



MAX KADE INSTITUTE

FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

Volume 22 No 3 • Fall 2013

The Milwaukee German Theater: Once the Pride of the City

Cora Lee Kluge



Image from Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries. Used with permission.

The Schlitz Park Theater, where famous German Theater manager Leon Wachsner began his Milwaukee career

INSIDE

- Support the MKI Library
- New Publication:
Wisconsin Talk
- Book Review:
Rocking the Wall
- Emigration from Tiefenort,
Thuringia
- New MKI Twentieth-Century
Oral History Project
- Chicago's Green White Soccer
Club
- Upcoming Events

For many years, the Milwaukee German Theater (MGT) enjoyed widespread recognition, not only as an excellent German-American cultural institution and one of the primary reasons for Milwaukee's reputation as the "German Athens," but also as one of the most extraordinary theaters anywhere in the world and performing in any language. Surprisingly—in view of its former excellence and significance—not many today are aware that there once was such an establishment in Milwaukee at all, and the theater's history has essentially not been writ-

ten. There are only a handful of older articles, theses, and dissertations; a number of newspaper and journal articles that must still be located and collected; and incomplete assortments of other materials, including occasional theater programs and advertisements. However, interest was recently reawakened when a searchable, digital index of the approximately 3,000 items included in the Milwaukee Public Library's unique Albert O. Trostel Collection of German Theater Scripts was prepared

Continued on page 4

Greetings, Friends and Readers!

Greetings from the Keystone House! We are pleased to report that the long-anticipated renovation of the fourth floor of the University Club is now underway. If all goes as planned, we will be in our new location by the end of the spring semester. Look for updates in future issues of our Newsletter.

Our new home in the heart of campus will enable us to do our work better and make it more convenient for patrons to access our resources, including our library and archival holdings. We are especially excited to know that it will be more convenient for students to drop by and work. In recent years, we have strengthened our ties to the UW's undergraduate and graduate students, in part by regularly offering German-American-themed courses through the Department of German. Every semester, two or more such courses are now offered. This spring, for example, students will be able to choose among Cora Lee's "German Immigration Experience" (now in its ninth year!), Mark's "German Language in America," and a new course, "Language and Immigration in Wisconsin," taught by Joe Salmons. No other university in the country has the breadth of German-American offerings that the UW-Madison has, which gives us the opportunity to bring the unique resources of our Institute into the classroom.

When we have moved to the University Club, we will also be able to involve more students in our three

current major research and outreach projects: the Milwaukee German Theater Project, the Pennsylvania Dutch Documentation Project, and the German Immigrant Oral History Project. We plan to showcase some of the results of these projects at next year's annual symposium of the Society for German-American Studies, which will, conveniently, take place in Milwaukee, April 10–13, 2014.

Over the summer and fall, outreach presentations have taken us across Wisconsin and to other states. Here are just a few examples: Cora Lee gave a lecture on "The Historical

Background of German and American Oktoberfests" in Waunakee, Wisconsin; "The Milwaukee German Theater" at the German Studies Association conference in Denver, Colorado; and "German POWs and the Mississippi Basin Model" in Davenport, Iowa. Mark introduced the "Pennsylvania Dutch Documentation Project" at an Amish Studies conference at Elizabethtown College, Pennsylvania, and made presentations on the Amish and the Mennonites at the Midvale Community Lutheran Church in Madison; and Antje spoke

Continued on page 11



Cora Lee Kluge with Matthew S. Zager, President of the Quad Cities Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers. Cora Lee was invited to speak about German POWs and the Mississippi River Basin Model at the German-American Heritage Center in Davenport, Iowa.

Photograph by Jerry Lowe. Used with permission.

Help Us Preserve and Enhance our Knowledge of German-Speaking Immigrants to North America!

Donate to the MKI Librarian Support Fund!

The Max Kade Institute is dedicated to collecting, preserving, researching, and sharing information about German-speaking immigrants and their descendants in America. These are our families' stories; these are America's stories.

In the last few years, we have undertaken a capital campaign to renovate new quarters for the MKI. Thanks to the tremendous generosity of our Friends, the Institute will soon move to the University Club on the University of Wisconsin–Madison central campus. German-American materials from families and communities—including books, letters, diaries, photos, audio recordings, and community records you have donated—will be kept there in an expanded library and archive.

We are now in the second stage of our Library Project Campaign, whose goal is to build an endowment for our librarian and archivist position. A library without a librarian/archivist is an empty shell. Highly specialized collections such as the MKI's, in particular, cannot serve their purpose without the knowledge, expertise, and commitment of a special librarian. This librarian must not only organize and maintain the collection and read documents in German Fraktur print and Old German scripts, he or she must also interpret materials and bridge the language barrier between MKI

resources and the library's patrons. In short, this person is the critical link between the Institute's resources and its outreach activities. As many of you know from personal experience, we are lucky to have such an experienced and dedicated individual in the person of Kevin Kurdylo.

As the Institute's collection will grow in the new facility, and as ever more visitors will seek archival assistance, the need to make the librarian/archivist position financially secure on a permanent basis has become paramount.

Therefore, the Institute is establishing an endowment fund to support the position of MKI librarian/archivist. We are delighted that the MKI has been awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Challenge Grant, which will be the cornerstone of this endeavor. But we need more help to ensure that the work of the MKI and particularly access to its unique resources and collections

will continue. Please support our efforts by contributing to the **MKI Librarian Support Fund**. Your donation will count toward the match required by the NEH Challenge Grant.

Gifts can be made by check, *made out to the UW Foundation*, with **Max Kade Institute Librarian Support Fund** in the *memo line*, and mailed to: Max Kade Institute, 901 University Bay Dr., Madison, WI 53705

or

online through the UW Foundation at <http://mki.wisc.edu> where you can click on "MKI Library Campaign" in the center on the page. A link on the campaign page takes you to an online donation form designated for the **MKI Librarian Support Fund**.

Thank you for your support!

Board of Directors, Friends of the Max Kade Institute

Hans Bernet Monroe
 Karen Fowdy Monroe
 Steven Geiger Wausau
 Gary Gisselman Wausau
 Elizabeth Greene Treasurer, Madison
 James Kleinschmidt President, Fitchburg
 Cora Lee Kluge ex officio, Madison
 Edward Langer Vice President, Greenfield
 Mark Loudon, ex officio, Sun Prairie
 Antje Petty ex officio, Fitchburg
 John Pustejovsky Secretary, Whitefish Bay
 Johannes Strohschänk Eau Claire
 Luanne von Schneidmesser Madison
 Pamela Tesch Oconomowoc

Continued from page 1

by Kevin Kurdylo, Adam Woodis, and Cora Lee Kluge of the MKI.¹ Presentations about the MGT have been given at conferences, and this fall a course is being offered in the UW Department of German entitled “The German-Language Theater in America.” Working with this topic involves exciting, original research; and now, nearly 80 years after the official dissolution of the Milwaukee German Theater Stock company, we are eager to pursue investigations in this area.

In its early years German-language theater performances in Milwaukee were productions by amateurs; the first was put on in February of 1850 by printers and typesetters of the newspaper *Banner und Volksfreund*. The stages were makeshift, and the audiences often interrupted the performances with high-spirited remarks. In 1868—under the leadership of actor and manager Henry Kurz, a native of Austria who had come to Milwaukee at the age of 20 or 21—the 900-seat Stadt Theater was built. This was the first building in the Midwest that was constructed specifically for German drama; and that year is often cited as the real beginning of Milwaukee’s German-language theater.

The most illustrious era of the MGT dates from 1884, when a triumvirate of Julius Richard (1848–1891), Ferdinand Welb (1852–1910), and Leon Wachsner (1851–1909) were engaged to serve as the theater’s new managers. All three were German-born—Richard in Hannover, Welb in Frankfurt am Main, and Wachsner in Stettin—and they were young and

energetic professionals with connections to well-known theaters. Richard left a position at the Hoftheater in Weimar to come to America, where his first engagement, in 1881, was with the Chicago German theater. Welb emigrated to Milwaukee in 1881, where he worked as an actor, artistic manager, and director until he accepted a similar position with the St. Louis German theater in 1900. Wachsner came to the United States in 1868 intending to become a merchant, and was appearing in amateur theater productions in the New York area when Adolf Neuendorff of New York’s Germania Theater offered him a position. In 1880 he moved west to become a member of Milwaukee’s Schlitz Park Theater, which was managed by the German immigrant Otto Osthoff (1849–1917).

The backgrounds of Richard, Welb, and Wachsner put them in a position to move the MGT away from what it had been—a provincial immigrant theater—by establishing contacts with people and institutions abroad, as well as with the broader entertainment industry of Milwaukee. Indicative of this was particularly Wachsner’s connection with the Schlitz Park Theater, where in the early 1880s comic operas such as those written by Gilbert and Sullivan were attracting large crowds of Milwaukeeans of diverse—not only German—ethnic heritage. The MGT was now working toward financial security for the theater by involving the city’s business leaders, especially the beer magnates who, in order to make their names known (and to sell their products), had established amusement parks such as the Schlitz Park, the Blatz Park, the Pabst Park,



Julius Richard

and Pabst’s Whitefish Bay Resort, essentially beer gardens offering theater, music, and dancing. The most important new contact for the MGT was Frederick Pabst, who in 1890 purchased Nunnemacher’s Grand Opera House, thereafter known as the Neues Deutsches Stadt Theater, to be the theater’s new home. He also financed its renovation—twice—after fires in 1893 and 1895, the second of which virtually destroyed it.² The Pabst Theater of 1895 could accommodate 1820 spectators and boasted of newfangled features, including all-electric lighting, one of the country’s first fire curtains, an early air conditioning system, a 3000-pipe electric organ, new heating and ventilation systems, and lavish interior ornamentation. Convinced that electricity was far safer than gas to illuminate his theater, Pabst also built an electric power plant next door, a building now used by the Milwaukee Repertory Theater, one of whose stages is called the Powerhouse Theater.

In addition, it is believed that the Pabst was the first theater to employ a counterweight system for hoisting scenery, though not until after World War I. Recognition of the historical importance of the Pabst Theater came in 1991, when it was designated a National Historic Landmark.³

Under the management of Richard, Welb, and Wachsner, the MGT played a role in bridging the chasm between Milwaukee's English-speaking and German-speaking communities. Announcements and reviews of the theater's performances appeared in English-language as well as German-language local newspapers—without reference to the fact that the language used on stage was German. And far beyond Milwaukee, the world was taking notice. Reports of Wachsner's annual trips to Europe to hire new members of the stock company, beginning at least as early as 1889, as well as notices about the activities of the MGT, appeared in numerous publications, including the *New York Times*, the *New York Dramatic Mirror*, the *New York Clip-*

per, Cincinnati's *Billboard*, London's *Green Book Magazine*, and the Berlin publications *Neuer Theater-Almanach*, *Bühne und Welt*, and *Deutsches Bühnenjahrbuch*.

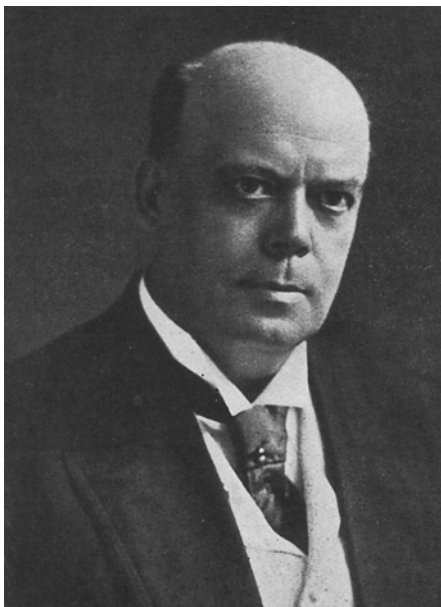
Richard, Welb, and Wachsner—and then the latter two alone, after Richard's death in 1891—and then Wachsner alone, when Welb departed for St. Louis in 1900—established the reputation of the company, engaging new actors and securing guest performances from some of the biggest European stars, including Adolf von Sonnenthal and Josef Kainz. A number of the actors who came from German theaters to Milwaukee remained in the United States. Others returned to Europe and to successful careers there: Otto Kienschner, whom Wachsner lured away from his position at the Stadt Theater in Leipzig in 1898, and who had returned to Germany by 1905 to become a director at the *Großherzogliches Hoftheater* in Karlsruhe, where he remained until his retirement in 1932; and Paula Menari, who was in Milwaukee from 1911 to 1913 and returned thereafter to Munich, where she was a successful soprano at the Theater am Gärtnerplatz until 1926. Some made the transition from work with the MGT to the film industry—including Gustel Hansen, who came to Milwaukee from Vienna in 1912 and later returned to Europe as a movie star; and Ludwig Kreiss, beloved actor and later manager of the Pabst Theater, who played the part of Baron von Stalberg in William Gillette's lost 1916 silent film entitled "Sherlock Holmes." Helmar Lerski (1871–1956) was in Milwaukee from 1898 until 1914, first as an actor with the MGT, and then as a photographer. Encour-



Leon Wachsner

aged by the Hamburg portrait photographer Rudolph Dührkoop, Lerski eventually moved to Berlin and was hired by the UFA film studios, where he worked on major films such as Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*.

The program of the MGT was also innovative: in 1889 Henrik Ibsen's *The Pillars of Society* was produced, and thereafter Ibsen's works remained a regular part of the program. In 1894, when Ibsen's *Ghosts* was found by New York audiences to be both scandalous and disgusting, it had been part of the repertoire in Milwaukee for three years; and dramas by George Bernard Shaw, Oscar Wilde, and August Strindberg had become familiar in Milwaukee—in German translation—when New Yorkers still considered them to be exotic fare.⁴ By the end of the 1890s, an average of some 70 to 80 plays written by some 35 to 45 different authors were being produced



Ferdinand Welb

Continued on page 12

New Publication: *Wisconsin Talk: Linguistic Diversity in the Badger State*



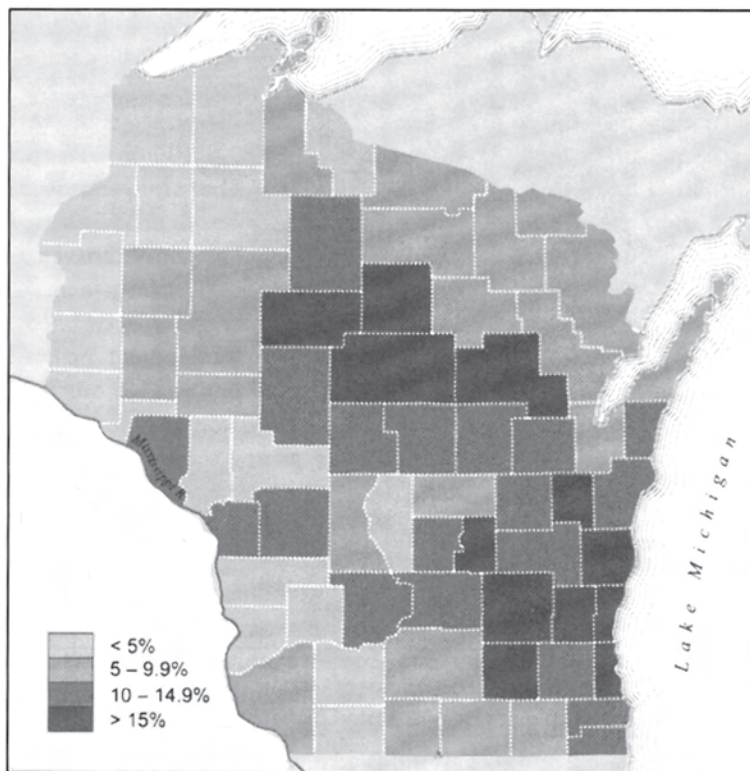
Wisconsin Talk: Linguistic Diversity of the Badger State has been published! This book grew out of MKI's "Language Matters for Wisconsin" project and connects the state's rich cultural heritage with the languages spoken here. It is edited by University of Wisconsin–Madison professors Thomas Purnell, Eric Raimy, and Joseph Salmons, and published by the UW–Press.

Wisconsin is one of the most linguistically rich places in North America. It has the greatest diversity of American Indian languages east of the Mississippi; French place names dot the state's map; German, Norwegian, and Polish—the languages of immigrants in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—are still spoken by tens of thousands of peo-

ple; and the influx of new immigrants speaking Spanish, Hmong, and Somali continues to enrich the state's cultural landscape. These languages and others (Walloon, Cornish, Finnish, Czech, and more) have shaped the kinds of English spoken within the state's borders, where three different major dialects of American English have been identified.

Wisconsin Talk brings together perspectives from linguistics, history, cultural studies, and geography to illuminate why language matters in our everyday lives. Individual chapters cover the following topics:

- The Native Languages of Wisconsin;
- Older Immigrant Languages;
- Immigrant Languages in Education: Wisconsin's German Schools;
- The Non-Wisconsin Sound of Southwest Wisconsin;
- Words used in Wisconsin;
- Standard English;
- Ethnicity and Language;
- Hmong in Wisconsin;
- Spanish in Wisconsin;
- Mapping Wisconsin's Linguistic Landscapes.



Percentage of Wisconsin residents born in Germany in 1900. Map by Mark Livengood; data from the 1900 U.S. census. (*Wisconsin Talk*, p. 44)

Striking a Chord for Freedom: Bruce Springsteen's 1988 Berlin Concert

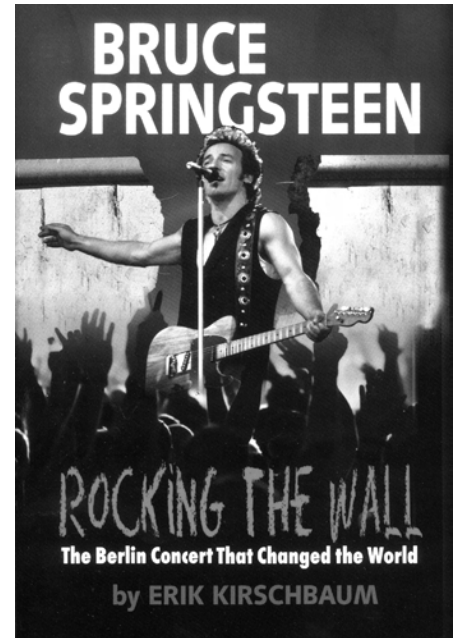
Rudy Koshar

Rocking the Wall. Bruce Springsteen: The Berlin Concert that Changed the World. By Erik Kirschbaum. New York: Berlinica Publishing, 2013.

In *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic* (Oxford University Press, 2010), historian Paul Betts shows that the private sphere assumed far more political importance in East Germany than scholars have thought. No one can deny the Communist regime's "will to total power" or its ability to repress and infiltrate civil society. Yet throughout the state's history, individuals dug in their gardens, socialized with friends, and listened to Western rock music. Beyond their personal meaning, argues Betts, these practices gained significance as political capital, especially in the 1980s.

Betts and others have started a scholarly fire that promises to con-

sume much of post-Wall historiography's emphasis on GDR "totalitarianism." Although Erik Kirschbaum's study is not an academic monograph, his book adds fuel to the blaze. In ten engagingly written chapters, Kirschbaum, an American journalist based in Germany for the past quarter century (and a UW-Madison graduate in history and German), takes the reader through the dramatic events that brought American rock icon Bruce Springsteen to East Berlin on July 19, 1988. The concert drew more than 300,000 fans (some say 500,000) and was the largest gathering in the Republic's history. Kirschbaum conducted interviews with Springsteen's longtime manager Jon Landau as well as with Free German Youth (FDJ) leaders who got state approval for the concert. In addition, he did interviews with many East Germans who



attended the concert and still have powerful memories of the event.

Kirschbaum often refers to the regime as "totalitarian," but so much of his evidence argues against that concept. He shows that East German authorities felt increasingly pressured during the 1980s to address restive youth's thirst for rock music from the West. The crowds streaming into East Berlin to see Springsteen's performance made that thirst manifest. But the evidence becomes even more convincing when we learn that many concertgoers—to Springsteen's amazement and delight—sang along to tunes like *Badlands*, *Chimes of Freedom* (a Dylan classic), and *Dancing in the Dark* during the four-hour event. East German fans knew their rock lyrics far better than they knew their *Das Kapital*.

Kirschbaum recounts how both Landau and Springsteen sensed that the seemingly granite-hard foundation of East German authoritarian-



A homemade U.S. flag banner welcoming Springsteen to Berlin

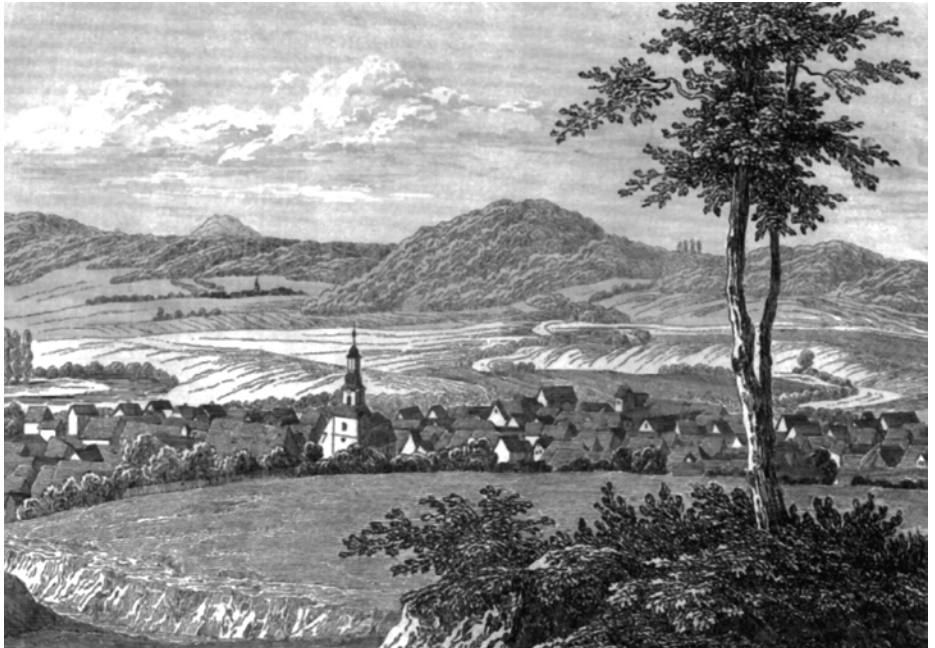
Continued on page 11

Forgotten People: A German Town Finds Its Nineteenth-Century Emigrants

Astrid Adler

Tiefenort is a small town on the river Werra in the German state of Thuringia. In the nineteenth century, when Tiefenort was part of the Grand Duchy of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, over 400 of its residents, about twenty percent of the population, left for places like Wisconsin and Pennsylvania, never to return. As time passed, the people at home ceased to talk about them. Tiefenort had forgotten its emigrants—until 2012.

It all began in the 1980s. Edwin Messing, living in New York, was researching his family history when he found clues in old letters that his ancestor Andreas Messing had emigrated in 1855 with his wife and children from Tiefenort. He contacted Tiefenort's Pastor Sobko, who put him in touch with Messing families still living in the local area, including my relatives Richard and Elisabeth



An image of Tiefenort from around 1850

Messing. A lively correspondence between Edwin in New York and Richard and Elisabeth in Germany ensued.

In March 1989, Scott Messing was

the first American Messing to visit the hometown of his ancestors. At that time, Tiefenort was still behind the Iron Curtain. Hosting a visitor from America was highly unusual and required clearing a multitude of bureaucratic hurdles. Everybody was excited to meet Scott as he was introduced to distant relatives in Tiefenort and neighboring communities. In the 1990s, after the reunification of Germany, more American family members visited Tiefenort, and in 2007 Messings from both continents held a reunion at nearby Krayenburg Castle.

The Americans' interest in their family history had piqued an interest among members of their German relatives, including me. I wondered: if we did not know about emigrants



Old buildings in Tiefenort around 1909

in our family, how many others in Tiefenort were unaware of emigrants in their family trees? Thus began my search for the forgotten people of Tiefenort.

Initially focusing on the Messing family, I was surprised how little information could be found in Tiefenort itself. Research in the Lutheran Church's state archives in Eisenach proved to be more fruitful. First, however, I had to familiarize

myself with old church books and learn to read the Old German script. By combining this archival information with the research that Scott had done, we were able to create the first family tree of the Messing family that included both the American and the German branches.

My research continued. I discovered connections between the Messings and other local families, and soon realized that Andreas Messing

was only one among a great number of emigrants. Over the next four years, I found more than 400 individuals from 94 different Tiefenort families who went to the United States, Canada, or Australia between 1846 and 1898. Many were related to each other and traveled on the same ship. Some individuals or small groups emigrated separately, and then reconnected with their families on another continent years after the first members had left.

With the help of the Internet, I was able to trace and contact descendants of many Tiefenort emigrants in America. Some were already working on their genealogy, but did not know that their ancestors had emigrated together with siblings or cousins. Now through my new connections I received more valuable information, documents, and pictures. In return I could supplement their efforts with the information that I had found in Germany.

In 2012, a group of us in Tiefenort created an exhibit called "Vergessene Menschen – Auswanderung im 19. Jahrhundert," (Forgotten People—Emigration in the Nineteenth Century). It coincided with the 875th anniversary of Tiefenort's founding and told the stories of twelve extended families complete with photos, illustrations, and background information. In just one week, it drew 1,200 visitors, including 31 from the United States and Canada. Many visitors knew or were related to the families depicted. Others came from neighboring towns and were inspired to research the emigration history of their own families and communities.

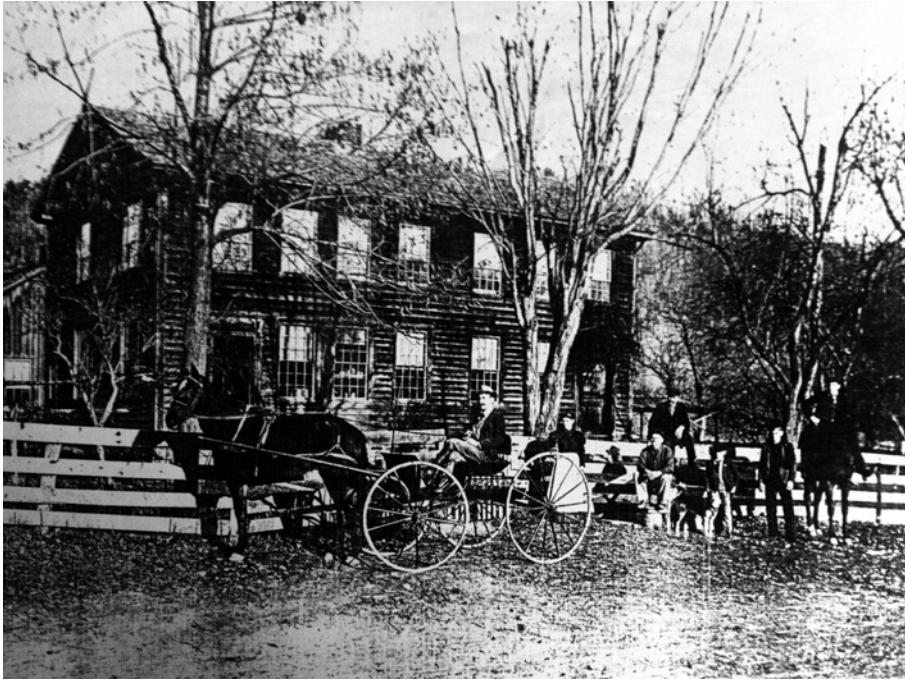
As a result, I am broadening the project to include other communities

(Zweiter Abdruck.)

Nach Amerika beabsichtigen auszuwandern:
Christoph Schäfer aus Tiefenort
 mit seiner Ehefrau Katharine Margarethe geb. Teubel
 und seinem Sohne,
Andreas Messing II., ebendaber,
 mit seiner Ehefrau Elisabeth geb. Walpert und 4 Kindern,
der Schmiedemeister Georg Thiel daher,
 mit seiner Ehefrau Anna Margarethe geb. Burkhart
 und 2 Kindern,
Wilhelm Walch, daher,
Justin Walch, daher,
Johannes Schmalz II., aus Dönges,
 letzterer mit seinem Vater Johannes Schmalz I., seiner
 Ehefrau Elisabeth geb. Trostmann und seiner Schwester
 Elisabeth Schmalz daher,
 der Landwirth Elias Burkhart, aus Kieselbach,
 mit seinen sechs Kindern und mit seiner Verlobten Chri-
 stiane Burkhart daher, sowie
 Georg Heinrich Nordmann aus Kreuzburg,
 mit seiner Ehefrau Magdalene geb. Luchscheerer und
 seinen beiden Kindern.

Dieselben werden die hierzu erforderlichen Reiselegi-
 mationen angehängt erhalten, Falls nicht binnen 4
 Wochen vom zweiten Erscheinen dieser Bekanntmachung
 an Seitens einer Justizbehörde Einspruch dagegen erfolgt.
 Eisenach, am 22. December 1854.
 Der Großh. S. Direktor des III. Verwaltungsbezirks.
 v. Schwenkler.

An 1854 list of people intending to emigrate, showing the names Schäfer, Messing, Walpert, Thiel, Walch, Schmalz, Burkhart, and Nordmann.



Homestead of Walter E. Messing in Tioga County, Pennsylvania. Undated.

in the former Grand Duchy of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach and the neighboring Duchy of Saxe-Meiningen. If you have information on emigrants from these regions, please contact me. More information, including contact information, can be found at <www.tiefenort-emigrants.de>.

A book with the same title as the exhibit, but greatly expanded in content, was published (in German) in June 2013. 🐾

Astrid Adler lives in Tiefenort, Germany, where she owns a business consulting firm. For her efforts in researching the history of emigrants from Tiefenort, she received the Citizen of the Month award from the State of Thuringia in September 2012, and took second place for the State Citizen award for 2012. She is currently working on an English translation of her book Vergessene Menschen.

All images in this article courtesy of Astrid Adler.



Charles E. Messing's meat market in New York. Undated.


Continued from page 7



The iconic border crossing sign at Checkpoint Charlie, now a symbol of the Cold War

ism was crumbling in July 1988. Most of the fans interviewed by the author recall feeling that too. They responded gleefully when Springsteen interrupted his marathon performance to give a short speech *auf Deutsch*. Springsteen expressed hope that all “barriers” would be torn down in the future. (A mini-drama preceded the speech: FDJ authorities feared that using the word “walls,” as the original text read, would cause trouble with political authorities, so Landau replaced it with “barriers” just minutes before Springsteen was to read his statement.) Sixteen months later, the Wall came down and the process of reunification began. Kirschbaum is careful not to assign Springsteen’s memorable concert too much weight in the downfall of the regime. But he also writes, “the roots of the East German revolution can clearly be traced to extraordinary moments like Springsteen’s rock concert” (136). His evidence puts him on safe ground to

make that argument.

General readers, rock music fans, historians and the history-minded will find something of value in this crisply written and entertaining study that reminds us once again how powerful cultural expression can be, especially in dictatorial regimes whose goal is to control the most intimate spaces of people’s lives. The East German regime fell well short of its authoritarian goal, and Springsteen and his E-Street Band can rightly claim to have made the failure more obvious to hundreds of thousands of young people who rocked the night of July 19, 1988 away. 

Rudy Koshar is the George L. Mosse/Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation Professor of History, German, and Religious Studies at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

Continued from page 2

about “German Immigration to Wisconsin” to a visiting delegation from Hesse, Germany.

In addition to our research and public outreach, we are also working to ensure the future of MKI by securing permanent funding for our two key staff positions, the Librarian/Archivist and the Assistant Director. We are deeply grateful to you, our Friends, for your support that has helped bring us so far over the past thirty years. We hope you will continue to work with us as we build endowments for both positions, which are so essential to our mission.

With warmest regards from the Keystone House!

—Mark and Cora Lee

Continued from page 5

annually, and the number of modern pieces was increasing. Guest performances enhanced the offerings, such as a presentation of Richard Wagner's *Siegfried* on 20 March 1898 by the Damrosch Opera Company of New York, which was followed by four dramas (Ibsen's *Nora*, Hauptmann's *Die versunkene Glocke*, Roberto Bracco's *Untreue*, and Victorien Sardou's *Cyprienne*) presented by Heinrich Conried's New York Ensemble with guest actress Agnes Sorma from the Deutsches Theater in Berlin between the 10th and the 14th of April of the same year. The next spring brought the Irving Place Theatergesellschaft of New York with Adolf von Sonnenthal for a performance of Lessing's *Nathan der Weise*.⁵ The wealth of material performed or considered by the MGT can best be seen in the 179 archive boxes of the Trostel Collection of German Theater Scripts.

To be sure, things were changing. At the end of the year 1904, the *New York Dramatic Mirror* published the following statement:

The announcement that the abandonment of the German Stock company at the Pabst Theatre, Milwaukee, is impending, owing to the fact that in the process of assimilation that is always going on even in the Western cities characterized by large populations that speak German and other foreign languages English speech and its institutions are becoming dominant, is significant.


It is said that the most notable German organization in Milwaukee, whose motto has been

"For the maintenance of German thought, speech and custom," recently gave an entertainment in English to raise funds, and this [...] points to the decadence of the purely German spirit [...] in that city. It is no wonder, then, that Manager Wachsner contemplates giving up the German stock company that for years has produced in admirable form the better German plays.⁶

The struggle to survive was on. It did not help, of course, that the theater's chief benefactor Frederick Pabst had died on 1 January 1904; and yet Wachsner persevered until his own death—on a train—in February of 1909, while on his way to New York on business. Reports of the theater's deficits became routine, and the local newspapers regularly published statements such as the following: "The German theater will be continued next year in spite of the fact that last year it was run at a greater loss than in the previous year."⁷

An additional source of difficulty was the anti-German hysteria of the World War I era. In 1917, sensing the mood of the city, the theater's management decided to present no plays in German for the duration of the war. But even in 1919, when a special performance in German was scheduled to be given by the German actors for the benefit of the German actors, many of whom had been unemployed for nearly two years, public outrage in Milwaukee forced the event's cancellation.⁸ Gradually such feelings subsided, but the problems were not solved. In the 1930–1931 season, German-language performances were held only on Sundays,

and the last one took place in March of 1931. No one was surprised when Milwaukee's German Theater Stock company filed a legal notice of dissolution on 7 June 1935.

The Milwaukee German Theater, the most visible showcase of Milwaukee's robust and resilient German culture, had come to an end. There were a number of reasons for its demise, including the First World War and the Depression, but the most important reason of all was assimilation, the empty house—or, as one observer stated: "There is no longer an audience." A shift to English had taken place, even in the residential and business areas that had been most German, where now "it has ceased to be a rarity to hear English spoken."⁹ The MGT had become strong because of its connections and interactions with people and places in the wider world of theater and entertainment; but it was no longer viable because of changes at the local level, the disappearance in Milwaukee of its German-speaking base. 

NOTES

¹ Online through the Milwaukee Public Library's Web site: <www.mpl.org/>.

² After the theater was renovated in 1895—at the staggering cost of \$300,000—it was renamed the Pabst Theater.

³ See Jim Rankin, "The Pabst Theater: A Paragon of Playhouses," © Pabst Theater, 1990. Online at <www.astortheater.org/history9.html>, retrieved 8 September 2013. This historical document was submitted to the Secretary of the Interior to gain landmark status for the Pabst.

⁴ Workers of the Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration in the State of Wisconsin, *Wisconsin: A Guide to the Badger State* (New York: Hastings House, 1941, 1954) 169.

⁵ J. C. Andressohn, "Die literarische Geschichte des Milwaukeeer deutschen Bühnenwesens, 1850–1911," *German-American Annals* 10 (1912): 65–88 and 150–170.

Continued on page 15

New Max Kade Institute Twentieth-Century German Immigrant Oral History Project

We are excited to announce a new Max Kade Institute oral history project!

In the twentieth century, over two million German-speaking immigrants came to America. Nearly 600,000 arrived in the 1950s alone, making up 23 percent of all immigrants in that decade. For the most part, the stories of these immigrants have not been documented, and very little research has been done on their experiences and their impact on American society.


MKI is now reaching out to citizens across Wisconsin, the Midwest, and beyond. Our goal is to create a collection of nearly forgotten immigrant stories, which

will be preserved in the Institute's archives. They will be made available to scholars and for educational purposes, and will add to the narratives of American and global history.

We are interviewing and recording first-generation immigrants from German-speaking regions in Europe who now live in the United States. We include individuals who speak German or lived in a German-speaking community in Europe, people who migrated directly to the United States or via another country, and individuals who came as adults or as children. Initially our focus will be on people who arrived before 1970.

There are as many different experiences as there are people. The

German Immigrant Oral History Project is a growing repository of personal accounts of emigration and new settlement, journeys near and far, triumphs and losses, assimilation and acculturation, and traditions and customs kept in a new world.

If you are a first-generation German immigrant and would like to contribute your story to this project, please contact the Max Kade Institute. 



Jugendmannschaft Grün-Weiss 2. Platz 1958

SC Green White youth team in 1958. Image courtesy of Rick Kaempfer.
<http://scgreenwhitehistory.blogspot.com>

Chicago's Green White Soccer Club

Like most newcomers, immigrants from German-speaking Europe who came to the U.S. in the mid-twentieth century preferred to live with people from their home region. Together they founded clubs and societies that reflected their culture and traditions. One such club is the "Soccer Club Green White" in Chicago, founded in 1956 by a group of German-speaking "Donauschwaben" (Danube-Swabians). Expelled from their hometowns in the plains of the Danube River (Yugoslavia, Hungary, Romania) in the aftermath of World War II, they were part of

Continued on page 15

WORKSHOP

Reading Old German Script

**Saturday, November 9, 2013,
9 am - 2 pm. Memorial LIBRARY
(Madison), Room 231**

Instructor: Karyl Rommelfanger

Do you have correspondence from a German ancestor written in a script that you cannot read? Do you have trouble finding your ancestor's name in an official document, because you can't make out the letters? This workshop will acquaint participants with the basics of the Old German written alphabet so that they can transcribe words or texts into modern script. Bring your own documents! After providing a general introduction, the instructor will assist you with your specific questions.

Karyl Rommelfanger is a retired German teacher from the Manitowoc Public School System. She has transcribed and translated documents written in the Old German script for 25 years.

For more information, including registration details, see the MKI Web site.

Co-sponsored by the Wisconsin Historical Society and the Friends of the Max Kade Institute.

TWO LECTURES

by Dr. Andrea Mehrländer

Lecture I

The Metamorphosis of a Reunified Berlin: Public Commemorations of the 50th Anniversary of John F. Kennedy's Visit to Berlin and the 25th Anniversary of the Fall of the Wall

**Wednesday, November 20, 2013,
7 pm. University of Wisconsin-
Madison, Memorial Union (for
room, see TITU)**

This lecture, to be held two days before the 50th anniversary of the assassination of John F. Kennedy, will juxtapose public activities in Berlin to commemorate JFK's famous visit to that city in June 1963 with the upcoming celebration of the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, and will discuss larger issues of commemoration and celebration of events in Berlin's history.

Lecture II

The Forgotten Minority: Urban Germans of the Confederate States During the American Civil War

**Thursday, November 21, 2013,
7 pm. University of Wisconsin-
Madison, Memorial Union (for
room, see TITU)**

Most German immigrants settled in America's northern states, and most of the German Americans who took part in the American Civil War fought on the side of the Union. Focusing on three cities in the Confederacy—Richmond, Charleston, and New Orleans—this lecture examines the role of ethnic Germans in the nineteenth-century American South, particularly during the Civil War era.



Andrea Mehrländer is the Executive Director of the Check Point Charlie Foundation in Berlin, Germany.

Both lectures are free and open to the public, and are made possible through the generous support of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Lectures Committee with funds from the Anonymous Fund. They are co-sponsored by the Friends of the Max Kade Institute, the Department of German, and the Center for German and European Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Join the Friends of the Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____ Phone _____

☐ I am a new member ☐ I am a renewing member ☐ Check here to indicate address change☐ Student—\$15☐ Supporter—\$100☐ Individual—\$30☐ Patron—\$250☐ K-12 Educator—\$30☐ Lifetime, Individual—\$1,000☐ Family (one address)—\$50☐ Lifetime, Family—\$1,500Please make checks payable to the *Friends of the Max Kade Institute*, 901 University Bay Drive, Madison, WI 53705.

- *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.

*Continued from page 12*⁶ *New York Dramatic Mirror*, 12 November 1904.⁷ *The Milwaukee Journal*, 1 June 1911.⁸ See “Minutes of a Protest Meeting” held on 15 February 1919, P2007–23, Library of the Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies, Madison, Wisconsin. See also Cora Lee Kluge, “Outrage Over German-Language Plays Divides Citizens of Milwaukee in February, 1919,” Parts I and II, *Max Kade Institute Friends Newsletter*, Winter 2007 and Spring 2008.⁹ Both quotes are from an article entitled “Dead Is the German Theater, Once the Pride of Intellectual Milwaukee,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, 7 June 1935, written by AHP (= Alfred H. Pahlke).*Continued from page 13*

a multi-ethnic wave of immigrants: “displaced persons” who arrived in the U.S. after 1948. In 1957, SC Green White started playing as one of seven “German” teams in the National Soccer League’s Second Division.

The recent influx of European immigrants had brought many soccer enthusiasts and experienced players to the Chicago area, and numerous clubs formed along ethnic lines.

Indoor games were played at the Armory, where they were a big draw for Chicago’s expansive immigrant population. “There were something like 3000 fans every Sunday when we played,” remembers Klaus Kilian, a former player. “Every nationality had a section there. The sound/noise was deafening. It was so loud you couldn’t even hear the whistle sometimes. But it was exciting to play in front of such a big crowd.” [Quote from <http://scgreenwhitehistory.blogspot.com>]

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

Non-Profit Organization
US Postage
PAID
Madison, WI
Permit No. 658

