

## Introducing the Dobberpuhl-Krueger Family Collection

Mark Louden



Photo from a 1972 celebration of “100 Year Pioneer Families” in Ozaukee County. Kneeling, holding his son Joel, is Wayne Krueger; Lois Ann Krueger, née Dobberpuhl, is standing behind wearing sunglasses; Lois’s father Palmer is holding the Kruegers’ younger son Karl

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In the spirit of the Wisconsin Idea, the Max Kade Institute is dedicated to connecting research into the German-American experience with public outreach. An apt example of how this connection can be made occurred earlier this year.

In July, I was contacted by Joel Krueger, who was born and raised in Cedarburg, WI, the descendant on both sides of his family from nineteenth-century immigrants from Pomerania who were among the first German settlers in that part of the state. Joel’s mother, Lois Ann (Dobberpuhl) Krueger, who passed away just weeks before Joel emailed me, had collected

a number of important materials, documenting her family’s history. Joel, an investment management executive who has spent most of his career overseas and currently resides with his wife and two sons in England, was interested in donating his family’s collection to an institution where it would be preserved and made accessible to researchers. After contacting the German Historical Institute in Washington, DC, with whom MKI is a partner for the GHI’s German Heritage in Letters project ([germanletters.org](http://germanletters.org)), Joel was referred to us.

Shortly before our fall semester began, I traveled to Grafton, which bor-

ders Cedarburg, to meet Joel's father Wayne, who is a retired businessman. Even before we sat down, Wayne showed me framed photographs of Dobberpuhl and Krueger relatives that hang in the hallway leading into his apartment. Over coffee, Wayne and I went through the materials his wife had preserved from her Dobberpuhl ancestors, which in addition to a number of letters from European relatives dating as far back as the 1840s, include immigration and naturalization documents, birth and wedding announcements, and several clippings from local German-language newspapers. As a family history buff, I was thoroughly in my element; the several hours I spent visiting with Wayne and learning about his and his wife's ancestors fairly flew by.

After another visit to Wayne's home and more communications with Joel in England, we made arrangements for the Kruegers to donate their materials to MKI, which now constitute the Dobberpuhl-Krueger Collection. Kevin set to work scanning what ended up being over 130 files, and

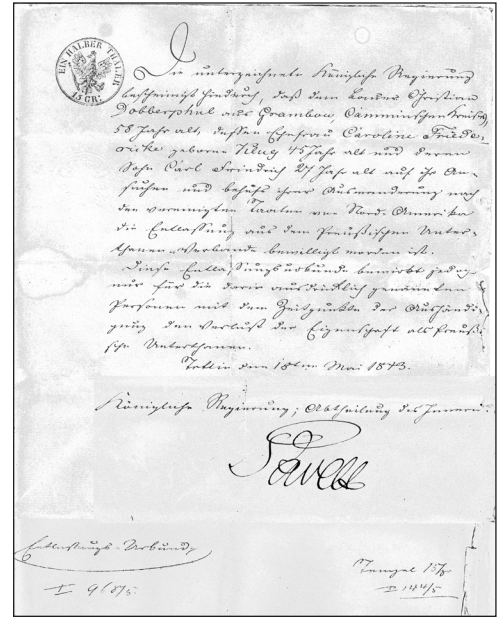
Antje began transcribing and translating some of the letters. In October, while Joel was in the States visiting his dad, the two drove to Madison to see their family collection at MKI.

Among the first Dobberpuhls (sometimes also spelled "Dobberphul") to emigrate to Wisconsin were Carl Christian Friedrich (1784–1848) and his wife Caroline Friederike (Klug) (1798–1875) and their children, who settled in what is today Cedarburg in 1843. The early settlers in this area were Old Lutherans, believers who had rejected the Prussian Union of 1817, a merger of Lutheran and Reformed churches in Prussia that was decreed by King Friedrich Wilhelm III.

Included in the documents in the Dobberpuhl-Krueger collection are *Entlassungsurkunden*, documents issued by the Prussian authorities giving citizens permission to emigrate. The one for Carl Christian Friedrich and Caroline Friederike, which was dated May 18, 1843, is pictured to the right.

Another interesting document was issued by the Territory of Wisconsin in November 1844, just fourteen months after the Dobberpuhls arrived in America. On it, which is shown to the left, one of the Dobberpuhls' sons, Carl Frederick (1816–1853), declared his intention to become a US citizen, renouncing "forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign Prince, Potentate, State or Sovereignty whatever, and particularly to Frederick William, King of Prussia."

The freedom to practice their faith without interference from state authorities was a major reason why families like the Dobberpuhls felt

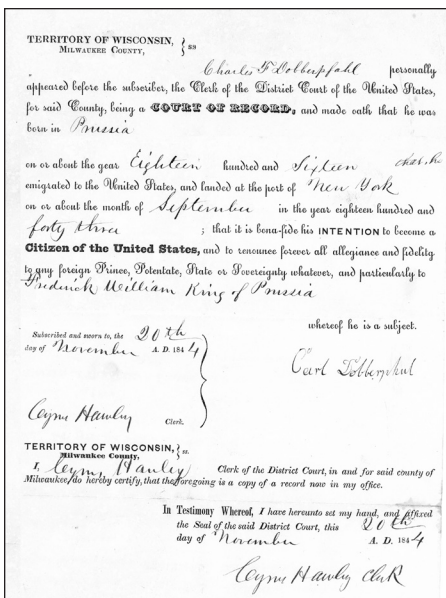


compelled to leave Pomerania. The first Old Lutheran settlement in Wisconsin was the community of Freistadt, meaning "free place," which was founded in 1839 in what is today Ozaukee County.

The importance of religion for early immigrants and their relatives back home is underscored in a letter in the collection sent by Caroline Dobberpuhl's brother, C. J. Gottlieb Klug, to the family dated April 29, 1846. Addressing his brother-in-law, Gottlieb stresses the importance of living according to the Christian faith as explicated in Martin Luther's catechism. "This should be our constant effort in all our affairs, that we pray and beg with all our heart to the Father for wisdom and grace in all undertakings and beginnings, future, and ending."

In his letter, Gottlieb Klug also refers to an intriguing situation related to church politics: "We have had news from America that Rev. Kindermann and others have taken up false teachings and that you have left them. Let us know the truth." Gustav Adolph Kindermann (1805–1856) was an Old Lutheran pastor who had been the

*Continued on page 6*



## Dear Friends and Readers!

This has been a rewarding fall for us at the Max Kade Institute. Our programming highlight has been “Neighbors Past and Present: The Wisconsin German Experience,” our new traveling exhibit funded by a Major Grant from the Wisconsin Humanities Council. Working with UW graphic designer Sue Medaris, Antje, Kevin, and I wrote the text for the fourteen poster-banners and selected diverse images, many of which come from the MKI Library and Archives. The number of institutions across the state that want to host the exhibit in conjunction with local programming has been so great that we decided to produce a second set of banners that will be on display here in Madison and elsewhere, including from April 29 until June 8, 2020, at the German-American Heritage Museum in Washington, DC. The display will overlap with the 44th Annual Symposium of the Society for German-American Studies held April 23–25, 2020, in Georgetown (visit [sgas.org/symposium](http://sgas.org/symposium) for more information). A schedule of where Neighbors Past and Present will be over the coming months can be found on this page.

The mission of MKI linking research with public outreach to advance the Wisconsin Idea, exemplified by Neighbors Past and Present, is also reflected in the content of this newsletter. The story behind the MKI's new Dobberpuhl-Krueger Family Collection underscores our commitment to documenting the legacy of German-speaking immigra-

tion to North America, which is only possible if we build ties to individuals and organizations through our outreach activities. At every MKI event, we hear fascinating stories that add to our understanding of how American regional cultures have come to be. Much of the inspiration for the NPP poster-banners has come from our decades-long work in communities across Wisconsin and beyond.

The Friends of the MKI play a crucial role in supporting our work in so many—sometimes surprising—ways, as the following anecdote shows. After our last Board of Directors in September, a number of us went to dinner. At one end of the table, board members Don Zamzow and Bill Petig made an exciting connection. Some years ago, Bill had begun researching the life and work of an important figure in Wisconsin German history, Albert Grimm (1864–1922), a Lutheran pastor from Antigo, WI, who as a child immigrated with his family from Pomerania and became a prolific writer, composer, and publisher. Don was excited to share with Bill that he in fact was acquainted with Judy Grimm, the last living grandchild of Albert Grimm, who still lives in the

area where her ancestors settled. Don connected Bill and me with Judy and her sister-in-law Ruth, and on a snowy Halloween Day, we traveled to the Grimm family home to visit Judy and Ruth, view and make copies of precious family historical documents, and enjoy a delicious lunch. Bill and I are now inspired to develop a public event centered on the legacy of Albert Grimm in the coming year.

Thank you so much, our Friends, for your loyal support of the Max Kade Institute. From all of us on the MKI staff, we wish you and your families a restful and joyous holiday season!

—Mark

### Upcoming dates for the NPP exhibit

December 4 - 30, 2019:

Appleton Public Library

January 13 - February 28, 2020:

Oshkosh Public Library

March 7 - April 25, 2020:

Chippewa Valley Museum, Eau Claire

Please check

<https://mki.wisc.edu/events/all-events> for additional display locations, updates, and new programming.

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## The German-American Textbooks and Educational Aids of Hermann Reffelt

Kevin Kurdylo

When William A. Trenckmann wrote his life story [see Book Review: *Preserving German Texan Identity: Reminiscences of William A. Trenckmann, 1859–1935*, p. 9], he mentions that, as a young child at his school in Millheim, Texas, “I mastered the Reffelt reader in a few months.” The Max Kade Institute’s Library holds several of Reffelt’s books, most all published by E. Steiger in New York. While not a great deal of information is available on Reffelt, it is clear he was a well-regarded educator and prolific author of German-language textbooks focusing on writing, reading, drawing, and arithmetic, along with one book of songs “für deutsche Schulen in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika,” and a book of poems, entitled *Dichtungen* (which, unfortunately, MKI does not own). While his books were created to be used by German-American students, his arithmetic works were also translated into English.

Johann Hermann Rudolph Reffelt was born December 12, 1811, in Bramsche an der Hase, near Osnabrück, where he attended *Gymnasium* and teacher’s college. In November of 1841, he married Carol Henriette Mathilde Biermann, and in 1842, the couple had a daughter, Catherine Dorothea Hermine Reffelt. While there is no additional information on Carol Henriette Mathilde, there is a record for Hermann’s sec-

ond marriage, to Julia Emilie Henriette Ahlborn, in August of 1848. This union produced a son, Julius, who was born around 1851. After teaching for some twenty years, Reffelt and his family immigrated in 1856 to West Bloomfield, New Jersey. In America, Reffelt continued his work as a teacher, including a position at the highly regarded German-American school founded in New York by pastor and educator Rudolf Dulon. Later, Reffelt founded a school for girls, and taught at the Hoboken Academy from 1861 until 1867. While most printed sources put Reffelt’s death in 1889, an article in the *New York Herald* and other records found in Ancestry.com indicate he passed away on December 22, 1891. He was survived by his wife, Julia, his daughter Hermine Rolffes (wife of J. Frederick Rolffes), and his son Julius Reffelt who, according to the 1910 US Census, was the proprietor of a button factory.

Of the many books Reffelt published, there are three that might have been the one Trenckmann “mastered” in his early school days: *Lesefibel, oder, Erster Unterricht im Lesen, verbunden mit Denk- und Sprachübungen* (New York, E. Steiger, 1864); *Erstes Lese- und Lehrbuch für Deutsche Schulen, oder, Erste Uebungen im Lesen, Schreiben und Zeichnen, verbunden mit Denk- und Sprachübungen* (Steiger, 1871); or *Das Erste Buch für Schule und Haus* (Steiger, 1871).

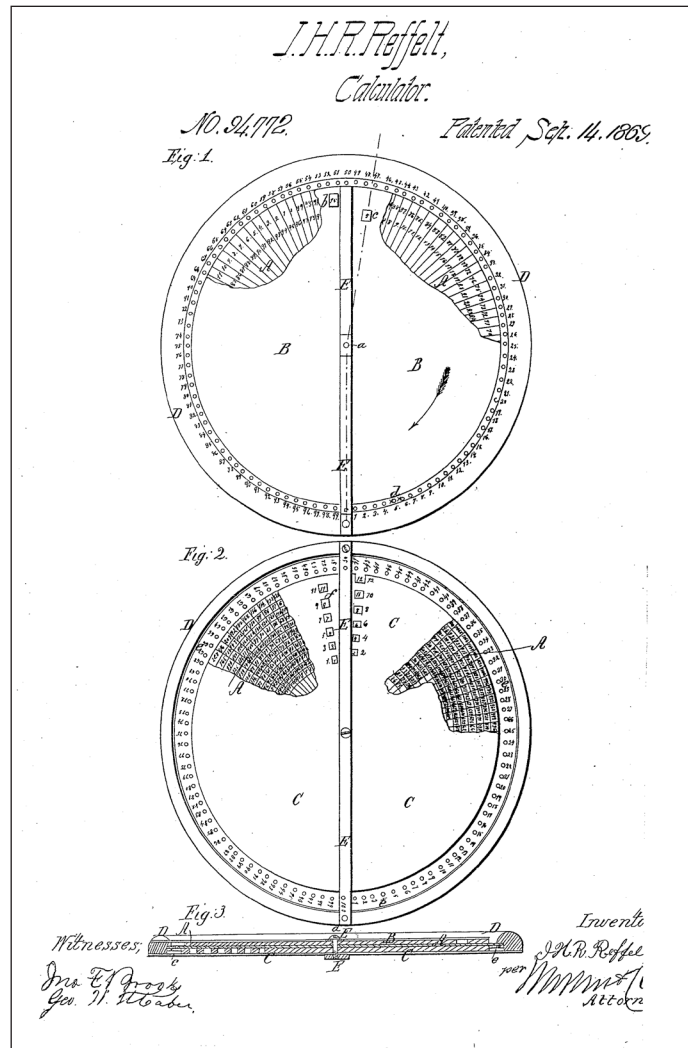


Given the dates of publication, it would most likely have been the 1864 *Lesefibel*, which, although MKI does not own a copy, is available digitally online (see: <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008620650>). The cover shows a beehive, beneath which is the motto: “Lernt, ihr Faulen, gross und klein, von den Bienen, fleissig sein” (Learn, you lazybones, large and small, to be diligent, like the bees)!

MKI does own a copy of *Das Erste Buch*, wherein we find, at the beginning of Reffelt’s foreword, the motto,

“The old must give way to the new; each good man must always strive to achieve better.” Within the foreword, he writes, “The first lessons of the child at school comprise writing, reading, drawing and arithmetic, combined with thought and language exercises. I have attempted in this small book to bring these four disciplines into a well-ordered methodological context, so that the first two pages cover the simplest and easiest aspects, the so-called cornerstones, of each of these disciplines. I do not know of any other German primers that have attempted this. To what extent I have succeeded I leave to the judgment of expert colleagues, and to reveal its effectiveness.” As evidenced from the first page, one can see initial exercises in line drawing, early math, and writing. These progressively become more advanced, so that later pages include vocabulary and simple sentences.

Later in the foreword, Reffelt indicates that he never shows “a single noun printed with a small initial letter, so that the child should not learn anything that would later have to be corrected. Since first impressions are the strongest, there is a difficulty here [in America], where children learn nouns in the English language mostly with a small initial letter. In order to make it easier for the German-American child to learn the correct gender of nouns and to form the plurals of them, I have, in most cases, provided both. The insightful teacher will know how to use the individual words as well as the sentences for a variety of thought and language exercises, and thus to strengthen the child’s power of thinking and to develop his sense of language.”



Reffelt’s works were adopted as part of the curriculum in school systems throughout the East coast and nationwide.

In addition to his numerous textbooks, Reffelt was also an inventor and/or improver of educational

aids, for which he held at least three patents: Reffelt’s Arithmetical Aid, Improvement in Numeral Frames, Reffelt’s Calculating Machine, and the Alphabeticon, an apparatus “intended to facilitate the otherwise tedious process of teaching the first rudiments of any language for which the apparatus may be prepared.”

We have no image of Johann Hermann Reffelt. The eminent educator and inventor, however, appears to have been a practical person up to the end, where his brief obituary notice concludes, “Please omit flowers.”

Ferner empfehle ich:

**Reffelt's Alphabeticon**  
zum leichten Lesenlernen.

REFFELT'S  
**Arithmetical Aid**  
zum leichten Rechnenlernen.

**Fractional Frame**  
und  
**Calculating Machine.**  
Prospecte gratis.


Continued from page 1

leader of the Old Lutheran exodus from Pomerania in 1843 of which the Dobberpuhls had been a part. That same year Kindermann founded Davids Stern (David's Star) parish in Kirchhayn, which was the second Lutheran congregation to be founded in Wisconsin after Trinity Lutheran was founded in Freistadt in 1840. Kirchhayn, Cedarburg, and Freistadt form an almost perfect triangle, with each community about 7 miles apart from each other.

Although Klug does not specify what he understands to be Kindermann's "false teachings," they likely have to do with tensions between the pastor and the Breslau Synod with which he was affiliated in Prussia. Kindermann appears to have felt that synodal leaders were too accommodating to the Prussian civil authorities, which led to his suspension by the synod and at least partly inspired him to emigrate. Kindermann's strong views on the autonomy of the church from the state were expressed after his arrival in Wisconsin, when

he resisted attempts to subject parochial schools to oversight from outside authorities. In any case, historians generally praise Kindermann's efforts to build the early Lutheran church in Wisconsin, work that was not without its challenges due to intra-Lutheran disagreements stemming from differing interpretations of doctrine and personality conflicts.

There are a number of other documents of interest in the Dobberpuhl-Krueger collection. One is a certificate apparently in Rev. Kindermann's own hand verifying that he performed the marriage ceremony between Carl and Caroline Dobberpuhl's daughter Wilhelmine (1818-1857) and Friedrich Groth (1824-1901) on February 8, 1844, less than six months (!) after the Dobberpuhls' arrival in America. The document is written in flawless English but in a script that is very close to German *Kurrent*. Since Kindermann had himself accompanied the Old Lutheran migrants in 1843 and was probably not yet proficient in English, it is likely he copied the text from a model provided to him.

There are many more gems in Dobberpuhl-Krueger collection, including a number of ephemera. My favorite is a poem titled "Troubles of a Traveling Man," which was produced for customers of the Ed Hafemeister shoe store in Milwaukee. It is written in "Denglish," a fanciful blend of German and English that was a popular form of humor among German Americans in the 19th and 20th centuries. The content suggests it was written during the Prohibition era. 

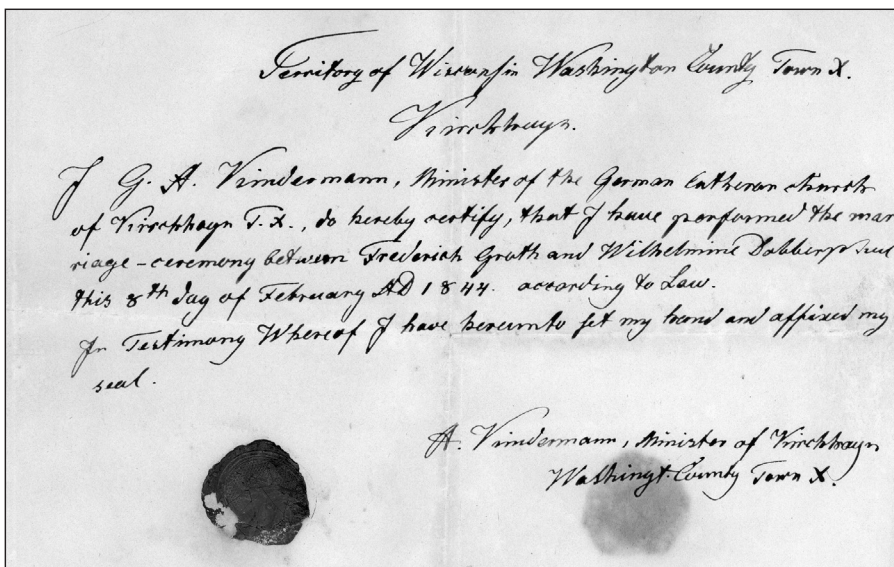
### Troubles of a Traveling Man

Wer on the road sei Lebe macht,  
Ihut viel experience meet a  
Und was mir just passiert is  
Ihut sure einiges beat a;  
Just lately gar nit lang zuruck,  
Ihu' in a train ich hota,  
Wir reiste durch a suffrage state  
Which recently ging troda;  
Da rushed a fellow in the car,  
Sei face roth wie ge-painted  
Und schreit: Hot einer liquor hier?  
A lady hot ge-fainted,  
Gi sure sag ich, unlock my grip,  
Hier is a bottle brandy.  
Wenn's for a life zu saven is,  
Dann is the stuff doch handy.  
Er grabbed the bottle  
Und gulped the booze  
Und sagt ganz easy, yes sir,  
Des hot a life ge-saved all right.  
Ich feel a whole lot better.  
To hell mit how you feel sagt ich;  
Du crook, hier rein zu laufa  
Und mit a lady for pretext  
Mein brandy auszusaufa.  
Hold on sagt er, du slanderst mich  
Ich thu' nit false pretend a  
A lady hot gefainted  
Und ich konnt' die sight nit stand a.

Sauft Wasser wie die Fish und kauft  
eure shoe von

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## Sophie Gudden: A German-Wisconsin Feminist and Oshkosh Leader of 100 Years Ago

Alan Lareau

In anticipation of the showing of MKI's exhibit "Neighbors Past and Present: The Wisconsin German Experience" in Oshkosh in early 2020, many intriguing tales of German immigrants have surfaced. After all, in the 19th century Oshkosh was the second-largest city in Wisconsin and destination of many German-speaking immigrants, including workers in the wood industry, who were imported to labor in the lumber mills along the Fox River, and farmers who found the landscape much like home. Oshkosh was also the site of a thriving brewing industry, a culture brought over from the homeland, and a huge number of saloons, pubs, and taverns where the bubbly beverage was served. The city was home to two Turner Halls and no less than eight different German-language newspapers from 1852 to 1920. But one story stands out, sadly all but forgotten though an important part of the city's heritage: that of Sophie Gudden (1861–1919).

The name Gudden may ring bells for Bavarians, for Sophie's father, Dr. Bernhard von Gudden, achieved notoriety as the psychologist who diagnosed King Ludwig II of Bavaria as insane, and who drowned with him under mysterious circumstances in the Starnberger See in 1886. Sophie, born in Munich on August 21, 1861, was one of nine children, many of whom went on to illustrious careers as artists and doctors. She married her American cousin, who



Sophie Gudden, *Oshkosh Northwestern*, February 26, 1907, p. 7

was also named Dr. Bernard Gudden (though without the h), when he was studying medicine in Munich. In 1884, the couple moved to America, where Dr. Bernard Gudden had his medical practice in Oshkosh, near his home town of Black Wolf. Here he became a prominent general practitioner and surgeon, and proprietor of the German American Hospital. Sophie soon became well known as a cultural leader for her activities in lo-

cal arts organizations such as Twentieth Century Club, but she was also active in statewide workers' rights campaigns through the Wisconsin Consumers' League. An eight-hour day and minimum wage for women and improved child labor laws were among her strong concerns. She became centrally involved in the women's suffrage campaign, speaking around the country at political and public events in German and in Eng-

**Mrs. Dr. B. C. Gudden left this morning for Munich on account of the recent death of her father, who was drowned with King Ludwig of Bavaria. She will be accompanied to New York by Dr. Gudden.**

*Oshkosh Daily Northwestern*, June 16, 1886, p. 4

lish, and writing articles for English and German newspapers. She worked with the Wisconsin Woman Suffrage Association, but demanded a more radical strategy and so founded the Wisconsin Political Equality League, of which she served as vice-president. In her last years, she was confined to a wheelchair due to arterial sclerosis, but though that limited her mobility, it did not slow down her activism, for, as she said, “my tongue was never affected by sclerosis.”

In addition to her political writings, Sophie Gudden had literary interests. In 1893, she published *Familienfestspiele* in Stuttgart, a collection of short dramatic sketches for amateur performance; her book of German-language fairy tales and a novel were never published and appear to be lost.

Dr. Bernard Gudden committed suicide in September 1916 following a nervous breakdown and depression, but Sophie Gudden remained a loud voice and visible leader in the suffrage cause. She died just weeks after Wisconsin legalized suffrage, on July 23, 1919. The Guddens, who are buried in Black Wolf, had no descendants.

Mrs. Gudden owned a considerable art collection, but the only public bequest in her will was the donation of

two paintings from her collection to the city of Oshkosh for display in the Public Library, which stood around the corner from her home. One painting of a child was by her brother, Rudolf Gudden (1865–1935), an accomplished artist in Munich, and the other, of an old woman, was by her brother-in-law Paul Ritter (1859–1888, not to be confused with his famous uncle of the same name, also a painter). These two fine paintings appeared to have been lost after her death, abandoned and neglected for

a century, but just recently they were found and identified in storage at the Oshkosh Public Museum, where they had landed with incorrect attributions and confusing paperwork.

Despite the prominence that she enjoyed during her lifetime, Sophie Gudden has been all but forgotten today. Her fascinating story deserves to be rediscovered and retold. May it also be an inspiration to look for other forgotten history. 🗝️

*Alan Lareau is a retired Professor of German in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures at the University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh, and a member of the MKI Friends Board of Directors.*



Unattributed clipping, 1919, Oshkosh Public Library, reprinted in Michael J. Goc, *Oshkosh at 150: An Illustrated History of Oshkosh* ([Friendship, WI]: New Past Press, 2003), p. 78. The image is titled, “Wisconsin Suffragists in Convention,” and also shows Meta Berger, Helen Haight, Jessie Annette Jack Hooper, and Ada James



## William Trenckmann's Efforts to Preserve German Identity in Nineteenth-Century Texas

Antje Petty

*Preserving German Texan Identity: Reminiscences of William A. Trenckmann, 1859–1935.* Edited by Walter L. Buenger and Walter D. Kamphoefner, Texas A&M University Press, 2019. xii, 210 pp.

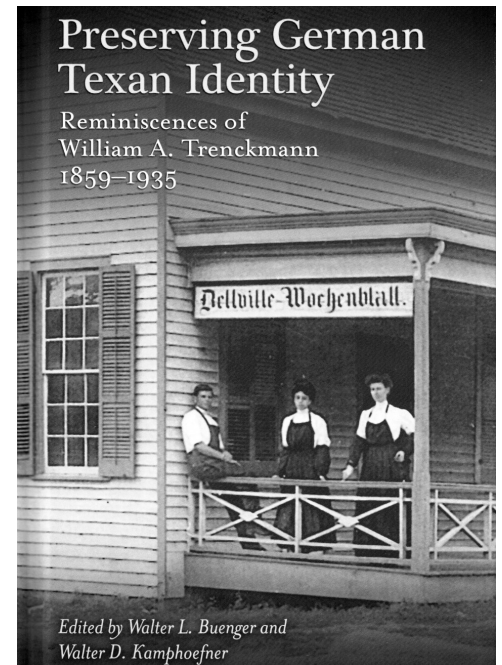
On September 17, 1931, the German-language newspaper *Das Wochenblatt* of Austin, Texas, printed its 40th anniversary issue. The paper's publisher, William A. Trenckmann, used the occasion to include the first installment of his memoirs, *Erlebtes und Beobachtetes* (Experiences and Observations). "If I as one who never attained any kind of fame am telling a lot about my life history and the history of the *Wochenblatt*, it is for two reasons: first, because I firmly believe that many of my readers of long standing are kindly disposed to me and might like to know me better, [. . .]; second, because the story of my life, even a humble one like mine that has never climbed the highest peaks nor fallen to the lowest depths, might still hold valuable lessons." [40] The serialization continued until February, 1933. It is now available in English as *Preserving German Texan Identity: Reminiscences of William A. Trenckmann, 1859–1935* with annotations by Walter L. Buenger and Walter D. Kamphoefner. Their detailed introduction and extensive footnotes guide the reader through the story and provide additional information, clarifications and

context, especially on the German communities, family backgrounds, and politics in Texas at the time.

As a matter of fact, Trenckmann, a Texas German who consciously straddled the German and Anglo worlds, had a unique perspective and a decided impact on Texas in the decades around the turn of the twentieth century. By the time he published his memoirs, Trenckmann had worked as a teacher and school principal, had been a member of the Texas House of Representatives, and had reached prominence as the *Wochenblattmann*, the founding publisher of the Bellville *Das Wochenblatt*, a German-language weekly, which he later moved to the city of Austin, and which reached readers across the state.

Trenckmann begins his story with his childhood in rural Millheim, Austin County, where he was born in 1859 on a farm that his father Andreas, a former school director from Prussian Saxony, had purchased a year earlier. Like Andreas Trenckmann, many German immigrants in Millheim were highly educated, relatively prosperous, and tended to be Freethinkers. Education was extremely important to them, and Trenckmann devotes large sections of his memoirs to the topic.

In Millheim, the German settlers went to great lengths to fund the local school and hire a highly qualified teacher. German was the main language of instruction.



"Absolutely sovereign in Millheim was only one man, and that man was our teacher, E. G. Maetze, who reigned supreme in his own kingdom—the school [for over 25 years]. I shall devote separate space to this school, because it was the real heart and also the pride of the settlement."

As a graduate of the University of Breslau, a former school principal, and a former member of the Prussian parliament in Berlin, Ernst Gustav Maetze indeed brought remarkable qualifications to this small, rural Texas community. The youngest students were taught by Maetze's daughter Ida, "under whose gentle direction," Trenckmann writes, "I mastered the Reffelt reader in a few

months.” [See article on p. 4]

When he was fourteen, Trenckmann’s mother died, and he left school to help his father on the farm. It was teacher Maetze who three years later encouraged him to attend the brand new Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College. “He had left me a geometry book in which I was to do some preparatory studying. My heart beat with joy at this prospect for further study. [. . .] I worked hard on geometry, brought in the corn and all the cotton except a few remnants. In the hope of securing a scholarship, I rode to Bellville in order to have myself examined. [. . .] Superintendent Rote examined me the next day and recommended me for a scholarship after he was convinced that I knew my multiplication tables and the capital cities of Texas and New York.” [68]

Trenckmann thrived at A&M, where—somewhat at odds with the mission of the university—he took classes in literature, languages, classics, and science. He was one of only a few ethnic Germans, and of those the only one who had grown up on a farm. Once again, the preparation he had received in Millheim loomed large. “I will add that I owe to my revered teacher in Millheim the fact that I always headed the class in English during the three years, and in my second year I was accorded the honor of contributing the essay for the commencement exercises. In the third year, I was given the honor that today is known as Valedictorian.” [71] He was underwhelmed by the content that was taught at A&M, but college broadened his horizon in another significant way. “I learned

nothing that I could use in any profession, except possibly a little bookkeeping. [. . .] The fact that I had two years of French and three years of Spanish, graduating in both, probably did not enable me to instruct Mexicans in chopping cordwood, nor would my French have been understood in Paris; but my reading knowledge of both these languages did preserve me from the assumption that only the English- and German-speaking peoples are fit to be the bearers of culture and that other peoples are inferior.” [75]

After graduation in 1879, Trenckmann became a teacher to support himself, finding employment first in Frelsburg and later in Shelby, two heavily German communities. “So I was to be a teacher and I, the son of a successful teacher, having grown up in a community in which the schoolmaster was the most highly respected man, was glad to be a teacher.” [76] At that time, school

policies in Texas were largely set at the local level, which resulted in disparities in quality between schools, but also provided communities with the opportunity to develop their own curriculum, including languages taught. “So far as I remember, no female teachers were employed in the German schools, but all the more of them taught in the small towns with two or more private schools. In these the daughters of former wealthy slave owners taught the courses in which they had been trained. Arithmetic was practically never taught, for that was considered unsuitable for ladies, but on the other hand there was often much training in declamation.” [77]

In 1884, Trenckmann seized the opportunity to become school principal in Bellville, the Austin County seat, which not only provided him with a larger salary, but also offered more intellectual stimulation. According to Buenger



The Trenckmann family, about 1903

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and Kamphoefner, Bellville had 807 inhabitants in 1890. Forty percent of the county's citizens were German, 25 percent were Anglo, nearly 25 percent were African Americans, and the rest mostly Czech: a multilingual place where non-German ethnic groups often spoke and read German. Trenckmann reveled in the Germanness of the town: "All the larger business establishments with the exception of the two Jewish firms were in the hands of Germans. [. . .]. There was plenty of entertainment. [. . .] At Hermann Schlosser's I enjoyed many a game of pool, and in private homes and in the Turner Hall I gave lessons in playing Skat. [. . .] We had organized a literary society, which consisted of an equal number of young men and young ladies." [100–102] Here Trenckmann met Tillie Miller, whom he married in 1886. The daughter of a local merchant, Tillie was highly educated herself. As Trenckmann put it: "I had gained a comrade, who although of a very different temperament from mine, had the same goals in life that I had." [104]

How much the couple worked together became evident in 1891, when they jointly decided William would give up his principal job and instead publish a German-language newspaper, with Tillie being the "editoress." They were hoping to eventually make more money than a principal's salary, but their motivation ran much deeper:

"The conditions of the time had a lot to do with our decision to enter into a risky enterprise. It was a boom period for German Americans. They had grown greatly in numbers through the big migration of the two

preceding decades. [. . .] In the cultivation of music the Germans, who had introduced male choruses, were the leaders. They took the lead in school improvement. Many of the large cities in the North maintained German theatres, the German *Turnvereine* had become important in the country. [. . .] German daily newspapers were exercising great influence, and German weeklies shot up like toadstools in the rain. Politicians eagerly wooed the German vote through flattery and learned to drink and to appreciate *Kochkäse* (German cheese spread). This and the growing prosperity of the Germans had brought about a greater respect for them and a greater recognition of their worth, but it had also awakened jealousy. This jealousy was particularly evident in the Southern states, where so many plantation and slave owners had become impoverished. In many counties they saw their lands fall into the hands of German immigrants. [. . .]

"I considered myself capable of helping to heal the breach, and I hoped to influence the Germans in taking a more active part in other phases of politics and to seek a more powerful assertion of their rights than the question of prohibition, which was gradually becoming a burning one. I particularly wanted to help the newer immigrants to an understanding of the American institutions. I wanted to impress upon them Carl Schurz's teaching that in order to become good Americans, they must remain good Germans; i.e., they must preserve in their homes the German language as the bearer of German culture." [109–110]

*Das Wochenblatt* became successful, surpassing expectations. In the early 1900s, it had a circulation of almost 3,000 and was sold in 32 counties—an organ for German Texas as a whole, but appealing especially to rural and small town Germans.

Trenckmann acted on his ideals. In 1906 he entered politics, running for a seat in the Texas House of Representatives as a Democrat. It may seem surprising, at first, that the son of a 48er, a group of German immigrants who are usually associated with the Republican cause and progressive ideals, would be a Democrat, but it is eye-opening to read Trenckmann's main reason for doing so: to support Texas' Terrell Election Law, a primary election law intended to disenfranchise African Americans. "I have always been in favor of equal justice for the colored people and for giving them equal voting rights. But I was convinced that their participation in elections as they were conducted in Austin County, and still worse in other areas of the South [. . .] was harmful to them, because it aroused bad feelings amounting to hatred in the white people, on whose good will they are largely dependent." [141]

In other sections of his reminiscences, Trenckmann's attitudes towards African Americans are not just paternalistic, but outright racist, as when he accuses black maids of being habitual thieves and sloppy workers. He writes that "Negro leaders at the time interpreted social equality to mean that they had a right to insult whites including women on the street, the type of thing that gave cause for the organization of the Ku

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Klux Klan.” [142] He is especially concerned about “the smartest ones, mostly the preachers and teachers,” whom he accuses of secretly inciting others against whites. “I am convinced that this situation has not really changed but has only gotten worse by reason of the fact that many young Negroes wore the American uniform in France [during World War I].” [142]


World War I was a trying era for German Americans, including those living in Texas. Like the vast majority of German Americans, Trenckmann and his *Wocheblatt* promoted American neutrality, but once America entered the war, they came to stand unwaveringly with their adopted country. Still, German Americans felt the repercussions of being both German and American. The language and culture that Trenckmann so revered now had to be kept discreet. Trenckmann’s connections, however, paid off. An old friend of his was now the US Postmaster General and gave *Das Wocheblatt* the first exemption in the country from the requirement to file translations of all war-related articles.

After the war, Trenckmann used his paper for appeals to alleviate the suffering of German civilians in Europe, and he was incensed that “appeals by German organizations to be permitted to send clothing and food across were briskly refused.” [178] At home, post-war years “brought the German American a new trial; but this time it was directed against all immigrants, against the Catholics, the Jews, and the Negroes, and against all persons with socialistic or communistic

inclinations. All at once an announcement came that the Ku Klux Klan had been newly organized.” [181] Soon Klan violence descended on the rural counties. German Texans were among the victims, but they also united to stop the Klan terror, especially by making use of the ballot box. “With few exceptions, the Germans did their part in getting rid of this shameful business. With them were the Swedes, Bohemians, Italians, Poles, and others.” Trenckmann does not mention African Americans. [183]

As Trenckmann wrote the final installment of his reminiscences in February of 1933, he saw a peaceful time ahead, though events in Europe would soon prove him misguided. But at this time, he was primarily concerned with the fact that, “among maturing young people, only a small minority of whom have had instruction in German, the language of their forefathers is gradually being forgotten and that most of the second generation who can still speak the language seldom make use of it. It looks as if in a few decades the knowledge of German will be limited to the highly educated. If it is to be preserved by those of German blood as a key to its rich cultural treasures, every effort will have to be made to change this trend.” [184] Ultimately, the trend was not reversed, but it is remarkable in itself that *Das Wocheblatt* was still published in 1935, as were other German-language papers in Texas.

By choosing the title *Preserving German Texan Identity*, the editors state what had been William Trenckmann’s main goal in life. The book not only adds another voice to the

chorus of (German) American stories, but is also an invitation to more deeply explore America’s German-language newspapers, as they provide a narrative that both parallels the Anglo-American story and enriches it. 

## German or English: A Conversation from 1862

Mark Loudon

Some years ago, in the course of my research on the history of German in Pennsylvania, I came across a fascinating pamphlet titled *Deutsch oder Englisch* (German or English). It was published in Allentown, PA, in 1862 and bore the subtitle (translated), “A conversation between two neighbors, Sebastian and Jacob, about the German language in North America.”

During the first half of the 19th century, thousands of Pennsylvanians descended from colonial-era German-speaking immigrants spoke a vernacular language related to Palatine German dialects, Pennsylvania Dutch, and could read and understand a form of standard German that was used in schools, churches, and the press. Around the time of the Civil War and afterward, as Americans generally became more mobile, Pennsylvania Dutch people came into closer contact with English monolinguals and many gave up their heritage language.

The attrition away from German in rural Pennsylvania concerned some, including the unnamed author of *Deutsch oder Englisch*, who sought to alert his fellow German speakers to what they risked losing. The conversation between Sebastian and Jacob begins as follows.

*Sebastian: Good evening, Jacob.*

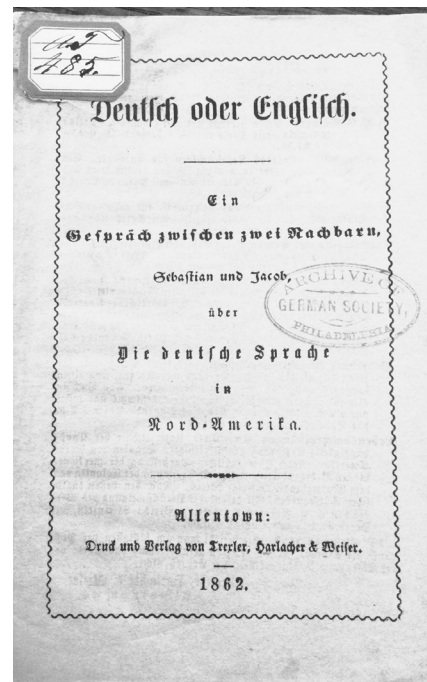
*Jacob: Good evening, Sebastian; it's nice to see you. Is your family well?*

*S: Yes, thank goodness! You're quite healthy, I'm glad to see. I thought I would stop by this evening for a little while to chat with you about a topic that is important to me. I see that you don't send your children to our English Sunday School, but to the German one. Are you doing that because of the German language or are there other reasons?*

*J: Only because of the language. I would much prefer to send them to the same school as the other children in our neighborhood, but my children should – really, must – learn German.*

*S: I can't understand why you are so adamant about this. We live in an English-speaking country. English is a more beautiful language, eventually everyone will become English speakers, and we Germans will never amount to anything if we don't speak English. That's why we should have our children learn English instead of German.*

*J: You mentioned three or four reasons why we should speak English only. Let me give you a few why we shouldn't switch to English. You say, “We live in an English-speaking country.” I say, we're in a free country where everyone may speak what he wants. It doesn't surprise me when our English-speaking neighbors aim to suppress the German language since that's to be expected of them. But it amazes and pains me very much when I see how Germans, even those who barely understand yes and no, try to put*



*down the language they grew up with, the language their fathers and mothers spoke and still speak, the language that they babbled in as small children and is associated with everything dear to them. As I say, this amazes and pains me; it's a kind of suicide when someone rejects his own language and with it every memory of our ancestors and our fatherland and its history. It would be bad enough if we were forced to do this, as some oppressed peoples are, but it is doubly bad when this kind of thing happens voluntarily. Over generations many Germans in Pennsylvania and other states succeeded in establishing schools that were on an equal footing with their English counterparts. Only recently have English speakers now started to dominate because many Germans have helped*

## Deutsch oder Englisch.

Sebastian. Guten Abend, Jacob.

Jacob. Guten Abend, Sebastian; es freut mich, dich zu sehen. Ist Deine Familie wohl?

Sebastian. Ja, Gottlob! bei Dir ist auch Alles gesund, wie ich mit Vergnügen sehe. Ich dachte, ich wollte heute Abend ein wenig bei Dir einkehren, und mich mit Dir unterhalten, und zwar über einen Gegenstand, der mir wichtig scheint. Ich sehe nämlich, daß Du Deine Kinder nicht in unsre englische, dagegen aber in die deutsche Sonntagsschule schickst. Thust Du das bloß der deutschen Sprache wegen, oder hast Du auch noch andre Gründe dafür?

Jacob. Allein um der Sprache willen. Ich würde sie viel lieber mit unsern Nachbarkindern in dieselbe Schule schicken; allein meine Kinder sollen und müssen Deutsch lernen.

Sebastian. Ich kann nicht begreifen, warum Du so darauf bestehst. Wir sind hier in einem englischen Land; das Englische ist viel schöner; es wird mit der Zeit Alles englisch werden; ja wir Deutsche können nie zu etwas Ordentlichem kommen, wenn wir nicht Englisch werden: darum sollten wir unsre Kinder nicht Deutsch, sondern Englisch lernen lassen.

Jacob. Du hast da drei oder vier Gründe angeführt, warum man Englisch werden soll; laß mich Dir nun auch

force say,  
Fundamentally predisposed in so  
many ways  
To a richness of novel yet clear  
expression;  
It is, as we ourselves were, so many  
years ago,  
When Tacitus encountered us:  
Distinct, unadulterated, and unique.

In their conversation, Jacob keeps trying to convince the skeptical Sebastian that it is worth the effort to keep up German, a language that even English people are keen to learn. Sebastian points out that it is important to know English if Germans want to succeed in public life, as in politics or business. Jacob concedes the utility of knowing both German and English, yet he notes that the maintenance of the German language goes hand in hand with the preservation of the German virtues of industry (*Fleiß*), perseverance (*Ausdauer*), simplicity (*Einfachheit*), thrift (*Sparsamkeit*), and modesty (*Bescheidenheit*).

Eventually, Jacob succeeds in convincing Sebastian of the value in maintaining German and shares a dramatic anecdote of what can happen when it is lost.


*I visited a home familiar to both you and me that I do not wish to name. On the bench in the corner sat the old Dutch mother of the house, who perhaps had helped to carry on her head the boards to build that house in her younger years; whose lot it had probably been to carry on her head to and from the mill the grain and flour for her children's bread; and who in any case helped to lay the groundwork for and bring about her family's success through her hard work, thrift, and*

*them to stamp out German traditions and ethnic identity. What are the Germans thinking?*

The author of *Deutsch oder Englisch* goes on to argue that German as a language is in fact superior to English because it has fewer words borrowed from other languages. To support his argument he quotes an unnamed American scholar (*Gelehrter*) who supposedly had this to say about English: "Our language is a piratical one. Pirates appropriate other men's

property to themselves. So it is with our language. It has taken in and appropriated to itself words from almost every language." The author follows up with a short poem by the eminent German lyricist Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724–1803) titled "Germany's Language" (*Deutschland's Sprache*):

*No living language may dare  
Compete boldly with Germany's  
language;  
It is, I may succinctly and with its*

quiet modesty, content with her lot in life. As I mentioned, there she sat on the bench in the corner, mending with her usual diligence the torn work clothes of her now adult sons. And there, in the middle of the room, on an adorned rocking chair, all decked out and fixed up, made up from head to toe, in a large, broad hoop skirt, sat her English daughter-in-law, rocking such that her legs came up into the air. And ... and ... do you know what? She was making lace! Take care, Sebastian, that this doesn't happen to you! Take care that your children don't learn to say to you, "I don't like to go to Dutch meetings!" Take care that in your old age you don't have to hear in your own house, "I don't care for that old Dutchman! I don't care for that old Dutch woman!" 

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