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The German-American Experience in World War I: A Centennial Assessment¹

The lynching of German immigrant Robert Prager in Collinsville, Illinois, looms large in the image of the World War I experience of German Americans. It was unquestionably a flagrant injustice, even by the standards of “unwritten law” which the defense claimed when the lynchers were unsuccessfully prosecuted.² This hapless coal miner, who was strung up by a drunken mob after having been forced to kiss the flag, had actually attempted to enlist in the U.S. Navy but was rejected because of a glass eye; in accordance with his last request, he was buried with an American flag. However, it would be a mistake to see this case as purely a matter of *ethnic* victimization. As much as Prager’s ethnicity, his socialist sympathies had made him a target. But it was not until the 21st century that anyone remarked upon the obvious German ethnicity of the lynch mob’s ringleader Joseph Riegel, and as many as a dozen of his followers. Although he could not be definitively located in the manuscript census (as is often the case with shiftless individuals), Riegel could read and understand German well enough to “partly translate” Prager’s farewell note to his parents.³ So rather than a tidy case of victimization, we are confronted here with a messy case of opportunism and scapegoating among mob members, and indifference on the part of various officials and authorities in the heavily German town of Collinsville. “Da waren Deutsche auch dabei” takes on a whole new meaning in the light of this information.⁴

More typical of the German-American experience in this era than Prager’s fate was the silent injustice suffered by Albert H. Pohlman and George F. Riebling, both from the Nebraska hamlet then known as Germantown. When the United States entered the Great War, local leaders decided their town needed to replace this “unpatriotic” name. And what could be more patriotic than to rename it after the first local boy who gave his life for his country?

Pohlman was wounded in battle on July 26, 1918, and died of his wounds on August 4. Riebling suffered a similar fate the next month. But because of their German names and ancestry, their sacrifice went unrecognized. Instead, the town was renamed after a hard-luck doughboy who caught typhoid fever on the ship over and died in an army hospital on August 18, 1918, never having laid eyes on the enemy, much less come under fire. What set him apart from the others was his Anglo name, Raymond Garland.⁵

Pohlman and Riebling are symptomatic of the unappreciated loyalty of most German-Americans during World War I. But even the fates of various “Germantowns” around the United States are indicative of a wide range of ethnic experiences. Texas followed the same principle as Nebraska but actually applied it fairly, bringing little “improvement.” The town was renamed after Paul Schroeder, a second-generation German who paid the ultimate sacrifice.⁶ Two Germantowns did receive new names with clearly anti-German overtones. The California hamlet was transformed into Artois, (reportedly after the old name nearly caused a riot when a troop train stopped there), commemorating a French region on the Western Front. The German Catholic community in Kansas was renamed Mercier after the Belgian cardinal who led resistance to German occupation.⁷ But across the country, in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Indiana, Tennessee, Wisconsin, and ironically in Illinois just thirty miles east of where Prager was lynched, other Germantowns survived the war unscathed.

This essay offers an overview of both the attitudes and actions of German-Americans in the Great War and the effects of the war on this ethnic group and its language and culture. It is evident that German-Americans were misunderstood both by their former countrymen back in the Fatherland and by their fellow Americans. Germans often assumed that because German-Americans (not even 11 percent of the 1900 U.S. population including the second generation), were unable to prevent Woodrow Wilson’s re-election or American entry into World War I, it meant they had quickly shed their ethnicity and immersed themselves in the Melting Pot, abandoning the German language and culture. Anglo-Americans, on the other hand, often confused these cultural loyalties or mere language preservation with political loyalty to the Fatherland. In fact, as a Missouri “German Preacher” touted for “Show[ing] up Kaiserism” remarked: “With by far the most Americans of German origin the language has no political significance.”⁸

This is nicely illustrated by an incident related to me by my grandfather, the grandchild of German immigrants on all sides of his family. A subscription agent for the *Westliche Post*, the German language paper of St. Louis, making his rounds in the rural hinterlands of St. Charles County, declared: “Wenn es Gerechtigkeit gibt, gewinnen die Deutschen”: If there is any justice, the

Germans will win. Grandpa shot back “Wenn es Gerechtigkeit gibt, gewinnen die Amerikaner,” which should need no translation. Married at the time, he waited until he was drafted to join the Army, and was mustered in on his first wedding anniversary in April 1918. He never made it to France, although a couple of Grandma’s letters did. Upon news of the armistice, the troop ship he was supposed to be on turned around in mid-ocean; Grandpa himself had been taken off the troop train and hospitalized in Chattanooga with a dangerous case of influenza. But he was just as proud of his service as if he had been in the front line of trenches. His army experience also illustrates the innocence with which some German-Americans approached the language issue. When he went off for his basic training in Texas, his Missouri-born mother wrote him her first letter in German! Of course he quickly advised her to switch languages.

His caution may have been unnecessary. There is evidence that some U.S. soldiers not only received letters in German, but also wrote home from the army in that language. In May 1918, the bilingual parish newsletter of a St. Charles, Missouri, Lutheran church included excerpts from letters of members who were serving in the military, and one of the fifteen letters was *auf Deutsch*, apparently written from training camp. The Jefferson City *Missouri Volksfreund* published an entire letter that a local Westphalia soldier sent home from France. He writes in typical immigrant German including a few English nouns like Farmer, Parlor, or Town, and quotes a bit of soldier doggerel, “First we ride, then we float, and then we get—the Kaiser’s goat,” showing his command of English. Since his name and that of his parents are listed, it was possible to identify him in the census. Not only had he been born in Missouri; so had both of his parents, and his grandparents had all immigrated as children, indicative of a remarkable degree of language persistence among rural Catholic Germans. But language and loyalty were obviously unrelated.⁹ At a nearby German Catholic parish not ten miles from the state capitol, a monument in its cemetery consecrates the ultimate sacrifice of three local boys with the words: “Herr gib Ihnen die ewige Ruhe” (Figure 1).¹⁰

So perhaps my Grandpa’s caution was unnecessary, and Great Grandma’s naiveté can be excused. Hers was in any case surpassed by that of the Germans in the Texas town of Fayetteville. In February 1918, patriotic Americans were shocked and outraged to see what appeared to be a smoking gun of disloyalty: a German flag flying in front of the Germania lodge’s hall. Surprisingly, no one torched the building, but eleven members including the town mayor were arrested. But it turned out that there was a rather innocent explanation: the lodge had traditionally flown the German flag on any day that an event was planned at the hall, serving notice in this era before radio and television. The



Figure 1. Tombstone in the Catholic cemetery at Taos, Missouri, for three German-American soldiers killed in World War I with the inscription at the bottom, “Herr gib Ihnen die ewige Ruhe.”

event they were announcing that day was not just harmless but patriotic: an American Red Cross rally. The club did agree, however, to use the American flag rather than the German in announcing future events.¹¹

The premier German-American statesman of the Civil War era, Carl Schurz, had always maintained that an immigrant’s love for his native and

adopted countries were no more incompatible than the love for mother and wife: "Those who would meanly and coldly forget their old mother could not be expected to be faithful to their young bride." The *Omaha Bee* put it even more succinctly: "Germania our Mother, Columbia our Bride." But as many a rueful husband can relate, this holds true only so long as the two women remain on speaking terms. Schurz, who died in 1906, was mercifully spared having to witness the falling out between the two loves of his life; some 2.5 million other German immigrants were not so fortunate. Given a choice, most German-Americans would no doubt have preferred to see America remain neutral in the Great War. Many were critical of American munitions exports that went almost exclusively to the Allies. In a bitter parody of Matthew's Christmas Gospel, the *Lutherbote für Texas* in August 1915 prophesied "but thou Bethlehem, Pennsylvania . . . though thou be little among the cities in America, yet out of thee shall come forth the tools of destruction, through which thousands in Europe will be condemned to death." But when forced to choose between the old homeland and the new, the great bulk of them would have agreed with the *Cincinnati Freie Presse*: "We stand and fall with the land of our choice."¹²

Granted, in surviving immigrant letters it is very rare to find anyone writing back to the Old Country in the early years of the war with criticisms of Germany. Once the U.S. entered the conflict, very few letters were exchanged because communications with Germany were virtually cut off. But among a dozen people writing back to the Rhineland when they reestablished communications in 1919 or the early 1920s, only one took the position that "The Kaiser now has what he really deserved, managed to become enemies with everyone, couldn't get along with anyone."¹³ Most writers were sympathetic with Germany and above all the economic plight of its people. Several correspondents expressed mistrust of the English-language press. With one exception, all who commented on the subject were resentful of Prohibition, and several remarked on the suppression and decline of the German language. After the war, several writers had contributed to charity drives for German relief efforts. There were frequent references to the military service of family members in America, including a few who had visited relatives or ancestral homes in the occupied Rhineland. However, the crucial difference is not between people writing letters sympathetic to Germany as opposed to those writing critically; it's the difference between people still writing to relatives, and those who no longer maintained ties with the Old Country. One striking feature of this correspondence is that it rarely continued into the second, American born generation. In a typical collection, there is only a single letter from one of the children, sometimes in English, announcing the death of the parent who had often been writing home for decades.¹⁴ By the war's outbreak,

the second generation outnumbered actual immigrants by more than two to one, so one of the big questions is how much of their parents' language and culture had been passed on to them.¹⁵

It is sometimes pointed out that the commanding general of the American Expeditionary Force, John Pershing, was of Germanic extraction, but with respect to language and culture, that was inconsequential, especially compared to someone like General Dwight Eisenhower, whose grandfather had preached in German, not to mention Admiral Chester Nimitz who was brought up bilingually in Fredericksburg, Texas, and probably had German as his first language. Black Jack's Pfoerschin ancestors had immigrated from Alsace already in 1724, and he had no association with the German language nor with any transplanted denomination. His mother had southern Anglo roots, and in his later life he was Episcopalian.¹⁶ But there were German-Americans from the heart of the ethnic community who distinguished themselves at lower levels of the U.S. Army.

The first Texas officer killed in World War I was another Fredericksburger of German heritage, Lt. Louis Jordan. Growing up on a ranch, he taught school briefly before winning a scholarship to the University of Texas, where he was the captain of the football team and their first All-American. Among the first to volunteer at war's outset, Jordan was commissioned a 1st Lieutenant in August 1917, arrived in France in early October, and was the first man in his regiment killed in action on March 5, 1918. His grandparents were all German immigrants, and like almost everyone in Fredericksburg back then, he was no doubt bilingual. A football story mentions him spurring his teammates on "with a few cuss words in German and some in English." One sports writer remarked, "it is ironic that a young man so proud of his German heritage" would die from a German shell. Fredericksburg, too, was proud of its son; it named its American Legion post after him, and when a new Longhorn stadium was built at Austin in 1924, citizens erected a flagpole there in his honor.¹⁷

Similarly from Quincy and surrounding Adams County, Illinois, the first men to give their lives for their country were of German background. Oscar Vollrath was the son of a prosperous farmer in rural Adams County and a graduate of a German Methodist college, Central Wesleyan, in Warrenton, Missouri. He enlisted in the National Guard in March 1917 even before the U.S. declaration of war, then switched to the Marines, where he became a corporal and squad leader. He died in an artillery bombardment at Chateau Thierry on June 9, 1918. That same week, the first native of Quincy had made the ultimate sacrifice, another Marine named Fred Schulte. He enlisted from Detroit at the outbreak of war, but had grown up and spent most of

his life in Quincy. Almost one-third of this heavily German town, 10,000 of some 35,000, turned out at a demonstration the next month to support the war and commemorate the two men, much as Fredericksburg, Texas, would do for Jordan after the war.¹⁸

Characteristic of the impersonal, industrial nature of the Great War, all three of these men, Jordan, Vollrath, and Schulte, died from artillery fire in the trenches, not in any dramatic no-man's-land heroics. Another commonality of the three is that all were of unmixed German ancestry and probably bilingual, but all were of the third generation in America, the grandchildren of immigrants. Each had been employed in a white collar occupation, a further indication of their entry into the American mainstream. But before attempting to generalize from these three cases, one needs to take a more systematic look at military participation rates of German-Americans, particularly of the second generation who might have closer ties to the Old Country, especially if their parents were still alive.

The 1930 Census provided a direct measure of military service; although it obviously would not encompass those killed in action, this is such a small fraction that it would hardly affect the overall findings. The mortality of the intervening twelve years also comes into play, but this would distort the findings only if veterans and non-vets had varying mortality rates among some ethnicities but not among others. This investigation (Table 1), based on a representative nationwide 1:100 census sample, is restricted to men born in the years 1887 through 1900 inclusive, those of prime military age.¹⁹ Immigrants were excluded from this analysis, because they were exempted from the duty to fight their former homeland, and it is restricted to whites, since black Americans, as in the Civil War, first had to fight for the right to fight. Ethnic affiliation is defined by the birthplace of potential soldier's father (which in most cases was the same as their mother's). Germans and Austro-Hungarians, the main nationalities of the Central Powers, could be distinguished from their former Slavic subjects, who by 1930 had established their independence. Although technically part of the Allied group, the Irish were tabulated separately on the assumption that their nationalist movement may have undermined their support for the British. For example, a *St. Louis Post Dispatch* reader suggested in April 1918 that "with the present attitude of the Irish toward the war" the Irish potato should be called Peruvian—an obvious play on the renaming of sauerkraut.²⁰

As reflected in the "% Served" and "Index 1" columns of Table 1, it is evident that second-generation Germans hardly stood out from their fellow Americans in their rate of military service. Despite the Czechoslovakian and Polish nationalist causes, the subject nationalities of the Central Powers served at rates only slightly higher than Germans, and they were overshadowed, as

Table 1. World War I Military Service by Ethnicity, Second-Generation Men, 1930 Census.

Father's Origins	Sample	% Served	Index 1	Index 2	Index 3
	N				
United States	13237	29.4	99	99	102
Allied	1186	31.8	107	107	99
Ireland	419	34.8	118	119	104
Germany	1316	27.9	94	96	91
Other Central	108	38.9	131	127	111
Central Occupied	288	30.6	103	96	90
Italy	180	23.9	81	75	62
Other Neutral	872	30.1	102	101	96
Total	17606	29.6	100	100	100

Index 1: % Served/Total % Served (29.6) * 100.

Index 2: % Served adjusted for age, as % of overall service rate.

Index 3: % Served adjusted for age, marital status 1917, literacy, and urban/farm, as % of overall service rate.

Source: Calculations based on the 1930 U.S. Census IPUMS 1% Sample.

Steven Ruggles, J. Trent Alexander, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Matthew B.

Schroeder, and Matthew Sobek. Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 5.0 [Machine-readable database]. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010.

was every other ethnicity, by the Austrians and Hungarians who make up the Other Central category (although this is based on a rather small number of cases). Old Stock Americans whose fathers were native born served at only average rates, but those with roots in Allied countries turned out in force. The two groups whose service rates are the most paradoxical are the Irish and Italians. Whatever their feelings about the Irish nationalist cause or their resentment of British domination, the sons of Erin flocked in unrivaled numbers to the American banner. Although Italy abandoned its neutrality and joined the Allied coalition before the United States, Italian Americans had the lowest service rate of any major ethnic groups in World War I.

Before concluding too much from these differences, we need to make sure that the ethnic playing field is level. There are a number of background factors that influenced a man's likelihood of service regardless of ethnicity. After peace had returned, one Illinois German immigrant reported back to the home folks: "My boys didn't have to go to war, because they were

farmers, and each one had a family.²¹ As it turns out, he hit upon two of the most influential factors affecting military service. Men who were single in 1917 served at rates 30 points higher than men who were married. The type of community one lived in also made a difference; big city residents had the highest participation rates, those in smaller towns and cities only slightly lower, but participation fell off for rural residents and especially for those living on farms, whose service rates did not reach two-thirds that of urban dwellers (since agricultural employment was one of the main grounds for draft deferment). Officially, the American army avoided illiterates; while this policy was apparently not applied stringently, service rates of those who were literate were double the rate of those who were not. The biggest factor, however, is age: World War I service rates peaked at about 50 percent for those born in 1896, but dropped off steeply in both directions, so that less than 20 percent of those born in 1900 served, and not even 15 percent of those in the oldest cohorts born in 1887 and 1888. If any of these characteristics varied substantially from one ethnic group to another, this, rather than any attitudinal factors, might have accounted for difference in service rates.

So in order to level the ethnic playing field, additional statistical controls were imposed for the factors mentioned above.²² The results are shown the three index columns of Table 1. Index 1 simply converts the service rates to a percentage of the overall average of 29.6 percent. Index 2 includes a statistical control for age (i.e., what would the service rates be if all ethnicities had the same age structure); here there is little change for most groups, although the Central Occupied nationalities move into negative territory, with service rates identical to those of Germans, who move up slightly. With additional controls added for Marriage, Literacy, and Locale, the differences narrow considerably except with the Italians. All other groups fall into the narrow range between 90 percent and 111 percent of the overall average. The Germans move down to 91 percent of parity, but they are still ahead of the Central Occupied nationalities, who come in at 90. The Other Central group, mostly Austrians and Hungarians, still maintains the lead, though by a much lesser margin. The Irish, too, still remain above average, but those of Allied nationalities fall slightly below. One thing this data suggests is that the influences of European nationalisms can easily be exaggerated. The service rates of groups whose presumed motivations were very different prove to be quite similar in their military participation. (The Italian case is rather puzzling but may reflect return and repeat migration, in that some Italian-Americans present in 1930 may have been back in Italy during the war years.)

The 1980 census with its ancestry question allows one more look at military participation, also going beyond the second generation, at least for the World War I veterans who survived to age 80 or beyond (Table 2).

Table 2. World War I Military Service by Ancestry, Men aged 80 +, 1980

Census.	% Served	Total Index	White Index
Ancestry			
English	33.1	117	112
French	32.1	113	109
German	28.3	100	96
Irish	33.5	118	114
Italian	23.7	83	80
Polish	24.7	87	84
All Races	28.4	100	96
Whites	29.5	104	100

Total Index: % Served/All Races % Served (28.4) * 100.

White Index: % Served/Whites % Served (29.5) * 100.

Source: Calculated as proportion of World War I veterans among the male population aged 80 and older, reported in *United States, 1980 Census of Population: General Social and Economic Conditions, United States Summary* (Washington, DC, 1983), tables 172, 179, pp. 1-169, 1-176.

The overall service rate is surprisingly close to that calculated from the 1930 census, around 30 percent. Once again people of German origins are in the middle of the pack; their overall service rate is almost exactly at the American average, and just 1.2 points below that for whites only. As in the earlier data, Irish had the highest service rates, and men of English and French ancestry also surpassed Germans. But Germans were well ahead of the two other ancestry groups that are separately tallied. Italians again have the lowest rates, and men of Polish background were also well behind the Germans despite any nationalist motives Poles may have had for serving, or the Germans for slacking. So regardless of one's methodology or definition of ethnicity, the service rates of German-Americans in World War I were only slightly lower than the national average, never falling as low as 90 percent of the overall rate of participation.²³

There are other measures of war support that one can examine, also in the civilian population. One is the purchase of Liberty Bonds. My home county of St. Charles in the heart of the German belt was second in all Missouri in per-capita subscriptions for the Third Liberty Loan campaign, earning it a place on a propaganda flyer that was dropped behind enemy lines. The banner town in Missouri was Treloar in a heavily German part of neighboring Warren County, where subscribers pledged nearly \$200 each. Another German-American record setter was Pioneer Flour Company of San

Antonio, then in the second generation of the Guenther family, which bought \$50,000 worth of Liberty Bonds, the most of anyone citywide. However, it is difficult to discern how much of such support was voluntary or coerced. In Guenther's case, support for the cause was probably heartfelt. By the eve of World War I, one of Pioneer's best customers was the U.S. Army at nearby Ft. Sam Houston, which bought a half-million pounds of their flour.²⁴ But in some instances it appears that German-Americans felt they were paying protection money by purchasing Liberty Bonds.

Beyond the pressure to support the war financially, there were clearly other forms of intimidation and injustice present in both American civilian and military policy. The military draft made few provisions for conscientious objection, and the right of dissent was severely curtailed by the Espionage Act of 1917 and the Sedition Act of 1918. The two groups of German-Americans who suffered most were at the opposite ends of the ideological spectrum: on the one hand, separatist sects such as the Amish, Mennonites, and Hutterites who practiced a religiously based pacifism; on the other hand, socialists and other leftist radicals such as I.W.W. members who supported U.S. neutrality in the belief that war benefitted only the capitalist class. Among those charged under the Espionage Act was Victor Berger, an Austrian Jewish immigrant from Milwaukee with a large German constituency who became the first Socialist elected to Congress in 1910, but was twice denied his seat during and after the war until his antiwar conviction was overturned by the courts. Four Hutterite conscientious objectors were subjected to imprisonment and abuse in Alcatraz (torture would hardly be too strong a word), which led to the death of two of them, following their being transferred to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Many of their brethren, along with more than 1,500 Mennonites, took refuge in Canada, which granted full military exemptions on religious grounds despite having borne the brunt of military service from the war's outset.²⁵

There were some 6,300 "enemy aliens," the bulk of them Germans, interned by U.S. authorities on the basis of the 1798 Alien Enemy Act, primarily at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, and Fort Douglas, Utah. The majority, however, were not immigrants, but crews of German naval and merchant ships that were stranded in American territory when they took refuge from the British navy in American harbors. Only some 2,300 genuine immigrants or sojourners were interned as "security risks," about one percent of the quarter million male German citizens above the age of 14 resident in the United States at the time (the great majority of whom had been present the requisite five years and would have had the opportunity to become naturalized had they so chosen).²⁶ The U.S. policy toward enemy aliens was extremely mild compared to the practice of Germany, France, Britain, or even a country

equally distant from theaters of war, Australia, which interned naturalized Germans and even some of the second generation.²⁷ Although American authorities undertook internment only on the basis of individual hearings rather than collective guilt, there is ample evidence of their overzealousness in the simple fact that, despite the aspersions cast upon them, only about half of those interned agreed to be repatriated to Germany—many of them reluctantly, simply in order to be released from internment.²⁸

However, many ethnic enthusiasts, and some academics as well, have taken this persecution narrative too far. Even academics can be very good at detecting German names among the victims of persecution, but rather myopic in spotting them among the perpetrators. Among those most often cited for inciting the anti-German hysteria during these years was one Gustavus Ohlinger, who authored a book warning of *The German Conspiracy in American Education*. Although his name suggests Scandinavian or German roots, it turns out the author was born in China, the son of Methodist missionaries Franklin Ohlinger and Bertha nee Schweinfurth. The 1910 census, where they resided together, reveals that his mother was born in Michigan of two German immigrant parents; his father, although of old stock, had Pennsylvania roots that were almost certainly German. In fact, there is good evidence that Gustavus still knew the language.²⁹ And he was just one of many German-Americans who enthusiastically supported the war.

The experiences of German-Americans during the conflict also varied considerably from state to state. Where there were only a few, they were often overlooked; if they were numerous enough, it was politically dangerous to trifle with them. But states that fell into the mid range of German concentration saw the most serious repression.³⁰ Missouri may represent a best-case scenario. It had a sizeable German community, but rather few recent immigrants. The state's Germans identified with their adopted country, and remembering their Civil War record, often considering themselves better Americans than the Anglo Americans who were whistling Dixie when Germans acted decisively to keep the state within the Union.³¹ Moreover, with Germans divided in their political loyalties, neither of the two major parties could risk alienating them. Finally, the legislature was out of session throughout the war, reducing the temptation for demagoguery on the part of the state's politicians.

Two recent studies of the German experience in Missouri and Texas during World War I both moderate the charges of wholesale German harassment.³² The Missouri study concludes that “contrary to the experience of German-speakers in Nebraska, South Dakota or Minnesota, few German-Americans in Missouri encountered the violent aspects of what Luebke called the ‘fierce hatred of everything German’ during World War I.” And in both cases, among the denunciators of alleged German sympathizers one finds names

that are unmistakably German, an ancestry which the census confirms. For example, when one Erwin Walz was forced to kiss the flag in Osage County Missouri, among his antagonists were men bearing the names Oidtman and Steinmann.³³ Walz's father, an Evangelical pastor, had editorialized in the *Westliche Post* in 1915 that "Whoever has a German tongue and a German heart, who embraces German attitudes and custom, is a true patriot."³⁴

In January of 1918, the Patriotic Speakers' Bureau of the Missouri Council on Defense even launched a branch known as the German Speakers' Bureau, to crusade for the war effort in the German language. If any other state attempted this, it has remained a well-kept secret, although the effort was abandoned after six months because of increasing hysteria about the language issue. Reportedly sixteen German speakers were recruited (among a total of some 200 Patriotic Speakers statewide), most of them born abroad to the extent they can be identified. Heading up the effort was Max F. Meyer, a University of Missouri psychology professor who had immigrated in his early twenties. St. Louis clothing manufacturer Rudolph Schmitz, who had arrived at age 18, was requested for a speech in Osage County. Music teacher Victor Lichtenstein, born in St. Louis of Hungarian Jewish parents, had no doubt sharpened his language skills studying in Europe, but he begged off of the quixotic task that a clueless Barton County official was proposing: to persuade an Amish congregation to switch to English. At least two of Meyer's crew were Lutheran ministers, Budapest-born Joseph Frenz, who immigrated in 1900 at age 9, and Hermann Wallner, who had arrived from Germany already in 1872 as a small child.³⁵ Although not part of this official effort, two sons of "founding fathers" of Missouri German Protestantism weighed in on war and language issues. Higginsville Evangelical pastor N. Rieger had his entire sermon published locally and reprinted by the *Kansas City Star Journal* under the headline, "German Preacher Shows up Kaiserism," an address he had also given the previous week in German. Rev. Ferdinand G. Walther reported to his county defense chairman that his Brunswick Lutheran congregation had been using English every other week for over six years, though he added in slightly accented English, "I hope not that I have to give up German preaching entirely."³⁶

Whether part of the German Speakers campaign or not, a young Jefferson City woman named Mathilda Dallmeyer earned the nickname the "Joan of Arc of Missouri" for her support of the war effort. As both her names suggest, she was of German heritage. Her father had immigrated at age 14 in 1871, joining older brothers, and become a prominent capital city merchant; her mother was born in Missouri to a pioneer German family. Matilda's rousing speech in April 1918 at Hermann, the most German town in Missouri, raised over \$6,000 in War Saving Stamp sales and nearly double that in

pledges. It is evident from her biography that she moved well beyond ethnic circles. Active in many civic organizations, she was an ardent suffragette, something often frowned upon by German-Americans, and attended the first Republican national convention to which women were admitted in 1919. She subsequently married Frank Shelden, a prominent Kansas City dentist, tennis star, and city council member. Although brought up in the German Evangelical Church where her father was the congregation president during the war, in her married life she was a Presbyterian.³⁷

One finds similar examples in Texas of divisions within the ethnic community, and as in Dallmeyer's case, social class came into play. Brenham was the seat of a county with more Germans than anywhere but San Antonio and Houston. In June 1918, its German weekly *Texas Volksbote* published a list of eighty-three persons, representing the cream of the town's business community, who publicly distanced themselves from the antiwar American Party. Soon thereafter the statement was carried by the English paper as well, and a few days later the German paper ceased publication. Voting returns show much stronger support for the American Party in the rural parts of the county.³⁸

In states such as Iowa, Montana, and Minnesota, conditions were much more severe, but here too, Germans were not the only ones subjected to pressure, nor were they all on the same side of the war issue. The Iowa governor's 1918 "Babel Proclamation" banned not only German but all foreign languages from schools and public places, and Chicago took similar measures. Nearly 1,000 complaints against Germans were made to the Minnesota Commission of Public Safety during the war, but this was only 56 percent of the total. Moreover, some of these complaints were raised by fellow Germans. A Carver County Lutheran pastor was forced to resign after berating his parishioners for failing to learn English after thirty or forty years in America. A Le Sueur County jeweler wrote to the Commission, "I am a German born, like the German people[,] but hate the German government." New Ulm, Minnesota, founded as a German colony, was the site of what has been described as the only draft riot in World War I. In fact it was a peaceful rally of some 5-10,000 people, supporting, among other things, a national referendum on the war, but it led to the suspension of three town officials by the Commission.³⁹

Montana was among the most intolerant of any of the states; in 2006, its governor saw cause to issue an official posthumous apology to 78 people fined or imprisoned on allegations of sedition during the war. All except three had been charged merely on the basis of alleged verbal statements, often made while drunk. But here too, not only Germans were singled out; of 41 people imprisoned, only 9 were from Germany and another 5 from Austria,

but there were 8 other nationalities among the incarcerated, along with 18 U.S. natives, few of them with German names. Association with the radical labor organization Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.) was more of a common characteristic of those prosecuted.⁴⁰

A recent, widely circulated *New York Times* OpEd on the World War I experience makes the shocking assertion: “More than 30 were killed by vigilantes and anti-German mobs.” The author’s 2015 book with the striking title, *Burning Beethoven*, includes a similar statement giving the figure “at least thirty-five people were killed at the hands of mobs or in other violence that included several public hangings of Germans.” A few pages later it cites the repression against labor radicals in the I.W.W., again making a dubious equation: “A disproportionately large number of German-Americans were members of the I.W.W.”⁴¹ Germans indeed played a large role in labor radicalism, but at different times and places than the I.W.W. The source cited in the book does mention thirty five mob killings in the first six months of 1918. But the very next sentence says that Alabama and Louisiana were the two states with the most lynchings, eight each, and the following sentence clearly states, “These were mostly racial killings.”⁴² The beatings and tarring and feathering of real and suspected German sympathizers were bad enough. But no one is served by turning persecuted African Americans and labor radicals into German Americans, although it reflects an unfortunate twenty-first century tendency to see ethnicity manifested only in victimization.

A glaring absurdity often cited in the campaign against the German language was the attempt to replace the word “sauerkraut” with “liberty cabbage.” However, it appears that this was an initiative by the food industry to combat falling sales due to consumer avoidance. Reportedly, the price had fallen from \$45-50 per barrel to a mere \$14 because of lagging demand. But one seldom encounters the new name in any primary sources, so it seems unlikely that it ever caught on any more than “freedom fries” did recently. A full-text search of the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* for 1918 produces only eight hits for “liberty cabbage,” some of them derisive, but 31 for “sauerkraut.” Although Chicago stands out in its hostility to things German, there too, the *Chicago Tribune* contains 31 mentions of “sauerkraut” during the last year of the Great War, but only three of “liberty cabbage.” In fact, a nationwide search of digitized English language newspapers in the Library of Congress “Chronicling America” database reveals only 81 uses of the word “liberty cabbage,” but nearly 600 for “sauerkraut” and more than 300 with the spelling “sauer kraut,” giving the traditional Germanic name an 11:1 advantage.⁴³ So while there may have been a temporary aversion to the food, the name was never endangered.

Another issue that is often exaggerated is the renaming of streets with

German names. Any time one encounters a Pershing Road or Avenue in the Midwest, it is a good bet that it once had a German name. The one in St. Louis, for example, used to be called Berlin Avenue. However, a recent prize-winning Heidelberg dissertation looked into this issue more broadly, and found that its prevalence varied widely. Chicago stood out for its hostility to things German, renaming 82 of 115 streets with German names, while Cincinnati replaced only a dozen, and Milwaukee and St. Louis even fewer. The difference is explained by the preponderance of Slavic immigrants, subjects of the Dual Monarchy, in Chicago. They also figured prominently in the crusade to end German instruction in the schools of the Windy City.⁴⁴ So German street names, like German town names across the country, experienced widely varying fates. In St. Louis, they were even a laughing matter. A letter to the *St. Louis Times*, (an offshoot of the German-language *Westliche Post*), made light of the campaign to abolish German street names, at the same time highlighting the prominence of Germans in city offices: “In place of the objectionable Allemania, Berlin, Carlsbad, Germania, Hamburg, Hannover, Hertling and Unter den Linden, we could have Niederlucke, Otto, Tamme, Fette, Baur, Stockhausen, Rice, Bergman, Schwartz, Kraleman, Udell, Eilers

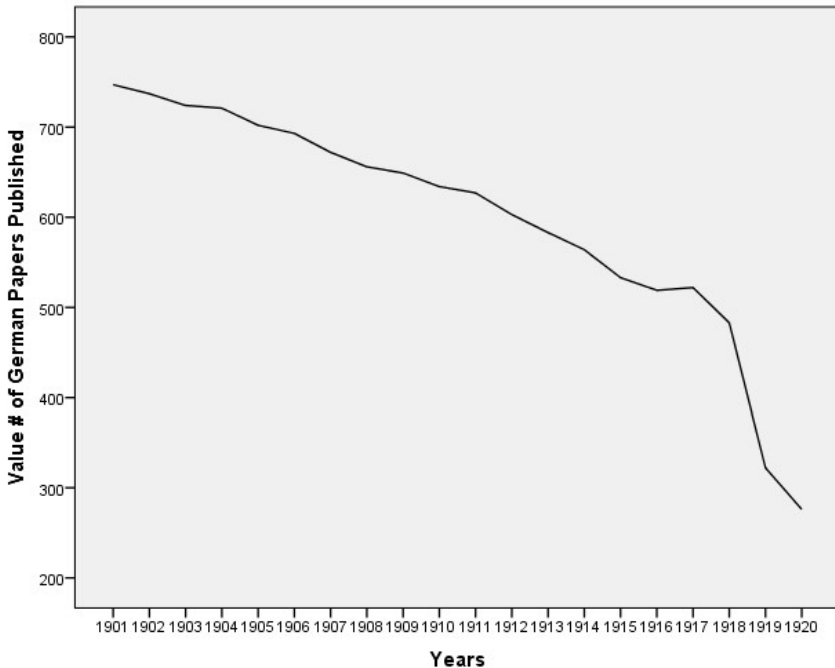


Figure 2. Number of German Newspapers Published in the United States, by Year. Source: Robert E. Park, *The Immigrant Press and its Control* (New York, 1922), 309-20.

and Schranz"; all, incidentally, drawn from the Board of Aldermen under Mayor Henry Kiel, who was re-elected in 1917 by a record margin, the first St. Louis mayor to serve three four-year terms.⁴⁵

The most apparent impact of World War I on private German-American cultural institutions was on the ethnic press. Until their loyalty was certified by the Postmaster General, newspapers had to submit translations of all their war related content to a censor before they received second class mailing privileges. Permit number 1 was issued to *Das Wochenblatt*, published out of Austin by William Trenckmann, born in Texas to immigrant parents in 1859. It was his good fortune that Postmaster General Burleson had been his college classmate at Texas A&M. Others were not so lucky; Socialist editor Victor Berger was not allowed to distribute his *Milwaukee Leader* (successor to his German-language *Vorwärts*) even as first class mail, though it was in English. A German Socialist daily in Philadelphia suffered the same fate.⁴⁶

Even in the case of the ethnic press, the war's effect was not a reversal of fortunes, but merely an acceleration of a decline that had already been underway for two decades (Figure 2). The number of German-language papers in the country had peaked just short of 800 in the early 1890s, but the Panic of 1893 and the ensuing depression set off an inexorable downhill slide, with a net loss of some 250 papers before the war even began. Although interest in war news did bring a miniscule upturn in 1917, America's entry into the Great War plunged the German-American newspaper count to just half its 1914 figure by 1920. At the beginning of the century, total circulation had held up somewhat better than the number of papers might suggest, as subscription lists were often consolidated when a paper bought out its competitor. But during the war, faced with the pressure of public opinion, censorship, translation requirements, postal restrictions, the loss of advertising revenue in general, and beer ads in particular, German-American papers lost three-fourths of their prewar subscribers.⁴⁷

The war's impact on language use in German-American churches was considerably less dramatic, as they were more immune to public pressure than newspapers, and at least in the short run less driven by profit and loss. Here too, the war merely accelerated a decline that had its beginnings at least a decade before the war's outbreak.⁴⁸ Besides the information available from denominational records, the 1906 and 1916 U.S. Census special reports on religious bodies provide a more systematic view of the trends over the decade preceding the U.S. declaration of war (Figure 3). In the first few years of the twentieth century, about half of all church parishes using the German language used it exclusively; by 1916 this proportion had fallen below 20 percent.⁴⁹ Ten years later in 1926 foreign language use had declined so much that the census did not bother to tally it. It should be noted that these figures

% of Members in Congregations Using Only German

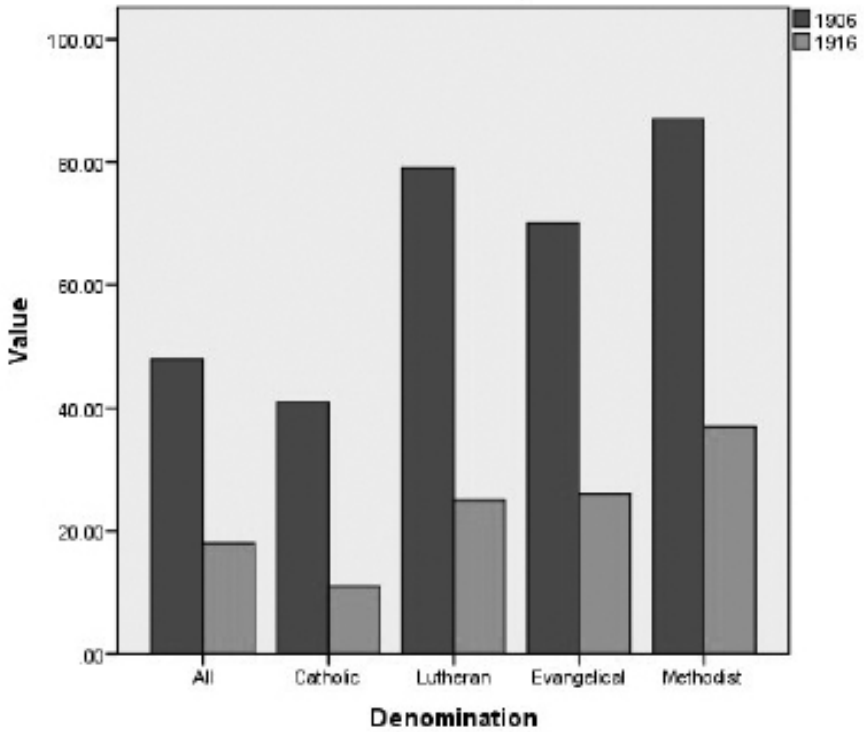


Figure 3. Language Use by Denomination, U.S. Census of Religious Bodies, 1906-16. Source: Calculated from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Religious Bodies, 1906, Part I* (Washington, DC, 1910), 114-21. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Religious Bodies, 1916, Part I* (Washington, DC, 1919), 78-85.

reflect the total membership in congregations using German exclusively or in combination with English, not the number of members who were monolingual or bilingual in German. Not surprisingly, there were contrasts among the varying denominations in their German language loyalty. One Catholic immigrant complained to the home folks in 1920: “The bishops are mostly Irishmen. They are mostly all against German and were also very hostile during the war against us Germans.”⁵⁰ His experience is reflected in the global figures. The multi-ethnic nature of the Catholic church, the prominence of the Irish in its hierarchy, and their frequent indifference or hostility to foreign languages made for a lower level and a sharper drop in German exclusivity than was the case with Protestant denominations that were essentially transplanted from Germany, as the Lutheran and Evangelical synods were.

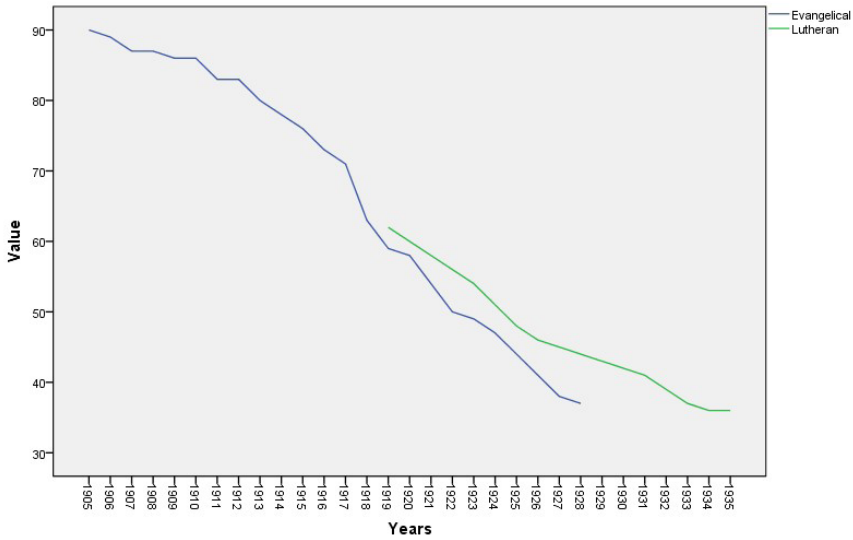


Figure 4. Percentage of Church Services Held in German, by Denomination and Year. Source: Calculated from annual *Berichte der Synodalbeamten und -behörden an die Distrikte der Evangelischen Synode von Nord-Amerika/ Reports of the Synodical Officers and Boards to the Districts of the [German] Evangelical Synod of North America* (St. Louis, 1905-1928) [name changes over time]; *Statistical Yearbook of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, 1937* (St. Louis, 1938), 152-53. Methodologies vary slightly between denominations. The Evangelical figures count the actual number of church services held in each language; the Lutheran figures are based on a weighted average of membership in churches, using all German, all English, and the three intervening quartiles, respectively. Neither tracks actual attendance by language.

The figures on German Methodists are somewhat deceptive; congregations that adopted English often transferred from German to English conferences and disappeared from the statistics entirely. In fact Methodists probably fell somewhere between Catholics and Lutherans in their language preservation.⁵¹ With the two largest denominations transplanted primarily from Germany, theologically Evangelicals were much more liberal than Lutherans, but their language practices were quite similar. By America's entry into the Great War, only about a quarter of their congregations used German exclusively. The small impact of the war on these two denominations becomes even clearer if we look at annual figures on language use within these two church bodies (Figure 4). Although still high, the use of German had been declining in the Evangelical church since the beginning of the twentieth century. The only discernible effect of the war was a slight steepening of the downturn between 1917 and 1919. Although comparable figures for Lutherans only begin in 1919, the close parallel of the two lines suggests that their experience, also during the war years, was quite similar to that of the Evangelicals.⁵²

The crusade against the German language and culture was most thorough and effective in the educational realm, an area of public life that was clearly subject to government regulation and financing. Largely forgotten in present-day controversies over bilingual education is the degree of public support and funding for German instruction in the half-century before World War I. A 1901 survey found about half a million elementary students receiving German instruction, including nearly a quarter million in public schools. Three rural public grade schools in my native St. Charles County, Missouri, continued to teach German right up to the American entry into World War I.⁵³ The same held true for the town of Morrison, just a little upstream from Hermann, the most German town in the most German county of Missouri. In fact, the book they were using had a 1915 copyright.⁵⁴ In some places German was merely taught as a subject, but in others including the cities of Cincinnati, Cleveland, Baltimore, and Indianapolis, there were truly bilingual programs, offering what today is called two-way immersion, lasting right down to World War I. In May 1917, novelist Booth Tarkington headed up a crusade against German instruction in Indianapolis, considering it to be totally unpatriotic. He was particularly incensed at the singing of the Star Spangled Banner *auf Deutsch* (Figure 5)—incidentally a translation by a Texas German dating from before the Civil War.⁵⁵ Within a year or two of American entry into the Great War, the German language was practically eliminated from public schools, also at the high school level. Before the war, about 25 percent of American high school students were taking German; by 1922 it was down to 0.6 percent. And no other language took up much of the slack.⁵⁶

Missouri does stand apart in that it did not pass a language law banning German from schools like more than half of all U.S. states, though this may be explained by the simple fact that the legislature was out of session from April 1917 through January 1919 when intolerance was at its peak. Not only did this superpatriotic hysteria virtually eliminate German instruction in *public* schools (and that of most other languages as collateral damage), it also brought a new wave of legislative interference with *parochial* schools. A Nebraska law of 1919, and similar measures in Iowa, Ohio, and several other states, forbade instruction in any school, including parochial, in any language except English. And an Oregon law, passed by initiative with Ku Klux Klan support, in effect outlawed parochial schools entirely by requiring public school attendance for all children aged 8 to 15.⁵⁷

Political means were not the only methods the Klan used to promote its English-only agenda after 1920. In Brenham and rural Washington County, Texas, it used anonymous threats, beatings, and tarring and feathering in an attempt to force churches and other institutions to abandon their use of German. A notice posted on the door of a Lutheran church in Berlin,



Figure 5. Das Star Spangled Banner, from a Civil War Era Broadside. Source: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/ih/as/loc.rbc.as.113160/pageturner.html?page=1>, translated by Hermann Seele, New Braunfels, Texas, 1851; published by H. De Marsan, New York, (1862-63, based on street address of publisher).

Texas, just outside Brenham, warned: "The eyes of the unknown hath seen and doth constantly observe those whose hearts are not right. . . . Be 100 per cent American. Speak the English language or move out of this city and county." The loyalty of Texas Germans was vouched for by none other than Colonel Mayfield, the publisher of a Klan weekly in Houston: "The Records show that our soldiers of German descent fought as valiantly overseas as those of families of longer resident [*sic*] in America. . . . Still, this is America, all America and nothing but America The people who do not care to speak our native tongue . . . should be driven from it." It demanded in bold headlines: PREACH IN ENGLISH. One of the demands the Klan made in Brenham was that soldiers' funerals not be conducted in German; it seems that Klansmen could not bear this *prima facie* evidence that language use and loyalty were unrelated. In neighboring Austin County, a dispute over the use of German at a political rally put on by the Cat Spring Agricultural Society escalated several weeks later into a shootout on the streets of Sealy, Texas, between Klansmen and Germans that left four people dead (two on each side), one German hospitalized with severe stab wounds, and a Klansman convicted of murder. But even such violence and intimidation could not stamp out the German language. The Agricultural Society continued to keep its minutes in German until 1942 (and virtually defied prohibition with the complicity of the local German-American sheriff).⁵⁸ As late as the 1970 census, more than one-third of the whites in Washington County, and more than one-fourth in Austin County, claimed German as their mother tongue. This was by no means a Texas record. In homogeneous, isolated Gillespie County in and around Fredericksburg, half a century after the Great War's end, a 57 percent majority still reported they had grown up with German as their first language.⁵⁹

Germans also fought back against language suppression with legal means, and amazingly enough, Lutherans and Catholics managed to cooperate. The Nebraska language law was challenged when Robert Meyer, the teacher of a one-room Lutheran grade school, was fined \$25 for teaching religion class in the German language—his pupil was reading the story of Jacob's Ladder from a German Bible. Supported by Lutheran officials and an Irish Catholic lawyer, he took his case all the way to the Supreme Court, where the law was overturned along with similar ones in Iowa and Ohio in the 1923 case *Meyer v. Nebraska*. The Oregon law was challenged by Catholics, with Lutheran support, leading to victory in the high court in the 1925 case, *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, which drew upon the Meyer precedent.⁶⁰ However, by then most of the damage to foreign language instruction, driven as it was multiple factors, was irreversible.

A few closing observations from my home state of Missouri will

demonstrate that the language transition proceeded largely independent of the influence of the Great War. It may have been due to the war that the Lutherans in the St. Louis suburb of Black Jack held their first English confirmation class in 1917, though they still had a German class the following week. It had been the custom in the parish for the women to clean the church the week before confirmation, but as the parish history relates, that year they waited a week and cleaned before the German class because “they were not sure the Lord knew English.” The war may not have been the only factor involved, however: the English confirmation was held on March 25, two weeks before the United States declared war. Other German congregations had taken similar steps earlier; St. Paul’s Evangelical in Creve Coeur introduced a monthly English service already in 1906, and by 1923 was alternating English and German every other Sunday.⁶¹

With the Catholic Church, too, there is evidence of disagreement between the laity and the heavily Irish hierarchy. In 1915, St. Louis Cardinal Glennon had banned German sermons and announcements in the churches of his Archdiocese, but a benevolent association of laity called the Missouri Catholic Union, meeting at nearby St. Peters in 1920, voted down a resolution to conduct its business exclusively in English, continuing on a bilingual basis as before.⁶²

The German language persisted longest in rural Protestant areas. Just one county removed from St. Louis, World War I apparently came and went without leaving a trace on language use in the Lutheran congregation of New Melle, Missouri, where my father grew up. He was still confirmed in German in 1927, and when the family moved to St. Charles shortly thereafter, he was even able to take German in the public high school. The German-language minutes of the nearby Lutheran congregation in Augusta where I grew up showed no indication that the Great War was even going on. There was, however, an amusing incident in 1918 growing out of a bitter dispute between two parishioners over the re-routing of a county road. When a congregational meeting attempted to mediate between the two, one parishioner quoted a county official and apparently continued on in English, only to be called to order by the interjection: “Deutsch!” But language was one thing, patriotism another; in 1921 Augusta Lutherans postponed a congregational meeting because many members wanted to attend the funeral of local doughboy Harry Haverkamp at the Evangelical church in town. Finally in 1935 the Lutherans started keeping the minutes bilingually, but only stopped translating them a few months before Pearl Harbor, and still had monthly German sermons till 1950.⁶³ At the Lutheran church in Concordia, an hour’s drive east of Kansas City, English confirmation was not even an option until 1925, and the last pupils were confirmed in German in 1939. Monthly German church

services were still being offered there until 1977.⁶⁴ So to paraphrase a famous Missourian, rumors of the German language's death from World War I were exaggerated.

The effect of German-Americans on the war effort, and the effect of the Great War on German-Americans, can be briefly summarized thus: although most would probably have preferred that the United States remain neutral, German-Americans served in the U.S. military at rates only slightly lower than the national average, and at higher rates than some ethnic groups that were presumed beneficiaries of a defeat of the Central Powers. And while the war certainly had an impact on the survival of the German language and culture in the United States, this impact was far from universal, and it merely accelerated trends that were already underway well before the fateful shots were fired in Sarajevo or the deadly torpedoes launched against the Lusitania.

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Notes

¹ This article originated as an Organization of American Historians Distinguished Lecture at the National World War I Museum at Liberty Memorial, Kansas City, MO, October 2, 2010. The author would like to thank the Museum for the invitation, and the audience for its feedback.

² "NOT GUILTY' IS JURY'S VERDICT IN PRAGER CASE," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 2, 1918, p. 10; ProQuest Historical Newspapers Chicago Tribune (1849-1986).

³ Frederick C. Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German-Americans and World War I* (DeKalb, Northern Illinois University Press, 1974), 1-14, uses the Prager incident as the introduction to what is otherwise a very balanced account of the ethnic experience, but never mentions the German background of Riegel or other mob members. The first account I have found that does so is Carl R. Weinberg, *Labor, Loyalty, Rebellion: Southwestern Illinois Coal Miners and World War I* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005), 129-31, 205; on Prager's farewell note see p. 127; on factors that led to his lynching, 112-21. Katja Wustenbecker, *Deutsch-Amerikaner im Ersten Weltkrieg: US-Politik und nationale Identitäten im Mittleren Westen* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2007), 224, also notes briefly that Reigel was one of two German-Americans among the lynchers.

⁴ A poem by Konrad Krez (1828-97), an immigrant to Milwaukee, pointing up German contributions to America. An English translation is included in Franziska Ott, "The Anti-German Hysteria: The Case of Robert Paul Prager, Selected Documents," in *German-Americans in the World Wars*, vol. 1, ed. Don Tolzmann, (New Providence, NJ: K.G. Saur, 1995), 351, another compilation blind to German names among the lynchers.

⁵ This incident was initially related to me in my college years, so long ago I have forgotten by whom, but there is much confirmatory evidence, including the dates and cause of death alone. Compounding the irony, Garland's mother, Flora, had actually immigrated from Germany as a child, but since his father was of New England Yankee stock, it was not apparent from his name. 1900 Census: H Precinct, Seward, Nebraska; Roll: 940; Page: 2B; Enumeration

District: 0147, ancestry.com.

⁶ Craig H. Roell, "SCHROEDER, TX," *Handbook of Texas Online* (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hls27>), uploaded on June 15, 2010.

⁷ Erwin G. Gudde, ed., *California Place Names: A Geographical Dictionary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949), 16. J. Neale Carman, *Foreign-Language Units of Kansas*, vol. 1 (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1974), 1004-5. [Http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/belgium_mercier1.htm](http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/belgium_mercier1.htm).

⁸ "German Preacher Shows up Kaiserism," *Kansas City Star Journal*, May 5, 1918. Clipping in folder 373a, Missouri Council of Defense Papers, Collection 2797, Western Historical Manuscripts Collection, University of Missouri-Columbia. Hereafter cited as MCDP, WHMC.

⁹ *Lutherische Immanuels-Bote*, May 1918. The July 1918 issue included excerpts from nine soldiers' letters, all in English, but since names were not given, there may have been some overlap with the previous issue. Copies in folder 373d, MCDP, WHMC. Letter of Edward Holtermann, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ferdinand H. of Westphalia, MO, Jefferson City *Missouri Volksfreund*, June 20, 1918.

¹⁰ New Saint Xavier's Catholic Church Cemetery, Taos, Missouri; photo courtesy of Dale Doerhoff, Jefferson City, MO. The three all had German-born fathers who had immigrated between 1853 and 1888, but all three of their mothers and one maternal grandmother had been born in Missouri.

¹¹ Matthew D. Tippens, *Turning Germans into Texans: World War I and the Assimilation and Survival of German Culture in Texas, 1900-1930* (Kleingarten Press, 2010), 1-3.

¹² *Ibid.*, 76. GERMAN LANGUAGE PAPERS' VIEW OF PRESIDENT'S CALL, *Sr. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Apr 3, 1917. p. 4.

¹³ Jürgen Macha, Marlene Nikolay-Panter, and Wolfgang Herborn, eds., *Wir verlangen nicht mehr nach Deutschland: Auswandererbriefe und Dokumente der Sammlung Joseph Scheben (1825-1938)* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2003), here #146, written March 12, 1920, from Minatare, NE. A topical index, p. 577, lists all the letters that mention World War I.

¹⁴ A study of transatlantic correspondence of the war era, drawing upon the largest German immigrant letter collection extant, analyzed 274 letters from 79 different writers, only six of whom, writing a total of 12 letters, were of the second generation. Antje Kreipe, "Wir wedern mit Euch bekriegt von unseren eigenen Mitbürgern': Die Deutschamerikaner und der Erste Weltkrieg," (Staatsexamen thesis, Ruhr Universität Bochum, 1999), 115-19.

¹⁵ *Thirteenth Census of the United States, Volume 1: Population* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1913), 875.

¹⁶ Piers Brendon, *Ike: His Life and Times* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 15. Frank A. Driskill, *Admiral of the Hills: Chester W. Nimitz* (Austin: Eakin Press, 1983). Pershing Obituary, July 16, 1948, *New York Times*.

¹⁷ Martin Donell Kohout, "JORDAN, LOUIS JOHN," *Handbook of Texas Online* (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fjo71>), uploaded on June 15, 2010. [Http://www.texasports.com/news/2005/10/7/100705aac_280.aspx](http://www.texasports.com/news/2005/10/7/100705aac_280.aspx). "Bill Little commentary: A century of memories," 10.07.2005.

¹⁸ David F. Wilcox, *Quincy and Adams County History and Representative Men* (Chicago, New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1919), 689-90, 1348-50. *Quincy Daily Journal*, June 24, 1918, p. 5; July 3, 1918, p. 12; July 22, 1918, p. 12. 1910 Census: Melrose, Adams Co. Illinois; Roll T624_229; e.d. 19, p. 9B; 1910 Census: Quincy Ward 4, Adams Co., Illinois; Roll T624_229; e.d. 46, p. 2B.

¹⁹ American war deaths totaled below 120,000, less than 3 percent of our men in uniform. Steven Ruggles, J. Trent Alexander, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Matthew B. Schroeder, and Matthew Sobek, *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 5.0* [Machine-readable database] (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010), 1930 Census, 1% sample.

²⁰ Nancy Gentile Ford, *Americans All! Foreign-Born Soldiers in World War* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001), 20-22. *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, April 29, 1918, p. 16.

²¹ Macha, Nikolay-Panter, and Herborn, eds., *Auswandererbriefe*, here #111, written February 24, 1920 from Joliet, IL.

²² This analysis uses Multiple Classification Analysis or MCA, a technique based on linear regression, to estimate the variance from the overall mean of individual ethnic groups' service rates, controlling for Covariates Age and Age Squared, and Factors Marriage, Literacy, and a four Locale categories ranging from Large City, Small City, Rural Nonfarm to Rural Farm.

²³ Table 2 was calculated as the proportion of World War I veterans among the male population aged 80 and older, without any additional statistical controls. United States, *1980 Census of Population: General Social and Economic Conditions, United States Summary* (Washington, DC, 1983), tables 172, 179, pp. 1-169, 1-176.

²⁴ Walter D. Kamphoefner, *The Westfalians: From Germany to Missouri* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 175. Lewis F. Fisher, *C. H. Guenther & Son at 150 Years: The Legacy of a Texas Milling Pioneer* (San Antonio: Maverick Publishing Co., 2001), 42-43, 48-49, 54-55. In 1918, \$50,000 had the purchasing power of ca. \$750,000 in 2014 dollars.

²⁵ Duane C. S. Stoltzfus, *Pacifists in Chains: The Persecution of Hutterites during the Great War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 104-77. Of the eighteen Hutterite colonies in North Dakota and Montana in 1918, only seven remained a year later, dwindling to just two colonies by 1935, when the Canadian migration reversed directions; *ibid.*, 211, 224-25. Although the United States population was twelve times that of Canada, the latter suffered more casualties in World War I. <http://www.canadiangreatwarproject.com/writing/casualties.asp>.

²⁶ Jörg Nagler, *Nationale Minoritäten im Krieg: 'Feindliche Ausländer' und die amerikanische Heimatfront während des Ersten Weltkriegs* (Hamburg: Hamburger Editionen, 2000), 537-46. One paragraph can hardly do justice to this thoroughly researched and judiciously written standard work that has received relatively little attention since it is only available in German. German immigration for the whole decade beginning in 1911 totaled barely sixty thousand including women, so practically all of the quarter million males who remained German citizens would have qualified for naturalization before 1917. See also Gerald H. Davis, "'Orgelsdorf': A World War I Internment Camp in America," *Yearbook of German-American Studies* 26 (1991): 249-65.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 34, 691-92.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 657-58, 700-701. Of course, the depressed economic situation of Germany at the time may have also figured in the decision not to return.

²⁹ Gustavus Ohlinger, *The German Conspiracy in American Education* (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1919); 1910 Census: Toledo Ward 6, Lucas, Ohio; Roll: T624_1209; Page: 3A; Enumeration District: 82; Image: 114. Besides census entries, information on his parents is available from the Franklin and Bertha Schweinfurth Ohlinger papers, 1868-1973, Yale University Library. Indicating language competence, the younger Ohlinger cites many German works in his publications, and his papers at the University of Toledo include the following folder: "John Schweinfurth [probably his great-grandfather], sermons in German, 1821."

³⁰ A study of Wisconsin concluded that the likelihood of violence against Germans was highest where they comprised 15-19% of a county's population. In counties that were 40% or more German there were seldom any attacks. John D. Stevens, "Suppression of Expression in Wisconsin during World War I," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1967), as cited by Nagler, *Nationale Minoritäten im Krieg*, 355-56, 401. The rate of internment of enemy aliens was also lowest in states of the Midwest and Northeast with the heaviest German presence, and highest in the South, and (in part because of the concentrations of socialists, union members, and particularly the I.W.W.), in the West. Nagler, 539-46.

³¹ On the Civil War record see Walter D. Kamphoefner, "Missouri Germans and the

The German-American Experience in World War I: A Centennial Assessment

Cause of Union and Freedom,” *Missouri Historical Review* 106 (2012), 115-36.

³² Tippens, *Turning Germans into Texans*; Petra DeWitt, *Degrees of Allegiance: Harassment and Loyalty in Missouri's German-American Community during World War I* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012). Both books are revised doctoral dissertations.

³³ Petra DeWitt, “Searching for the Meaning of Loyalty: A Study of the German-American Experience During World War I in Osage County, Missouri,” *Yearbook of German-American Studies* 39 (2004): 77-92.

³⁴ Ingeborg Gundlach, *Die Westliche Post und der Erste Weltkrieg* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2005), 204-5.

³⁵ DeWitt, *Degrees of Allegiance*, 66-67, 78. Victor Lichtenstein to Max F. Meyer, April 5, 1918, folder 756, MCDP, WHMC; letter of June 18, 1918 to Mr. Rudolph Schmidt, St. Louis, requesting speech at Freeburg, Osage, Co., MO, folder 1045, MCDP, WHMC. Information on birthplace and immigration: 1900 and 1910 manuscript censuses, accessed on Ancestry.com.

³⁶ Sermon of Rev. N. Rieger, *Kansas City Star Journal*, May 5, 1918. Clipping in folder 373a, MCDP, WHMC. Letter of Rev. F. G. Walther to Chariton County Defense Chairman, May 16, 1918, folder 373b, MCDP, WHMC. Manuscript census entries confirm that these were sons of Joseph Rieger of the German Evangelical Synod of North America and C.F.W. Walther of the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, respectively.

³⁷ DeWitt, *Degrees of Allegiance*, 120; <http://www.colecohistosoc.org/bios/biographies.html>, s.v. Mathilde Dallmeyer Shelden, Rudolph Dallmeyer. Cf. *Mexico Missouri Message*, June 27, 1918, p. 1, 4.

³⁸ *Texas Volksbote* (Brenham), June 7, 1918, p. 1. The *Brenham Banner Press* reported with satisfaction the demise of the *Volksbote* in its issue of July 2, 1918.

³⁹ Hildegard Binder Johnson, “Germans,” in June Holmquist, ed., *They Chose Minnesota: A Survey of the State's Ethnic Groups* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1981), 175-77.

⁴⁰ [Http://www.seditionproject.net/index.html](http://www.seditionproject.net/index.html). Last accessed 4 May 2015.

⁴¹ Erik Kirschbaum, “Auf Wiedersehen, Amerika!”/ “Whatever Happened to German America?” *New York Times*, September 23, 2015, p. A27; Kirschbaum, *Burning Beethoven: The Eradication of German Culture in the United States during World War I* (New York: Berlinica, 2015), 140, 145.

⁴² H. C. Peterson and Gilbert C. Fite, *Opponents of War: 1917-1918* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1957), 200. Their index has nearly a full column of entries for the I.W.W. and nearly that many for Socialists, but only a couple of entries for German-Americans.

⁴³ “Eat Liberty Cabbage is the Sauerkraut Men's Slogan,” *New-York Tribune*, April 25, 1918, p. 1. ProQuest Historical Newspapers St. Louis Post Dispatch (1874 - 1922); ProQuest Historical Newspapers Chicago Tribune (1849-1986). The Library of Congress, “Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers,” searching English-language papers published in 1918.

⁴⁴ Wüstenbecker, *Deutsch-Amerikaner im Ersten Weltkrieg*, 283-85, 342-50. Jonathan Zimmerman, “Ethnics against Ethnicity: European Immigrants and Foreign-Language Instruction, 1890-1940,” *Journal of American History* 88,4 (2002): 1386-92.

⁴⁵ David Detjen, *The Germans in Missouri, 1900-1918: Prohibition, Neutrality, and Assimilation*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985), 214. <http://exhibits.slpl.org/mayors/data/dt48283221.asp>.

⁴⁶ Clara Trenckmann Studer, “TRENCKMANN, WILLIAM ANDREAS,” *Handbook of Texas Online* (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ftr08>), uploaded on June 15, 2010. Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 242-43.

⁴⁷ Carl Wittke, *The German-Language Press in America* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1957), 204-9, 238-45, 264-65, 272-74; Robert E. Park, *The Immigrant Press and its*

Control (New York: [Arno Press reprint], 1922), 309-20.

⁴⁸ Of sixteen German Evangelical congregations in St. Louis for which information is available, with one or two possible exceptions all had introduced some English by 1914. However, in eight cases where complete transition to English is noted, it took place only after 1930. Scott Holl, *The Stones Cry Out: Congregations of the Evangelical Synod of North America in the City of Saint Louis, 1834–2005* (exhibit catalogue, St. Louis, 2005).

⁴⁹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Religious Bodies, 1906, Part I* (Washington, DC, 1910), 114-21. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Religious Bodies, 1916, Part I* (Washington, DC, 1919), 78-85.

⁵⁰ Macha, Nikolay-Panter, and Herborn, eds., *Auswandererbriefe*, here #252, written December 14, 1920 from McIntire, IA.

⁵¹ This was the pattern found by Doris Dippold, “It Just Doesn’t Sound Right’: Spracherhalt und Sprachwechsel bei Deutschen Kirchengemeinden in Cole County, Missouri,” M.A. thesis, University of Kansas, 2002.

⁵² Calculated from annual *Berichte der Synodal-Beamten/Synodical Reports . . . of the [German] Evangelical Synod of North America* [name changes over time] (St. Louis, 1905-1928); *Statistical Yearbook of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, 1937* (St. Louis, 1938), 152-53. The Lutheran statistics do not include the English District of the Synod, a separate non-geographic district which reflects the denomination’s devotion to German or reservations toward English.

⁵³ Louis Viereck, “German Instruction in American Schools,” U.S. Bureau of Education, *Report of the Commissioner of Education for 1900-1901* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1902), 659. Steve Ehlmann, *Crossroads: A History of St. Charles County, Missouri*, (St. Charles, MO: Lindenwood University Press, 2004), 165.

⁵⁴ *Witter’s Deutsch-Englische Schreib- und Lese-Fibel und Neues Erstes Lesebuch für Amerikanische Freischulen*, rev. ed. (St. Louis: C. Witter, 1915).

⁵⁵ Frances Ellis, “German Instruction in the Public Schools of Indianapolis, 1869-1919,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 50 (1954), 372. The translation of the National Anthem stemmed from the pen of Hermann Seele, of New Braunfels, Texas, in 1851. Walter D. Kamphoefner, Wolfgang Helbich and Ulrike Sommer, eds., *News From the Land of Freedom: German Immigrants Write Home*, ed. with (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 22.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁵⁷ Lloyd P. Jorgenson, *The State and the Non-Public School* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1987), 205-15.

⁵⁸ Walter D. Kamphoefner, “The Handwriting on the Wall: The Klan, Language Issues, and Prohibition in the German Settlements of Eastern Texas,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 111 (2008): 52-66. *Colonel Mayfield’s Weekly* (Houston), January 21, 1922.

⁵⁹ Walter D. Kamphoefner, “German Texans: In the Mainstream or Backwaters of Lone Star Society?” *Yearbook of German-American Studies* 38 (2003): 137-38.

⁶⁰ Jorgenson, *Non-Public School*, 205-15. DeWitt, *Degrees of Allegiance*, 162-63.

⁶¹ Margaret Ware and Vertrees Hood, eds., *Salem Lutheran Church, Black Jack, MO, 1850-1964* ([St. Louis], 1998), introduction. [Jackie Caesar, ed. and trans.], *St. Paul’s History: The First Hundred and Fifty Years* (St. Louis, 1995), 77, 87.

⁶² Ehlmann, *Crossroads*, 164-67.

⁶³ St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, New Melle, Missouri, 140th Anniversary Booklet, (1984), p. IV-B-9. Christ Lutheran Church, Augusta, MO, Gemeindeprotokolle, Book 1, p. 429-30: Minutes of Meeting of Feb. 4, 1918 and passim.

⁶⁴ Alfred W. Rodewald, ed., *Descending Love, Ascending Praise: St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, 1840-1990* (Concordia, MO, 1990), 72, 194-97, 228-30 and passim.