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Doughboys *auf Deutsch*: U.S. Soldiers Writing Home in German from France

In his 1917 Independence Day address shortly after the United States entered World War I, former president Theodore Roosevelt fulminated against what he called hyphenated Americans, conflating language and loyalty: “We have room for but one language here, and that is the English language . . . and we have room for but one sole loyalty and that is a loyalty to the American people.”¹ Ever since then, nativists have echoed this statement and sentiment, conflating heritage language preservation with political disloyalty.² But they have missed something important. There are refutations of this claim written in stone in cemeteries across the nation: commemorations of Americans who died in service to their country during World War I on gravestones in a half-dozen languages other than English. The first to catch my attention was a chance discovery at New Ulm, Texas: an American soldier who paid the ultimate sacrifice in France, commemorated with a bilingual tombstone in Czech and English, and this for someone of the third generation. Further investigation on Find-a-Grave.com revealed tombstones of other men who died in American service in World War I commemorated in Polish, Spanish, Hebrew, Italian, and even in German, the latter from Wisconsin to Missouri to Texas, sometimes with no English whatsoever on the monument. Like the Czech-American soldier, many of these doughboys were of the third generation.³

Recent investigations have turned up something even more surprising: despite the widespread crusades against all things German, some U.S. soldiers in the field were writing home in the German language. On the basis of digitized German American newspapers alone, evidence of such German letters was located in five different states. Unlike the tombstone inscriptions probably selected by the parental generation, these men themselves, some of them in the third generation, chose to write home in German. This discov-

ery was all the more amazing because my maternal grandfather told me that when he went off to basic training in 1918, his Missouri-born mother had written her first letter to him in German, but he had quickly instructed her to switch to English so as not to arouse hostility. Similarly, Texas German editor William Trenckmann and his daughter Clara had resolved to switch their correspondence to English after she enlisted in the Navy and in her words “fought Germany with my trusty Underwood on Capitol Hill,” although he wrote her one September 1918 letter in German anyway because he was in a hurry and “unaccustomed work goes slowly.”⁴

In a way, this German correspondence fits in with the larger picture of the U.S. Army, which showed a striking degree of ethnic pluralism during World War I, especially compared to the intolerance found in civilian life and government at the time. Even on the home front, the experience of German-Americans varied widely depending on locality.⁵ However, all foreign-language newspapers, even those in the language of allies, were required to file English translations of any war news they published, unless they received an exemption from the Postmaster General. But in the Army, as Nancy Gentile Ford writes, “Far from harshly implementing ‘Anglo-conformity’ of automatically forcing the foreign-born soldier into an ‘American mold,’ the United States military showed a remarkable sensitivity and respect for its immigrant troops.” Under the Camp Gordon plan, the Army organized Italian, Russian Jewish, Polish, Greek, and Spanish speaking companies with bilingual officers of their own background, similar to the German ethnic companies and regiments in the Union Army during the Civil War.⁶ No such considerations were extended to German-American recruits in World War I, nor were they needed, but it seems the Army’s toleration of heritage languages extended also to German.

In May 1918, not forty miles from the site where immigrant Paul Prager had been lynched the month before, the bilingual parish newsletter of the Lutheran church in St. Charles, Missouri, 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.⁷ No names were given, but it is quite likely this writer was of the second if not the third generation in a settlement that dates from the 1830s. There was also one Amana Colony “apostate” who wrote a number of letters home to Iowa in German as long as he was stateside, but switched to English when he was deployed overseas, reverting to German again when he arrived back in the states. This is the more surprising because Iowa, with its governor’s “Babel Proclamation,” came down especially hard on the German language (and other foreign languages as well). But a separatist communal society like Amana no doubt preserved the language longer than ordinary communities.⁸ Another Iowa soldier’s letter written in German from the American Expeditionary Force back to Dav-

enport was less surprising than the Amana letters, since it was written by an immigrant, albeit someone of what sociologists call the “1.5 generation,” who arrived so young that he might as well have been native born. This artilleryman serving in France wrote to his brother, who had been associated for years with *Der tägliche Demokrat* of Davenport. Although the letter was only summarized, it included a remarkable phrase that translates thus: “he asserts that the American troops never had a better prospect of a final victory and a general world peace.” Both brothers had first arrived in the country in 1890 at a very young age along with their mother and brothers.⁹

Moreover, a preliminary exploration has uncovered letters by German Americans of later generations published in German newspapers in four other states. Lt. Paul Flothow wrote two letters in October 1918 to his immigrant mother that were published in the *Omaha Tribune*, including this remark which further illustrates the Army’s linguistic pluralism: “On the German exams I came off as the best in my division, and am being employed in the office of the headquarters.” But he was not delighted with his desk job, writing his mother that he would bring home no hero’s medals: “this may be a joy for you, but not for me.”¹⁰ The *Detroit Abend-Post* published a brief German letter from a soldier to his sister reporting his wounding and hospitalization; both of them were of the second generation.¹¹

German letters from ten different doughboys from the Wendish Lutheran settlements in Texas have recently come to light, published in the *Giddings Deutsches Volksblatt* [GDV]. Most were not only published but also written after the armistice, but a few appeared earlier. Richard Kissmann’s detailed account of his troop train journey from Texas to New York, written shortly before embarkation on June 14, 1918, was published in the *Volksblatt* in three weekly installments from July 4 to July 18. Three of his letters written from the front were published posthumously in 1919 after he was killed in action just ten days before the armistice.¹² Kissmann is commemorated by a tombstone on the Lutheran cemetery in Manheim [*sic*], Texas, its inscription entirely in German. Like Kissmann, the majority of writers were of the second generation, writing home to parents who had immigrated as young adults and probably had a poor command of English.¹³ The editor was apparently not intimidated by government translation requirements; the first Kissmann letter was published a week before the *Volksblatt* was granted Permit no. 603 exempting it from the requirement to file English translations of all war news. From this date forth, July 11, 1918, until the paper’s demise in 1949, its masthead carried a statement in English: “This is not a German paper but an American newspaper published in the German language.”¹⁴ That is essentially the thesis of this article as well.

More remarkable than the writings of Wendish Texans are three German letters written home from U.S. soldiers in France and published in their en-

tirety during the war, selected for closer analysis here because of their length and the fact that all were written by persons of the third generation: grandchildren of immigrants. They are transcribed and translated in full in the appendix. One was published by the Jefferson City *Missouri Volksfreund* and two by the *Seguiner Zeitung* in the Texas town of the same name.¹⁵ The Missouri letter was written by a German Catholic farm boy, Edward Holtermann of Westphalia, MO, who lived only a dozen miles from the state capital, and even closer to Taos and a triple tombstone consecrating the ultimate sacrifice of three local Missouri Germans with the words: “Herr gib Ihnen die ewige Ruhe.”¹⁶ One Texas letter by Robert Klingelhoefler was addressed to “Herr und Frau E. Halm,” presumably Emil and Erna Halm of Seguin, who had immigrated in 1900 and owned a photography studio in town.¹⁷ The other Seguin letter, written to unnamed cousins, was by PFC Carl Biesele.

Before discussing the letters and their content, one should first characterize the letter writers and their communities.¹⁸ All three were at least the third generation of their families in America; i.e., they and all of their parents were born in their home states. That Klingelhoefler should write in German is least surprising: descended from a family of original *Adelsverein* settlers who had arrived in the 1840s, he grew up in Fredericksburg, in the Texas county where the German language persisted the longest. As late as the 1970 Census, a 58 percent majority in Gillespie County claimed German as their mother tongue; it took until the year 2000 for Spanish to overtake German there. The son of a prosperous stonemason, Klingelhoefler graduated from the Normal School in San Marcos (where Lyndon B. Johnson would later study), and then briefly taught at Texas Lutheran College in Seguin, which operated bilingually up to 1917. By 1920 Klingelhoefler had returned to his native Fredericksburg and was teaching high school at the 1920 and 1930 Census, until he was appointed postmaster in 1934, a position he held for 22 years until his retirement in 1956. Thereafter he founded his own abstract company, and in the last two years before his death in 1973 he was president of Security State Bank. His wife, Mattie nee Broesche, was also of German descent, though not from Fredericksburg.¹⁹ The 1940 Census only enumerated the mother tongue of a 5 percent sample, two persons per census page, but one happened to be Klingelhoefler’s mother Sophie and another a neighbor two houses down. Both claimed German as their mother tongue although they were of the third generation.²⁰

Biesele was the grandson of Leopold Biesele, a Forty-eighter Revolutionary from Baden; his older brother Rudolph had taught high school German before embarking on his career as the premier historian of Texas Germans from his professorship at the state university in Austin. But otherwise, Carl Biesele had a similar social profile to Holtermann, although the latter hailed from the most heavily German Catholic county of Missouri. Both men grew

up as the sons of farmers, and both spent much of their lives farming.²¹ Biesele had completed one year of high school; Holtermann stopped at the eighth grade. Biesele lived in a neighborhood with few Anglos, but a considerable Mexican immigration. Both sample persons on his 1940 Census page claimed Spanish as their mother tongue, though on the previous page his nearest neighbor reported his mother tongue as German, while the other reported Spanish. In Holtermann's community, the persistence of German is all the more remarkable. German immigration began already in the 1830s, and three of his four grandparents were native Missourians.²² His 5-year-old niece on the next census page reported a German mother tongue in 1940, as did both of the sampled persons on his page, including an 11-year-old boy. His wife, Mary Luebbert, whom he married in 1924, was also of German descent. Holtermann farmed in the community of Westphalia for his whole life, but around 1943 when he was in his fifties, Biesele moved to San Antonio, where he was working as a bookkeeper at Kelly Air Force Base when he died in 1968. His wife, Josephine Schnabel, was also of obvious German extraction; in fact, her mother was an immigrant.

The degree of linguistic tolerance in the soldiers' home counties is less surprising when one considers that in Missouri, there was no law that banned the use of German, and county councils could request that the language no longer be used, but had no authority to demand it. The makeup of Texas county councils of defense, often considered instruments of repression, is also revealing. In Gillespie County (Fredericksburg), all but one of the eight-person board members was of German background; in Guadalupe County (Seguin), the twenty-man board was half German, including three immigrants.²³ This did not prevent a tragic incident which happened after the war had ended. A venerable Texas-born German Methodist pastor in Seguin committed suicide in the wake of his arrest and impending trial for disloyalty based on statements he allegedly made at a Thanksgiving celebration.²⁴ However, there is little evidence that Germans in general were intimidated by Anglos in the Seguin area; if they suffered from anything, it was a superiority complex. Their local designation for Anglos was "raggedy," a term that survived to the end of the twentieth century and was even adopted by the people it was applied to. Some of them even learned German. Seguin Germans also stood apart politically, many of them remaining Republican in what was nearly a one-party state, and helping to elect Harry Wurzbach to multiple terms of Congress in the 1920s. Fredericksburg was even more staunchly Republican.²⁵

All three letter writers were single when war was declared, making their induction more probable. Apparently all three were drafted rather than volunteering, but Klingelhoef's previous \$1.00 contribution to the Red Cross indicates support of the war effort. He and Biesele registered for the draft on

June 5, 1917. Biesele was inducted on February 16, 1918, and Klingelhoefler around the same time, since it was announced in the *Sequiner Zeitung* that he and 105 others left for training camp on February 26. The two Texans, who were in the same company, embarked for France from New York on June 14, 1918. After the armistice, they served in the occupying forces in Germany and departed for the U.S. from St. Nazaire, France on May 27, 1919 on the *Mongolia*, arriving stateside in Boston on June 7. Holtermann registered for the draft on June 5, 1917, and was inducted on September 20, three months later; he served until May 23, 1919.

One thing that is striking about these letters is that despite the language in which they were written, the content could have come from any old doughboy. In many respects the writers sound like wide-eyed country boys seeing a bit of the world. Even college graduate Klingelhoefler commented, "The journey across the sea was something new for me, and if it hadn't been for the fears of the U-boats (although groundless) we would have all enjoyed it even more." The quip about U-boats suggests a certain deprecation of the German war effort. In general, there is no indication any of these three writers had any reservations or mixed feelings about their military service. Later in his letter Klingelhoefler remarks, "Thus far everything has gone splendidly. I could find no grounds to complain if I wanted to." He was even satisfied with Army chow: "we can't complain about the food. We receive meals of the same quality as we did in Camp." Biesele's reactions were similar: "we can't complain, we're well off and get good and plenty to eat." None of these men had yet seen combat or even arrived at the front when they wrote these letters, so attitudes may have changed, but apparently none of their subsequent letters were published or preserved. Klingelhoefler's biographical sketch does characterize his service in German occupation after the armistice as "an interesting experience for the young soldier," but does not elaborate further.²⁶ Biesele's unambivalent American identity was just as apparent: "Last Saturday we got our first mail, and of course everyone was happy to hear something from the 'good old U.S.' . . . Uncle Sam will certainly carry out his great work successfully in the transportation of troops and 'Supplies' over here." Holtermann also demonstrated his identification with the American cause, quoting a bit of soldier doggerel, "First we ride, then we float, and then we get—the Kaiser's goat." Obviously he assumed that his readers had an adequate command of English, as is also indicated by the casual use of an occasional English figure of speech by the other two writers.

Biesele was clearly bilingual as well, but when it came to wine he revealed his provincial tastes, which would probably set some connoisseurs' teeth on edge: "You can get good sour wine here aplenty, but we don't drink much of it if we can't get sugar to add to it." For sugar, as well as nuts, figs, milk, and eggs, he uses the German terms, but cakes, candy, and jam are referred to

in English. Klingelhofer uses an English word that has since become antiquated, “Kodaking.” One might have suspected a false transcription of “kayaking,” but since he says “on the banks of the Guadalupe” rather than on the river itself, and since the recipient was a photographer who sold Kodaks, he obviously meant taking photos. Holtermann, too, wrote in typical immigrant German including a few English nouns like farmer, parlor, or town. In one sentence he used a German word, *Wege*; in the one immediately following, its English equivalent, “Road.” Linguists could gain additional insights from this material, but from a lay person’s perspective, little English interference can be detected except for the vocabulary.²⁷

It becomes obvious how far removed Holtermann was from his roots in German Westphalia, which was housebarn country where keeping man and beast under the same roof was standard practice. This memory was obviously not passed down; he sounds rather taken aback by this practice in France: “Here the house and barn are one building. On the one side are the cows, hogs, goats, and rabbits, and when you open the next door, there you are in the parlor.”

He did find one positive aspect to single out for praise: “One thing they have better than us, and that is the roads. Nice shade trees on both sides of the roads.” Bieseles echoes his admiration: “This would be an ideal country for (Auto)-tourists; it has many good country roads lined on both sides with trees of various kinds, such as maple, poplar, walnut, and mulberry.”

Although they grew up 800 miles apart, Bieseles and Holtermann found many of the same peculiarities of French agriculture worthy of comment. Both were curious about local farming practices, and how they compared with those back home. Although unspoken, there is an air of superiority in what Holtermann writes about French farmers: “It’s funny how the people here do their farm work. Where we first landed, the farmers all had one horse and a two-wheeled cart. They plowed with one horse. The next place we stopped, the farmers had two horses, and whoever didn’t have two horses, they had a cow or an ox, but they had four-wheeled wagons. Where we are now they only have cows and oxen.” Tractors were still rare in Osage County, but every farmer had at least a team of horses, and it was unthinkable in that era to use cows or oxen as draft animals.²⁸ Bieseles also remarked that he had observed an ox being fitted with iron shoes. He was more explicit about what he considered the backwardness of French agriculture: “The soil is light in color, but with application of plenty of artificial fertilizer and manure the people raise good harvests. However there is an apparent lack of modern farm machinery, so that five people only accomplish as much work as one man in our country.”

Bieseles did comment positively on the French livestock: “everywhere we saw green grass and the finest and biggest cattle that I have ever seen.”

But both farm boys were rather puzzled by the lack of fences. The Missouri doughboy observed with typical immigrant vocabulary: "This is a country without *Fenzen* [fences], and the people have to herd their livestock." Biesele commented using the same "Denglish" term: "Something else that I had never seen before was a dog that kept a whole flock of sheep together and guarded them. '*Fenzen*' [fences] they don't have here at all except in towns and villages where you have stone walls and fences. So far I've only seen one '*Drahtfenz*' [wire fence]. The people here are many years behind us in everything."

Biesele was just as haughty when he compared technical progress on the railroad on opposite sides of the Atlantic: "The machines look like toys compared with our big locomotives. . . . In England we saw some locomotives and freight cars about one third as large as ours. We also saw a few automobiles; these appear to have good motors, but otherwise look like cars that were built ten years ago in America. We saw a whole bunch of Ford, Dodge, and Buick cars here." The cocky, slightly arrogant American abroad of popular stereotype is older than we realize, even when he spoke German.

Judging by the letters that have been preserved, persons of the immigrant generation were thirty to fifty times more likely to be writing from America to Germany in this era than someone of the second generation.²⁹ But these letters by doughboys *auf Deutsch* suggest that it was a lack of emotional ties with the Old Country rather than inadequate language ability that explains why so few people beyond the immigrant generation were writing to Germany. After all, the three writers analyzed here were all of the third rather than the second generation, but still quite competent in the language. The mere existence of these letters, and even more their content, confirms the statement of a Missouri "German Preacher" touted for "Show[ing] up Kaiserism" with a lecture he delivered in both German and English: "With by far the most Americans of German origin the language has no political significance."³⁰ If this sounds like self-justification on the part of a German American, it proves to be one of the rare points of agreement between the Britons and Germans of that era. A British officer wrote in a 1918 book that otherwise roundly savaged the Germans: "To judge of Germany by the German of America, or the German who has shaken the dust of Prussia from his feet is puerile. There is no more grossly misunderstood man in the world to-day than the German in America."³¹ Equally unimpressed by the hyphen was a German intelligence officer who observed: "Only a few of the troops are of pure American origin; the majority are of German, Dutch, and Italian parentage. But these semi-Americans . . . fully feel themselves to be true-born sons of their country."³²

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Appendix: Transcript and Translation of Soldiers' German Letters

Seguiner Zeitung, 15 August 1918.

Briefe aus Frankreich

[Letters from France]

I

In Frankreich, d. 7. Juli 1918

Herrn und Frau E. Halm

Seguin Texas

Werthe Freunde,

Sie haben vielleicht schon längere Zeit auf ein Lebenszeichen von der anderen Seite des blauen Oceans gewartet. Nun, ich kann Ihnen zunächst mittheilen, daß ich noch sehr lebendig bin, ja, von Tag zu Tag lebendiger werde. Soweit ist Alles ausgezeichnet gegangen. Ich könnte keinen Grund zur Klage finden, wenn ich auch wollte. Die Reise über's Meer war etwas Neues für mich, und wenn die, allerdings unbegründete Furcht vor den U-Booten nicht gewesen wäre, so hätten wir alle wohl noch mehr Freude daran gehabt. Gegenwärtig sind wir in einem kleinen Städtchen oder Dorf ("village") stationirt, wo wir weiter ausgebildet werden. Unsere Signal Corps Equipirung ist noch nicht eingetroffen: sobald sie kommt, werden wir jedoch allzeit genug zu tun haben.

Ich weiß nicht recht, wie ich diesen schönen Sonntag Nachm. zubringen soll. Vielleicht mache ich einen Spaziergang in die umliegenden Hügel, aber ein Spaziergang mit ein paar Soldaten ist lange nicht so interessant wie eine "Kodaking"—Partie irgendwo am Ufer der Guadalupe sein würde.

Ich habe zweifellos seit meiner Ankunft in Frankreich um mehrere Pfund zugenommen und könnte den ganzen Tag lang essen, wenn der "Mess—Sergeant" mir die Gelegenheit dazu gäbe. Da er uns nur dreimal täglich zu essen giebt, kaufe ich öfter in den Grocery-Stores im Dorfe ein. Aber wir können uns nicht über das Essen beklagen. Wir erhalten Mahlzeiten von gleicher Qualität wie wir sie in Camp _____ bekamen.³³

Viel Neuigkeiten weiß ich nicht und muß deshalb für dieses Mal schließen, werde aber wieder schreiben. Bitte lassen Sie bald Etwas von sich hören. Mit besten Grüßen.

Ihr Freund
Robert Klingelhofer
H. Qu. 360th Inf. American
Exp. Forces.

[In the translations below, words in *italics* were taken over directly from the German original.]

In France, 7 July 1918
Mr. and Mrs. E. Halm
Seguin Texas

Dear Friends,

You may have been waiting for some time for a sign of life from me from the other side of the blue ocean. Now I can tell you first of all that I'm still quite alive, indeed I get more lively from day to day. Thus far everything has gone splendidly. I could find no grounds to complain if I wanted to. The journey across the sea was something new for me, and if it hadn't been for the fears of the U-boats (although groundless) we would have all enjoyed it even more. Presently we are stationed in a little town or *Dorf* (*village*), where we will receive further training. Our *Signal Corps* equipment has not arrived yet; as soon as it arrives, however, we will have enough to do all the time. I still don't know how I should spend this pretty Sunday afternoon. Maybe I'll take a walk in the surrounding hills, but a walk with a couple of soldiers is by far not as interesting as a "*Kodaking*" party somewhere on the banks of the Guadalupe would be.

I have no doubt gained several pounds since I arrived in France and could eat the whole day long if the "*Mess-Sergeant*" would give me the opportunity to. Since he only gives us something to eat three times a day, I often buy things at the *Grocery-Stores* in the village. But we can't complain about the food. We receive meals of the same quality as we did in Camp _____.³⁴

I don't know much new to tell you and have to close for this time, but will write again. Please let me hear something from you soon. With best regards.
Your friend,

Robert Klingelhofer
H. Qu. 300th Inf. American
Exp. Forces.

II

In Frankreich, d. 15. Juli 1918.
Liebe "Cousins".

Da ich weiß, Ihr würdet gern etwas von mir hören, so will ich heute versuchen an Euch zu schreiben. Wir sind jetzt seit drei Wochen "irgendwo in Frankreich", und doch kann man es manchmal selbst kaum glauben, daß man so weit von Daheim fort ist. Am letzten Samstag erhielten wir unsere erste Post und natürlich war Jedermann froh Etwas aus den "good old U.S." zu erfahren; von jetzt ab werden wir vielleicht unsere Post regelmäßig erhalten.

Wie geht es Euch allen, und was macht Seguin? Ich nehme an, daß Klasse 1 und 2 jetzt gänzlich eingezogen sind. Onkel Sam führt sicherlich sein

großes Werk erfolgreich durch in der Transportirung von Mannschaften und "Supplies" hierher. Von der Zeit an, da wir Camp _____ verließen,³⁵ wißt Ihr, waren wir beständig unterwegs mit Ausnahme von anderthalb Tagen, die wir in einem "Rest—Camp" hier im Lande zubrachten. Anfangs waren wir ja ziemlich müde, sind aber jetzt tüchtig an der Arbeit und gewöhnen uns daran. Wenn Ihr eine Idee davon haben möchtet, was wir hier thun, so macht jede Woche einmal einen Marsch von zehn Meilen—dazu kommen dann das regelrechte Exerzieren und die Instruktions—Stunden am Abend. Etwas, was den meisten von uns hier nicht gefällt, sind die kurzen Nächte (von 10 Uhr abends bis 4 Uhr 30 M. morgens), aber wir können nicht klagen, sind wohl auf und erhalten gut und reichlich zu essen. Nach der Instruktions—Stunde können wir thun, was wir wollen Briefe schreiben, baden, spazierengehen oder von alten Zeiten plaudern.

Von dem Lande hier in Allgemeinen will ich Euch Etwas erzählen. Von England haben wir nicht viel zu sehen bekommen. Es hatte aber den Anschein als ob die Leute etwas schwerfällig ("slow") seien und sich für nichts groß interessiren. Die Franzosen dagegen sind sehr patriotisch; woimmer wir durchpasierten wurden willkommen geheißen und mit Hurrahs begrüßt. Die Kapelle, die bei unserem Truppentheil ist, macht überall großen Eindruck; die Leute hier hatten eben niemals etwas Aehnliches gesehen oder gehört. Der Landestheil, durch welchen wir kamen ist ungefähr, was wir "rolling prairie" nennen würden, obgleich wir auch an etwa fünfzig Meilen bergigen Geländes vorbeikamen. Die Felder sehen gut aus und sind gut bearbeitet, überall fanden wir grünes Gras und das feinste und größte Vieh, das ich je gesehen habe. Wir kreuzten verscheidene große Flüsse und viele kleine Gewässer, die alle klares Wasser führen im Gegensatz zu denen unseres Landes, wo wir nur im Staate New- York solche klare Gewässer fanden. Die Hügelseiten entlang sind viele Weinberge zu sehen; das Land ist von heller Farbe, aber unter Anwendung von reichlich Kunst- und Stalldünger ziehen die Leute gute Ernten. Es fehlt jedoch augenscheinlich an modernen Farm—Gerätschaften, sodaß fünf Leute nur soviel Arbeit fertigbringen wie ein Mann in unserem Lande. Wir kamen durch viele schöne kleine Städte wo Alles nett und sauber und mehr modern aussah, obgleich dies ein ärmerer Theil des Landes ist, wie man sagt. Dies wäre ein ideales Land für (Auto-) Touristen; es hat viele gute Landstraßen mit Bäumen verschiedener Art, wie Ahorn, Pappel, Walnuß, und Maulbeer, an beiden Seiten besetzt. Auch einige Nadelwälder und Sägemühlen, so wie Obstgärten haben wir gesehen.

Wir sind in einem typischen französischen Dorf einquartiert. Die Leute treiben ihr Vieh auf die Weide, hüten es dort und bringen es abends zurück in den Stall. Als ich letzte Nacht Wache stand, sah ich einen alten Mann,

der ein großes Fuder Heu mit einem Paar Ochsen einfuhr; die Felder, die die Leute bearbeiten, liegen rund um das Dorf herum, ein kleiner Bach läuft mitten hindurch, an welchem viele Vietränken sind und große Steintröge, in welchen alles Waschen gethan wird; das Wasser fließt beständig durch diese hindurch und ist daher immer rein.

Der Platz gefällt mir, und solange wir hierbleiben, werde ich zufrieden sein. Irgend etwas zu kaufen hier ist jedoch manchmal schwierig. Manchmal kann man Nüsse, Feigen, "Cakes", "Candy", "Jam", kaufen, auch Milch und Eier. Die Y.M.C.A. unterhält eine Kantine, räumt aber gewöhnlich in ein bis zwei Tagen mit ihrem Vorath auf. Guter saurer Wein ist in Menge zu haben hier, aber wir trinken nicht viel davon, wenn wir keinen Zucker dazu bekommen können. Was ich vermisse, ist frische Frucht und die guten Wassermelonen, die Ihr jetzt haben könnt, aber -- -- --.

Dieser Tage sah ich zwei Männer einen Ochsen beschlagen; sie brachten ihn in eine Art von Gestell, banden ihn mit Schlingen um den Körper, Kopf und Beine fest, sodaß er sich nicht rühren konnte und schlugen zwei kleine Eisen auf jeden Huf. Etwas Anderes, was ich noch nicht gesehen habe, war ein Hund, der eine ganze Herde Schaffe zusammenhielt und hütete. "Fenzen" giebt es nämlich hier nicht, außer in und um Städte und Flecken, wo man steinerne Mauern und Zäune hat; ich habe bisher nur eine einzige "Drahtfenz" gesehen. Die Leute hier sind um viele Jahre hinter uns zurück in Allem.

Die Passagierwagen, in denen wir fuhren, waren Wagen zweiter Klasse und sind in Abtheilungen getheilt, mit zwei Bänken in jeden Abtheil; die Maschinen sehen aus wie Spielzeuge verglichen mit unseren großen Lokomotiven, doch kamen wir schnell genug von der Stelle mit den Zügen. In England sahen wir einige Lokomotiven und Fracht—Cars etwa ein Drittel so groß wie die unsrigen. Wir sahen auch einige Automobile; diese scheinen gute Motoren zu haben sehen aber im Uebrigen aus wie die vor zehn Jahren in Amerika gebauten Cars; eine ganze Anzahl Ford, Dodge und Buick Cars haben wir hier gesehen.

Ueber meine Seereise habe ich Euch, glaube ich, schon geschrieben. Während der letzten Nacht der Ueberfahrt, auf einem kleineren Schiff, haben ich und die meisten Anderen "die Fische gefüttert", wie man zu sagen pflegt, aber seitdem habe ich mich fein befunden. Einige Leute haben starke Erkältungen gehabt; denn es ist noch immer recht kühl nachts, etwa 45 Grad Fahrenheit, fängt aber jetzt an wärmer zu werden.

"Well", ich hoffe es geht Euch allen gut; schreibt gelegentlich an mich und grüßt alle Bekannten von mir.

Mit bestem Grüß

Euer Vetter

Doughboys auf Deutsch

(Priv.) Carl H. Biesele
H.Q. Co. 360. Inf., Care of Signal
Platoon—American Exp. Forces.

In France, 15 July 1918

Dear “*Cousins*”,

Since I know that you would like to hear something from me, I'll try to write to you all today. We've been here for three weeks “somewhere in France,” and still it's sometimes hard to believe that you're so far away from home. Last Saturday we got our first mail, and of course everyone was happy to hear something from the “*good old U.S.*” From now on maybe we will receive our mail more regularly.

How are you all, and what is Seguin up to? I take it that classes 1 and 2 are now completely inducted. Uncle Sam will certainly carry out his great work successfully in the transportation of troops and “*Supplies*” over here. From the time that we departed Camp _____,³⁶ you know we were constantly en route with the exception of a day and a half that we spent in “*Rest-Camp*” here in this country. At the beginning we were rather tired, but now are really going to work and getting used to it. If you want to have an idea of what we're doing here, take a march of ten miles once a week—then add to it regular exercises and instruction classes in the evening. One thing that most of us here don't like are the short nights (from 10 p.m. to 4:30 in the morning), but we can't complain, we're well off and get good and plenty to eat. After the instruction classes we can do what we want, write letters, swim, take walks, or talk about old times.

Let me tell you something about the country here in general. We did not get to see much of England. But it had the appearance as if the people were somewhat *schwerfällig* (*slow*) and weren't interested in much of anything. The French in contrast are very patriotic: wherever we marched through we were welcomed and greeted with hurrahs. The band that was along with our unit of troops made a big impression everywhere. The people here had never seen or heard anything like it. The part of the country that we came through is something like what we would call “*rolling prairie*,” although we also came through about fifty miles of hilly terrain. The fields look good and are well tended; everywhere we saw green grass and the finest and biggest cattle that I have ever seen. We crossed a number of large rivers and many small streams, which all carry clear water in contrast to those of our country, where we only found such clear water in New York State. Along the hillsides you can see many vineyards. The soil is light in color, but with application of plenty of artificial fertilizer and manure the people raise good harvests. However there is an apparent lack of modern farm machinery, so that five people only

accomplish as much work as one man in our country. We came through many nice little towns where everything looked nice and clean and modern, although this is one of the poorer parts of the country, from what they say. This would be an ideal country for (Auto)-tourists; it has many good country roads lined on both sides with trees of various kinds, such as maple, poplar, walnut, and mulberry. We also saw some evergreen forests and sawmills, and also orchards.

We marched into a typical French village. The people drive their cattle out to the meadows, herd them there and bring the back to the barns in the evening. When I stood watch last night, I saw an old man who drove in a big load of hay with a team of oxen; the fields which the people work lie all around the village, a little brook runs right through it, in which there are many cattle troughs and big stone troughs in which they do the wash; the water flows constantly through it and therefore is always clean.

I like this place, and as long as we stay here I will be contented. However it is sometimes difficult to buy anything here. Sometimes you can buy nuts, figs, "Cakes", "Candy", "Jam", also milk and eggs. The Y.M.C.A. maintains a Canteen, but in one of two days its supplies usually run out. There is good sour wine here aplenty to be had, but we don't drink much of it if we can't get sugar to add to it. What I miss is good fresh fruit and the good watermelons, which you could have now, but - - -

The other day I saw two men shoeing an ox; they put it into a kind of chute, tied it up with ropes around the body, head, and legs, so that it couldn't move, and nailed two little irons on each hoof. Something else that I had never seen before was a dog that kept a whole flock of sheep together and guarded them. Cause they don't have any fences here except in and around cities and town, where they have stone walls and fences; so far I've seen only one single wire fence. The people here are many years back behind us in everything.

The passenger cars that we rode in were second class cars and were divided into compartments, with two benches in each compartment. The machines look like toys compared with our great locomotives, but we moved along fast enough with the trains. In England we saw some locomotives and freight *Cars* about a third as big as ours. We also saw a number of automobiles; they appeared to have good motors, but otherwise they looked like the *Cars* that were built ten years ago in America; we saw a whole bunch of Ford, Dodge und Buick *Cars* here.

About my sea voyage I believe I already wrote you. During the last night of the voyage on a smaller ship, I and most of the others "fed the fishes" as the saying goes, but since then I've been feeling fine. A number of people have had bad colds, cause it is still quite cool at night, about 45 degrees Fahrenheit, but it's now starting to get warmer.

“Well”, I hope you all are doing well; write to me now and then and give my best to all my acquaintances.

With best wishes

Your Cousin

(Priv.) Carl H. Biesele

H.Q. Co. 360. Inf., Care of Signal

Platoon—American Exp. Forces.

III

Missouri Volksfreund (Jefferson City), June 20, 1918.

Herr Edward Holtermann, Sohn von Herrn und Frau Ferdinand Holtermann zu Westphalia, schrieb uns letzte Woche einen Brief von Frankreich, dem wir Folgendes entnehmen:

“Während ich in Camp Funston war, habe ich Ihre Zeitung immer regelmäßig erhalten, und jedesmal wenn ich die Zeitung erhielt, war es für mich wie ein Brief vom Liebchen oder von daheim. Seitdem ich in Frankreich bin, habe ich weder eine Zeitung noch einen Brief erhalten. Ich verließ Camp Funston am 28. März und habe in diesen zwei Monaten manches gesehen. Ich bin durch neun Staaten gereist, dann über die See und bin jetzt fast durch Frankreich. Wir hatten in den Ver. Staaten einen Gesang, welcher wie folgt lautete: **First we ride, then we float, and then we get—the Kaiser’s goat.** Ich bin jetzt anderthalb Monate auf dieser Seite und habe schon vieles in diesem alten Lande gesehen. Wir sind schon ziemlich herumgekommen und dies ist der fünfte Platz, wo wir Halt machten. Es ist spaßig, wie die Leute hier ihre Farmarbeiten thun. Wo wir erst landeten, hatten die Farmer alle ein Pferd und ein zweiräderiges Wägelchen. Sie pflügten mit einem Pferde. Wo wir nächst anhielten, hatten die Farmer zwei Pferde, und wer nicht zwei Pferde hatte, der besitzt eine Kuh oder einen Ochsen, sie hatten aber vier-räderige Wagen. Wo wir jetzt sind, haben sie nur Kühe und Ochsen. Die hauptsächlichsten Produkte sind Trauben, Roggen, Gerste und Hafer, sowie auch etwas Frucht. Hier ist Haus und Stall ein Gebäude. Auf einer Seite sind Kühe, Schweine, Ziegen und Hasen und öffnet man die nächste Thüre, so ist man im Parlor. Die Farmer wohnen alle im Town. Sie haben keine Gebäude auf der Farm, wie in den Ver. Staaten. So alle zwei Meilen ist ein Town, und in jedem Town ist eine Kirche. Ich kann jeden Abend in die Kirche gehen. Es sind meist lauter Katholiken. Eins haben sie besser, als wir, und das sind Wege. Schöne Schattenbäume auf beiden Seiten der Roads. Dies ist ein Land ohne Fenzen, und die Leute müssen ihr Vieh hüten. Als ich von Hause fort ging, ahnte ich nicht, daß ich je Frankreich sehen würde. Ich habe auch schon

Schützengraben gesehen, aber nicht solche, in denen jetzt gekämpft wird, sondern solche, in denen vor einigen Zeit gekämpft wurde. Das Wetter ist schön. Ich erfreue mich der besten Gesundheit und hoffe dasselbe von Ihnen. Einen schönen Gruß an Sie und alle meine Verwandte und Bekannte in Osage County. Meine Adresse ist:

Private Edward Holtermann, Co. B 126th Inf., Am. E. Forces, Am. P.O. 734 A, Via New York”

Mr. Edward Holtermann, Son of Mr. and Mrs. Ferdinand Holtermann of Westphalia, wrote us a letter last week from France, from which we took the following:

“While I was in Camp Funston, I always received your newspaper regularly, and every time that I received the newspaper, it was like a letter from my dear or from home to me. Since I’ve been in France, I have received neither a newspaper nor a letter. I left Camp Funston on March 25 and have seen quite a bit in these two months. I traveled through nine states, then over the ocean and am now almost across France. We had a song in the U.S., which went as follows: “*First we ride, then we float, and then we get—the Kaiser’s goat.*” I’ve now been on this side for one and a half months and have already seen a lot in this old country. We’ve gotten around quite a bit and this is the fifth place where we made a stop. It’s funny how the people here do their farm work. Where we first landed, the farmers all had one horse and a two-wheeled cart. They plowed with one horse. The next place we stopped, the farmers had two horses, and whoever didn’t have two horses, they had a cow or an ox, but they had four-wheeled wagons. Where we are now they only have cows and oxen. The most important products are grapes, rye, barley, and oats, as well as some fruit. Here the house and barn are one building. On the one side are the cows, hogs, goats, and rabbits, and when you open the next door, there you are in the *Parlor*. The farmers all live in *Town*. They have no buildings on the *Farm* as in the United States. About every two miles there’s a *Town*, and in every *Town* there’s a church. I can go to church every night. It’s mostly nothing but Catholics. One thing they have better than us, and that is the roads. Nice shade trees on both sides of the *Roads*. This is a land without *Fenzen* [fences], and the people have to herd their cattle. When I went away from home, I had no idea that I would ever see France. I’ve also seen trenches already, but not any in which there was any fighting now, but I did see some where there was fighting some time ago. The weather is nice. I enjoy the best of health and hope the same for you. My best wishes to you and all of my relatives and friends in Osage County. My address is: Private Edward Holtermann, Co. B 126th Inf., Am. E. Forces, Am. P.O. 734 A, Via New York”

Notes

¹ Roosevelt used very similar formulations on various occasions, for example in his editorial in the *Kansas City Star*, “To my Fellow Americans of German Blood,” April 16, 1918; and at a speech in Des Moines, reported in the *New York Times*, May 28, 1918: “There can be but one loyalty—to the Stars and Stripes; one nationality—the American; and therefore only one language—the English language”; and in his last public statement read at an “All-American concert” in New York on January 5, 1919. Roosevelt had expressed similar sentiments as early as the 1890s, and even before U.S. entry into World War I asserted in a 1915 Columbus Day Americanization speech, “there is no such thing as a hyphenated American who is a good American.” For a detailed exploration see the chapter on German Americans, “From Hero to Traitor to Good Citizen: Americanism and the Campaign against the Hyphen,” in Leroy G. Dorsey, *We Are All Americans, Pure and Simple: Theodore Roosevelt and the Myth of Americanism* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007), 117–38.

² Conservative citations of Roosevelt precipitated calls for a fact check on snopes.com: <https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/sole-loyalty/>. For one recent such citation see <https://the-politicalinsider.com/teddy-roosevelt-assimilation-immigrants/>.

³ Examples of such gravestones include those of Emil Lesikar, Aug. 25, 1891–Oct. 16, 1918, City Cemetery, New Ulm, TX; Ignacy Moczygemba, July 30, 1886–Sept. 23, 1918, Panna Maria, TX, Catholic Cemetery; Alejandro Garcia Trevino, Apr. 24, 1888–Oct. 8, 1918, City Cemetery, Brownsville, TX; Abraham Levine, 1894–Aug. 9, 1918, Beth Joseph Cemetery #02, Woburn, Middlesex County, MA; Antonio G. Romano, 1894–1918, Saint Michael Cemetery, Boston, MA; Henry Schneider, Jan. 4, 1892–Nov. 3, 1918, Der Stadt Friedhof, Fredericksburg, TX.

⁴ Walter L. Buenger and Walter D. Kamphoefner, eds., *Preserving German Texan Identity: Reminiscences of William A. Trenckmann, 1859–1935* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2018), 2, fn.1. “Underwood” is the brand name of her typewriter.

⁵ For an overview of homefront conditions, which varied widely between individual states and even communities, see Walter D. Kamphoefner, “The German-American Experience in World War I: A Centennial Assessment,” *Yearbook of German-American Studies* 49 (2014): 3–30. For more detail at the state level see Matthew D. Tippens, *Turning Germans into Texans: World War I and the Assimilation and Survival of German Culture in Texas, 1900–1930* (Klein-garten Press, 2010); Petra DeWitt, *Degrees of Allegiance: Harassment and Loyalty in Missouri’s German-American Community during World War I* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012). DeWitt concluded (155): “In contrast to the experience of German-speakers in Nebraska, South Dakota, Minnesota, and Iowa, few German-Americans in Missouri encountered the violent aspects of what [Frederich] Luebke called the ‘fierce hatred of everything German’ during World War I.”

⁶ Nancy Gentile Ford, *American All: Foreign-born Soldiers in World War I* (College Station, Texas A&M University Press, 2001), 136 (quote), 76–82. See also Christopher M. Sterba, *Good Americans: Italian and Jewish Immigrants during the First World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). On German Union regiments see *Germans in the Civil War: The Letters they Wrote Home*, ed. Walter D. Kamphoefner and Wolfgang Helbich, trans. Susan Carter Vogel, (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2006), 20–23 and passim. In some instances, German was used as a language of command in such regiments as late as 1863. Wolfgang Helbich, “German-Born Union Soldiers: Motivation, Ethnicity, and ‘Americanization,’” in Wolfgang Helbich and Walter D. Kamphoefner, eds., *German-American Immigration and Ethnicity in Comparative Perspective* (Madison, WI: Max Kade Institute, 2004), 301–8, esp. 302, n. 25.

⁷ *Lutherische Immanuel-Bote*, St. Charles, MO, May 1918. The July 1918 issue included excerpts from nine soldiers’ letters, all in English, but some or all of the writers may have been

quoted in the previous issue. Copies in folder 373d, Missouri Council of Defense Papers, Western Historical Manuscripts Collection, Columbia, MO.

⁸ Harry Young, a native of Iowa as were his parents, wrote nine German letters between August 1918 and February 1919, now digitized in the Amana Archives. William L. Harding, "Original Copy of Babel Proclamation," *German Iowa and the Global Midwest*, accessed February 4, 2018, <http://germansiniowa.lib.uiowa.edu/items/show/313>. Over 90% of Amana Colony residents reported German as their mother tongue in the 1940 census.

⁹ *Der tägliche Demokrat* (Davenport, IA), March 18, 1918, p. 6. William Sachau wrote from France to his brother Walter in Davenport; [the newspaper may have reversed the names; only Walter is listed in the 1930 census as having served]. Both brothers had first arrived in the country in 1890 at a very young age along with their mother and brothers.

¹⁰ Letters of 24 and 31 October, 1918, in *Tägliche Omaha Tribune*, December 6, 1918, p. 3. Another German letter written on October 7 by John Reisbeck was published by the paper on November 22, 1918, p. 4, but his language facility was less remarkable given that he was an ethnic German immigrant from Russia.

¹¹ "Vom Hospital in Frankreich," *Detroitter Abend-Post*, November 3, 1918. The writer, Walter A. Nichols [*sic*; actually Nickel] had served in the navy for four years and then enlisted for a six-year term in the army. According to the census entry for his sister [Jo]Hanna Schepperle, both of their parents were German immigrants; her husband was native born with a Swiss father.

¹² Kissmann's letters were written from "somewhere in France" on August 26, 1918 (GDV, January 9, 1919), September 19, 1918 (GDV, January 16, 1919), and October 1, 1918 (GDV, January 23, 1919). My thanks to Weldon Mersiovsky and the Texas Wendish Heritage Society for researching and sharing this material and that cited below.

¹³ A letter written on July 28, 1918 from Haiti by U.S. Marine Hermann Zoch to his brother was published in the GDV, August 29, 1918, with the notation that it was translated from English, implying that others without this notation were written in German. Zoch states he wrote in English to spare the censor time and effort, and asks his brother to translate it for his immigrant parents. Another letter to Zoch's parents from August 17, 1919 (GDV, October 9, 1919) was written in German. Other soldiers writing in German include Pvt. [Paul] Gerhard Buscha, undated (GDV, October 24, 1918); PFC W[alter]. H. Oltmann, November 12, 1918 from a hospital in Paris (GDV, December 19, 1918), with German postscript "Hurrah for the Stars and Stripes"; Cpl. J.H. [John Henry] Koslan, November 14, 1918 (GDV, December 19, 1918); Sgt. Paul H. Knippa, December 16, 1918 from Mehren, Germany (GDV, February 7, 1919), and March 30, 1919 (GDV, July 3, 1919); Pvt. P[aul] H. Lehmann, December 20, 1918 from Paris, France (GDV, May 22, 1919); Cook Joe Wukasch, December 27, 1918 from Zeltingen am Mosel, Germany (GDV, February 6, 1919); PFC Ben [Traugott Bernhard] Liberty, January 14, 1919 from Grancey, France (GDV, February 20, 1919). Cpl. Gotthold J. Miertschin, March 15, 1919 from Annecy, France (GDV, April 24, 1919). These writers were all of immigrant parentage, except for Wukash's mother and both of Liberty's parents.

¹⁴ Daphne Dalton Garrett, *Giddings Deutsches Volksblatt, 1899–1949* (Warda, Texas: Garrett Historical Research, 1998), 54–55. Evidence of this statement can be found in an editorial on the American Red Cross published on September 20, 1917, which translates thus: "The enemy grants no exception nor mercy, whether English or German-American" (Ibid, p. 20).

¹⁵ *Seguiner Zeitung*, August 15, 1918, p. 1. <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph488495/m1/1/zoom/?q=Camp&resolution=2&lat=5153.365881083894&lon=3243.0896464877524>. The paper also published a "Brief von Drüben" in the issue of December 12, 1918, p. 1, specifying that it had been translated, a strong indication that the letters featured here were German originals, as were letter excerpts published in the issue of December 19, 1918, p. 1.

¹⁶ Letter of Edward Holtermann, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ferdinand H. of Westphalia, MO, Jefferson City *Missouri Volksfreund*, June 20, 1918.

Doughboys auf Deutsch

¹⁷ Emil Halm is also listed as the “Manager” of the *Seguiner Zeitung* at this time. The paper ran regular illustrated ads by Halm’s photo shop urging customers to send the “Boys” in uniform “Bilder von ‘Daheim’”: pictures from back home.

¹⁸ Unless otherwise indicated, all the background information and military service data was obtained from census data and military records indexed and digitized on Ancestry.com, along with linked data from Find-a-Grave.com.

¹⁹ *Pioneers in God’s Hills*, vol. 1 (Austin: Gillespie County Historical Society, 1960), 94–95; vol. 2 (Gillespie County Historical Society, 1974), 59–60. Klingelhoef served on the editorial committee of volume 1 and chaired it for volume 2, which is dedicated to him. Texas Lutheran College published its catalogues and newsletter bilingually in this era, and kept handwritten faculty minutes in German through the 1916–17 academic year, switching to English thereafter. In 1925 “Frl. Klingelhoef,” Robert’s sister Lena, was teaching German at the “Hochschule,” which in standard German could mean the college, but in Texas German no doubt meant high school. *Seguiner Zeitung*, December 24, 1925, p. 7, verified by an e-mail of February 4, 2020, from her grandniece, Karen Haschke.

²⁰ The 1940 Census was the first to enumerate the mother tongue of all persons, not just immigrants and their parents, although only on a 5% sample basis, two random persons per census page. It is the earliest read available on the persistence of the German language at the local level. Before the individual-level data was released, an anonymized public use sample was utilized by me to analyze language patterns in the second generation: “German-American Bilingualism: *Cui Malo?* Mother Tongue and Socioeconomic Status among the 2nd Generation in 1940,” *International Migration Review* 28 (1994): 846–64.

²¹ A new edition of Rudolph Leopold Biesele, *The History of the German Settlements in Texas, 1831–1861* (San Marcos: German Texan Heritage Society, [1930] 1987), includes a profile of the author by his son and the letter writer’s nephew, John J. Biesele, confirming that the brothers grew up on a cotton farm a few miles north of Seguin.

²² The history of the Westphalia, MO community is reflected in the letters of one of the earliest settlers: Jette Bruns, *Hold Dear, as Always: Jette, a German Immigrant Life in Letters*, ed. Adolf E. Schroeder and Carla Schulz-Geisberg (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1988).

²³ DeWitt, *Degrees of Allegiance*, 162. There was only one Texas German on the 23–member board of Lee County where Giddings was located, but the county was second only to Gillespie (Fredericksburg) in the persistence of the German language. Sandra Denise Smith Davidson, “Propaganda, Pressure, and Patriotism: The Texas State Council of Defense and the Politics of Gender, Race, and Class during World War I” (Ph.D. Diss., University of Houston, 2017), 272–77, 291–95, supplemented by further research on Ancestry.com.

²⁴ *Seguiner Zeitung*, December 19, 1918, p. 5; *San Antonio Express*, December 18, 1918, p. 6.

²⁵ By 1888, the county had more residents of German descent (42%) than “American” [white Anglo] descent (35%), and Seguin still hosted a Sangerfest in October 1916. Arwerd Max Moellering, “History of Guadalupe County, Texas” (M.A. Thesis, University of Texas, 1938), 207–214; incidentally the thesis was supervised by Rudolph Biesele, Carl’s brother. Josephine Blume Seeliger Etlinger, *Sweetest You Can Find: Life in Eastern Guadalupe County, Texas, 1851–1951* (San Antonio: Watercress Press, 1987), 58–59 and passim; p. 317 cites a 1939 memoir by J.M. Woods, who stated, “Having learned German and being quite sociable, he believes he has more friends among the people of German descent than any other ‘raggedy’ that ever lived.” See also Trenckmann, *Preserving German Texan Identity*, 22–28.

²⁶ *Pioneers in God’s Hills*, vol. 2: 59. His regiment was sent to the front on August 21, 1918 and took part in the St. Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne offensives, suffering 254 men killed, 951 wounded, and 32 missing, plus 344 who were gassed. Among some 2500 enumerated in a religious census during the German occupation, there were 292 Lutherans, the fourth largest element behind Baptists, Catholics, and Methodists, indicating a significant German element

in unit. The circumstances of Richard Kissmann's death were related to his sister in a letter of March 10, 1919 (GDV, April 10 1919) by his company's captain, Joseph J. Schmidt of Houston, quoting a Sgt. Koch who witnessed it. The regiment marched into Germany on December 6 and was stationed in and around Zeltigen am Mosel. "A History of the Activities and Operations of the 360th United States Infantry, Zeltigen, Germany, April 15, 1919": <http://www.90thdivisionassoc.org/History/UnitHistories/PDF/WW1/360%20Inf%20Regt.pdf>.

²⁷ This is based on the observation of reading hundreds if not thousands of German immigrant letters in preparation for publication. My favorite example of this is a reluctant Texas Confederate disparaging one of his officers: "er hatte namlich vor mehreren Jahren einem Manne den er sein Feld verrentet hatte, und . . . um es einem anderen Manne zu verrenten der ihm mehr Geld bot—er schoß den ersten Renter 6 mal mit seinen Sechs schuter." Wolfgang Helbich and Walter D. Kamphoefner, eds., *Deutsche im Amerikanischen Bürgerkrieg: Briefe von Front und Farm, 1861-1865* (Schöningh: Paderborn, 2002), 500. Linguists consider this borrowing, especially of nouns, from the language of the host society to be a perfectly normal process. See the discussion in Hans C. Boas, *The Life and Death of Texas German* (Durham: Duke University Press for the American Dialect Society, 2009), 226–36, 291–92.

²⁸ The 1920 Agricultural Census enumerated horses and mules in several categories, and even tallied donkeys, but the only categories for cattle were dairy cows and beef cows. On average in Osage County, there were 2.4 horses and 1.6 mules per farm, or about two teams per farm. The census listed total value of farm machinery but did not indicate what type. Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920, vol. 6: Agriculture* (Washington: G.P.O., 1922), Part 1, pp. 585–6.

²⁹ A study of transatlantic correspondence of the war era analyzed 274 letters from 79 different writers, only six of whom, writing a total of 12 letters, were of the second generation, although they far outnumbered the immigrant generation in the general population, comprising 71% of the German stock in 1910 and 76% in 1920. 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. These letters are now part of the Deutsche Auswandererbriefsammlung Gotha (DABS): <http://auswandererbriefe.de/sammlung.html>.

³⁰ Sermon of Rev. N. Rieger of Higgensville, MO, published under the title "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. Manuscript census entries confirm that he was a son of Joseph Rieger, one of the "founding fathers" of German Protestantism in America with the 1840 Kirchenverein des Westens, predecessor of the German Evangelical Synod of North America.

³¹ Haldane Macfall, *Germany at Bay* (London: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1918), 35.

³² Cited in Ford, *American All*, 145. Similar sentiments were expressed in a full-page, English-language editorial, "The Test of Americanism," reprinted in the GDV, November 1, 1917, including the following: "Wether [sic] the commands given are in English or French or German or Yiddish or Russian, we know that they will be obeyed. Watever [sic] the language a man may think of America it counts for naught. What counts is the way he thinks." Facsimile in Garrett, *Giddings Deutsches Volksblatt*, 48.

³³ The name of this camp was obviously removed by a military censor, evidence that the entire letter had passed muster. Both Klingelhoefner and Bieseles were trained at Camp Travis in San Antonio, now part of Fort Sam Houston. *Seguiner Zeitung*, February 28, 1918, p. 1.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.