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**The Battle Against the Kaiser:
Social and Cultural Conflict in Marinette, Wisconsin,
During the World War I Era**

This essay traces the social and cultural conflict in Marinette (population in 1920: 13,000), a small city in northeastern Wisconsin, during the World War I era. The war vastly increased cultural antagonisms which had existed under the surface tranquility both within the state of Wisconsin and in the city of Marinette. Until World War I crusades against unregulated saloons and against parochial schools using the German language for instruction had repeatedly failed. Elected officials both in Wisconsin and in Marinette who favored nativist and temperance programs went down to defeat. The war against the Kaiser changed the situation and provided the catalyst through more direct methods both to increase the speed of the "Americanization" of the large German immigrant community and to end for a time the strong influence of saloons. The focus of this essay is to examine the various incidents during the war which greatly accelerated the process of change.

Marinette, like Wisconsin, did not neatly fit the common national pattern for a number of reasons. Wisconsin had a larger percentage of Americans of German descent, some of whom had emigrated to America relatively recently. The ethnic make-up of the state made a wholehearted crusade against imperial Germany more difficult than in some other states. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Germans in Wisconsin accounted for 34.8 percent of the total population and nearly 50 percent of those with foreign parentage. The 710,000 Wisconsinites of German parentage surpassed old-stock Americans by 100,000 and were four and one-half times as numerous as the second-largest ethnic group in the state in 1900, the Norwegians.¹

According to a survey in 1914, one-third of Wisconsin's residents were of German ancestry, 9 percent British, 7 percent Norwegian, 6 percent Polish, 3 percent Swedish, and 2 percent French-Canadian; two-thirds were of foreign background. According to the 1910 census, 27.5 percent of Marinette's population was foreign-born. Of the 4,027 foreign-born, 2,059 were adult males over twenty-one years of age. Of the 2,059 adult males in the city, 1,838

were naturalized American citizens; 294 had applied for United States citizenship since 1910.² Like other northeastern industrial states, Wisconsin had a sizeable Roman Catholic population. Like other states of the upper Mississippi valley, Wisconsin had a large number of Lutherans—the second-largest religious group in the state. In fact, around 80 percent of Wisconsin residents who belonged to churches were either Roman Catholic or Lutheran. By 1890 Wisconsin's religious composition was essentially what it remains today, "almost half Catholic, a third Lutheran, 20 percent all other denominations."³

As large numbers of German immigrants poured into Wisconsin during the second half of the nineteenth century, both the Roman Catholic and German Lutheran Synods (Missouri and Wisconsin) maintained parochial schools in which the primary language of instruction was German. As the decade of the 1880s drew to a close there was increasing opposition to the use of German for instruction in a number of states.

In Wisconsin, the Bennett Law was passed in 1889 requiring that English be taught in the schools of Wisconsin for at least sixteen weeks during the school year. Further, reading, writing, arithmetic, and United States history were required to be taught in English. Support for and passage of the law arose after Wisconsin Governor William Hoard discovered that not one of the 129 German Lutheran schools in the state offered instruction in English. German Catholic schools also offered instruction in German. Irish Catholic clergymen supported the bill in spite of the opposition of Wisconsin's Catholic bishops Michael Heiss of Milwaukee, Francis X. Katzen of Green Bay, and Kilian Flasch of La Crosse. In the end, German Catholics and German Lutherans won the linguistic battle, but lost the cultural war. Vehemently opposed by both religious groups, the Bennett Law was repealed, and Governor Hoard was defeated for reelection in 1890.⁴ With Germans voting for the Democratic gubernatorial candidate, the Democrats won the governorship in 1890 for the first time since before the Civil War, defeating the Republican incumbent, William Hoard. The political alliance between German Catholics and German Lutherans was short-lived, and both groups returned to their traditional antagonistic positions, although both shared a number of common characteristics: hostility to lodges and secret societies, maintenance of parochial schools, a German cultural identity, the continental Sunday, as well as hostility to giving women the vote, which many male Catholics and Lutherans feared would increase the voting strength of the temperance movement.

Assimilation of German Catholics occurred at a faster rate than with German Lutherans because the Catholic Church adopted English earlier than did German Lutherans. The Roman Catholic hierarchy in the United States was dominated by the English-speaking Irish who actively promoted a program of adopting English over German, Polish or Italian. Bishop John McCloskey of Louisville succinctly summarized the argument against the use of German:

"If these German prelates are allowed special legislation as Germans, great injury is likely to follow to the interests of religion. We will be looked upon as a German church in an English-speaking country."⁵

In contrast to Catholics of German origin, who were part of a larger multi-ethnic church led in large measure by English-speaking churchmen of Irish descent, Lutherans of German origin were members of church organizations by nationality. German Lutheranism in America was further divided into a number of synods (Iowa, Buffalo, Wisconsin, and Missouri) which reflected a bewildering array of differences on points of Lutheran doctrines, organizations and shades of assimilation into American society.⁶

In addition to German Lutherans, there was a sizeable community of Scandinavian Lutherans in Marinette. Both Scandinavian and German Lutherans shared some characteristics in common with other Protestants, including parish autonomy—the right of individual congregations to organize, appoint and dismiss their own pastors—which contributed to further splintering.

There were three frame Scandinavian Lutheran churches in Marinette: Our Savior's (Norwegian) and Zion (Swedish); a Danish Lutheran church disbanded in the 1920s because of small numbers. Noting the larger numbers of the German immigrant community as reflected in larger churches, newspapers, organization, and teaching of German in high school, the Scandinavian community wanted recognition in Marinette. More sympathetic to the temperance movement, unlike German Lutherans, Scandinavian Lutherans did not maintain parochial schools, nor did they trumpet their cultural achievement in music and other fields as readily as German immigrants. They supported the war effort against Germany and hence did not arouse the antagonism that parts of the German immigrant community aroused during the World War I era. Nonetheless, Scandinavians in Marinette and in the state wished to receive recognition.

Like German Lutherans, many Scandinavian Lutherans held their services in the language of the old country. Before World War I, the pastor of Our Savior's Lutheran Church had complained that French and German were taught at Marinette High School, but not Norwegian or Swedish, as was done at schools at Eau Claire, Minneapolis and Chicago.⁷

The landscape in many parts of Wisconsin's towns and villages included not only the district school and the spires of Catholic and Lutheran churches, but the neighborhood or village tavern as well. Sizeable numbers of German immigrants began coming into the state in the 1850s. Among other things in their cultural baggage, German immigrants brought the brewing and drinking of beer, "Dutch treat," and the "continental Sunday." Some old-stock Americans believed that the drinking of beer coupled with frivolity at family picnics was a desecration of "the Lord's Day." In the late 1850s the nativist element within the state Republican party made an unsuccessful effort to introduce prohibition into Wisconsin. Their effort in pre-Civil War Wisconsin failed, although elements within the Republican party remained critical of the

abuses sometimes associated with saloons but were unable to remove them down to the World War I period.

The difficulty of controlling and regulating taverns was even greater in pre-World War I Marinette. Although some of the leading businessmen and lumbermen were prohibitionists, the saloon owners did pretty much as they pleased. The editor of the *Marinette Eagle-Star* counted seventeen taverns open on Hall Avenue alone as he returned from the barbershop on a bright Sunday morning in July 1888. Community sentiment eventually turned against this blatant defiance of city ordinances. In July 1894, for the first time in Marinette's history, both saloons and barbershops were closed on a Sunday morning. Two years later, Dr. John Sherman, pioneer resident, strict Sabbatarian, ardent prohibitionist, and devout Presbyterian, was elected mayor. However, the victory of the "respectable element" in the community was short-lived for Sherman served only one term as mayor. By the end of the nineteenth century, the lax attitude toward regulating the saloons had returned. In 1897, the city government collected \$60,000 in property taxes in a city of 16,000 and an additional \$16,000 from the city's forty-three taverns.⁸ The problem of saloon owner defiance and lax enforcement of Sunday closing laws continued into the new century.

In July 1912, clergymen from Marinette's four Methodist, three Scandinavian Lutheran, two Baptist, Presbyterian, Christian-Scientist and Salvation Army churches submitted petitions to the Marinette city council demanding that the Sunday closing law be enforced. In fact, some of the old-line Protestant ministers wanted a strict enforcement of the Sabbath on Sundays. Yankee Blue Laws came in conflict with an immigrant tradition of a "continental Sunday." When, for example, Marinette's German community held a "Sängerfest" on the weekend of 26-28 July 1912, the Methodist minister denounced it saying that "Sängerfest" should really be called "Beerfest."⁹ The two societies of the devout and the drunkards sometimes met on Sunday morning as parishioners were on their way to church, and saloon habitués were on their way home. It was suggested that a 1:00 A.M. Sunday closing would lessen this disagreeable situation. The *Marinette Eagle-Star*, in its 4 December 1912 edition, observed "Our mayor, who wins in the management of our city's finances, would do well to brush up on the moral responsibility of his office."

In addition to the ongoing struggle to control the city's tavern owners, residents of Marinette could turn their attention to another, far more serious struggle with the outbreak of war in Europe during the summer of 1914. In this struggle, as in the temperance question, clergymen and members of various churches became involved. In late September 1914, a German Lutheran and a German Methodist minister spoke at a rally in support of raising money for the Red Cross to help German civilians.¹⁰

Marinette residents of Polish background met at Sacred Heart School and adopted a resolution calling for the United States, Great Britain, and France to establish a free and independent Poland as well as freeing downtrodden

nationalities in Europe. Not all Roman Catholics saw the war in Europe in the same light. Archbishop A. Messmer of Milwaukee, writing from Rome during the fall of 1914 observed, "I have followed the beginning of the war very closely and cannot but pray for the just cause of the Austrians and Germans."¹¹

During the two-and-a-half years after the beginning of the war in 1914, Marinette citizens followed the changing fortunes of the two camps, but while residents of the city might be emotionally involved with one side or the other, they were not directly involved in the war in the old countries. After the German government announced that, starting on 1 February 1917, it would resume unrestricted submarine warfare, America's drift into the European war became almost unavoidable if not inevitable. This new turn in the course of events had an immediate and direct impact on the lives of some of the people in Marinette.

One of the first Marinette residents to discover the limits of free speech was a German immigrant by the name of Ewald Mans. Employed as a janitor, it was claimed that Mans had a record of drunkenness. Mans was now accused of making unpatriotic remarks about the United States. Marinette County Judge William Quinlan sentenced Mans to five days in jail for his remarks and then Mans was told "to make tracks." The *Marinette Eagle-Star* quoted the *Fond du Lac Reporter's* account of the event with approval:

At Marinette, Wisconsin, this week, a man was given a five day jail sentence and also banished from the city for one year because he made improper remarks about the United States. The jurist who passed that sentence is to be commended, as a few punishments of that kind will convince each and every resident of this country that while freedom of speech is permitted, there is such a thing as taking advantage of that freedom and uttering treasonable remarks.¹²

Wisconsin's senior senator, Robert LaFollette, had the dubious distinction of sharing with Mans the community's disapproval. When LaFollette's picture appeared on the screen of the Bijou Theatre, the audience vigorously hissed. Earlier in March, LaFollette along with twelve other senators had filibustered against the Wilson administration sponsored bill in the United States Senate to arm American merchant ships. On 4 April 1917 the Senate, by a vote of 82-6, and on 6 April 1917 the House of Representatives, by a vote of 373-50, passed a resolution recognizing the existence of a state of war with Germany. Nine of Wisconsin's eleven congressmen voted against the war resolution. The two congressmen from northern Wisconsin's two congressional districts voted in favor of the war resolution. Marinette's Congressman Robert Classon of Oconto, representing the ninth district, cast one of Wisconsin's two affirmative votes in favor of America's entry into the war.

Wednesday, 11 April 1917, was designated as Loyalty Day. G. H. Landgraf, Superintendent of Marinette schools, made a patriotic speech at the

high school. Across the river in Menominee, Rev. James Rayburn spoke to overflowing crowds in a pitched "tabernacle" tent on "Christ, the Agitator," and on the following day, Thursday, 12 April, "Preparedness in the Bible and in American History."¹³ Residents of the twin cities on the Menominee prepared themselves for war in other ways as well. A completely new departure for the two cities, both Marinette and Menominee were dry on Sunday, and the law would now be strictly enforced.¹⁴

In contrast to the community's early enthusiasm for the war during April 1917, city and county officials had difficulty raising funds for wartime savings bonds and generating enthusiasm for the war, particularly among Marinette's sizeable population of German background as 1917 turned to 1918 and the war wore on. It was reported that the Knights of Columbus had oversubscribed to the Red Cross fund by 50 percent and that the three Scandinavian Lutheran churches worked for the war effort, but Rev. H. Westphal of Trinity Lutheran (the German Lutheran parish) admitted that Trinity Lutherans did not have a Red Cross fund nor an American flag, although he noted that the congregation was raising money for Lutheran servicemen and had a goal of \$1,500. The ministers of two German Lutheran churches in Marinette and Menominee came under fire for remarks made during the spring of 1918. In a trial, Rev. C. H. Averswald, of Christ Lutheran Church in Menominee, was accused of two statements and found guilty. In a conversation, alluding to the sinking of the *Tuscania*, Rev. Averswald remarked of Americans on the ship, "soldiers who went over on the *Tuscania* said they would get the Kaiser or go to hell. I guess they went to hell." Born in Germany, Rev. Averswald emigrated to America when he was fifteen. The *Marinette Eagle-Star* reported that Rev. Averswald also said, the United States "has no right to be in this war and it has no right to send its soldiers to foreign soil."¹⁵ In reply to the question whether or not he had made disrespectful remarks about the American flag, Rev. Westphal said that was a matter for the church council of Trinity Lutheran Church to decide.

Accusations of disloyalty were also made in rural areas of the county. Despite the fact that Fredrich Borg, a farmer in the town of Grover, denied that he was pro-German, his barn was painted yellow. Borg pointed out that his son had enlisted in the army although he was not yet twenty-one.¹⁶ Disloyalty to the war effort was not confined to Marinette County. The *Marinette Eagle-Star* denounced Wisconsin Senator Robert LaFollette as a traitor for his opposition to the war. (Cynics referred to LaFollette as the Kaiser's favorite senator.)

Attempts to further the war effort were promoted on the Menominee side of the river as well during the summer of 1918. John O'Hara, an attorney, president of the American Club of Menominee, announced that all German books including readers, grammars, as well as private books, would be burned. O'Hara went on to note that not only books in the German language, but also books in German thought would be burned. Further, German would no

longer be taught at the Menominee high school. A number of patriotic talks would be given preceding the burning.¹⁷

Efforts to support the war and suppress evil continued on the Marinette side of the river during June 1918. W. A. Brickley, who operated the bar in the Queen City Hotel, did not have his liquor license renewed. The reasons for not renewing Brickley's liquor license included: brawls in the bar, having a "tearoom" for ladies, and not meeting his quota for buying war bonds. Brickley defended himself at the hearing by complaining that he had to borrow money at 6 percent to buy war bonds which paid 4 percent. Brickley also noted that another saloonkeeper who accidentally served minors had his license renewed.¹⁸ The city of Marinette's war against saloons, however, continued to be a limited one during the rest of 1918. As cold weather approached during the fall of 1918, the residents of Marinette found themselves under attack from another quarter—the outbreak of an epidemic of influenza.

By December 1918, the epidemic had become so severe that the city councils of both Marinette and Menominee voted that schools, churches and theatres should be closed immediately. Saloons, however, could stay open, but bartenders were required to boil glasses and there were to be no chairs in the taverns. There was to be no congregating on streets, in stores, or in poolrooms. Streetcars in the twin cities on the Menominee were only half filled. A house in which an occupant had become ill with the flu was to be quarantined, but this rule did not apply to the homes of wage earners.

Not everyone in the community was pleased with the city council's priorities in closing public places. The Methodist ministers in Marinette pointed out the incongruities of the ban. Schools, churches, and lodges, places where good ventilation occurred were closed, but saloons, places where people cough, sneeze, and expectorate, were merely to be regulated. Nine Protestant ministers signed a petition that taverns be closed at 6:00 P.M. Rev. Francis G. Tulley, pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Roman Catholic Church, protesting the closing of churches, stated that he believed the spiritual health of the community was the most important of all considerations. Roman Catholic churches continued to have services, but only low mass, and funeral services were private.¹⁹

While Marinette was trying to defend itself against a virulent attack of influenza, community leaders also stepped up their crusade against slackers who did not buy their share of war savings bonds. Marinette County raised \$801,900 of which the city of Marinette had contributed \$600,000. Support for the war bond drive in the outlying towns in the county was strong and towns raised considerable sums—depending on the ethnic composition of the community. Crivitz, a predominantly Polish community, exceeded its quota of \$8,400 and raised \$9,700. Niagara, a town in the northern part of the county with a large papermill, raised \$40,450 for the bond drive. A number of Niagara residents were of Italian and Polish backgrounds.²⁰

In contrast to the support for the bond drive in Crivitz and Niagara, financial support for the bond drive lagged far behind in the prosperous farming towns of Grover and Beaver in the southern part of the county. A large number of the farmers who settled in this area were of German background. The quota for the town of Grover was \$87,000; \$14,300 was raised. The quota for Beaver was \$34,800; \$13,400 was raised.²¹

A number of steps were taken to encourage citizens both in the county and in the city of Marinette to participate more enthusiastically in the war bond drives. The first step was to call them before the War Loyalty Board. In September 1918, four of the six people called before the board failed to appear—an act in itself considered disloyal. Subsequently, the *Eagle-Star* triumphantly reported that "a Belgian farmer whose farm was valued at \$5,000 and had not bought any liberty bonds agreed to 'come across.'" In another case of failure to appear, the man was let off because he was just drunk, not disloyal. In some cases publishing the list of slackers and their quotas was enough pressure to make reluctant patriots pay up.²²

Out in the towns of Grover and Beaver, more direct action was needed to encourage some of the farmers to become more patriotic. As in the case of the second and third liberty bond drives, barns were painted free of charge and some people were given baths in creeks—free of charge.²³ During October 1918 a "flying squadron" of Marinette city and county residents made a foray into the town of Grover to force recalcitrant citizens to sign up for their share of liberty bonds. The *Eagle-Star* reported that on a Wednesday night (16 October 1918) there were some exciting incidents which lasted well after midnight, "but the patients operated upon took their bonds, are recovering, and hence additional details will not be made public."²⁴

That evening began with a public meeting in the Grover townhall. Attorney John O. Miller, Superintendent of Marinette Schools, G. H. Landgraf, and Alfred Martini addressed those present. An undersheriff was at the door and allowed no one to leave. "Then, the big works started. Mr. Miller went after those who had not taken their bonds in a manner similar to the way the Marines go after the Hun. By the time he had finished those that were there felt that they had better procure their allotments before he started over." All present signed up. A posse brought in delinquents who had not even attended the meeting, including a prominent town official.

The *Eagle-Star* continued the account. A crowd of sixty went to one farmer after midnight, "roused him out of bed. An officer was stationed at the door and he was told that he had to sign up for his bonds at once. He objected, saying that he had already done so, but it was proven that his allotment was \$500, and he had only taken \$100 worth." The farmer reached for his gun, but he was disarmed. "He was then given his chance either to sign for his bonds or to be taken to Marinette and put in jail. He took the bonds."²⁵

One of those honored on that Wednesday night was Herman Kopplin, a farmer who had only signed up for \$100 of the \$400 bonds allotted to him. After a visitation by the committee on Wednesday evening, Kopplin told George Bartels, a solicitor for bonds at St. John's Lutheran Church in Grover, the following Sunday morning that Bartels was a Judas and the visitation committee was made up of robbers. Kopplin found reason to regret his words before the day was over. On Sunday evening, 20 October 1918, in downtown Marinette's Dunlap Square, Kopplin kissed the flag and apologized before an estimated crowd of two to three hundred people. Kopplin also agreed to give \$100 to the Red Cross and sign up for \$1,000 worth of Liberty Bonds. Aware that a number of farmers in the southern part of the county refused to let the sheriff in at gunpoint, the crowd shouted "The War in Grover is not yet over." It was noted that farmers were now signing up for war bonds.²⁶

The reluctance of some farmers in the town of Grover to buy war bonds had ethnic religious overtones. The Polish Baptist pastor at Pound reported that the Rev. Gustaf Ahlf, a German Lutheran minister, did not encourage his parishioners to buy savings bonds. Rev. Ahlf replied that it was not his duty to encourage his church members to subscribe, and he resisted arrest because the officer did not have a warrant.²⁷

Feelings were strong in Marinette's Polish community as well. In early November 1918, the pastor of Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church, Marinette's Polish parish, suggested that, once the war was over, the Kaiser should travel with a circus and be fed pumpernickel and water, adding "our American boys . . . will invent a proper remedy and treatment for him [the Kaiser] as he deserves something worse than the primitive Christians got from Nero, Diocletian, and others."²⁸ The strong feelings over Marinette's war effort continued through the last day of the war, 11 November 1918.

While a limited form of religious warfare has been part of the American social landscape for many years, it usually took the form of clergymen and theologians "proving" that their particular faith was right and correct on various doctrinal matters. Such theological discussions were often polemical and sometimes were meanspirited and ill-tempered. Although many of Marinette's residents belonged to churches, the theological tensions before the war were to some degree muted, because so many of the people were first- or second-generation Americans and belonged to ethnic churches. One spoke of the German or Swedish Lutheran church, or of the French Canadian or Polish Catholic church. Even a shared faith was divided by nationality. In pre-World War I America a German Lutheran did not normally belong to a Swedish Lutheran church, nor did a Polish Catholic join a French Canadian parish unless marriages of individuals occurred between these various groups, and the hard rock of first- or second-generation single nationality identity began to soften into a generation of Americans with mixed and less clearly defined ethnic ancestry.

The war shattered the religious peace in the community which had been based on a kind of balkanized pattern of religious-ethnic identity. Nationality groups which belonged to ethnic churches found themselves in conflict as they, to varying degrees, identified with or even supported the changing fortunes of the old country. Sharing the same block on Elizabeth Street, and standing side by side were Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church, a Polish parish, and Peace Evangelical Church, known as the German Evangelical Church. Before the war, relations between the rectory and the parsonage had been friendly. In fact, an earlier priest at Sacred Heart and the Rev. William Leonhardt, pastor of Peace Evangelical Church, had played croquet together in the summer and a game of "flinch" on winter evenings.²⁹ According to reports, Rev. Leonhardt, who emigrated to the United States from Germany in 1890, had shown a notable lack of enthusiasm for the war effort. Among the charges against Rev. Leonhardt were:

Contrary to the suggestions of the *Eagle-Star* and the Marinette Fire Dept., the minister only had the sexton ring the church bells for services. Bells at the church were not rung for Liberty Bond drives, when Americans were on the Marne river because "my janitor was at work," or when the Kaiser abdicated on the grounds that if the German emperor left Germany, there would be revolution. It was said that Leonhardt spoke of German successes before July 19, 1918, but said little of American victories after July, 1918.³⁰

The late ringing of church bells to celebrate the end of war on 11 November 1918 brought matters to a head. The priest next door, Rev. John Pocięcha, reported that the church bells of Peace Evangelical Church rang neither at noon nor 4:00 P.M. on 11 November 1918, but were finally rung at 7:15 P.M. in the evening. Later the same evening a band of Marinette citizens called on Leonhardt and with a number of insulting remarks demanded that he ring the bell again, although the charge that someone said "kill him" was denied. Leonhardt rang the bell.³¹

The trustees of the church, pointing out that twenty men from the congregation had been in service and that one had been killed, passed a resolution demanding that "the vigilantes" apologize. The vigilantes responded that they knew the bell of Peace Church had been rung on Armistice Day but they simply wanted Rev. Leonhardt personally to ring it again. They stated further: "We understand that some members of the congregation want to start something. Let them be sure they can finish it. We are ready for them."³² In response an unnamed citizen protested "mobocracy," without signing his name in the newspaper. The members of the visitation committee who forced Rev. Leonhardt to ring his church bells published their names in the *Eagle-Star* under the title of "Citizens of Mobocracy." The roster of twenty-three names revealed a list of solid middle-class citizens. The composition of the group

included a dentist, a clerk for the Circuit Court, a president of a small manufacturing company, a lawyer who had run for the office of District Attorney, a superintendent of the papermill, a couple of foremen and managers of firms in Marinette, as well as a teacher of the Stephenson Training School (County Normal School) later to become its superintendent. Of the twenty-three in the group which published their names, twelve had last names which were English, five German, and three Scandinavian.³³ Not everyone in the community approved of Leonhardt's crash course in American citizenship. F. A. Brown, whose family had investments in lumbering, railroads, and banking, warned at a victory luncheon of war workers a few days later, "if in our beloved land you see any signs of mobocracy rearing its venomous head, crush it."³⁴

The brief incident at Peace Evangelical Church on Armistice Day 1918 was overshadowed by the relief, excitement, and general rejoicing that war was over. Whistles, sirens, and bells were heard in the two cities early in the morning of 11 November 1918. Shortly after 8:00 A.M. someone put a casket with a sign attached "War" in front of the Dunlap Square bandstand. At 9:00 A.M. Mayor Fisher proclaimed a holiday and the Bergfors Band provided music for the occasion. Neighboring Menominee had a mile-long parade and as early as 4:30 A.M. women began the day in Menominee's Frenchtown by banging pots together. The rest of the morning was punctuated by periodic deafening sounds of sirens. Saloons remained open and more than one drunk was seen on the streets. That evening there was a large bonfire on Stephenson Island in the Menominee River—only a short distance from downtown Marinette.³⁵

Marinette County ranked twenty-second in population in the state in 1920, and ranked twenty-fifth out of Wisconsin's seventy counties in its support of the four Liberty Loan drives. While Marinette County fell short of its quota on the first two subscriptions, the county surpassed its quotas on the last two bond drives. On the third drive, the county's allotment was \$525,000, and residents raised \$859,200; on the fourth drive the county's allotment was \$1,150,600, and residents raised \$1,176,800. Overall, according to state records, Marinette County citizens raised \$3,118,800 in the four bond drives during World War I. The war had helped to expand Marinette's banking resources. Economic growth came at a social cost, however. Thirty-two young men from the county did not return home: thirteen were killed in action, five died from wounds, and fourteen from disease.³⁶ As the year 1918 ended, the *Eagle-Star* observed: "We have learned that things heretofore regarded as impossible in our community life can be accomplished by systematic organization and public spirit."³⁷ The war was over, but some of the social and psychological wounds left behind by the conflict would heal less quickly.

The cultural effect of the war was an accelerated assimilation of German-Americans into society, with a much greater lessening of ethnic identity. Within Marinette itself, "Americanization" continued after the war, but in a

more relaxed manner. As first- and second-generation Americans passed from the scene, knowledge of the Old World, Old-World language, and identification with Old-World animosities and ambitions to a large degree passed with them. During the 1920s it was reported that Roman Catholic and Lutheran churches had a dual worship pattern of conducting services both in English and in a foreign language.³⁸ A decade after the war ended, the largest of the German Lutheran organizations, the Missouri Synod, printed 90 percent of its publications and books in English.³⁹

The "Americanization" of churches took a number of forms. The German Methodist and Swedish Methodist churches disappeared, leaving only one Methodist Church, the older Methodist church on Main Street. The Swedish Baptist Church lost its ethnic identity. In contrast to the Methodist and Baptist churches, Lutheran churches in Marinette before World War I had been immigrant churches either German or Scandinavian. During 1918, a number of Lutherans organized St. James Lutheran Church; services were in English, and the congregation was affiliated with the United Lutheran Church, whose roots went back to colonial America.⁴⁰

Ethnic social organizations survived the war, but not foreign-language newspapers. The *Marinette Tribune* (Swedish), founded 1892, and the *Marinette Volksbote* (German), founded 1898, stopped publishing during the World War I era. Unlike Gustav Forsen, the publisher of the *Tribune*, Herman Schomaker gave up publication of the *Volksbote*, but began publishing the *Union Laborer*.

Scandinavian fraternal and social organizations continued after the war. The Danish Brotherhood and Sisterhood, Skandia, Daughters of Sweden, and Vasa Order of America, all continued during the decade of the 1920s. Specialized ethnic societies such as the Norwegian Literary Society ceased to be listed in the *Polk City Directory* after the middle of the decade. In contrast, the German ethnic society, Sons of Herman, was listed in the 1921 *Directory*, but not in the 1926 edition of *Polk*. The German Singing Society (*Männerchor*) continued through the 1920s as well as the German Society of Marinette (*Deutscher Verein Marinette*). Although a number of German insurance companies were listed in *Polk's Directory* before the war, there were none listed after the war. Of the four fire and marine insurance companies listed after the war, one was Canadian, and another was English.

The anti-German feeling within the community did not directly affect municipal politics. Assuming that surnames give at least some indication of ethnic background, Marinette had a city council composed of ten aldermen with English, Scandinavian or German names. Besides the normally recognized English names, the Marinette City Council consistently had three aldermen of Scandinavian background for the twenty years after 1911. With the exception of 1911 and 1930 when there were only two recognizable German names, there were either three or four aldermen of presumably German background during the same years.⁴¹

Liberty bond drives ended with the war. Community fund drives replaced war bond drives, and service clubs during the 1920s worked for such projects as supporting the Boy Scouts and setting up playgrounds. The First World War with its introduction of "systematic organization and public spirit" had a profound effect in changing the community. How did Marinette County compare with other counties in Northern Wisconsin? The Northern counties of Wisconsin where the lumbering and mining industries had a predominant role in the economy were also the counties with the highest number of violent incidents during the war. The number of extralegal actions reported in the state in 1917 was thirty-two, in 1918 seventy-three. Marinette County did not totally fit the pattern of northern Wisconsin. More violent incidents occurred in northwestern Wisconsin than in northeastern, and many of these incidents in northwestern Wisconsin (particularly Bayfield, Ashland and Douglas counties) occurred during the spring of 1918 as American casualties from the war in France began to increase, in contrast to Marinette County where extralegal actions occurred in the fall of 1918.

In counties with large numbers of German immigrants or residents of German descent extralegal actions were less likely to occur. Of six Wisconsin counties in which 40 percent of the population was of German background, there were no reported incidents in four of them. In contrast, in fifteen counties where the percentage of residents of German background was 15 percent to 19 percent, twenty-seven incidents occurred.⁴²

Because lumbering was inherently hard and dangerous work, violence both during peacetime and war was more readily accepted in sawmill towns. Hannah Arendt has observed:

An element of violence is inevitably inherent in all activities of making, fabricating, and producing, that is in all activities by which men confront nature directly, as distinguished from those activities like acting and speech, which are primarily directed toward human beings. The building of the human artifice always involves some violence due to nature—we must fell a tree in order to have lumber, and we must violate this material in order to build a table.⁴³

The anti-German reaction in the wake of the war against imperial Germany cast a long shadow across the state as well. Associating their wartime experiences with the Democratic party's Wilson administration, Wisconsin citizens of German descent voted for Harding and "normalcy" in overwhelming numbers in the 1920 election. Many voters of German descent who had supported the Stalwart faction of the Republican party before the war, now supported the LaFollette family and the Progressive Republican faction after the war. Robert LaFollette, Jr., did not lose his senate seat until 1946.⁴⁴

With the exception of the election of Democratic Governor Albert G. Schmedeman in 1932, the Democratic party ceased to be much of a force within state politics until after World War II. In fact, during the 1920s, the party practically disappeared as a political entity. The party received less than 5 percent of the vote in the 1922 primary. No Democrat was elected to the state senate during the years 1923-31, and the state assembly had one Democrat during the 1923-25 session.⁴⁵

The Milwaukee brewing industry recovered more quickly than did the state Democratic party. Prohibition laws, to the extent that they were enforced at all, were implemented with great difficulty. In Marinette, local officials estimated that there were the same number of drinking establishments in 1929 as there had been in 1919.⁴⁶ In short, foreign-language usage died; liquor and beer consumption, although in slightly more moderate form, survived.

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Notes

¹ Robert C. Nesbit, *Urbanization and Industrialization, 1873-1893*, vol. 3 of *The History of Wisconsin* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1985), 262-64; La Vern J. Rippley, *The Immigrant Experience in Wisconsin* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985), 88-93; Guy-Harold Smith, "Notes on the Distribution of the German-Born in Wisconsin in 1905," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 13 (Winter 1929), 107-20. See also Paul Kleppner, *The Cross of Culture: A Social Analysis of Midwestern Politics 1850-1900* (New York: The Free Press, 1970) and *The Third Electoral System 1853-1892: Parties, Voters, and Political Cultures* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979); Richard Jensen, *The Winning of the Midwest: Social and Political Conflicts, 1888-1896* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971).—The German immigrant community in the United States reflected the divisions which had existed in the German states. In Europe, however, Swabians, Prussians, Saxons, and Württembergers lived in different parts of the German Confederation, and in an age before railroads had very little contact with one another. In the United States, however, German immigrants from different parts of the German Confederation—after 1870 the German Empire—might live next door to one another. Both Kleppner and Jensen found a direct correlation between ritualism and political voting patterns. Members of ritualistic churches, Roman Catholics and Lutherans in the Midwest were more likely to vote Democrat, while pietistic church members such as Presbyterians, Methodists and Baptists tended to vote Republican. Republicans in the Midwest were more supportive of temperance programs. Kleppner even found that German Lutherans themselves divided into more ritualistic groups which voted Democrat, while Lutherans more influenced by pietism were more likely to vote Republican.

² *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 24 April 1914.

³ Stephen J. Tordella, *Religion in Wisconsin: Preferences, Practices and Ethnic Composition* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin, 1979), 8; Brian W. Beltman, "Rural Church Reform in Wisconsin During the Progressive Era," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 60 (Autumn 1976): 3-24.

⁴ La Vern Rippley, *The German-Americans* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1976), 120-23. See also Nesbit, *Urbanization*, 601-18; Frederick C. Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German Americans and World War I* (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974), 38; and especially Rippley, *The German-Americans*, 108.—The largest of the German immigrant Lutheran churches was the

Missouri Synod. The founders of the synod had left Saxony and settled in Missouri in the late 1830s because they were opposed to the forced union of Reformed and Lutheran churches by the Prussian king. Organized as a separate Lutheran entity in Chicago in 1847, the experiences of its organizers in Prussian Saxony had a twofold effect on its outlook in America. The Missouri Synod enthusiastically endorsed the belief in separation of church and state and it was decidedly unecumenical. Like the Catholic Church, the Missouri Synod's churches maintained 2,100 schools enrolling nearly 100,000 children. Other Lutheran organizations, such as the Wisconsin Synod, operated another 1,000 parochial schools. In most of these schools the language of instruction was German. Another major German immigrant church was the Evangelical Synod of North America. Like many of the Lutheran synods, a large majority of its 340,000 members worshipped in German, and before World War I, the German Evangelical Synod operated more than 300 elementary schools. Although more ecumenical than the conservative German Lutheran synods, some of the pastors of the Evangelical Church came under particularly severe attack because their church in Germany had been called "the Kaiser's Church," the church of the Hohenzollerns, the ruling family of Germany. Other German church groups such as United Brethren and German Methodists were less authoritarian, more tolerant of lodges and secret societies, and shared a pietistic view of society.

⁵ Rippley, *The German-Americans*, 110.

⁶ Luebke, 38.

⁷ Rippley, *The Immigrant Experience in Wisconsin*, 57; *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 4 May 1912.

⁸ Carl Krog, "Marinette: A Lumber Camp Becomes a City 1880-1910," *The Old Northwest* 6 (Spring 1980): 31 and 38-39.

⁹ *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 30 July 1912, and 11 January 1913.

¹⁰ *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 21 September 1914.

¹¹ *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 14 September 1914.

¹² *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 26 March 1917.

¹³ *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 12 April 1917.

¹⁴ *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 14 April 1917.

¹⁵ *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 4 January 1918, 16 February 1918, 5 April 1918, and 15 April 1918.

See especially Neil A. Johnson, "The Patriotism and Anti-Prussianism of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 1914-1918," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 39 (1966): 99-118, and David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 178-90. The war vastly increased ethnic-religious antagonism which had existed under the surface tranquility of American society before 1914; reflecting a prejudice not exclusively German Lutheran, the *Lutheran Witness* (Missouri Synod publication) described France as "a nation in the last stages of decay." After American entry into the war, a Dallas minister was quoted as saying the "Christian forces of the country will put themselves under discipline and go where Christ leads them." The *Lutheran Witness* dismissed the statement as "Calvinist Ranting." When the Methodist *Christian Advocate* erroneously made the assumption that the state church of Prussia had the same relationship to the crown as the Church of England, the Presbyterian publication, *Continent*, pointed out that the *Christian Advocate* was in error—American Lutheran clergymen did not take an oath of allegiance to the Kaiser. In August, 1918, the *Lutheran Witness* complained, "Why must American Germans be held accountable and persecuted for the sins of a government they have long past forsaken?" At the beginning of the war, synodical conference Lutheran churches (Missouri Synod and Wisconsin Synod) did not have and would not have the United States flag in their churches, nor would ministers proclaim from their pulpits that their parishioners should buy United States War Bonds on the grounds that such practices violated the doctrine of separation of church and state. Besides unregulated saloons one of the early casualties of the First World War was Victorian prudery. Concerned lest American soldiers contact venereal disease, the United States Army launched a plainspoken sex education program with slogans such as "A German bullet is cleaner than a whore." French Premier, Georges Clemenceau, noting that American troops had been stationed in Europe for a considerable amount of time, offered U.S. General John J. Pershing the services of French licensed prostitutes

to relieve the tedium of American soldiers' stay in France. Secretary of War, Newton Baker, decided not to pass this generous Gallic offer on to the high-minded President Wilson. While at the same time plainspoken words were introduced to replace Victorian euphemisms, a number of idealistic terms were introduced to portray the war effort in a very positive light. The most commonly used word was "service." Soldiers became servicemen, the draft became National Service with draftees chosen by a Selective Service Board.

¹⁶ *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 6 May 1918.

¹⁷ *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 8 June 1918.

¹⁸ *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 29 June 1918. See also Lorin Lee Cary, "The Wisconsin Legion 1917-1918," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 50 (Autumn, 1969): 41.-Perhaps, because beer was so readily associated with Germans, a surprisingly large number of bartenders joined the Loyalty Legion, a super-patriotic organization to promote citizen support of the war effort.

¹⁹ *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 13 December 1918, 11 October 1918, 17 October 1918.

²⁰ *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 3 October 1918, 8 October 1918.

²¹ *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 8 October 1918.

²² *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 14 September 1918, 3 October 1918.

²³ *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 7 October 1918.

²⁴ *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 17 October 1918.

²⁵ *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 17 October 1918.

²⁶ *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 21 October 1918.

²⁷ *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 30 October 1918.

²⁸ *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 2 November 1918.

²⁹ *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 18 November 1918.

³⁰ *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 19 November 1918.

³¹ *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 18 November 1918, and 19 November 1918.

³² *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 20 November 1918.

³³ *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 19 and 20 November 1918. "Citizens of Mobocracy" were listed as follows, and the *Polk City Directory of Marinette-Menominee 1918*, gave their occupations as: D. C. Robertson, cashier, Farmers Savings & Trust Co.; Harry Pratt, superintendent, Park Paper Mill; Prof. W. E. Morton, teacher, Stephenson Training School (Marinette Co. Normal School [two-year program]); Edward Golden, foreman, M. & M. Light & Traction Co.; Charles E. Larson, grocer; Harvey Washburn, foreman, Brown-Mitcheson Co.; George Mitcheson, secretary/treasurer, Brown-Mitcheson Co.; W. H. Helmer; John Rye, cashier, Kreuter Mfg. Co.; H. F. Bornheimer, manager, Wisconsin Telephone Co.; Joseph Maurer, book & job printer; J. R. Hubley, secretary of James B. Goodman Co.; William F. Haase, lawyer (later a 1930 Marinette Co. Judge); Ralph Wenk, salesman, Marinette Flour Co.; James Peterson, papermaker; Fred Larkins, wire chief; Chris F. Jaeger, president of Aerial Cutlery Mfg. Co.; Ralph Garland, clerk, M. & M. Light & Traction Co.; Arnold Murphy, law student, Marquette University (Marinette Co. District Attorney, 1920s); George Marcoe, barber; Oscar S. Anderson, clerk for the Circuit Court; Dr. E. H. Redeman, dentist.

³⁴ *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 12 November 1918 and 19 November 1918.

³⁵ *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 12 November 1918.

³⁶ *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 20 May 1919; *Wisconsin Blue Book* (State of Wisconsin, 1919), 420-21.

³⁷ *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 31 December 1918.

³⁸ *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 18 January 1924.

³⁹ Paul T. Dietz, "The Transition from German to English in the Missouri Synod from 1910-1947," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 22 (1949): 125; Alan Graebner, "The Acculturation of an Immigration Lutheran Church: The Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, 1917-1929," Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1965.

⁴⁰ *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 30 September 1926, 2 April 1922.

⁴¹ *Polk City Directory of Marinette-Menominee*, for the years 1910-40.

⁴² John Dean Stevens, "Suppression of Expression in Wisconsin During World War I," Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1968, 181, 188 and 189.

⁴³ Hannah Arendt, "What was Authority," in C. J. Friedrich, ed., *Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 91. See also Frederick C. Luebke, *Germans in Brazil: A Comparative History of Cultural Conflict During World War I* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 217-23. Luebke has noted that the anti-German feeling in Brazil, after Brazil's declaration of war against Germany in 1917 was much more severe than in the United States. Both the United States and Brazil had important German-speaking subsocieties which maintained various ethnic cultural institutions—German language newspapers, churches, schools, and a variety of voluntary associations. Both countries had foreign ministers who resigned in protest as their countries' governments adopted policies which ultimately led them into war: in the United States, Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan, in Brazil, Foreign Minister Lauro Muller who was of German descent. The differences between the two countries, once war was declared, were much more pronounced, however. While there were acts of violence in the United States against the German immigrant community, these were not nearly as severe or common as the violent and destructive riots which occurred in Brazil in 1917. Luebke concludes: "Had the Germans in the United States been as divergent from the American norms as Teuton-Brazilians were from the Brazilian, it's likely that they too would have suffered from destructive riots, as the Chinese did in mining camps of the American West" (p. 223). Wisconsin is one of five states in which over half of the population is either wholly or partially of German descent (the others being Iowa, the Dakotas, and Nebraska).

⁴⁴ Herbert F. Margulies, "The Election of 1920 in Wisconsin: The Return to 'Normalcy' Reappraisal," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 41 (Autumn 1957): 15-22, and *The Decline of the Progressive Movement in Wisconsin, 1890-1920* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1968). James Lorence, "Dynamite for the Brain: The Growth and Decline of Socialism in Central and Lakeshore Wisconsin, 1910-1920," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 66 (Summer 1983): 251-74; Howard R. Klueter and James Lorence, *Woodlot and Ballot Box: Marathon County in the Twentieth Century* (Wausau, WI, 1987) 241-355.

⁴⁵ William F. Thompson, *Continuity and Change 1940-1966*, vol. 6 of *The History of Wisconsin* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1988), 403.

⁴⁶ *Marinette Eagle-Star*, 12 August 1929.

