MAX KADE INSTITUTE
FRIENDS NEWSLETTER
Volume 21 No 3 • Fall 2012

Grottos of the Midwest: Religion and Patriotism in Stone

Peyton Smith

All photos for this article by Peyton Smith.

The front of the *Grotto of Christ, the King, and Mary, His Mother*, in Dickeyville, Wisconsin, extols religion and patriotism and greets visitors to the grotto.

INSIDE

The Midwest is home to a fascinating array of religious structures created primarily by German immigrants. Throughout this part of the country one finds cemeteries with elaborate headstones and crucifixes, small roadside chapels and shrines, bathtub Virgin Marys, and spectacular tall-spired Catholic and Lutheran churches with detailed stained-glass windows and ornately carved wooden altars.

But the real architectural gems created by these immigrants may be the religious grottos of the Midwest, which are considered to be among the most important folk or "outsider" art works in the United States. Derivations of a European tradition that priests, primarily German Catholics, brought with them to the new country, grottos reflect the times in which they were first built: times when disease swept the world and wiped out huge segments of the population. The first major grotto in America, for example, was built by a priest who had promised to erect a shrine if he

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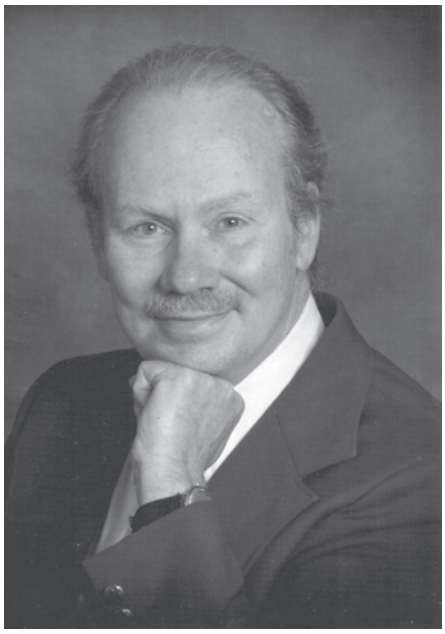
In Memoriam: Henry Geitz (1931—2012), Former MKI Director



Professor Henry Geitz, Jr., whom we knew as Hank, died in Fitchburg, Wisconsin, on October 27, 2012, at the age of 81. A native of Philadelphia, he first came to Madison in 1956 as a graduate student and teaching assistant in the Department of German. After completing his doctorate at the UW in 1961, he taught a year at the University of Richmond before returning to Madison in 1962, where he became a dedicated and award-winning teacher of German language and literature, cultural history, and pedagogy. In addition, he held a variety of administrative positions that brought him into contact with colleagues and acquaintances around the world. He worked as Associate Director and then Director of the UW's NDEA Institutes in 1964 and 1965, as Resident Director of the UW's Junior Year in Freiburg in 1967–1968, and then as Chair of German in the UW Extension and the UW Center System. From 1983 to 1989 he was Associate Director of the UW's Academic Programs Abroad; in 1989–1990 he was Resident Director of the UW's Program Abroad in Budapest; and thereafter, until his retirement in 1997, he served as Director of the Max Kade Institute.

Hank's parents were immigrants from German-speaking areas of Europe, his father from Hesse and his mother from the Banat; and Hank had a lifelong, solid, and enthusiastic interest in German-American studies. He was among those who had long dreamed of establishing an institute at the UW to promote work in this area, and he devoted considerable energy to the founding of the MKI. As MKI Director, he organized special conferences on the German-American press, German influences on education in the United States, and the land ethic of Aldo Leopold. He was the editor of *The German-American Press* (1992) and co-editor of both the first English edition of Hans Bahlow's *Dictionary of German Names* (1993) and *German Influences on Education in the United States to 1917* (1995). In addition, he oversaw the publication of a number of other volumes in the Max Kade Institute series, of which he was the general editor.

Hank's contributions and achievements were recognized, and high honors often came his way, including the silver medal of the University of Freiburg (1984), the Outstanding German Educator Award presented by the Wisconsin Chapter of the AATG (1989), and the Cross of Merit from the Federal Republic of Germany (1991). Those of us who knew him personally remember him as a warm and generous Friend, colleague, and supporter—and as our former director. We will miss him!

Greetings, Friends and Readers!

The fall semester is more than halfway over, and frost was on the pumpkins in time for Hallowe'en. The MKI continues to forge ahead, and since our last Newsletter our presence has been felt in many corners of the state and beyond. In July, for example, Kevin Kurdylo joined the Pommerscher Verein of Marathon County in a ceremony to unveil a memorial marker honoring early Pomeranian settlers of the area; and he met with members of the Sauk City Freethinkers to discuss their history and to explore possibilities of their collaborating with the MKI. In July the MKI also put in an appearance at the German Fest of Milwaukee, thanks to the assistance of a number of Friends who volunteered their time to take on a shift or two; and we extend our appreciation to them and especially to Ed Langer, who was responsible for making the arrangements. Meanwhile, Mark Louden was in Germany for several months during the summer, teaching three courses on German-American topics at the University of Freiburg.

So far this fall, Mark has given a presentation on the topic of "The German Presence in Wisconsin" at the Trinity Historical Society in Freistadt, sharing highlights from the UW course he taught last spring on the same subject, and he will present a second talk on this topic later in November in Lebanon. In addition, Mark will speak about Amish music at a meeting of the German Interest Group in Janesville on November 5th. Antje Petty has been active, too, working with a fourth-grade teacher at Elm Lawn Elementary School in Middleton to develop teaching materials on Mecklenburg-German immigrants who settled in the area, which will use the new Pope Farm Conservancy as their focal point. In addition, she and Lori Bessler of the Wisconsin Historical Society have continued the series of genealogy workshops that was so popular last spring, holding two more—on October 20 and 27. Cora Lee Kluge has also been occupied, giving a presentation on the Milwaukee German Theater at the German Studies Association conference in Milwaukee, another concerning the work of the MKI to the Board of the Wisconsin Humanities Council, a third one on the role of the Forty-eighters in the Civil War to a group at the Waunakee Public Library, and a fourth one on aspects of German immigration to the Pommerscher Verein of Marathon County. We are delighted to be part of the UW's outreach mission, and we thank all of the groups we have visited for their warm welcome.

Meanwhile, we know you are eager for news about our renovation project, which will convert the fourth floor of the University Club on the UW Library Mall into the new home of the MKI. Things are moving along—slowly—but we have reached the very final planning stages. Stay tuned especially for information about the schedule. We realize that your generosity has made you stakeholders in this undertaking, and we are deeply grateful. And we are all very pleased that things are progressing.

Meanwhile, we are now looking forward to the end of the year—and the beginning of the new one. We wish you all the best and hope you will work hard, be successful, and stay in touch!

—Cora Lee and Mark

Pommerscher Verein Unveils Immigrant Memorial Marker

Kevin Kurdylo

Photos courtesy of the Pommerscher Verein Central Wisconsin.

On July 15, 2012, a ceremony was held in the Town of Berlin, Marathon County, Wisconsin, to unveil a granite marker commemorating the Pomeranian immigrants who settled in the area starting in 1855. Organized by the Pommerscher Verein Central Wisconsin, a heritage group that studies the history, culture, and Low German (or *Platt*) language known to their ancestors, the celebration included singing, dancing, speeches, and even a release of pigeons as the monument was unveiled. The songs included a version of "On Wisconsin" and "You Are My Sunshine" in Platt, as well as "Das Pommernlied," which was written in 1850.

The six-foot-tall marker is made of red granite quarried locally, at a site where several of the original settlers and their immediate descendants found employment. One side of the marker features a narrative about the Pomeranian settlement of central Wisconsin; the other shows a map of the Kingdom of Prussia, identifying the provinces from which large groups of the immigrants originated, as well as a map of Wisconsin, highlighting the counties of Marathon and Lincoln where so many Pomeranian immigrants settled—often in towns with names like Stettin, Hamburg, and Berlin. Here, in a landscape reminiscent of their homeland, they established communities that were predominantly German—their neighbors spoke German, newspapers were printed in German, and church services were held in German. This marker recognizes the struggles and accomplishments of the settlers, and it reminds us how they helped to shape who we are today.

Surrounding the monument are 149 tiles engraved with the names of original immigrant settlers and nearly 400 commemorative bricks financed by descendant families. The Verein plans to compile a collection of stories about the immigrants whose names adorn the site.

In a time of rapid change and concern for the future, we are gratified to know that local organizations such as the Pommerscher Verein of Central Wisconsin are committed to the important task of keeping our history alive.

Ein deutscher Osage-Häuptling (A German Osage Chief)

Translated by Kevin Kurdylo

Germans in Europe have long been fascinated with Native American culture, due in large part to the 19th-century works of Karl May, arguably one of the best-selling German authors of all time. It is now known that May never visited the places so vividly described in his stories; instead he exercised his imagination and relied upon travel narratives and accounts of encounters with Native Americans written by others to create fabulous adventures set in America's Wild West, including tales involving a German immigrant named Old Shatterhand.

The following is a summary of a different story—titled "Ein deutscher Osage-Häuptling"—which appeared in the September 1890 issue of *Das Evangelische Magazin*, edited by C. A. Thomas and Robert Matt and published in Cleveland, Ohio, by Lauer und Mattill. Like the tales of Karl May, this one involves a German immigrant, and it claims to be a true account, though specific details, such as *when* the events occurred, are not provided. In the first paragraph we are told that most stories about the experiences of white settlers have no basis in fact and should be dismissed as *Quatsch* (rubbish). But here, we are assured, is a story whose veracity is vouched for; it deals with the lives of early settlers in Kansas and is told by a man who himself lived through the events: "Wir lassen den Mann selbst reden" (We let the man speak for himself). The identity of this man is never given (at the end of the story we find the initials "R. M.," which might stand for Robert Matt), and we are asked, "Who knows whether in the state of Kansas today there is not a reader who remembers the occurrence?" There are details in the story that could probably be verified with enough time and effort.

The story begins: "When my parents emigrated from Germany to America, I was about four years old. Because we were extremely poor, my parents continued further west, my father looking to nourish his family from the hunt until we could enjoy our first harvest from the land. We established ourselves near an Indian reservation and in our daily dealings we had the best of relationships with these half-civilized natives.

"As a young boy I came in contact with young Indians daily, from whom I learned to set traps and use weapons. But of greatest value to me was learning the language of the Osage Indians and the Shawnees, so that I could communicate with members of both tribes fluently. Nothing pleased the Indians more than when they met a White who could understand their language, and they did their best to instruct me. When I was twelve years old, I could use a bow and arrow, a gun, and traps as well as any Indian my age, and I was proficient in their language. For these reasons I was popular with all Indians and was protected by them when they met me on the hunt or while trapping.

"When I was fourteen, my father took a new homestead in southern Kansas. After moving there I saw nothing more of my Indian friends for many years. Our homestead was fifteen miles southwest of Independence, on the old Abilene trail, on a small stream, which carries the impressive name *Zwiebelcreek* (Onion Creek). [Note: This appears to be in Montgomery County, Kansas.] This land had formerly been part of the Osage reservation; the government bought it from the Indians and opened it for settlers. How such a government purchase is accomplished, I do not want to describe in depth, but would only mention here that a majority of the Indians were dissatisfied, because they had been deceived and cheated. With their great and feared chieftain Big Hill Joe they went on the warpath, spreading panic and alarm among the scattered settlers, some of whom knew nothing about Indians except what they had learned from stories. About 300 settlers fled to Independence, where a militia company was formed to provide protection.

"Among the few settlers who were not frightened away was my father. He sought instead to protect his homestead, and thus we remained on our property. I myself could not conceive of any danger, for as well acquainted as I was with Indian life, I had never seen them on the warpath. Our nearest neighbor lived a mile away from us. He was called Bäcker

Das Evangelische Magazin.

Band 22. September 1890. Nr. 9.

Ein deutscher Osage-Häuptling.

Wenn man heutzutage von den Erlebnissen der weißen Ansiedler des Westens liest, dann legt man gewöhnlich das Buch weg, oder man warnt seine Leute, den Quatsch nicht zu glauben, weil leider so unglaublich viel über Indianergrausamkeit geschrieben wird. Natürlich sagen die Bücher selten etwas über die Grausamkeit der Weißen. Wenn wir aber eine Geschichte entdecken, welche von dem Leben der ersten Ansiedler handelt, und finden den Mann, der die Erfahrungen selbst erlebt hat und die Wahrheit seiner Erzählung mit lebenden Zeugen bestätigt,

and had three children. When news came of the Indian outbreak, Bäcker brought his whole family and all his cattle to our house, wishing to stay with us until the danger was past. On the day after their arrival three more families arrived, and now the men undertook the serious work of converting our house into a fortress to defend their families. Including the children from these other families, we numbered a full dozen all together, and before long we began to play at being Indians.

"A week passed without a real Indian being sighted, and the settlers began to consider returning to their homesteads, believing the uproar about war had been a false alarm. On the day before the Bäcker family was to depart, I got permission to go with the two Bäcker boys to their place on Onion Creek to check the traps they had laid. My father and Mr. Bäcker had left early that morning for Independence, allowing us boys also to get an early start. When we arrived at the Bäcker home, we found everything in good order. We got some grain from the shed and fed the pigs that were rolling about in the brook; then we checked the traps and found an opossum and two raccoons had been caught. We skinned them and nailed the pelts on the barn, in order to dry them in the sun.

"It might have been around nine o'clock when we started back to the house, but we hadn't gone far before we became aware of a troop of riders in the distance; they were driving many cattle before them and heading right toward us. My two comrades broke out in wails and fled toward the house. As they ran, the war cry of the Indians clearly told me we had been discovered. An attempt to flee would have been in vain, as the Indians were mounted. I ran after the others, and we got into the house and locked the doors and windows. The Bäcker boys were pale with fright, and I must admit that their appearance also made me feel nauseous.

"Seeking safety, we crept into the attic, where we found we could see through the cracks between the joists. From there I could see that the Indians had taken all our cattle and our horses. With terrible shouting they rode around the house, swinging their rifles and tomahawks in the air. When they began to pound at the door we could hardly keep the younger Bäcker still. He trembled with fear and grabbed his head with both hands, as if his scalp had already been unfastened. We heard the windows rattle and then the door broke under massive blows. From our hiding place we could clearly see the hideously painted faces of the Indians in the room. They immediately began to help themselves to the useful items: spoons, forks, tinware, bedding, and clothing. Up to then none had sought our hiding place; their whole attention was directed toward the robbery. I believe we would have remained completely undiscovered except for a chance betrayal. The room below was completely filled with Indians who had suddenly become silent; wanting to get a better view, I crept further forward on the board, to where the opening was larger. Unfortunately the board gave way and flipped, and before I knew it, the board and I fell onto the heads of the Indians.

"The uproar was tremendous. Knives, pistols, and rifles were grabbed, and a heathen roar filled the air. During this commotion I managed to get myself free. Surrounded by Indians, I heard these words in the Osage language: 'Kill the paleface! Shoot him!' But I was immediately convinced this was said only to frighten me, and there was no real intention to kill me.

"Despite my precarious situation I did not lose my composure, but recalled from my earlier encounters that only calm and courageous behavior would inspire respect among the Indians.

"I looked the fierce warriors straight in the eye and said, 'You are not Osage, you are cowards! The Osage are brave and make no war with women and children. You threaten a boy who knows the Osage, and who knows that they are valiant and are his friends!' I spoke in their language and instilled in my words

all the pathos I was capable of.

"My speech had the desired effect. The weapons were lowered, and grunts of astonishment could be heard. A brawny Indian who towered over the others came forward and ordered them to make room. As he stepped up to me I thought that this must be the great Chief Big Hill Joe (*der grosse Berg Joseph*), and I was filled with hope and courage. He offered me his hand and said, 'Small white Osage, my warriors will do you no harm, though we have killed many men! Where have you learned to speak Osage?'

"'At the great river,' I said, pointing to the north.

"Then I told them how I had lived for many years among the Osage, and what brave fighters they were, and how, in my father's house, they exchanged wampum and ate bread. An Osage, I told him, was never a common thief, but was always a true man.

"'We are also your friends,' the chief said.

"'You are not warriors; you have stolen my father's horses and cattle. No Osage does that.'

"'We have stolen no horses here,' he said.

"But I realized that I was making an impression, so I said: 'No, not here, but farther up, and I live there,' pointing with my hand at the creek. 'Is this how the great Chief Big Hill Joe deals with his friends?'

"'There are only noisy rabbits up there, they hid in their house and did not come out,' the chief said mockingly.

"'My father has gone to Independence; there are only women and children at home. Does the Osage chief steal our cattle when no one is watching?'

"The chief stepped to the side, where he spoke for a while with his warriors, then returned and said to me, 'We leave the ponies and cattle.' He fixed me with his piercing black eyes and said, 'The small white Osage goes with us, and we will make him a great chief.'

"It is hardly necessary to say that I refused the invitation. Several of the warriors came up to me and spoke in their language, as it made them happy to hear me speak Osage. But it particularly amused them when I could not find the right word and got stuck. Suddenly the chief gave a sign, and the wild band was gone. I soon discovered that they had taken none of the cattle and horses that belonged to us. Big Hill Joe would not have that said of them.

"I then went into the house and found the two Bäckers still in hiding, almost paralyzed with fear. When I told them that the Indians were gone, and that we would have to drive our cattle home, they could hardly speak, as they believed a miracle had occurred.

"An indescribable happiness met us when we arrived at home on our horses and driving our cattle, as no one could believe we were still alive. Our mothers were crying tears of joy, looking at us as if we had just come back from the grave.

"It took some time to tell the entire story. As I finished, the two young Bäckers professed they had always looked down on me because I could not understand English, but they now realized that a spoonful of Osage was worth more than a whole bowl of English.

"The news spread, with the young Bäckers making more of it than was called for, and I became famous. Whether mockingly, in fun, or in earnest, I was given the title of the German Osage Chief, and I've worn the name to this day with pride. Whenever anyone asked me why I never learned to speak better English, I'd usually say because I had learned to speak Osage.

"Since then we have had peace with the Indians. Before long the last Osage will have gone to the happy hunting grounds, and the place where he once lived will no longer know his story."

Note

Big Hill Joe was known as Pa-I'n-No-Pa-She (Not Afraid of Longhairs / Pawnees), also Governor Joe, Star Chief, and Wat-Si Ki-He-Kah. He apparently was educated in the Osage mission school, but was known to pretend not to understand English. There are reports of killings attributed to his band dating from between 1872 and 1880. There are various dates given for his death, ranging from as early as 1878 to 1883 and even 1903.

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should survive his illness. The grotto builders were not schooled in architecture or any formal art tradition. At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, however, the availability of inexpensive concrete made it possible for them to create incredible structures without using blueprints.

The birthplace of the grotto movement in the Midwest is Saints Peter and Paul Church in West Bend, Iowa, home to the Grotto of the Redemption (http://www.westbendgrotto.com/). This "Mother of all Grottos" takes up an entire city block and contains nine contiguous grottos that illustrate the story of the Redemption, from the Fall of Man to the Resurrection. It is said to be the largest collection of semiprecious stones, minerals, and petrified materials in the world, valued at $4.3 million. To be fully appreciated, it should be visited at night as well as during the day. The grotto was built by a German-born immigrant, Paul Dobberstein, who came to the United States in 1893 to study for the priesthood at St. Francis Seminary near Milwaukee. While there, he suffered a severe case of pneumonia. The Grotto of the Redemption is the result of his promise to build a shrine to honor the Blessed Virgin if he should survive, and a small stone grotto honoring "Our Lady of Lourdes," also attributed to Dobberstein, was built at the seminary in 1894.

In 1901, now a parish priest at Saints Peter and Paul Church, Dobberstein began to stockpile massive amounts of fieldstone, rocks, and boulders, but he did not begin construction in earnest until 1912. His work on the grotto continued until his death in 1954. Dobberstein attributed the grotto tradition to the Middle Ages, when shepherds attending their flocks in the hills sought refuge from storms in natural grottos, or caves. They adorned the interiors with holy pictures and crucifixes, placing them over small altars to give the caves the appearance of a church sanctuary.

The *Grotto of the Redemption* in West Bend, Iowa, takes up an entire city block and virtually overwhelms the viewer with tons of semi-precious gems, petrified wood, and colored glass.

Father Dobberstein had studied geology, and he knew his rocks and minerals. He learned to embed colorful minerals into concrete panels and then assemble them to form shrines and grottos. Starting in 1912, Matt Szerensce, a parishioner, assisted Father Dobberstein, and he continued working on the grotto until his own death in 1959. Together the men made frequent trips to the Black Hills and elsewhere, excavating railroad carloads of rocks, minerals, and precious stones. Father Louis Greving, who was assigned to the parish in 1946, also helped complete the grotto. Because Father Dobberstein was commissioned to construct other smaller grottos for Catholic churches and convents in Iowa, Wisconsin, and Illinois, his handiwork can be seen in many small towns around the Midwest.

While the grotto in West Bend was built to celebrate religion, other major grottos incorporated patriotism to reflect the sense of pride that immigrants felt in their new country. The Dickeyville Grotto on the grounds of the Holy Ghost Church in southwestern Wisconsin (http://dickeyvillegrotto.com/grotto.htm) is another well-known array of grottos, shrines, and gardens. Unlike the Grotto of the Redemption, the one in Dickeyville contains extensive quantities of glass and ceramics, along with natural stones and petrified materials, some gathered from as far away as the Holy Land. Imagine a structure 25 feet tall, 30 feet wide, and 25 feet deep embedded with thousands and thousands of pieces of sparkling glass and ceramics, shells, marbles, minerals, rocks,

This detail of the fishpond at the *Rudolph* (Wisconsin) *Grotto Gardens and Wonder Cave* illustrates its natural setting, surrounded by trees and vegetation.

petrified wood—and doorknobs. The Dickeyville Grotto is even said to contain a cross carved by Father Marquette's first Indian convert.

Father Mathias Wernerus, a German-born priest who served the parish from 1918 until his death in 1931, was the driving force behind the Dickeyville Grotto. Wernerus began his work by constructing a Soldiers' Memorial in 1920 to honor three men from the parish who had lost their lives in World War I. In 1924, he began to expand his vision, aided through the years by his parishioners and by his cousin, Mary Wernerus. The grotto was completed in 1930, and remained virtually unchanged until 1964, when parish priest Father Lambert Marx added concrete and sandstone Stations of the Cross.

Many believe that Dobberstein influenced Wernerus, because Wernerus attended the St. Francis Seminary after the small grotto there was built, and both priests' structures have similar features. However, no written records or original source materials confirm this. Wernerus himself wrote, "Many reasons urged me to put up 'Religion in Stone and Patriotism in Stone.' The main reason why it was done I could not reveal."

The St. Phillip Parish Grotto Shrine and Wonder Cave at Rudolph, Wisconsin, is another marvelous site worthy of a visit (http://www.rudolphgrotto.org/). It contains almost forty structures, including grottos and shrines to God and country. Unlike the Redemption or Dickeyville grottos, however, it is constructed primarily of native rock and is bedecked with mature trees and extensive floral gardens. A unique feature in Rudolph is the Wonder Cave, an enclosed pathway one-fifth of a mile long that contains dozens of religious statues and plaques.

This grotto was primarily built by Philip Wagner, who was born in Iowa and went to Europe to study for the priesthood. While there, he became very ill and visited the Our Lady of Lourdes shrine in France, a well-known healing spot. Recalling the visit years later, he wrote, "My health having failed, I prayed devoutly to Mary amidst the quiet and beauty of the place. Should it be restored, I promised to build sometime, somewhere, a shrine in her honor."

Wagner fulfilled that promise by beginning to build the Rudolph grotto in 1928 and working on it until his death in 1959. Edmund Rybicki began assisting Wagner as a fourth grader and worked until his death in 1991. Like the others, they let the structure develop intuitively as they worked. Although not as flashy as the other two major grottos, it possesses great natural beauty.

The Paul and Matilda Wegner Grotto in Cataract, Wisconsin, is a smaller grotto built by German Lutheran immigrants next to their farmhouse (http://www.monroecountyhistory.org/wegnergrotto.php). The Wegners were transfixed by a visit to the Dickeyville Grotto in 1929. When they returned home, they immediately began to work. Built primarily by Paul until his death in 1937, and thereafter by his wife until her death in 1942, the Wegner grotto is a stunning sight in the middle of an undeveloped natural landscape.

The Wegners followed Wernerus's technique of studding concrete with glass and ceramic objects. They began with a decorative fence around the property, ultimately building many more structures, including bird houses, a battleship, and a replica of their 50th wedding anniversary cake. An ecumenical statement can be seen in a mosaic glass church, eight feet by twelve feet, which depicts the Lutheran, Catholic, and Jewish religions,

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Teaching the U. S. Civil War in Germany

Nicole Konopka

All photos for this article by students at Bamberg University. Used with permsission.

The students from Bamberg University are greeted by "Miss Emma" as they approach the "Confederate Camp" in Walldürn.

In 2011 many conferences and exhibitions in both the U.S. and Germany commemorated the 150th anniversary of the beginning of the American Civil War. Because I had taken part in several of these and had been exposed to a great deal of new source material on the topic, I decided to teach a class on transnational history entitled "Germans and the American Civil War." It was part of a series designed especially to bring together North American exchange students and German students, whose previous topics had included "German and American Romanticism" and "The Figure of the Noble Robber in Germany and America." The interaction that took place proved rewarding in terms of intercultural exposure and stimulating conversations.

During the summer of 2012, we began to examine the role of Germans in the American Civil War. In the mid-19th century tens of thousands of Germans had left their European homes to settle in the New World. During the Civil War, many proved their loyalty to their adopted homeland by serving as soldiers. From the start, the large numbers of these Germans not only had an impact on the course of the war, but their actions also influenced their self-perception as an ethnic group and had repercussions in their respective homelands. I wanted my students to realize that there were more interesting issues to study in this conflict than the dates of battles and the numbers of casualties. I wanted them to learn from subjective individual accounts and from fiction to understand more complicated aspects. Such approaches offer a unique method for immersing the reader in events that took place 150 years ago.

Thus, rather than digging a chronological path through historical data, I decided to take the "road less traveled" and guided students through a variety of novels, poems, motivational songs, and personal statements. We began our journey with the novel *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott. At first students did not see a connection between this American children's classic and the topic of our class. Gradually, however,

they discovered that the immigrant experience is as much a part of this novel as are Marmee's goodness and Amy's nose. Focusing on Professor Bhaer and the unfortunate Hummels allowed students to access the Civil War experience from a different point of view than those usually chosen, especially since these characters are not actively involved in the fighting but nevertheless are affected by the war and its consequences.

We then moved on to Ferdinand Freiligrath and Walt Whitman, both poets and both strong supporters of personal freedom and reform. Since the class was taught in German and in English, the students were encouraged to read the poems in their original language; and we discovered that Freiligrath's writings about the Revolution of 1848 and Whitman's about the Civil War were eerily similar in terms of personal drive, irony, and the strongly voiced enthusiasm for liberty and patriotism. An additional link became evident when students discovered that Freiligrath was the first German poet to translate Whitman's poems into his mother tongue, albeit during his years in exile in London.

Other texts we read included items well known to the American students but new to most of the Germans: *Shiloh* by Shelby Foote, *The Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane, and chapters from *Gone with the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell, as well as a report by Ulysses S. Grant and speeches by William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass. Examples in German consisted mainly of songs and letters by German-American soldiers. One text of particular interest was the adventure story *Bill Hammer* by Otto Ruppius, published in serial form in the German magazine *Die Gartenlaube* in 1862. I was introduced to the story by Kevin Kurdylo, the ever-helpful librarian of the Max Kade Institute, who pointed out to me that Cora Lee Kluge had written about it in one of the previous *MKI Friends Newsletters* (Vol. 18, No. 4, Winter 2009). There were several reasons students struggled with this story. First, they found the nineteenth-century font challenging to read. Second, they did not understand why a German magazine published in Leipzig (Saxony) would print such an American tale. The impact of German-American mass migration on Germany, illustrated by the distribution of this text in one of the most popular print media of the time, was for them a new and fascinating topic. Finally, students were both fascinated and somewhat appalled by the propagandistic nature of the story and its strong overtones of patriotism and heroism. My students—and in fact many Germans—are ambivalent about patriotism of any kind, mainly because of its massive abuse in Germany during the first half of the 20th century. But they also could not easily relate to the notion that a German readership would identify with the son of a German immigrant who attempts a death-defying task to save approaching Union troops and his village from the Confederacy: a German-American hero in an American setting during an American conflict. Students had a much better understanding once they saw the connection between the 1848 Revolution in the German states, transatlantic migration, and the principles that were defended during the Civil War.

Discussion between student and reenactor about music in the Civil War.

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An *Other* American Dialect: Pennsylvania German in the American Midwest

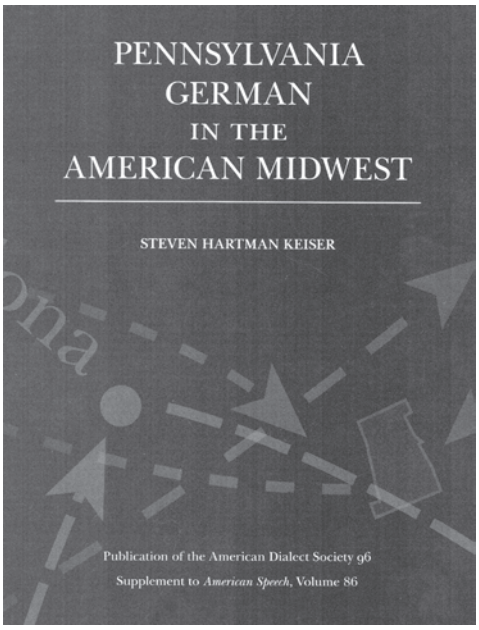
Joel Stark

Pennsylvania German in the American Midwest. By Steven Hartman Keiser. Supplement to *American Speech,* vol. 86. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011.

Both the unique position of Pennsylvania German in the family of Germanic languages and its rich history on American soil make the language an interesting topic for scholars and members of the general public alike. Spoken today primarily—but by no means exclusively—by members of Old Order Amish and Old Order Mennonite communities, Pennsylvania German can be heard on family farms across the American Midwest. As Steven Hartman Keiser puts it in his new book, *Pennsylvania German in the American Midwest*, the language has "outgrown its name." Its geographic center is no longer in the fertile valleys of southeastern Pennsylvania as it was in colonial times. With nearly a quarter-million total speakers, the majority reside to the west of Pennsylvania in Ohio, Iowa, Indiana, Wisconsin, and several other states.

At its core Keiser's book is a study of the divergence of Pennsylvania German into two main branches: Midwest Pennsylvania German (MPG) and Pennsylvania Pennsylvania German (PPG). On the one hand, the differences between the two dialects are minor enough that speakers enjoy complete mutual intelligibility, analogous to that between regional varieties of American English. On the other hand, the variation is significant enough to draw overt comments from native speakers and can serve as an indicator of a person's origin. For example, what MPG speakers call an *Eemer* is known in PPG as a *Kiwwel.* These two variants for the word 'bucket' illustrate the minor lexical disparity that is no more inhibitive to mutual intelligibility than the American English regional variants *pop* vs. *soda*.

Keiser's thread of emphasis is that the sociolinguistic variation in Pennsylvania German runs parallel to patterns found in American English, making Pennsylvania German a "truly American" language. One of these similarities is illustrated with the following example: just as speakers of American English have diagnostic phrases to identify pronunciation traits, such as *Park your car in Harvard Yard*, Pennsylvania German speakers have their own stock phrases to differentiate between speakers of MPG and PPG. For instance, a speaker from Pennsylvania is likely to produce a diphthong similar to the English 'eye' in the phrase *drei veisi Weibsleit* ('three white women'), whereas a Midwesterner will pronounce the words with a monophthong much like the vowel in 'bad.' Two other salient phonemes that separate MPG from PPG include variations in the pronunciation of /r/ and /l/. Keiser documents this variation with empirical quantitative data collected in Kalona, Iowa; Holmes County, Ohio; and Grant County,



Wisconsin. These data are then compared to data from two regions in the traditional PPG homeland of Lancaster, Montgomery, and Berks Counties, conclusively illustrating the subtle—but noticeable—variation in the language.

Now in its third century since first moving to Ohio, Pennsylvania German is spoken alongside English in hundreds of speech communities dotting the map from Maine to Washington. It is in a state of "stable bilingualism," which means speakers are acquiring and maintaining both English and Pennsylvania German without showing preference for one over the other. As members of both a religious community and the greater non-sectarian society as a whole, the Old Order Amish and Old Order Mennonites look to continue main-

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In Memoriam: Fritz Albert (1922—2012)

Professor Fritz A. Albert, longtime colleague, supporter, and Friend of the Max Kade Institute, died in Madison on September 16, 2012, at the age of 90. He was a member of the Department of Agricultural Journalism (now Life Sciences Communication) at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, an internationally acclaimed and award-winning photographer and filmmaker, and a respected teacher and mentor of his many students.

Born in Mylau (Saxony), Germany, in 1922, he studied photography in Munich after finishing high school and served in the Luftwaffe as a reconnaissance photographer during World War II. After the war he became a photographer for a German agricultural development agency, where he met members of the University of Wisconsin's Department of Agricultural Journalism who helped him attend a short course on the UW campus in 1950. He and his wife Ingeborg chose Madison to be the family's home, and in 1954 they came to stay.

Fritz Albert's influence went far beyond his department and beyond the state of Wisconsin. He was involved in founding the Land Tenure Center (now part of the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies); he brought the work of the UW to people throughout the state, exemplifying the meaning of the Wisconsin Idea; and his films on agrarian structures in Latin America were used in teaching institutions both in this country and abroad. He served on the Governor's Blue Ribbon Task Force on Cable Communications and the Wisconsin Educational Communications Board, as well as UW committees for the West European Area Studies Program and the International Studies Program. In 1984 he was awarded the Cross of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany for his work in promoting understanding between Germany and the United States. And—last but not least—he was a member of the MKI's Executive Committee from 1984 to 1989, during the Institute's important early years.

Fritz Albert maintained his interest in our activities and his membership in the Friends. Likewise, the MKI was influenced and inspired by his perspective, which brought into focus the relationship between an area's land and climate, on the one hand, and its settlers and their agricultural traditions, on the other. Thus in no small measure, his legacy can be seen in our work, such as in the project that led to our publication entitled *Wisconsin German Land and Life* (2006). We have appreciated Fritz Albert's encouragement and his leadership. And we will miss him.

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These are, of course, only a few examples of the texts we read in class, but I strongly believe that accounts such as *Bill Hammer* invite students to see the American Civil War in a more nuanced way than they could through mere historical facts or the statement that citizens of the German states overwhelmingly supported the Northern cause.

The highlight of the course was a visit to a Civil War reenactment event here in Germany. We were given an introduction to the reenactment phenomenon by Claire Scott, an exchange student who herself had participated in Civil War reenactments as a member of *Living History* in Quiet Valley, Pennsylvania. Then a dozen of the students and I went to Walldürn, a little town in Baden-Württemberg, where we marveled at and mingled with Germans who were reenacting the Battle of South Mills that took place on April 19, 1862, in Camden Town, North Carolina.

Reenactments are popular today in Germany. Most focus on medieval scenarios and local events, but there is a small but dedicated community that organizes reenactments of modern foreign battles. These groups maintain a low profile and communicate via blogs and mailing lists, occasionally sending invitations to interested outsiders to attend their events and learn about a particular time period through participation. The students were fascinated by the show and wanted to know what brought participants to the camp in Walldürn. Answers seemed ambiguous, and the students concluded that most people had discovered reenactments as an enjoyable hobby. Our close encounter with the sounds, smells, and tastes of the Civil War, however, left a lasting impression on us and may best be summed up in the words of one student: "Whatever one might have thought beforehand, it was nothing compared to what we finally witnessed!"

What students took home from that trip in particular and the class in general was the knowledge that there are many stories to be told about the Civil War, including about the experiences of Germans, and that military history and political documents are not the only useful sources for understanding this complex story.

We continue to discover new materials from that period and thus continue to spin the tale. My students are now writing term papers about topics such as the role of military music in the Civil War, the ethnic faces of heroism, and how fiction may influence what we know as facts. They have just begun to dig for answers, and I wonder what they will still unearth.

A student report with additional photos of the visit to the American Civil War reenactment at Walldürn, Germany, may be viewed here: http://www.uni-bamberg.de/amerikanistik/exkursionen/a-field-trip-back-in-time-american-civil-war-reenactment-in-wallduern-germany/

Nicole K. Konopka is a lecturer in American Studies at Bamberg University in Bavaria, Germany. She harbors a serious fascination/fondness for oddities, especially if they relate to German-Americana.

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considered at the time to be the three major German religions, whose legend reads "One God, one Brotherhood."

For those willing to take time to look for adventure, the Midwest offers many examples of impressive religious, folk, and outsider art. At the major grotto sites, guides conduct organized tours during the summer months, and booklets explain the history of the grottos, written by the people who built them. For those interested in additional information, two scholarly works do an excellent job of describing these unusual structures: *Sacred Places and Other Spaces: A Guide to Grottos and Sculptural Environments in the Upper Midwest*, by Lisa Stone, a folklorist and curator, and Jim Zanzi, an Art Institute of Chicago professor; and *Dickeyville Grotto: The Vision of Father Mathias Wernerus*, by Susan Niles, a professor of anthropology and folklorist at Lafayette College.

This article is adapted from an earlier version published on the Center for the Study of Upper Midwestern Cultures Web site: http://csumc.wisc.edu/?q=node/204

Peyton Smith is a former Vice Chancellor at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. He has had a lifelong interest in grottos and other artistic environments made of concrete.

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taining the Pennsylvania German language in the American Midwest well into the foreseeable future.

Joel R. Stark received his M.A. in German Linguistics at the University of Wisconsin–Madison in Spring 2012. His current studies focus on the sociolinguistics of Pennsylvania German and other German-language islands in North America.

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

Kevin Kurdylo
Friends of the Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies
901 University Bay Drive, Madison, WI 53705
Phone: (608) 262-7546
Fax: (608) 265-4640
kkurdylo@wisc.edu

mki.wisc.edu
maxkade.blogspot.com

Friends of the Max Kade Institute
for German-American Studies
University of Wisconsin
901 University Bay Drive
Madison, WI 53705

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