss women, who came individually and as adults to the United States in the mid-twentieth century. May this volume be an inspiration to record the stories of other immigrants in their own voices. 🇨🇭

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numbers, Hungary could announce that 61.21 percent of the population spoke Hungarian, representing a triumph for Magyarization, and also providing a measure of Hungarian bilingualism (a topic never captured by U.S. censuses). Census data, and maps created from this data, also identified ethnic groups that might work against Magyarization. Slovaks, for example, who had emigrated to America for work and then returned to Hungary, might have come into contact with groups (particularly in Pittsburgh) in favor of Slovak independence and/or a pan-Slav union.

Meanwhile, the U.S. censuses imposed limitations on respondents who had emigrated from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1880 they could choose among only three lands of origin: Austria “proper,” Bohemia, and Hungary, but by 1910 the Hungarian Monarchy had persuaded the U.S. to offer only two choices: Austria or Hungary. Slavic nationalities in the U.S. were particularly vocal in their opposition to this, and—although the census forms had already been printed—a “mother tongue” question was squeezed in along with “place of birth,” resulting in some interesting self-identifications such as Hun-Slovak. By 1920 the Austro-Hungarian Empire had been restructured into seven “successor states,” and respondents of the U.S. census could determine themselves how they wanted to be identified (with some noting their origin at such specific levels as “Salzburg” or “Linz”), only to find themselves restricted again by 1930, when fewer categories were allowed. Oberly also pointed out that the Allies used

Hungarian census data after World War I, when Hungary’s borders were being redefined.

While Steidl and Oberly worked with quantitative census data, Wladimir Fischer in his talk entitled “Maintaining South Slav Migrant Groups: The Praxis, 1890s to 1960s” focused on primary source materials, such as newspapers, diaries, photographs, and the minutes of migrant groups’ social organizations, to reveal how these groups maintained their ethnic identities. He is also intrigued by the “engineers” who actively worked to maintain ethnic groups and wants to document their stories and explore their methods. Identity politics were particularly important for Slavs in America, as they constantly argued that they were not Austrian or Hungarian, but Slovene or Croatian.

At the turn of the twentieth century, migrants were proud of their ethnic identities but also took part in American culture and political discourse (particularly when it affected their groups). Fischer showed images from ethnic newspapers that reveal how these papers “translated” American culture for speakers of the Slovene and Croatian languages (such as an ad for a 4th of July “Piknik”), while also bringing news about events “back home,” including politics, harvests, weather, and even cattle markets. Immigrant life was bustling in America, as proven by the profusion of ethnic business advertisements for banks, newspapers, saloons, grocery stores (“groceriji,” a word born in America), and funeral homes. Many of the ads in Croatian papers included the phrase “svoj k svojema,” which means roughly

“shop with your compatriot.” Interestingly, for businesses ethnic boundaries seemed flexible at this time, and shops owned by non-Croats used this phrase, or stated that they were “friends of the Croats.”

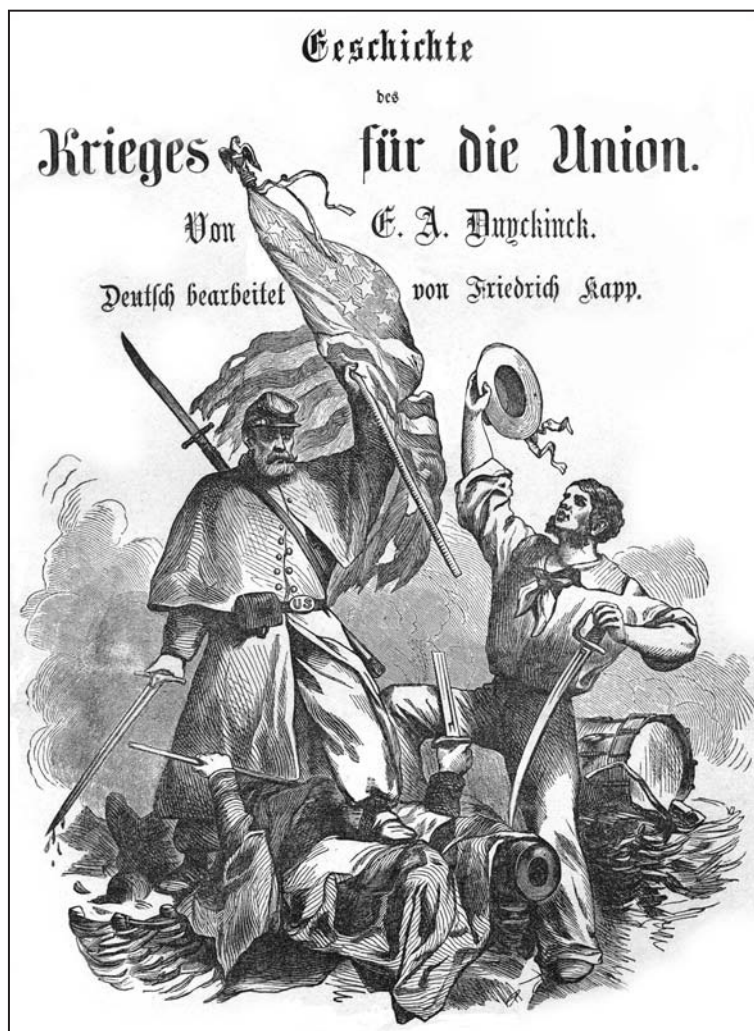
Nearly 40 percent of Slavs who came to America before World War I returned to Hungary; like immigrants from countries such as Italy, many had planned only a temporary migration, mainly for the purpose of raising money for their families in Europe.

The conference concluded with a lively discussion, and all agreed that this unusual collaboration of scholars using different approaches to a common topic will produce a wealth of results. 

## Upcoming Conference, March 3-5, 2011: German and German-American Dimensions of the Civil War

Mark your calendars for March 3-5, 2011, when the Max Kade Institute will be hosting a symposium entitled “German and German-American Dimensions of the Civil War” at the UW–Madison Memorial Union. The goal of the symposium is to bring together leading senior researchers, promising young scholars, and graduate students from different fields (history, American Studies, German Studies, literature, political sciences, geography, etc.) to share their research with a public and academic audience.

2011 will mark the sesquicentennial of the inauguration of President Lincoln and the first shots fired in the U.S. Civil War. We will mark the occasion by examining the time before, during, and after the Civil War from a unique angle, focusing on immigrants (especially those from German lands) and the global impact of the war (especially within German-speaking Europe). Topics will include: German immigrants, including Forty-eighters, and their influence in American society and political discourse; German Americans in the North and the South; Wisconsin’s participation in the Civil War; the German-American home front; German feminists; German abolitionists; the portrayal of antebellum America, the Civil War, and the war’s aftermath in the German press and in German-language literature; the depiction of the Civil War and the Civil War era America by German artists; and the portrayal of this period in American history in current German media, art, and literature.



Front cover of E. A. Duyckinck's *History of the War for the Union*, trans. Friedrich Kapp (1861–1865). Donated by the family of Dr. Henry A. Peters, Jr.

**Call for Papers:** In addition to a number of prominent scholars from Europe and the United States, our program will feature short (20-minute) presentations selected from submissions. Please send your 250-word abstract and a one-page curriculum vita to <clnollen@wisc.edu> by January 15, 2011.

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## Fall Events at the Max Kade Institute

Antje Petty

**D**uring the months of September, October, and November the Max Kade Institute hosted a number of exciting programs that show how many different themes and topics the field of German-American studies encompasses, and how varied the German-American experience itself has been.

### **“Investigating Immigrant Languages in America,” a conference focusing on German and Scandinavian languages.**

On September 16 and 17, MKI and the University of Oslo held a conference on immigrant languages in America, particularly German and Scandinavian. It built on the long Wisconsin tradition of researching immigrant languages that goes back to scholars like Einar Haugen, Frederic Cassidy, and Lester Seifert. Sixteen scholars from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, the University of Oslo, and other campuses in the U.S. and Europe offered new research on language structure, bilingualism, and language contact. While the first day emphasized linguistics, especially the often-ignored syntax of immigrant languages, the second day aimed at a broader public and focused on socio-linguistics, dialects, and language loss and maintenance. Throughout the conference, the comparison and juxtaposition of German and Scandinavian languages and dialects provided a fascinating insight into the history and evolution of these languages in America.

A few examples: Mark Loudon (UW–Madison) in his talk “Two Dialects, One Syntax: Wisconsin German as Relexified in Pomeranian” emphasized that people in Wisconsin German communities, speaking both a dialect and a form of standard German several generations after immigration, showed strong influences in the grammar of their standard variety coming from the dialect (typically Pomeranian Platt). Janne Bondi Johannessen and Signe Laake (U–Oslo) reported on the result of recent interviews with Norwegian heritage speakers in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa. They found that most of these speakers spoke Norwegian dialects (mostly from the Gudbrandsdal region) and were not familiar with forms of standard Norwegian. They also observed significant influences of English on the immigrant language, with both English words and grammatical structures having crept into the Norwegian. Bert Vaux (Cambridge), looking at the other side of the coin of language contact, showed how some features of Scandinavian and Germanic languages influence the English language of the Midwest.

### **Bruno Schweizer’s Grammar of Cymbrian, a German Language Spoken in Italy.**

On October 1, James R. Dow, Professor Emeritus of German at Iowa State University, gave a presentation on “Bruno Schweizer’s *Cymbrian Grammar* as a Product of

the *SS-Kulturkommission*.” Cymbrian (German: *Zimbrisch*) is a Germanic language related to Austro-Bavarian, which is spoken in areas of Northern Italy by descendants of people who came from north of the Alps in the early Middle Ages, or—depending on whom you ask—even earlier. Heavily influenced by Italian and surrounding Italian dialects, like Veronese, the language is spoken today by only about 2,000 people and will probably die out in the coming decades. In 1941, as part of the Nazi “*Ahnenerbe*” project, which tried to document traces of German or Germanic heritage anywhere in Europe, linguist Bruno Schweizer (1897–1958) set out to document the Cymbrian language and—in accordance with the outcome desired by his sponsors—its Lombardic origin. Schweizer’s work was never published, but his personal papers reside now in the archives of the German *Sprachatlas* in Marburg, among them a multi-volume dictionary of the Cymbrian language and a five-volume 848 page manuscript, written between 1941 and 1953, entitled *Gesamtgrammatik der Zimbrischen Sprache. Vergleichende Darstellung der zimbrischen Dialekte* (Complete Grammar of the Cymbrian Language. A Comparative Description of the Cymbrian Dialects). In 2005, James Dow—with the support of a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship—set out to re-evaluate

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## Wasser Fest, Milwaukee 2010

Kevin Kurdylo



Photos courtesy of Sandy Casterline.

*Above:* It seemed amusing at first, as long as a little higher ground still remained, but before long officials closed the German Fest grounds because of safety concerns. *Below:* The parking lot was looking like Lake Michigan as we searched for our cars.

Opening day of German Fest in Milwaukee this year was a washout, literally. Mother Nature unleashed torrential rains on the city, and with water levels in the culture village and other areas of the grounds rising steadily, officials closed up early. Residents of the city reported flooding, sink holes, mudslides, and manhole covers popping up from water surges in the sewers. My own drive home was quite an experience, with buckets of blinding rain, stunning flashes of lightning, and billowing black smoke rising up

from an industrial site.

Nevertheless, the remaining days of the festival benefited from glorious summer weather, and the customary crowds of visitors returned.

A big thank you to all those who volunteered to put a human face on MKI's German Fest exhibit this year—I've received a number of donations and queries for information as a result of folks learning about us and what we do. After a soggy beginning, a definite success! 🌩️



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the manuscript and prepare the grammar for publication. He not only looked at the manuscript, but he also consulted the scholarly literature published since Schweizer's days and, most importantly, analyzed audio and film recordings that the Schweizer team had made in 1941. Some of these recordings, including songs and dialogues, were played at the presentation. In 2008, Bruno Schweizer's *Zimbrische Gesamtgrammatik*, edited and annotated by James Dow, was published for the first time (Steiner Verlag). It already has aided the research of many linguists, folklorists, and other scholars. Professor Dow has generously donated his own papers related to this research project to the Max Kade Institute.


**“With a Chosen Few” and “Don’t Forget Me,” two exhibits to commemorate Mildred Harnack-Fish.**

The Max Kade Institute is a cosponsor of the exhibit “...With a Chosen Few: in Memoriam of Mildred Harnack-Fish,” which is being shown at the UW–Madison Hillel Foundation from October 13 until December 3. Created by the artist Franz Rudolf Knubel, Professor Emeritus at the University of Essen, and originally shown in the German Resistance Memorial Center in Berlin, the exhibit is an artistic interpretation and documentation of the last weeks in the life of Mildred Harnack-Fish. Born in Milwaukee, Mildred Harnack-Fish (1902–1943) was a student and lecturer in the English Department at the UW–

Madison, where she met her future husband, Arvid Harnack, a German student of economics. In 1928 the couple moved to Berlin, where Arvid worked in the Reich Ministry of Economics and Mildred taught American Literature and translated German literature into English. After 1933, they became key members of a group of young intellectuals and writers that was opposed to the Nazi Regime and actively tried to undermine it by distributing pamphlets and posters in Germany and passing information to the Allies, especially the Soviets. Members of the group, named “die rote Kapelle” (the red orchestra) by the Gestapo, were arrested in 1942 and most were executed, including Arvid and Mildred Harnack. She is believed to be the only American woman executed by the Nazis for resistance to the regime in Germany.

Parallel to the “With a Chosen Few” exhibit, the UW–Madison Memorial Library is showing an exhibit “Don’t Forget Me” that documents the life of Mildred Harnack-Fish in the United States, especially in Madison. Many of the documents in this display are from the Memorial Library collection.

Additional programming provided alongside these two exhibits included a reading of the Harnack letters with UW students, presented by Shareen Blair Brysac, author of *Resisting Hitler: Mildred Harnack and the Red Orchestra*; and a behind-the-scenes look at a Wisconsin Public Television production about Mildred Harnack by Joel Waldinger. MKI also sponsored a lecture by Jost Hermand, Professor Emeritus of German at

UW–Madison, who spoke about “Literature of the Inner Emigration, 1933–1944.” Written by authors opposed to the Nazi regime who had remained in Germany, among them several members of the “Rote Kapelle,” the commentary of this resistance literature was often of necessity extremely subtle or hidden between the lines. 

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- *Friends of the Max Kade Institute* is a non-profit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization that supports the research, outreach, educational, and publishing activities of the Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies.
- Membership covers the calendar year (January–December). Payments received after November 1 of the current year will be credited for the full succeeding year.

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though children ate, as one member stated, “apart from the table.” While the adults worked, children were required to attend school; nevertheless, they were also expected to do manual labor when they were old enough. The colony provided its members with basic clothes and shoes, but any extras had to be furnished by the members themselves.

The St. Nazianz society never joined a specific Catholic order, although Oschwald adopted the principles of the Third Order of St. Francis, an official order that included both married and unmarried members. He also introduced the Catholic Breviary, a strict regimen of prayers recited at various times during the day. A typical day involved rising early and retiring late, with the hours in between interspersed with

work, meals, prayer, and the evening recitation of the Rosary.

At its height in the early 1870s, the colony had approximately 200 members, and a century later researcher Father Alfred Schneble listed a total of some 350 persons who at various times had been members of the “Settlement,” as it was known locally.

Although mysticism had played a large role in his spiritual life in Germany, Father Oschwald seems to have laid this aside upon his arrival in the United States, perhaps because of the pressures connected to building his communal society. He enjoyed good relations with the Archbishop of Milwaukee, Swiss émigré John Martin Henni, who visited St. Nazianz several times. He continued to use his medical skills to help those who were ill, collecting plants and herbs for his homeopathic cures and keeping records of illnesses

he treated. It is said that he visited anyone needing help, no matter what his or her religious affiliation.

In February, 1873, Ambros Oschwald became ill and died within a few days, leaving the St. Nazianz colony in complete shock. Members held a public visitation for their priest, and large numbers of people from the surrounding area, some even from neighboring states, came to pay their respects. Father Oschwald was laid to rest in St. Ambros’ Chapel, but years later his body was moved to the newer Loretta Chapel, where it remains today. With his death, the communal society of St. Nazianz began to change.

*(Conclusion follows in the next issue.)*

*Karyl Rommelfanger, President of the MKI Friends, is a retired teacher of German who researches German-American history in Manitowoc, WI.*

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## The MKI Library Project Capital Campaign

*Are you*

- ... passionate about history?
- ... interested in America as an immigrant country?
- ... intrigued by the experiences of your German ancestors?
- ... concerned about the preservation of American print culture?

*If so, please support the MKI's Library Project for*

- a state-of-the-art facility in our new quarters on UW–Madison's central campus;
- new acquisitions;
- an endowment to support library staff.

*This is a three-year fundraising campaign. Tax-deductible contributions can be made to the MKI Library Capital Campaign Fund at the UW Foundation. For more information, contact Antje Petty at (608) 262-7546 or <[apetty@wisc.edu](mailto:apetty@wisc.edu)>.*