

Eldon Knuth

Mecklenburger Gotteskasten, Dubuque, Iowa, 1904

As Carl Wiedow (a.k.a. Jürnjakob Swehn) documented so vividly in his letters to his former schoolteacher (Gottlieb Gillhoff) in Mecklenburg, the church played an important role in the adaptation of the immigrant to his new home.¹ Recognitions of the importance of this role led to the establishment of a seminary for training pastors in Dubuque, Iowa, in 1854 —by two pastors from Bavaria, with support from Bavaria. This seminary blossomed and matured, becoming the present-day Wartburg Theological Seminary.² At the 1904 celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the seminary, the accompanying photo was made of a group of attendees identified as the “Mecklenburger Gotteskasten.”³ Of the twenty-nine men depicted in this photo, twenty-six are believed to be pastors. Of the twenty-six pastors, twenty-three are identified in a photo caption found in the seminary archives. But only their names and graduation year are given. The recent renovation of the museum in the *Gillhoff-Stuv* in Glaisin, Germany, motivated a search for additional information. Mrs. Jean E. Peterson of the Iowa Synod Archives, Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa, provided invaluable help in researching the archives. The author searched public records such as the census lists from Mecklenburg, the U.S. and Iowa; passenger lists; death indexes and cemetery records.

In the following summary of data collected for those twenty-three identified pastors, the information from the photo caption is displayed in bold type. The date enclosed in parentheses is the year the student completed his studies at the seminary; the location of the pastor in the photo is given by row and seat number counting from the left. Then the collected data is summarized with references enclosed in parentheses. The acronym WTS indicates the Iowa Synod Archives located at the Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa. References identified only by date are census tables from Mecklenburg (1867 and 1890), U.S. (1870, 1880, 1900, 1910,

1920, and 1930) and Iowa (1895, 1905, 1915 and 1925). The referenced obituaries are on file at the Iowa Synod Archives.

Henry Berestaedt (1886) Row 1, No. 1

Heinrich Bergstädt, born 1865 in Kaliss. Emigrated in 1883. Served in State Center, Iowa, 1886-88; Royal, Illinois, 1888-1905; Princeton, Illinois, 1905-15; Chumway, Illinois, 1915-18; Brandon, Wisconsin, 1918-27, and Peoria, Illinois, 1927-34. Died in 1934 in Peoria, Illinois (obituary).

Carl Baetke (1897) Row 1, No. 2

Carl Joachim Heinrich Gottlieb Bätke, born 1862 in Gr. Schmölen (1867). Emigrated in 1892 (Hamburg passenger list). Served in Pepin, Wisconsin, 1898-1903, then in Welcome, Minnesota (WTS). Found in various listings in Calgary, Alberta, Canada from 1911 until 1916. (See, e.g., *Henderson's Alberta Gazetteer and Directory for 1911* and *The Lutheran Church Almanac* for 1916.) Withdrew from Iowa Synod in 1913 (WTS). Died in 1946 in Seattle, Washington (Washington Death Index).



.Mecklenburger Gotteskasten

DUBUQUE, IOWA

24 AUGUST 1904

W. C. F. Adix (1875) Row 2. No. 1

Wilhelm Carl Franz Adix, born 1849 in Ziegenderf (obituary). Emigrated in 1872 (1900). He founded congregations in Buck Creek, Sumner, Westgate and Maynard, 1875-97, and served in Andrew, 1897-1908, all in Iowa. Died in 1908 in Jubilee, Iowa (obituary).

L. Seehase (1880) Row 2. No. 2

Ludwig Seehase, born 1858 in Webersfelde (obituary, WTS). Emigrated in 1867 (1900). Served in Emden and Flattville, Illinois; Clinton, Iowa and Eureka, South Dakota. Died in 1940 in Clinton, Iowa (obituary).

W. Proehl (1886) Row 2. No. 3

Wilhelm Pröhl, born 1859 in Lübtheen (1867). Emigrated in 1875 (New York passenger list). Served in Peoria, Illinois, 1879-80, then as assistant instructor at the WTS, 1880-84. Returned to Germany to study at the universities in Rostock, Leipzig and Erlangen, 1884-86. Served then in Chicago, Illinois, 1886-89. Was Professor from 1889 to 1900 and Director from 1900 until 1905 at the WTS; died in 1905 in Dubuque, Iowa (obituary).

J. C. K. Graening (1868) Row 2. No. 5

Johannes Christian Karl Graening, born 1846 in Wüstenmark (WTS, obituary). Emigrated in 1854 (1900). Served in Marine City, Michigan, 1868-86, Monona, Iowa, 1886-1905, and Maxfield, Iowa, 1905-15. Died in 1932 in Waverly, Iowa (WTS, obituary).

C. Proehl (1878) Row 2, No. 7

Carl Pröhl, born 1858 in Lübtheen. Emigrated in 1873. Served in Castleton, Illinois, 1878-94, then in Mendota, Illinois, 1894-1914. Served also as Finance Secretary, Iowa Synod, 1914-26. Died in 1932 in Mendota, Illinois (obituary).

U. F. Groth, Sr. (1885) Row 3. No. 2

Ulrich Friedrich Groth, born 1861 in Kittendorf. Ancestors on his mother's side included the important Lutheran theologians Paul and Johann Tarnow. Emigrated in 1883. Served in Yorktown, Royal, Harker's Corners and Paines

Point, all in Illinois, 1885-89, and in State Center and Palmer, both in Iowa, 1889-1932. Interrupted these services with two one-year tours as a traveling preacher, in Kansas and in Oklahoma. Died in 1932 in Palmer, Iowa (obituary).

R. Bunge (1899) Row 3, No. 3

Richard Heinrich Julius Bunge, born 1877 in Garwitz bei Klinken (1890, obituary, WWI draft registration and Bergmann Family Tree.) Emigrated in 1890 (1900). Served first in Fond Du Lac, Wisconsin, 1906-12. Then became headmaster of the college in Eureka, South Dakota, 1912-16; Served next as pastor in Aberdeen, South Dakota; Archbold, Ohio, and Watertown, Wisconsin. Died in San Antonio, Texas in 1920 (obituary). Is a twin brother of Walter Bunge, also a brother of Paul Bunge and John Bunge.

G. F. H. J. Romberg (1890) Row 3, No. 4

Johannes Romberg, born 1856 in Perlin. Attended universities in Leipzig, Tübingen and Rostock. Emigrated in 1890. Served in Earlville, 1890-95, and Sheffield, both in Iowa; then as headmaster of the Evangelical Lutheran College in Brenham, Texas, ten years; next as pastor in Austin, Texas, twelve years, and finally as professor at Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa, 1916-18. Died in Waverly, Iowa in 1918 (obituary). The Iowa Cemetery Records give his name as Gotthard Frederick Henry John Romberg.

Wilhelm Baetke (1885) Row 3, No. 5

Wilhelm Bätke, born 1864 in Gr. Schmölen (1867). Brother of Carl Baetke (1867). Emigrated in 1882 (passport application of his son). Served in White Lake, South Dakota, 1885-86, and Boyden, Iowa, 1886-1926. Died in Sheldon, Iowa in 1940 (obituary).

Paul J. Bunge (1893) Row 3, No. 6

Paul John Bunge, born 1872 (1900, WWI draft registration, obituary) in Warin (Bergmann Family Tree and Anderson/Borel Family Tree). Emigrated in 1890 (1900). Served in Hartley and Davenport, Iowa; Sugar Creek, Colorado; Hull, Iowa; Delmont and Menno, South Dakota. Died in 1947 in Sheldon, Iowa (obituary).

Hermann Wunderlich (1896) Row 3, No. 7

Hermann Ernst Wunderlich, born 1868 in Kröpelin. Studied at Rostock, Leipzig and Erlangen. Emigrated in 1896. Served in Eureka, Aberdeen, Webster and Watson, all in South Dakota; Lytton, Iowa; Sterling, Nebraska; Otis, Kansas and Eaton, Colorado. Died in 1945 in Greeley, Colorado (obituary).

August F. L. Augustin (1885) Row 3, No. 9

August Augustin born 1863 in Penzlin (1867). Emigrated in 1884 (1900). Served in Russell, Kansas, 1885-90, and Eau Claire, Wisconsin, 1890-1933. Died in 1940 in Eau Claire, Wisconsin (obituary).

Gustav A. G. Bischoff (1879) Row 3, No. 10

Gustav August Georg Bischoff, born 1851 in Dömitz (1867, obituary). Emigrated in 1876. Served in Yankton, Von Homme and Hutchinson Counties of South Dakota, 1879-96; Woodbury and Mitchell Counties, Iowa, 1896-1914. Died in Sheldon, Iowa in 1914 (obituary).

John G. Bunge (1895) Row 4, No. 2

Johannes Gustav Bunge, born 1874 in Ribnitz. Emigrated in 1890. Served initially in the Oklahoma Territory, where he gathered scattered settlers into congregations. Served subsequently in Hawkeye, Iowa; Garnavillo, Iowa; Rich Hill, Missouri; Linton, North Dakota; Wauzeka, Wisconsin; Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin; Ellis, Kansas; March and Jordan, Montana, and Goodrich and Fredonia, North Dakota. Died in Sheboygan, Wisconsin in 1951 (obituary).

A. Hein (1900) Row 4, No. 3

August J. Hein, born 1875 in Dömitz (New York passenger list). Emigrated in 1892. Lived in Waterloo, Iowa (1895) and Dubuque, Iowa (1900). Served in Tripp, South Dakota (1910); Clinton, Iowa (1920, 1925); Boyden, Iowa and Wilber, Nebraska. Died in 1965 at Tripp, South Dakota (obituary).

A. F. C. Karsten (1901) Row 4, No. 4

Albert Fred Karsten, born 1877 in Sumner, Iowa (1885, WWI and WWII

draft registrations). The only pastor in the photo born in the U.S. But his parents were both born in Mecklenburg (1880). Lived in Dubuque, Iowa (1900). Served in Tripoli, Renwick, Mason City, Correctionville and Alta Vista, all in Iowa. Died in Waverly, Iowa in 1958 (obituary).

C. W. R. Streich (1890) Row 4, No. 5

Carl Wilhelm Robert Streich, born 1858 in Bernstein, Brandenburg (obituary). Emigrated in 1885 (1900). Served in Waseca, Minnesota, 1890-1894; Ableman, Wisconsin, 1894-1910; as missionary in Webster, South Dakota, and Philipps, Wisconsin, 1910-20; and as Pastor in Wykoff, Minnesota, 1920-28. Died in Wykoff, Minnesota in 1928 (obituary).

Carl G. Ziehe (1891) Row 4, No. 6

Carl Ziehe, born 1865 in Rühlow (obituary). Emigrated in 1887 (1910). After graduating from the WTS, he returned to Mecklenburg for one year to study at the University of Rostock. Served in Davenport, Iowa, 1891-97; Mason, Maxwell, Charlottenburg, and Greenvine, all in Texas, forty-four years. Died in Brenham, Texas in 1946 (obituary).

Walter H. Bunge (f1899) Row 4, No. 7

Walter Heinrich Bunge, born 1877 in Garwitz bei Klinken. Emigrated in 1892. Served in Olin, Iowa, 1899-1905; Defiance, Ohio, 1904-9, and Cleveland, Ohio, 1909-22. Died in 1922 in Cleveland, Ohio (obituary).

Albert R. Boer (1902) Row 4. No. 8

Albert Reinhardt Boer, born 1882 (Hamburg passenger list, New York passenger list, WWI draft registration) in Schwerin (Hamburg passenger list, New York passenger list, Obituary). Emigrated in 1898 (Hamburg passenger list, New York passenger list, 1920). Lived in Dubuque in 1900 (1900). Served in Grove Hill, Iowa; Independence, Iowa; St. Paul, Minnesota and Bloomer, Wisconsin. Died in Eau Claire, Wisconsin in 1947 (obituary).

Alvin W. Biedermann (1889) Row 4. No. 9

Alvin Wilhelm Biedermann, born 1862 in Moxa, Thüringen. Studied two years at the University of Berlin. Emigrated in 1887 (1910). Served in Otis, Kansas, 1890-95; Tinley Park, Illinois, 1885-99; Toluca, Illinois, 1899-

1912; Compton, Illinois, 1912-21 and Lohman, Missouri, 1921-30. Died in Lohman, Missouri in 1930.

Of the twenty-three pastors in the photo which have been identified, twenty were born in Mecklenburg. Many were sons of pastors. They emigrated in the fifty-year time period from 1846 to 1896. Obituaries have been found for twenty-two of the twenty-three pastors; the lack of an obituary for Carl Baetke is due perhaps to his withdrawal from the Iowa Synod. They served in at least fifteen states, all in the Midwest, where many of the immigrants from Mecklenburg settled. Seventeen of the twenty-three served during at least a portion of their careers in Iowa; two served in Garnavillo, Clayton County, where Carl Wiedow (a.k.a. Jürnjakob Swehn) first went to church when he settled in Iowa. The pastors served as missionaries, founded congregations and responded to calls for pastors. The twenty-two obituaries document that this was a well-educated, extremely dedicated group which persevered in spite of frequent relocations and the challenges typical of frontier living. Nearly all served as long as health allowed. Without question, the role of this group in the settlement of the Midwest was immense relative to the size of the group.

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Notes

¹ Johannes Gillhoff, *Letters of a German American Farmer*, trans. Richard Trost (Iowa City, Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2000); Eldon L. Knuth, *Who Wrote Those Letters?* (Bloomington, Indiana: Author House, 2005).

² Albert L. Hock, *The Pilgrim Colony* (Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2005), includes an excellent history of the Wartburg Theological Seminary.

³ The author was provided with a copy of this photo in 1989 by Dr. Robert C. Wiederaenders, Archivist at that time at the Iowa Synod Archives, Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa.

