

Robert E. Ward (1937–2017): In Memoriam



In 1993, the Society for German-American Studies celebrated its 25th anniversary at its seventeenth annual meeting and symposium in Austin Texas, sponsored by the German-Texan Heritage Society. In conjunction with the symposium a special award, the SGAS Founding Father Award, was presented to Robert E. Ward in recognition of his contribution of having founded the society in 1968.¹

In addition to serving as president from 1968 to 1979, he edited its first newsletter, which appeared occasionally in those years. In 1969 he began publication of a journal, *German-American Studies* (later: *Journal of German-American Studies*), editing fifteen volumes of it until 1980, when the *Yearbook of German-American Studies* superseded it. In 1977, he and John R. Sinnema, professor of German at Baldwin-Wallace College, coordinated the first regular annual meeting and symposium of the SGAS at Baldwin-Wallace College in Berea, Ohio.²

Ward was head of the Modern Languages & Literatures Department at Youngstown State University when he founded the society. His interest in German culture came from his family background. Born in Cleveland on 7 March 1937, he learned German at home from his mother, the daughter of German immigrants from Heilbronn am Neckar. He majored in German at Baldwin-Wallace College, studying under John R. Sinnema, and went on to obtain graduate degrees in German, an M.A. from Indiana University-Bloomington, and a Ph.D. from Vanderbilt University. Later on, he acquired a law degree

from the University of Akron, and became a professor of Business Administration at Baldwin-Wallace College, while also serving as an attorney at law.

Two of his publications are especially noteworthy. He published an anthology of German-American poetry: *Deutsche Lyrik aus Amerika* (New York: Literary Society Foundation, Inc., 1969), which was the first such collection since before World War I. It included authors from the colonial period up to the time the book was published, with verse by several German and Austrian writers of the Exile generation. Many of them joined the newly formed SGAS, and published poems in the early issues of the *Journal*.

For many years Ward worked on and then published his major work, the *Bio-Bibliography of German-American Writers, 1670–1970* (White Plains, New York: Kraus International Publications, 1985). This is a basic reference source for anyone seeking information on German-American authors.

Ward also joined an editorial team consisting of myself, Steven Rowan, and Werner Mueller, which brought out a translated edition of Wilhelm Kaufmann's *The Germans in the American Civil War, with a Biographical Dictionary* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: John Kallmann Publishers, 1999). At the time of his demise he was working on a history of the Cleveland Germans, leaving behind an unfinished manuscript.

The Robert E. Ward Collection at the Western Reserve Historical Society in Cleveland contains his publications, as well as works on German-American history and genealogy, an area he was greatly interested in. In addition to the SGAS, Ward served on the boards of several German-American heritage societies in the Greater Cleveland area.

The fledgling society that he founded with about thirty members has now grown to become an international organization, and its *Yearbook of German-American Studies* is held in high regard. All of this ultimately goes back to the society's beginnings in 1968. So, we can be grateful for its founding father, Robert E. Ward, who passed away in Cleveland on 27 January 2017.

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Notes

¹ For further biographical information on Ward, see: Don Heinrich Tolzmann, "SGAS Founding Father Award–1993: For Dr. Robert E. Ward," *Society for German-American Studies Newsletter* 14,2 (1993): 9-11.

² For my history of the society, see: "The Society for German-American Studies," in Don Heinrich Tolzmann, *German-Americana: Selected Essays* (Milford, Ohio: Little Miami Publishing Co., 2009), 233-47.