

Max Kade Institute Friends Newsletter

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UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON, 901 UNIVERSITY BAY DR., MADISON, WI 53705

Santa's Ancestors in Mecklenburg and Western Pomerania

By Christoph Schmitt



The *Rugklas* in a village in southwest Mecklenburg.
Photo by Karl Eschenburg, around 1934.

If you were to see a person wrapped in straw, a so-called *Rugklas*, you might think of harvest festivals or carnival costumes but not necessarily of Christmas. In the villages of Mecklenburg, the rural areas east of the Elbe River and south of the Baltic Sea, however, *Rugklas* moved about town and entered people's houses on Christmas Eve. He usually came in the company of other masked characters: *Kinnjees* (the Christ Child), *Zägenbuck* (the billygoat), and *Schimmelreiter* (the horseman on a white horse). Thanks to extensive field recordings by folklorist Richard Wossidlo (1859-1939) we know that the custom was still practiced as late as the 1930s.

Rugklas (also *Rug'klas*, *Ruhklaas*, *Ruhklas*, *Ruuchklas*) translates as "rough *Klaus*," an abbreviation of *Nikolaus* or Nicholas. Bundled up in a sheaf of straw, old sacks, and furs, wearing a crude mask and carrying

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Keeping Busy: Past, Present, and Future

By Cora Lee Kluge, MKI Director

Greetings, Friends and Readers!

The fall semester is coming to an end, and we look out our Keystone House windows on a snow-covered landscape. The view to the south has remained unchanged over the last years, but to the north, the new American Family Children's Hospital, scheduled for completion in 2007, is rapidly taking shape and looking down like a giant on its little MKI neighbor. Come and see how we are beginning to feel like Lilliputians!

Things have been going on in our abode, too. We are delighted to announce the appearance—finally!—of our long-awaited publication entitled *Wisconsin German Land and Life* (see page 13 of this Newsletter); and in October we took part in Madison's Wisconsin Book Festival, presenting what was then our most recent publication, *The Wisconsin Office of Emigration 1853–1855 and Its Impact on German Immigration to the State* by Johannes Strohschänk and William G. Thiel (2005).

Our fall lecture series included three events: (1) a double-billing on November 1st on the topic of "Migrating German Words, From Russia to

America: Comparing Germanisms East and West," which featured Luanne von Schneidemesser of the *Dictionary of American Regional English* project at the UW–Madison and Lutz Kuntzsch from the Gesellschaft für deutsche Sprache in Wiesbaden; (2) a presentation on November 15th on "Old Colony Mennonites in Bolivia" by former MKI associate Kimberly Miller; and (3) a lecture on December 6th on the topic of "Amish in North America" by Mark Loudon, former MKI Director.

Our plans for the future are taking shape. We are eager to spread the word about Cora Lee Kluge's spring semester course on "The German Immigration Experience," which will meet Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 11:00. Sign up for German 278, lecture 2—and note: it's for everyone! No German language skills required! Please also note that Antje Petty will conduct a workshop at a conference on "The Challenges of Citizenship and Literacy in a Global Society," sponsored by the Wisconsin Council for the Social Studies and International Education (March 19–21, 2007 in Middleton, Wisconsin). Our schedule for other spring semester events in the Madison area has not yet been set, so please keep watching our Web site for details.

Meanwhile, a group of faculty, staff, and students associated with the MKI is planning a trip to the University of Kansas in Lawrence for the annual symposium of the Society for German-American Studies, April 26–29, 2007. The program has not yet been finalized, but it will apparently include several of our presentations—we will supply more details later.

Kevin Kurdylo continues to provide the real muscle behind the MKI. He serves as our first line of contact with the public, answering the phone and greeting walk-in guests; he mans our library's information desk and provides support to all those who need books and other assistance; and he is the powerhouse behind the production and distribution of the *MKI Friends Newsletter*, including everything from creating the pages to attaching the

Max Kade Institute

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A Conversation with Jack Thiessen, Author of the *Mennonite Low German Dictionary*

Interviewed by Kevin Kurdylo, MKI Librarian

Jack Thiessen, emeritus professor of German at the University of Winnipeg, coauthored Mennonitische Namen/Mennonite Names with Victor Peters and is the author of Mennonitische Jeschichten, a collection of short stories, and The Dictionary of Mennonite Low German.

Jack is considered the leading contemporary writer in Mennonite Low German and more than upholds the tradition of the well-known Arnold Dyck (1889–1970). Jack was a Keynote Speaker at the September 2006 MKI conference, “The German Language and Immigration in International Perspective.”

K.K.: I’d like to begin, if I may, by asking about your youth. When and where were you born?

J.T.: I was born on April 14, 1931, in De Salaberry Municipality (County), Manitoba, to my parents Peter Abraham Thiessen and his wife Helene—Ljolja in Russian—néé Sawatzky, who had immigrated to Canada from Ukraine two and a half years earlier.

K.K.: Is there a defining moment or story from your childhood and growing up Mennonite that helped make you who you are today?

J.T.: Mennonites had been thoroughly kicked in the *Tuggis* (*Dupps*, ass) of their soul in Ukraine and were disoriented when they arrived here; this was never stated or admitted but I knew this as an

early memory. Also I knew that my parents’ marriage was a classical example of misalliance. My mother, widowed in Russia, had a son and so her handicap at choosing an equal was out of kilter and focus.



Jack Thiessen

K.K.: What kind of impression or effect did this inherent understanding of the Mennonite experience in Ukraine have on you?

J.T.: Our sojourn in Ukraine was much more pronounced and lasting than Mennonites realize. Aside from Al Reimer writing about it in his novel *My Harp Has Turned to Mourning*, precious little has been done with this epoch except to ignore it. At the Canadian Mennonite University not a single course is offered on this

segment of Mennonite history.

Prior to my life and living in Germany, I had always thought of Mennonites as a “member” of the German tribe. I think so no more and I am sure whatever Germanness there was in our character, it was diluted into non-existence when “we” were in Russia.

K.K.: Could you comment further on what you seem to be implying was an imbalance in the relationship between your mother and father? Was

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The Friends of the Max Kade Institute Board of Directors

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Rugklas continued from page 1

strange props, the fellow looked “rough” indeed. In over fifty years of research traveling around Mecklenburg, Richard Wossidlo heard many a story about *Rugklasen*, as the old tradition of the costumed characters going house-to-house was called. One of his notes from 1923 reads: “Rugklas keem mit de Rod’ un mit’n Aschebüdel—dor kloppt he mit, dat dat stöwen ded. Hadd ne mask mit ’n langen flässen boort vör.” (*Rugklas* arrived with a rod and a bag of ashes. With that he tapped the floor so that dust was raised everywhere. He wore a mask with a long beard made from flax.)

In other depictions *Rugklas* wears a hat pulled over his face, carries a pannier made of straw, and even has a long tail. Not exactly how one imagines Santa Claus to look! In fact, *Rugklas* shares more of the features of *Knecht Ruprecht*, the dark character who in some regions of Germany accompanies *Nikolaus* on December 6th, St. Nicholas Day. Sometimes *Rugklas*’ appearance generated genuine fear, as in this description from Warnemünde near Rostock: “Rugklas segh oft ut as de Düwel. Kinner stünnen un bäwerten. Dat wier ganz unanständig, dat de Kinner so bang makt würden.” (*Rugklas* frequently looked like the Devil. The children stood there and trembled. It was not right to scare the children like that.)

A Wossidlo recording from 1933 describes how *Rugklas* entered a house in a little village near Lake Müritz: “Ihrst keem de Vörknaller. De knallt. Hele Christ holl ’ne Rod’ un kloppt an ’t finster, ob se rinkamen dörben. Denn keem de Schmied, Zägenbuck un Knapperdachs. De hett so ’ne Tang in de Hand – knappt he mit hen. De Zägenbuck slög mit de Pietsch. De Schmied hadd ok ’ne Pietsch. De Rumpsack hett ’n Büdel mit Sand in de Hand un ’n groten dicken Stock. Dor pumpt he mit. De Hele

Christ krieg dat Geld.” (First came “de Vörknaller,” who cracked a whip. The Holy Christ held a rod and banged with it on the window, to get permission to enter. Then came the blacksmith, the billy-goat, and the clattering badger. He had something like tongs in his hands which he used to pinch people with. The billygoat cracked a whip. The blacksmith also had a whip. *Rumpsack* [another term for *Rugklas*] carried a bag with sand in his

hand and a long, thick stave, which he banged. The Holy Christ got the money.)

The *Rugklasen* tradition was carried out mostly by unmarried farm laborers and farmers’ sons. At this time of year there was not much work to do, and like Carnival season, they had time to let off some steam. Their performance therefore was not so much geared towards young children, but to the young women. This was one chance to gain entry to many houses and look for a bride! Also, as can be seen from the above story, *Rugklas* and his friends did not just visit folks to bestow gifts upon them, but also to extract some tribute, usually money

or brandy, which was collected by the *Kinnjees* (Child Jesus/Christ Child) or the *Hele Christ* (Holy Christ) character, most often played by a girl in a white dress. The point of the whole event was to have loud and raucous fun. Wossidlo reports that children and young women hid under beds where they had to be found by the visitors, and that the costumed characters had to jump over chairs before the family patriarch would bring out the brandy: one shot for each jump.

The children in the family had to say prayers, for which they were rewarded with apples and *Pfefferküsse* (spice cookies) by the Christ Child. But unlike in the Catholic St. Nicholas tradition, they were not really admonished for past misbehavior.



Rugklas in southwest Mecklenburg.
Photo by K. Eschenburg, around 1934.

On the contrary, they were allowed to ridicule all characters, including *Kinnjees*, with taunting children's rhymes.

The billygoat brought a number of noise-makers, bells, and a whip. His presence is evidence of Scandinavian influences on Mecklenburg traditions. While he was just one of many characters east of the Elbe River, he was closely associated with Santa Claus in Finland, where Santa himself frequently wore a billygoat mask. On the island of Rügen, which had been part of the Swedish kingdom until 1815, the billygoat was often played by several people. For example: two people walked together with bent backs, covered by a sheet, with a third player sitting on top of them, sometimes holding huge horns.

Schimmelrider is a better-known character, as he also appeared at Carnival and at weddings. When he was played by two people, *Rugklas* sat on his back, directing the ceremony. Sometimes *Schimmelrider* was played by just one person, who tied the rims of two large colanders around his body, held a stick with an artificial horse head, and stuck his head through a hole in a white sheet.

Usually there were about four to six participants, but sometimes larger groups roamed around. They could include a bear tamer, who would perform a bear dance, a blacksmith who would shoe the horse, a "husband and wife" or a "Jew," who would complain about their lot in life. Sometimes even two *Rugklas* or two *Kinnjees* showed up.

Richard Wossidlo left us with many descriptions of this unique tradition, but how does it tie in with Christmas celebrations and procession traditions today? Without a doubt *Rugklas* is part of the cult of St. Nicholas that emerged in Europe in the Middle Ages.

Nicholas was a "hyperhagios," a saint above other saints, and in many ways the male counterpart to Holy Mary, the mother of Christ. The story of Nicholas became the source for legends and various visual depictions, but also religious pageantry. Here it was popular to show the contrast between good and evil in the juxtaposition of angels and saints with diabolic animal figures. People particularly loved to play with the imagery of evil. Hidden behind grotesque masks, they could break out of their daily confines, as they did at Carnival. Thus the variety and number of dark characters surrounding "Nicholas" all across Europe were manifold.

Martin Luther was a strong opponent of the St.



Christmas processional custom in Pomerania.
Wood engraving of a drawing by F. Iwan, 1892.

Nicholas cult, which might be the reason why Nicholas celebrations in Lutheran regions of Germany were moved from December 6th to December 24th. Here they could be folded inconspicuously into the many other activities surrounding that multi-day holiday. On Christmas Eve in

Germany today, *das Christkind* (Christ Child) visits houses in the Catholic South, while *der Weihnachtsmann* (Santa Claus) makes his rounds in the Lutheran North. He is a creation of the nineteenth century, where the imagery of an emerging bourgeois society now depicts a new more benevolent Santa figure. A popular 1847 painting by Moritz von Schwindt shows a bearded, heavily clothed old man, carrying a little spruce tree over his shoulder. This *Weihnachtsmann* combines some of the features of the Nicholas figure and his more sinister companions. At the same time, Christmas celebrations in Germany became more private and personal. The refined new middle-class household preferred to celebrate in peace and

she more cultured or refined? It seems you loved them both very much, despite whatever difficulties they may have had with each other . . .

J.T.: My mother was a reflective woman with an idea how life and literature worked. Whereas my father? Not one bit.

K.K.: How did your interest in words and language develop?

J.T.: After learning from my mother the story called a Parable of Jesus Feeding the Multitudes, and then the Sermon on the Mount, I understood with total clarity my *Muttersprache*, the Mennonite dialect. There was a feeling of it being “just right.” I discovered that my mother tongue had stood the test of time and maintained an integrity of the soul. By comparison, English and High German were roughage, bulk, fillers.

K.K.: You spent many years in Europe. Was this for your education?

J.T.: Since there was no system of life, living, or education in place when I was in school or living in Grünthal, Manitoba, and I sensed the lack thereof, I could not wait to travel and live in Germany where all this was in place.

I returned to Canada after completing my Ph.D. because my dear mother was very ill at the time. Later on I stayed, partly because of inertia and partly because of my colleague Al Reimer who, as a colleague, was part of the fish and bread without which I could not sustain myself. (Al Reimer was the copy editor of my dictionary).

I spent six years in Marburg, both as a teacher and as a student. Working at the *Deutscher Sprach- und Wortatlas* was an eye-opener and became a mirror to my ethnic soul. This was repeated in Kiel, home of and to the *Preussisches Wörterbuch* archives; Dr. Ulrich Tolksdorf, the curator, was a part of my Mennonite ethnic soul, waiting to be developed. As I was to him. Our mutual collegiality was on par with that of the Father and the Son. I was in Kiel as often as time and circumstances permitted. It was there at the *Stammtisch* in the Waitzstrasse where I became what I had always been: a storyteller and a sermonizer (see: *Predicht fier Haite*, Buske Verlag, Hamburg, 1984; and *Plautdietsche Jeschichten*,

Elwert Verlag, Marburg, 1990). Had it not been for Ulrich Tolksdorf’s premature demise, I would still live in Kiel.

K.K.: How do you think you developed your storytelling abilities?

J.T.: When in my early childhood Arbuse (“Wattermelon”) Klassen—the greatest storyteller I have ever experienced—and my father cut loose, I knew that God spoke Low German when in a good mood and I also knew that storytellers could still any waters. My mother was refined and objected to ribaldry because the church said she should, but she could not prevail against her old man and her favorite storyteller from *Tus* (home). This Peeta Klassen spoke of children having *nippad* themselves which meant they had a river (Djnieper) in their pants. I believe that Klassen, Mark Twain, Arnold Dyck [a Mennonite Low German author], and Victor Peters [Thiessen’s co-author for *Menno-nitische Namen/Mennonite Names*] are regulars at the Celestial Happy Hour *Stammtisch*.

K.K.: How and when did you first come into contact with the Max Kade Institute in Madison?

J.T.: I was introduced to the Max Kade Institute in the mid-eighties when I met [founding director] Jürgen Eichhoff, again, in Kiel. When I finally met the “movers and shakers” of this Institute in Madison this past summer, I experienced every sensation of belonging, similar to talking Mennonite Low German and having my dictionary abode in Kiel. Joe Salmons and Mark Loudon & Co. are the Keepers of the Holiest Shrine in Madison, or the USA, for that matter.

K.K.: Do you have a favorite entry in the Dictionary?

J.T.: My favourite entries in the Dictionary are *Frindschauft* and *nofaedme* and all that these terms stand for. [*Frindschauft* refers to relatives, a relationship by blood or marriage; kinfolk. *Nofaedme* refers to tracing relatives, as in genealogy, “a typical Mennonite indulgence of which they never tire. . . . Nothing gives Mennonites more satisfaction than to ferret out relatives all over the Mennonite globe and to draft plans to visit them.”]

K.K.: How has the Dictionary been received? What are some things you’ve heard said about it?

The Monroe Swiss Singers of Monroe, Wisconsin

by Deborah Krauss Smith, Director, Monroe Swiss Singers



The Monroe Swiss Singers in authentic Swiss costumes, 2005.

Although the village of New Glarus in Green County was originally colonized in 1845 by settlers from the canton Glarus, other Swiss primarily from the German-speaking cantons of Switzerland also found their way to Green County. During the 1860s, the community of Monroe, 15 miles south of New Glarus and the county seat since 1839, began to experience a heavy influx of Swiss not only from Europe, but also from New Glarus. With the establishment and building in 1868 of a Turner Hall in Monroe, which is currently the oldest continuously operating Swiss organization in Green County and possibly even the United States, Monroe and Green County gained an important venue for Swiss and German immigrants to carry on their Old World customs and traditions.

Consequently, Monroe has had a long history of Swiss choral groups, primarily yodel quartets and *Männerchors*. The *Monroe Harmonie*, a men's choir comprised of Swiss immigrants, was established at Turner Hall in 1891 and was, along with other Swiss vocal groups, a fixture in Monroe until the 1940s. The immediate predecessor of the Monroe Swiss Singers was the Turner Hall Swiss Club Men's Chorus, which was established in 1958. Due to dwindling membership, women's voices were added in February of 1963, and the group came to be known as the *Gemischter Chor Monroe*. On January 24,

1968, the name was officially changed to the Monroe Swiss Singers.

Of the original 19 singers in 1963—nine women and ten men—all but one were immigrants, and all from Switzerland except one from Germany. Today the group, which specializes in the performance of authentic choral and instrumental Swiss folk music, has grown to over 50 members from south-central Wisconsin. While only eight singers in the current group are either native Swiss or German, many of the rest are descendants of immigrants to Green County. Because few members still speak or understand Swiss dialect or German, part of each weekly rehearsal is dedicated to rote teaching of word pronunciations and translation of texts.

Edwin Schuetze, the chorus' first director (from 1963 to 1966), was followed by the group's only Swiss-born director, Christian Gafner (from 1966 to 1971). From 1971 to 1976, Betty Koehler directed the choir, and Marie Power from 1976 to 1985. The Monroe Swiss Singers' current director, Deborah Krauss Smith, the granddaughter of Swiss and German immigrants to Green County, has led the group since 1985.

Performing in colorful authentic costumes, the group's concerts and programs include singing,

Christmas on an Emigrant Ship

by Ossip Schubin

Published in *Sheboygan Amerika*, 25 December 1906

Translated by Antje Petty

All over the deck tiredness and homesickness—people are sitting, cowering, and lying down. The eyes of the emigrants are turned towards the East—all eyes—as many eyes as there are—yes, all of them are looking east, and all are clouded with pain and tears.

In the middle of this heartbroken crowd one person stands straight, only one person. It is a very old woman, a grandmother, who tries to cheer up her frightened little grandchild. For this she chooses the one means which through the centuries has helped mankind to find hope in times of misery: she tells a story.

“It will get better,” she whispers to the little boy. “Christmas is near, and everything always gets better at Christmas time, especially on the ocean. You see, at Christmas the birds come, the birds that bring peace to the people and calm to the seas—*Alcyones* they are called.” The grandmother had read this many years earlier in a thick old book. “Yes, they are called *Alcyones*. Almost two thousand years ago they appeared for the first time to let the seafarers know that Christ had been born. Then they continued to fly across the stormy sea and the rustling woods—gently imposing silence so that the sweet little child Jesus would not be disturbed in his slumber. Since that day they have returned every year at the same time.”

“Every year? They really come every year?” asks the grandson. “Yes, my darling, every year.” Then the grandmother grows silent. Now she is tired, too. But the little boy rests his elbow on his knee and gazes out over the sea.

The sun is setting. It grows into a bigger and big-

ger golden ball, igniting the clouds that encircle it and drag it into the ocean. Now the sea itself is aglow and glimmering as if precious jewels were riding the waves. Suddenly the boy screams and cheers and claps his hands: “Grandmother, grandmother! There they are!”

The grandmother awakes from her dream and asks: “Who?” “But the birds, of course! There! Can’t you see? They are sailing just above the waves. Look! Listen! They are whispering to the sea to be quiet!”

And indeed: beautiful silver-gray birds glide over

the waves. So close are the birds one could think they themselves are floating. They touch the sea lovingly with their wings and gently put it to sleep.

And then from one of the cabins a song emerges. A Christmas song! The sailors are singing to celebrate Christmas Eve. The emigrants listen. Familiar sounds settle over them and comfort them. They now sense

the quiet of the appeased sea. In their misery they had stopped counting the days, and they had not noticed that December 24 had arrived. Now the day brings a measure of consolation. Invisibly and affectionately hope spreads among them. Softly and melancholically a Christmas song forms on their lips, and for the first time they turn their heads towards the West.

A golden haze covers the sea. The song sounds more sincere and confident. And enveloped by gently singing hope, the emigrant ship continues to glide over the waves.

Ossip Schubin is the penname of Aloisa (Lola) Kirschner (1854–1934), a German-Jewish author of novels and novellas from Prague, Bohemia.



Sheboygan and Its German-language Newspapers: Additions to the MKI Collections

The MKI has recently received a large donation of materials from the Sheboygan County Historical Research Center, including more than 100 bound volumes of German-language newspapers. The collection contains many issues of the *Sheboygan Amerika* from the years 1906 to 1933; the *Sheboygan National Demokrat* from 1861 to 1862 and 1902 to 1921; the *Sheboygan Volksblatt* from 1895 to 1904; the *Sheboygan Zeitung* from 1880 to 1881 and 1905 to 1916; and more. This is just a small portion of the ca. 400 German-language newspapers published in Wisconsin over the years, including about 100 at the turn of the twentieth century. Some are undoubtedly rare issues; at this point we are still assessing what we have received.

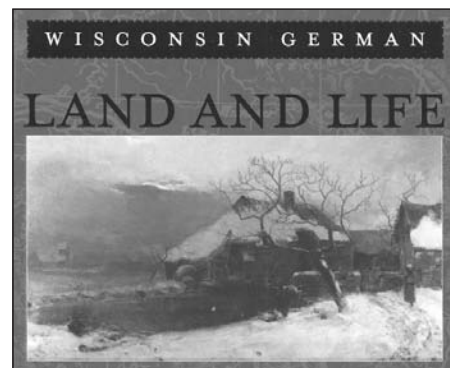
Today Sheboygan, located 50 miles north of Milwaukee on Lake Michigan at the mouth of the Sheboygan River, is home to over 50,000 people, and another 50,000 are in Sheboygan county. More than half of them still regard “German” as their primary ancestry, reflecting the fact that Sheboygan was one of the centers of German immigration to the Midwest in the second half of the nineteenth century. At that time, most Germans in Sheboygan County were Protestants from the northern and central German states, such as Prussia, Hesse-Darmstadt, Hanover, or Lippe-Detmold.

Some immigrants to the area farmed the fertile land, while others were skilled tradesmen who took advantage of the region’s abundance of natural materials, water power, and ideal shipping location. Wood and furniture industries, tanneries, and engine manufacturing flourished in Sheboygan. By the 1880s the city had become famous for its kitchen and bathroom cabinetry, fixtures, and utensils, gaining a national prominence to which the Kohler Company based in Sheboygan still attests today. As the county’s population exploded from 133 in 1840 to 27,000 in 1860 and double that by the end of the century, German-speakers consistently made up over 70 percent of its foreign-born population.

The Sheboygan Germans contributed not only their skills and enterprising energies, but also their

culture and way of life. This is reflected in the pages of the *Sheboygan Amerika*, from whose 1906 issues we highlight several items in this Newsletter. Open the paper on any given day and you will find local and world news; coverage of businesses, entertainment events, and stories about individual community members; serialized fiction, and letters to the editor. Always included are the “Stadt Neuigkeiten”—daily tidbits of town news and gossip. You may find the Christmas advertisements on the following pages particularly appropriate for the season!

New MKI Publication



We are pleased to announce the publication of *Wisconsin German Land and Life*, edited by Heike Bungert, Cora Lee Kluge, and Robert C. Ostergren. The volume includes contributions by both German and American scholars and represents an innovative approach to immigration research. The focus is on migrants from farming communities along the Rhine who relocated to Wisconsin in the nineteenth century: from the Westerwald to Reeseville; from the Cologne area to Cross Plains; from the Eifel to the so-called Holyland in Fond du Lac and Calumet counties; and from Rhine Hesse to Washington and Sheboygan counties. Authors of the individual articles concentrate on the migrants’ relationship to the land, using German and American records such as census and family records, land registers, plat maps, and land surveys. Readers learn about the migrants’ situation in their original home, the migration process itself, and their experience in Wisconsin. Thanks go especially to Kimberly Miller, MKI’s Editorial Assistant, for helping to finish this project!

The book is available through your favorite local bookseller or from the University of Wisconsin Press, <<http://www.wisc.edu/wisconsinpress/>>.

Christmas Ads from the *Sheboygan Amerika*, 1906, and *Die deutsche Hausfrau*, 1910

By Kevin Kurdylo and Antje Petty

The *Sheboygan Amerika* was published six times weekly from 1903 until 1941, and Milwaukee's *Die deutsche Hausfrau*, also well represented in MKI's collections, from 1901 to 1955. We have selected some seasonal items from 100 years ago in Sheboygan (pages 10–11), as well as a letter from Milwaukee (page 12), which was intended to help wives. Note the use of English words in many of the ads.

Winke für Weihnachtsgeschenke

Die beste Zeit zum Kaufen ist heute, da unser Lager noch groß und gut gewählt ist. Verzögerung bedeutet nur, daß die gewähltesten Möbel von anderen, pünktlicheren Leuten fortgekauft werden.

Above: This ad from Kroos & Son offers the following advice: “The best time to shop is today, as our inventory of select items is still large. Delay will only mean that the best furniture will be bought up by more punctual people.” Later on in the ad, Kroos & Son urge readers: “Verpassen Sie diese Gelegenheit nicht, sondern sprechen Sie vor und überzeugen sich.” (Don’t miss this opportunity, but drop on by and convince yourselves) that Kroos & Son is “der Store mit den niedrigen Preisen” (the store with the low prices.)

FLEXIBLE FLYER
Der Schlitten, welcher sich steuern läßt.

Es ist der beste Schlitten für jeden Knaben und der einzige Schlitten, den Mädchen kontrollieren können.

F. GEELE HDW. CO.

Later on in the ad, Kroos & Son urge readers: “Verpassen Sie diese Gelegenheit nicht, sondern sprechen Sie vor und überzeugen sich.” (Don’t miss this opportunity, but drop on by and convince yourselves) that Kroos & Son is “der Store mit den niedrigen Preisen” (the store with the low prices.)

The F. Geele Hardware Company (*left*) was selling the Flexible Flyer, “the sled that can be steered.” The ad goes on to say that it is “the best sled for every boy, and the only one that girls can control.” Of course, in the image showing three children on the sled (“We’ll wait for you at the bottom,” they cry as they pass a child on an inferior snow-traversing vehicle), the Flyer is being steered by a boy.

H.C. PRANGE CO.
Der größte Store in Sheboygan.

Puppen! •• Puppen!

608

**Leder-Körper zu Puppen und
Leder-Puppen
zu ermäßigten Preisen.**

Wir stellen heute eine große Sendung importierte Puppen, die wir gerade von den Fabrikanten aus Deutschland zugekauft erhielten, zum Verkaufe aus.

Die Sendung besteht aus

**54 Dutzend Leder-Puppen
u. Leder-Puppen-Körpern.**

Diese große Puppen-Sendung sollte bei uns nach dem gegebenen Versprechen bereits im September eintreffen, allein Umfängen, welche außer der Kontrolle der Fabrikanten lagen, verhinderten dies. Wir haben die Waren unter großer Preisermäßigung angenommen und der Vorteil kommt unseren Kunden zu Gute.



Above: Prange's ("The largest store in Sheboygan") offers 608 dolls and leather doll bodies at discounted prices, straight from the manufacturers in Germany. The shipment was supposed to have arrived in September, but was delayed due to circumstances beyond the control of the factory. Thus Prange's is able to pass the advantage of a price reduction along to their customers. Dolls originally priced at \$3.25 are offered for \$2.79, while 50 cent dolls went for 43 cents!

Die berühmten

„Teddy“-Bären

zum Verkaufe in unserem hellen Bargain-Basement.

Nett und schön! Freundlichere kleine Bären sind niemals gesehen worden.

In the same ad, Prange's also announces that the famous "Teddy" bears are for sale in their bright Bargain Basement. "Nice and beautiful! Friendlier little bears have never been seen."

Der **FRITZ** meint —

Ein schönes Weihnachts-Geschenk

wäre eines seiner feinen ledernen

Suit Cases.

Man findet bei ihm eine vollständige Auswahl aller Größen und Qualitäten, und zu allen Preisen.

Auch führt er ein großes Lager von **Handkoffern, Koffern, Kniedecken (Lap Robes)**



und **Blankets** zur Auswahl, zu Preisen, die Sie befriedigen werden.

Sollten Sie ein

Pferdegeschirr

benötigen, ein einspanniges oder doppelspanniges, ein leichtes oder schweres, so sprechen Sie bei uns vor. Es wird nur die beste Arbeit geliefert und die Preise sind recht.

Alle Reparaturarbeiten werden prompt und billig besorgt.

Fritz Telgener,

113 N. 8. Straße, Sheboygan, wo der Schimmel steht.

Above: Fritz Telgener's ad has a personal tone to it: "Fritz says that one of his fine leather 'Suit Cases' would make a beautiful Christmas gift." One can find a complete selection in all sizes and grades at Fritz's, for any budget. He also carries a large inventory of valises, suitcases, knee covers (Lap Robes), and blankets to choose from, at prices that will satisfy you. And if you should need a harness, single or double span, light or heavy, then just call on him. Only the best work is supplied and the prices are agreeable. All repair work is provided promptly and inexpensively. Remember, that's Fritz Telgener's, "wo der Schimmel steht." This last likely refers to a statue of a horse that may have stood outside the store—Sheboygan historians, contact us if you know the answer!

The letter that follows comes from *Die deutsche Hausfrau*, and begins, "Er kaufte ihr eine 1900 Waschmaschine." The author's name suggests that this ad might have been a translation from English into German.

He Bought Her a 1900 Washing Machine: One of our readers recounts how her husband learned what 'washday' means for a woman

Dear editor! Most men have no idea what "wash day" means for a woman. My husband is one of the best men there are, but he laughed when I asked him one day to buy me a *1900 Gravity* washing machine. I told him I could wash a whole tub of laundry in six minutes with the machine. "But dear wife," he said "a washing machine is a luxury. And besides, there is no better exercise than rubbing laundry on a washboard. It is good for your back. I think it is better to wait until we have paid off the mortgage on the farm before we spend money on such new-fangled falderal as a washing machine."

That was the end of that. I gave in and continued with the old washing routine. I had to admit that it was painful, but I knew that my husband had no idea how hard it is to do laundry for a family of five, including three small children.

I am not a strong woman, and so it happened that the laundry in addition to all the other house work became too much for me, and I fell ill. I had been ill for two weeks, and everything in the house had gone haywire, when I asked my husband to do the wash. It had been impossible to find a maid, no matter how much we were willing to pay or how much we pleaded.

So one morning my husband went to work, and soon I heard a lot of clatter in the kitchen. From my bedroom I caught an occasional glimpse of my poor John struggling with the heap of dirty laundry. If ever a man got enough exercise, it was my husband that day! I felt sorry for him, and yet I had to laugh when I recalled how he had made fun of me when I had asked him to buy me a *1900 Gravity* washing machine. When he was finally done, and the laundry was hanging on the clothesline, he was totally exhausted.

In the evening he came into my room and asked sheepishly: "What's the company called that makes those washing machines you talked about?" I looked

around and found the ad, which included the following address: *The 1900 Washer Co.*, 684 Henry Street, Binghamton, N.Y.

He didn't say anything else, but he called right away for the free washing machine catalogue. The booklet came immediately and with it an offer that would let us use the *1900 Gravity* washing machine for thirty days for free. My husband immediately liked the chance to try the machine without having to put down a cent. "We will use the washing machine for at least four weeks, even if we do not buy it," he said, and he placed an order.

The washing machine was sent to us immediately and without charge, and the company even offered us the option of paying in small installments. A week later I was well enough to try out the washer. It is the best washing machine I have ever seen. It practically runs on its own. It only takes six minutes to wash a whole tub-load, and the wash comes out impeccable.

We were both delighted with the washer and wrote to the manufacturer that we would like to keep it and would accept the easy payment plan of 50 cents a week. We now pay without ever missing the money, and I would not want to be without my washing machine anymore, even if it cost five times that much.

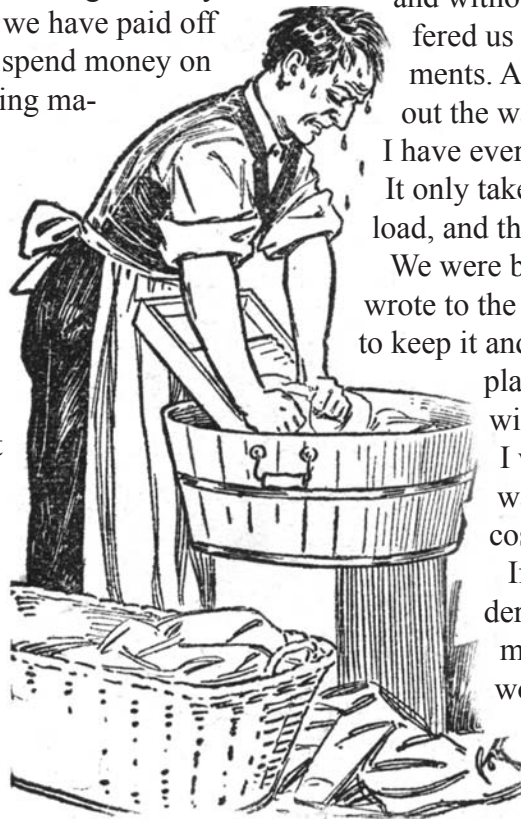
If housewives only knew what wonderful help the *1900 Gravity* washing machine provides, not one of them would be her old self anymore. The machine saves time; it provides comfort and saves doctor bills.

"Washday" is no longer a scary word. I am a totally changed woman since I don't have to use a wash-

board anymore. And if some husband somewhere objects to buying one of these labor-saving machines, please benefit from my experience and let him do a big load of laundry on an old-fashioned washboard. He will be only too happy to buy a *1900 Gravity* washing machine soon!

Everyone can get one for a free trial by simply requesting the washing machine catalogue. Please excuse my lengthy letter, but I hope, my dear editor, that you will print it for the benefit of all the ladies reading your publication.

Sincerely, Frau J. H. Smith



Ein „geschäftiger Tag“ für John

Felecia Lucht on “Language Variation in Lebanon, Wisconsin”

In this issue, we introduce Felecia Lucht, one of several graduate students in German at the UW–Madison who are writing dissertations on German-American topics. Cora Lee Kluge recently spoke with her about her research.

CLK: First of all, Felecia, tell us something about yourself—where are you from? Does your background explain your interest in the fate of the German language in communities in Wisconsin?

FL: I was born in Wausau, WI. When I was young, my grandparents on my father’s side sometimes spoke German and on my mother’s side Polish. From an early age I was interested in different languages and in learning why people switched languages. In the case of my grandparents, it was usually to say something to each other in a way that the grandchildren couldn’t understand!

CLK: What is the title of your dissertation?

FL: It is “Language Variation in German-American Communities: A Diachronic Study of the Full Spectrum of Language Use in Lebanon, Wisconsin.” I’m looking not only at the languages people currently use in the community, but also the history of language use there.

CLK: Why did you choose Lebanon?

FL: Founded in 1843, Lebanon started out as a predominantly German-speaking community, most of whose settlers came from Pomerania and Brandenburg. Although English is the dominant language today, there are still some speakers and semi-speakers of German. At this point, just over half of the population is of German heritage. In the 2000 U.S. Census, 999 Lebanon residents claimed German heritage, representing 59.9 percent of the estimated total population of 1,664.

CLK: Are there native speakers of German still in the area today? Or do you have to rely for your research on written documents?

FL: As with many German-American communities, the number of native speakers of German has dwindled considerably. But there is still a small number of speakers and semi-speakers of German, most of whom I met through Leonhard Staerk. And with the assistance of Pastor Charles Werth of St. Peter’s Lutheran Church and Pastor James O’Reilly-Christensen at Immanuel Lutheran Church, I have found rich sources of information on language use in the churches since the early years. I am also looking through census records and other documents to find additional information on institutional language use.

CLK: What is the reaction of the people of the community with whom you have spoken?

FL: I feel fortunate to have had the chance to work with the people of Lebanon. Everyone has been very helpful and generous with his or her time. The assistance of Lebanon’s residents is invaluable: not only does it help me with my research, but it also helps them preserve a piece of their town’s history.

CLK: What did you expect to learn when you began this study? Have any of your findings surprised you?

FL: One of the things I find most interesting about this study is that the transition from German to English in this community has been a very complex process.

CLK: Thank you very much, Felicia—and all the best for success this year, as you finish your studies!

Monroe Swiss Singers continued from page 7

yodeling, accordion playing and other instrumental music, Swiss flag-throwing (*Fahnenschwingen*), musical coin-rolling (*Talerschwingen*), and alp-horn blowing. The group has won many first-place awards in competition singing, performs at most of Green County's major events, and has accepted performance invitations at places such as Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry and Daley Plaza; Folklore Village Farm in Dodgeville, WI; the World Dairy Expo in Madison, WI; the Berne (IN) Heritage Festival; and UW–Madison's Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies.

The trademark event of the Monroe Swiss Singers is its *Swissfest*, held annually the first Sunday in November at the Turner Hall of Monroe and featuring many of Green County's Swiss choirs and musicians. 2006 marked the 40th anniversary of that event, at which six of the original 19 charter members who are still singing with the group were recognized. For over 30 years, the choir has provided musical leadership for the *Deutscher Weihnachtsgottesdienst*, a Christmas communion service conducted entirely in German and held annually since 1972 at St. John's United Church of Christ in Monroe. For a number of years, a portion of the group has also led the annual German Carol Sing at Folklore Village Farm's Plum Grove Church.

The Monroe Swiss Singers are also featured in *Wisconsin Folks*, the Wisconsin Arts Board's folk artists online directory; in a video produced by Discover Wisconsin Productions (DWP) for its nationally broadcast television/radio tourism series, *Discover Wisconsin*; and on DWP's CD production entitled *Discover Wisconsin Music: State-of-the-Art*. In addition, the group is featured in a book and recording by UW–Madison folklore professor, James P. Leary, entitled *Yodeling in Dairyland: A History of Swiss Music in Wisconsin*. In a non-musical venture, the group in 1996 published a well-received cookbook, *Old World Swiss Family Recipes*, whose second edition was featured in the *Wisconsin State Journal* in late 2005. The group's Web site is <www.MonroeSwissSingers.org>.

The Monroe Swiss Singers is a member organization of the Turner Hall of Monroe, its home

and headquarters, and is an active participating member of the North American Swiss Singing Alliance (NASSA), a national organization of Swiss choral groups in the Upper Midwest and Canada. In 1976, the Monroe Swiss Singers hosted NASSA's triennial Singing Festival and Competition, and in 2003 they assisted the New Glarus Yodel Club in hosting the event.

Deborah Krauss Smith holds a degree in music education from the UW–Eau Claire with applied majors in organ and voice. Her career as a church musician has spanned over 35 years.

Director's Corner continued from page 2

mailing labels. When he can find time between all his other activities, he catalogues new acquisitions. Please see our Web site for information about additions to our collections.

Alexandra Czernik, who has just said good-bye after a three months' internship with us and is now back in Bremen, spent time with both our new collection of Sheboygan German-language newspapers, a gift from the Sheboygan County Historical Research Center, and the Pabst Theater German Playscripts Collection, which came to us from the Pabst Theater in Milwaukee in September. We wish her well, and we hope to see her again in the future!

Finally, we are looking forward to the appearance in late spring of our next publication, *Other Witnesses: An Anthology of Literature of the German Americans, 1850–1914*, edited by Cora Lee Kluge. Included are German-language works by Christian Essellen, Reinhold Solger, Mathilde Franziska Anneke, Theodor Kirchhoff, Udo Brachvogel, Robert Reitzel, Julius Gugler, Edna Fern, Lotte Leser, and others; an introduction in English to each chapter provides background information and points the way for further research. Some of the texts are published here for the first time, and others have never appeared in book form. It will be a relief to get this project off my desk!

Now, at the end of the year 2006, we send to all our Friends and Readers our very best wishes for a happy holiday season and for much hard work, success, and happiness in the year to come. Stay in touch!

—Cora Lee

Rugklas continued from page 5

quiet, while noisy, rambunctious festivities were viewed as uncultured. In the countryside this meant that public Christmas celebrations that had included the whole community ceased to exist.

This year on Christmas Eve a solitary, good-natured old man will visit the children of Mecklenburg in their homes, leaving presents for all. He will be dressed in a red robe and a red bobble cap, wearing big boots, and sporting a flowing white beard. This *Weihnachtsmann* comes to Germany from America. Northern German and Dutch immigrants had brought their St. Nicholas with them to the new world, where he quickly became “St. Nick” or “Santa Claus,” a secularized figure popular across society. In 1931 the Coca-Cola company started an ad campaign featuring St. Nick for the first time as the jolly old man in a red suit with white fur trim, red and white being the company’s logo colors. This image was so widely viewed that it became the standard “Santa” depiction worldwide, even for the *Weihnachtsmann* in German lands. And fortunately for the children of Northern Germany, *Nikolaus* still appears on December 6th. Looking very much like Santa Claus, he leaves sweets and treats in children’s boots. *Rugklas*, however, hasn’t been seen in Mecklenburg or Western Pomerania for many, many years.

Christoph Schmitt, Ph.D., is Head of the Department of European Ethnology (Wossidlo Archiv) at the University of Rostock, Germany.



Billygoat as gift-bringer. Illustration by Elsa Beskow, Swedish author of children’s books.

Profile continued from page 6

J.T.: The Dictionary has been responsible for the leavening of Rudy Wiebe’s last two works. He writes “In particular, I want to acknowledge the work of Dr. Jack Thiessen, without whose absolutely unique *Mennonite Low German Dictionary*, so much of this book would have been impossible to write. Thank you, Jack, for making the (for me) instinctive sounds of Low German systematically visible on paper, at last.” This is basically a literary rendition of what Al Reimer has said all along as well. (Rudy Wiebe is the most auspicious Mennonite writer in history and one of the finest in Canada; I recently endorsed several Scandinavian writers’ submission to have Wiebe honoured as a Nobel Laureate).

K.K.: You spent some time as Director of the Travelers Recreation and Information Programme (TRIP) aboard ocean liners in the 1950s. Was that an interesting job for you?

J.T.: My shipboard experience as TRIP Director (head office in the UN Building in New York) was exceptional since I crossed the North Atlantic 42 times; this led to a hand-crafted (still extant) wedding invitation by Grace Kelly and Prince Rainier. I met them aboard ship, although Ms. Kelly traveled incognito, as did many other “prominent” passengers. I was not at the wedding in person, but I did write about the experience in *Mennonite Low German*.

K.K.: Can we expect another edition of the Dictionary when this one sells out?

J.T.: I have a few pages chock full of notes and additions for the next edition of the Dictionary, should there be one.

K.K.: What else are you working on now?

J.T.: Ever since my old man died six years ago at age 96 ½ I have written letters on his behalf describing conversations while drinking German beer and smoking Havanas “mett dem Oolen,” i.e. with God, and picking the Old Fellow’s brains. These will someday be published, and then we will know the mysteries of life!

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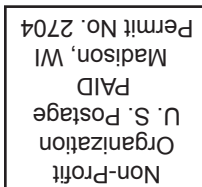
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