

Max Kade Institute Friends Newsletter

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German glass ornaments in America

By Robert Brenner

This is the time of year when Christmas trees all over America are decorated with fanciful ornaments. Many of these are re-creations from times past and show the influence of German traditions. Before World War II, Germany was America's principal supplier of thousands of glass, paper, cotton, wood, and metal ornaments. Of these, fanciful glass creations were the most popular as Americans rushed to stores in the weeks before Christmas to purchase horns, Santa Claus figures, pine cones, birds, and countless other figures. Over time, Germany produced more than 10,000

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Photo courtesy of Robert Brenner
A family around a feather tree.

Special Collection Feature

A look at Christmas in the German-American home

By Kevin Kurdylo, MKI Librarian

The MKI owns many issues of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, a monthly journal marketed to "die Frauenwelt Amerikas" (the world of American women) and originally published in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. For this holiday season, I examined two random December issues (1914 and 1917) to get a sense of how some German-American families may have experienced Christmas in the past. I present the following for your consideration.

Both issues contain the sort of holiday-themed items you would expect to find in any family-ori-

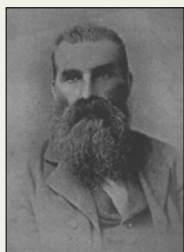
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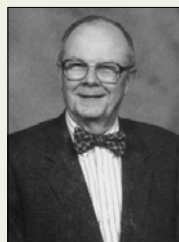
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Christmas doll from the journal.

MKI part of a three-year project to digitize rare recordings of American dialects, languages

By Kevin Kurdylo, MKI Librarian

The Max Kade Institute (MKI), in partnership with the Center for the Study of Upper Midwestern Cultures (CSUMC), *The Dictionary of American Regional English* (DARE), and the University of Wisconsin Libraries, has received funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services to undertake a three-year project aimed at digitizing, interpreting, and making accessible important fieldwork audio collections capturing a variety of American languages and dialects. The project also seeks to devise culturally sensitive permissions procedures that protect language communities such as Native peoples, with the goal of making available on the Web appropriate audio clips of Native languages.



Project goals include:

1. Digitizing more than 900 hours of cassette, reel-to-reel, 78 rpm disc, and rare SoundScriber recordings, selected from three distinctive sound collections: the MKI North American German Dialect Archive, the DARE fieldwork collection, and the Mills Music Library ethnic music collection.
2. Creating a database with appropriate metadata describing items within the audio collections. We estimate that 3,000 entries will reside in this database.
3. Developing an accompanying website that links to the database and provides interactive maps and interpretive essays, illustrated by sixty hours of audio clips selected from the nine hundred hours of digitized material.
4. Strengthening relationships and establishing workable procedures for securing permissions, guided by tribal laws and restrictions, concerning culturally sensitive Native language recordings. The aim here will be to disseminate information on our experiences in an effort to aid other researchers involved in similar projects.

The American Languages project aims to increase awareness, understanding, and utilization of significant audio collections, and serve as a model for the presentation of other important but technically challenging materials. Additionally, this project should generate guidance for developing collaborative permissions policies that will take into account concerns of communities that have generated intellectual property, and which will offer reciprocity and protection to such communities as they consider making intellectual property available to a wider public.

Max Kade Institute

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Reliving the past: Notes on Sternberger project

By Kristen L. Reifsnyder

In 1850, a young man named Jakob Sternberger left Europe in search of a new home in a foreign land. Coming from a prominent family in Kaaden, Bohemia, he had been a student at the Charles University in Prague, where he had been involved in the revolutionary movement spreading across the German states. Fleeing political persecution after 1848, Jacob emigrated to America, journeyed across the country, and eventually settled in Wisconsin. This is where the story begins for the Sternberger family in America. The Max Kade Institute is very fortunate to have in its collection a cache of about two hundred letters of Jakob Sternberger's correspondence, including his first letter home to his family and friends.

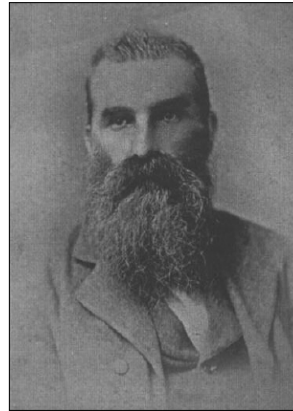
This twenty-two page letter, written in November of 1850, details Jacob's travels through Wisconsin, his eventual purchase of land, and his encounter with other inhabitants, both immigrant and indigenous. With his traveling companion Paul von Schwarzenfeld, Jakob Sternberger bought a plot of land together with a farmhouse on the Wisconsin River. The following excerpt taken from page eight of the letter describes his newly acquired property.

To the south the *Wisconsin River* marks the boundary of our property (...) From there heading north, the land in its breadth (from east to west), about 70-80 paces across, consists of an *opening* of oak trees (very good firewood and also some lumber) and further down this *opening* changes to *prairie* and marsh land.

This expanse will soon without much effort be turned into the best fields for cultivation. [p. 8]

Jakob supplemented this text with a sketch of his land showing the river, farmhouse, fields, and various foliage.

After describing his new home, Jakob Sternberger continued his letter by describing the flora and fauna of the area, mentioning in particular those plants and animals not found in Europe. He also told of encounters with certain individuals during his journey. On page fifteen, Jakob recounted an incident involving a Native American and a



Jakob Sternberger



Franziska Sternberger

bottle of whiskey.

We had the chance to see only one inhabited *Indian* hut on our journey along the *Fox River* (...) The man, a short but well built character with steely muscles (...) invited us with grinning friendliness to enter his hut, (...) While we were visiting the hut and played with the boys, our schnapps-drinking companion offered a shot to the native, who eagerly gulped down all of it (easily $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mug of whiskey) with incredible *virtuosity*. A few minutes later, the poor devil was completely drunk, he was foaming from the mouth like a rabid dog, and in his state of drunkenness moved closer and closer to me, until I started to feel uncomfortable, and I left the hut. (...)

Indeed, this anecdote of a Native American becoming intoxicated evokes the negative images many white settlers held of their indigenous neighbors. In addition to his encounter with a Native American, Jakob also related his views on typical characteristics of Americans of European descent, such as those of the Yankee.

In general, the *Yankee* differs from the more recent immigrant in positive ways. He is direct without beating around the bush, wherever he goes he appears with self-confidence, as is appropriate for a man and a Republican. (...) With straight posture, a hat on his head (he bares his head only when under oath or sitting at the table) he enters the room, waving a

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Teaching German and English in Early America

By Mark L. Loudon, MKI Director

During World War II, foreign language teaching in this country experienced a major change. Largely because of U.S. military involvement in Asia, policy makers and those in the intelligence community found it necessary to train individuals to become proficient in “exotic” languages,

such as Japanese, that were seldom taught in schools and colleges. Previously, more familiar “living” languages (typically French and German) had been taught much as their “dead” counterparts (e.g., Latin and Greek) had been for generations, namely through a method generally known as “grammar-translation.” In such traditionally oriented courses, the goal was not so much to make students into speakers of foreign languages, but to teach them to read and translate from them into English. With the advent of the “audiolingual” method of foreign language teaching in the United States (still the method preferred by the Foreign Service and the military for training personnel to work abroad), the emphasis shifted away from teaching students only

to read and translate and toward getting them to speak, and to a lesser extent, write in the target language. Most foreign language programs today are in line with this “proficiency-based” approach that promotes both receptive (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and writing) skills.

The motivation for this shift in foreign language pedagogy was clear: Enough people, especially in government and education, felt it was important for Americans to be able to actually

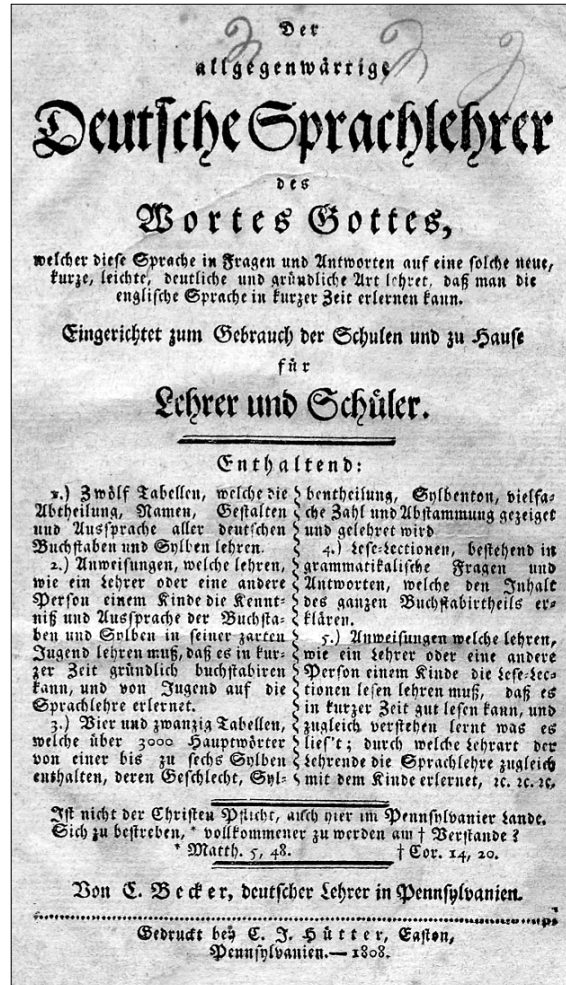
communicate in languages other than English.

The current lack of fluent speakers of Arabic, Farsi, Pashto, and other languages of the Near East and Central Asia underscores the importance of foreign language study for national security. But certainly most folks would acknowledge the commercial benefits of speaking

languages other than English as we become part of a global village. It is interesting, then, to cast a glance further back in American history to a time when four-skills language teaching was also viewed as a matter of importance.

At the very beginning of the American nation, in the late eighteenth century, it is estimated that fully one-third of the population of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania was German-speaking. Adding to that the sizable numbers of German speakers in the other twelve states, we see that German, at that time, was by far the most widely used language in this country after English. As a result, schoolteachers in places such as Pennsylvania

with large German populations found it desirable to do three main things: first, teach German-speaking children English; second, make these same children literate in standard German (both basically the tasks of modern bilingual education); and third, teach children from English-speaking homes German as a foreign language. Such schoolteachers, however, were faced with a number of challenges. First, school attendance during



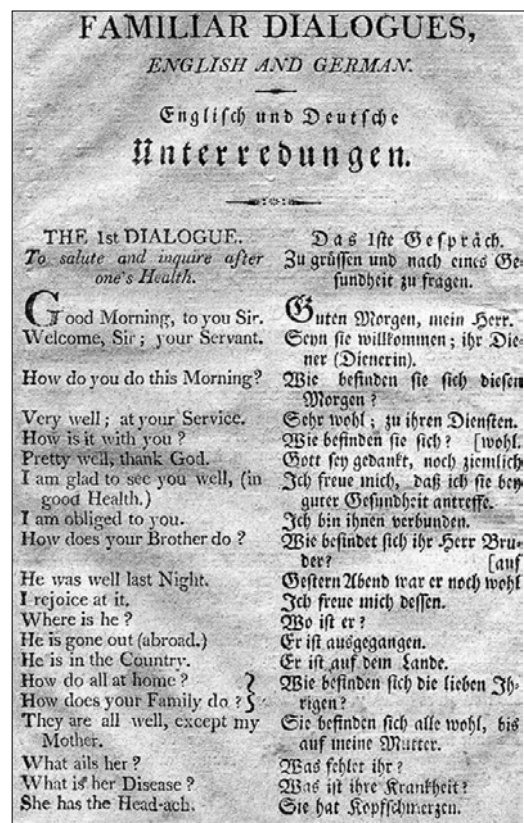
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the colonial era and afterward was generally low. Especially among rural families, children's first priority was to help out on the farm, meaning that formal education generally either took place during the winter months, or in the evenings at home. A second major problem was the dearth of appropriate teaching materials. While there was no lack of traditional primers—A-B-C books appropriate for the youngest school-age children—there was little in the way of textbooks for older learners.

It was in this setting, in late eighteenth-/early nineteenth-century Pennsylvania, that a teacher named Christian Becker became important. A Moravian immigrant from Germany, Becker wrote one especially interesting and important book, *Der allgegenwärtige Deutsche Sprachlehrer des Wortes Gottes* (The Universal German Language Teacher of the Word of God), published in 1808, which, despite its religious-sounding title, addressed mainly the secular needs of his German-speaking pupils. More than just a language textbook (dealing with both German and English), this book contains a wealth of practical knowledge deemed necessary for well educated children. In the remainder of this essay, I'd like to share some of what we find in Becker's *Sprachlehrer*, as well as a later version focused on teaching English.

Becker presents much of his information in dialogic form. For example, in a chapter on "the necessity of knowing English and how to learn it," Becker's interlocutor asks him the following question: "Isn't it a hindrance to children learning to utter English words if they learn to read German before they learn English?" The reply: "Reading German before learning English poses no more of an obstacle to a German child (who only hears and speaks German at home) than speaking German would hinder reading it. For reading is nothing more than pronouncing words that someone else wrote or printed. Therefore it makes no difference if a child reads or speaks." In the substance of the book itself, Becker's approach to teaching German and English looks strikingly like what is known as "phonics" today, a method that emphasizes the relationship between letters and actual speech sounds.

Bilingualism and biliteracy are Becker's goals, so it is interesting to see how he approaches teaching spoken English to children growing up in a



mainly German-speaking milieu. Here Becker applies his dialogic style of presentation by giving his pupils sample conversations in English. For language teachers and learners with experience in audiolingualism, this approach will be familiar, even if the content may strike our modern ears as perhaps less than appropriate for young learners. Consider the excerpts from "The 3d Dialogue: *To dress oneself*": "Pray, light a Candle, and make a Fire. Bid the Maid to bring me a clean Shirt. But stay. I don't want one yet. This is clean enough. Reach me my Breeches." "Will you have your Nightgown?" "Yes, and my Stockings too. ... Look for my Garters. These Stockings have Holes in them. Mend them a little." "There are your Slippers." "Clean my Shoes. Put on my Shoes, for I cannot stoop. ... Now I only want my Gloves, my Hat, and my Sword."

It is difficult to gauge the efficacy of Becker's approach to teaching German and English in early America, but his last question-and-answer pair at least summarizes his general philosophy, if somewhat curiously and perhaps circularly: "Why do you want to understand what you read?" "I want to understand what I read, because reading is no good to me if I do not understand what I read."

A lifetime of involvement with German

By Nicole Saylor

JoAnn Tiedemann's quest to stay close to her German heritage has put her in some pretty interesting places. She has sung Brahms's "*Deutsches Requiem*" in the Thomaskirche in Leipzig, volunteered at World Cup soccer championships in Chicago, and built lifelong friendships at Concordia Language Villages in Minnesota.

"I keep grasping for opportunities to use my German," said Tiedemann, who has been an MKI Friends member since the mid-1980s when she was a graduate student at the UW–Madison School of Library and Information Science. She is now the cataloging librarian for the Madison School District. ("We Germans, we do have this sense of organization," she said, with a grin.)

She was born and raised in Madison, a fourth-generation American on her father's side, and a third-generation on her mother's. Her grandparents spoke German, as did her parents before they started school. "I can't remember a time when I didn't know I had German heritage," she said.

Tiedemann's grandfather was a minister, who during WWI was told he could no longer preach in German. Her love of and proficiency in speaking German is "a connection to my grandparents that I otherwise wouldn't have," she said. "It came easily to me at age nine. It was something different. It wasn't Madison, it wasn't here and now, yet it was familiar enough."

It was at age nine that Tiedemann first went to summer camp at Concordia Language Villages, Moorhead, Minnesota, where she learned German through their immersion program. After being a camper, she went on to serve as a summer camp staff member for thirteen years. Tiedemann, who has her bachelor's degree in elementary education and German, wrote the first German curriculum book for the camp. She stays connected to the



Tiedemann

camp through volunteering, and she keeps in close touch with the friends she has made there. "The people are still very dear to me," she said. "They're my primary support group."

Tiedemann is also close to Germans she met during her many trips to Germany, including a trip in the summer of 1988, a year before the Berlin Wall fell.

She worked in libraries in East Berlin for five weeks, and then went to Leipzig to build a swimming pool complex as part of a student work brigade. Some of those fellow workers would later participate in the protest marches. "Following the news," she said, "I really felt I knew much more personally what was going on."

She has been back to Germany several times, including a tour with the Robert Page Festival Singers out of Pittsburgh. "I don't have a solo voice," she said. "I'm fine in a group of a hundred." And when she goes to Germany, thanks to Fritz Thiedemann, a two-time Olympic champion in equestrian jumping, "I've never had to tell people how to pronounce my name ... that's the only place."

She keeps on top of all things German through friends and online news sources. Right now she has her eye on the reconstruction of Dresden's Frauenkirche, which once dominated the city skyline. She saw the ruins of the church, destroyed in 1945 during the massive firebombing, during her 1988 student trip. "No one has seen it for 40 years," said Tiedemann, who hopes to be there for the dedication ceremony set for 2006.

This year, Tiedemann donated to MKI a self-published book by Peter Uiberall, one of the longest-serving interpreters at the Nuremberg Trials. She received a copy from her aunt, who was a friend of Uiberall. The book contains short stories that were written in 1934 and originally appeared in Austrian, German, and Swiss newspapers and magazines. Uiberall worked as a stock clerk and farm laborer in the United States after leaving Austria as a refugee in 1938.

Busy fall brings German visitors, new projects

By Mark L. Loudon, MKI Director

The first signs of winter are in the air as the fall semester draws rapidly to a close. This has been another busy and enjoyable few months at the MKI. In terms of events, we were very happy to welcome two longtime friends from Germany to Madison for lectures, Dr. Helmut Schmahl from Mainz and Dr. Wolfgang Grams from Oldenburg. (See related stories pages 8 and 12.) The attendance at both these talks was great, and the discussions afterward stimulating. And as usual this fall, many of us headed across the state for several outreach talks. Ruth Olson, Joe Salmons, and Jim Leary kept up their usual incredible pace in building our sibling institution, CSUMC, most recently by presenting at a conference on regionalism in the humanities at the University of Nebraska. Antje Petty and I have kept busy with a number of MKI presentations to various groups around Wisconsin. Special kudos to Antje for representing the MKI again at the Wisconsin Association of Foreign Language Teachers in Appleton.

Eric Platt and I are continuing work on the monograph series and look forward to bringing out several more titles this spring. *The Mennonite Low German Dictionary* by Jack Thiessen is now out, the product of hard work by Emily Engel, Eric, and Joe Salmons. In the context of the monograph series I should also mention that revenue from sales is increasing steadily, funds that are deposited into our publications account to help build the series. Thanks to the MKI Friends' bridge support over the past three years, the growth of the monograph series has been one of the high points in recent MKI history.

I also have another very important piece of news to share with our Friends. This fall we learned that a major grant application we submitted to the Institute of Museum and Library Services earlier this year has been funded at around \$234,000 spread out over the next three years. (See related story page 2.) This grant, the preparation of which was mainly the work of Ruth Olson and Kevin Kurdylo, will allow the MKI and CSUMC to partner with the *Dictionary of American Regional English* and the Mills Music Library, both located here at the UW–Madison, to digitize fragile sound recordings of German and English dialects spoken in North America, as well as rare 78 rpm recordings of ethnic music and skits from the Upper Midwest. With IMLS support we will be able not only to preserve these invaluable audio documents for future generations of students, scholars, and members of the public, but also make them accessible worldwide through our Web site. In December Ruth, Kevin, and I will be traveling to Washington for our first IMLS workshop; I'll keep you posted on how this exciting project develops.

As we move into the winter holiday season, I wish all of our Friends much health and happiness. And let me express my sincere gratitude for the support you have given us over the past year. On a personal note, I want to acknowledge the hard work and upbeat spirit shown by each member of our MKI/CSUMC team. Everyone at the Keystone House is a joy to work with, and for that I am deeply grateful.

Onward to 2004!

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German migration was pursuit of happiness

By Kevin Kurdylo, MKI Librarian

Dr. Wolfgang Grams, director of the Oldenburg-based heritage tour organization Research and Travel (www.routes.de), gave an engaging presentation on the nineteenth-century German migration experience to a rapt audience of more than thirty people on Monday, Nov. 3. Displaying a passion for sharing knowledge and a talent for linking education to entertainment, Grams discussed reasons people sought to immigrate to America, how travel arrangements were made, what overseas travel was like, and what immigrants hoped to find in America.

Grams first became interested in migration history when researching letters that emigrants wrote to family and friends still in the old homeland, particularly those of Johann Heinrich zur Oeveste, who left Osnabrück in 1834 and settled in Indiana. Among Grams's many slides was a photograph of Johann Heinrich and his wife, revealing a possibly falsely accentuated sense of opulence that helped convey the message, "We did the right thing by coming to America."

Having been exposed to letters written by those who immigrated to America, many German-speaking people, suffering under a strict social and economic hierarchy, set about saving money and planning their trips, often for up to two years in advance. A common saying about emigration during the 1880s was that it took 100 days and the equivalent of 100 dollars to be successful.

Discussing how taverns often served as initial "travel agents" for those desiring to emigrate (there were some 600 such agencies in the Grand Duchy of Oldenburg alone), Grams showed images of advertisements placed in newspapers announcing emigration services, a map detailing routes from various locations to German ports kept by a tavern owner, and passports issued to those who wished to become legal travelers from Germany to America (about thirty percent of emigrants never applied for passports). One image from 1881 revealed that the deposit (*Handgeld*) for one woman and her children amounted to thirty marks for the adult and fifteen marks for each child. Passage on a North German Lloyd ship in 1881 for this group cost 248 marks.

Grams told an amusing tale of a rare case where a criminal was provided the funds to emigrate, and then wrote from America threatening to return unless more money was forthcoming!

The dream that motivated many to emigrate was the one espoused in the Declaration of Independence, which was first published by a German-language newspaper in America. Here the idea of the pursuit of happiness being a self-evident truth was conveyed by the words "das Bestreben nach Glückseligkeit." Often happiness was equated with property, which was easy to come by in America, and the prevalent belief was that hard work would result in success and prosperity. Indeed, as Grams pointed out, our nation's history is a summary of all the individuals who came to America seeking happiness.

Throughout his talk Grams emphasized how education could be combined with pleasure while visiting the sites where history occurred, and he noted how on several occasions people were able to "revitalize" their ability to speak the German dialect used by their parents and grandparents by immersing themselves in the locations and cultures of their ancestors. The Board of the Friends of the MKI is examining the feasibility of offering

New library acquisitions

A listing of recent library acquisitions can be found on our Web site as a link from the News page or at the URL: csumc.wisc.edu/mki/Library/NewAcqs/NewAcqs.htm.

We wish to express our gratitude to Neil Giffey, Prof. David M. Gosdeck, Dr. Wolfgang Grams, Victor Greene, Sue Lendborg, Dr. Jack Thiessen, and Ross Walker for their donations, and special thanks to Alexandra Jacobs for her work in identifying documents in the Asbach family history collection. Contact the MKI Librarian at (608) 262-7546 or by e-mail at kkurdylo@wisc.edu to view the collections or donate materials.

—Kevin Kurdylo

Martinson digitizing hours of dialect tapes

By Eric Platt

The hum of a small motorcycle engine usually means only one thing at the Max Kade Institute: Kirk Martinson, the Institute's new sound lab technician and Web-page guru, has returned from running another errand.

Kirk, the father of two children, motors in and out of the MKI several times a day, dividing his time between the important tasks of digitizing old cassette and reel-to-reel tapes and picking up his son, Espen, from preschool, between working on improving the Institute's Web presence and buying Siri, his newborn baby daughter, some new winter clothes.

Kirk has accomplished much in the two months that he has worked at the MKI. His sound-lab responsibilities mostly consist of digitizing recordings of various German dialects from Texas and Kansas that Glenn Gilbert recently donated to the Institute. So far he has digitized over seventy-five hours of tape.

The MKI digitizes these tapes in order to preserve the interviews contained on them and to make them readily accessible for future research. According to Kirk, the majority of the interviews on the Gilbert tapes were conducted in the 1960s with people born between 1890 and 1900. Besides providing valuable information about the German dialects these individuals spoke, the tapes also provide data on German-American farming practices in the Southwest, the origins of certain Texan towns, and other aspects of German-American life in the region. Kirk's work adds a new dimension to the hundreds of hours of digitized interviews that the MKI already possesses, since most of the other recordings housed at the MKI originated in the Midwest.

When not working in the sound lab, Kirk also helps out on various Web projects and is currently



Martinson

New program assistant Hamre has background in public health policy

Dawn Hamre, the new program assistant at the Max Kade Institute, comes with a wealth of experience, not only on the UW–Madison campus, but also at Georgetown University. After leaving Georgetown, she worked in the nonprofit sector as paralegal for the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

She has also served as a Kennedy Center volunteer and was a member of the Women's Committee for the National Symphony Orchestra, participating in youth educational programs and staffing the organization's major fundraising event.

For now she plans to stay in Wisconsin. She and her husband are in the midst of a major house redesign and landscaping project.



Hamre

helping the Institute purchase some much-needed new equipment with funds recently provided by the German Consulate in Chicago.

School also plays an important role in Kirk's life. He currently is a graduate student in German linguistics and is also working on an M.A. in Scandinavian Studies. Kirk actually began his graduate career at the University of Texas at Austin, but he followed his advisor, Mark Loudon, to Madison when Mark joined the faculty. Kirk offers two reasons for his decision: "Mark is an excellent professor, and Wisconsin is much closer to my family's home in Minnesota," he explains.

Kirk's family, school, and Institute responsibilities leave him little free time. He does manage to play volleyball with friends once a week, however, and he kayaks whenever he gets the chance.

Collection Feature continued from page 1

ented journal today, including Christmas poems, stories, recipes, handicraft activities, and advertisements. Perhaps unique to the time is the inclusion of Christmas music scores for the piano, intended for the family sing-along. The 1914 issue also includes much that is related to the First World War, including a call for contributions to ease the suffering of women and children and an article on the activities of “Deutsche Frauen zur Kriegszeit” (German women during wartime).

Items from both issues that reflect a purely holiday spirit include a humorous piece about the tribulations of using electric lights on the modern Christmas tree; an illustrated article on *Weihnachten* in Bethlehem; *Weihnachtszeit* recipes for such treats as *Pfefferkuchen*, *Lebkuchen*, *Springerle*, *Mandelkränze*, *Zimt-Sterne*, and even *Schokoladewurst*; ideas for needlework, hardanger embroidery, and beadwork gifts; and a place for readers to write in asking for advice, information, or items that they wish to procure.

An article on gift ideas for children in the 1914 issue reveals that “Puppen sind noch immer die Weihnachtsgeschenke, welche unsere kleinen Mädchen am meisten beglücken. Und bekommen sie gar ein Puppenkind mit Kleidern zum An- und Ausziehen wie die eignen, so ist der Jubel erst recht gross” (Dolls remain the Christmas gift most likely to please our little girls. And should they receive a doll with clothes to put on and take off like their own, then is their rejoicing truly great).

The advertisements, of course, are always of great interest. One shows the best gift for persons of either gender, “eine elegant Herren- oder Damen-Uhr – nur \$1.00!”

Another ad tells us we can get a gallon of Possum Creek Whiskey for only ten cents! Helpful for ensuring that yuletide glow, no doubt.

And should you wind up with a toothache from consuming too many *Lebkuchen* or other Christmas goodies, yet another ad exhorts you to be your own dentist!

I’d like to conclude with some words from an article in the 1919 issue written by a Gertrud Bäumer, expressing thoughts on Christmas that one can still hear today:



Be your own dentist and cure your toothache with Dr. Feigenson's.



Das beste Weihnachtsgeschenk? The best Christmas gift? A gallon of whiskey for 10 cents.

“Es ist keine blossе altmodische Sentimentalität, dass Weihnachtskuchen selbstgebacken, Weihnachtsgeschenke selbstgearbeitet sein sollten. Denn ihr Sinn besteht ja nicht darin, dass man seinen Besitzstand an wünschenswerten Dingen vermehrt sieht und seinem Gaumen etwas extra Gutes anbietet.” (It is not a merely outmoded sentimentality that Christmas cakes and cookies should be home-baked, that Christmas gifts should be handmade. For their significance does not lie in the fact of increasing one’s possessions or in being offered something particularly tasty.) Instead, Ms. Bäumer contends, every aspect of Christmas should be a symbol of something deeper, of something that enriches the sense of family, fosters a spirit of wonder, and creates lifelong memories. Here’s wishing you and yours just that experience this holiday season. *Fröhliche Weihnachten!* Merry Christmas!

Part II of the “Love and Marriage” collection feature will appear in the Spring 2004 issue.

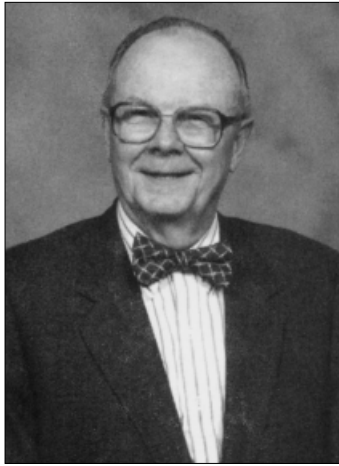
On the trail of Pennsylvania German words

By Mark L. Loudon, MKI Director

The oldest and most widespread variety of German spoken in North America is the colonial dialect known popularly as “Pennsylvania Dutch.” This term, although misleading to some today, reflects the meaning of the word “Dutch” in earlier British and American English in reference to the languages and cultures of all Germanic speakers in Western and Central Europe. Most scholars and many language advocates have preferred the term “Pennsylvania German” in order to underscore the historical connection between the language and the Palatine dialects from which it emerged over two centuries ago, but “Pennsylvania Dutch” is still more common among native speakers.

There has been no lack of research on the history, language, and culture of Pennsylvania Germans, especially over the last seventy-five years or so. A few individuals devoted to Pennsylvania German studies stand out, however. One very important scholar, especially on the language side, is Professor C. Richard Beam. Beam, now retired from the German faculty of Millersville University in Pennsylvania, has devoted most of his long and productive career to the investigation of the vocabulary of Pennsylvania German. As the founder and director of the Center for Pennsylvania German Studies, one of the key institutions dedicated to documenting Pennsylvania German for future generations, Prof. Beam has published a number of important books dealing with the language, two recent examples of which I would like to showcase for our readers here.

The first book, which appeared in 2002, is *Des is wie mer's saagt in Deitsch* (This is How We Say It in Pennsylvania Dutch). This is a fascinating collection of over 4,000 words provided by one particularly gifted native Pennsylvania German



Prof. C. Richard Beam

speaker and teacher, Lee R. Thierwechter, of Belleville, Pennsylvania. Thierwechter grew up in the heart of the Dutch country of southeastern Pennsylvania, Lebanon County, and is an amazing one-man wellspring of information on how Pennsylvania German was spoken there in earlier days. Beam got to know Thierwechter several years ago and was inspired to embark on the project that resulted in the present book. Beam began with a three-volume Pennsylvania German collection of word lists and questionnaires compiled for the Pennsylvania German Society by the late Dr. Ellsworth Kyger and presented these materials to Thierwechter, encouraging him to recall how the words were used in context. The result is something much more than a bilingual dictionary

or list of words. Every entry is used in at least one sentence evoking not only the word's sense(s), but also the everyday life of Pennsylvania Germans during Thierwechter's youth. Here are a few choice examples: for *Schnuppbox* “snuffbox,” *Schnuppboxe kann mer ball immer sehne rausschtecke an de Mannsleit ihre Hosseseck*. “Snuffboxes can usually be seen protruding from the pockets of men's pants.” And for *Huppsgrott* “toad,” *Ich hab verlenger gleeni Huppsgrotte gyuust fer bait fer fische fer bass*. “Years ago I used small toads for bait to fish for bass.”

The second reference work on Pennsylvania German vocabulary I would like to share with you is similar in structure to the work just described, but on a much larger scale. This is the second edition of Prof. Beam's *Pennsylvania German Words in Context*, which contains over 7,000 entries. Again, what we have in this monument of Pennsylvania German studies, is something much more than a dictionary for the fact that each word is presented in a sample sentence. These sentences Beam

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German ornaments continued from page 1

different ornaments for the American market.

The history of these glass ornaments is also the history of glass blowing in the Thuringian mountains of Germany, specifically in the tiny town of Lauscha, the birthplace of the glass Christmas tree ornament. It all began in the second half of the eighteenth century with small glass beads on chains that were the first glass items produced in Lauscha. Bead blowing allowed individuals to process glass (produced in larger glass houses) in a small workshop “at the lamp.” With the so-called “boot pipe” (a winding pipe) the glass blower blew through a rape oil flame and thus created a primitive jet of flame. In this, he heated a glass rod, quickly exchanged the “boot pipe” for the glass rod, and blew the heated spot into a ball-shape. The beads were then separated from the rod, silvered with lead or fish-silver (later with a silver-nitrate mixture), and filled with wax. For a long time these glass beads were the main source of income for the lamp-blowers of Thuringia.

While heavier glass ornaments (termed “kugels” by American collectors) were made by kiln since the 1820s, it was not until 1870 that the first thin glass ornaments were blown. In 1867, a gas depot was built in Lauscha to provide the glassblowers with a constant, extremely hot, and adjustable gas flame, which enabled them to produce extra-thin-walled bubbles of glass.

Americans quickly fell in love with the fantastic glass ornaments, so much so that by the early 1880s, toy agents, bankers, and publishing house representatives vied for export rights, leaving glass artisans free to produce ornaments and giving them time to design new ones. Slowly the glass ornament industry spread to neighboring villages. So numerous were the glass workers by the mid-1880s that glass houses could not employ them all, and many artisans were forced to work independently in their homes. Thus a family-run cottage industry developed, leading to an abundance of competition, creativity, and craftsmanship that is reflected in the high quality of the products.

American businessmen were quick to advertise these glass ornaments. In 1888 Butler Brothers of New York offered a wholesale \$5 assortment of Christmas tree ornaments to stores, which could individually retail at five and ten cents each. The catalog included red balls, drums, satchels, fruits, acorns, dented double balls, strings of small glass beads, and

gold-colored balloons in assorted shapes. These were advertised as the best “made in Thuringia” and were all carefully packed in wooden cases. Later catalog editions included gilded birds with glass silk tails, the red-coated Weihnachtsmann carrying a Christmas tree, and nature’s own decoration, the pine cone.

By 1893 ornaments were crowned with the familiar cap and spring mechanism still used today. A further improvement resulted when ornament hooks were developed, which finally ended the time-consuming task of hand tying each ornament.

In the early 1900s German glassblowers used molds to create different figures for the American market. Since molds were either rented or purchased, depending upon the wealth of the glass blowing family, this decade saw little distinction in the shapes of the ornaments. Individual families, however, strove to achieve creative distinction by the colors and patterns applied to ornaments.

After World War I, glass ornaments continued to be wire-wrapped, but not in the quantities of pre-war years, for Americans now were in love with solid ornaments. Ninety-five percent of these were silvered inside, eliminating the soft pastel appearance of those produced before World War I. In the 1930s wire-wrapped ornaments declined even more as cucumbers, ears of corn, zeppelins, trucks, cars, and fantasy-shaped ornaments were the rage. From October 1939 until 1945 German-blown ornaments were not available for sale in America.

After World War II, Germany only slowly began to provide ornaments for the American market. Their desirability was low because many Americans considered it “distasteful” to use decorations manufactured by a country with which they had just fought a bitter war. Besides, Americans were in love with unbreakable plastic and novelties such as bubble lights. In the 1960s and into the 1970s Americans’ tastes had shifted to aluminum trees lit by the four-color revolving floodlight or white trees with only one-color ornaments. However, following these decades, Americans began to collect older Christmas decorations and began to appreciate what had been created by German craftsmen before World War II.

What will the future hold? If history repeats itself, there is no doubt that glass ornaments of this decade will be as revered in the future as those from the late 1800s are today.

Robert Brenner is a Christmas historian who has published several books on the subject.

Dr. Schmahl explores immigrant biographies

By Antje Petty, MKI Assistant Director

On October 3, Dr. Helmut Schmahl, Assistant Professor at the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz/Germany introduced an audience of over fifty people at the Memorial Union in Madison to the nineteenth-century phenomenon of mug books.

Mug books were commercially produced, glossy coffee table books that recounted the stories of mostly Midwestern communities. They came in three basic formats: 1) books exclusively filled with biographies, 2) county histories and biographies, and 3) ethnic biographies often covering a larger region. People had to pay to be included in a mug book and paid extra if they wanted their photo included. Thus the resulting story, not only told, but also reviewed and edited by the subject, always was a success story, focusing on model citizens who had lived the American Dream. Even though many subjects were first-generation immigrants, biographies in mug-books generally reveal little about the immigrant experience itself, but rather focus on a person's success after immigration.

The books included biographies of famous Americans, mixed alphabetically with local biographies. Thus we find Mrs. Jacob Kessel right next to Abraham Lincoln in the *Portraits and Biographical Record of Sheboygan County* (Chicago: Exelsior Publishing Co., 1894). Only very few women (about one in fifty) have their own entries in mug-books, and if they do, they are mostly widows whose stories are those of their late husbands.

How did Mrs. Jacob Kessel get into this publication? Most likely, one day she saw an ad or editorial in her local newspaper announcing a group of "biographers" from a "Great American Historical Society" coming to her county to record information on county and personal history "while the early settlers are still alive." Shortly after, agents for a commercial publisher would have appeared in Town Rhine near Sheboygan. They successfully

convinced many people to subscribe to this new history of Sheboygan County and in return have their own stories included in the volume. Little is known about the actual writers of the biographical sketches, who were employees of the publisher or in some cases worked for the local newspapers.

Nineteenth-century historians did not consider mug books proper historical works but rather "pompous obituaries" as one put it. However, in recent years historians and genealogists have learned to appreciate these publications. Yes, mug



Mrs. Jacob Kessel

books were very biased toward their subjects, were often poorly and hastily written, and included many factual mistakes, but they also recorded stories, events, and data not typically included in traditional histories. First of all, they focus on the stories of ordinary citizens, who usually do not have a voice in historical texts. Even though these stories are by no means complete and objective narratives, they nevertheless include correct and precise information

on facts such as birthdates, addresses, property owned, social and political affiliations, etc.

For genealogists, these texts can be an invaluable resource, since they detail family relations and family migration patterns within the United States that are not easily gleaned from censuses or other sources. Regarding one George Bodenstein (1821–1877), a businessman in Sheboygan, his biography in the *Portraits and Biographical Record of Sheboygan County* concludes: "He was the founder of a large family in this country, and had the satisfaction of seeing his children grow to be useful and respected members of society. As years go by, his descendants may turn to this brief sketch of their common ancestor with interest and pride."

The full biography of Mrs. Jacob Kessel can be found at Dr. Schmahl's website:

http://www.germanimmigrants.de/county_history

friendly *good morning* or *good day* and without further ado proceeds to sit down on the next best chair. [p. 16]

It is interesting to note that this description of a stereotypical Yankee is perhaps not unlike the images many have of Americans today.

The scores of letters in the Sternberger file that were written after Jakob's first letter home indicate that several of Jakob's friends and family eventually joined him in his new home. For example, Jakob's brother Kajetan sent his eight-year-old son Ferdinand (who was born out of wedlock) to join Jakob on the farm. Kajetan's many letters to his son and to Jakob, in which he expresses concern about the boy's well-being in Wisconsin, offer a glimpse of the extraordinary circumstances of a child emigrating without his parents. Additional correspondence addressed to Jakob came from his good friend, Anton Klenert. Klenert eventually immigrated to America to help Jakob after the untimely death of Paul von Schwarzenfeld.

The Sternberger Collection, which contains quite a few letters from several generations, provides a wealth of historically, socially, linguistically, and even politically relevant information. As a linguist, I was particularly interested in the English vocabulary items used in the letters, especially in descriptions of the countryside and people. Examples from the excerpts shown above include *opening*, *prairie*, and *yankee*. Gradually, the use of English in the collection's letters increases to the point at which a few of the twentieth-century letters are written entirely in English, even when addressed to other German speakers.

As briefly indicated by the above-mentioned letters, the Sternberger collection contains a great deal of information on German immigrants in the United States. Piecing together this historical information can, however, be a long and arduous process. Occasionally, background documentation for specific material in the letters no longer exists. For example, one text contained four recipes for medications to heal wounds. Certain ingredients for the medications are no longer used and had to be researched in greater detail. Undated correspon-

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Letter excerpt and translation

Here is the end of a letter written by Jakob Sternberger to his family in Bohemia. (Wisc., Nov. 1850)

Nun habe ich mich bei Gott, vollkommen müde geschrieben, es ist auch bereits 2 Uhr Nachts vorüber u[nd] die Arbeit bei Tage war eben nicht die leichteste. für dießmal also genug, wären die Europäischen Briefschreiber, aber so eifrig, als ich, so würde ich bereits wenigstens einige Bogen in Händen haben. doch Geduld, wenns Herz auch bricht.

Adieu u[nd] Gott mit Euch, Alle Lieben in der Heimath, vergeßt nicht mitunter wenigstens zu gedenken.

Eures treuen
J. Sternberger.

Wie sehr mich einige Zeilen der guten Mutter erfreuen würden, will ich nicht versuchen zu schildern. Ihren Namen wenigstens mit eigener Hand geschrieben, würde ich als Verzeihung betrachten für All die Sorgen Kummer, die ich ihr bereitet u[nd] als Segen ansehen, für mein künftiges Leben.



Now, by God, I completely tired myself writing, it is also past 2 a.m. and work during the day was not exactly the easiest. Enough for now. If the European correspondents were as diligent as I, I would hold at least a few letter pages in my hand by now. But patience, even when the heart is breaking.

Adieu and may God be with you, all you dear ones at home, don't forget once in a while to remember.

your devoted
J. Sternberger

How much a few lines from our good mother would delight me, I do not want to try to describe. At least her name, written in her own hand, would be a sign of forgiveness for all the sorrow and pain that I have caused her, and I would consider it a blessing for my future life.

Sternberger continued from page 14

dence is another problem that I frequently encountered while transcribing the Sternberger letters. After having worked on the project for a few months, though, I became familiar enough with the people and places to date some undated correspondence.

As scholars continue to work on this project, further details on the Sternberger family and on German Americans in general will be revealed. Thus, the overall value of the Sternberger project has yet to be fully tapped.

Kristen L. Reifsnyder completed her Ph.D. in German at the UW–Madison in 2003 and is currently a lecturer at the University of Giessen.

Pennsylvania German continued from page 11

collected from a wide variety of sources, most importantly Pennsylvania German speakers themselves in interviews. Of special importance here is the fact that the data have been collected from members of all major Pennsylvania German subgroups, the sectarians (speakers of mainly Mennonite and Amish background) as well as nonsectarians (typically Lutheran or German Reformed). Also, the consultants for the project hail from far-flung regions where Pennsylvania German is spoken including New York, Illinois, and Ontario. Consider the entry for *Kalenner* “almanac”: *Sell hen die Leit geduh in de alde Zeite. Sie hen en neier Kalenner kaaft, wann sie en nei baby ghat hen. No hen sie seller weck. Wann eppes dich gwunnert hot wehich em Yaahr wu du gebore waarscht, no hoscht sell graad ghat datt im Kalenner. Des hot alli Haushalding ghat.* “That the folks did in former days. They purchased a new almanac when a baby was born. Then they put that almanac away. If you were interested in anything that happened in the year you were born, then you had everything in there in the almanac. Every household did this.”

If you’re interested in learning more about the work of the Center for Pennsylvania German Studies (they also put out an excellent newsletter), contact Prof. Beam at 406 Spring Drive, Millersville, PA 17551.

From the Treasury Vaults

By Bob Luening,
MKI Friends Treasurer

The MKI Friends wishes to take this opportunity to thank its Lifetime members and mention that Lifetime dues are designated for the MKI endowment fund for long-term support of the Institute’s activities. We wish to express our deepest gratitude to our Lifetime members:

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As one year comes to an end and a new year begins, it’s time to recall our past accomplishments, thank our friends for their past contributions, and ask that they continue to support the many activities of the MKI. Membership fees help support lectures, workshops, and outreach talks as well as publications such as *German-Jewish Identities in America*, the *Mennonite Low German Dictionary*, and this very newsletter. By renewing today you will not only be supporting MKI’s varied activities but also ensuring an uninterrupted subscription to our quarterly newsletter!

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