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Monumentality: How Post-1871 Germans in the United States Expressed Their Ethnicity

This essay examines the ideological mindset that resulted from the German victory over the French at Sedan in September 1870.¹ It manifested itself first and foremost in Germany, then spilled like water from a broken dam into the German-Americans in the Midwest. Achieving a stunning military as well as personal victory over France's Emperor Napoleon III who was captured, General Helmut von Moltke in the field and Chancellor Otto von Bismarck in Berlin were propelled to hero status not just in Germany, but in German communities everywhere. The stunning success of the victory at Sedan in late 1870 and the founding of the German Empire in January 1871 caused Germans everywhere to exude a deeply felt pride in nationhood, exuberance for chauvinistic myths, fervor for Fatherland-based symbols, and jingoistic enthusiasm for mementos, monuments, mausoleums and megaliths. All of these in one way or another coupled arrogance to architecture.² Our focus in this essay is concentrated in but not restricted to, the Midwest, meaning the states of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Missouri, and to a lesser extent Ohio and Indiana. In part this selection of states is representative because in each, the German born population in 1890 amounted to on average 50% of the foreign born in that state.³

Called Second Empire at home and abroad, the architecture of buildings in the United States are categorized nominally as belonging to the Victorian era, roughly 1860-1900. Sometimes the nomenclature includes "General Grant style," used during the Grant administration for public buildings. However, the historical context also pertains not so much to England under Victoria as to Second Empire in Germany which lasted from 1871-1918. However, the greatest personage behind the classification of "Second Empire" style is incorporated by the actual reign of Napoleon III (1852-70). It was this nephew of the first Napoleon who undertook a major building campaign to transform Paris into a city of grand boulevards and monumental edifices. One of Napoleon III's efforts which gained currency in the American architectural world was his enlargement of the Louvre (1852-57), which reintroduced the Mansard roof, developed during the Renaissance in the 1600s by Francois Mansart. Following the Sedan debacle of 1870, though, it was the German Second Empire, characterized in Europe as the *Gründerjahre* style, that reinforced the bombastic and pompous "Second Empire" style which took hold in the United States. In general terms, the architectural

style gained a foothold first in the Fatherland and only after about 1885 in the American Midwest.

Expatriates, refugees, reformers, escapees—all immigrants of one strain or another—to the end of their days cling to the memories of lost fatherlands. Rejected by, and no doubt angry at, his native country, the emigré to a new land departs either willingly or is expelled against his wishes for activities considered detrimental to the politics, culture or even the health of a nationalistic government. Both of these push factors in Germany constituted the situation resulting from the failed harvests and the potato diseases that caused the huge numbers of German emigrant departures in the 1840s. Their numbers and the Revolutions of 1848 carried the mass emigration into the early 1850s.⁴ So enormous was the influx of Germans by 1855 that a wave of Nativism swept the United States in the face of "too large an influx," sometimes exacerbated by cartoons showing European potentates sweeping out the "dirt" from under their feet.⁵ However, as the years unfold, feelings of the forlorn and the abandoned evolve into recollections that grow sweeter. Time gently draws a veil of oblivion over the gnawing hardships, the Nativist loathing and the pain that once upon a time drove the emigrant abroad. In a manner of speaking, the immigrant begins as a nationality orphan who gradually acquires a new birthright. In place of loyalty to his father and mother, he replicates them in his so-called new bride, an imagery used by many a German-American author to explain the new code of patriotism.

Once considered a backwater among the nations of Europe, Germany, following her victory over the French in 1870, felt vindicated. The victory of Prussia over France and the subsequent January 1871 proclamation of the Second Empire under the central leadership of Otto von Bismarck quickly produced both an impressive, unified German nation and a smoothly industrializing modern state. Germans everywhere no longer apologized for being German. They now found it possible to exude a deeply felt pride in nationhood, arrogance about their architecture, exuberance for myths, enthusiasm for symbols and mementos from the past that reminded them of greatness. Wagner turned to the medieval epic for his operas. German-Americans rediscovered the poets, Goethe and Schiller, both for street nomenclature and parks as well as monuments and statues that would give them a new sense of legitimacy in the respectable, if Germanic, New World.

In the United States, meanwhile, the 1890 census included among its 92 million absolute population some 9.2 million foreign born, one third of which tally was German born, and who at the time comprised 5.5% of the total U. S. population.⁶ But this statistic pales in the face of the German-language mother tongue speakers living in the United States in 1890.⁷ In that year nearly 12 million Americans reported mother tongue usage of German which amounts to 13 percent of the population, a figure that, on a percentage basis, is much higher in the Midwest states of the nation. In this region there were public and parochial schools as well as even public schools teaching exclusively or largely in German as the language of instruction.⁸

Feelings of national inferiority embedded in oft-repeated phrases like *Kleinstaaterei* [the curse of tiny little duchies and disjointed principalities] had, until 1871, more or less made Germans in America ashamed of their origins. The cultural-political

superiority of Great Britain, France, along with the colonial empires of Holland, Portugal and Spain were the objects of German-American jealousy. Then suddenly after 1871 there was plenty about which Germans in America could be proud.⁹ In the words of Henry Villard, the 1848er journalist, adviser to Lincoln and railroad builder, Americans of German descent ought to accept Bismarck in spite of his faults as "the trenchant instrument of Providence which hewed a pathway to national unity, and made their fatherland more respected abroad than it had been since the reign of Charles V."¹⁰

In the United States suddenly it became fashionable for the Germans to perpetuate, disseminate and exhibit their culture. For example, businesses suddenly began making appeals to the large German-speaking market. German-language newspaper publishers between 1872 and 1892 nearly doubled—to over 620 with 84 dailies in circulation: Philadelphia had six German dailies, New York five, Milwaukee, Cincinnati and St. Louis four each.¹¹

In German-American architecture prior to the 1871 terminus, there was little outright imitation of the fatherland. Occasional and beautiful examples of *Fachwerkbau* in Wisconsin,¹² the forebay Pennsylvania Dutch barns erected in the Swiss style, and efforts at establishing agricultural villages by immigrant Mennonites in Kansas were not very successful. Early on, the Germans showed an affection for masonry construction and in a few regions demonstrated their skills with limestone, seam-faced granite,¹³ and everywhere an inordinate affinity for brick.¹⁴ A drive through the Midwest countryside reveals the overlap of German settlers with rural-based brick construction. This pattern, however, is not easily pinned to a specific era or to construction that coordinates positively with the architectural monuments that gained sway during the German Second Empire. A visual German had to await the achievements of the German Second Empire.

This eruption of monumentality and bombast is best observed in the palatial, almost fortress style of the German breweries in America that were erected following the 1871 victory.¹⁵ Whereas German-American architecture once imitated renaissance palaces and classical temples in tandem with classical architects like Karl Friedrich Schinkel in Berlin, Leo von Klenze in Kassel, Munich and with his Walhalla at Regensburg [devised in 1807 and completed in 1842] as well as Gottfried Semper in Dresden, following 1871 there was near total reorientation to the Gothic and away from the classical. German taste in architecture during the Second Empire returned to the great mystic structures of the Middle Ages, resulting in an imitation that rivals the instincts of Ludwig II of Bavaria (1842-86), himself at least in part the product of the new German "greatness" of unification. His grandfather, Ludwig I, gloried in his Grecian Walhalla, the Odeon, the Glyptothek and the Propyläen in Munich. With polar difference in taste, Ludwig II made Neuschwanstein his very own medieval castle, while his less medieval Herrenchiemsee, Linderhof and other palaces equally honored the musical medievalist par excellence, Richard Wagner (1813-83).

Perhaps the monument mentality of the Germans in their homeland is nowhere better exemplified than in the statue to *Hermann der Cherusker* erected in 1875 near Detmold in the *Teutoburger Wald*. First suggested by Graf Friedrich von Hesse-Homburg during the French Revolution, the legendary hero was not yet up to the task of igniting feelings of national unity among the Germans. Napoleon thus achieved not only French unity but European triumph that humiliated the Germans even as it planted its Cheruskian seeds of revenge. Thus Ernst von Bandel (1800-76) in his native Bavaria at the age of 19 suggested a Hermann statue to King Ludwig I of Bavaria. Turned down, Bandel left for Detmold at the edge of the *Teutoburger Wald* and stayed with a university acquaintance, then moved to Berlin in 1834 where he worked in the Gottfried von Schadow [*Quadriga* on the Brandenburg Gate] school until his death. However, in 1841 Bandel acquired space on the picturesque Gothenburg Heights in the Teutoburg Forest where on September 8, 1841, the corner stone was laid for his sculpture in honor of the legendary folk hero, the historic person and Latin soldier, Arminius.

Arminius is the name of the Cheruscan tribal leader who was born about 16 B.C. (died in 21 A.D.) to Segimer, a Cheruscan chieftain among the inhabitants of the north German plains between the Elbe and the Rhine. As a means to subdue the local tribes and eventually subjugate them under domination from Rome, the emperor offered Segimer's sons, Flavius and Arminius, Roman citizenship. In fact, already in 7-8 A.D. during the Pannonian uprisings of central Europe,¹⁶ Arminius was in charge of a unit friendly to Rome. But when the Roman governor in Germany, Quintilius Varus, introduced Roman law and Roman rates of taxation to be paid by the Germanic tribesmen, the Arminius-led Cheruskans turned against their foreign occupiers. Apparently, Arminius secretly built a coalition of his and other German tribes in order to resist, or perhaps even to mutiny against Rome. Then on September 9 in the year 9 A.D. his opportunity presented itself. When Varus left his forward summer camp on the Weser River heading for safer winter fortifications on the Rhine, the Cheruskans under Arminius overwhelmed the amassed Roman forces.¹⁷ Just where this singular Germanic triumph occurred has long been shrouded in mystery. During the course of twenty centuries some 700 sites for the battle have been suggested. Recently, however, archeologists have pinpointed it at the small town of Kalkriese which is situated twenty kilometers north of Osnabrück, and eight kilometers east of Bramsche. Numerous clues ranging from grand scale ramparts and trench fortifications to minute Roman *dinarii* coins with dates as late as August in the year 9 A. D. have clinched the arguments about the battle site to the satisfaction of both archeologists and historians.¹⁸

A significant style of a national monument is the obelisk and the column, imported from ancient Egypt and Rome. Paris has its share, so does London—and Berlin, with the *Friedensengel*, follows suit. When the Catholic popes rebuilt Rome in the sixteenth century they proved fond of pagan obelisks. Germans in the main got this tradition from this city, the ancient seat of the Holy Roman Empire. Following the Napoleonic

wars, however, King Ludwig I of Bavaria erected a bronze obelisk in Munich to commemorate the Bavarians who had fallen in the Russian campaign. The most important national monument in terms of German unity, however, was the Walhalla at Regensburg. It is a "pillar-carrying" structure similar to the temples of the Acropolis. For the early Greeks, a pillar [obelisk] represented the same thing as a statue and Johann J. Winckelmann, who offered Germany the categorical definition of classicism, insists that the same holds true for Germany. A pillar symbolizes Germanic manliness. Parenthetically, it should be mentioned that Klenze also created the famous Hermitage for the Czar in St. Petersburg.¹⁹

In the Walhalla, Klenze replicated the Propylaeum of Athens combining elements of the Pantheon in Rome. Conceived during the period of Napoleonic occupation, the Walhalla is the mythical place where Odin [sometimes called Wotan] resides. Here once the wounded or fallen heroes gathered in the "hall shining with gold" and here Odin chose his comrades, a hall symbolizing the field of battle. Sixty yards high and 136 long, the southern eaves of the Walhalla showcase the German states gathered around a victorious Germania. On the northern side is Hermann the Cheruscan fighting the battle of the *Teutoburger Wald* against the Roman legions. Inside the gods look down on statues of famous, patriotic Germans. Francophobic in the extreme, Walhalla is a sacred monument created to worship German strength through unity. In the mind of Ludwig I speaking at the cornerstone laying in 1830, Germans would unite as individuals into a national unity, just as the building had mystically united the individual stones into a constructed whole. The Walhalla was dedicated in 1842 on the anniversary of the Battle of Leipzig, which liberated the Germans from Napoleon in 1813.

Like Walhalla, the *Hermannsdenkmal* was a column [an obelisk] of sorts, a symbol of Germany's youthful force, a heroic right hand with sword uplifted, ready to do battle at any moment. Its image is that of a knight in armor, a barbaric conqueror of Roman legions. Whereas the figure is reminiscent of classical models, the massive pedestal is huge and monumental. With the concept of huge symbolic statues already established in the New World, it was likely, if not automatic, that Hermann the Cheruscan would one day also reach his destination in America. Beginning during the Napoleonic period at Philadelphia in 1810, German immigrants organized the first Hermann's Lodge of freemasons in the United States. Soon German settlers and their offspring organized a town settlement society to found what was intended in 1834 to be an exclusively German city at Hermann, Missouri. Of course, there were other "Hermann" towns, Hermannsburg, Virginia, founded in 1842 by the *Deutscher Bundes-, Cultur- and Gewerbeverein* on a 15,000 acre tract of land. Others followed, Herman in Grant County and Hermanntown, a suburb of Duluth, both in Minnesota. Although Germany never gave "Hermann" place name status, there are other Hermann sites in the United States, Hermann township in Sheboygan County, Wisconsin, others in Michigan, Nebraska and Pennsylvania, to mention a few.

The figure of Hermann which stands today at New Ulm, Minnesota, is surely a symbol whose existence arose out of the national German unification spirit of that time. Newly united and with its own Hermann dedicated by the attendance of no less than Kaiser Wilhelm I in 1875, Germans across the United States were proud of their origins. No longer would Know Nothings and anti-immigration, "Mayflower Americans" be able to subdue their pride in heritage. But as any ethnic group plagued by underdog status [due largely to language barriers and similar differences other than outright prejudice], the Germans in America after unification felt back home, sought unity in spirit and cultural heritage in the United States. The Hermann symbolism instinctively became one of their points of convergence. After all, Hermann had challenged and defeated mighty Rome. Perhaps, in New Ulm at least, the 1862 Uprising of the Native American Sioux and their defeat by the German citizens of the budding municipality stirred a deep, if subconscious, identification with that earlier tribesman at Kalkriese.

Although the New Ulm Hermann was clearly plagiarized from the Detmold exemplar, there are clear contrasts, not least of which is their relative size. The German press is quick to point out that while most things in America are larger than in Germany, the Hermann statue is the obvious exception.²⁰ In mythic depiction, Hermann is either seated on a white horse, sword upraised, poised on his white steed for action, or standing in golden tunic and helmet, a red mantle flung boldly over his right shoulder and arm. His black pants and shoes recall the liberal German black, red, gold—today's German flag. The smaller Hermann in New Ulm stands 102 feet above the ground looking eastward over the river valley and city of New Ulm. In Detmold the much larger statue facing west [France] perches above Gothenburg Heights nearly 60 feet higher than the American version and from its lofty pedestal offers a panorama of the *Teutoburger Wald* and the city of Detmold.

In like manner, the bases differ considerably. Bandel decided upon a circle, Berndt used an octagon. Bandel offered a gallery around the lower edge of the pedestal, not an outlook from the cupola as in New Ulm. For the gigantic figure of Hermann at Detmold, a cup-shaped crown covers ten heavy pillars radiating from a central inner structure, which render the monument its solid, massive support. Berndt's stature roosts above a visitor's pavilion in the dome, offering views from glass dormers, though access to the foot of the figure is also possible. In garments as well, the figures differ. Bandel lets the cloak drape much lower, exposing more flesh. Berndt swirls the mantle around Hermann's shoulders. Both figures bestride the fallen shields of the Roman generals, though in Detmold these include the Roman eagles, which Berndt carefully avoided because in America the eagle is an American national symbol. Finally, the New Ulm Hermann sports a full beard and appears much older than the primary Hermann could possibly have looked. Is the New World Hermann more the picture of a tested, proven but older German-American immigrant, and less the great warrior who turned back the Romans?

While German-Americans at the end of the nineteenth century had achieved most of their goals as immigrants—land, wealth, schools, churches and a refined, sophisticated culture—they needed monuments like Hermann to focus the spiritual capital they had amassed. Myths and symbols through which immigrants perceived their world and their nationality suddenly dominated German-American city skylines. If the Germans erected a monument to the ancient *Cherusker* who defeated the Romans, then German-Americans had to follow suit.²¹ Communal assembly rooms, athletic stadiums, Olympian beer halls, and German athletic Turner arenas all coalesced to symbolize the new unity the German-Americans felt in mystical identification with their now-unified and very nationalistic homeland. Monumental victory columns in German-American cities,²² albeit dedicated to the North's triumph over the evil of slavery, were thinkable only after the victory of Prussia in 1871. Completed in 1902, for example, the Indianapolis obelisk is titled "Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument" but in every respect it is a German facsimile. It replicates also the column with its winged angel at the Place de La Bastille in Paris. Designed by Berlin architect Bruno Schmitz (1865-1912), the Indianapolis column looks much like the many Schmitz monuments in the Fatherland, including those designed to promote German unity, the *Völkerschlacht Denkmal* at Leipzig, the *Kyffhäuser Denkmal* (1896) on the northeast ridge of this mountain range in Thüringen and the *Deutsches Eck Denkmal* with its figure of the Kaiser, which stood formerly at the confluence of the Mosel and the Rhine at Koblenz, since removed.²³

Not surprisingly, perhaps, German-American brewery architecture after 1871 evolved into a distinctive nineteenth-century style that may be titled "Victorian" but resembles more a medieval German renovation of the Germanic past. Although German brewers brought lager beer to the United States in the 1840s, early beer production efforts remained small and uninspiring. After 1870, however, this liquid symbol of a new world power in Europe created among the expanding German immigrant community in the United States, a demand not only for the "liquid bread" but for sophisticated, highly technological units for production. Not only did most breweries in the United States at the time fall into German hands, but these owners in turn hired German-born and trained specialists to brew their libations and to design their plants.²⁴ Among the more famous architects was German-born and trained architect and engineer, Fred Wolf, who was responsible for breweries far and wide, among them about a dozen in the Cincinnati area alone. Another major name is Edmund Jungenfeld who worked for 28 years as the architect for Anheuser-Busch in St. Louis.

But the monumentality of German-America was by no means confined to breweries. The strength of the German-American impact was in evidence also at the *Turnverein* [gymnastic societies] buildings throughout the Midwest German belt. German orphans' homes, theaters, German banks and similar financial institutions, along with of course German churches took on a monumental phase that reflected the *Gründerjahre* styles unfolding back in Germany. Both the Turner halls and the German

Teachers College in Milwaukee look as much like hybrid German castles as like late-nineteenth-century social facilities. The Deutsches Haus-Athenaeum on Michigan Street in Indianapolis reflects the typical classical style overlarded with German bombast. St. Paul's downtown became filled with German buildings: The St. Paul Turnverein on Franklin Street, the successor Turnverein at 596 Wabasha St., the German-American Bank at 94 East Third Street, the Germania Bank Building at 6 West 5th Street, the Deutsches Haus at 438 Rice Street [later "converted" to the American House]. Breweries also abounded, the Theodore Hamm Brewery with William Hamm Sr.'s residence at 671 Cable Avenue, not to mention the palatial castle of the Jacob Schmidt Brewery in downtown St. Paul and the beautiful castle which bore the name Leinenkugel Brewery in northeast Minneapolis. Less palatial are the Wolf's Brewery of Stillwater, Schroeder's in Otter Tail County, the Germania Brewery on Kegan's Lake in Minneapolis, the Henry Schuster Brewery in Rochester.

Equally representative of American brewery styles founded and owned by German-Americans are the classical breweries of Milwaukee.²⁵ Of great distinction for its structure and architecture is the Joseph Schlitz brewery with plans drawn by Fred Wolf and Louis Lehle and subsequent construction completed in the 1880s with ensuing embellishments. Here the designers relied much on the *Rundbogenstil* but expanded into a three-bay center flanked by tower-like pavilions with broad Romanesque arches of rough-faced stone. In the words of Susan Appel, "the architects retained a medieval feeling by capping the towers differently, purposely throwing off the main façade's near-symmetry. . . . They incorporated further visual variety in the bowed mansard roof crowned with an ornamental penthouse above the center section."²⁶ Valentin Blatz in the 1880s likewise expanded his Milwaukee brewery with glorified, emboldened architecture. Designed by H. Paul Schnetzky and remodeled later by the architect August Maritzen, the 1891 plant took on palatial, Romanesque arches with huge, three-arched, window columns capped by medieval towers at the corners and over the central façade. Soon its success propelled Blatz into constructing the largest brewing concern in America. Of comparable stature was the Philip Best Brewing Company whose structure was designed by Charles G. Hoffmann. Born in Prussia, Hoffmann with his wife Charlotte was an in-house architect who served only Best Brewing and did not come to the firm as an outside specialist who created for others as well.²⁷

The St. Louis citadel of Anheuser-Busch was designed and erected in 1891-92 by architectural associates headed by German-born E. Jungensfeld and Company. As at Pabst, the equipment was arranged to allow for gravity brewing with movement downward around a spectacular sky lighted courtyard or atrium. Always, company pride, prosperity and the German heritage were the intended public perception. Though less Romanesque, the Milwaukee Miller Brewing Company of 1886 bears similar features that strongly accentuate a Germanic emphasis. And they parallel many of the structures built by Germans in the 1890s, be it in Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Chicago, St. Louis, Davenport, St. Paul or La Crosse.

A similar case can be made for the German churches built by Catholic as well as Lutheran Germans in the period between 1870 and 1914. In Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Louis, St. Paul, Omaha, Des Moines, Madison, La Crosse and elsewhere, the German churches erected during the period from 1875 to 1910 are enormous in scale and representative of Germanic exuberance. Churches, notably Catholic churches in German communities, suddenly gained architectural prominence and a generous touch of bombast. Convents and monasteries too enjoyed outward evidence depicting German success. In cities like Oldenburg and St. Meinrad, Indiana, structures tower above their landscapes. Using cathedrals in Milwaukee, La Crosse, Dubuque, the Quad Cities, Chicago, at St. Nazianz, Wisconsin, and at St. John's in Minnesota, German Catholic architecture honored the Germans. A prominent architectural firm for structures in the upper Midwest was Anton Dohman of Milwaukee, a prominent ecclesiastical firm with strong roots in Germany. Churches at Hoven, South Dakota, at Strasburg and Richardton, North Dakota, in addition to Arcadia and Wausau, Wisconsin, are evidence of German sacred structures that exhibit ethnic prominence.²⁸ Further examples are the Trinity Cathedral at New Ulm and the parish church of Sleepy Eye in Minnesota. In St. Paul the architecture of the churches sometimes paralleled that of more Catholic Austria and even the more Baroque of Bohemia and Poland, but clearly the German sense of exhilaration was frequently in evidence.²⁹

Likewise during the 1870-1900 timeframe, the Germans in America successfully introduced not only the teaching of German in public and private schools, but also established their substantial German Teachers Seminary in Milwaukee and erected the *Rundbogenstil* structure to house it.³⁰ It was the supremacy of the German language in the schools that eventually led to tugs of war with the non-German element during the final years of the nineteenth century when such episodes as the Bennett Law in Wisconsin and the Edwards Law in Illinois created huge political controversy.³¹ During this same period, the Germans excelled in public display. Their houses, their societies, their blatant spurning of the Sunday closing traditions clearly reflected their new arrival on the world stage.³² Beer gardens became lavish show places, shooting parks thrived, Turner gymnastic societies abounded, cultural centers like the German Center, now the Athenaeum, sprang up in cities like Indianapolis. Designed by Bernhard Vonnegut, the construction as a German "temple" of culture was in the classical German renaissance style of the late nineteenth century.³³

During this period, too, there was considerable effort at naming cities and towns with German nomenclature. Among the more demonstrative of the German victory over France in 1870 is the appearance on maps in 1874 of the name Moltke, the victorious German general.³⁴ The most distinguished such naming is obviously the capital of North Dakota, Bismarck, which was altered from the original Edwinton to Bismarck during ceremonies for the completion of the Northern Pacific Railroad by its German-born entrepreneur, Henry Villard, in 1883.³⁵ All of this success led eventually to the founding of the German-American National Alliance which put the German clubs and societies of the United States onto a national platform. In many respects the Alliance has been criticized for representing not the Germans so much as the German-American brewers. Nevertheless, one of its achievements was to extend

the teaching of German in the schools and to give a public image of preeminence to German culture and to the German element in America.³⁶ Politicians often supported the enthusiasm of German-Americans basking in the light of German triumphs in trade, industrialization, and quality workmanship. In time, of course, pride and a sense of special worth by the German-Americans as the bearers of a special German culture in the United States gave rise to an aloofness and contempt for the culture of Germany. It was Germans, however, who often were the first to voice disdain for American society, which they found vulgar, shameful or embarrassing.

Missouri Congressman Richard Bartholdt, former editor of the *St. Louis Tribune*, speaking at the 1909 St. Louis celebration commemorating the Germanic tribal victory in the *Teutoburger Wald* said: "The Germanic spirit of liberty and independence . . . has united all American Germans in a common defense of the right of self-determination against fanatical attempts to abridge it and has culminated in the mighty organization, the German American Alliance, under whose auspices this festival is celebrated."³⁷ City after city with a substantial German immigrant community published volumes, often in the German language, to celebrate the achievements of the Germans as if they had made the most superior contribution of any group to the American ideal.³⁸ An equal effort in celebrating German worthiness is exhibited in the vast triumphs of the German-American press and in the German book trade as demonstrated by the writings of Robert Cazden.³⁹

As has been pointed out in scholarly articles, the editors of the German-language papers in the United States were seldom unanimous about anything except the Franco-German War of 1870. Having forgotten the suppression of the liberals during the revolutions of 1848, and no longer apprehensive about Prussian power to suppress ideas, German editors in America were excited to cheer the emerging Germany in Europe's heartland. Discussions about reform, liberal revolution, and republicanism quickly faded as subscribers and advertisers ushered in a new heyday for German publishing in the United States. While there were seven dailies in German in 1876, there were 374 weeklies. In 1890 the sum of such German publications had reached 727, rising to 800 in 1894—the summit year for German-language newspapers in the United States.⁴⁰

Oftentimes German enthusiasm took veiled forms. When Cass Gilbert was designing the new capitol for the city of St. Paul, he developed a close association with the prominent Germans of St. Paul. Among them were the leaders and administrators of the Germania Life Insurance Company as well as the Germania Bank, in the middle of them the brothers Ferdinand and Gustav Willius, prominent persons in charge of the German community in St. Paul. In the wake of the success story of the German Fatherland, the *Rundbogenstil* was prominently exemplified in the Germania Life Insurance Company which was constructed in 1888-89 on Minnesota Street at Fourth Street, as well in the Germania Bank Building at 6 West Fifth Street. However, the

designs for both of these structures were actually executed by American architects in St. Paul, Edward Bassford and J. Wlaler Stevens, respectively.⁴¹

Besides their solid financial anchorage with the banks and the money in the Minnesota Capital, Ferdinand Willius enjoyed prominence as the German Consul.⁴² It was banking and its money managers amid the Germans who spearheaded projects to symbolize the arrival of German *Kultur* like the Schiller monument erected and dedicated July 8, 1907, in Como Park.⁴³ However, German culture and its acceptance in the greater Minnesota community is perhaps nowhere as patently in evidence as in the new Minnesota State Capitol designed by Cass Gilbert.⁴⁴ In the elaborate Minnesota Capitol whose completion occurred in 1905 is the sophisticated *Rathskeller* restaurant on the walls of which are the many German folkloric statements inscribed elegantly in the German language. When Germany lost its battle of public relations in the United States following the 1915 sinking of the *Lusitania* and the subsequent declaration of war in April 1917, the wise sayings were buried under plaster by order of Governor J. A. A. Burnquist.⁴⁵

By 1930 Governor Chistiansen called for their restoration but the Women's Christian Temperance Union opposed it due to the drinking motifs of the mottoes.⁴⁶ In 1937 the *Rathskeller* was remodeled into a cafeteria, in 1940 it was repainted and in 1961 it was revamped for ventilation and sound conditioning. The wise sayings stayed buried thereafter because prohibitionists could not stand their liquor allusion.⁴⁷ While the Cass and Willius papers in the Minnesota Archives are silent about the reasons for inclusion of these phrases on the capitol's restaurant walls, there is ample evidence of letters to and from architect Cass and his staff linking him to prominent members of the German community of St. Paul. Thus there is no doubt why Cass included these bits of wisdom in the *Rathskeller*. Buried for three quarters of a century under paint and plaster, the original sayings were laid bare and painfully restored in the years leading up to 2000.⁴⁸

For the theme of this essay, the statements themselves may be of little importance. What they indicate is the prominent status Germans, German architecture, German culture and the German presence enjoyed in the larger American community of a large Midwest city. Although it is not strikingly obvious as a German architectural product, we should note in passing that the linkage of Cass to the German community is exemplified by another structure he created, the German Presbyterian Bethlehem Church⁴⁹ at 311 Ramsey Street in St. Paul, an effort that predates but may have led to Cass acquiring the bid to design the state capitol. In other words, his association with the German community of St. Paul preceded his acceptance by the statewide community. More striking for its lack of German *Gründerjahre* architecture is the St. Paul church of St. Agnes. Designed and supervised by the St. Paul German architect, George J. Ries, this design strongly exemplifies Austria, Bavaria and perhaps even Hungary. With its limestone walls, elaborate roof lines and onion-shaped tower located in the heart of "Frogtown" north of the capitol, the 1909 construction of St. Agnes Church is alien to the *Rundbogenstil* but representative of the eastern German-speaking immigrants who peopled that parish. Still, it is impressively "German" in contrast, for instance, to the Saints Volodymyr and Olga Ukrainian Church on Victoria Street at

Portland Avenue, which was also built in 1909 but is absolutely neo-classical, enjoying its eight huge columns in front.

By way of conclusion, we might note that in his book *Bonds of Loyalty*, Fredrick Luebke⁵⁰ discusses why the Germans in America overnight became such victims of oppression from the British and American propaganda machine. During the early years of World War I, German activity in America still advocated language and cultural maintenance brazenly, in a propagandistic tone not different from that championed by the Allies. This would be expected of a numerous, prosperous and respected ethnic group. Being pro-German was a by-product of the German cultural, architectural, linguistic chauvinism sponsored by their newspapers, brewers, publishers, the hundreds of German associations and *Vereine*, many coupled to the German American Alliance. Sometimes German *Kultur* in the United States was not so much for Imperial Germany as for the achievement of religious and even political goals that dovetailed with German ideals. Taken together, however, the war and defeat of Germany in 1918 caused a sweeping and very rapid decline in all the manifestations of the once proud German Second Empire. *Vereine*, newspapers, German in the churches, statues of "Germania" and whole buildings disappeared.⁵¹ It was the price German-Americanism had to pay for its excessive enthusiasm following the 1870 victory at Sedan. On the heels of this cost came the even deeper one levied by the Nazi government and its terror that was defeated only at the much greater cost of World War II. Assimilation and the silence it afforded was the only escape possible.

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Northfield, Minnesota

Notes

¹ I have treated this subject matter in a general way in my article "German Assimilation: The Effect of the 1871 Victory on Americana-Germanica," in Hans L. Trefousse, ed., *Germany and America: Essays on Problems of International Relations and Immigration*, Brooklyn College Studies on Society in Change, no. 21 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 122-36.

² See among the many publications by George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars Through the Third Reich* (New York: New American Library, 1977).

³ *Population of the Eleventh U. S. Census Statistics: 1890*.

⁴ See in general LaVern J. Rippley, *The German Americans* (Boston: Twayne, 1976), chap. 4 and 6, pp. 44-57 and 72-98.

⁵ The 1848 Revolutions, a cartoon copied frequently in papers on both sides of the Atlantic. It is reproduced as "Kehraus" in "Revolution von 1848" in *Informationen zur Politischen Bildung* (4. Quartal 1999), 44.

⁶ *Abstract of the Eleventh Census: 1890* (Washington, DC, 1896).

⁷ Heinz Kloss, *The American Bilingual Tradition* (Rowley, MA: Newbury House, 1977), and *Deutsch als Muttersprache in den Vereinigten Staaten* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1979), and *Atlas of 19th and early 20th Century German-American Settlements* (Marburg: Elwert, 1975).

⁸ See my "Conflict in the Classroom," published originally in *Minnesota History* but reprinted in Anne J. Aby, ed. *The North Star State* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 2002), 132-49. The subject of German language instruction in the schools and the state laws that governed it are catalogued extensively in the book by Heinz Kloss, *Volksgruppenrecht* (Essen: Volksverlag, 1942), and repeated to some degree in his *Bilingual Tradition*.

⁹ One might argue that something parallel took place again from about 1960 to 1980 when the economic miracle in a circuitous way redeemed the German people in West Germany, at least in the eyes of their "countrymen" in the United States, from the shame of Nazism and defeat in World War II.

¹⁰ Charles V of Habsburg (1500-58). Quoted from the *North American Review* (January, 1869) by John G. Gazley, *American Opinion of German Unification 1848-1871* (1926; reprint ed., New York, 1970), 483. See also in this regard, the recent biography of this German magnate in American history, Alexandra Villard de Borchgrave and John Cullen, *Villard. The Life and Times of an American Titan* (New York: Doubleday, 2001).

¹¹ Carl Wittke, *The German-Language Press in America* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1957), 208.

¹² Among many publications, see Fred L. Holmes, *Old World Wisconsin: Around Europe in the Badger State*. illus. Max Fernekes (Eau Claire, WI; E. M. Hale, 1944).

¹³ E.g., Roger Kennedy, *Minnesota Houses: An Architectural and Historical View* (Minneapolis: Dillon, 1967), 62.

¹⁴ An example of books on the subject is Fred H. Peterson, *Building Community, Keeping the Faith: German Catholic Vernacular Architecture in a Rural Minnesota Parish* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1998). For a variety of German folk art styles in construction and daily life and work, see Charles Van Ravenswaay, *The Art and Architecture of German Settlements in Missouri: A Survey of a Vanishing Culture* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1977). See also O. H. Rudnick, *Das Deutschtum St. Pauls in Wort und Bild. Eine Historische Beleuchtung Deutsch-amerikanischer Tätigkeit in St. Paul* (St. Paul: n.p., 1924).

¹⁵ See, e.g., Timothy Holian, *Over the Barrel: The Brewing History and Beer Culture of Cincinnati, 1800 to the Present* (St. Joseph MO: Sudhaus Press, 2000), 2 vols., John Theodore Flanagan, *Theodore Hamm in Minnesota: His Family and Brewery* (St. Paul: Pogo Press, 1989), Nancy Moore Gentleman, [missing] (Milwaukee: Procrustes Press, 1995), and, "The New Prohibition," *SGAS Newsletter* 12,1 (March 1991), 2ff.

¹⁶ Pannonia was a Roman province nowadays including especially Romania and some territory in Hungary.

¹⁷ See the pamphlet by Arnold J. Koelpin, *The Hermann Monument: A Prairie Tale in the Annals of Americana* (New Ulm: City of New Ulm, 1988).

¹⁸ Peter S. Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome: Emperor Augustus, Arminius, and the Slaughter of the Legions in the Teutoburg Forest* (New York: Norton, 2003). But see also Reinhard Wolters, "Hermeneutik des Hinterhalts: die antiken Berichte zur Varuskatastrophe und der Fundplatz von Kalkriese," *KLIO*, vol. 85 (2003), 131-70. In this article the scientists cast doubt on the conviction that the site was indeed Kalkriese.

¹⁹ Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses*.

²⁰ See, e.g., *Westfalen-Blatt*, Nr. 169 (Thursday July 24, 1997) in its section Ostwestfalen-Lippe.

²¹ The Hermann monument at New Ulm, Minnesota, is a replica of the one at Detmold in the Teutoburger Forest in Westphalia, Germany.

²² George Theodore Probst, *The Germans in Indianapolis 1840-1918*, rev. and illus. by Eberhard Reichmann (Indianapolis: German-American Heritage Center, 1989), 102-3.

²³ See in general George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars Through the Third Reich* (New York: New American Library, 1975).

²⁴ See in general Susan K. Appel, "The German Impact on Nineteenth-Century Brewery Architecture in Cincinnati and St. Louis," in Charlotte L. Brancaforte, ed., *The German Forty-Eighters in the United States* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), 245-56, here, 245. See especially n. 16 in the Appel article.

²⁵ These are perhaps best exemplified by Susan K. Appel, "Building Milwaukee's Breweries; Pre-Prohibition Brewery Architecture in the Cream City," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 78 (Spring 1995): 163-200.

²⁶ Ibid., 180.

²⁷ Ibid., 189; see n. 63 in Appel.

²⁸ James Coomber and Sheldon Green, *Magnificent Churches on the Prairie: A Story of Immigrant Priests, Builders and Homesteaders* (Fargo: Institute for Regional Studies).

²⁹ Among many sources, if sometimes scattered in varying texts, is Mary Lethert Wingerd, *Claim the City: Politics, Faith and the Power of Place in St. Paul* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

³⁰ LaVern J. Rippley, "The German-American Normal Schools," in Erich A. Albrecht and J. Anthony Burzle, *Germanica-Americana* (Lawrence, KS: Max Kade Document Center, 1977), 63-71. For a statistical view of the preeminence of German in the schools of the Midwest, see Louis Viereck, "German Instruction in American Schools," *Education Report 1900-1901* (Washington, DC, Bureau of Education, 1902).

³¹ In general, see LaVern J. Rippley, *Immigrant Wisconsin* (Boston: Twayne, 1985) for a good discussion of the Bennett Law and its outcome and William G. Ross, *Forging New Freedoms: Nativism, Education and the Constitution, 1917-1927* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994) for details about the results of German teaching in the schools once the war against German America broke out from 1916 onward.

³² Countless volumes directly and obliquely inform of the clash of cultures in many metropolitan cities. E.g., William Roba, *The River and the Prairie: A History of the Quad-Cities 1812-1960* (Davenport: Hesperian Press, 1986), 79ff., David W. Detjen, *The Germans in Missouri, 1900-1918: Prohibition, Neutrality and Assimilation* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985), Walter D. Kamphoefner, *The Westfalians: From Germany to Missouri* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987). Further evidence appears in Judith and Neil Morgan, *Dr. Seuss & Mr. Geisel: A Biography* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1995), as summarized in the *SGAS Newsletter*, vol. 25, no. 2 (June 2004).

³³ Eberhard Reichmann, ed. of revised edition, George Theodore Probst, *The Germans in Indianapolis, 1840-1918* (Indianapolis: German-American Center, 1989) and Theodore Stempfel, *Artist's Life: Rudolf Schwarz and Karl Bitter* (Indianapolis: Indiana German Heritage Society, 2002).

³⁴ See, e.g., LaVern J. Rippley with Rainer H. Schmeissner, *German Place Names in Minnesota* (Northfield: St. Olaf College Press, 1989), 33, 79.

³⁵ See Alexandra Villard de Borchgrave and John Cullen, *Villard. The Life and Times of an American Titan* (New York: Doubleday, 2001) and Nicolaus Mohr, *Excursion Through America* (Chicago: R. R. Donnelly & Sons Co., 1973).

³⁶ Charles Johnson, *Culture at Twilight: The National German-American Alliance, 1901-1918* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999). See also, Clifton James Child, *The German-Americans in Politics* (New York: Arno Press, 1970 originally 1939).

³⁷ Quoted in Detjen, p. 30.

³⁸ Examples include Giles Hoyt, ed., Theodor Stempfel, *Fünfzig Jahre unermüdlichen deutschen Strebens in Indianapolis / Fifty Years of Unrelenting German Aspirations in Indianapolis* (Indianapolis: German-American Center and Indiana German Heritage Society, 1991); Steven Rowan, trans., *The Jubilee Edition of the Cleveland Wächter and Anzeiger, 1902* (Cleveland: Western Reserve Historical Society, 2000); Rudolf Cronau, *Drei Jahrhunderte deutschen Lebens in Amerika: Eine Geschichte der Deutschen in den Vereinigten Staaten* (Berlin: D. Reimer, Ernst vohsen, 1909), Albert B. Faust, *The German Element in the United States* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1909); the many publications of the German-American Alliance, e.g., Marion Dexter Learned, *Guide to the Manuscript Materials Relating to American History in German State Archives* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Institution, 1912), reprinted by Heritage Books, 1997, not to mention its own huge tome, Max Heinrich, ed., *Das Buch der Deutschen in Amerika* (Philadelphia: National German-American Alliance, 1909); Wilhelm Jense-Hensen, *Wisconsin's Deutsch-Amerikaner bis zum Schluss des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 2 vols. (Milwaukee: Germania, 1900, 1902), and many others.

³⁹ Robert E. Cazden, *A Social History of the German Book Trade in America to the Civil War* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1984).

⁴⁰ Carl Wittke, *The German-Language Press in America* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1957), Karl J. R. Arndt and May E. Olson, *German-American Newspapers and Periodicals 1732-1955* (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1961), LaVern J. Rippley, *The German-Americans* (Boston: Twayne, 1976), 164ff., and Henry Geitz, ed., *The German-American Press* (Madison: Max Kade Institute, 1992), among many other sources.

⁴¹ H. F. Koepfer, *Historic St. Paul Buildings* (St. Paul: City Planning Board, 1964), 36-37. These structures can be compared to the visual appearances of the many Berlin structures being erected

contemporaneously, e.g., Wertheim and Hermann Tietz, the Munich *Bayerisches Nationalmuseum* of 1896, and perhaps the 1886 Berlin Reichstag building.

⁴² The Willius papers at the Minnesota Archives retain the original hand-written documents boldly displaying the printed letterhead "Wir Wilhelm, von Gottes Gnaden, Deutscher Kaiser, König von Preußen," appointing Ferdinand Willius to the consular post.

⁴³ See LaVern J. Rippley, "German Banking in Minnesota," in Clarence Glasrud, ed., *A Heritage Fulfilled* (Moorhead: Concordia College, 1984), 94-115. Here, too, note the illustrations showing the structures of the insurance and bank companies.

⁴⁴ See among the many publications Barbara S. Christen and Steven Flanders, eds., *Cass Gilbert, Life and Work: Architect of the Public Domain* (New York: Norton, 2001), and Neil B. Thompson, *Minnesota's State Capitol: The Art and Politics of a Public Building* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1974).

⁴⁵ *St. Paul Dispatch* (December 11, 1930).

⁴⁶ *St. Paul News* (January 6, 1931).

⁴⁷ Examples of these "gems of wisdom" include: *Trink und ess, Gott nicht vergess / Im Becher ersaufen mehr als im Bache / Zunächst versorge deinen Magen, dann trink soviel du kannst ertragen / Ein frischer Trank, der Arbeit Dank / Trink aber sauf nicht, red aber rauf nicht / Malz und Hopfen geben gute Tropfen / Noch einen gegen das böse Wetter*. There are 29 in all. Most were offensive to the prohibitionists of the time.

⁴⁸ LaVern Rippley served as consultant to Allison Chapman at the Minnesota Historical Society which was charged with verification of the authenticity of each saying when such could only be guessed from what remained under the plaster. See *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 3, 2000, p. A8. See also Minnesota Historical Society, *Member News* 9,1 (January-February 2000).

⁴⁹ For a picture of this church see Neil Thompson, 99.

⁵⁰ Frederick C. Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German Americans and World War I* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974), 311ff.

⁵¹ See, for example, the photo of the statue of Germania being lowered from the Germania Building in St. Paul in LaVern J. Rippley, "Conflict in the Classroom: Anti-Germanism in Minnesota Schools, 1917-19," *Minnesota History* 47,5 (Spring 1981): 170.

