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Michael Zimmer's Diary: Ein deutsches
Tagebuch aus dem Amerikanischen
Bürgerkrieg

by William D. Keel

2005

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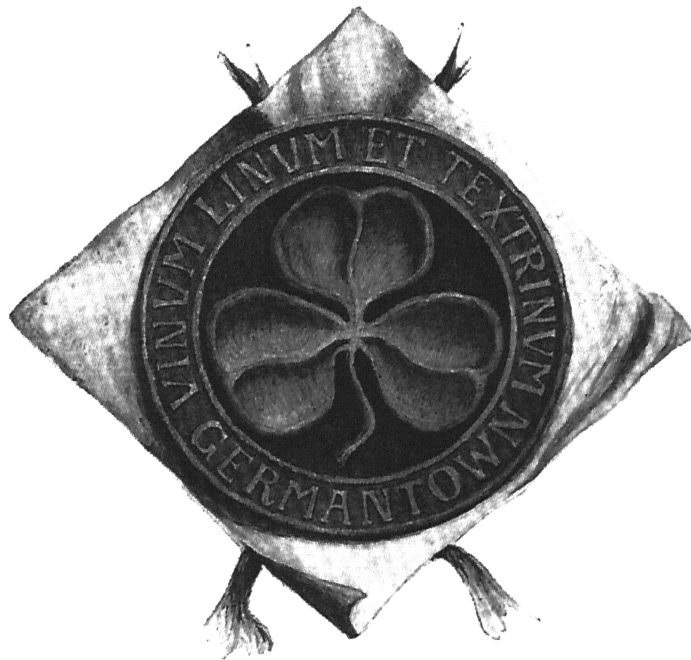
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YEARBOOK OF GERMAN-AMERICAN STUDIES

Volume 40

2005



The Society for
German-American Studies

Depicted on the front cover is the seal of Germantown, Pennsylvania, founded by Francis Daniel Pastorius in 1683. The seal was designed by Pastorius shortly before 1700. The three-fold cloverleaf with Latin motto denotes the three principal occupations among the citizens of Germantown: viticulture and wine-making, flax-growing, and textile production. The Latin motto reads *Vinum Linum et Textrinum* ("grapes/wine, flax/linen, and weaving mill/weaving"). Pastorius formulated the same motto in German as *Der Wein, der Lein und der Webeschrein*.

The Society for German-American Studies has elected to display the Germantown seal on its stationery and membership brochure as well as on the cover of the *Yearbook of German-American Studies* in commemoration of the earliest group settlement of German-speaking immigrants in North America. Our source for the image is Rudolf Cronau, *Drei Jahrhunderte deutschen Lebens in Amerika: Ruhmesblätter der Deutschen in den Vereinigten Staaten* (Berlin: D. Reimer, 1926), 69.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

From the Editor ix

Donald F. Durnbaugh: In Memoriam 1

INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

Frank Baron

*German Republicans and Radicals in the Struggle
for a Slave-Free Kansas: Charles F. Kob and August Bondi* 3

HISTORICAL TEXTS

Karl Friedrich Kob

*Wegweiser für Ansiedler im Territorium Kansas (1857),
with annotations by G. Scott Seeger* 29

*Excerpts from Wegweiser für Ansiedler im Territorium Kansas (1857)
(Guide for Settlers in Kansas Territory),
translated by Julia Trumpold and William Keel* 75

August Bondi

*Excerpts from //^Autobiography of August Bondi, 1833-1907,
excerpted with annotations and index by Frank Baron* 87

BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by Timothy Holian

Paul C. Nagel

The German Migration to Missouri: My Family's Story
Reviewed by Robert W. Frizzell 161

- Christian Bauer
The Ritchie Boys: A Film by Christian Bauer
 Christian Bauer and Rebekka Gopfert
Die Ritchie Boys: Deutsche Emigranten beim US-Geheimdienst
Reviewed by Jerry Glenn 163
- Don Heinrich Tolzmann, ed.
Illinois' German Heritage
Reviewed by William D. Keel 165
- Ernst Grabovszki
**Zwischen Kutte und Maske:
 Das geheimnisvolle Leben des Charles Sealsfield**
Reviewed by Jerry Schuchalter 166
- Christian Gellinek
Going Dutch—Gone American: German Settling North America
Reviewed by J. Gregory Redding 168
- Frank Mehring
Karl/Charles Follen: Deutsch-Amerikanischer Freiheitskämpfer
Reviewed by Gerhard Weiss 169
- Rudolf Leonhart
**Memories of New Ulm:
 My Experiences During the Indian Uprising in Minnesota**
 Don Heinrich Tolzmann, trans, and ed.
Reviewed by Timothy J. Holian 171
- Philip Otterness
Becoming German: The 1709 Palatine Migration to New York
Reviewed by J. Gregory Redding 173
- Jiirgen Macha and Andrea Wolf, eds.
**Michael Zimmer's Diary:
 Ein deutsches Tagebuch aus dem Amerikanischen Biirgerkrieg**
Reviewed by William D. Keel 173
- C. George Fry and Joel R. Kurz
**The Americanization Process in the Second Generation:
 The German Lutheran Mathias Loy (1828-1915) Caught Between
 Adaptation and Repristinization**
Reviewed by Tom R. Schultz 179

- Charles R. Mack and Henry H. Lesesne, eds.
Francis Lieber and the Culture of the Mind
Reviewed by Randall P. Donaldson 178
- Pearl Fichman
Before Memories Fade
Reviewed by Jerry Glenn 179
- Don Heinrich Tolzmann
German Heritage Guide to the State of Ohio
Reviewed by J. Gregory Redding 180
- Alexander Stephan, ed.
**Americanization and Anti-Americanism:
The German Encounter with American Culture After 1945**
Reviewed by Jorg Meindl 181
- Donald F. Durnbaugh, ed.
Edward E. Quinter, ed. and trans.
**The Day Book/Account Book of Alexander Mack, Jr. (1712-1803):
Weaver, Brethren Elder, Apologist, and Chronicler in Early America**
Reviewed by Karen M. Johnson-Weiner \ 83
- C. Richard Beam, ed., with Joshua R Brown, ed. (vols, one and two)
and Jennifer L. Trout, ed. (vols, three, four and five)
The Comprehensive Pennsylvania German Dictionary
Reviewed by William D. Keel 185
- Stephen Bowers Harroff
The Amish Schools of Indiana: Faith in Education
Reviewed by Gabriele Lunte 186
- Corinne and Russell Earnest
**To the Latest Posterity:
Pennsylvania-German Family Registers in the Fraktur Tradition**
Reviewed by Bethany M. Usher 188
- Christoph Mauch and Joseph Salmons, eds.
German-Jewish Identities in America
Reviewed by G. Scott Seeger 190

| | |
|--|-----|
| Axel W.-O. Schmidt, ed. One of the 999 About to Be Forgotten: The Memoirs of Carl Barus 1865-1935 <i>Reviewed by Timothy J. Holian</i> | 192 |
| Colin G. Calloway, Gerd Gemünden, and Susanne Zantop, eds. Germans and Indians: Fantasies, Encounters, Projections <i>Reviewed by Heiko Mühr</i> | 194 |
| Wolfgang Helbich and Walter D. Kamphoefner, eds. German-American Immigration and Ethnicity in Comparative Perspective <i>Reviewed by William D. Keel</i> | 196 |
| Werner Mohr Albert Bloch: Caricaturist, Social Critic, and Translator of Karl Kraus <i>Reviewed by Randall E. Donaldson</i> | 198 |
| Antonius Holtmann A Lost American Dream: Civil War Letters (1862/63) of Immigrant Theodor Heinrich Brandes in Historical Contexts Eberhard Reichmann, trans. <i>Reviewed by Tom R. Schultz</i> | 199 |

BIBLIOGRAPHY

| | |
|---|-----|
| Dolores and Giles Hoyt Annual Bibliography of German-Americana | |
| <i>I. Supplements for 2003</i> | 203 |
| <i>II. Bibliography for 2004</i> | 220 |
| <i>III. Topical Index</i> | 260 |
| Five-Year Index of the Yearbook of German-American Studies (2001-2005) | 267 |
| S GAS Bylaws | 281 |
| SGAS Publication Fund Policy | 287 |
| SGAS Research Fund Policy | 284 |

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General Information

The Society for German-American Studies was founded for the purpose of encouraging and advancing the scholarly study of the history, language, literature, and culture of the German element in North America. This includes coverage of the immigrants and their descendants from Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and other German-speaking areas of Europe. Members of the Society include representatives from various academic disciplines and others who share a common interest in German-American studies.

The *Yearbook* is published annually. The editor welcomes contributions in English, preferably, or German on all aspects of German-Americana from members of the Society. The manuscript should be prepared so that it can be read anonymously by the members of the Editorial Board, with the authors name appearing on a separate sheet only. For submission, four copies of the manuscript prepared in accordance with the University of Chicago Press *Manual of Style* are requested. All manuscripts and correspondence concerning the *Yearbook* should be addressed to William Keel, Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures, 1445 Jayhawk Blvd., University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045-7950. Inquiries regarding book reviews for the *Yearbook* should be addressed to Timothy J. Holian, University of Wisconsin-Waukesha, 1500 N. University Dr., Waukesha, WI 53188-2799. The *Newsletter* appears four times a year. Items for the *Newsletter* should be submitted to La Vern J. Rippley, Saint Olaf College, Northfield, MN 55057.

The SGAS annual membership dues, which include subscription to the *Yearbook* and the *Newsletter*, are \$30.00 for regular members. Membership applications to the Society for German-American Studies should be made to the Treasurer of the Society, William Roba, Scott Community College, 500 Belmont Road, Bettendorf, IA 52722. The Society for German-American Studies is open to membership from individuals, societies, libraries, and organizations.

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the Mohawk. These were frontier communities far removed from the direct influence of the Crown, but still some "Palatines" would remain on the move, eventually establishing important communities in Pennsylvania and New Jersey and producing some of the most important figures in German-American history. Although much of this side of the migration is familiar to scholars, Otterness breathes new life into the narrative with his eye for detail and his ability to humanize the participants in this saga.

Scholarship on this era is always plagued by nomenclature problems: terms such as "Germany" and "German" are troublesome prior to 1871, although they are used as commonly understood cultural and regional descriptors. But in a book that wants to trace how different people first became Palatines and then eventually Germans, there should have been a more careful explanation of these terms. In the 1750s Benjamin Franklin is still referring to the settlers as "Palatine boors," but as early as 1724 Robert Livingston had complained about the bragging of the "High Germans." It would have been interesting and informative to see some reflection on the distinctions implied by these labels. Still, this is a compelling book; it is well researched and well written. For the sake of convenience, scholars will probably continue to refer to the 1709 migration as the "Palatine" exodus, but at least now there can be a greater appreciation of the complex dynamics that shaped this first episode of mass migration to the Americas.

Wabash College

J. Gregory Redding

Michael Zimmer's Diary: Ein deutsches Tagebuch aus dem Amerikanischen Bürgerkrieg.

Edited by Jürgen Macha and Andrea Wolf. Sprachgeschichte des Deutschen in Nordamerika: Quellen und Studien/History of the German Language in America: Sources and Studies, vol. 1. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2001. 214pp. \$51.95.

This new series focusing on the linguistic history of German-speaking immigrants in North America grew out of collaborative research between scholars at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, represented by the Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies, and the Westphalian Wilhelms-Universität in Münster. The editors of the series are interested in publishing primary texts and documents representing the some 300 years of German language usage in the North American context as well as analyses of those texts. Texts, and to some degree commentary, will be in both original German and English translations to ensure broad dissemination.

The first volume in the new series is a bilingual edition of the Civil War diary of Palatine immigrant Michael Zimmer, who arrived in Philadelphia in 1846 and then volunteered for service in the Mexican War (1847-48). By the outbreak of the Civil War, Zimmer had married, had five children and was living in Burlington, Wisconsin. In September 1861, Zimmer enlisted in the "Burlington Rifles," Company E, Ninth Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry Regiment, known as the "German Regiment." During his three-year period of enlistment the regiment was assigned to the trans-Mississippi Western Theater of operations, generally in southern Missouri, Arkansas, Kansas and

Indian Territory. At the end of his enlistment in the fall of 1864, Zimmer returned to Wisconsin. He died in Burlington in 1896.

The "war diary" itself exists in two versions, both donated by a granddaughter of the author to the State Historical Society of Wisconsin in 1974. The first version is somewhat smaller in format than the second one and contains indications (corrections, words crossed out, incorrect dates, etc.) that lead the editors to believe that the larger format version is a transcription with corrections of the first diary. The contents of both diaries include approximately twenty pages describing—retrospectively—Zimmer's experiences as a soldier in the Mexican War. The Civil War diary begins on September 7, 1861, and ends with his return home on December 4, 1864.

The current edition of the diary presents a transcription of the presumed earlier version (smaller format) in German followed by a complete English translation. The translation is followed by a five-page glossary of terms in Zimmer's orthography with their largely English equivalents. Preceding the text itself are three introductory essays. The first by series co-editor Joseph Salmons is a brief English introduction to this volume. This is followed by a lengthy essay by the other co-editor of the series, Jürgen Macha, who discusses in German the historical context of the text and analyses the orthography and language usage from a variety of angles (dialect of the author, incorporation of both German and English orthographic principles, etc.). Of particular interest is a brief overview of the service of the Ninth Wisconsin by Richard Zeitlin, which provides a general context for Zimmer's personal account.

Given the idiosyncratic orthography of the German original, it is, of course, difficult if not impossible to assess the accuracy of the transcription of the German original text. The English translation on the other hand should have been carefully proof read by someone who is familiar with the type of vocabulary to be expected in a military diary in the American context. On pages 116-17 we read, "It took about three minutes until Sergeant von der Garth came with some men" The original German reads on page 5 "es dauerte kaum 3 Minuten da kam der Sergeant von der Garth mit etlichen Mann" It appears obvious to this reader that what Zimmer describes is the arrival of the "sergeant of the guard" and not someone named "von der Garth." On page 118 we find the description of the removal of a soldier who had died as follows "two other men came with a bier, laid him on it and went away." This is a translation of the passage on page 6 "kahmen zwei andere mit einem Tragbahr legten ihn darauf und forth ging es." Normally, one would expect the dead soldier to be carried off on a "stretcher." One could also argue that the soldiers returned from New Orleans on a "steamship" and not a "steamboat" (119) although that does reflect Zimmer's usage of "Stimboth" (8). A grammatical error also occurs in this context. A clearly passive construction on page 8 "wier sollten in Nuoliz Distscharscht werden" (we were supposed to be discharged in New Orleans) becomes "we should discharge in New Orleans."

Admittedly, these errors occur in the passages dealing with Zimmer's Mexican War experience. A careful reading of the Civil War portions might reveal many more errors. But given the record of one or two major translation errors per page, this edition is very problematic. The very first sentence of the translation of the diary actually omits the designation of Zimmer's company. The original German on page 2 has "hab ich Enlistet vor den Mexikanischen Krieg und wurde inn das 3 Aterfly Regement Company A Cãpten Thaylor eingereit..." The translation on page 114

begins "I have enlisted for the Mexican War and joined the 3rd Artillery Company under Captain Thalor." I would have translated this as "I enlisted for the Mexican War and was assigned to Company A of the 3rd Artillery Regiment [commanded by] Captain Taylor." It seems to this reviewer that the name of the captain was more likely Taylor than Thalor—unless the editors actually checked military records to verify this.

Despite the problems with the translation, the purpose of the series and this volume is to provide documents for the history of German in America as well as scholarly analyses of those documents. That analysis is offered in a brief introductory essay written by Jürgen Macha and Andrea Wolf entitled "Entstehung, Überlieferung, Sprachform, Darstellungsart" (xiii-xxx). The essay correctly notes that Zimmer enlisted in "Kompanie A" (xxv) leading this reviewer to wonder whether either of the two series editors (Macha and Salmons) really checked the translation. The essay does, however, provide some detail on the influences of home dialect (*Vorderpfälzisch*) as well as mid-nineteenth-century orthographic practices on the spelling found in the German original. Macha and Wolf believe that Zimmer applied what he had learned about avoiding obvious dialect sounds in his spellings to the extent that he hyper-corrected words such as *Teppiche* carpete to *Dopige* (98) by replacing consonants and creating unlauded vowels. As far as English terms, names and places names are concerned, Macha and Wolf believe that Zimmer attempted to render them according to German sound-letter correspondences so that, if read by a German, the actual American word would be produced as in *Hambold* or *Hambolt* (17; for the town of Humboldt, Kansas), which would correspond more to the American pronunciation when read out loud than the German pronunciation of the baron's actual name.

The original German diary text and this introductory essay save the volume. Despite the many shortcomings of the translation, the presentation of the original German and the study of orthographic habits of mid-nineteenth-century German immigrants is well served by this initial volume of the series. The actual day-by-day account of a German immigrant soldier, who served in two wars, is fascinating reading. For readers without the ability to work through the original German, however, the translation needs to be thoroughly reworked.

University of Kansas

William D. Keel

The Americanization Process in the Second Generation: The German Lutheran Mathias Loy (1828-1915) Caught Between Adaptation and Repristinization.

By C. George Fry and Joel R. Kurz. *Studies in Religious Leadership*, vol. 2. Lewiston, N. Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 2005. xvii + 366pp. \$119.95.

A goodly proportion of the people who fueled western expansion in the nineteenth century were ethnic Germans. Many were Pennsylvania Germans, American-born, but clinging tenaciously to their language, culture and religious customs. Others were immigrants, often forced to emigrate by poverty or the burning desire to be a part of the American adventure, to go to a new land where they could be their own masters. The Lutheran pastor, theologian, author and educator Mathias Loy was the son of

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