



African Americans and the German Language in America

Mark Louden

LATELY Run-away from his Master, *Philip Solomon Flegelar*, of Dutchess County, a Negro Man Slave named *Primus*, aged about 20 Years, 5 and $\frac{1}{2}$ Feet high, well set, very black Skin, when he talks he winks with his Eyes: He had on a light colour'd homespun Jacket, Buckskin Breeches, and Brass Buttons, thick Shoes, with Strings, blue Leggings, old Felt Hat, and Linen Shirt, talks good English, Low-Dutch, and High-Dutch. Whoever takes up and secures the said Negro Slave, so that his Master may have him again, shall have *Three Pounds* Reward, besides all reasonable Charge- paid by

Philip Solomon Flegelar.

N. B. All Persons are forbid carrying him off, as they shall surely answer it at their Peril.

May 31st, 1762.

The New-York Gazette, June 14, 1766

INSIDE

- MKI Friends 2021 Annual Meeting, Port Washington, WI
- Black German Speakers in Texas
- Dr. S. W. Staads, Homeopathy, and *Der Amerikanische Hausarzt*
- Book Review: *German Americans on the Middle Border*

Some years ago, early in my career researching the history of the German language in America, I came across stories of African Americans who spoke German. I probed deeper and learned that there is extensive evidence going back centuries of Americans of African descent who spoke multiple languages, including German. There is little evidence to suggest African languages, including Arabic, continued to be spoken by the descendants of first-generation enslaved people,

however in virtually every region of the US where Black people lived and interacted with speakers of languages other than English, there are reliable accounts of African-American multilingualism. Examples I found of European languages spoken by Black people include Dutch, French, German, Gaelic, Spanish, and Swedish. Many African Americans also became proficient in Native American languages, often serving as interpreters between European Americans

Continued on page 12

FRIENDS OF THE MAX KADE INSTITUTE ANNUAL MEETING 2021
Port Washington and Grafton, Ozaukee County
Sunday, September 26, 2021

After having to cancel the program portion of the 2020 Annual Meeting, the Friends of the Max Kade Institute are pleased to hold their Annual Meeting 2021 in Ozaukee County, a center of German and Luxembourg immigration in the 1850s and 1860s. We will explore the maritime history of Port Washington, a beautiful Lake Michigan harbor town, where many immigrants first set foot on Wisconsin soil. In rotating groups, we will enjoy a self-guided tour of the Exploreum, the town's new maritime museum; we will be guided through the historic Light Station and Museum; and we will visit the Port Washington Historical Society to see their exhibits and hear a presentation about the town's early settler families from German-speaking Europe. Afterward, we will drive to the Milwaukee Ale House in nearby Grafton for the annual business meeting and dinner, followed by a presentation by MKI Director Mark Loudon on "Luxembourgers in Wisconsin."

PROGRAM	
11:30 – 12:00	Registration at Port Washington Exploreum 118 N Franklin St, Port Washington
12:00 – 3:30	Tours of the Port Washington Exploreum, Light Station, and Historical Society in three rotating groups.
3:30 – 4:00	Drive to Milwaukee Ale House in Grafton 1208 13th Ave, Grafton
4:00 – 5:00	Friends Annual Business Meeting (snacks & cash bar)
5:00 – 5:30	Socializing; new Board of Directors meeting (election of officers)
5:30 – 6:30	Dinner
6:30 – 7:30	Lecture by Mark Loudon



LOCATIONS / Addresses

- Exploreum:** 118 N Franklin St, Port Washington (parking behind building)
- Historical Society:** 205 N Franklin St, Port Washington (across from Exploreum, street parking or parking behind Exploreum)
- Light Station:** 311 Johnson St, Port Washington (street parking)
- Milwaukee Ale House in Grafton:** 1208 13th Ave, Grafton (street parking and parking lot across the street)

COST

- All three tours together/ per person:** \$8
- Dinner, per person (see choices on registration form):** \$44

PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED by Friday, September 10!
Please register online at: <https://mkifriends.org/annual-meetings/>
 or fill out the registration form available at the above website and mail it with your check.

BRING A FRIEND – MAKE A FRIEND!

Dinner purchase includes Friends of the MKI membership for the year 2021 for *new* Friends.

Questions? Contact Antje Petty: apetty@wisc.edu

Dear Friends and Readers!

Summer greetings from the Max Kade Institute! As I write this, things are looking good across the University for something approaching a return to normal this fall as COVID infection rates continue to decline and increasing numbers of students and University employees are being vaccinated. In August we will be receiving specific guidance from our administration, but the plan is to hold most classes in person and to allow for a resumption of in-person activities. We are starting to build a schedule of MKI-sponsored outreach events that will take place in Madison and across the state, as well as virtual presentations, building on the popularity of our lecture series over the past year. Please watch your email and the MKI website for information on upcoming events. One special highlight will of course be our MKI Friends Annual Meeting in Port Washington and Grafton, now planned for Sunday, September 26. See p. 2 for more information.

We are pleased to feature in this issue of the newsletter two articles on the history of interactions between African Americans and German Americans, with a special focus on language. One of the most important aspects of the German-American experience is the contact between German-speaking immigrants to the US and their descendants and members of different ethnic and cultural groups. When German speakers set out from Europe to make new lives for themselves in America, the goal was typically not to recreate cultur-

ally and linguistically homogeneous “little Germanies.” While German Americans and other groups did build communities within which certain elements of their heritage cultures, including languages, were maintained, the identities they created were profoundly hybrid, blending influences from both the Old and New Worlds.

The specific question of contact between Americans of African and German descent is one that offers many avenues for research. Traditionally, a number of scholars and German Americans themselves have held the view that the relations between the two groups were historically better than between Anglo Americans and Black people. Some observers have emphasized the support among German Americans for the cause of abolition. A closer look at the historical record presents a more complex picture. Germans were among America’s enslavers and as part of their acculturation into US society, many immigrants and their descendants came to share the views of their white neighbors, a number of whom regarded African Americans

and other people of color negatively. As an institution grounded in scholarship, MKI seeks to interpret the German-American experience past and present as objectively as possible and to share the products of cutting-edge research with the general public. We hope that the articles in this newsletter addressing African-American and German-American history will inspire others to explore this fascinating area in greater depth. As the writer Pearl S. Buck expressed it, “If you want to understand today, you have to search yesterday.”

Over the past year, one that has been such a challenge for everyone, we at MKI have been grateful for the steadfast support that you, our Friends, have consistently shown us. We are looking forward to welcoming you back to visit us at the University Club and to see you at our events in the coming year.

Thank you so much!

—Mark

Board of Directors, Friends of the Max Kade Institute

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Relations between African and German Americans and Black German Speakers in Texas

David Hünlich

According to the 2016 American Community Survey (a 5-year data sample), German Americans and African Americans make up the two largest ethnic groups in the United States; around one-quarter of the US population identifies with one of these heritages. With sizeable populations of both German Americans and African Americans for over 150 years, Texas offers a unique opportunity for the study of relations between the two groups. My postdoctoral project funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) at Texas A&M University aims to approach the relationship from the perspective of Black speakers of German in Texas and how they crossed ethnic boundaries.

One of the goals of the project is to examine the racial attitudes of German Americans in the 19th and 20th centuries. There are two competing positions regarding relations between African and German Americans in the US that require deeper exploration. Some have claimed that German Americans were not in any way exceptional in the landscape of white supremacy, while others argue that a majority of Germans were opposed to slavery and secession and exhibited rather egalitarian racial attitudes. Indeed, from what we know today, even in Texas most Germans were not directly involved in slavery. In

Fayette County, for instance, 17 out of 753 German households (2.3 %) as opposed to 407 out of 1,183 Anglo households (34%) listed human property. The discrepancy holds at all levels of income and raises questions. For the heavily German Hill Country there are hardly any records of enslaved people. In his portrayal of a Texas German slave plantation, Kearney (2010) asks whether the rejection of slavery by most German immigrants was “primarily ideological, or economic, or . . . a visceral response conditioned by deep cultural differences?”

The presence of Black speakers of German in proximity to white Germans in Texas offers an important entry point to answering these questions. Few enslaved people learned German, yet there are numerous accounts of Black German speakers from after the Civil War in every Texas county in the so-called German Belt. Cases that could be related to slavery are confirmed only for the earliest German settlements such as Industry (Austin County). But many speakers also lived in Black freedom colonies such as Moab (Lee County). These settlements were established after emancipation as independent communities on newly acquired land. Often situated in the hinterland, they offered security and protection to the freedmen. So why did Black Texans learn German, an immigrant

language? Black families in these settlements found themselves living in areas that became increasingly German and less Anglo. As former plantation owners moved away, new immigrants moved in. Germans and Czechs built their own tight-knit communities bringing with them capital, a tradition of family-based agriculture, and an ethnocentric community organization. Although they rarely relied on outside labor, soon the new immigrants were in a better economic situation than most African Americans after slavery.

There clearly were economic reasons for learning German. African Americans who crossed linguistic boundaries had better chances to enter into work relationships with immigrants who didn't know English. A member of the Wagner family who had a dairy farm in Round Top recalls:

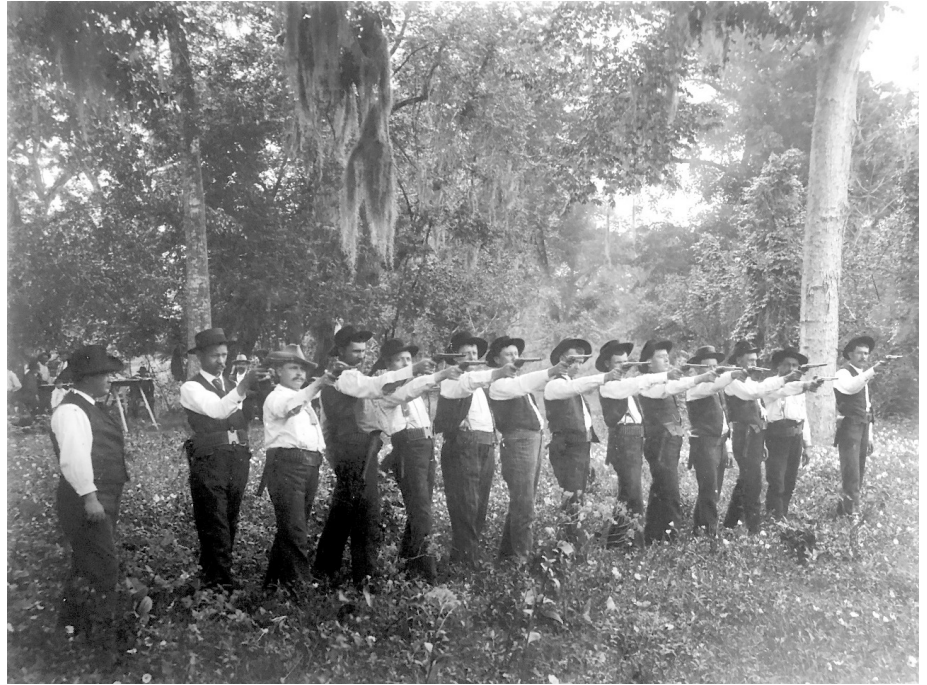
“No Mexicans, but a few black people learned German then. They worked and the old folks couldn't speak English and the blacks could not speak German . . . so they finally . . . those whose mother and father were black, they learned German . . . and it was so weird for us: a black guy, speaking German. I thought that was only for us, not for him . . . that was really weird. But they spoke good German, just like us.”

But apparently there also was an ideological component that facili-

tated interactions: Germans had left behind a feudal system that was breaking down and they sought to leave the social strictures of the Old World behind. Local historian David Collins has collected credit ledgers and land transactions showing that Germans and Czechs in Texas were willing to engage with African Americans economically at eye level in the 19th century. Several emerging freedom colonies depended on these economic ties, and the relationship was a welcome contrast to the previous experiences African Americans had had with white people. Observations such as the following by freedom colony researcher Doris Williams (Bastrop County) confirm that Black Texans found it easier to interact with more recent European immigrants than with the old-stock Anglos:

“We lived near Smithville Texas with my grandparents, and they always referred to people as Dutch or Bohemians. And you know, I never really understood it until now that I’m doing a lot of research with history . . . the thing that fascinated me most about them was that—you know it was during Jim Crow and segregation—but they never said anything negative about the German people . . . you know, they would refer ‘Oh, he’s German, you know that German family.’ But they never had anything bad to say about them and I felt that was kind of unique, because they did have a lot of bad things to say about the other people, but not the Germans that they were exposed to.”

In later years, wherever German and African Americans coalesced to support the Republican Party, such as



The image above, which dates to around the turn of the 20th century, shows a group of German-Texan *Schützen* (marksmen), including an African-American man at the far left. The image was discovered by local historians in a Brenham, TX, residence; no copyright

in Washington and Colorado County, a political bond also supported the ethnic link. Cordial interactions grew out of this relationship, another motive to learn German. The picture above of a *Schützenverein*, a German shooting club, in Brenham, Texas, speaks to such positive contacts during leisure time. German was the dominant language of many Texas German clubs into the 1940s, so that some degree of command of the language was required to participate in the *Vereinsleben*, the social life of the association. The picture was taken around the turn of the century and shows an African-American “Schütze” standing in line with other German speakers—a situation that would become unimaginable in later years.

The changing reasons for acquiring and speaking German bear witness to

a transition in ethnic relations in the 20th century. At that time, influential German-language newspapers such as the *Belleville Wochenblatt* advocated moving away from the Republican Party in order to accelerate assimilation into the Anglo-Texan mainstream, which was mostly Democratic. World War I delayed the process of assimilation. By the 1920s German speakers became the target of the Ku Klux Klan’s English-only crusade. The situation partially reinvigorated the old Black-German alliance, but overall the political estrangement between African Americans and Germans continued. Increasingly, speaking German became a means of self-protection and social mimicry for many African Americans. As one of my interviewees from Fredericksburg, Gillespie County, remembers, her ability to understand her Ger-

man-speaking neighbors was a way of curbing insults and backbiting in a time where local race relations had “Americanized” in the most negative sense. Similar experiences are reported from Austin County. A fluent Black speaker of a Northern German dialect in that county told a graduate student in 1992: “Die Weißen sprechen nicht mit uns Deutsch” (The whites don’t speak German with us). Only decades earlier it had been normal for fluent German speakers of either race to interact with each other.

It appears that the decision on the part of Texans of German ancestry to shed their German identity and regard themselves as simply white Texans led them to adopt racial sentiments different from those of their forebears. However, some interviews indicate that proximity between the group members was not completely lost during the phase of assimilation. Although there are hardly any Black German speakers alive today, there is hope that the unusual biographies of German-speaking African Americans will help us uncover more detail about the history of relations between Texans of African and German descent. 🗡️

David Hünlich holds a Ph.D. in Germanic linguistics from The University of Texas at Austin where he worked on language shift, multiethnolects, and Texas German. From 2016 to 2019 he researched the linguistic integration of refugees in Germany as a researcher at the Leibniz-Institute for the German Language (IDS) in Mannheim. Recently, his interests include the various long-term social effects of migra-

tions, e.g., on the political and ethnic landscape of the receiving society. As a DAAD fellow, he is currently documenting the lives of Black German speakers in Texas.

NOTE

* “Keine Mexikaner, aber ein paar schwarze Leute, die haben dann Deutsch gelernt . . . Die hamn gearbeitet und die Alten, die konnten kein Englisch und die Schwarzen konnten kein Deutsch . . . so haben sie sich endlich . . . welche von denen die Mutter und Vater Schwarze waren, die haben dann deutsch gelernt . . . und das war so komisch für uns: ein schwarzer Kerl, dass der Deutsch sprechen konnte, ich dachte das war bloss für uns nicht für ihn . . . das war ganz komisch. Aber die konnten gut deutsch: wie wir sprechen konnten.”

Dr. S. W. Staads, Homeopathy, and *Der Amerikanische Hausarzt*

James R. Dow

James R. Dow, professor emeritus of German at Iowa State University, recently donated to the MKI Library and Archives a manuscript detailing his research into Dr. Soeren W. Staads and *Der Amerikanische Hausarzt*. This is a summary of that work.

Soeren Wilhelm Staads was born March 13, 1869, in Flensburg, Germany, the youngest of five children, and he died in Los Angeles on September 20, 1951, of carcinoma of the stomach and liver. He arrived in the United States in 1892. Staads claimed to have studied medicine at the universities of Stuttgart and Copenhagen, as well as at Harvard, though there is no evidence to support these claims. Upon passing the state board examinations, he was licensed in January 1893 to practice medicine in the state of Iowa. He quickly sent for his fiancée, Helene Wernst, who arrived in New York in May 1893. After settling first in the town of Essex, Iowa, they soon moved to Pomeroy, Iowa, where they stayed until 1898, when they relocated to Sioux City, Iowa. Here Dr. Staads established the Hillside Sanitarium, and practiced his chosen fields of homeopathy and surgery. Dr. Staads and his wife, who died in 1940, raised six children, with many descendants.

During his career, Dr. Staads was a member and president of the Hahnemann Homoeopathic Medical Society of Iowa. He was also presi-

dent of the Sioux City Homoeopathic Medical Society, and in 1921 he presented a bust of Samuel Hahnemann, the founder of homeopathy, to that city's public library. Staads was a senior member of the American Institute of Homoeopathy; a member of the Surgical, Gynecological and Obstetrical Society; and later, after moving in 1928 to Los Angeles, an associate member of the Los Angeles County Homoeopathic Medical Society.

Staads wrote many articles and letters for homeopathic journals, and is solely responsible for a short-lived journal, *Der Amerikanische Hausarzt* (the American Home Doctor), and an 81-page pamphlet, *Wegweiser zur Gesundheit für Meine Patienten aus Nah und Fern* (Guide to Health for My Patients Near and Far), which will both be discussed below. But first, a brief look at the medical system of homeopathy.

The National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health offers the following description:

Homeopathy was developed in Germany more than 200 years ago. It is based on two unconventional theories:

“Like cures like”—the notion that a disease can be cured by a substance that produces similar symptoms in healthy people.

“Law of minimum dose”—the notion that the lower the dose



S. W. Staads, from *Wegweiser zur Gesundheit*, 1905

of the medication, the greater its effectiveness. Many homeopathic products are so diluted that no molecules of the original substance remain.

Homeopathic products come from plants, minerals, or animals (such as crushed whole bees). Homeopathic products are often made as sugar pellets to be placed under the tongue; they may also be ointments, gels, drops, creams, and tablets. Treatments are “individualized” or tailored to each person—it is common for different people with the same condition to receive different treatments.

Der Amerikanische Hausarzt

Though announcing on its cover that it would appear monthly, only three issues of *Der Amerikanische Hausarzt* are known to have been published; all three have some similarities. At the beginning there are advertisements, primarily promoting books and home remedy apothecaries that should be in every household; some books are for the homeopathic treatment of farm animals. These advertisements appear primarily in German, with some in English “for our American Friends and those of our German Friends who prefer to Read American.” The first issue offers an editorial about the nature of the journal, “Was der *Amerikanische Hausarzt* will” (What the *AH* Intends to Offer). In issues two and three there is a lengthy biography of the founder of homeopathy, Dr. Samuel Hahnemann (1755–1843). Issue two also includes a brief editorial about the change of location from Essex to Pomeroy, Iowa. Each issue includes a description of some sickness or ailment and a detailed prescription for its homeopathic treatment.

I. Jahrgang, No. 1

In his introductory editorial in the first issue (October 1894), Dr. Staads states that *Der Amerikanische Hausarzt* aims to be a reliable medical advisor and a “family treasure.” Subscriptions, at \$1.00 per year for twelve issues, will provide free medical advice and a large discount on book purchases. Soon after the editorial, Staads provides his medical advice to “stop bleeding from the extremities.” First, he says not to use anything unclean, such as

spider webs, no dirty cloth, and never use *Carbolsäure* (carbolic acid). One should cleanse the wound, use a bandage from his very own *Wundverbandkästchen* (wound dressing kit, available for \$10.00), and then apply *Arnica Hamamelis-Salbe*, a salve of arnica and witch-hazel (also available to purchase from Dr. Staads). For a gaping wound, the recommendation is to call a doctor and have it stitched.

Next comes a brief article on the deadly disease diphtheria, to be treated with alternative spoonfuls from one prepared mixture of “10 granules of cyanide of mercury” and one of belladonna, and ensure the patient sweats. Laxatives are not recommended, though enemas are, and the patient should eat apples and plums, gargle with salt water, and be allowed to sleep.

The last pages of the issue include an advice section (often in response to letters from pastors or their wives), concerning treatments for kidneys, low energy, bladder trouble, crippled legs, lack of breast milk, etc.

I. Jahrgang, No. 2

While the first issue was published in Essex, Iowa, the second (February 1895) indicates it was printed in Pomeroy, Iowa. Staads writes in his *Gruss!* that his move to Pomeroy was a result of financial difficulties. Perhaps related to these difficulties, in this issue Dr. Staads offers his readers a “great opportunity”— each individual who collects 250 paid subscriptions to the *Amerikanischer Hausarzt* will receive “a course at one of the best homeopathic colleges of this country.”

His medical advice in this issue

covers, once again, diphtheria, followed by a biography of the founder of homeopathy, Samuel Hahnemann, advice on tooth care, frostbite, and inoculations, with Staads decrying vaccines as possibly leading to paralysis, blindness, feeble-mindedness, and even syphilis.

I. Jahrgang, No. 3

Besides a continuation of the biography on Hahnemann and another promotion for the “great opportunity,” the third and final issue (March 1895) includes medical articles on the diagnosis and treatment of nosebleeds, rheumatism, and kidney troubles, as well as five full pages on the use of galvanic, faradic, and static electricity in healing. Staads offers to sell devices which can administer these electrical treatments, with prices ranging from \$10 to \$40.

Wegweiser zur Gesundheit

In 1905 Staads, presenting himself as “Operatör am Deutschen Lutherischen Hospital in Sioux City,” summarized and enhanced much of what he had offered in *Der Amerikanische Hausarzt* in his 81-page booklet *Wegweiser zur Gesundheit für Meine Patienten aus Nah und Fern* (published by Verlag der Health Publishing Co., Sioux City, Iowa, für den Buchhandel bei Geo. Brumder, Milwaukee, Wis.). Like the journal, this publication begins with a request of his patients to write letters with detailed descriptions of themselves and their ailments, and if possible to include a personal photo. In addition to covering many of the ailments that were covered in the *Hausarzt*, the book also offers a recommendation

to spend time outside (“plants do not thrive in a cellar”), touts the benefits of exercise and good eating habits (no pie, but lots of vegetables), insists that spirits and tobacco are absolutely not good, and that bathing only once a week is sufficient, as “man is not made for water, only for air”—so instead it is advisable to lie naked in one’s room for a period of time.

Discrediting Dr. Staads

The field of homeopathy has long been criticized by America’s established medical community, and Dr. Staads received his fair share of negative scrutiny. In 1923 a report entitled *Some Quasi-Medical Institutions* was “Prepared and Issued by the Propaganda Department” of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA) that includes this assessment of Dr. Staads:

S. W. Staads’ name appears in each issue of *Polk’s Medical Directories* from 1900 until 1917

inclusive. In each case it is a display announcement giving the alleged educational and professional qualifications. In the directories for 1900, 1902, and 1904 Staads is given as a graduate of the “German Medical College of Chicago, Ill., 1892” and of the “Independent Medical College, Chicago, 1899.” The “German Medical College” was during its brief span repeatedly characterized by the Illinois State Board of Health as a fraudulent diploma mill. The “German Medical College” was not chartered until Dec. 28, 1891; Staads was “graduated” in 1892! [It] was a fraudulent Chicago diploma mill whose charter was revoked by the Supreme Court of Illinois in 1899—the year of Staads’ “graduation.” [. . .] In addition, he claims a “special course Chicago Homeopathic Medical College, 1897,” and

“Pratt’s Course of Orificial Surgery” over a period of years commencing with 1898.

The directories also list Staads as “Staff Surgeon, German Lutheran Hospital, Sioux City, which he claims on the title page of his *Wegweiser* pamphlet, and Lecturer to the German Hospital Training School, Sioux City, Iowa.

In addition to questionable degrees and assumed titles, Staads was also condemned by JAMA for his business dealings, calling his [Sioux City] Hillside Sanitarium Company “Another Get-Rich-Quick Scheme.” Claiming to have entered into an exclusive contract with a German drug maker “to manufacture and sell medicines for humankind and animals,” including a cure for “the most difficult cases of cancer,” the Company urged “preachers and others” to invest their money and liberty bonds in it—an irony, considering that Soeren W. Staads died of carcinoma of the stomach and liver. 🗡️

James R. Dow is Professor Emeritus of German at Iowa State University with research interests in German Volk-skunde (folklore), the Old Order Amish of Kalona, and Amana Colonists of Amana, Iowa. He was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2005 for the study and grammar of the Cimbrian language, and in 2018 published Heinrich Himmler’s Cultural Commissions: Programmed Plunder in Italy and Yugoslavia.

HILLSIDE SANITARIUM

Dr. S. W. Staads

DIRECTING
PHYSICIAN

207 Massachusetts
Building

Sioux City, Ia.



A quiet, homelike place, fully equipped with all forms of Hydrotherapy, Electricity, Massage, X-Ray Work, Radium Treatment, Diet Cures, etc. Dr. Staads has had more than twenty years’ experience in general and gynecologic surgery. Staff of Competent Consulting Physicians. **Send for Free Literature**

Image from the *Iowa Homeopathic Journal*, April 1920

German-Americans on the Middle Border: Changes in Attitudes toward Emancipation and Black Suffrage, 1830–1877

Pamela Tesch

German Americans on the Middle Border: From Antislavery to Reconciliation, 1830–1877 by Zachary Stuart Garrison, Southern Illinois University Press, 2020, 213 pp.

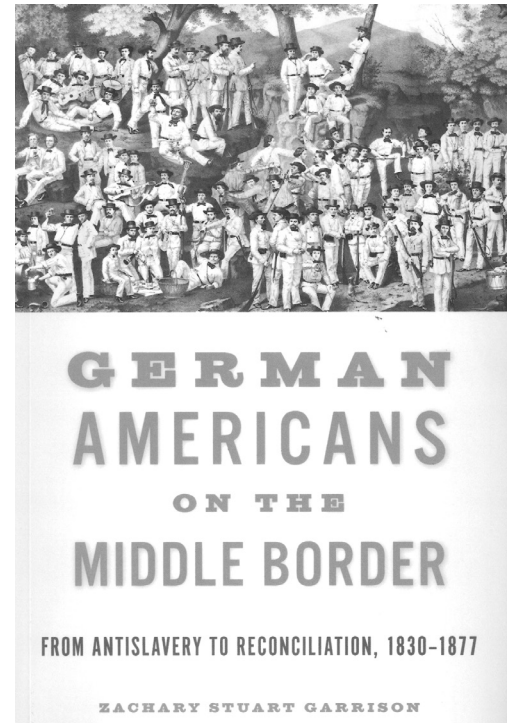
In *German Americans on the Middle Border: From Antislavery to Reconciliation, 1830–1877*, Zachary Stuart Garrison argues that before the Civil War, German Americans who settled in the region where the Ohio, Mississippi, and Missouri rivers meet expressed an antislavery stance that was grounded in a liberal philosophy and derived from their experiences during the (failed) European revolutions in the nineteenth century. After the Civil War, according to Garrison, these German Americans were regarded as dangerous outsiders. In an effort to “secure their position in the reunified nation,” they abandoned their commitment to freedmen and freedwomen, and instead adopted a “reconciliation” position that supported economic development. Garrison provides evidence for and analysis of his thesis over eight chapters.

In chapter one, he presents the first group of German immigrants to the region, who arrived between 1830 and 1848. Known as “the *Dreissiger*,” they left Germany primarily for economic reasons or to avoid forced military service. In a close reading of newspapers, letters, and diaries,

he recounts the history of politically active Germans who believed in liberalism, democracy, and universal freedom, and who were opposed to slavery. Examples include law student Albert Lang, George Housemann, and Gottfried Duden. According to Garrison, these German immigrants were torn between America as “a promised land versus America as the land of slavery, and they faced the contradictions between liberty and slavery.”

The second wave of German immigration (1848–1850), included the *Achtundvierziger* or Forty-eighters, who had left German-speaking Europe after the failed revolutions of 1848/1849. In chapters two and three, Garrison describes the discussions in the St. Louis-based *Anzeiger des Westens*, analyzing the complexities of the antislavery stance combined with the hope German Americans had for freedom and land ownership in their new country. As an aside, Garrison adds an interesting review of the existing scholarly literature on the Forty-eighters, including books by Benedict Anderson, Charlotte Brancaforte, Alison Clark Efford, James Sheehan, and others.

Another key to understanding the German Americans during the Civil War era surrounds the figure of Abraham Lincoln and his election as President in 1860. This is the focus of chapter four, titled “Continuous Vigi-




lance is the Price of Freedom: Antislavery Germans and the Election of 1860.” Many historians accepted that German American voters in the West secured a victory for Lincoln in 1860. But as Garrison notes, “Generally, outside of Illinois, German Republicans on the Middle Border were less familiar with Lincoln’s political background and were motivated instead by the momentum building behind antislavery.” This chapter details the discussions of the election in the *Illinois Staats-Anzeiger*, *St. Charles Demokrat*, *Westliche Post*, and the *Belleviller Zeitung*, with many examples and quotes. For scholars of Abraham Lincoln interested in the

details of his nomination and election from the perspective of German-American immigrants, this chapter provides abundant material.

Next, Garrison conveys the reasons for the German Americans' participation in the Civil War: to preserve the nation, and to destroy anti-democratic forces. In chapter five, "The West's Most Loyal Unionists: Union, Emancipation, and German Soldiers' Motivations," the author presents the thoughts of German-American soldiers about the union, emancipation, and the various reasons for their participation, which he discovered in journals, diaries, and letters. Chapters six and seven appraise the antislavery stance and the radical support of German Americans for emancipation, under the titles of "Rebel Bushwhackers and the 'Damned Dutch': Radical Germans and the Deeper Roots of Missouri's Guerrilla War" and "The Radical Turn: Abolition and the Crisis of German Liberalism."

In chapter eight, "A Terrible Mistake was Made: The Retreat of German Liberalism," Garrison examines the way in which German Americans suddenly moved away from an anti-slavery stance and focused instead on their own personal interests. "As the Germans concluded, a radical agenda that first and foremost addressed political and economic discrimination against African Americans prevented national progress; they therefore shifted their focus to national reunion and local economic development, including growing class inequities."

Through close readings of German-American newspapers, Garrison provides his readers with 1)

a clear overview of two waves of German immigration and German Americans' opposition to slavery; 2) a discussion of antislavery positions drawing from a wide variety of primary sources, including newspapers, letters, journals, and diaries; and 3) a comprehensive bibliography of primary and secondary sources on the topic spanning the nineteenth century. Depending on which newspaper or other source was consulted, attitudes toward slavery and the role of Blacks in post-Emancipation American society varied widely and changed over time. The author's thesis that German Americans shifted from pre-Civil War opposition to slavery to a position of reconciliation during Radical Reconstruction will certainly lead to further analysis, questions, and discussion. 

Pamela Tesch teaches German literature and German phonetics at UW-Whitewater. She received her Ph.D. in German literature with distinction from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and has taught Continuing Education courses throughout the UW-System. She currently serves on the board of the Friends of the MKI. Her interests include reading literature, writing, drawing, painting, and discovering interesting walking paths.

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

Kevin Kurdylo
Friends of the Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies
432 East Campus Mall, UW-Madison, Madison, WI 53706-1407
Phone: (608) 262-7546
mki@library.wisc.edu

mki.wisc.edu

Continued from page 1

and Indigenous people in the US and Canada.

The earliest available evidence of Black speakers of German comes from runaway slave advertisements. These grim historical documents, thousands of which have been collected and analyzed by researchers, contain detailed information about enslaved people, including their physical appearance, personal qualities, professional skills, and linguistic abilities. There are numerous references to German-speaking enslaved people from the Hudson Valley of New York. In the 17th century, Dutch immigrants settled there as part of the New Netherland colony, with German speakers from the Palatinate and neighboring southwestern states following in the early 18th century. Both Dutch and German continued to be spoken in the Hudson Valley into the 20th century.

Slavery was widespread in New York during the colonial period, declined after the Revolution, and was formally abolished only in 1827. White New Yorkers of diverse ethnic backgrounds, including Dutch and Germans, enslaved Black people, many of whom became proficient in the heritage languages of their enslavers. At the beginning of this article is an example of a notice from the June 14, 1766, issue of *The New-York Gazette* for the capture and return of a freedom-seeking man named Primus who was trilingual, proficient in English, Dutch (“Low-Dutch”), and German (“High-Dutch”). The enslaver, Philip Solomon Flegelar (also “Fla-gler”; 1731–1804), was a grandchild of Palatine German immigrants.

The following anecdote illustrates

how German continued to be spoken by Black people in upstate New York in the early 20th century. The writer was a person named Richard H. Tooker, who moved with his family as a child to Canjoharie, Montgomery County, NY. As a college student in the 1930s, Tooker made notes about the local heritage variety of German known as “Mohawk Dutch,” which were published in 1985.

On one occasion during the middle 1930s the writer had an opportunity by pure chance to have an extended conversation with an elderly woman of the Negro community of Rome, New York. Unfortunately, I do not remember her name. Her father was a Negro from Virginia (still living at the time, although over a hundred years old), but her mother was the daughter of two early residents of Canjoharie who had met and married while working for Mike Keller on that man’s farm. The grandfather was half Irish and half Mohawk, while the grandmother was half German and half Mohawk. As a girl in Rome, my informant had often heard her grandmother and mother conversing between themselves in Palatine Dutch [German], and as a child will, she had picked up a few words.

In the late 1880s, as a young woman, my informant was working as a cook in an institution in Utica, and customarily went home to Rome on her afternoon off. She told me that one day on the train, she had noticed two men looking at her very closely. As the train came into the Rome station, she got up to leave the car, and

as she passed these two men, she heard one say to the other in a low voice, “schwarze” (“black”). She immediately turned and looked them full in the face, and said sharply: Yes, and you’re a “schwartzte deiwel” (“black devil”) yourself.

My informant told me, with relish, that she would never forget the look on the two men’s faces.¹

Around the same time that Germans from the Palatinate immigrated to New York, others followed William Penn’s invitation to settle in Pennsylvania. Many made Philadelphia their home, while others opted to put down roots in rural southeastern Pennsylvania, whose descendants became known as the Pennsylvania Dutch. Slavery was formally abolished in Pennsylvania in 1780, but the last enslaved people were not freed until 1847. Historians note that few Germans in Pennsylvania were enslavers, though several, mostly in Philadelphia, had indentured servants. In that city, German receded as an actively spoken language by the turn of the 19th century, but Pennsylvania Dutch, which developed mostly from Palatine dialects, continues to thrive to this day.

Thus far, there is no clear historical evidence of Black speakers of Pennsylvania Dutch during the early 19th century, but after the Civil War, a number of African Americans migrated northward into traditionally Pennsylvania Dutch areas. Close relations developed across the groups such that many Black people acquired the German-related language of their neighbors. On October 10, 1898, p. 2, the *Reading Times*

reprinted an article from the *New York Sun* titled "Penna. German Negroes" that recounted the following.

One of the most unusual experiences I have ever had occurred two days ago in Lebanon County. I met a number of colored men, women, and children who spoke nothing but German. Before the day was around I met at least fifty colored people who spoke German. And when it came to speaking English they were not at all at their ease. I asked how this came about and was told that the colored people came, twenty, thirty and forty years ago, up from the South and settled among the quiet Pennsylvania German farmers of the Blue Mountain districts. The colored children grew up on the farms, where they worked and heard nothing but German spoken. They soon forgot nearly all the English they knew and now rarely speak anything but German. Their children go to English country schools in Winter, but as quickly as they are out of sight of their teacher they begin to talk the German dialect, and nothing else. I have been told that in recent years in Germany colored people speaking the language can be found in numbers, but they also speak English. These Pennsylvania German negroes of whom I speak use absolutely nothing but the German in their ordinary affairs of life. They are good farmers, live on Pennsylvania German cooking and have all the habits and customs of the Germans.

The astonished visitor to Pennsylvania then had this to say about a German-speaking Jew of African descent he met.

Here in Reading I have just met a smart, intelligent middle-aged black man, whose name is Solomon Williams, and who belongs to the Jewish Church. He says he knows only one other colored Jew, a man named Moses Varns, of New York. Both speak German quite well. Williams' parents were servants in a wealthy Hebrew family in New York. He was born while they were employed there, was named Solomon and was brought up in the Jewish faith. He observes all the Hebrew religious customs. His friend Varns was born and raised in the same conditions. I have heard of another colored Jew in Philadelphia, who also speaks German quite well. The other day I read of a black man arrested in New York who had a rich Irish brogue and came from Ireland.

In records from the 1900 US Census for Reading, PA, I found an entry for a Solomon W. Williams, born in New Jersey on April 2, 1862, whose father was listed as having been born in Prussia and his mother in Jamaica.

There are stories of African-American children who acquired German through having been adopted by German speakers. An especially interesting one appeared in the St. Louis newspaper, *West-liche Post*, on October 24, 1875, p. 3, reprinted from the *Pittsburgh Volksblatt*.

Still today, many a German resident of Pittsburgh will remember the dark-skinned Negroes, George and Charley, who worked here as capable coopers from 1848 until 1854

and spoke no other language than the genuine Swabian as it is spoken in the Swabian Jura. They spent time in German taverns without ever being harassed. Both had been adopted as children by the long-deceased George Rapp, who lived with his colony in Harmony, by the Wabash River in Indiana until 1822.² The boys had been purchased from a Kentucky slaveholder and raised in the colony, where they learned the cooper's trade. Since as adults they were not inclined toward the celibacy requirement introduced by Rapp, they left the colony and went to Pittsburgh, married, and worked as coopers. At the wonderful parade sponsored by German residents of Pittsburgh in May 1848 celebrating the revolution of the German people, George and Charley proudly marched under the black-red-gold banner, which at a time when slavery and hatred toward Negroes were at their height struck a real chord. Unfortunately, I do not know whether the two Swabian Negroes are still living and where they live.

The editors of the *Westliche Post* added their own postscript to this account from Pittsburgh.

We also know several German-speaking blacks. In 1849, drawn back to Europe by the Baden Revolution, we met two colored staff members on the ship who spoke German. In Louisville we knew several such people, for example, one working in the home of Mr. Lichten and one working for the druggist Sheffer. Here in St. Louis, Dr. [Hugo] Starkloff of Carondelet employs a Negro who speaks German. It appears that such persons have a special talent for

learning languages by ear since all those mentioned here spoke the particular dialects, Swabian, Low German, etc., they heard in the homes where they worked.

Other German speakers in America of African ancestry were born in Europe, so-called Afro-Germans, and emigrated to the US. An 1873 article that originally appeared in the *New Orleans Deutsche Zeitung* and was reprinted in other German-language newspapers, including the *Pennsylvanische Staats-Zeitung* (May 8, 1873, p. 2), reported that according to the US Census of 1870, there were 15 Afro-German immigrants in New Orleans. Seven had been born in Prussia; three in Bavaria; two in Hesse; one in Hanover; one in Swabia; and one whose specific birthplace was not known. German-born African Americans were also counted by the census in Memphis, Cleveland, New York, and Charleston.

An early account of an Afro-German immigrant to America appeared in another German-language newspaper from St. Louis, *Amerika*, in its May 7, 1873, edition, p. 4. The story was attributed to another newspaper, from Cincinnati.

In 1852 there was a bookstore in Philadelphia operated by the firm M. and C. One day, a Black man came into the store and asked for a German book. Since many Negroes in Pennsylvania speak German, Mr. M. asked him, "Kannst du auch deutsch sprechen?" (Can you speak German, too?) My friend M. was astonished when the Black man answered in perfect German, "Ja, mein Herr, ich bin ein geborener

Fritz Limburger

A German Negro with the truly classic name Fritz Limburger was fully exonerated of a serious charge yesterday in the Court of Criminal Correction before Judge Victor Falkenhainer. Fritz—who unfortunately knows nothing of his ancestry—was born 24 years ago in Hamburg and came to the US a few years ago. Since then he has struggled to make a living as a waiter. For about four months he has resided in St. Louis, but in that short time he has experienced so many unpleasantnesses that one could say that the “climate” here does not agree with him. Shortly after arriving in the city, the poor fellow was accused of robbery and locked up; only yesterday, after seven weeks, was he able to enjoy the sweet taste of freedom.

On the evening before last Thanksgiving, a certain Henry Whitney was accosted by two Black men in Olive Street and robbed of 35 cents, which they magnanimously returned when he moaned to them that that was all the money he had. Mr. Whitney repaid this magnanimous gesture by quietly playing Sherlock Holmes. A few days later, he ran into Fritz Limburger on the street and thought he recognized him as one of the robbers. No number of professions of innocence on the part of poor Mr. Limburger could suffice: he was tossed into jail and had to stew there over his misfortune until the hour of his redemption yesterday.

During the proceedings before Judge Falkenhainer, the defense attorney, W. L. Fitzgerald, provided a full alibi for his client; but that was not what sealed the deal. On the witness stand Mr. Whitney testified that the robber he presumed to have caught had an exceptionally deep voice and spoke perfect “Black English.” Judge Falkenhainer called the defendant himself to the stand, whereupon it became clear that Mr. Limburger has a distinctly high-pitched voice and speaks with an unmistakable German accent such that he cannot hide the fact that he is a “foreigner.” His exoneration was received with great satisfaction by the “colored ladies and gentlemen” in the courtroom, who offered the judge and the spirited defense lawyer for their German fellow Black hearty applause.

From: *Westliche Post*, January 10, 1912, p. 9

Deutscher und sogar ein naher Landsmann von Ihnen” (Yes, my sir, I am a native German and in fact a close countryman of yours.) The Negro had been born in Coburg and was from a family of thirteen members who had been


brought to Germany by the Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha from his journey to Africa. The man had been raised at the duke’s court and later emigrated to Philadelphia, where he worked as a pastry chef. One can imagine

the expression on the face of my friend M., who was born in Nordhausen [a small city in Thuringia].

In 1912, the *Westliche Post* reported on the experience of another Afro-German immigrant, a man named Fritz Limburger. A complete translation of the article is given on p. 14. The story of an African-American male being unjustly accused of a crime by a white person is all too familiar in American history. It is heartening that justice prevailed for Limburger in a system controlled by whites in the early 20th century. His defense attorney, W. L. Fitzgerald, was a prominent jurist in St. Louis and active in the Democratic party, which at that time in US history was not known for its support of African Americans. The judge who presided over Limburger's case was Victor H.

Falkenhainer, who was born in St. Louis in 1868 to immigrant parents and was described in his obituary as having "held a prominent position among South St. Louis Germans."³ His obituary went on to describe him as "an aloof man of somewhat stern mien to those not familiar with him" and a "stern, unrelenting judge." Also notable in the story of Fritz Limburger's trial was the presence of supporters from the St. Louis African-American community, despite the fact that Limburger had been arrested only a short time after arriving in the city.

The historical experience of Afro-German immigrants to the US raises a number of fascinating questions. To what extent did they—and their descendants—identify as German Americans, African Americans, both, or neither? Were the experiences of Afro-German Americans different depending on the eras in which they

lived and the communities in which they settled? These and many more questions indicate that a great deal of research remains to be done on the interactions, linguistic and otherwise, between German Americans and African Americans. 

NOTES

¹ Richard H. Tooker, "Palatine Dutch, a Fragmentary Record," *Der Reggebooge* 19 (1985), p. 39.

² The Harmony Society (also known as Harmonists, Rappites) is one of the more well-known Christian utopian communities in America. Rapp founded the society in Germany in the 1780s, then relocated with his followers to America in 1803. The society was disbanded in 1903.

³ The *St. Louis Star*, May 7, 1931, p. 7.

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