

## Chapter XIV World War I

Eberhard Reichmann and Fred Janiga

Louis Howland, "the war is one between civilization and barbarism..."

"As I have said in other books, the anti-Germanism in this country during the First World War so shamed and dismayed my parents that they resolved to raise me without acquainting me with the language or the literature or the music or the oral family histories which my ancestors had loved. They volunteered to make me ignorant and rootless as proof of their patriotism. This was done with surprising meekness by many, many German-American families in Indianapolis, it seems to me. Uncle John [Rauch--prominent Indianapolis lawyer] almost seems to boast of this dismantling and quiet burial of a culture, a culture which surely would have been of use to me today."

Kurt Vonnegut, (from *Palm Sunday*)

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# INTRODUCTION

German-Americans had it hard during World War I and the selections in this chapter demonstrate that fact. Not only were they wrestling with their inner ghosts which tore them between loyalty to a distant country (in both mileage and memory), but they also faced the slings and arrows of detractors at home, many of whom would have gladly locked them up in internment camps for simply carrying German last names. Clifton Phillips tells us that even in Indiana especially, where citizens of German birth made up the single largest and most socially active ethnic majority, the strong pro-German undercurrent could not withstand the storm of nation-wide anti-German sentiment. The fact is German-Americans had always been patriotic. The problem was only that they tended to maintain some form of cultural and historical patriotism to the German fatherland alongside their very heart-felt patriotism for America. And this fact seemed not only strange but even unacceptable to many Americans of Anglo descent, in particular. In many ways, the battles of the European continent, where Germans and British were embroiled in conflict, were spilling over across the Atlantic and infecting the social and political atmosphere of this country with the same poison. And America which had fought a war for national unity not 60 years before, found itself once again on the doorstep of potentially destructive internal strife.

Many of the stories included in this chapter lay testimony to the myriad accusations flung at German-Americans during the war. Families who had been in Indiana for generations suddenly found even their citizenship being called to question (Clifford Scott) and accusations of the most bizarre sort were commonly entertained and investigated (St. Meinrad's spying monks, for example). But for all the many rumors and suspicions about German-American underground activity in support of the Kaiser, no single case of German-American treason was ever prosecuted during World War I. Much to the contrary was true. Most German-Americans chose to acquiesce to the pressures around them and withdrew from their cultural and linguistic heritage as Germans in America. They not only supported the war effort in droves as fellow German-American Richard Lieber urged them, but they even abandoned their language in large part and adapted many of their social pillars (churches, newspapers, schools, clubs and taverns) to appear, at least outwardly, more "American". German-Americans contributed perhaps even disproportionately to the war effort in terms of both human and financial resources. The need to compensate for their sin of German-ness caused many to exaggerate their American-ness. The editor has chosen a sampling of illustrative stories of Indiana German-American heroism on the warfront to demonstrate their will to fight for the "homeland." The stories of Alois Strobel, Paul Frank Baer, Jim Frenzel and Adolph Bretz demonstrate that Hoosier Americans of German descent overcame any split-loyalties they may have felt in fighting their German cousins and performed their duties with honor as American soldiers.

The aftermath of World War I on Americans of German descent was harrowing. Theodor Stempfel reminds us that war makes citizens into children, forced to blindly follow, and sacrifice individual intellectual activity for the common goal of victory. Stempfel states the truth eloquently and to the point: "the war has changed our character as a nation profoundly." The mark left by World War I on the German-American community was truly indelible. The German language, which had been banned throughout the state's schools in 1919, would never again rise to pre-war usage levels thus dooming countless German language newspapers and dissolving the bonds of unity of many German church congregations. While many social clubs and taverns that

had previously served the German-American community adapted and continued to exist, they were structurally weakened and susceptible to further attack. And those attacks were quick to follow on the heels of World War I. Giles Hoyt lays out the three-fold hammer-effect that laid waste to German-American culture in Indiana within the first quarter of the 20th century: the war, prohibition, and the Great Depression. The death knell nearly rang with the World War II only 20 years later.

For German-American culture to have disappeared entirely within the state of Indiana following World War I would have certainly been unimaginable. The stigma left on Hoosiers of German descent could never be erased. If any benefit, however, can be taken from this experience, it could be said that the persecution and repression of a culture often causes that culture to coalesce and concentrate itself for the sake of survival. The experiences of German-Americans in Indiana during World War I may have indeed functioned to unite previously diverse and divergent groups closer together. More contemporary German-American communities are less focused on specific regional, religious or political affiliations and identify more generally with their historic and cultural German heritage. This is certainly one result of World War I and its aftermath, and perhaps, an important aspect of the community's identity which has allowed it to adapt and survive into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## 1. INDIANA IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Clifton J. Phillips

THE OUTBREAK OF WAR IN EUROPE in the summer of 1914 awakened Indianans to a heightened awareness of world affairs. While the immediate reaction was one of shock and amazement at the unexpected turn of events, most of the newspaper press in the state concurred in placing the chief blame for the conflict squarely at the door of the Central Powers, which were generally considered unpopular, autocratic states. On Aug. 5, the normally rather cautious *Indianapolis News* summed up the case editorially: "No amount of special pleading can alter the judgment of mankind. Germany and Austria could have prevented this war by refusing to take the first foolish step." Yet within a few weeks, as the war became a familiar feature of the news, a more balanced and even neutral point of view predominated in the secular press as many Indiana newspapers softened their previously anti-German attitudes, as Cedric C. Cummins has shown in his *Indiana Public Opinion, 1914-1917*, 3-21. Several newspapers shifted from a pro-Ally to a largely pro-German point of view, including the *New Albany Ledger* and the *Richmond Palladium*, as well as three Chicago papers circulating in Indiana, the *American*, the *Examiner*, and the *Tribune*.

By the end of Aug. 1914, however, the flood of news stories depicting the German invasion and occupation of neutral Belgium in a largely unfavorable light brought an end to this relatively fluid state of public opinion. Although most Hoosier editors gave little space to the more flagrant examples of "atrocities" propaganda, the general tenor of news reportage as well as the editorial comment was damning of Germany for its apparently unduly harsh treatment of the Belgian people. Two additional factors reinforced the pro-Ally position in 1915--German submarine warfare, particularly the torpedoing of the British luxury liner *Lusitania* with the loss of some 1,500 lives, including 124 Americans, and reports of sabotage in American factories

filling war orders for the Allies. Yet, despite editorial condemnation of Germany, there was little inclination to call for American intervention in what was still considered a purely European affair. In fact, by the spring of 1916, when Francisco Villa and his band of raiders crossed the Mexican border into U.S. territory, most Indianans would probably have preferred war with Mexico to one with Germany. In an election year, moreover, Hoosier politicians were reluctant to offend the extensive German-American community in the state, which was eagerly wooed by both major parties in the presidential campaign of 1916.

A strong current of positive pro-German sentiment also existed in Indiana, where persons of German birth or descent constituted the largest and most closely knit ethnic minority. Throughout the first years of the war German-language newspapers in Evansville, Fort Wayne, Indianapolis, and Terre Haute rallied their readers to the cause of the Fatherland, attacking war loans to the Allies and urging on the nation an embargo on the shipment of munitions to Germany's enemies. Active in the same movement were the German cultural, religious, and other societies in the state, many of which were represented in the Indiana German-American Alliance, a branch of the national body of the same name which was organized in 1905. Led from the outset by Joseph H. Keller, an Indianapolis businessman and one-time president of the city's board of school commissioners, the Alliance by 1915 comprised 123 local societies. Its annual state convention in Aug., 1914 was held in the heavily German city of Hammond, which gave a warm welcome to the delegates, who sang both "Die Wacht am Rhein" and the "Star Spangled Banner" at a picnic attended by about 5,000 persons. Two years later the members of the German-American Alliance meeting in state convention in Indianapolis passed resolutions affirming their loyalty to the U.S. while maintaining their belief in the justice of the German cause.

Irish-Americans, less numerous in Indiana though very influential, esp. in Roman Catholic ecclesiastical circles, seconded the pro-German efforts, chiefly out of antagonism to Great Britain. Perhaps the most important pro-German journal in the state was Joseph Patrick O'Mahoney's *Indiana Catholic*--by 1916 the *Indiana Catholic and Record* - which seldom missed an opportunity to strike an anti-British note. During the year 1915 joint German-Irish rallies were held in several Hoosier cities to protest American partiality toward the Allies. Among other minority ethnic groups in Indiana, the Hungarians of South Bend and the Calumet Region gave ardent support to the Central Powers, while the Belgians, Serbians, Croatians, Czechs, Slovaks, Romanians, and Poles were pro-Ally. Italians were caught in the middle between supporters of both sides and took little part in the controversy prior to Italy's adherence to the Allies in May 1915.

The war in Europe was a stimulus to the organized peace movement in America; though pacifism as such found little lodgment in Indiana except among certain religious groups. In March 1915, the Indiana Peace Society, which had been founded a year before under the chairmanship of President William Lowe Bryan of Indiana University, held a meeting in Indianapolis to plan concerted efforts with other organizations such as the recently formed Woman's Peace Party. In May the Indiana branch of the World Peace Foundation was organized, with Charles W. Fairbanks as chairman and Amos W. Butler secretary. During 1915 David Starr Jordan, formerly a professor at Butler College and president of Indiana University before becoming head of Stanford University, returned to the state to lecture under the auspices of the World Peace Foundation. Both the Indiana Federation of Women's Clubs and the Woman's Franchise League Indiana adopted the peace issue, and the indefatigable Hoosier feminist May Wright Sewall became a member of Henry Ford's ill-conceived peace expedition to Europe in Dec. 1915.

Although pro-German advocates were occasionally found in these peace organizations, most of their leaders leaned to the side of the Allies, and some later became active interventionists.

The war split the churches, at least partly, along ethnic lines. German and Irish Catholics, German Lutherans, German Methodists, and Evangelicals usually favored the Central Powers, while Episcopalians and Christian Scientists were pro-British. Most other churches tended to show less interest in the war during the period of American neutrality, though they eventually became pro-Ally. One of the strongest statements by a religious body came from the committee on social service of the Indiana Baptist Convention in Oct. 1914. Describing the war's cause as "predatory capitalism, entrenched behind hoary despotisms," the committee flatly declared: "This is not a Christian war. It is pagan and brutal. It shows how far the nations engaged in it are from being Christian." Most consistent in their opposition to war were the historic pacifist sects in Indiana--the Brethren or Dunkards, the Mennonites and Amish, and the Society of Friends. The two former groups, largely German in origin, took virtually no part in public peace agitation, but the Quakers of Indiana held mass meetings opposing war and sent resolutions to the President and Congress.

In general Indiana and the Middle West moved much more slowly than the East toward the notion of military preparedness, which was rejected outright at this time by such national Hoosier political leaders as Vice-President Marshall and Senator Kern. The leading advocates of preparedness in the state were more often Republicans or Progressives than Democrats, and were usually ardent backers of the Allies, while of course the Socialists were utterly opposed to the whole system of militarism. In the forefront of the preparedness drive in Indiana was the novelist Booth Tarkington, whose advocacy of a bigger Navy in the summer of 1915 drew criticism from even the generally pro-Ally Indianapolis News. Tarkington, whose travels abroad had made him a strong Francophile, also attacked the pro-German attitudes of the German-American "hyphenates." Other Hoosier men of letters in the pro-Ally preparedness camp were James Whitcomb Riley, George Ade, William D. Foulke, and Meredith Nicholson.

One of the chief proponents of military preparedness in Indiana was Lucius B. Swift, former Mugwump and Progressive party leader who opened a one-man campaign for a larger army in an address before the Economic Club of Indianapolis on May 25, 1915, which was later issued as a pamphlet under the title *The Military Situation in the United States* (1915). Noting the effect of the European war in undermining American security, he discussed the need for immediate defense preparations. "We are no longer immune from attack by reason of isolation," he stated, "and we have not only our own country but the Monroe Doctrine and the Panama Canal to take care of." Swift's chief contribution to the pro-Ally cause, however, 'was an anti-German polemic first presented at the prestigious Indianapolis Literary Club on Oct. 4, 1915, and widely distributed in pamphlet form as *Germans in America* by such organizations as the American Rights Committee, a pro-Ally organization of which Tarkington, Swift, and Professor James A. Woodburn of Indiana University were officers.

During the year 1916 an ever-widening group of Hoosiers came over publicly to the Allied cause. Among the sixteen Indiana signers of the "Address to the People of the Allied Nations" which was issued in April 1916, to advertise American sympathy for the Allies were the names of eleven Indiana University professors. Since economic prosperity was related to America's trade with the Allies, farmers and others rejected any embargo on the shipment of American food to them, as a resolution of the Indiana State Grange in 1916 and statements in various farm journals made clear.

The German decision on the last day of Jan. 1917, to resume unrestricted submarine warfare stirred Indianans, and President Wilson's announcement on Feb. 3, breaking off relations with the German Empire won immediate approval in most quarters. Both houses of the General Assembly unanimously voted resolutions of support, while Governor Goodrich wrote the President that Hoosiers were behind him. The disclosure of the Zimmerman Note with its plans for an alliance of Germany with Mexico and Japan against the U.S., together with the reports of attacks by German submarines on American merchantmen in March, brought most Indianans to an acceptance of U.S. entry into the war. Many felt like Louis Howland, an editor of the *Indianapolis News*, who wrote in a letter to Swift on March 22: "...the war is one between civilization and barbarism, and we should stand for civilization. We should also stand for the great English race, to which we owe, our religion, our language, our literature, our law, and our liberty." In some cities mass meetings were held urging Congress to declare war on the Central Powers, such as the one convened in Indianapolis on March 31 under the chairmanship of Episcopal Bishop Joseph M. Francis. The unanimity of Indiana's two Senators, James E. Watson and Harry S. New, and 13 Congressmen in voting for war on April 4 and 5, 1917, reflected the general consensus reached among most of the state's population concerning the necessity for finally entering the conflict. Yet, as Cummins has pointed out, unlike the wildly enthusiastic response to the Spanish-American War in Indiana, Hoosiers joined with the Allied Powers in the First World War with sobriety and a sense of the great seriousness of the moment.

The great majority of Indianans quickly closed ranks after the declaration of war. On April 6, 1917, the *Indiana Catholic and Record*, one of the bitterest critics of the Allies, announced that all Americans must be loyal supporters of what was now their country's cause. Almost all the German-Americans who had hitherto clung to the side of the Fatherland accepted the inevitable and prepared to support the war effort. One of the chief movers in this matter was Richard Lieber, the German born conservationist and Indianapolis businessman whom Governor Goodrich appointed to his staff as military secretary with the rank of Colonel on April 13, 1917. During 1917-1918 Lieber gave a series of speeches in Indianapolis and other cities in an attempt to rally German-American opinion to the American cause. In these addresses, which were later published and distributed by the "Friends of German Democracy," he explained how his fellow countrymen's natural love for the Fatherland had blinded them to the "diabolical plotting and depth of depravity of official Germany," and expressed the hope that with the German-American change of heart after the United States' entry into the war the 'old American' will straighten his path."

**Source:** Clifton J. Phillips, *Indiana in Transition. The Emergence of an Industrial Common Wealth, 1880-1920*. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau & Indiana Historical Society (1968), XV, 586- 614 [abr.].

## **1. THE WAR AND ITS CONSEQUENCES FOR THE GERMAN ELEMENT (1914-18)**

George Theodore Probst

The bullet that killed Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand at Sarajevo on June 28, 1914, set off a global conflict. In America there was only a moderate amount of interest in the event. As nation after nation entered the war, and since it was difficult to expect the American people to remain entirely neutral, President Woodrow Wilson issued no less than ten proclamations of

neutrality between Aug. 4 and Nov. 6, 1914. The U.S. was populated with peoples from every part of the world, and it was only natural that sympathies should be with powers from which the various national groups originated. Feelings for the Allies and feelings for the Germans and their Austrian brothers were to be found within our borders. When it became obvious that these sentiments were growing stronger, President Wilson asked the nation to remain "neutral in thought as well as in action."



***The Spottvogel, the popular Sunday edition of the Indianapolis Telegraph and Tribune, brings the ominous news: "Germany Declares War on Russia" (Aug. 2, 1914)***

From the outset of the conflagration the German-American press sided with the homeland. The majority of papers in the U.S., however, presented the news in a manner favorable to the Allies. For that reason, the editors of the German-language press felt an even greater obligation to correct that bias and to show the other side of the coin. Their editorials came out of the conviction of the heart, not as a result of bribes from the German Imperial Government.

Papers such as the *Iowa Staats Anzeiger* of Des Moines, and the *Chicago Abendpost* immediately refuted the claim that the war was caused by the Kaiser. As a whole the German-language press gave three principal causes for the aimed conflict: 1) Russia's imperialistic designs for more territory; 2) the revengeful attitude of the French as a result of the Franco-German War (1870-71); 3) the desire for economic gain by the British.

In Indianapolis, the *Telegraph und Tribune* showed its teeth by calling it a "deplorable sensation." With a tone of exasperation, the paper charged that these people were munition makers and profiteers indulging in "commercial cant" about "people struggling for liberty." "The editorial pointed out that it is only natural that the naturalized citizens from Germany, Austria, Bulgaria, and Poland would sympathize with their native countries. It repudiated the idea that Russia and Britain were friends of the small nations and that their victory would mean suppression of militarism.

The War was the focus of attention along Indianapolis Germans who had also sided with the position of Germany while the U.S. was yet neutral. Then there were rumors that the U.S. might side with the Allies after Col. Edward M. House's conference with Sir Edward Grey (Feb. 1916), followed by Wilson's message after the torpedoing of the *Sussex* in which the President threatened to sever diplomatic relations with Germany. Immediately, a group of German businessmen in Indianapolis sent a letter to Sen. John W. Kern protesting that Germany had not violated international law to the extent of justifying severance of diplomatic relations or a declaration of war. The letter stated that Germany would not intentionally commit any avoidable act that would bring ill will in America, and that the Fatherland did not knowingly "commit the slightest act which, by any stretch of the imagination, could be construed as an attack upon our national honor." The Senator was urged to use his influence against any possibility of breaking diplomatic relations with the home of their forefathers.

Due to Senator Kern's absence from Washington, the letter was read by Representative Thomas Taggart on the floor of the House. Taggart also stated that the letter came from prominent Germans in Indianapolis whose loyalty to America could not be questioned. The views of the majority of Germans of the city must have been presented in this letter, for it was signed by such well-known German leaders as Charles Mayer, John P. Frenzel, Joseph Keller, Herman P. Lieber, Herman Frenzel, Theodor Stempfel, Albrecht Kipp, Very Rev, Anthony Scheideler of St. Mary's, and William F. Piel.

At the same time another communication was read from the German Democratic Club of Indianapolis, an organization of 800 members, which urged that nothing be left undone to prevent a severance of the peaceful and neighborly relations which existed between the U.S. and the German Empire.

During the same crisis, the members of the Indianapolis German-American Alliance flooded their congressmen with protests against any unfavorable action toward Germany. Between 300 and 400 telegrams were sent, and a prominent German businessman paid for any dispatches where the sender lacked the money.

In May of 1916, the German-American Alliance of Pennsylvania called for a meeting in Chicago of delegates from all German organizations in the country, to make known the demands of the German-Americans in the presidential election. By the summer of 1916, however, the German-language press was almost unanimous in its opposition to Wilson.

Throughout the period of American neutrality, the National German-American Alliance collected funds for relief work in Germany and Austria-Hungary. From 1914 to 1917 a total of \$886,481.24 was sent to these countries by sympathetic Americans who wished to help them in their need.

The pro-German sentiment was strong enough among a few of the Indianapolis Germans to volunteer for the Kaiser's army. In August of 1914, 12 young men met at the Indianapolis Brewing Co. to form an organization through which they might raise funds for anyone who would desire passage back to the Fatherland for military service. The group set up headquarters at The German House, and they had hopes that 75 men from the city would

volunteer. All of the men had previously been in the German Army. In a more tranquil manner, the Germanistic Society of Indianapolis was formed in 1916 for the purpose of promoting in America the study of German civilization and Germany. The means through which the society intended to accomplish this purpose were public lectures and literature. The formation of the society nevertheless demonstrates a desire for a more intelligent understanding of their native land.

When Germany again began its unrestricted submarine warfare in the early part of 1917, the American public was overwhelmingly in sympathy with the Allies. On April 2, 1917, the President asked Congress for a declaration of war against Germany, and four days later the final approval was given.

The imbroglio which the war brought to the German-Americans has too frequently been given little attention. War with Germany placed the German element in an embarrassing position, and it brought a real conflict of loyalties into their lives. Many of them had friends and relatives fighting for the honor of the German Empire. To have enthusiasm in killing one's own relatives can hardly be expected. Because of the position taken by many of the German-American leaders while the U.S. was still neutral, a social persecution of the Germans followed the declaration of war.



“After him!”

**A Cassel cartoon in the *New York Evening World* and *The Literary Digest*, Aug. 11, 1917. Vigilantes saw German spies and saboteurs in every corner. Oscar Frenzel II was called home from Army camp to dismantle the antenna for his wireless set-which was then destroyed. Even the monks in St. Meinrad's Abbey were under suspicion and surveillance. But no Hoosier German was ever convicted as an enemy agent.**

Even before war had actually been declared there were well-known persons in Indianapolis such as Lucius B. Swift who charged the Germans before the Indianapolis Literary Club with being only "technically American citizens." Swift lambasted the

Germans of the city by claiming that the German element preferred Prussian efficiency to American liberty, and that the Kaiser as being "a Moses leading the Germans into the Promised Land."

A group of native Americans aroused a large part of the public to regard the German element as unpatriotic, and they created a definite feeling of antagonism. Anonymous letters were sent, and a whispering campaign gave the Germans of the city an uncomfortable feeling. One group, headed by Russell B. Harrison, the son of President Benjamin Harrison, made it their business to go on a "German hunt" for the names of any Germans whose loyalty might be questioned, esp. among the newer immigrants.

The Germans of Indianapolis had an understandable sympathy for their homeland. It was their opinion that the U.S. was being used not to further its own interests but the interests of Great Britain. They had strenuously opposed Wilson in the election of 1916, because they lacked confidence in his leadership. When the atrocity stories appeared in the English-language newspapers, the Germans simply refused to believe them.



**"The Two Giants. Germany: "I will destroy!"--America: "I will create!"**

**Like Louis Raemackers' black-and-white interpretation of the conflict (*Philadelphia Public Ledger* and *The Literary Digest*, June 23, 1917), a flood of cartoons and posters depicted the Germans as barbarians, as Huns. This had its roots in British propaganda blaming the German invaders of neutral Belgium of atrocities.**

In spite of their misgivings about the necessity of the war, the German element participated in the conflict. The loyalty to their adopted country was greater than their loyalty to the land of their fathers. There were 124 members of the German House who served in the armed forces, and a German congregation, Trinity Lutheran Church, came in second in the drive among the churches to sell Liberty bonds. The Turnverein offered the club rooms and

auditorium of the German House for use by the Red Cross to the Governor. In reply, Gov. James P. Goodrich accepted the offer and stated that he did not question the loyalty of the German citizens. The appointment of German-born Richard Lieber--the designer of the Department of Natural Resources and father of the state park system--as his Military Secretary, at the rank of colonel, was proof that he meant what he said.



**Col. Richard Lieber (1869-1944), military secretary to Gov. Goodrich. Born in St. Johann, Saarland, he came to "visit" his uncles Herman and Albert Lieber in 1891. Fortunately for us, he stayed and became a great spokesman for the protection of America's natural resources. He chaired the Park Committee of the Indiana Historical Commission for the State Centennial 1916. The tragedy of war between the two countries afflicted Lieber on the family level. His nephew perished on the battleship *Bismarck* when it was sunk in WW II.**

In an attempt to ameliorate the misunderstandings, the Germans made some changes in the more outward things. The name of "Das Deutsche Haus" was dropped and changed to "Athenaeum." The Maennerchor temporarily dubbed itself the "Academy of Music," and the German lettering on the front of Trinity Lutheran was changed to English. These efforts to placate the rest of the community paid dividends, for there were no public demonstrations against the Germans in Indianapolis as there were in other cities. Nor were there any, overt acts of oppression. Compared to other Midwestern cities both the Germans and the nativists in Indianapolis behaved themselves and remained, at least outwardly, at peace with one another.

On a national scale the German-language press was restricted after the passing of the King bill. Senator William H. King of Utah, accusing many German papers of being "disloyal, traitorous, and treasonable," introduced a bill which required all German-language papers to print any comment respecting the government of the U.S. in parallel English and German columns until such a time that the paper was approved, by the postmaster general. The design of the bill was to censor what was termed "traitorous comments," and it was passed as an amendment to the Espionage Act.

The World War and its aftermath deeply affected the German-Americans in Indianapolis and throughout the country. It caused a sharp curtailment of German activities and a decline in German organizations and institutions. The 25th Annual Saengerfest of the Northeastern Saengerbund was postponed; most German-language papers were suspended; the names of many groups were Americanized. There was a nationwide movement to eliminate German names from public buildings, streets and parks, and there were numerous Schmidts who became Smiths, and Muellers who became Millers.

An almost universal assault began on the teaching of German in the schools. The "enemy language" was removed from the grade schools or the entire school system in Toledo, Chicago, Milwaukee, New York, Philadelphia, Cedar Rapids, Duluth, Baltimore, Columbus, Cincinnati, Dayton, and Indianapolis. In our state, the Indiana State Teachers' Association even advocated the elimination of all foreign languages from the elementary schools, and after the passage of the McCra bill by the legislature in 1919, it became unlawful to teach German in public, private, or parochial schools. The German language was ridiculed as the language of the "Huns." It was also charged that many German organizations had fostered a movement to make America a German country. By the time the bill passed only a few schools were still using German, since the language had, understandably, become quite unpopular among the students, and social pressure had forced many of the schools to oust the language even though they preferred to continue its use.

Ostensibly the World War hastened assimilation of the German element. However, this "assimilation" was not a voluntary one. It is, therefore, very doubtful, that it really changed the minds of the older generation. Within a year the Germans in New York City were holding a rally in Liederkrantz Hall, and, when in the middle of a speech the speaker dropped the English and began in German, the crowd went wild with cheers. In Indianapolis the Academy of Music again became the Maennerchor, and the Musikverein was singing German folksongs. The most noticeable result of the war was the banning of the German language from the younger generation. The lifting of the ban in 1923 by the state legislature did not result in German regaining its pre-war number one position among the foreign languages taught in the state. It has been on a modest third place ever since, behind Spanish and French.

The war further created an antagonism between two groups of Americans which may not have otherwise come about, at least not in such intensity. German culture was still regarded with suspicion by the radical nativists, and the German-Americans could hardly forget the wounds which had been inflicted upon them through social ostracism.

But the war did not sound the death-knell to German culture. True, the German-language press--except for the Fort Wayne *Staatszeitung und Freie Presse* -- did not survive. Neither did a number of organizations, notably the influential German-American Alliance. The German churches, however, and the Turnvereins, though under different labels, the Maennerchor and the Liederkrantz still remained active. The German's love of song continued to be a part of his soul. He persisted in his fight against prohibition even when he could no longer drink his beer, and he remained an exponent of a freer use of the Sabbath Day. German thrift and honesty were passed on as part of a family tradition.

Finally, WW I was not the means through which the German-Americans became patriotic citizens, for their loyalty to the U.S.A. throughout its history cannot be questioned. And it is absurd to assume that use of a foreign language in an ethnic environment-- be it German, Italian, or Polish--somehow makes a person an unpatriotic citizen. Prior to the war

the Germans did practice freedom of speech, which is guaranteed under the Constitution, by criticizing, sometimes harshly, U.S. foreign and domestic policy.

But had these Germans not been thought worthy of naturalization by the government, American citizenship would not have been granted. It is far more accurate to say that WW I speeded up the process of the sole use of the English language among citizens of German ancestry than to state that the war had something to do with making them loyal citizens.

The World War had come as a shock to the Americans of German descent. It caused tragic misunderstandings between them and other elements of the community, and it seriously curbed German-American activities. In spite of their unfavorable attitude toward the entry of the U.S. into the war, the Germans of Indianapolis loyally supported the government. The conclusion of the war brought about a period of readjustment in which the German language was banned from the schools and German cultural activities were frowned upon, but it did not suddenly disconnect the German-Americans from their religious, cultural, and social traditions. The aftermath of the World War found German culture adjusting itself to an American environment.

**Source:** G. Th. Probst, *The Germans in Indianapolis, 1840-1918* (1989), 147-155, rev. & illustr. By Eb. Reichmann [abr.]. Originally, this work was an M.A. thesis at the IU Dept. of History (1951).

### **3. "A PLEA TO GERMAN AMERICANS FOR UNITY OF PURPOSE" (MARCH 16, 1918)** Richard Lieber

WE of German extraction have always taken pride in being truthful, dependable, reliable and sincere. To deserve this reputation in our new home has almost been a mania with our people, and I believe I can fairly leave it to the people at large whether the German in this country has not enjoyed the esteem and confidence of his neighbor in all of his private or business dealings.

He simply could not believe that his kin across the water should be different from him. Hadn't his father and mother, his teacher and preacher taught him honesty by precept and example? And when he turned away from the old home and it came to a last parting from mother, did she not beg him to stay clean and upright and honorable?

I am not pleading for sympathy, my friends, I am only glad that a mother's blessing and prayer has born fruit in her son's new home, but it was this artlessness that made him slow to perceive the diabolical plotting and the depth of depravity of official Germany.

The Bemstorffs, Luxburgs, Zimmermanns, Boy-Ed, von Papen, Igel and all the rest of the cacodemons, compared with whom a Richelieu and Metternich are meaningless and gentle adumbrations in the gentle art of villainy and treachery, these men are the most loathsome enemies of mine because they have cast for a time a sinister shadow over millions of loyal and thoroughly dependable citizens of German stock.

They have abused our country's hospitality, they have plotted, planned and schemed against their host, and in our case, they have added another one to their long list of crimes, they have tried to arraign us as helots, by playing on natural sympathies and kindly memories.

But that is not all. Bemstorff and his culls were sent home. A few others are put behind prison bars. Those are the ones who were caught. What about the others? Is there any reason to think that we have rid ourselves of the execrable brood? Certainly not. And I hold it therefore to be the bounden duty of every citizen of German extraction on account of the danger of being confounded with one of these caitiffs to take a clear and outspoken stand on the side where I know they want to be counted, namely on the side of their chosen country. Not half-heartedly, but wholeheartedly, not in the rear or to the side, but in the van. Who do you think in Germany is the worst hated enemy next to the English?

The German American. And why?

Because he "betrayed" the German cause in America.

Read what the "Deutsche Zeitung" of Mexico demanded editorially in the fall of 1916 "He (the President) will not dare to declare war. A war policy should be opposed with all means at command. If necessary, barricades should go up in the cities;"

Is that plain?

Have you done that? No, you haven't. And you never thought of such a thing. But you have been found wanting by the military masters of Germany who thought they could dispose of you according to their needs.

The truth of the matter is that the German who had left his home always looked back at it with tender thoughts. His attachment to Germany was not political, but purely sentimental. Much as a New York busman born in Indiana would feel about the old farm in Hoosierland. Not that he would go back to it, but he didn't like to have mean things said about it.

But in Germany this feeling was never reciprocated. In the first place, America was the proper place for "derailed existences" like he, and secondly, the country has not use for one expatriated.

"Since the Samoa incident" -says Baron von Polenz, we know on what side the German American would fight, viz., on the side of the country to which he has sworn fealty." On which subject Dr. Paul Rohrbach expresses the sour grape thought: "To Germany the German American is lost, for he most generally belongs to a culturally low stratum."

But perhaps it would not take much culture to erect barricades. Besides that, an uncultured person should be grateful when he is given the glorious opportunity to die as a traitor, serving in somebody else's cause.

That was the only way in which the German American could have redeemed himself in the eyes of the Prussian militarists; not entirely, of course, but in part. A German victory under the circumstances on top of all other things would be the greatest disaster to the German American.

That one fact should be clearly recognized by all of us, and it is incidentally the point where self-preservation and patriotism converge.

Today the German American is under a cloud of suspicion. He feels that keenly because it is underserved and unjust. Officially he is told that the fight is against the Kaiser and not the German people, but unofficially the German American is arrayed on the Kaiser's side. Of course, this horrible misunderstanding must be cleared up, and it will be. For the American has too much sense of fair play and humor and the German American too much inherent devotion to his adopted country to persist in a parlous situation which impairs the unity of our people. I propose that we German Americans take the lead. That we come out of the distant haze of passivity. That we be within reach, as we are within call.

In the deep agony of the German American heart that he must fight also those near and dear to him-when blood relatives meet on battlefields-let us remember that brother arose against brother when the holy cause of the Union was in danger. And let us now and never forget that our neighbor's ancestors of Anglo-American stock twice took up the sword against home and brother "when, in the course of human events" as that majestic document tells us "It became necessary for one people to dissolve the (political) bonds which have connected them with another."

Let us remember what my illustrious namesake, Dr. Franz Lieber, has said of our destiny and our duties.

"We belong to that tribe which alone has the word Self-Government. We belong to that nation whose great lot is to be placed, with the full inheritance of freedom, on the freshest soil in the noblest site between Europe and Asia, a nation young, whose kindred countries powerful in wealth, armies and intellect, are old- these are the reasons why it is incumbent upon every American again and again to present to his mind what his own liberty is (and) how he must guard and maintain it."

My friends, fellow citizens of German descent, I am pleading for this understanding in unity, I am pleading for singleness of purpose and for wholehearted action, I am pleading for a mutually better understanding.

**Source:** Richard Lieber, "A Plea to German Americans For Unity of Purpose" New York City: Friends of German Democracy, 1918.

#### **4. FORT WAYNE GERMAN AMERICANS IN WORLD WAR I: A CULTURAL FLU EPIDEMIC**

Clifford H. Scott •

It was no easy matter to be one of an estimated 40,000 Allen County-Fort Wayne residents of German descent during the war years of 1914 to 1919. Particularly from 1917 on when the U.S. fully entered the conflict, German-Americans experienced substantial inner turmoil of identity and public pressures for a wartime conformity that embraced not only civic loyalty but Anglo-cultural conformity as well. These internal and external forces unleashed a veritable epidemic of cultural change and assimilation that affected the lives of church and club Germans alike. The story might well be subtitled: "How Hans and Fritz Became Henry and Frank."

Fort Wayne and Allen Co. were influenced from very early in their corporate history by German immigrants. By the 1840s and 1850s the immigration was a flood which receded during the Civil War years, but which surged back in the 1870s and 1880s. Comparatively few new Germans arrived from the 1890s on, but high birth rates continued to increase the local population of German ancestry. Esp. during the peak years of the 1840s and 1850s Germans who sought greater economic rewards, as well as the smaller numbers who were motivated by religious and political objectives, flowed in through two major avenues to Fort Wayne. From the north, they moved from New York along the Erie Canal to the Great Lakes and either directly into northeast Indiana from Toledo and the Wabash and Erie Canal or rebounded from Milwaukee and Chicago. From the south, the German population came from and through Pennsylvania, the Ohio River, Cincinnati and Evansville.

A preliminary examination of the 1880 census, the 1917 "enemy alien" registration files, and a close tabulation of B.J. Griswold's family biographies show that local German-Americans came from nearly all regions of the 1914 German Empire, but esp. from farm villages of Baden, Wurttemberg and Hanover. Large but somewhat lesser numbers came from Hesse, Prussia, Saxony, and Bavaria. And still others came from Westphalia, Alsace, the German cantons of Switzerland, Silesia, Schleswig-Holstein, the Rhineland, and assorted city states. The census shows a surprisingly large number of first-generation artisans--such as coopers, cabinet-makers and cobblers--along with small business entrepreneurs and professional men, who, combined with urban laborers, balanced off the agricultural Germans in Allen Co. German Lutherans were clearly superior in numbers to the Catholics, while smaller German Protestant sects and the small German- Jewish community combined ran a distant third. In fact, the existence of a number of German Lutheran families in Allen Co. coming from traditionally and predominantly Catholic areas of Germany, like Bavaria, lead me to suspect that some marginally Catholic Germans moved into Lutheran congregations here in order to satisfy ethnic cultural needs more satisfactorily than they could in the more pluralistic Catholic parishes. Such ethnic needs also explain the existence of de facto ethnic parishes among Fort Wayne Catholics by the mid-19th century. It was certainly possible to assimilate into the economic and political life of the community as Lutheran and Catholic communicants, but it is intriguing to note the names of some of the more aggressively Anglo-assimilationist German-Americans on the rolls of the Plymouth Congregational, First Presbyterian, and Trinity Episcopal churches.

Ethnic identity, expressed by language and the religious and cultural values it manifested, was of the very fabric of Fort Wayne-Allen Co. life. And it was that ethnic identity which led to the cultural and civic trauma experienced by local German-Americans in World War I.

An initial shock for a number of local first-generation German-Americans was to discover that despite the length or loyalty of their residence in Allen Co., they were considered by the government to be enemy aliens. Within *two* weeks of U.S. entry into the war, local papers announced that the Justice Department required hundreds of German alien males to register at the local federal court if they wished their freedom of movement. The problem was that substantial numbers of first-generation immigrants failed to initiate or to complete the relatively simple process of citizenship naturalization. Naturalization for over a generation had required the filing of two separate papers, or applications. The "first papers," or Declaration of Intent, required foreign-born males to register at the county clerk's office a disavowal of allegiance to any previous government along with minor personal information. After waiting through a probation period of at least two years, "second papers," or the Declaration of Naturalization, could be filed. Then the applicant had to appear before the circuit court judge on either of two special days of the year for a perfunctory hearing and swearing-in. Naturalization was strictly procedural and seldom were there any hitches, yet the bureaucratic routine was more than many immigrants knew about or cared to follow. This was esp. true since even voting, the most tangible right of citizenship, was legal in Indiana with first papers, and it was generally not denied in practice for any alien who had a decent reputation and who was personally known to precinct election officials. Yet the May 1917, dusting of the ancient 1798 Alien Law by the Department of Justice required local aliens--even those who had taken out first papers--who worked in or near, or who needed to pass by, the Penn Centraltracks, Bowser's, General Electric, or the Post Office, to register as enemy aliens or else face arrest and prison. The two-week period for registration came and went with fewer

than one-third of the affected male aliens registering. First one and then a second extension of time was granted for Allen Co. registrations, but still only a minority of those in question went up to the second floor of the Post Office to register. Local and federal officials made a number of threats, but no individual action was taken. In a separate but related move, all German aliens were required to surrender any weapons of war, aircraft, wireless, secret codes, or foreign flags to the local police. A few German Americans turned in some small caliber rifles, shotguns, and German military flags, while some others remarked privately that this was none of the government's business. The "Landwehr Verein" and the "Waffengenossen," German veterans' clubs, turned over 50 Prussian war muskets, relics of the 1870 Franco-Prussian War. It is doubtful if any potential saboteurs were quelled by the measure, but certainly a number of families were angered by the assumption of enemy status and the implicit attack on those people and symbols most German.

The day after Christmas, 1917, a second registration edict from the U.S. Attorney-General was announced requiring all German alien males to register at police headquarters without reference to place of work or movement. Each alien was required to fill out a four-page form on his background, supply four photographs, and be fingerprinted. About two-thirds of the 1,500 alien German males registered. An extension was granted, but only another hundred came. Federal officers and the local police chief made more threats, but these did not increase the number of registrants. About 80% of the alien German males registered altogether, but the charge remained that Allen Co. had the highest percentage of registration dodgers in the state.

Up to the spring of 1918 only alien males were dealt with; wives were ascribed the citizenship status of their husbands; and unmarried alien women were apparently ignored. Some complications did arise, however, with American-born women married to alien males who as a consequence of their marriages were declared alien enemies. In May of 1918 President Wilson corrected this oversight of alien women and brought them in under the registration edict. Local officials estimated that a larger percentage of required females registered than had the males. Going through local registration files makes one seriously question, however, whether a 70-year-old nun, in the U.S. since the 1880s, working at St. Joseph's Hospital, and weighing in at less than 90 pounds, posed any threat to the security of the republic, or if instead the major effect of the registration dicta was to arouse public opinion and to frighten immigrant ethnics into cultural conformity.

The registration acts and the war itself at least partially succeeded in stimulating civic assimilation. An examination of local naturalization files shows that many first-generation German-Americans had not been bothering to become naturalized. During 1915 and 1916 only 33 German immigrants completed their naturalization. But between Jan. and June of 1917, 98 German aliens became citizens. The same rush to the county clerk's office was recorded for those taking out first papers with a four-fold increase being recorded in the first year of America's participation in the war as compared with the preceding year. To encourage this action, local shops and factories posted the names of all their alien employees on prominent bulletin boards.

German immigrants were not the only aliens feeling a hot breath on their shoulders. Given the new interest in past compliance with naturalization laws, old records were researched. A variety of embarrassment and indignation resulted as people who had viewed themselves as citizens for years, who voted, who had served in the Spanish-American War, and who even held political office were found to be aliens. For example, the 1917 sheriff of Allen Co., a Scotch immigrant of 1882, was reported to have never filed

second papers. In 1912, 30 years after his arrival, he had taken out first papers, but apparently, he had neglected the second stage. How could the chief county law enforcer hold office or enforce the law if he were illegal himself? The public dilemma was resolved by some private footwork between the sheriffs and county clerk's offices, and an announcement was made in the press that the sheriff had now filed his second papers. The local circuit judge, of the same political persuasion as the sheriff, took up the matter promptly and ruled in Sept., 1917, that the sheriff had already been naturalized through his father's prior filings. Another alien holding an important public post was the local "fuel administrator" appointed by the U.S. government.

Local non-registrant German-Americans continued to be harassed by local authorities, including the sheriff's office, but local officials made no arrests. One arrest was made by federal agents who, following complaints by local Fort Wayne citizens, charged that a prominent retired blacksmith had failed to register and had openly bragged that he would like to see anyone arrest him. Since his property was valued at between 100,000 to 150,000 dollars, local officials had conflicting emotions. When asked after his federal arrest why he had failed to take out second papers--he had undertaken his first filing years earlier--he replied that he had come to the U.S. in 1859 and had voted for every Republican presidential candidate since Lincoln. "Why should I have filed?" he asked rhetorically. The wartime requirement was certainly viewed by this man and by many others as an insult to their proven loyalty and an indignity foisted upon them because of their German-American background. In this very heated case, however, local antagonism pressured the Justice Department to imprison the 83-year-old retired blacksmith for 18 months at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia.

A major focus of attack upon the culture of German-Americana in Allen Co. was the German language. In local homes, clubs, churches, and schools many German-Americans continued to use the native tongue as the social and emotional bond that held together a German-American community and provided a sense of identity and security. The pressure for culture conformity over the years had periodically singled out the use of language as both symbol and substance of American nationalism. Consequently, Anglo-conformist proponents over the years had attacked the continued use of the non-English tongue almost as vehemently as ethnic saloons and parochial schools. WW I created an environment for another major, and largely successful, attack on the acceptability of German language usage. Use of German was held to be a hindrance to patriotic sentiment and that it indeed induced anti-American attitudes. The attack centered mainly on those two socially sensitive institutions, the church and the school.

In part, the drive generated locally from civic and religious leaders' intent on promoting the patriotism and righteousness of the citizenry; in part, also the attack generated from Washington through Indianapolis as one more method of stimulating the public opinion support believed necessary for the successful prosecution of the war. From both sources the principal local agency for supervising this militant assimilationist thrust was the quasi-official County Council of Defense, an organization which also supervised a number of other public and private functions of war mobilization. Working under the Council of Defense was the so-called Liberty Guards, a largely volunteer vigilante group. Cooperating with the Council and with local agents of the Justice Department in Fort Wayne were members of the highly secretive American Protective League.

Prior to WW I, more German-American churches in the area used German as the basic church language for services, sermons, publications, and much of the instruction in

their parochial schools. Redeemer Lutheran and Trinity English Lutheran were major exceptions. Theological concepts, as well as the warm but exclusive social intercourse of the ethnic churches, were tied closely to the German language. At about the same time in 1917 that the church fathers of the German Lutheran Synod saw the handwriting on the wall and transformed themselves into Missouri Synod Lutherans, local churches on a selective basis began offering some services in English and others in German. Often there were two separate Sunday morning services with one for each language; in other cases, the morning service would be in German and an evening service in English. In rural and outlying communities, the move to English was slower, but there was strong resistance in Fort Wayne as well, esp. at Emmaus Concordia, where one of the problems was that the ministers spoke English very poorly and had a very difficult time preaching sermons that required a fine use of abstract language and the nuances of religious thought. Some parishioners left St Paul's when it adopted English in order to attend the German services at Concordia, at least until that congregation also moved to English. The consternation among tradition-oriented German Lutherans cannot be overstated. Ministers at two county Lutheran churches were raked over the coals severely by the Council of Defense for their slowness in demonstrating wartime cooperation in matters of language and other activities solicited by the Council. Martin Luther was quoted repeatedly to the pastors by the Council on their required duty to the state. Pressure was stepped up considerably in Sept., 1918, following a State Council of Defense edict enforced by the County Council of Defense with its estimated 300 Liberty Guards. Retired Lutheran ministers and older members of the congregations recall "the spies" who attended their services. In a county Lutheran church, on at least one occasion, when the pastor had inadvertently slipped in a German sentence, a visitor in the congregation boldly stood up during services to ask the minister to repeat in English what he had just said.

The decree had come out from the modern Caesar, and the plight of these German shepherds keeping watch over their flocks was summed up by still another pastor hesitantly writing the Council of Defense after having received their ban on the language. "Is it," he questioned, referring to German, "entirely prohibited if it can be proven that it is not used to discredit America?"

"What would you advise in a congregation made up mostly of German-Americans and some not understanding the English language as well as German?" To which a second-generation German-American in a leadership position in the Council replied:

"It should be your purpose to use as little German language in your church as possible consistent with the spiritual welfare of such of your members as do not understand sermon English. This is America and not Germany, and the German language does not lend itself well to American teaching."

At the Fort Wayne Lutheran Teachers Conference in 1918, the teachers voted under duress, to discontinue the teaching of German, both as a mandatory foreign language and as a common language of instruction, after it had been the medium of expression in their schools for 45 years. In at least one Lutheran parochial school, however, a special class in the language was established prior to the opening of the regular class day.

German Catholics in Fort Wayne, centered in ethnic parishes at St. Mary's and St. Peter's with German priests, had similar language problems, but they were nowhere as severe as those faced by the Lutherans. Fortunately for them the U.S. was not fighting the Latins, and the larger Catholic Church, being quite cosmopolitan ethnically, was prone to use English when Latin was not required. Nonetheless, German sermons were discontinued in 1917, and the German words on the stations of the cross were removed. The venerable rector at St. Mary's, a veteran of Fort

Wayne's religious and cultural skirmishes since 1888, kept the German Catholics one jump ahead of the Council of Defense, not without receiving numerous accusations regarding his loyalty. The crusty old Dutchman, a linguist with seven or eight languages under his belt, even lectured the Council, although quite diplomatically, for becoming anti-intellectual in their purge of languages, cautioning the group that in the years to come America as a world power would need citizens versed in the languages of the world.

Shortly after the war, the priest retired and returned to his native homeland for the remaining years of his life. Lest I leave anyone out of the battle over the use of the German language, let me note also that the Council, working with the city librarian, ordered that no more books written in German be purchased by the library. Cooperating loyally with the Council, the librarian also searched the shelves for the removal of seven books and ten pamphlets published in English that were alleged to be either pro-German or neutralist in their argument.

This epidemic of public and private coercion of local German-Americans to adopt every article, symbol, and slogan of wartime patriotism was tied very closely to assimilationist pressures for Anglo-cultural conformity. Some examples of this epidemic of cultural coercion were based on hysterical xenophobia, past suspicions, and festering grudges. Other cases undoubtedly were based on the reality that many German-Americans still exhibited German sympathies and cultural traits--it was impossible to lose your German accent on demand--and that in some other cases a few German-Americans were so aggravated at the implicit charges, the explicit threats, and the petty harassments that they verbally attacked their oppressors.

Let me cite a few examples of the more hysterical variety:

1) A woman wrote to the local Council of Defense charging that a local German-owned greenhouse was encouraging its delivery men to leave their vehicle motors running while they delivered flowers. It was a clear example, she charged, of aiding the enemy by wasting militarily needed gasoline.

2) A janitor in an apartment house charged that he heard men speaking German in an apartment. He had listened, but could not understand what was said, but he was fairly sure they were spies.

3) Two middle-aged women of a highly respectable and wealthy German-American family in Fort Wayne were speaking German to one another while riding on a streetcar when an "English" woman came up shaking her finger at them and either inadvertently or purposely stuck her finger in one speaker's eye.

4) In Dec., 1917, a number of citizens became excited when they saw a man walking around the alleys of downtown Fort Wayne making sketches of buildings. The police, flooded with calls, quickly arrested the man on the charge of being a German spy. A crowd gathered outside the police department demanding that the arrested man be turned over to them for immediate retribution. Mayor William Hosey quickly had the alleged spy brought to his office for a hearing. The bewildered and frightened man explained that he was employed by the Sanford Fire Map Co. of Chicago and was working to map out several buildings for use by fire insurance companies that utilized his firm's findings in establishing premiums and coverage. The crowd which had gathered was calmed by the mayor who praised its members for their patriotic action and encouraged them to continue to be on their guard.

5) A German-American man in July, 1917, was perceived to be making disrespectful remarks about the American flag while standing in a small crowd at the Transfer Corner. Other men in the crowd cornered him and called for the police. In court the case was thrown

out when it became clear that the man, from a Polish area of Germany, could barely speak English and had been talking about the fact that Poland had no flag and had not even been discussing Old Glory.

6) Another case thrown out of court involving a German-American occurred when an employee at Berghoff's brewery was arrested on the basis of rumors spread by other employees that he was disloyal and had boasted that he had served in the Mexican army. (Antipathy towards Mexico was very strong at the time, and a curious number of incidents in Fort Wayne during the war years linked disloyalty in the European war with the earlier Mexican military intervention by President Wilson.)

7) In still another case tossed out of court, the proprietress of a hotel in a nearby small town became suspicious of a German-American farmer, followed him around the town, and in the grocery store thought she overheard him making pro-German statements. Under oath she became less certain of what the farmer and the grocer had been saying, and the judge wisely dismissed the affair.

There are other examples of public and private attacks on local German-Americans where there may have been actual words or actions that drew the fire of Anglo-conformists, although the merit of the counteractions is certainly debatable, e.g.:

1) The principal at Bloomingdale elementary school expelled a German-American boy who refused to salute the flag in class and who, after being ordered again by the principal to salute, pulled a small American flag from his pocket and allegedly tore it to pieces.

2) In April, 1917, a small riot broke out at the local GE plant when workers, of whom the heavy majority were German-Americans, turned on one of their numbers, beat him up, and ran him out of the plant for reportedly having shouted three cheers for Germany.

3) In another beating, a man entering the Court House was asked if he were going to enlist in the military, to which he apparently replied: "Hell, no! I should say not... Anybody who enlists is a damn-fool." He was severely beaten before he made his escape.

4) In court two men found guilty of cursing the American government were fined \$25-\$50 each and costs and sentenced to 30 days labor on the county roads.

5) In a case that made a major splash in the community, a German-American woman and her daughter were remanded to the federal grand jury in Indianapolis after a hearing before the local federal commissioner on charges of treason and of having threatened the life of President Wilson. What had happened had been a verbal scuffle between the two women and a group of women who had come into their home soliciting for the Red Cross. The daughter had ordered the collection committee out of the house saying that if the Red Cross did not stop harassing them, she and her mother would kill a few of its leaders and the President as well. Another person who testified against the two women at the local federal hearing was a neighbor who reported that the mother had told him that she never used flour substitutes and never would. (The Food Administration requested families to reduce their consumption of wheat flour by substituting rye and graham flour, along with other food savings such as sugar and meat. Local public opinion was used to enforce such administrative requests.) It is not yet clear what happened in Indianapolis to the two women, but since the war was over before that session of the grand jury reported its findings, I suspect the case was dismissed after a verbal thrashing by the judge.

6) There were a number of other cases against German-Americans in which food was at issue. Some German-American families kept specially baked loaves of coarse bread in the pantry for visiting inspectors while keeping their white wheat bread under cover. German

saloons that in that fine old tradition served free food with their liquid sales came under several attacks. In one instance after hearing rumors of the availability of meat sandwiches on "meatless Tuesdays" at one establishment, the local deputy food administrator dropped by on the next Tuesday, ordered a bottle of pop, and was asked by the friendly barkeeper if he would like to have a ham sandwich. The German saloon-keeper's hospitality cost him his food license for one year by the local food administrator, forcing the proprietor to close his business for lack of patronage.

7) In another saloon episode, a local war drive solicitor and a saloon tough got into it over wartime prohibition. The solicitor chastised the tough for unpatriotic remarks about wartime prohibition and his lack of generosity in the war drive, to which the tough--according to his accuser in his later testimony--remarked what he would like to do to President Wilson the next time his bladder filled. Prohibition's defender, much to his later regret, struck the tough, who then proceeded to wipe up the sidewalk with his adversary. Although the Council of Defense was furious over the outcome, apparently little happened to the tough since the bruised accused had apparently struck the first blow and since the pugilist and the soft-drink saloon keeper insisted that the alleged threat against the President had really been directed against the solicitor.

An extremely important home front wartime activity, again under the general supervision of the County Council of Defense, was the raising of money to fight the war. Since the national government chose to raise two-thirds of the war cost through citizen loans in the form of war bonds, militant propaganda and heavy pressure were necessary in the four Liberty Loan drives, the Victory Loan drive, several Red Cross drives, and an intriguing United War Work campaign at the end of the war. With the possible exception of the German language issue, the fund drives were among the most controversial domestic repercussions of the war.

The story is too long and complex to detail here. Through a few examples let me suggest some aspects of the "Battle of the War Chest." After Fort Wayne and Allen Co. failed to meet their quotas in the first two loan drives, the screws were tightened. For the third drive, and those to follow, organizers threatened and carried through on their threats to publish the names of those who failed to purchase or purchase as much as others felt they should. The Council of Defense called in for quasi-judicial hearings those who allegedly responded unpatriotically to drive-collectors, and it assessed fines in the form of bond and Red Cross subscriptions. All stops were pulled on the propaganda machine. And local German-Americans were a prime target for being urged to prove their loyalty by contributing more than their Anglo neighbors.

Fort Wayne's prime historian and an enthusiastic Anglo-proponent of the war designed parade floats for the bond drives with the theme of "German Kultur in Belgium. Do We Want It in America?" with scenes of ruthless Huns terrifying Belgian families. Newspaper ads asked potential Red Cross contributors, "Which Are You For? Angels of Mercy or the Fiends of Hell?" And the best-loved and most hated Protestant minister in town stated in a major address at the Palace Theater that "Any man who, without excuse, turns down the Red Cross and refuses to join, take his name and brand him as a pro-German. If he doesn't like the Stars and Stripes, let him go back to the land of the Kaiser." Given the emotional supercharge of the various drives, it was little wonder that words led to actions with German-Americans being under the greatest pressure to prove their loyalty with their checkbooks. In a case at the Cooney Bayer Cigar Factory, employees refused to work

with a German-American fellow worker who had objected to joining the Red Cross. Ultimately the young man was forced to leave so that the factory could claim full Red Cross membership. A woman who was a young German girl employee at the Wayne Knitting Mills recalls that she and other German girls were put under special pressure by their foreman to contribute. A farmer in East Allen Co. was called before the Council of Defense for receiving a solicitor in an unfriendly manner, as was a downtown medical doctor who was told by the ruffled solicitors to "go to Mexico where you belong." And north of the city an elderly German-American farmer was roughed up by the collectors when the farmer maintained that his mortgage payments did not allow him to buy as many bonds as the very prominent Fort Wayne solicitor believed he should. That particular episode led to a Council of Defense hearing and a very heated and prolonged feud between a German-American on the Council and a volunteer lawyer for the farmer from the Freie Presse und Staats Zeitung, the local German newspaper.

Not surprisingly, from the time of the third bond drive on through the last, Allen Co. surpassed its quotas.

When it came to troop recruitment, German-Americans were not untypical of the total manpower pool in the county with the important exception of Amish, Mennonite, and Dunkard males who nearly all claimed conscientious objector status. Seeking an exemption was hardly a novelty, however, as over 55% of the draft registrants in Allen Co. claimed such a Status under one or another criterion. Despite the claims of local editorialists and a prominent local historian writing at the time, Allen Co. males were not exceptionally enthusiastic about volunteering for service as Captain Thomas Ryan, the head recruiter for the district, noted. The men who gave the Fort Wayne district its excellent showing came more heavily out of St. Joseph and Lake Co. The names of the actual Allen Co. troops do show about the same percentage of men with German names as the total population would warrant. The same is true of the 127 casualties from Allen Co.; in fact, the first Allen Co. death suffered on the battlefield was that of a German-American, Carl Winkelmeier.

Politically, the effect of WW I was to drive a wedge into the party affiliation of a major element of German-Americans in Fort Wayne and Allen Co. It is not too much to say that the War created a political shift that would alter substantially the political balance in Fort Wayne.

All through the late 19th century and early 20th century, Fort Wayne was known as a Democratic town based heavily on the votes of German Catholics and Lutherans who sought to protect not only family traditions and city jobs, but also corner saloons, parochial schools, and the integrity of the German community from the personal-morality drive of Republicans who were often found among native-stock Americans organized through English-descended denominations such as the Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Baptists, and Methodists.

An analysis of election returns in the early 1890's and in the early teens of this century suggests that in 1914 about 60-65% of the local German-Americans voted Democratic, about 30% Republicans and about 10% Independent or socialist. Some German Democrats had shifted to the Republican Party after the depression of 1893 and the election of 1896, and Democratic adherence among Germans had eroded a few percentage points among upwardly mobile and Anglo assimilationist Germans during the first decade of the 20th century. But still most local German-Americans were Democrats.

Internal analysis suggests that over 90% of German Catholics were Democrats. Roughly around 60% of the Lutherans were Democrats. 85-90% of the German-Americans who attended non-Lutheran Protestant churches were Republicans. Most German Lutherans who had served in

the Civil War, or whose fathers had, maintained allegiance to the Party of Lincoln. Non-church Germans were generally Democrats. On the other hand, nearly all German Republicans were Protestant church members.

Precincts and wards with heavy German population voted heavily in the columns of the Democratic Party. The figures bear this out conclusively in the election returns for 1912 and 1914 when the Republicans split between the regular party and Theodore Roosevelt's Progressives. In 1916, however, strange and powerful forces unglued a segment of the Lutheran Democratic voters who, along with Progressives returning to the GOP fold, produced narrow Republican victories. The 1918 election dynamics closely followed the 1916 pattern, which by 1920 produced major Republican victories in the city with Warren Harding receiving a plurality in every Fort Wayne precinct!

The voting shift that began in 1916 was largely due to Wilson's foreign policy and the successful efforts of Republican leaders to capitalize on German ethnic unrest. The foreign policy issues were those that showed Wilson and Congressional Democrats acting increasingly hostile to Germany, allowing, and even promoting munition sales and credits to Great Britain, pursuing an interventionist policy in Mexico which harbored ill for the European conflict, and making public pronouncements that challenged even Teddy Roosevelt's reputation for antagonizing hyphenated American ethnics. Meanwhile, state and national Republicans walked a very narrow path presenting themselves as more dedicated to neutrality than Wilson with their presidential candidate, judicious Charles Evans Hughes, while at the same time straining not to give the appearance in Anglo districts of courting the German vote. Especially did Republican strategists attempt to keep any mention of Roosevelt from entering their campaign in German-American areas. Roosevelt was distrusted even more than Wilson among German-American voters, and Democrats played upon that fear by forecasting that Republican Hughes would appoint TR as Secretary of State should he be elected in 1916.

In late Sept., Republican presidential candidate Hughes made a major address in Fort Wayne at the Palace Theater managing somehow in an hour's criticism of Wilson to avoid mention of the European war. Hughes had to be careful to appear to be neither pro-German nor pro-German-American. Consequently, he used Wilson's Mexican policy as his code device for excoriating Wilson's military intervention in outside countries where the U.S. ought not to become involved. Hughes spoke in the vaguest of generalities, but it was enough to present himself as an alternative to Wilson who could demonstrate integrity and character without any of Roosevelt's excesses. Other major Republicans campaigned for Hughes in Fort Wayne during October, including Senator Warren Harding and former President William Howard Taft.

The Democratic efforts were capped by a whistle stop from Wilson, who got off his campaign train to shake some hands, but who was gone in a few minutes without making a statement. But on the eve of the election, Vice-President Thomas Marshall, from nearby Columbia City, was called in to pull out the chestnuts for local Democrats with a major Fort Wayne rally. But Marshall's magic had vanished. Much was made of the fact by his opposition that Marshall had seemingly denigrated German-Americans by charging elsewhere that Hughes was the candidate of German-Americans and the Hohenzollerns.

More important yet in undermining Marshall and the Democrats in the local political scene was the action of some of the major professional German spokesmen. The key here was the daily German newspaper, *Freie Presse und Staats Zeitung*, one of three German dailies in the state and the only one to survive into the 1920s. Its respected editor, Anselm Fuelber, broke his lifetime allegiance with the Democrats and his personal friendship with Vice-President Marshall in order to campaign actively for Hughes. Reports of Fuelber's speeches in the

Republican *Daily News* show that he was drawing large crowds of German-Americans around the county and region. Fuelber presented himself as a reformed Democrat who saw Hughes as the best bet for a neutralist American foreign policy and for a domestic policy which would least likely depreciate German-American culture.

When the Fort Wayne ballots were counted in 1916, the Republican presidential candidate for the first time in the living memory of Fort Wayne voters had received a plurality. Moreover, in the Congressional race, four-term incumbent and Democrat, Cyrus Cline, a second generation German-American, was upset by Republican Louis Fairfield. Among local Germans, Cline could not escape his voting record of support for Wilson's European and loan policies. Republicans would control the district up to the Great Depression.

I am not yet fully able to determine which German-Americans shifted their party votes. Few Catholics did, so it must have been Lutherans of two sorts: those who economically and socially were being lured to the more assimilationist respectability provided by the Republicans and those elsewhere on the spectrum whose sense of German-American identity was most wounded by Wilson's foreign policy and rhetoric and who consequently made their political leap.

In summary, it is possible to draw several conclusions about the WW I experience of German-Americans in the Fort Wayne:

- 1) There were no acts of treason, espionage, sabotage, or even that terribly vague condition known as sedition committed by local German-Americans. Certainly, many local German-Americans, however, were upset and occasionally outraged by personal attacks upon their loyalty and their purses, and by generalized attacks upon their adherence to German cultural values and lifestyles. concurrently, it needs to be remembered, other German-Americans exercised leadership positions in promoting and enforcing war-time cultural conformity upon their ethnic brethren.

- 2) Cultural assimilation by local German-Americans was undoubtedly accelerated by both internalized cultural and psychological decisions made by individuals and by the power of external coercion in the hands of neighbors, local authorities, quasi-legal bodies, and by federal threats and active federal agents with their 300-volunteer local secret agents. Rapid cultural change is visible in areas of language, clubs and societies, political affiliation, and the sense of personal identity held by numerous German-American residents.

- 3) Because of their large numbers and the integration of many of their members into all strata of community economic, political, and social life, German-Americans in Fort Wayne-Allen Co. did not suffer the degree or quantity of abuses visited upon minority German-American communities in other parts of the state and nation. Nonetheless, there were clearcut First Amendment violations; libel, slander, and petty harassment were fairly common; some people were physically abused; and a great many were forced by covert and overt threats to part unwillingly with their property.

- 4) Normally, some of the greatest pressure and vilification were directed not at local German-Americans who exemplified the Prussian military values and the political authoritarianism that were presumably the enemy of American policy, but rather the target was their German antithesis: Amish, Mennonites, other anabaptist and pacifist Germans, and traditionalist Lutherans who insisted upon the separation of church and state and who, at least early in the war, refused to turn over their pulpits to political tub-thumpers and war bond salesmen. Those German-Americans who more closely resembled the values ascribed to

Prussian leadership were most likely to march off to war, vocalize at patriotic observances, and put coercive muscle on their more reticent ethnic relatives.

5) I see no break in stride locally between wartime emotions and exaggerated actions and the infamous "Red Scare" of 1919. In fact, it was in 1919 after the war was well over that the Indiana legislature with the affirmative support of local legislators and the active lobbying of the city's wartime leadership passed legislation outlawing the use of foreign languages as a medium of communication in Indiana schools. While there would be some changes in targets and supporters, I also find continuous links, esp. at the psychological and emotional level, between the war time vigilantism and the Ku Klux Klan popularity of the 1920s.

6) Finally, the hard evidence forces me to note that the local leadership which was most likely inclined to become carried away in their wartime enthusiasm for changing German-Americans was that which was drawn from the prewar "progressive" sector of the community. This includes the political progressives who had sought to produce both political-economic reforms and moral uplift for the city, and it includes the religious progressives in the form of "social gospellers" who, backed by largely Anglo-congregations and socially active ministers and lay leaders, had sought in the prewar era to make their religion socially relevant by entering political and civic forums to champion moral and social reforms.

So, in conclusion, for Fort Wayne-Allen Co. residents of German-American backgrounds, WW I would be a basic watershed in their lives and in their relationships with the broader American community. The anguish and suspiciousness evoked by the epidemic of hyper-cultural nationalism in those years is still evident among those who remember that era. For people who look to history for insight into their own age, the lessons of WW I are abundant.

**Source:** *Old Fort News*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (1977), 3-17. [Original includes 24 illustrations]. Prof. Scott taught history at IU Fort Wayne.

## **5. TRYING TIMES FOR GERMAN-AMERICANS AROUND THE STATE**

### **5.1 My Friend Ethel and the Lusitania**

Evangeline Bockstahler (1905-1999)

Ethel and I were only ten years old when the *Lusitania* was sunk by a German submarine. The Indianapolis papers carried stories, and people were awfully shocked about the incident. My father, Albert James Roath, with his English background was real mad at the Germans.

The next morning, I met my friend Ethel Behmland as usual at the corner on my way to school. I told Ethel what my father had said about these terrible Germans, and that I also thought that they were bad.



**ILLUSTRATION LUSITANIA (NEW YORK TIMES FRIDAY MAY 7, 1915)**

Ethel came right back at me: "You've got it all wrong. You know what my grandfather said? He said it serves them just right. Why did they run that ship back and forth to England, Germany's enemy, if it were not for guns and ammunition? And he said that the Germans had warned them several times."

I didn't take that from Ethel. "No," I said, "they've done us wrong and they are bad!"

"Oh, shut up," she replied angrily, "my grandfather knows better than your father." Now I got mad, too: "No, you better shut up! My family has been in this country longer than yours."

She screamed at me; "How do I care, if you don't think that I am right I won't talk with you anymore!"

That was too much. I screamed right back: "No, I don't!" And that was the last time we spoke to each other for months.

One day, when I told my mother about our broken friendship, she said: Child, this war is a terrible thing, and remember that my father, your grandfather Monninger, also came from Germany like Ethel's grandfather. And let me tell you something else, it just isn't right that you girls have your own little private war.

Why don't you talk with Ethel that you want to be friends again?"

The next morning, I saw Ethel at the corner and said: Why don't we end our little war cause I still like you." Ethel was glad that I had broken the ice. Our friendship was as nice as before the *Lusitania*--and it lasted until the end of Ethel's life in 1985.

## 5.2 The Spirit of Mars

Theodore Stempfel, Sr.<sup>1</sup> (1862-1935)

It was in June, 1917. A glorious morning in a glorious month. The air was balmy. Patches of deep blue sky were sending their greetings from above the tall buildings down to the busy people rushing along the streets in their daily routine of dollar chasing.

Observing the men and women coming and going to and fro, one could not help noticing a certain nervousness in their behavior, a more vivid tempo in their walk and marked alertness in greeting acquaintances. From many buildings flags were fluttering in the breeze, streamers were stretched across the streets telling you "do your bit."

The people were bewitched by the first ecstasy of war. The country was at war with a nation across the Atlantic, 3,300 miles away from Indiana's capital, at war with Germany, from whence so many thousands of her sons had come and founded a new home, and in the hour of darkness had helped to nominate and elect Abraham Lincoln and fought and died to preserve the Union.

The enchanting beauty of Dame Nature in her June bridal dress had lost its charm for the restless mortal. The spirit of war polluted the air. A centrifugal force had spread frenzied, hysterical patriotism over the land. On that June morning a mixed crowd gathered at the intersection of Market and Pennsylvania Streets; young men and old men, boys and girls, colored folk and white people. Several young women clad in trim khaki uniforms mingled with the crowd. They knew that they looked alluring in their attire. Many of them had hoped to speed up the cardiac valve of some young fellow's heart. This was the time of adventure, of daring, because two months earlier America had joined the other twenty-five nations of the world to destroy Germany.

A band arrived playing martial airs. The crowd formed a circle from curb to curb and sang the new war songs with gusto. All were sincerely patriotic and naturally quite noisy. On the outside of the circle, newly made soldiers from Fort Harrison were scouting around, anxious to find some chance to display their newly acquired military spirit.

The crowd sang "Over There" and other songs again and again, the musicians exercised their lungs, the drummer pounded his calfskin with youthful energy.

Nothing happened.

At the corner of Pennsylvania Street, a streetcar stopped. An old man stepped off carefully. A market basket hung in his left arm, in his right hand he carried a hickory cane that fifty years before he had brought with him from Tennessee. Slowly he walked along the Lemcke Building, his head bent forward in deep thought; he was trying to remember all the instructions the old lady had given him as he left home. He was to get radishes at the third stand from the market corner, potatoes at about the middle of the block, parsnips near the side entrance to the hall, and then he was to count the change carefully that the potato woman might hand him. Only a married man can fully realize what a large assortment of duties and advice can quickly be heaped upon him by his spouse as she is closing the front door.

While our friend was peacefully walking towards the market, thinking of the blissfulness of matrimony, he was suddenly stopped by a boisterous mob in khaki. They seemed ready to lynch him. Deep in thought, he had forgotten to take off his hat before the numerous American flags carried by the crowd.

A bank clerk, who had observed the whole performance from his office window, rushed to the assistance of the victim of the mob spirit and succeeded in rescuing him by pushing him through the entrance door of the Peoples State Bank.

The crowd calmed down and soon dispersed after having enjoyed an exciting moment.

The clerk accompanied the old man to the market. On the way he said: "I am 75 years old, I served two years in the Union Army during the Civil War, we did lots of real fighting, but never made such noise about the flag. I reckon times have changed," and saying this he stopped at the third stand from the market corner to buy his radishes.

**Source:** Theodore Stempfel, *Ghosts of the Past* (1936), posthumously and privately published by his son, Theodore Stempfel, jr.

### **5.3 Give Me a Kiss, Hun!**

Betty Lou (Thralls) Randall

In 1988, at a restaurant in Columbus, IN, a group of women were overheard mentioning events from World War I. At one point the conversation turned to their recollections of how they, as children of German ancestry, reacted to the state of war.

"Until the war," one woman said, "all our family spoke German at home. But when we went to town after the war began, father gave us strict orders not to speak German on the streets. I remember being shaken to my senses once downtown for asking something of my mother in German."

Another lady broke in, "I always hated it when the boys yelled, 'Hun!' at me on the way home from school. They would say, 'How about a date, Hun! You are really cute, Hun! Give me a kiss, Hun!'"

#### **5.3.1 Theophil J. Koch--Enemy or Patriot?**

Betty Lou (Thralls) Randall

At St. Peter's Lutheran School in Columbus during WW I, one of the teachers, the brilliant pianist and painter T.J. Koch had his problems with the populace. Teacher Koch had been born in Germany and still felt a bond with his native land. Sensing this, some of the town's leaders invited him to carry the American flag in all the local patriotic parades. Others, however, still questioned where Koch's sentiments lay.

One day, several men showed up at the door of Koch's classroom. Their intent did not seem friendly. Koch explained that the children were in music class and that he would talk with the men after the class was over. After several more songs were sung and just before the class period ended, Koch sat down at the piano and directed the children in a rousing chorus of THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER. After the pupils filed out of the classroom for recess, the men told Koch that they had come to question his motives, but after hearing the national anthem so superbly sung, they were sure that Koch was a patriotic American.

## 5.4 The Alien

Marcia F. Schwenk

Herman Wind was only nine when his mother died back in Germany in 1870. The family had planned to emigrate to America, and his father Heinrich decided to go even after his wife's death.

Life wasn't easy in the New World for Herman and his five brothers and sisters. They also lost their father after a couple of years, leaving them orphans with no money to support them. But Herman was an exceptionally hard worker. By middle age he had acquired a number of pieces of property, most of them small tracts bought one at a time from his savings from numerous jobs. He had two great interests: reading and politics. He read books and magazines whenever he could, and he was a loyal Democrat. He held county jobs, such as seeing that the roads in his township were kept in good repair, and he also drove the "school hack" for the children of the neighborhood. When his son Henry, later to become county commissioner, got old enough to take the school route, the job was passed on to him. In the evening of every election day, Herman would drive his wife and children into Columbus and park at the courthouse. There they would sit and watch the election returns as they were posted outside for interested citizens, and he was certainly one of them.

Imagine then, the shock of finding himself suspect by the authorities when the U.S. entered the war in 1917. As far as he was concerned, he had become a citizen years ago. He had gone to the courthouse and gone through the citizenship process, hadn't he? Hadn't he always voted? But something had gone wrong. Some mistake had been made somewhere. Perhaps the papers had never been filed properly. As far as the U.S. government was concerned, he was an enemy alien. There was no avoiding it, he must be photographed, fingerprinted, and registered as such.

The picture still exists, and those who knew him say that he looks absolutely furious.

**Source:** Eb. Reichmann (ed.) *Hoosier German Tales* (1991), 155f.

## 5.5 Black Hands at the Cleaner's in Muncie

Jane Leitshuh Harnett

Conrad Charles Leitshuh--or you can spell it Konrad Karl Leitschuh--had immigrated in the 1890s. By 1900 he established a large dry cleaning plant at the corner of Main and Madison Streets, and business was great. One night, after the war broke out, Leitshuh's "French Steam Dye Works"--as they were called--were visited by some super-patriotic God-knows-who. When the sun came up, there were black hands painted all over the place. Whether Conrad said "damn" or "*verdammt*" we'll never know. But we know for sure that he was quick to remedy the insult--after all, it was his business to keep Muncie clean! Then he went out and bought several American flags and hung them all over the building. The Muncie paper reported the incident.

Conrad's 11-year-old boy, George, didn't look forward to going to school that day and face the kids. Was he glad when nothing happened there. But inside the Leitshuh home something changed for good: George didn't hear and speak a word of German anymore, and the old German customs his parents had observed were no longer followed--even at Christmas time. All because of the black hands of an awful war.

**Source:** Eb. Reichmann, *Hoosier German Tales* (1991), 153; 156-157, related during the GermanHeritage Project in Bartholomew Co., 1984 and 1988; ed. by Betty Lou (Thralls) Randall; 155; 157.

## **5.6 Concordia College Students as Officers?**

B.J. Griswold

"...the officers' training course... opened at Indianapolis, May 14 [1917]. One of the most notable features of the enrollment was that of a group of students of Concordia College, the prominent German Lutheran educational institution of Fort Wayne.

The faculty announced, on the 5th of May, that 100% of the eligibles in the school had applied for admission to the training corps.

Eleven students were accepted.

**Source:** B.J. Griswold, *The Pictorial History of Fort Wayne, Indiana*. Chicago (1917), 577.

## **5.7 "Vaterland" Spells Trouble for Pastor Zumhingst in Jackson County**

Carol Newkirk Weil

*I came across a 1918 clipping without an exact date and notation as to the newspaper it came from. It raised the loyalty question of the pastor and the congregation of German Lutherans at Borchers Church.*

"SAID TO HAVE OFFERED PRAYER FOR FATHERLAND. People in one neighborhood in County Aroused Over Alleged Plea of Minister.

Germany may be in a plight where she needs the prayers of her friends, but Jackson County isn't a very good place for a minister of the gospel to make a plea for "the Fatherland." It is reported that one minister of Jackson Co. Sunday included in his prayer the plea for the 'fatherland.' It happens that in his congregation are a large number of loyal American citizens who realize the seriousness of the war conditions and who are opposed to people living in this country accepting all its rights and privileges and in return trying to comfort and aid the enemy.

The Location of the church and the name of the minister are not made public at this time as an investigation will be conducted. The affair has been reported to the proper authorities, the people living in the community of the church are insistent that action be taken.

It is claimed that the same minister "refused to permit patriotic meetings to be held in his church and would not permit a member of his congregation to present the cause of Thrift Stamps before the congregation at a regular service during the recent week's intensive campaign."

However, other news about this event appeared in *The Seymour Republican*, July 18, 1918, and in *The Evening Republican*, Columbus, Ind., July 17, 1918:

"GERMAN PASTOR IS PLACED UNDER CONTROL OF U.S.--Rev. Henry Zumlingft [sic] of Borchers, Jackson Co., Taken on Warrant. Prayed for Fatherland and Opposed W.S.S. Put under bond and the supervision of a federal officer--must report weekly to postmaster at Seymour. Rev. Henry Zunllingft, pastor of a German church at Borchers, in the northern part of Jackson Co., near the Bartholomew county line, was arrested this morning by federal officers on a presidential warrant, charging him with seditious utterances and spreading German propaganda. He was taken to Seymour where he was placed under a bond of \$1,000, and Martin Trimpe, of Seymour, was appointed federal supervisor under whose charge the preacher will be during the war, he being required to report regularly to the supervisor, and in addition he will also be compelled to report each week in person to Allen Swore, postmaster at Seymour, giving a detailed report of all his actions.

The specific offense charged against the preacher is that he recently offered a prayer in his church in which he prayed fervently for the success of the central powers, invoking the divine blessing' on the "Vaterland." It is also charged that he urged his parishioners not to purchase war savings stamps and used his influence to interfere with the workers in the war savings stamp campaign.

Zumhinsgt is reported to have vigorously denied any pro-German tendency, and endeavored to explain his words in his prayer by asserting that when he referred to the "vaterland" he in reality meant the U.S., simply using the word "vaterland" as the word which in his native tongue meant the country to which he gave allegiance, which in his case he claimed was the U.S. It is said that the pastor's conduct has been decidedly pro-German and that his activities have been antagonistic to all of the war work of the nation. While, under the action taken by the authorities, he is still permitted his personal liberty, he is theoretically, at least, interned."

P.S. Martin Trimpe and Frank Cordes were bondsmen so that Rev. Henry Zumhingst (not Zumlingft) would not be jailed. Both Frank and Mart drowned in an auto accident six weeks later (see *The Evening Republican*, Columbus, IN, Aug. 29, 1918).

**Source:** The files of Jackson Co.-born Carol Newkirk Weil, Ann Arbor, MI.

## **5.8 War Clouds over Holy Trinity Church at Mount Vernon, Posey County.**

Elfrieda Lang (1904-2006)

Upon the entrance of the U.S. in WW I on April 6, 1917, the feeling toward those of German ancestry became so acute that a year later a special congregational meeting was called for May 19, 1918, and a vote taken whether to continue with the German services. The majority favored having such services, whereupon it was decided to conduct a service in German for an indefinite period.

Because of the intense emotion among the people of the region, at the June 2, meeting it was voted to remove the German inscription from the church. Children who gave any resemblance to German ancestry or spoke the language were ridiculed at school. Throughout the county, the people of German ancestry were spied upon. It behooved people who spoke more than one language to speak only English during these days of persecution. The curiosity of a prominent Mount Vernon doctor having been aroused considerably, he took an

exploratory stroll one Sunday morning. As he approached the site of the Evangelical Church, he met the child of one of Trinity's most loyal members. He asked the little girl, "What are they doing in there?" Very seriously she replied, "Why don't you go in and see?" Plans had been made to dynamite some of Trinity's membership and also the church. Parents were not able to conceal from their children such worry as they endured. Those who each day engaged in family worship, petitioned for protection, not knowing when they retired that night whether a new day would greet them or not.

In 1918 another cloud darkened the horizon. Some citizens became victims of the terrible influenza epidemic. No mission festival could be held at Trinity that year. Beneath their multiple **loads** of anguished endurance, beat loyal American hearts--the fruit of at least two generations of freedom under the U.S. flag. Hence it was these thrifty Germans who willingly bought Liberty Bonds.

**Source:** Elfrieda Lang, *The History of Trinity Evangelical and Reformed Church 1853-1953* (1953), 140-141 [abr.].

## **5.9 The War Knocks at the Doors of St. Meinrad Abbey**

Frank James Feeney

American Catholics, mindful of the numerous nativist revivals, accused of harboring foreign allegiances, and cognizant of the minority position, reacted by a vocal and solid commitment to the American national goals. Whatever remained of the nationalities movements within the Church was quickly abrogated in favor of American unity. The insecure and largely immigrant Church had to prove its loyalty.

### REACTION AT ST. MEINRAD

How to reconcile American loyalty and concern for the old country and relatives still living there bothered some of the monks. Maurus Ohligslager, a frater at the time, had the impression that "the priests and brothers were true Americans; they were loyal and supported the war effort." Yet, "a few of the old fathers and brothers whose sentiment was with the Germans were prudent and did not proselytize; they kept opinions to themselves." These older monks had been away from the mainstream of American life, "so they were still very German in custom and outlook; their motives for emigrating were religious; they came to be monks, to serve God in missionary work." This holds the key to understanding much of what follows. The majority of the monks were very spiritual men whose one driving force was the advancement of religion in themselves and in others. The older priests had come into this country to help minister to the spiritual needs of the German communities. At least one member of the community, Abbot Athanasius, had entered this country both as a candidate for the priesthood and as a political refugee from Bavaria.

The war produced "a strained situation" with sympathy directed toward the Germans and loyalty toward America. But throughout the turmoil "a fine level-headedness" prevailed. Several factors were responsible for this state of affairs.

Rumors shortly began to circulate that a wireless station at the Abbey was being used by six monks to relay messages to Germany, messages harmful to the U.S. In fact, a small receiving set, quite novel for the time, could hardly relay messages across the Atlantic, even if it could transmit. Nevertheless, a delegation was formed at the County Seat, Rockport, to

investigate. A local lawyer, Mr. Savage, who was both influential and friendly to St. Meinrad told them quite frankly how foolishly they were acting. The Abbey had no sending station and the most powerful transmitter, located in Arlington, VA, could not even reach Europe. With this statement the citizens were satisfied, though probably somewhat disappointed that they had not found some actual espionage.

St. Meinrad was particularly fortunate in that it was located in the midst of several German-American communities. These acted as a buffer zone. With restricted travel, poor roads, and wartime activity, outsiders were infrequent and somewhat suspect. The younger members of the community, the fraters, seemed very enthusiastic about various wartime, patriotic celebrations. In the *Fraterstock* there are several casual comments. "In addition to our Red Cross Flag which hangs on the bulletin board as a sign that the fraters are members of that military aim, we now have a little badge to be worn by the senior (the oldest in time of service)"--Jan. 13, 1918. April 6, 1918, the Anniversary of the Declaration of War, was announced by 5 minutes of whistles and bells. This day also opened the Third Liberty Loan Campaign. On April 23, 1918, flag raising exercises were held on the Abbey grounds. After the Abbot blessed the flag, Mr. Kreuzberger, a lawyer from Evansville, gave a patriotic speech emphasizing that a Catholic can also be a good patriot. Citizens from the town of St. Meinrad, as well as other neighboring towns, attended, but "some of those, not being accustomed to such a Catholic atmosphere, would not await the end of Mr. Kreuzberger's speech." An unknown backwoods band, consisting of a tin flute, two drums, and one bass drum, gave a recital afterwards. Three days later the President ordered a half-day holiday in honor of the Third Liberty Loan. Father Columban brought out the band, and Father Augustine shot a small cannon according to the music. On Sept. 7, Frater Matthew Preske of Evansville was visited by four of his eight brothers, who had been called to the colors. "Each one," stated the *Fraterstock*, "is more robust than the other. Surely we shall win the war."

Various members of the community performed patriotic duties befitting their particular capacities. The Abbot wisely heeded the friendly warnings of 1916 and the community followed suit. Moreover, he appointed two capable monks to represent him and the Monastery whenever federal agents needed information or assistance. Both Fathers Columban Thuis and Dominic Bartel served well in this capacity.

Other Benedictine abbeys faced close scrutiny because of their German origins and oftentimes predominantly German-speaking culture and customs. At Conception Abbey in Missouri local citizens had reported to the Secret Service that eyewitnesses had seen trucks backing up to the Abbey where weapons were being stored for future use against the United States. Government officials investigated the reports and found nothing. Abbot Athanasius feared similar measures at St. Meinrad. However, Father Columban assured the Abbot that American public officials were most considerate and should be dealt with openly on all problems.

**Source:** Frank James Feeney, "*World War I German-American Sentiments at Saint Meinrad Abbey, Indiana.*" M.A. thesis, Dept. of Religious Studies, Indiana Univ. (1970), 26-29.

## 5.10 The Will of Christ and the Dishonorable Discharge of Private John Smeltzer

John Christian Wenger

The Mennonites suffered in some cases because of local hatred against those who were regarded as pro-German, or disloyal to the U.S. As a matter of fact, the Mennonites of America, both of Swiss and Dutch backgrounds, have the highest regard for and appreciation of their nation and their government. But because of their understanding of the will of Christ for His disciples, they find themselves unable to serve in the military. A note in a local newspaper reported, for example:

"Because Rev. Andrew Hostetter [Hostetler], Pastor of the Mennonite Church at Middlebury, had refused on religious grounds to purchase Liberty Bonds, the Chicago Cream Station at Middlebury, managed by Hostetter's son, is today adorned with signs and yellow paint, reading: 'We love the Kaiser,' 'We are hoarding wheat and flour,' 'I am a slacker.'

"A gang of Middlebury people, incensed by Hostetter's refusal to aid the Liberty Loan, are responsible for the painting.

The son has been drafted and underwent his physical examination..."

In some cases extreme pressure (even threats) was used against conscientious objectors in an attempt to force them to buy Liberty Bonds.

Those who went to camp were in some cases treated with relative kindness, while in other cases fairly extreme measures were employed in an attempt to coerce the young men into accepting the uniform and military service.

The case of John Smeltzer is one of medium severity. John, the son of Deacon Samuel and Salome (Burkey) Smeltzer, was born July 2, 1893, in St. Joseph Co. He united with the Mennonite Church in his youth, at the age of 15 or 16. He was baptized and received in the Holdeman congregation. On July 23, 1918 he was inducted into the U.S. Army at South Bend, and taken to Camp Zachary Taylor, Ky. Upon arrival at camp, John refused the uniform, and as a conscientious objector refused to obey military orders. Various measures were then employed by officers, guards, and private soldiers in an attempt to break the will of John, "soldier" No. 15,142, and induce him to become a real soldier. A guard, e.g., ordered John to run. The guard ran behind him, intending to wear him out, but it so happened that John had greater endurance than did the guard, and after severely panting for a time, the guard finally said: "Let's walk." On another occasion many heavy army blankets were piled upon John after he was put to bed in his clothing, and he sweated until the color of his outer garment stained his underwear.

A certain guard gave John a verbal dressing down and became so angry that he wept. He declared that if he ever got a chance he would take John out, shoot him, and report that his gun was accidentally discharged.

On one occasion a provost sergeant accompanied by two soldiers, brought a heavy rope to John and told him to put the noose around his neck. After putting the rope over some sort of beam overhead, he gave it to the two soldiers and told them not to pull until he gave the order. He then attempted to intimidate John. John stood his ground and waited for the provost sergeant to give the order to pull, since he had told the soldiers, "Do not pull until I say so, but when I say pull, then pull!" After the provost sergeant saw that John would not be intimidated, he came up to him and said: "You're a fool. You would have let them do it."

Perhaps the severest treatment which he received was that he was made to stand on tiptoe during which time ropes were attached to his thumbs and fastened to a point in the building higher than himself. John stood on tiptoe as long as possible but finally had to let down his weight, whereupon he hung by his thumbs in great distress. The outcome of all this effort was

that John was given a court-martial, which resulted in his being given dishonorable discharge on yellow paper, which reads as follows:

#### DISHONORABLE DISCHARGE FROM THE ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES

To All Whom it May Concern

This is to certify That **John H. Smeltzer, Private, Salvage Division**, Sub Depot Q.M.C., U.S. Army, is hereby Dishonorably Discharged from the military service of the United States by reason of the sentence of a **General Court-Martial** Order No. 36, Hq. Camp Zachary Taylor, Ky., Oct. 11th, 1918. Said **John H. Smeltzer** was born in Wakarusa, in the State of **Indiana**. When enlisted he was **25 1/12** years and by occupation a **Farmer**. He had **Blue** eyes, **Brown** hair, **Light** complexion, and was **Five feet Ten** [two] inches in height.

Given under my hand at **Camp Zachary Taylor, Ky.**, this **5<sup>th</sup>** day of **November**, One thousand nine hundred and **eighteen**.

[S:] S.J. Cauger, Major Q.M.C.

Sub Depot Quartermaster

Commanding

It should be noted that all of John's maltreatment ceased the moment he was transferred to Ft. Leavenworth. He was no longer a soldier, and was, of course, a model prisoner. He was detailed to dairy work and milked cows four times daily.

According to *The Mennonite Encyclopedia*, 138 Mennonites were court-martialed during WW II. "Prison sentences ranged all the way from one year or less to life... Sentences from 5 to 30 years were very common. None of these severe sentences were fully served" (III, 902).

**Source:** John Christian Wenger, *The Mennonites in Indiana and Michigan*. Scottdale, PA: Herald (1961), 38-41 [abr.]--J.S. Hartzler's *Mennonites in the World War* (1922) reports more comprehensively on the issue.

### **5.11 The Rev. Edmund Kayser of Gary, Indiana: The First Victim of the Anti-German War Hysteria (1915)**

Don Heinrich Tolzmann

On April 5, 1918, Robert Paul Prager was lynched at Fort Collinsville, Ill. as a result of the nationwide Anti-German Hysteria of the First World War. This lynching was the most widely reported case of a German-American casualty, but Prager was not the first victim. Indeed, the first case appears to have taken place in 1915 at Gary.

In 1916 Frederick Franklin Schrader reported in his *German American Handbook* that "Since the outbreak of the European war, in August 1914, Americans of German descent and birth have had to bear calumny and persecution. With a press which from the outbreak of hostilities has endeavored to precipitate the U.S. into the great conflict as an ally of England, France, Russia, and Japan, it has been impossible to obtain a fair hearing for the other side with which so many of us are connected by direct ties of blood. This inimical point of view has been instilled into the minds of thousands of our neighbors and has led to attempts at the suppression of the constitutional right of petition, of free speech and a free press." Most

importantly, Schrader concludes that this suppression" culminated in reaching "the stage of assassination in at least one case--that of Rev. Edmund Kayser, pastor of St. James's Evangelical Lutheran Church at Gary, Ind., Aug. 24, 1915."

Schrader's reference to the assassination of the Rev. Kayser related to a case that was widely reported nationally in *The New York Times*. However, it was a case that would never be solved, and one that would be forgotten as a result of the turbulent times.

On Aug. 26, 1915, *The New York Times* reported that Kayser had been slain and that the local authorities considered this due to a war plot. "It was reported that the murder was the work not of an individual, but of a gang, and the plot carefully worked out... The pastor's pro-German utterances led to his destruction." Moreover, the report indicates that telegrams and correspondence "seized following the murder are said to link the Rev. Mr. Kayser very closely with the German propaganda in this country. Government Secret Service men are investigating rumors that the pastor was plotting to tamper with or destroy mills making war munitions."

On Aug. 27, 1915, the following article was reported:

Indiana Pastor Slain  
After Many Threats  
Police Discard Theory that Murder Resulted from his Pro-German Utterances

Special to *The New York Times*

Chicago. Aug. 25--The Rev. Edmund A.H. Kayser, pastor of the St. James's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tolleston, Ind., who had recently become notorious in that section because of his pro-German utterances and bitter attacks on the United States and President Wilson, was found dead in a lot near his home last night. There were two bullet wounds in his body, and his hands and feet were tied with a cord.

The pastor had been threatened with death in several anonymous letters recently, and about a month ago applied to the Chief of Police for a permit to carry a revolver. This was denied him. The threats so agitated the pastor that he decided to send his family to the home of Mrs. Kayser's mother in Michigan.

Federal and state authorities who were endeavoring to establish a motive for the murder, received an intimation that the Rev. Kayser was "lynched" private reasons by members of his own congregation, who believed that the pastor's moral conduct was not what it ought to be. A woman's footprints were among those discovered outside the window of the pastor's home. The pastor had been warned to cease his attentions to a married woman in Gary.

Kayser was 42 years old, a native of Wurttemberg and a graduate of Strassburg University. He held an inexorable dominance over his congregation that led into their homes and commercial affairs.

When the war broke out Kayser became intensely active. He wrote articles for German and English-language newspapers. When the *Lusitania* was sunk he upheld Germany's rights and attacked President Wilson's activities and sentiments.

A resolution of the Saxon Verein of the congregation, pledging neutrality, he tore up and threw into the faces of the parishioners who had framed it. Kayser was shot in the chest as he sat in his library, the shot coming from outside. When he staggered to the doorway to grapple with his assailants, he again was shot, this time the bullet entering the jugular vein and ultimately causing his death. Kayser was dragged 40 feet away from the light of the

windows and tied with window cords about the wrists and ankles. He had' been dead for more than an hour when his body was discovered by a passer-by.

Members of Kayser's congregation who spoke to him earlier in the day told the police that he told them smilingly that an anonymous telephone call had apprised him that he would be "lynched," but that he had heard so much of this sort of talk that it had ceased to alarm him.

"I have four enemies," he had told them, "and they are the only ones I am afraid of. And if I have trouble with them, it will be because of my private affairs. I am not afraid of anything happening because of my political policies."

The Rev. Mr. Kayser left a widow and three children.

Then on Sept. 1, 1915, it was reported, the authorities now felt that the murder of the pastor was due to a "war plot," as had been assumed first on Aug. 26. It indicated that several individuals were being investigated, and that arrests were expected. Again, the murder was seen as the work of a gang, and the plot was tied to the pastor's pro-German remarks. It also reaffirmed that telegrams and correspondence had been found which linked him "very close with the pro-German propaganda in this country," and that the Secret Service was still investigating rumors of the pastor "plotting to tamper with or destroy mills making war munitions." There are no further reports on the murder of Rev. Kyser, and the case was obviously dropped from further consideration.

The fact that a minister was assassinated in his own home and the blatant attempts to justify the crime are reflective of the gravity of the Anti-German hysteria. The final report's attempt to link the pastor with intrigues and plots was a common element of the anti-Germanism. Unfounded charges of this kind appeared over and over in the country's press. They proved to be patently false.

**Source:** D.H. Tolzmann's 1994 manuscript [abr.]. He also edited *German-Americans in the World Wars: A Documentary History*. (Muenchen: K.G. Saur, 1995). In it, his colleague at the Univ. of Cincinnati, Franziska Ott, presents "The Anti-German Hysteria: The Case of Robert Paul Prager. Selected Documents," 237-365.

## **6. "A VERY PRIVATE HERO": HENRY ALOIS STROBEL OF ST. MEINRAD** Mary Rose Strobel Birchler

This is the story of the most highly decorated Hoosier private in WW I. His daughter who authored articles about Strobel renders this story in the first person, for much of it was written by him in his personal journal.

### *In No Man's Land*

One cold, rainy night, I was lying on a listening-outpost in No Man's Land, in the poppy-covered fields of Flanders near the city of Ypres, Western Belgium. It was very dark--minutes seemed like months. Thousands of thoughts seemed to run through my mind as I lay there, chills running up and down all over me. I wondered what I would do if a German jumped in front of or captured me. I was scared.

Mice and rats were running through the grass; making noises, and black objects seemed to be running back and forth in front of me. It wasn't my imagination; there was something in front of me. I raised and aimed my rifle and I yelled, "Halt! Who's there?" An answer came, "I'm American, are you?" I came closer, "What are you carrying?" I asked. "Some of our boys were shot and we had a hell of a bad time, but I've got a German machine gun," he replied. This was the first German machine gun captured by the 30th Division, and by a man from my company.

We took over the lines from the 33rd British Division. Our policy was one of aggression. We were prepared for counterattack and were to hold the line until every man was down. The night of Aug. 26 a cloud of 2,520 cylinders of phosgene and chlorine gas was released on us leaving many in poor condition. This was termed mustard gas as it has a slight smell of mustard. It was carried in shells which scatter liquid on the ground. It burned nasal passages, mucous membranes and skin, whether exposed or not. It caused blindness and other types of incapacitations for a number of weeks. Of course, it killed thousands. Gasping the poison-filled air, I knew I had been burned.

### *Dirty Bucket Camp*

Sept. 1 the chief objective was Lankhof Farm, strongly fortified. It was taken. Voormezele was also taken and a new line established. This was South and a little East of Ypres.

Sept. 4 and 5 we were relieved by the 105th and part of the 104th British Brigades. We marched to Dirty Bucket Camp and Kill Bug Station. There we bathed and were deloused. Flanders mud was left behind.

We moved on to the 3rd British Army near Arras. It was a distinction to have been a part of the first American Division in Belgium.

Sept. 6 we marched to Proven and then were moved by train to Wavrans. We marched again, this time to the St. Pol area.

Sept. 23 we transferred to the 4<sup>th</sup> British Army in Northern France. Lorry after lorry rolled into place loaded with troops. We were joined by Australians. The Cantigny battle had great moral effect on the U.S. It showed the Doughboy was well trained and reliable under fire.

In front of us lay the hitherto impregnable positions of the Great Hindenburg Line. Many attacks by the British had been fruitless. Now the task was given the 30th Old Hickory Division of Indiana, along with the 27th of New York. We were to fight the only decisive battle of the war.

This corps formed the main wedge in the attack against the German lines which included the Bellicourt Tunnel of the Cambrai-St. Quentin Canal. Others were to follow our corps.

Every man wondered that night if the morrow spelled "safety", "blighty" (injury), or "gone west" (death), for him.

### *Prepared for death*

Sept. 26, 1918, every man in the regiment received notice that if he had money or valuables that he desired to send home he had the last opportunity to do so. Also, any other

business matters were to be attended to at this time. In other words, we were being prepared for death. It was cold and we were suffering greatly from exposure. We had no overcoats or blankets--only our uniforms. Rest and sleep were impossible. We looked for cover but there was not even a hole to crawl into. I finally found a piece of a German great-coat and covered myself as best I could. It smelled badly. Dead Germans were everywhere. Everything smelled badly.

Rain had frozen on the grass and weeds and they crackled under foot as we headed for the tape or "jumping-off place" at 3 a.m.

### *The Hindenburg Line*

The Hindenburg System consisted of the following: First--Three rows of heavy barbed wire; thickly woven, as to resemble a mass of briars intermingled; each row about 40 ft. deep.

Second--Three rows of Hindenburg trenches which took four years to build.

Third--The backbone of the entire system--Bellicourt of the St. Quentin Canal Tunnel. This canal passed for a distance of 6,500 yards underground, from Le Catelet on the North to Recquival on the South. It had been built by Napoleon and in some places was 193 ft. underground. Germans lived on canal barges, lit the canal with electric lights, and fitted it with a dressing station for their wounded soldiers. Thousands and thousands could be accommodated, and they could rest while being secure from shell fire. The end of the tunnel was closed by ferro-concrete walls with openings for machine guns.

To the trench system and the town of Bellicourt, concrete tunnels ran overhead through which troops could move to reinforce the frontline: Catelet-Nauroy, a support system and the village of Nauroy had been prepared for defense. Machine guns covered the entire area. Germans believed this position to be impregnable.

Sept. 29 at 4:30 a.m., all troops were reported on the "jumping-off place." At 5:50 a.m., the barrage from 14 brigades of artillery began. Then came the barrage of three machine gun battalions. Smoke and fog settled over the area and it was impossible to see more than six yards away. Officers lost control over their troops. The success of the attack was on the individual and we moved on.

At 7:25 a.m., the main Hindenburg system had been crossed with a constant flow of prisoners. By 11:30 a.m., Nauroy was occupied. At 11:45 a.m., Bellicourt was completely cleaned up.

Some of our men were wounded or killed as some of our shells fell short of target. We were still plagued by smoke and fog and had trouble seeing at all. Men fell and were lying all around us. We advanced and came upon dead Germans and started capturing the live ones. Our men were still getting lost and mixing with other units. Empty machine gun shells could have been picked up by the bushes.

The 30th Division and esp. the 120th Infantry were the first units on the entire front to break through the Hindenburg line. We were attached to the British but were still American. Captured German officers said, "Alles ist verloren"--All is lost. I have only the highest praise for the Australian soldiers who supported us. Prisoners numbering 1,141 were taken in this attack.

We were called Storm or Shock Troops. "Root Hog or Die." During the great attack, I found an air hole (ventilator) and dropped smoke bombs into the opening and proceeded to the other side of the embankment. Some of the men came up to the entrance in time to see

the Germans filing out. The Division captured 3,848 Germans. The spoils captured were enormous, but left for salvage, uncounted.

The buddies who helped me were Capt. John B. May Jr., Alvin O. Bridges, John W. Berryhill, James Lake, William Clark, George Riggle and Herman Seibel. There were 15 Germans in this group! and it was here that my first German interpretation work started. I came from a small German community, St. Meinrad, Ind., the son of Clemens and Elizabeth von Lahr Strobel, and we spoke High German at home. Giving orders in German was a frightening but easy task for me. The Germans did not know who I was. Many apparently thought I was their commanding officer. The smoke and fog were so thick you could hardly see anyone. I commanded and they obeyed. My own men didn't know what I was saying, as none of them could speak German. Some of the captured soldiers were so scared they simply could not talk; others willingly complied with orders and answered my questions. We disarmed each man as they came out and by the end of this long one-day battle had in our command 242 German prisoners.

### *No pleasant sight*

I was the first American soldier to enter the St. Quentin Canal Tunnel after this horrendous battle. This was no sightseeing trip. There was a plant above the main tunnel for rendering bodies. Dead soldiers were rendered to make glycerin used in ammunition and explosives. I cannot describe what I saw.

After the capture I was in charge of a number of wounded Germans. We kept one able-bodied German soldier as orderly for each dozen or so men. Guards with bayonets stood ready as I conveyed my orders in German. I conversed with a very upset German officer we captured at the tunnel. He begged to be taken back in the tunnel for his surgical instruments. Instead, we took him to one of our first aid stations and he was a great help in dressing the wounds. Later, word got to me that he proved to be a fine surgeon.

I never liked the idea of killing. I had been asked to be a sniper many times as I was an excellent marksman. However, I always begged off, even when I had some of my clothing shot off and some of my equipment damaged. It was great to know that one of the enemy we captured was a good surgeon and apparently a fine man. Perhaps he happened to be on the "wrong side."

Oct. 1 we were withdrawn and marched to the Tincourt area. Oct. 2 we continued to Belloy west of Perronne. This area had been fought over for four years, changing hands many times and was totally destroyed except for a few signs marking sites or road directions.

Oct. 4 and 5 we moved back to the lines, attacking again Oct. 8 and 9 the village of Premond, Brancourt, Becquigny, LeHavre, Meneresse and Boise de Busigny. All taken.

On Oct. 10, we advanced into severe battle at Vaux Andigny. This too would be taken. Food and water were extremely scarce. We had gone without either for a couple of days. The ration detail could not keep up with us and at times firing was too heavy for them to advance. We were weak and hungry.

Oct. 10 near Vaux Andigny. I was wounded and carried off the field. It wasn't quite that simple as these two incidents took an entire day which seemed an eternity.

We were advancing under fire from machine guns, rifle and other artillery. Our own defenses were withering at this time and we were near exhaustion. We were fighting out in the open. No trenches anywhere. Indian warfare, it is called. Hand to hand combat. Something hit me! My left arm dropped. I yelled, "My arm's been shot off." It hadn't been, but it felt like it. It lay there beside me with blood running all over the ground. The lower arm didn't seem to be

connected to the upper arm except by skin. Later I learned that my arm was almost severed at the elbow. I don't know why I didn't lose consciousness. I was alone except the dead around me. Fear rose in my mind. Should I stay here or try to get help? I started back, crawling a short distance at a time and cradling my arm. I found a discarded soldier's pack and upon investigation, found a can of jam and some bread. I rolled over and reached a bayonet and jabbed it into the can. Here, with jam on moldy bread, I had the best meal in a long time.

A short time later some German soldiers came through and I played dead. My heart was pounding so hard I thought they would hear it. They kicked me, mumbled something, and went on. As I moved on, I found one of my buddies lying severely wounded on the ground. As I crawled by, he begged me for a drink of water. I had none, nor did I know where I might find any. I could not even guess how I might help my friend. I never heard from him again. Perhaps he had "gone west." For me, this day ended over 60 days of front-line duty. All active sectors, none quiet.

I had been wounded in the morning and about dusk the stretcher bearers found me. One of them turned out to be one of the finest men I ever knew. I asked him to try to locate my things, take what he would like for souvenirs, and send me the rest. I never expected to hear from him again. While I was hospitalized in Rouen, France, my family in southern Indiana received a package from him with all my things intact.

Later I was transferred to Bath War Hospital, Bath, England, where my arm was repaired with metal plate. Here an archaic form of physical therapy began. I have never forgotten the large red-haired nurse who came in regularly to rebreak my arm so I would have some range of motion. I hated and respected her at the same time. She was a stern woman but I've been very thankful to her. While in Bath, the war ended.

Next, a hospital in Paignton, England. From there, back to the states and three more hospitals.



Private Henry Alois Strobel; Company D; 120th Infantry; 30th Division  
Old Hickory of Indiana

I was discharged April 10, 1919, after six months of hospitals. A report came through a short time later that fewer than 20 of my company of 250 were alive or unwounded at this time.

### *My return to my beginning*

I was more than pleased upon my discharge from the Army to return to where life began for me--to the rolling hills of Indiana. It was good to catch up on all the news I had so long missed out on. Some mail caught up with me long after the war was over.

On Nov. 11, 1921, Armistice Day, I represented the state of Indiana at Arlington Cemetery at the burial of the Unknown Soldier. I was greatly moved and impressed for many reasons at this service. I felt that this could have been me.

Feb. 26, 1924, I married my sweetheart, Catherine M. Eberle of Tell City. We first lived in West Lafayette where we both attended Purdue. Later we moved to Indianapolis, where our first child, a daughter Frances, was born. We soon settled in one of the most beautiful areas I ever remember seeing; the small Swiss-German town of Tell City, along the Ohio River.



### Distinguished Service Cross

The Distinguished Service Cross is the United States Army's second highest military decoration for soldiers who display extraordinary heroism in combat with an armed enemy force. Wikipedia

Awarded for: Extraordinary heroism in combat

First awarded: 2 January 1918

**Source:** Mary Rose Strobel Birchler, in *Schweizer Festzeitung*, special issue of *Tell City Newspaper* for the town's "Swiss Festival," Aug. 10, 1983, 29ff

## **7. FLYING ACE LT. PAUL FRANK BAER SHOT DOWN**

James Norman Hall and Charles Bernard Nordhoff

When Baer was taken prisoner in the spring of 1918, our Aviation lost a man who would surely have run up a long string of victories. He has all the qualities that make an Ace: the coolness, the skill, the endurance, and the courage that never counts cost. Always on the offensive, Baer cruised far within the enemy lines in search of the enemy, and never hesitated to attack against heavy odds or under unfavorable circumstances. During the few months he was at the front, he was officially credited with eight victories, winning for himself the reputation of a fighting-pilot of the very first order. His keenness and endurance are shown by the fact that in one day he has been known to make six patrols over the lines--a truly remarkable feat, as every aviator knows. Baer's resistance to fatigue is undoubtedly due to his simple habits. He took excellent care of his health and kept himself in all-round training like an athlete. He is, however, a thoroughly companionable fellow, always ready for a good time, frank and unaffected in manner, and much loved by his comrades.

In May, 1918, while a member of the 103d Pursuit Squadron, Baer met with a mishap which put him out of the war. On the 22d, Lieutenants Giroux, Turnure, Wilcox, and Dugan, led by Baer, set out on patrol. Baer took them across the lines about 16 km southwest

of Armentieres. They were flying at 5000 meters, when below them and some distance in the German lines, they saw five German single-seaters. As the Americans dove to attack, they saw three other German machines above them. Baer, with Giroux, close behind him, plunged headlong on one of the lower machines; next moment, the other four enemies dove on the two attackers. The three Germans of the big patrol piqued at once into the melee, and a fast and bitter combat ensued, during which Giroux was brought down and killed, and Baer had his controls cut by a bullet, after bringing down a German in flames. The other three Americans, heavily outnumbered and caught in a tight place, disengaged themselves with difficulty and reported on landing at the Squadron that, when last seen, Baer was descending normally and was probably a prisoner.

The fact is that with his controls cut and two Albatross on his tail, shooting at him all the way down, Baer fell from 4000 meters and had a frightful crash, from which he escaped only by a miracle.

Though he seldom speaks of it, Baer's experience as a prisoner in Germany was of exceptional interest. He was fairly well treated at the headquarters of the squadron which brought him down, but while being taken to the rear to receive treatment for his knee (which had been broken in the crash), he was noticed by a German infantry officer of very forbidding aspect. Frowning heavily, he approached the wounded American and, pointing to the ribbon of his *Croix de Guerre* [French medal], asked the meaning of the palm attached to it. Baer shook his head, not understanding at first, but another German standing nearby said, "Each one of those Palms represent a *Deutscher/lieger* shot down." At this announcement the German forgetting all tenets of military courtesy, reached over and pulled the decoration from Baer's breast with such violence that the pin ripped a hole in his tunic.

On another occasion, still badly crippled by his wounded knee, Baer showed his pluck by attempting to escape, far up in northern Germany. After several days of exposure and fatigue, he was captured by a body of the lowest type of German soldiers, and taken, in company of two escaped British officers, into a cellar where the soldiers were carousing with a number of women. In this place Baer, crippled and half dead with fatigue, was singled out for the heavy gibes and insults of his captors, and at last, unable to resist, was so severely beaten and mauled that he considers himself lucky to have escaped with his life.

Now that the war is over and he is safely in America once more, Baer should feel well satisfied with the part he has played in the struggle, for few members of the Lafayette Flying Corps have had more thrills or have made a finer record at the Front.



Distinguished Service Cross with oak-leaf cluster

On May 21, 1918, he destroyed his eighth enemy plane. The Paul Baer Municipal Airport, Fort Wayne, is named in his honor.  
Indiana Book of Merit

**Source:** *The Lafayette Flying Corps* (1920), 1, 102-105.

## 8. LT. JIM FRENZEL AND THE LAST BOMBING MISSION IN WW I

Oscar Frenzel III

On that November day in 1918, Lt. Jim Frenzel of the US Air Service in France took off from a primitive airfield with his plane loaded to the hilt with bombs. His mission was to bomb German targets he might spot either in France or in Germany.

While my Uncle Jim had been airborne for quite some time, he got a Morse code message ordering him to return immediately and without dropping any bombs. It was the 11th of November and Armistice had just been declared. Any bomb could have endangered this step toward peace.

The order and its political implications were quite clear to Lt. Frenzel. He had to return with his deadly cargo. In those days, however, no plane had ever landed with its load of bombs. An explosion was more than likely.

Once back over the airfield, he circled it a couple of times to decide the best approach for his almost suicidal landing mission. Those who watched him coming in saw the most perfect touch down ever. When the plane came to a halt he fainted. Death had rejected him--but ever since, Uncle Jim was never quite the same.

The story traveled home and made headline news in Indianapolis. His father, J.P. Frenzel, the head of the powerful and family-owned Merchants National Bank--which, on account of having been German-American, had suffered "withdrawal symptoms,"--was friends with the part-owner of the News, the former U.S. Vice President Charles W. Fairbanks. No sooner had the paper published the heroic story when the cash withdrawals not only ended but new deposits put more money in the bank than ever before.

**Source:** Interview with the late Oscar Frenzel III, at the Athenaeum in Indianapolis

## 9. HOW ADOLPH BRETZ EXPERIENCED ARMISTICE DAY IN FRANCE

Hugo C. Songer

On November 11, 1918, the war ended. My mother's brother, Adolph Bretz, wrote to his parents Louis P. and Katherine (Partenheimer) Bretz, of that day:

France, November 13, 1918

Dear Folks:

The wish and prayer have been answered and we should all thank our dear Lord that the war is over; and further we should feel especially grateful that He carried us through so lucky. The question now is, "When will we see the good old United States of America again?" It certainly was a great sensation on the eleventh minute of the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, the peace started. It ceased so remarkably. On that very minute everything was quiet. Just before this the mighty guns had been raging unceasingly, day and night. Now, all at once perfect silence. An airplane came flying between the two contending lines and all activities apparently died away. Like the sound of a gong, it certainly sounded somewhat curious. Being used to it all this time, the big guns firing and roaring and shells bursting so close to us, we could see where they were landing, tearing big holes in the ground and damaging and destroying everything they hit; and oh, that terrible noise! Now everything is quiet, so quiet that you can hear a pin drop, so to speak.

That night the German soldiers were shooting up their colored lights, which surely looked fine. Our boys were among them in their lines, talking and having a good time with them. The Germans, in turn, came to our lines and did the same. They certainly seemed to be pleased that the fighting was over--the same as we were. I would have thought that they would be sullen and indifferent, but they were not. In less than ten minutes after the fighting ceased, they threw away their guns and were ready to shake hands with our boys, and, at the same time admit that they had been defeated by the Yanks. Hurray! for the Yanks.

Your Son  
Adolph

Uncle Adolph told me that he had befriended a German farmer living near their trenches. After the war ended, he paid him one more visit. When he arrived, the farmer's two sons had returned home from the German Army. The old man went outside and dug around in a brush pile and came out with a jug of apple brandy. They sat around the kitchen table, drank the jug of brandy, and celebrated the end of the war.

**Source:** Hugo C. Songer, *The History of Huntingburg* (1987), 174-175.--"Huntingburg alone had 212 men in uniform."

## **10. THE HAMMER EFFECT--WORLD WAR I, PROHIBITION, AND THE GREAT DEPRESSION**

Giles R. Hoyt

When in 1898 Hoosier Germans in Indianapolis celebrated the opening of the completed Das Deutsche Haus and declared it a symbol of their achievements, no one would have thought that only 20 years later the German community would feel compelled to change the building's name to "Athenaeum", or that in 1919 there would be a law banning the teaching of German, the language of the "Hun," from all public schools in Indiana.

The U.S. allied itself with England in the European war for various reasons: sincere solidarity with England, esp. on the part of East Coast Americans; profiteering from the sale of war materials to the British; and bad German and very clever British foreign relations with the U.S.

The war was to be the war to save democracy and, ironically, the war to end all wars. The fact that England had been the traditional enemy of American democracy and had a rigid class system that was certainly less than democratic seemed to make no difference. Indeed, the U.S. had waged war twice to obtain and maintain its freedom from England. But American involvement in WW I was less about European politics than American international aspirations and nationalist assertiveness--externally and internally. For better or worse, it was a time of "norming," of having all citizens commit to a certain American way of life, including language, political identity, and, as much as possible, customs.

The German-American National Alliance had missed the point in its plea to Washington to remain neutral in an essentially European war being waged by the aristocracies of Europe, which were cruelly sacrificing their youth in a vicious stalemate. The object of America's involvement seemed to be to establish the U.S. as a nation among nations with its

own cohesive identity. This was enforced with remarkable vigor and the abrogation of the civil rights of all "foreigners," particularly German-Americans. The American Protective League was formed with 200,000 untrained spies to keep an eye out for subversion. Hysteria gripped the land: in St. Louis on the morning of 5 April 1918 German-born Robert P. Prager was seized by a mob of 200 and hanged as a lesson in patriotism; Boy Scouts burned German newspapers on the streets of Columbus, OH; the National Guard burned German-language books in Wisconsin; and musical organizations purged German composers, including Schubert and Schumann, from their repertoire. The Council of National Defense, created by Congress in 1916, established councils in each state.

The German language was forbidden in schools, in churches, and over the telephone by state councils of defense. In some places, any language except English was forbidden for public use. In Indiana the Indiana State Teachers' Association even advocated the elimination of all foreign languages from the elementary schools, and after the passage of the McCray Bill in 1919, it was illegal to teach German in any school, public or private. The ban was not lifted until 1923.

The ultimate effect of the virulent anti-Germanism of the period 1917-22 is not well researched. The German family names of those who died in battle during World War I and are listed in the Indiana War Memorial in Indianapolis indicate that many young men fought more or less willingly. German-Americans of any generation were and always had been Americans first. This included the commander of the American Expeditionary Force in World War I, Gen. John J. Pershing (originally Pfoerschin). Ironically, Bismarck Street in Indianapolis was renamed Pershing during the war.

In Fort Wayne, as in most Indiana cities, the war brought often subtle but long-standing tensions to the surface. This was the time "for the Anglos to gain the upper hand in the long-term cultural clashes with the German ethnics" (Clifford Scott). German cultural traits and activities were driven from any preeminence in the public arena.

The effects on individuals, families, and communities were considerable. Richmond's excellent German language program in its schools was dropped. The Richmond *Kriegsverein* of 1871, a veterans' group, disbanded for its own personal safety when threats made it advisable. After the 1917 law declaring Germans "enemy aliens" was passed, many German-Americans throughout the state discovered that their parents had failed to complete papers on them. Prominent Richmond citizen John Feltman was declared an enemy alien after arriving in this country with his parents at age two. He had to apply for naturalization at age 75. Families changed names, burned records, and pretended to be other than German in origin. Donald M. Royer notes in Richmond that "as late as 1988 one detects a sense of timidity among some German-Americans about their ethnic identity. They would rather not 'come out' as it were... Anti-German prejudices were much more subdued in Richmond during WW II, but the legacy of WW I still seems to linger in the self-feelings of some residents of German ancestry. WW I did the most toward loss of community identity, loss of language, and loss of neighborhood.

So, it was also in that most German of Hoosier counties, Dubois Co. The nativist English-language press outside Dubois Co.'s German areas mounted attacks against the German-Americans with the demand they speak English and disband their German clubs. This led to conflict--a majority felt times were changing and that alignments with Germany should be dropped. "Of the few who would talk about this period in Dubois Co. history, the memories are of bitterness at losing their language and their connection with their past" (J.N. Niehaus). After the war life went on as before, but without the German language in

public places and in the schools, without the old German names for organizations, and with a sense of isolation bordering on alienation and internal discontent.

On a personal level, Hoosier German-American author Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., perhaps describes best the effect of anti-Germanism:

As I have said in other books, the anti-Germanism in this country during the First World War so shamed and dismayed my parents that they resolved to raise me without acquainting me with the language or the literature or the music or the oral family histories which my ancestors had loved. They volunteered to make me ignorant and rootless as proof of their patriotism. This was done with surprising meekness by many, many German-American families in Indianapolis, it seems to me. Uncle John [Rauch--prominent Indianapolis lawyer] almost seems to boast of this dismantling and quiet burial of a culture, a culture which surely would have been of use to me today. (*Palm Sunday*)

In addition to the anti-German and generally anti-foreign nativism of WW I came a devastating blow to the remnants of German-American social life--prohibition. It also affected other ethnic groups--like the Irish with their whiskey and the Italians with their wine. Prohibition involved more than forbidding the production, sale, and imbibing of alcoholic beverages--it was an attack on the personal freedoms of a large number of people. Beer was and is a symbol of *Gemutlichkeit*, of conviviality for German Americans. First, American mainstream society forced them to stop using their language, to change the names of their societies, and break contact with the land of their origin, and then another core element of their way of life was also outlawed. They were made to feel more and more like second-class citizens.

The third blow to German-Americans hit all groups equally: the Great Depression beginning in 1929. Frugality and industriousness, acclaimed German-American virtues, were not enough to save them from the economic ravages of deflation and unemployment. The depression called into question the economic structures that had been the basis of American prosperity. Further, it had a leveling effect on all groups and forced them to accommodate each other's needs for mutual survival.

**Source:** Prof. Hoyt's article is from his chapter on the "Germans" (146-181), in *Peopling Indiana: The Ethnic Experience*, ed. by Robert M. Taylor, Jr. and Connie A. McBirney, with contributions of 33 scholars on the various ethnicities in the State. IHS (1996).

## 11. WAR'S AFTERMATH

Theodore Stempfel, Sr. (1862-1935)

The time is out of joint. The dreadful war not only has maimed and destroyed human life and dissipated property, it has also uprooted the social and economic order. For years to come it has impaired the happiness of the human race, the joy of living, and has carried grief and heartache to every corner of the globe. It has poisoned the mind and hardened the soul of mankind. It has cast suspicion between neighbors, disrupted friendships of long standing, and even torn asunder family ties. It has anew demonstrated man's inhumanity to man and made us stand aghast at the intensity of hatred slumbering in the human breast. It has brought forth gallant heroes and revealed craven cowards. It has given men of dubious character the opportunity of covering their tarnished past under

the glittering cloak of noisy patriotism. It has afforded a welcome chance to the anonymous letter writer, who did not dare to fight with open visor.

The war has treated men of mature judgment and intellect as children, by removing from the shelves of public libraries, as unfit reading matter, books like Bertrand Russell's *Justice in Wartime*. It has forced men of letters--like Romain Rolland, Hermann Hesse and others into exile in Switzerland. It has created untold wealth and abject poverty. It has awakened the most noble and sublime, as well as the most base and brutal instincts in man. It has--thank God--forever swept away kings and emperors "by the grace of God," and erected governments that Proudhon dreamed of 80 years ago. It has restricted civic freedom, encroached upon personal liberty, and concentrated in the hands of a few powerful weapons of government.

In the crisis of war, such infringements may seem necessary. To be unhampered at the front, a warring nation must not temporize with means to enforce unity of action at home. The heat of passion must be kept aflame, even at the expense of truth. The government must be stern, uncompromising and relentless, without patience for the wavering and half-hearted. Under the iron heel of Mars, all those are crushed who do not keep pace with his impetuous energy and determination. What does it matter if mistakes are made, if money is expended with extravagance, if shrewd schemers fill their pockets at home, if human life is needlessly sacrificed in battle? There is no time to think, no time to pause, the will to win is ever utmost, and other trifles must wait until some future time.

But war must come to an end, and then its aftermath brings new and unforeseen problems. Disenchantment follows exaltation. The heat of passion is chilled by the coolness of reason. There is a towering of enormous figures as the cost is being counted. The empty treasury of the state must be replenished by increased taxation. Industry converted to the purposes of war must readjust itself to the demands of peace. Soldiers returning to civil life must find employment, the disabled must be provided for.

## PROBLEM OF RECONSTRUCTION

Victor and vanquished alike are confronted with the serious problem of reconstruction. The cost of life's necessities rises by leaps and bounds. The purchase power of money declines in proportion, and the profiteer thrives and multiplies in the fertile soil. Labor, in self-protection, conscious of its power, extorts higher wages, adding new complications to the economic dilemma. People become restless, irritable, dissatisfied and disunited. The spirit of political bias and partisanship rises in their midst. Such have been, more or less, the logical consequences of war in modern times.

The World War, having reached larger dimensions than the combined wars of centuries, has intensified in the same proportion the task of rebuilding the economic structure of society. The world has lost its equilibrium...

## NEED FOR FAR-SEEING LEADERSHIP

It will require far-seeing leadership and courageous action to restore normal economic and mental conditions after the convulsions of the war...

Compared with the dismal misery and black despair prevailing in Central and Balkanized Europe, compared with all the firebrands smoldering in the soil of Europe--the gravity of our own problems seems to dwindle.

Before pandemonium broke loose in Europe, we had been pursuing a care-free existence, quite happily blended with agitated experiments in protective tariffs--tariffs for revenue only—

and free trade, in gold standard, bimetallism and free silver, in trust building and trust busting, in wet and dry excitements, in unrestricted and restricted immigration; and other issues that may have pleased the fancy of political party leaders. Our body politic was robust and elastic enough to withstand such violent reform cures. Any other nation would have collapsed under the unskillful knife of political surgeons.

But the war has changed our character as a nation profoundly. We have become meekly accustomed to paternalism. Some of our sacred and inherent rights--among them the freedom of speech and the press-- have undergone undreamed of limitations and restrictions. We have become oversensitive and timid under the espionage law. We have been told, only recently, that the Constitution never meant to protect our personal liberty. On many occasions we have withheld our opinions for fear of being called "pro-German," or "Bolshevistik," or lest we should measure below par in the mathematical calculation of citizenship.

**Source:** Opening passages of Th. Stempfels privately printed lecture at the Indianapolis Literary Club on "Americanization", April 19, 1920 [see also Chapter Becoming American]

## **12. WORLD WAR I AND ITS MANY CASUALTIES**

In late June 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, nephew of Emperor Franz Josef and heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and his wife, were assassinated on a visit to Sarajevo by a Serbian nationalist. This assassination set in motion the events that led to the outbreak of the First World War, one of the bloodiest conflicts in human history and a trauma that would bring down the Austro-Hungarian Empire, ending nearly eight centuries of Habsburg rule and unleashing unrest across the European continent that led to the rise of socialism, communism, fascism, Irish republicanism, and the Indian independence movement, all of which radically changed the political landscape.

The Austro-Hungarian Empire crumbled as a direct result of the First World War (1914–18), as did the empires of Tsar Nicholas II of Russia and Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany. George V, the first cousin of both the Kaiser and the Tsar, successfully retained his crown. In 1917, George became the first monarch of the House of Windsor, which he renamed from the House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha as a result of anti-German public sentiment.

Austria-Hungary, like many in countries around the world, blamed the Serbian government for the attack on the Archduke. An escalation of threats and mobilization orders followed the incident, leading to the outbreak of World War I in mid-August. This pitted Germany, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire (the so-called Central Powers) against Great Britain, France, Russia, Italy and Japan (the Allied Powers). The Allies were joined in 1917 by the United States. The four years of the Great War, as it was then known, saw unprecedented levels of carnage and destruction, thanks to grueling trench warfare and the introduction of modern weaponry such as machine guns, tanks and chemical weapons. By the time World War I ended in the defeat of the Central Powers in November 1918, more than 9 million soldiers had been killed and 21 million more wounded. Civilian casualties in the war numbered close to 10 million. The two nations most affected were Germany and France, each of which sent some 80 percent of their male populations between the ages of 15 and 49 into battle.

On July 5, 1914 Kaiser Wilhelm secretly pledged his support, giving Austria-Hungary a so-called *carte blanche* or “blank check” assurance of Germany’s backing in the case of war. Convinced that Vienna was readying for war, the Serbian government ordered the Serbian army to mobilize, and appealed to Russia for assistance. On July 28, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, and the tenuous peace between Europe’s great powers collapsed. Within a week, Russia, Belgium, France, Great Britain and Serbia had lined up against Austria Hungary and Germany, and World War I had begun.

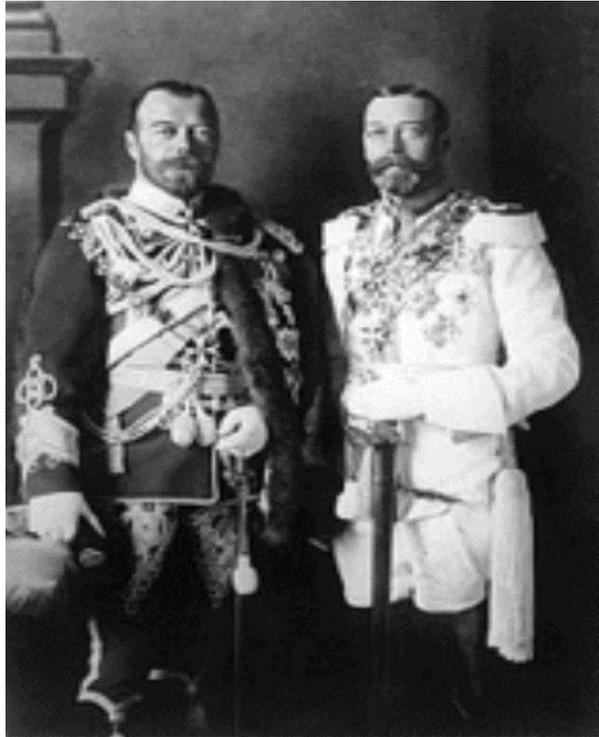
Germany began fighting the war on two fronts, invading France through neutral Belgium in the west and confronting Russia in the east. On the Western Front both sides dug into trenches and began the bloody war of attrition that would characterize the next three years of the war. Combined with the fierce Allied resistance in France, the ability of Russia’s huge war machine to mobilize relatively quickly in the east ensured a longer, more grueling conflict instead of the quick victory Germany had hoped to win.

With the war having effectively settled into a stalemate in Europe, the Allies attempted to score a victory against the Ottoman Empire, which had entered the conflict on the side of the Central Powers in late 1914. British-led forces combated the Turks in Egypt and Mesopotamia, while in northern Italy Austrian and Italian troops faced off in a series of battles along the Isonzo River, located at the border between the two nations. The Imperial Russian Army attempted to invade eastern Prussia during the early days of the war, only to be beaten back by the Germans after some initial success. When the Imperial Russian government was overthrown by the Bolsheviks in October 1917, the new government signed a treaty with the Central Powers, effectively taking it out of the war. It was Germany’s policy of unchecked submarine aggression against shipping interests headed to Great Britain that helped bring the United States into World War I in 1917. Widespread protest over the sinking of the British ocean liner *Lusitania* by a U-boat in May 1915 helped turn the tide of American public opinion steadfastly against Germany. In February 1917 Congress passed a \$250 million arms appropriations bill intended to make the United States ready for war. Germany sunk four more U.S. merchant ships the following month and on April 2, 1917 President Wilson appeared before Congress and called for a declaration of war against Germany.

With Germany able to build up its strength on the Western Front after the armistice with Russia, Allied troops struggled to hold off another German offensive until promised reinforcements from the United States were able to arrive. On July 15, 1918, German troops under Erich von Ludendorff launched what would become the last German offensive of the war, attacking French forces (joined by 85,000 American troops as well as some of the British Expeditionary Force) in the Second Battle of the Marne. By the fall of 1918, the Central Powers were unraveling on all fronts. Despite the Turkish victory at Gallipoli, later defeats by invading forces and an Arab revolt had combined to destroy the Ottoman economy and devastate its land, and the Turks signed a treaty with the Allies in late October 1918. Austria-Hungary, dissolving from within due to growing nationalist movements among its diverse population, reached an armistice on November 4. Facing dwindling resources on the battlefield, discontent on the home front and the surrender of its allies, Germany was finally forced to seek an armistice on November 11, 1918, ending World War I.

At the peace conference in Paris in 1919, Allied leaders would state their desire to build a post-war world that would safeguard itself against future conflicts of such devastating scale. The Versailles Treaty, signed on June 28, 1919, would not achieve this objective. Saddled with war guilt and heavy reparations and denied entrance into the League of Nations, Germany felt tricked into signing the treaty, having believed any peace would be a “peace without victory” as put

forward by Wilson in his famous Fourteen Points speech of January 1918. As the years passed, hatred of the Versailles treaty and its authors settled into a smoldering resentment in Germany that would, two decades later, be counted among the causes of World War II. For many of the older German generation World War I and World War II were actually the same war, just disrupted by a twenty year period.



**Tsar Nicholas II of Russia with his physically similar cousin, King George V of the United Kingdom (right), in German military uniforms in Berlin before the war; 1913**

#### The Royal Casualties of the War

When we learn or read about history, it is usually facts and numbers. We learn that by the time the war ended, more than 9 million soldiers had been killed and 21 million more wounded. Civilian casualties were close to 10 million. These casualties caused untold pain on families and friends. There were other casualties: the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Empires of Tsar Nicholas II of Russia and Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany, only George V, the first cousin of both the Kaiser and the Tsar, successfully retained the crown. This extended family, the European royalties, lost more than just the monarchies. In his book *The Emperors: How Europe's Ruler Were Destroyed by The First World War*, Gareth Russell tells the story of the Austrian, German and Russian imperial families during the four years of the First World War and the political and personal struggles that brought about their ruin.

In the Prologue the Heading reads "'Oh, George, is the news very bad?" This is the Queen speaking, We get the answer on the next page. "The king replied but it is not what you

think. Nicky, Alix and their five children have all been murdered by the Bolsheviks at Yekaterinburg." George V refers here to his cousins Nicholas and Alexandra. In the last paragraph of the Prologue, we read: "In many of the royal households of Europe, silence descended over the disappearance and death of the Romanovs. It was in many ways the Rubicon moment of the war, symbolizing, as perhaps it was intended to, the death of the old world; no matter which side won the war, the golden age of monarchies which had preceded it had vanished, rendered irrecoverable by the events of four short and terrible years."

Tsar Nicholas II of Russia was born in Alexander Palace, Saint Petersburg, the oldest son of Emperor Alexander III and Empress Maria Feodorovna of Russia (formerly Princess Dagmar of Denmark). Nicholas was of primarily German and Danish descent. His mother's siblings included Kings Frederik VIII of Denmark and George I of Greece, as well as the United Kingdom's Queen Alexandra (consort of King Edward VII). Nicholas, his wife Alexandra, and Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany were all first cousins of King George V of the United Kingdom. Nicholas and Wilhelm II were in turn second cousins once removed, as each descended from King Frederick William III of Prussia. In his childhood, Nicholas, his parents and siblings, made annual visits to the Danish royal palaces of Fredensborg and Bernstorff to visit his grandparents, the king and queen. The visits also served as family reunions, as his mother's siblings would also come from England, Germany and Greece, with their respective families. It was there, in 1883, that he had a flirtation with one of his English first cousins, Princess Victoria, the oldest daughter of Queen Victoria. Queen Victoria (Alexandrina Victoria; 1819–1901) was the daughter of Prince Edward, Duke of Kent and Strathearn, the fourth son of King George III. Both the Duke of Kent and King George III died, and Victoria was raised under close supervision by her German-born mother, Princess Victoria of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld. She became Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland at age 18. Victoria married her first cousin, Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. Their nine children married into royal and noble families across the continent, tying them together and earning her the sobriquet "the grandmother of Europe".

- Victoria, German Empress
- Edward VII, successor to the Throne
- Alice, Grand Duchess of Hesse
- Alfred, Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha
- Princess Helena
- Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll
- Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught
- Prince Leopold, Duke of Albany
- Princess Beatrice

Queen Victoria was the last British monarch of the House of Hanover. Her oldest son and successor, Edward VII, belonged to the House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, the line of his father. Victoria, Princess Royal, Queen Victoria's and Prince Albert's oldest daughter married Prince Frederick William of Prussia (the future Frederick III). Their son, Wilhelm II or William II (1859–1941), was the last German Emperor (Kaiser) and King of Prussia, ruling the German Empire and the Kingdom of Prussia from 1888 to 1918. He was the oldest grandchild of Queen Victoria. Edward VII (Albert Edward 1841–1910), the oldest son of Queen Victoria and Prince

Albert, was King of the United Kingdom and the British Dominions and Emperor of India from 1901 until his death in 1910. He was succeeded by George V, his second son (1865–1936) and grandson of Queen Victoria. He was married to Princess Victoria Mary of Teck. Queen Elisabeth and her sister Margret were their granddaughters. As a result of the First World War (1914–18) the empires of his first cousins Tsar Nicholas II of Russia and Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany fell while the British Empire expanded to its greatest effective extent. As a result of the anti-German sentiment George V changed his name from the House of Saxe-Coburg to the House of Winsor. The name was derived from Winsor Castle.

Emperor Franz Josef Habsburg was born on August 18, 1830 in Vienna's Schönbrunn Palace. Franz Joseph was the oldest son of Archduke Franz Karl and Princess Sophie of Bavaria. He would become the most respected and most beloved member of the Habsburg dynasty, ruling the Austrian Empire and then Austro-Hungarian Empire; a multilingual empire of 50 million people stretching from what is now Poland to the Mediterranean, for 68 years, the third longest reign in the history of Europe. Emperor Franz Joseph died in November 1916 . After the death of his uncle Archduke Karl or Charles was crowned Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary. He was married to Zita, a princess of Bourbon-Parma and they had eight children. He was to become the last crowned head of the Habsburg dynasty that had ruled Austria for 640 years. In the fall of 1918, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy collapsed. After the Allied victory in World War I, Charles agreed to "temporarily relinquish" his imperial rights. He never officially abdicated and died in exile on the island of Madeira in 1922.



**Empress Zita of Austria with her eight children. Standing in the back from left to right Archdukes Carl Ludwig, Rudolf and Robert, in the middle Archduchesses Adelheid, Elisabeth and Charlotte with Archduke Felix, in the forefront Empress Zita and Archduke Otto, 1962.**

After Charles's death, the former Austrian imperial family, Empress Zita and her eight children, were on the move. With the Nazi invasion of Belgium on 10 May 1940, Zita and her family became war refugees. The U.S. Government granted the family exit visas on 9 July. The

Austrian imperial refugees eventually settled in Quebec, However, all her sons were active in the war effort. Otto promoted the dynasty's role in a post-war Europe and met regularly with Franklin Roosevelt; Robert was the Habsburg representative in London; Carl Ludwig and Felix joined the United States Army and were stationed at Camp Atterbury in Indiana. Empress Zita met with her children while sheltered incognito by the Marian Sisters in Indianapolis.

**Source:** Ruth Reichmann, *IGHS Newsletter, Volume 33, No, 2, Spring 2017*

Gareth Russell *The Emperors: How Europe's Rulers were destroyed by World War I* (2014)