

4. The War and the German-American Question

I think we should talk about the War next because it was really the war that changed everything. If it weren't for the War, I would not have got the flu and I would not be here. We didn't really think about it at the time, but World War I turned out to be a pivotal moment in American history. When it was over, things would not ever be the same for us as a country, and most especially for those of us who were German-American. I wasn't around for all of the changes that came, but I lived through the early stages of them, and so I want to include a few of them in this Story: the war's impact on the Spanish Flu and the German-American culture, how the war changed women's rights, the progress of automobiles, communications, and electricity – lots of stories within the story of war.

The entry of the United States into World War I in 1917 was a transformative moment in American history, as a national mobilization touched all aspects of society, redefining how people understood and practiced patriotism and civil liberties. The following year, as U.S. troops deployed to the Western Front in Europe and the war reached its battlefield conclusion, the emergence of the 1918 influenza pandemic underscored the enormity of the conflict and the changes it wrought.

Many people asked how it could happen that a disease as terrible as the Spanish Flu could wipe out fifty million people in a matter of months, seemingly before people were truly aware of it. How could it fly around the whole world and not be stopped? Why weren't people warned about how bad this flu was? Why didn't this disease get more coverage in the newspapers and magazines?

There were a number of reasons, of course, but the primary reason was the war. Massive troop movements spread the virus quickly from country to country, and the war was simply more newsworthy than the flu, which meant that people preferred to read about the war effort. It is true that the speed with which the flu traveled and with which people became infected and died made it a very different kind of flu. It seemed that by the time a community knew the Spanish Flu was among them, it had already infected a good number of them. It is also true that no one knew for sure how this disease was spread. Widespread confusion, fears, and rumors made reliable news coverage difficult. There were those who feared the disease might be caused by the toxic gases being used in the war. Others feared it was retribution from God for the horrors of the war. People didn't know what to believe or exactly what to do to avoid getting the flu; and there was a widespread hope that like all previous types of flu, this one, too, would eventually burn itself out.

It is also true that some newspapers had been advised to play down the seriousness of the disease because they did not want people to panic. There were passionate and volatile feelings aroused by the war, which could easily be inflamed to cause riots and widespread civil disorder, especially in

heavily German-American areas. So as entrepreneurs took advantage of a growing hysteria to hawk their preventive or remediating products, it seemed safer for newspapers to focus on advertisements for products instead of factual articles about the flu. The result was that in many newspapers there was little information about the actual flu except advertising for products and notices of school or church closings. There were products promising protection or relief or healing, products to coat the nose and throat, products to eat or drink, products to massage on oneself or carry on one's person. Everyone had a favorite theory about what to do to protect yourself from the flu or to help you get over it.

A very important reason for inadequate press about the flu was the timing of the flu. The disease came to the United States during some of the bloodiest offensives in the war in Europe, when the Germans had been winning and there was real fear that the Allied Powers might actually lose this terrible war. Once the United States entered the war on April 6, 1917, by declaring war on Germany, and then the spring of 1918 saw American troops on the battlefield in Europe, Americans had a stake in the war; and they followed the Allied soldiers' progress closely that summer and fall. For some, their days began to be a roller coaster of jubilation, despair, hope, and fear. Americans wanted to read about and talk about the progress of their soldiers in Europe. They wanted to feel hope and pride again. Then when our troops started the rapid, victorious advance into Germany during September and October after we had had so many dark and uncertain days and we were losing so many of our young men and we were feeling so discouraged – well, the flu simply took second billing to the more important news about the war.

But for about nine million Americans, dear little Johnnie, which number included me and all my family and friends, the most important reason why we did not pay more attention to the flu is that we were concerned about our immediate safety. We were German-Americans. People often do not want to talk about this issue, and some, to their credit, are ashamed of what they did during the war years, especially to the peaceful Mennonites, Amish and Hutterites. By 1910 nearly 10% of all American people were either born in Germany or were the children of German immigrants. No other ethnic group came close to that percentage. I consider Germans "my people" because my grandparents came over from Germany. I grew up speaking German as well as English, I learned German in school, and our services at church were in German. Even our report cards were in German as well as English. I also consider myself American because this is where I was born, where I would live and where I would raise my children. Now suddenly it seemed we German-Americans were the enemy. Fears generated by this fact were more powerful than fears about the flu. We discovered with shock that we could be beaten or even killed, just for being German. In addition, we were always a proud people who had until then been respected and admired for what

we had brought to America. Suddenly overnight, it seemed, and without any change on our part, the tables had flipped and we were ridiculed, harassed, tormented, humiliated, and demonized just for being German.

While it is true that many of us had relatives back in Germany and did not want the United States to go to war with them, for the most part we advocated against war simply because we were a peaceful people who had come to this country to escape the brutalization of the constant warring that was going on in Europe. We wanted a place to farm the land, raise our children in peace, practice our religion without persecution, and enjoy the fruits of industriousness and education and culture for which we were known. Despite their differences, most Germans had one thing in common – a love for and an ongoing commitment to the German language. German-Americans may have come from different parts of Germany, but most of them felt united by a common conception of cultural “Germanness.” Before 1914, the vast majority of German-Americans had a nostalgic love for their ethnic heritage, yet no sense of political loyalty toward Imperial Germany. Unfortunately, at the beginning of the war, before the United States became involved, some of the German-Americans had applied for visas to go to Germany to help them fight the war. Anti-German press and propaganda that were generated and fueled primarily by Anglo-Saxon business owners, who had become nervous about the prosperity and political power of the German-American contingent in this country, quickly made this a continuing issue of German-American traitorous loyalties, even though it was so few men who had applied to go.

The flu struck Wisconsin about six weeks before the war ended, when our troops seemed finally to have the enemy on the run. In some heavily German communities, this good news unfortunately excited and inflamed anti-German sentiment even more. Men who wished they were in Europe to “chase down those Huns” said, “If we can’t fight them over there, let’s fight them here.” Out of concern for our safety we German-Americans paid more attention to articles in the paper about Liberty Loan drives, and how those who failed to meet their quota were being punished, than to notices about the flu.

By late fall of 1918, as Americans became more aware of the seriousness of the Spanish Flu, they did pay more attention to newspaper coverage; and they did try to follow public health guidance, even when they did not like it. For example, many of us wanted to go to church to pray for our soldiers and for an end to the war and the flu. We wanted to spend Sunday afternoons visiting our friends and neighbors to talk about it all. It was hard having to give that up. However, as one editor noted later, it was probably the fact of the United States being at war that helped to mobilize public cooperation to defeat the flu. We were willing to sacrifice normal comforts in the war against the

flu once the dangers of the flu became fully known. The patriotism we felt for our country as our young soldiers fought for their lives in this grand battle for world peace carried over into our personal lives as a determination to wage our own successful war against our common enemy, the Spanish Flu.

When it became quite certain that the virus was passed through coughing and sneezing, and public health campaigns were able to reach more people to educate them about how to prevent the flu, this terrible disease was finally brought under control by December of 1918. That, of course, was too late for me.

And the Lesson I Took Away from This, my Little Dear One,

in case you decide to go back sometime for another life up above, is

**BEWARE THE TRAP OF THINKING YOU ARE INVINCIBLE;
IT IS A GREAT FALLACY TO THINK YOU CANNOT DIE.**

THE GERMAN-AMERICAN QUESTION

Now let's spend a little time on this issue of anti-German hysteria because 1917-1918 brought something very new to the American people: an unprecedented usurpation of power by the federal government and a consequent trampling on individual civil rights guaranteed by the Constitution. This time in history set dictatorial precedents in the United States that many people felt were dangerous ones to set in a free democracy. This was particularly harmful to German-Americans in 1917-1918. As I have made Stories about various periods in history, I have seen the same pattern of human behavior repeated over and over again: xenophobia, racism, bigotry and hatred used as tools by select segments of the population to incite and inflame mob behaviors in the masses, behaviors that are clearly designed to protect the financial well-being, perceived entitlements, and powers of the select few who feel threatened by newcomers.

By the start of World War I there was in the United States a growing sense of Anglo-Saxonism among the descendants of English immigrants, the attitude that their Anglo-Saxon culture was superior to all others. They based their claims irrationally on the idea that they were the "first" to come to America, completely disregarding the facts that immigrants from Spain, France, Germany and other countries had come to America equally early or earlier, and that Native Americans had been here for centuries. Let's look at some well-researched articles about this issue. How about

these: *German-Americans during World War I – Immigrant Entrepreneurship*, Katja Wustenbecker of the University of Jena; *Anti-German Sentiment in the Midwest in World War I*, A. E. Steenbergen of Radboud University Nijmegen; *War Hysteria and the Persecution of German-Americans*, History on the Net.com; *Anti-German Hysteria During World War I: Banning Beethoven and Changing German Names*, Revisionist.net; *When German Immigrants Were America’s Undesirables*, The History Channel; *During World War I, U.S. Government Propaganda Erased German Culture*, NPR; *German – Shadows of War – Immigration*. . . Classroom Presentation/Teacher Resources, Library of Congress. There is much more, but let’s start with these.

By the early 1900s, the "Great Rapprochement"-- a friendlier relationship between the United States and Great Britain - brought about a flourishing of Anglo-Saxonism in American culture. English-Americans, no longer needing to downplay their English heritage, could openly promote their English heritage and American birthright. Anglo-Saxons had their own definition of what was "American," and anything that did not conform was an undesirable deviation, perhaps even dangerous. And they were having trouble understanding why German-Americans would not willingly give up their German culture. After all, had they not deserted Germany for a better land? To them, German-Americans were naturally clannish and arrogant. Especially troublesome were the numerous German-American festivals; where dancing and beer-drinking were commonplace, even on the Sabbath. Native-born Americans invented a term to describe this deviation — "hyphenism." Whereas the term "German-American" (or "Irish-American") had for decades referred simply to specific ethnic identities in American society, under Anglo-Saxon nativism they became insults, implying that these ethnic groups were not "100% Americans." The implication was that if you were a hyphenated American, you were not a true American. In keeping with the pseudo-science of the times, nativists even came to believe that these social characteristics were hereditary, passed down through genetics.

ROOSEVELT BARS THE HYPHENATED

No Room in This Country for
Dual Nationality, He Tells
Knights of Columbus.

TREASON TO VOTE AS SUCH

The term “hyphenated Americans” quickly came to be used synonymously with disloyalty and even treason and became the flag behind which xenophobia and racism could hide. Unfortunately, leaders who should have helped the country maintain stability and rational behavior in the defense of civil rights sometimes joined the rabble-rousers, as Theodore Roosevelt did in his 1915 speech to the Kiwanis Club, reported by the New York Times.

Little Dear One, as we reach out and pull down all this information about this particular topic, I think it is important to think about this in terms of the evolution of the human race. In essence, we must ask: will humans ever reach a point where they can accept the one big truth that unless they can learn to overcome their fears, greed, hatreds, selfishness, and xenophobia, the planet we all call home cannot survive? People often do not want to talk about all of this because it makes them uncomfortable to know that humans can behave so badly. But we must talk about it now because this issue also clearly explains what happened during the last years of the war that changed everything for my ancestors and yours, and it was probably why I did not pay closer attention to the dangers of the flu. The simple problem was that once President Wilson declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917, he immediately proclaimed all Germans “alien enemies.”

They were barred from living near military facilities or airports, in all port towns and in the nation's capital. They had to disclose their bank accounts and any other property to an Alien Property Custodian appointed by the attorney general. Furthermore, in 1918, Germans had to fill out registration affidavits and be fingerprinted. German citizens in America who failed to comply with these rules or who were considered potentially dangerous were placed in internment camps for the duration of the war. These camps ultimately held over 6000 German Americans plus 200 conscientious objectors.

In order to mobilize Americans behind the war effort, so-called patriotic organizations and the federal government alike employed anti-German propaganda. President Wilson appointed journalist George Creel to head the newly created Committee on Public Information (CPI), which was tasked with strengthening the war effort by rallying the public behind the government through speeches, posters, films, and door-to-door campaigns. The CPI also worked closely with immigrant organizations to get the government's message into every household. The fear of spies grew when Americans were warned

to be watchful of their neighbors of German descent and to report any suspicious person to the authorities. It was rumored that spies were poisoning food, and that German-Americans were secretly hoarding arms. The situation was only made worse by newspapers and government officials, both of which fed the public's paranoia. Nearly nine million potential German-American spies were a frightening thought to most citizens. Many Americans started to look twice at their colleagues and neighbors. Patriotism and loyalty could only be proven by subscribing to Liberty Loans, donating to the Red Cross, participating in parades, and joining the armed forces. Any form of dissent was henceforth considered pro-German and thus unpatriotic.

New laws restricting the rights of speech, publication, and trade were passed shortly after America's entry into the war. These included the Espionage Act and the Trading with the Enemy Act, both passed in 1917, and the Sedition Act of 1918. From that point on, any criticism of the government, the draft, or any aspect of the war could be punished by a fine of up to \$10,000 and/or imprisonment for up to twenty years. This, of course, represented a severe break with established democratic traditions in the United States. Still, only a few congressmen supported Senator William Borah (R-Idaho) when he spoke out against these measures, arguing: "It is not necessary to Prussianize ourselves in order to destroy Prussianism in Europe." In fact, the laws on the punishment of verbal criticism were even stricter than those in autocratic countries such as Russia, and they contravened all civil rights guaranteed in the constitution in an unprecedented way. The laws were passed in part to stem individual acts of vigilantism, which in the past had led to lynchings, beatings, and the tarring and feathering of war opponents. Nevertheless, mob actions escalated in April 1918 in the wake of Germany's Ludendorff Offensive, which caused the first significant American casualties. In accordance with the popular slogan "If you can't fight over there, fight over here," members of patriotic societies made certain that everybody in their neighborhood contributed to the war effort. They also harassed anyone who opposed the war, especially those of German stock, but also socialists, pacifists, and conscientious objectors. German-language services in churches were disrupted and German-language newspapers were shut down; churches housing German congregations were painted yellow; schoolchildren were forced to sign pledges in which they promised not to use any foreign language whatsoever; citizens of German descent were dragged out of their homes at night and forced to kiss the flag or sing the national anthem. The most notorious case of mob action was the lynching of Robert Prager in Illinois in April 1918. Prager, a German native who had applied for American citizenship, was known to harbor socialist ideas and was suspected by his neighbors of stealing dynamite. Although this could not be proven, he was dragged out of town, stripped, and hanged. This lynching caused outrage among many prominent Americans; nevertheless, court proceedings found the members of the mob not guilty.

Once the United States entered the war, German-Americans found themselves in a “no win” situation: if they told anyone that they opposed the war, they could face trial; if they avoided the topic altogether, they were considered “lukewarm” patriots. Even those who fully embraced patriotic activities were often suspected of being hypocrites who were hiding their “true” feelings. In July 1917, an American officer summarized this sentiment when he declared: “the truly dangerous German-Americans, the ones we have to watch and exterminate are the German-Americans who wear American flags on their coats but harbor ultimate loyalty to the Kaiser.” The exclusive right to define who was a real American was claimed by the members of so-called patriotic societies: “One hundred percent” Americans did not use any language other than English, did not read foreign-language newspapers or attend foreign-language church services, were not members of any clubs adhering to German customs (French and British clubs became particularly fashionable during the war, however), and did not criticize the government. Many Americans charged German-Americans with divided loyalties or insufficient patriotism unless they proved their “innocence” by contributing generously to patriotic causes. The vast majority of German-Americans, however, were loyal to their adopted country and did not understand why they – more than anyone else – had to prove something that was a matter of fact to them. Their situation was attributable to several factors, some of which were beyond their control: first, their sympathy for relatives back in the old country was turned against them once the United States entered the war; second, in the early years of the European war several prominent German-Americans had voiced their opinion that German culture was superior to American, and this cultural chauvinism was later held against the whole ethnic group; and third, the large number of Americans of German descent was seen as a cause for concern, especially after German Foreign Undersecretary Arthur Zimmermann suggested in 1914 that Germany could use this “fifth column” against the U.S. any time it chose. Of course, Zimmermann’s statement was delusional and completely unfounded: German-Americans were much too heterogeneous to be united, and as Americans, they were interested in preserving their cultural rather than their political heritage.

In the fall of 1917, the fight against Germans in Europe was extended to their Kultur in the United States. This battle against all things German included a ban on the use of the German language in schools, universities, libraries, and religious services. Additionally, German societies, musical organizations, and theaters were shuttered and the German-language press in America was forced to shut down. Patriotic organizations claimed that the preservation of the German language would hinder German-Americans’ assimilation into American life and, even worse, brutalize young people: “Any language which produces a people of ruthless conquistadors such as now exist in Germany, is not a fit language to teach clean and pure American boys and girls.” In most public schools, teachers were forced to sign loyalty pledges, and many pupils no longer dared to enroll in German-language courses. By March 1918, thirty-eight out of forty-eight states had restricted or ended German-language

instruction in schools. Ohio, Iowa, and Nebraska passed the strictest language laws in the country; since their laws also prohibited the use of any foreign language in public places or on the telephone, the U.S. Supreme Court declared them to be unconstitutional in 1923 and 1925, respectively. Public and university libraries ended their subscriptions to German-language newspapers, books written in German and even English books that dealt with Germany and Austria-Hungary (such as history books or tourist guides) were stowed in basements for the duration of the war. However, some libraries went so far as to destroy them or to sell them as wastepaper; several of these books were actually publicly burned along with German-language newspapers during local patriotic celebrations.

Most German-American congregations suffered from the language ban, and many of them eventually switched to English for their religious services. Mennonites, Amish, and Hutterites were among the groups that were most heavily exposed to hostility, because their members were not only of German descent but also generally opposed to military participation. (Ironically, they had once left Europe to evade military service and find religious tolerance.) During wartime, however, their pacifist creed was taken as proof of their pro-German sympathies; the fact that most of them kept apart from their American neighbors made them even more suspect. In general, they chose not to comment on the public discourse; they continued to operate their own schools, cherished their old customs, spoke their German dialects, and resisted Americanization. None of them felt any loyalty toward Germany; they just wanted to be left alone to practice their faith and live according to their religious beliefs. Many so-called patriotic organizations were irritated by this behavior, and they renewed their efforts to force those groups to contribute to the war effort. Several members of these religious groups were beaten, churches were destroyed, their cattle were sold in order to buy liberty bonds in their names, and American flags were hoisted on their schools. These religious communities were left with two options: either to suffer this treatment or emigrate. The more liberal congregations chose the first option and worked out a compromise with the Wilson government in which they allowed their young men to participate in the civil service. Still, some Mennonites were drafted into the armed forces, and several of them were jailed as conscientious objectors. More than 1,500 Mennonites and Hutterites finally migrated to Canada during the war in order to escape further harassment and prosecution. In times of frantic mobilization, when the German language was as much an enemy as Imperial Germany itself and when war opponents were seen as traitors, there was no room for tolerance for ethnic peculiarities and pacifist ideals.

These self-proclaimed patriotic organizations also started campaigns to Americanize the United States nominally. Hundreds of German names for towns, streets, parks, and public buildings were changed. Extremely recognizable German names such as "Berlin" or "Hamburg" became "Pershing" or "Belgium." Many German-Americans sought to avoid further harassment by changing their family

names, often shortening them or translating them into English. The same was true for most cultural societies. Actual legislation or local pressure led to changes in club names, the halting of publications (or at least a switch to English), an end to meetings for the duration of the war or even the outright termination of clubs. Several German theaters that were dependent on the language skills of their patrons had to give up performing in the years to come. Even music fell victim to patriotic scrutiny. Most well-known orchestras had conductors and musicians who were either German or German-American, such as Frederick Stock of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Ernst Kunwald of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, or Karl Muck, the conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, to name only the most prominent. Many orchestras and opera houses stopped playing works by German and Austrian composers such as Beethoven or Mozart to avoid being labeled disloyal. For some patriotic societies, German music was particularly perilous since it stirred the emotions of listeners; for others, it was a perfect tool for German propaganda: "German music, as a whole, is dangerous, in that it preaches the same philosophy, or rather sophistry, as most of the German literature. It is the music of conquest, the music of the storm, of disorder, and devastation."

Superpatriotism soon reached ridiculous levels. The names of German foods were purged from restaurant menus; sauerkraut became liberty cabbage, hamburger became liberty steak. Even German measles was renamed liberty measles by a Massachusetts physician. Superpatriots felt the need to protect the American public from contamination via disloyal music by pushing to eliminate classic German composers such as Beethoven, Bach, and Mozart from the programs of community orchestras. Some states banned the teaching of the German language in private and public schools alike. In July 1918, South Dakota prohibited the use of German over the telephone, and in public assemblies of three or more persons.

Harassment of German-Americans became commonplace. Employers would receive telephone calls asking if they still had "that German spy" on the payroll. Persons reading German-language newspapers on public trains were verbally insulted and spat on. Just having a German name was cause enough for the American Protective League to launch an investigation into a person's private affairs. When one German-American, having grown tired of the constant Liberty Loan drives, dismissed a salesman with "to Hell with Liberty bonds," he was charged with disorderly conduct and fined. When a northern German-American vacationing in Florida was caught unprepared for a cold snap and exclaimed, "damn such a country as this," he was arrested for having violated the Espionage Act.

Eventually, the anti-German-American rhetoric reached dangerous levels. Elihu Root, a distinguished American statesman, remarked that there were men walking our streets "who ought to be taken out at sunrise and shot for treason." John F. McGee, head of the Minnesota Safety Commission, urged the use of firing squads to wipe out "the disloyal element" of his state. Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels intoned that "we will put the fear of God into the

hearts of those who live among us, and fatten upon us, and are not Americans.” California Representative Julius Kahn more bluntly stated that the nation would benefit from “a few prompt hangings.”

Not surprisingly, acts of violence increased dramatically during the winter months and reached a climax in the spring of 1918. In Pensacola Florida, a German-American was severely flogged by a citizens group. He was forced to shout, “To hell with the Kaiser,” and then ordered to leave the state. In Avoca, Pennsylvania, an Austrian-American was accused of criticizing the Red Cross. A group of superpatriots tied him up, hoisted him thirty feet in the air, and blasted him with water from a fire hose for a full hour. In Oakland, California, a German-American tailor was nearly lynched by a local organization called the Knights of Liberty. In San Jose, a German American named George Koetzer was tarred and feathered, and then chained to a cannon in the local park. In Tulsa, Oklahoma, a German-American was tarred and feathered, lashed fifty times, and forced to leave the city. Several Lutheran pastors were whipped for having delivered sermons in German. In Jefferson City, Missouri, a German-American named Fritz Monat was seized by a vigilante mob, stripped, beaten, and taken to the local movie theater, where the show in progress was interrupted in order for the audience to watch as Monat was forced to kneel and kiss the flag amid rousing rhetoric against disloyalists. In dozens of communities mobs disguised as patriotic organizations invaded homes and dragged suspects from their beds in order to interrogate, threaten, beat, and sometimes deport them.



Cartoon of Uncle Sam lynching the Kaiser, 1918

Robert Prager, lynched in 1918

Among the most tragic of these acts of “patriotism” was the mob lynching of Robert Prager on April 5, 1918, in Collinsville, Illinois. When war broke out with Germany, Prager felt a strong sense of loyalty to the United States. Although he had been in the country since 1905, it was the war that prompted him to apply for citizenship. He also tried unsuccessfully to join the Navy. Prager’s Socialist leanings and stubborn personality apparently caused him to lose at least one job. By 1917 he was working in a coal mine and had applied for union membership. At that time, a rumor was circulating around town that German agents planned to blow up the mine, with the miners still in it. Several local persons came under suspicion and were forced to publicly declare their loyalty and to kiss the American flag. As a German immigrant, Prager too was suspect. After work on the evening of April 3, a group of miners seized Prager and paraded him through the streets of Maryville. They denounced him as a German spy and told him to leave town. Several union leaders who were tasked with determining whether or not Prager should be allowed to join the

union were concerned enough about Prager's safety that they made various plans to have him taken into protective custody by the police. But Prager refused, and instead posted around town copies of a statement he had typed up, declaring his loyalty, but also attacking the union for denying him the opportunity to make a living. After reading his statement, a group of about seventy-five miners "souped up their patriotism at a local tavern", and then went to find Prager and teach him a lesson. After Prager agreed to leave town, the crowd began to disperse. But some fun-loving members of the group felt that things had ended too abruptly, and they began to urge that Prager be forced to kiss the American flag. Someone produced one, and Prager complied. Then he was told to demonstrate his loyalty by coming with them. Terrified, Prager agreed. The German-American was then dragged into the street. He was stripped down to his underwear and draped in the American flag, and then forced, barefoot, to stumble through the streets of Collinsville. At the center of town, the mob demanded that he sing the national anthem. Prager didn't know the words, but he willingly sang another patriotic tune.

At this point, some level-headed citizen called the police, who then took Prager into protective custody. They closed down all the local bars in an effort to quell the mob spirit. Instead, the mob swelled, and went to the police station where they demanded to be admitted. The police hid Prager in the basement, told the mob that he was no longer there, and opened the door to allow an Army veteran named Joseph Riegel inside to confirm the claim. When they opened the door, however, the mob swarmed in. They found Prager and took him back outside, where the mob had now reached several hundred persons. The parade continued, and the mob stopped passing cars and forced Prager to kiss the flag and sing patriotic songs to their occupants. The police followed the mob at a distance, but did nothing to stop the procession. When the mob crossed the city line, the police simply stopped following. Someone suggested Prager be tarred and feathered, and the procession halted while a fruitless search was conducted for the necessary materials. When that failed, Prager was dragged to a tree, illuminated by the headlights of three automobiles. Someone made a noose out of a tow rope. Riegel, who had a lot of pull with the crowd because of his status as a veteran, did not have enough to hoist Prager alone. "Come on fellows, we're all in on this, let's not have any slackers here," he called out. As many as fifteen grabbed the rope as someone else in the crowd suggested that everyone else at least touch the rope. Prager was pulled into the air. When their amateur efforts failed to kill him, someone suggested Prager be allowed to say something if he wanted to. After being let to the ground Prager was granted permission to write a letter. He wrote a quick goodbye to his parents. He asked for and was granted permission to pray. After asking forgiveness for his sins and once again stating his loyalty, he walked unassisted back to the tree and the rope. As the more than 200 persons looked on, Prager spoke his last words, "All right boys, go ahead and kill me, but wrap me in the flag when you bury me." Prager was yanked back into the air and hanged.

Although many in America denounced the lynching, local opinion in communities with large German-American populations defended the action. In their minds, the problem was that mobs were being forced to take action because Congress had failed to adequately punish disloyalty. The Espionage Act did not in fact cover casual "disloyal" utterances by individuals. Bowing to the ensuing pressure, the Attorney General asked for changes to the law. Congress responded by amending the Espionage Act via the Sedition Act, the most restrictive limitations on the rights of free speech and free press in the country's history.

The Sedition Act made it illegal to speak, print, write, or publish any "disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language" about the government, the constitution, the military, or the flag. It was illegal to use any such language which could be interpreted as intending to do the aforementioned. It was illegal to urge or incite any behavior which could hinder any function necessary or essential to the war effort, or to willfully advocate, teach, defend, or suggest the doing of any of these acts.

Prager's last request was honored and he was buried wrapped in the American flag. Twelve persons were charged with murder. The trial took three days. The defense presented its case in six hours, and concluded with the argument that Prager was a suspected German spy and that the lynching was justifiable under "unwritten law." After forty-five minutes of deliberation, the jury found all of the defendants "not guilty."

**And the Lesson I Took Away from This Is
BE WARY OF MOBS, GROUP-THINK, AND INTOLERANCE
THEY TURN HUMANS INTO BRUTES**

German-language newspapers also came under intense pressure from these so-called patriotic organizations. Many readers cancelled their subscriptions, companies stopped advertising in them, no one wanted to deliver them anymore, and vendors stopped selling them. Many of them switched to English, some merged with former competitors, others ceased operations for the duration of the war. Many ethnic societies and German-language papers failed to survive the war; still, not all of them were destroyed. Though strongly diminished, several continued into the decades after the war.

On the whole, the treatment of German-Americans during the war varied from region to region and depended on their numbers and on the behavior of local politicians and attorney generals. There was less harassment in places where there were few citizens of German descent, since they were not perceived as a real threat. Likewise, there were fewer arrests of German-Americans and less scrutiny in places where local politicians and lawyers resolved not to enforce laws to the fullest. However, when politicians and officials decided to use the situation to advance their careers, they were often able to incite a community to hatred against anyone who appeared to dissent – just as Joseph McCarthy did thirty years later. As a result of the war, many German-Americans preferred to conceal their ethnic background, as could be seen in the first postwar census, when about 900,000

German-born Americans seemingly vanished, only to reappear under the categories of American-born or other ethnicity. Insofar as they held onto their German language, culture, and traditions at all, many German-Americans did so in private or turned it into folklore.

So we see that World War I had a devastating effect on German-Americans and their cultural heritage. Up until that point, German-Americans, as a group, had been spared much of the discrimination, abuse, rejection, and collective mistrust experienced by so many different racial and ethnic groups in the history of the United States. Indeed, over the years, they had been viewed as a well-integrated and esteemed part of American society. All of this changed with the outbreak of war. At once, German ancestry became a liability. As a result, German-Americans attempted to shed the vestiges of their heritage and become fully "American." Among other outcomes, this process hastened their assimilation into American society and put an end to many German-language and German cultural institutions in the United States.

WHAT HAPPENED IN IOWA, WISCONSIN, AND SOUTH DAKOTA

Both Iowa and Wisconsin were heavily populated with Germans and German-Americans. Both suffered under the vigilante tactics of hyper-patriotic people and groups. Both carry their burdens of shame for actions ill-befitting a civilized society. South Dakota's German population increased steadily at the turn of the century, but much of the anti-German attention in 1917 and 1918 was diverted onto the Mennonites.

When the United States entered World War I in 1917 many Iowans enthusiastically supported the war effort. But some were opposed to the war. There were many issues that caused debate among Iowans at the time—conscription (military draft), espionage and sedition laws, Liberty Loans, the Babel Proclamation (forbidding the use of German on the telephone), the American Protective League, and the Councils of National Defense. Let's look at some information from the Annals of Iowa:

When Governor William Harding issued a statement that made it against the law to use any language but English in public, many Iowans were angry. The "law" was nicknamed the "Babel Proclamation." Governor Harding even made the point in a public speech that God did not hear prayers that were spoken in any language but English. The Traer Mutual Telephone Association in Des Moines protested, but on June 1, 1918 were told by their Advisory Board that the Governor's Proclamation was legal and must be obeyed.

Some laws that were passed during the war became unpopular in Iowa. As we have seen, the federal government passed the Espionage Act in 1917 and the Sedition Act of 1918, which made it illegal to do anything that caused insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny, or refusal of duty by a member of the armed forces, and to do anything that willfully obstructed recruitment or enlistment service. The Sedition Act forbade Americans to use "disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language" about the United States government, flag, or armed forces during war time.

In 1916 the federal government established the Council of National Defense. In Iowa the state Council of National Defense was created by Governor Harding. Councils of National Defense were created at the county levels too. The purpose of the councils was supposedly to encourage citizens to perform patriotic duties, but in many counties around Iowa they were used to target German-Americans.

Misuse of power by county Councils of Defense led to much persecution of innocent people. People who spoke Dutch, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish and Czech were hurt as well as those who spoke German. Four elderly women in Scott County were jailed for speaking German over the telephone, and fined \$225. A Lutheran pastor was jailed for preaching part of a funeral service for a soldier killed in the war in Swedish because the young man's grandparents did not speak English.

One of the most effective tools of the pro-war population was the American Protective League, organized in 1918 to root out German spies and sympathizers. Iowa's American Protective League was headquartered in Davenport, but branches were organized in every county. They worked with the county Councils of National Defense. They used intimidation, coercion and entrapments. They used informants and even assessed fines. Because many small communities in Iowa valued conformity, this regulation was quite effective. For instance, there were rumors of bacterially-contaminated adhesive bandages that led to arrests, but no convictions. And there were rumors of ground glass in sacks of flour that led to several bakeries going out of business.

Although none of the wartime pressures and tactics were designed specifically to coerce the German-Americans, yet obviously they felt the weight of public opinion more than the average citizen simply because of their birth and ancestry. The District chairmen in the Fourth Liberty Loan Campaign received these instructions, "Watch for disloyal remarks and report every instance since [every] derogatory rumor or report was inspired by German propaganda and German money was paying for the starting of these rumors." Charges of seditious remarks, failure to buy bonds, or donate generously enough to various fund drives continued, and "slacker" courts operated regardless of the question of their legality.

The end of the fighting in Europe did not bring an end to the fear and distrust of the use of foreign languages. On April 10, 1919, the Thirty-eighth General Assembly enacted a law requiring that instruction in secular subjects in all schools in Iowa, public or private, had to be in the English

language. Foreign languages could be taught above the eighth grade only. To further the Americanization of all Iowans, the Assembly also passed a law requiring citizenship instruction be given in the schools. The war had its impact on the make-up of the Iowa General Assembly, too. When the Thirty-sixth General Assembly met in 1915, there were eight senators and twelve representatives with German names. Four representatives listed Germany as their birthplace, three were born in Norway, two in Sweden, two in England, and one in Canada with the remainder being native born. In 1919, when the Thirty-eighth General Assembly convened, two senators and six representatives had German names. None had been born in Germany, while four members listed the British Isles as their place of birth.

Although pressure to use English abated after the war it did not completely end. Americans had been encouraged during the war to view anything German with distrust, and some of this feeling lingered, fading only slowly as time passed. Those German-Americans who lived through the war years would never again feel quite the same about their heritage or, perhaps, about America—for loyalty to the one required severing all ties with the other. Governor Harding's language proclamation in Iowa, combined with the anti-German feeling during World War I, caused a decline in the use of German. Although the German language was spoken more frequently in the twenties, it is doubtful if it ever attained the importance it held before the war. An opportunity to appreciate and enjoy their heritage in America was denied a generation of Germans as a consequence of the pressure of the war years. There was also a significant economic impact on the German-American community.

In the years before World War I, the livelihood of many Germans in America depended, directly or indirectly, upon a constituency that retained the imported German language and culture. This included anything from pastors of immigrant churches and editors of German-language newspapers to restaurant owners, brewers, and saloonkeepers. However, this did not mean that German Americans still had strong ties with their country of origin. Most of them were only secondarily interested in the maintenance of German culture, and in all of this, the Germans were not essentially different from other immigrant groups. Remarkable about the German Americans was that large numbers of them were in high and powerful positions, despite the fact that they were a minority. The difference with other immigrant groups lay with the number of Germans who came to America, the time of their arrival, and the quality of the cultural baggage they brought with them. The Germans have always been the largest non-English speaking immigrant group in America, and their immigration from Germany to the United States came in several different waves. The first wave occurred in the colonial period, when thousands of Germans came to Pennsylvania, New York, and Maryland, and later spread to the Carolinas and Virginia. Especially Pennsylvania was and still is famous for its high-German population, and the German farmers, craftsmen, and indentured servants helped develop the state in colonial times. The Germans that came to the US in the colonial period were mostly pushed by factors such as wars raging in Germany, high taxation, and laws of primogeniture, which are laws that permit only the eldest sons of families to inherit their father's land.

Starting in the late eighteenth century and continuing through much of the nineteenth century, millions of Germans moved to the US and German immigration shifted from the Mid-Atlantic states to the Midwest. This shift occurred because German immigrants, unlike the poor Irish immigrants who came in equally high amounts and in the same time period, came with enough resources to head to states such as Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Missouri. Many German immigrants were farmers who brought skills that contributed significantly to the agriculture of the Midwest, and many others settled and helped build Midwestern cities such as Milwaukee and Cincinnati.

Around the time of the American Revolution between 1765 and 1783, German immigration dropped to a minimum, but a second great wave of German immigration began around 1830 in the Jacksonian era. Between 1830 and 1860, a total of five million immigrants came to the United States. This wave reached its climax in 1854 and counted 3.3 million immigrants during the peak years between 1847 and 1857, of which 1.1 million immigrants were German. This wave of German immigrants was especially triggered by the German revolutions of 1848 and 1849 and the unrest and chaos that they caused. During the next decades, the number of immigrants was greatly reduced again because of a lack of pull factors in the US, most significantly the Civil War and the depressions of 1873-1878 and 1882-1885. Immigration rose again during the boom period of the late 1880s, and around 1890 about one-third of all people living in states of the Midwest had German roots.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the pattern of German immigration was not only dependent on the situation in the US but also closely related to economic and political conditions in Germany. First of all, Germany had been deeply affected by the agricultural revolution. Technological improvements in transportation and the adoption of machinery to farm production permitted distant countries to compete for the German market. By 1875 Germany had become a wheat-importing country, and this had devastating consequences for German farmers, craftsmen, artisans, and shopkeepers. This long industrial depression hit not only Germany but Europe as a whole, and had been triggered in part by competition from the United States. All of these push factors occurred simultaneously with a large pull factor in the US, namely the economic boom of the late 1880s, and the result was a flood of German immigration to America.

Not all were leaving their home country just because of the economic situation. Some also fled from military service in the new German Empire, which had been forged in 1870 by the Iron Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck. By the 1890s, German immigration to the US plummeted again because the industrial developments in Germany had led to a shortage of labor, and thus a large push factor disappeared. By the time World War I started, the first generation of German immigrants in America was far outnumbered by the second, whose attitudes and behavior were much more deeply conditioned by the social process of assimilation.

The Germans who came to the United States after the Civil War differed in several ways from the earlier waves of German immigrants. Although most of the pre-Civil War immigrants were peasants, there were also significant numbers of well-educated, highly motivated political radicals and activists who had fled from Germany after the unsuccessful revolutions of 1848. The wave after the Civil War contained less well-educated immigrants and more urban laborers, who usually ended up in businesses dominated by Germans such as furniture making, brewing, and baking. Different from the earlier waves of immigrants from Germany, few post-Civil War immigrants were

dissatisfied with the motherland. The Germany that many people before the Civil War had fled from did not exist anymore. Germany was now a “dynamic empire, united under Bismarck’s vigorous leadership, rapidly moving through a transitional phase to become an industrialized world power and a leader in state socialism and conservative reform.” Germany had become a source of nationalistic pride for many German Americans. However, this does not mean that all Germans were homogeneous.

Apart from the fact that there were several waves of Germans that came to the US in different periods of time with different social backgrounds, there were also many provincial differences, religious divisions, and political distinctions among them. Most Americans of the time usually tended to think of the Germans as one unified group, but the political autonomy that German petty states had had for centuries had reinforced large linguistic and cultural differences. Many Germans spoke dialects instead of the language that was used in books, newspapers, and schools, and many of those dialects were so different from each other that Germans who originated from different parts of Germany were often unable to understand each other. They clashed with each other, with their mentality, customs, and outlook being “as different as the French and the English.” Most Germans therefore valued their regional identities more than their German identities.

However, the deepest divisions among Germans were religious. Attitudes, values, and behavior patterns were much more closely related to religious belief than they were to language, place of birth, or economic status. The Germans have a history of long and fierce religious wars between nations and petty states. Each petty state could determine for itself what religious identity it wanted to have, and this was usually decided by the ruling family of each state. The political boundaries of the petty states thus tended to conform to religious lines. The German immigrant brought his values, ideas, and prejudices with him to America, and naturally sought out others of his own kind to live with and start communities with, causing concentrations of like-minded Germans to develop. A lot of German Americans identified themselves first of all as Catholics, Lutherans, Evangelicals, or Methodists, and only secondarily as Germans. These Germans were called Kirchendeutschen or “church Germans,” because they were prepared to cast off their ethnicity when it would get in the way of attaining their church preferences. The church Germans were mostly immigrants that came during the wave of German influx between roughly 1816 and 1848, and this group accomplished cultural maintenance through membership in a religious community. Churches not only served as places of worship but also provided cultural support for new immigrants by offering counseling, schools, help for immigrants in need, and a place for socializing with other people of German heritage. Churches were an enclave where the German language could be freely spoken and the culture freely practiced. German language and culture did serve different purposes for different groups among the Kirchendeutschen. Among the Catholics, Lutherans, and Mennonites, the emphasis on the European heritage widened the gulf separating the several German religious groups from each other and from American society. Among the Evangelicals, the United Brethren, and the German Methodists, attachment to German culture was less intimately tied to religious goals. For some, this meant that church membership was no hindrance to full assimilation into American society, and for others it meant there was no religious hindrance to full participation in the activities of German societies which stressed German character and culture. However, it is important to note that the maintenance of German language

and culture among the Kirchendeutschen had nothing to do with the political goals of Imperial Germany in any way.

Although religion was extremely important, not all Germans had bonds with their country of origin in the form of religion. Some also had bonds with the German culture centered in secular societies, called Vereinsdeutschen or “club Germans”. Club Germans were mostly immigrants who arrived in the US between 1848 and 1861. They were more likely to be highly educated and were often social and political liberals or even radicals who tended not to associate with religious institutions. In contrast to the church Germans, who mostly lived in rural areas and small towns and who were conservative in their religious, economic, and political beliefs, the club Germans were oriented towards secular values and attitudes and mostly resided in urban areas. This group also had a great appreciation for the arts and domestic life and found it very important to maintain their German heritage and values and pass them along to the next generation. The secular organizations were very diverse and included, among others, singing societies, shooting clubs, card clubs, and fire companies. For many urban German immigrants, the Vereins provided the same kind of social function that the churches afforded the Kirchendeutschen. Most members of the Vereins were people from the lower middle classes who usually cared little about the process of assimilation into American society.

The Vereinsdeutschen and Kirchendeutschen take on the most importance in maintaining and disseminating German culture in America. Furthermore, it also explains why Germans were so slow to assimilate. Structural assimilation, which is the large-scale entrance into cliques, clubs, and institutions of the host society, is named as the keystone of assimilating into a host society. However, because there were such high numbers of Germans living in the United States, they did not enter Anglo cliques, clubs, and institutions because they had their own. Once structural assimilation has occurred, all other types of assimilation will naturally follow, but in the case of German Americans, structural assimilation did not occur in most communities until the effects of World War I forced it to occur.

Despite the great diversity of the German American population, they were still unified in a way by the German-language press. By the 1890s, there were nearly 800 German newspapers and journals published in the US. By the time the US entered the war in 1917 and anti-German sentiment started to play an increasingly bigger role, the number had dropped to 522. The tone of the German American press had undergone changes in the years since the 1880s when immigration had reached its peak. Earlier, the German-language newspapers were focused on Americanization and helping the newcomers to adjust in their new country. The form, style, and even content of most newspapers were very similar to Anglo American newspapers. However, as mentioned before, Germany underwent important changes while many people were immigrating to the US, and it became a country that one could be proud of. This meant that the newspapers became less critical of the fatherland and contained more news on Germany instead of just on America. Thus, in the years before World War I, the German-language press tended to give full, uncritical support to the maintenance of language and culture and the German American community and interest.

Some of these newspapers did react to a growing sense of Anglo-Saxonism in the United States (the attitude, among English-descended Americans, that their culture was superior to all others) by promoting German nationalism. They were especially proud of German literature, music (Bach,

Beethoven, and Mozart), and German philosophy. But this sense of cultural pride about the Fatherland and their desire to maintain German language and culture in America had nothing whatever to do with the political goals of Kaiser Wilhelm. German American Lutherans were outright hostile toward the Kaiser. The vast majority of German-Americans wanted very much for America to remain neutral toward Germany, but their political allegiance belonged to the United States.

However, the German-language press changed the content of their newspapers not only because of nationalistic pride. Another important reason was an economic one, namely that the German newspapers depended on the steady influx of immigrants from Germany, which declined sharply after 1890. In order to maintain their newspapers, they adapted the content to hold readers.

As discussed before, the German immigrants were high in numbers and they often tended to settle among others of their kind. For example, in 1850 the city of Milwaukee was composed of 6000 Germans and 4000 native-born Americans, and only six of the Germans were married to non-Germans (Gordon 134). By 1910, more than 85% of all German immigrants resided in either the Middle Atlantic or the Midwestern states. The Midwestern cities of Milwaukee, Cincinnati, and Saint Louis were the most famous centers of German immigrant culture. However, what the German communities in most cities lacked was a distinct German neighborhood. The Germans were generally well distributed throughout most cities in 1910, and the same was true for rural concentrations of German Americans. This shows that, although German immigrants did continue to speak their own language and cherish their heritage, they did not entirely separate themselves from the rest of the population.

In 1910, Germans were by far the most numerous immigrant group in the United States, with 8.6 million people of either German birth or parentage on a total population of 92 million. Of course, there were many German Americans who assimilated quickly and did not identify in any meaningful way with the German culture and values, but this group was far outnumbered by Germans that continued to speak German and cherish their heritage.

That the Germans living in the US in the early twentieth century seemed separatist or that they resisted Americanization was not caused by national characteristics or ethnic traits, but was related to the numbers in which they came to America, their religious, linguistic, political, and social diversity and the lack of occurrence of structural assimilation because of Kirchen and Vereins. While it is true that later German immigrants tended to be less critical of the fatherland than their predecessors had been, that does not mean they agreed with everything that happened in Germany. They had a natural affection for their old country because they had friends and family there, and hoped that America would be able to maintain peaceful relations with Germany. However, their political allegiance belonged to the United States of America and not to Germany. In their opinion, the use of German language and the cherishing of German culture had nothing to do with Germany as a political unit. Before World War I started, Anglo Americans generally shared this view. Being a German in America meant that you were a respected part of American society, and people were allowed to feel German and American at the same time. It was widely accepted that one could have both the German and the American identity, combining elements of both nationalities. However, the view of Americans on this changed dramatically in the years to come.

The situation in Wisconsin was different in one important respect: an intensification of the anti-German sentiment arose because Wisconsinites felt stung and humiliated when their state was labeled the Traitor State. In the early twentieth century, Wisconsin was perhaps the most German of all the American states. Roughly forty percent of the state's 1930 population was either German born or first generation German-American. The Badger State was home to people from all the German-speaking parts of Europe, from Pomerania to Austria. There were Protestants and Catholics, Jews, freethinkers, and socialists of various stripes. Milwaukee, in particular, was the beating heart of Wisconsin's *Deutschtum* (Germanness). It was home to some of America's most recognizable beer brands, a place to get good schnitzel and sauerbraten, and it had a vibrant German-language press. The city had so many German cultural institutions that it earned the nickname "German Athens." Milwaukee's Germans were clustered on the north side of town, but could be found virtually anywhere in the city and surrounding countryside.

The 'Traitor State' Label Spurred Wisconsinites to Prove Their Nationalistic Fervor

As happens so often in the popular media, misconstructions and information taken out of context can easily become the rallying cry around which any number of passionate causes come together. Wisconsin's anti-German experience was both triggered and strengthened by an unfortunate and unrelated application of the label "Traitor State" that was applied to it when nine of the state's 11 U.S. representatives voted against going to war.

On July 17, 1917 an editor in the Princeton Indiana Daily Democrat asked "Will Wisconsin be known when the war is over "as the traitor state?" This editor was primarily responding to the perceived disloyalty of Wisconsin's national representatives, not its German population, pacifists or socialists; but his famous words gave the hyper-patriots in the state the opportunity to make an aggressive effort to clear the state of its unpatriotic reputation by clearing the state of those deemed "undesirable."

Wisconsin's "Yankee population," residents who hailed from New England or New York, were those most likely to become hyper-patriots. They generally felt they knew how to be American better than any hyphenated immigrants or their descendants, especially German Americans, and they used U.S entry into World War I as the opportunity to reinforce their definitions of Americanism, patriotism and loyalty and impose them upon other Wisconsinites. These hyper-patriots were generally business leaders and white-collar professionals, men and women used to being in power and having their word obeyed. They were not used to having their leadership and authority questioned. When they wanted something done, it got done, whether this was pressuring neighbors to buy Liberty Bonds or forcing housewives to sign the Food Pledge, which stated that all "patriotic" men and women would voluntarily restrict their food usage so that the soldiers overseas were always well fed.

Their number-one target was Robert M. La Follette, Wisconsin's senior senator. Early on, he had become a national symbol of treasonous and seditious behavior for not supporting the arming of merchant marine ships in March of 1917. In September of 1918, the postmaster general in Wisconsin denied his newspaper, the Milwaukee Leader, a socialist newspaper, second class mailing privileges. This meant that most of the newspapers, which were sold by subscription through the mail, could not get out to their subscribers. In February of 1918 La Follette suffered the worst of several harassments, like being hanged in effigy, when he was indicted by the U.S. government for treason and sedition. His vindication came in 1922 when he ran for re-election and won 72% of the vote. Daniel Hoan, the mayor of Milwaukee, was another socialist. He famously stated, "The American people do not want this war. They were plunged into this abyss by the treachery of the ruling class of the country." It is not surprising he would be a target for the hyper-patriots. However, in the end, when Hoan was re-elected in Milwaukee without the request for martial law demanded by hyper-patriot Bloodgood, the socialists remained in power in Milwaukee for several more decades.

German Americans posed a problem to their Yankee neighbors because in many ways they considered themselves at least equal to, if not better than, these neighbors, especially in arts and education. World War I gave the hyper-patriots a chance to change this dynamic. At every opportunity they portrayed Germans as monsters or subhuman creatures. Hyper-patriot attacks against German-Americans seemed to be primarily about suppressing German-American pride and eliminating the German language from schools, churches and other institutions. While the headstone inscribed "Here lies the remains of German in BHS," which was found outside the Baraboo High School the day after high school graduation, and the book burning that occurred there on the day of graduation, may have been a high school prank against a German teacher and not directly related to the war, nevertheless, this kind of behavior could never have occurred without the climate of suspicion and hatred the hyper-patriots inspired. Shell Lake, Spooner and Westby in Wisconsin also burned books and images of the Kaiser in public bonfires. In the end the hyper-patriots were fairly successful in destroying German culture in Wisconsin.

World War I was a defining moment for the United States. Soldiers shipped out to the Western Front, many more people took on unconventional roles at home, and Americans across the board were forced to make compromises in daily life. The country initially was quite divided about the war. In 1917 one city in particular in Wisconsin illustrated how badly views on the war could be polarized. That city was Milwaukee.

Wisconsin's most populous city had long been home to a large population of German immigrants and their descendants, and it was one of the nation's biggest centers of German-American culture. Milwaukee was likewise the home of U.S. citizens known as "hyper-patriots" who made it their mission to force out any trace of German Kultur in the city and force upon their neighbors a love for Uncle Sam. This story of the city's internal conflicts in the Great War was told in a presentation for Wisconsin Public Television's University Place, World War 100: A Centennial Symposium. The talk brought together three historians who detailed the role of patriotism during the war in Milwaukee.

- *German Americans weren't the only people feeling pro-war pressure in their communities. Socialists, religious leaders and the Milwaukee labor movement were all subject to*

harassment and intimidation from the hyper-patriots. Factory owners saw any attempt by workers for improved pay or conditions as pro-German plots to disrupt industrial capacity. Troublemakers were quickly silenced by government agents.

- *Milwaukee was a center of the socialist movement in the U.S., which elected officials to multiple levels of government. The city was governed by a socialist mayor, Dan Hoan, and was also the home to one of the Socialist Party of America's heaviest hitter, Victor Berger. The latter is known for being the first socialist elected to the U.S. Congress. In February 1918, Berger was indicted by the federal government and convicted on charges of treason and sedition.*
- *One of the most outspoken hyper-patriots of Milwaukee was Wheeler Bloodgood, a lawyer from Dutch New York. In March 1917, Bloodgood founded the Wisconsin Defense League — whose name was later changed to the Wisconsin Loyalty Legion — in an attempt to dispel any notion that Wisconsin was a "hotbed for sedition and disloyalty." Bloodgood famously asked the federal government to impose martial law in Milwaukee if Hoan won the April 1918 election. Bloodgood's demands, however, were not met.*

The reality is that Wisconsinites as a whole quickly accepted U.S. involvement in World War I. They did not need to be forced or coerced or shamed into support for their country's cause.

The draft provided one of the earliest opportunities for Wisconsin to show its true colors. Fearing draft riots in Wisconsin because of the German population, Army officials offered to send federal troops to maintain order on draft registration day, which was set for June 5, 1917. Governor Philipp replied to the federal offer with a polite, "No, thank you." He had full faith in the people of Wisconsin. Without fuss or fanfare, 218,700 young men registered for the draft in Wisconsin, 106% of the number estimated as eligible. On the home front, activities such as food conservation provided one of the most universal ways in which civilians displayed their patriotism and support for the war effort. Herbert Hoover enlisted millions of American housewives to create food surpluses for Europe through conservation. For most housewives and families, conserving food, eating wheatless or meatless meals, felt good. These daily sacrifices gave meaning to the term patriotism.

High participation resulted from patriotic fervor but also from social pressure. The two really went hand in hand. For example, on the last day of a drive to encourage women to sign the Hoover pledge, an intimidating "automobile parade" drove through Madison. The caravan stopped at every house not sporting a Food Pledge Card in the window. A woman from the parade would get out of the car, go up to the house and proceed to convince the housewife that she needed to sign the pledge. And as one would expect, most complied. Wisconsin farmers responded to the call for more food by bringing approximately 94,000 additional acres under cultivation during the war. By 1918, production of corn, potatoes, oats, and barley, all substitutes for wheat which was going to Europe, they increased production by 10 to 15 percent over prewar output. As agricultural workers entered the military or took industrial jobs in cities, rural communities showed their patriotism by providing stopgap solutions for the shortage in farm labor. In Ashland County, for example, the schools closed for a week in the fall of 1917 to help bring in the harvest. At home, war gardens brought squash, carrots, turnips, spinach, and a panoply of other produce to the family table, easing some of the strains on commercial agriculture. Perhaps the most important aspect of war gardens, however, was not what they produced, but the sense of participation in the war effort that gardeners felt when they grew their own food. In a society so totally committed to the war effort,

gardens gave the young and the old a sense of belonging, of participating, of doing something on their own to win the war.

It was the same in Milwaukee. "The citizens of Milwaukee easily fulfilled the city's draft quotas and oversubscribed its allotments in all four Liberty bond drives by millions of dollars. Milwaukee factories churned out every conceivable product for the military with only minor labor disturbances. Women demonstrated their loyalty by moving into factory jobs, thus avoiding a potentially severe labor shortage, and ordinary citizens planted victory gardens, they did Red Cross work and abided by government meatless, wheatless, lightless and gasolineless restrictions."

Nevertheless, these achievements were outweighed by the climate of anti-German sentiment. During World War I, many German Americans in Milwaukee and beyond shed or changed their last names in attempt to free themselves of the often toxic social climate they faced. Within the first four months after the U.S. declaration of war, 250 people reportedly abandoned their German familial names. Additionally, the number of German language teachers in the Milwaukee dropped from 200 to one during the war.

"This time undoubtedly was a bitter pill to swallow for Milwaukee's German Americans. For years, they had been praised for being industrious civic and business leaders. German theater, music and intellectual endeavors were at the pinnacle of the city's cultural landscape. But the war turned everything upside down. ... By 1917, most German Americans in Milwaukee were second- or third-generation Americans and certainly loyal to the U.S., but even those who were natives of Germany recognized their obligation to their adopted homeland."

In 1918, South Dakota prohibited the use of German over the telephone and in public assemblies of three or more persons, but because the state was more sparsely populated, the law was not as rigorously enforced. More attention was placed on communities like the Salem Mennonite Church in Freeman, because of Mennonite pacifism. This community was an outgrowth of a Swiss Mennonite congregation that came from the Ukraine in 1874 and established itself 2.5 miles north of Salem in 1880, not too far from where my brothers and their families had relocated.

One anti-German incident, which occurred when 75 students broke into a Yankton, S. D., high school and threw all the German books into the Missouri River, was considered by some people to be more an example of youthful high jinx parading as anti-German sentiment. Nevertheless, some of the incidents were serious, the most noteworthy example being that of Conrad Kornman.

Conrad Kornman was Editor of the Sioux Falls Deutscher Herold and president of the South Dakota state chapter of the National German-American Alliance. Aberdeen and Yankton were heavily German-American, Sioux Falls less so. A rival newspaper in Sioux Falls reported "un-American activities by the Deutscher Herold, prompting an investigation, which rapidly turned into a witch

hunt, because instead of humbly backing down, Kornman stuck to his principles, his First Amendment rights, The 1910 South Dakota Census had included the term "foreign white stock". The German-American population included immigrants from Germany, Austria, and Russia. Kornman bought the paper from the financially-stressed owner on December 27, 1917, and continued the fight for the right to free speech. Over the first four months of 1918 his office was painted yellow, he developed psoriasis and insomnia and lost 20 pounds. His pursuers were intent on taking him down and making an example of him. They selected passages from various editorials and letters of his that they construed out of context in order to inflame the citizens. On May 4, 1918 the judge sentenced him to prison in the United States Penitentiary at Leavenworth, Kansas for 50 years, with a \$1000 fine. His attorneys filed that same day to take the case to the Supreme Court, which heard the case and overturned it on February 3, 1919. But by then Kornman had lost his newspaper, which folded in June 1918, and he lost his farm. He moved his family to Minnesota to start over.



Was the price worth it in the end? Some historians thought not. "The post-war failure of President Woodrow Wilson's peace efforts, widespread race riots and labor unrest, the frightening specter of Bolshevism, the onset of Prohibition, and foundering of Progressive ideals all contributed to a sense that the war, a crusade to make the world safe for democracy, fell far short of that goal."

And the Lesson to Take Away from All of This is a Question:

DOES WAR EVER ACHIEVE ITS GOAL?

WHAT DID MY FAMILY DO?

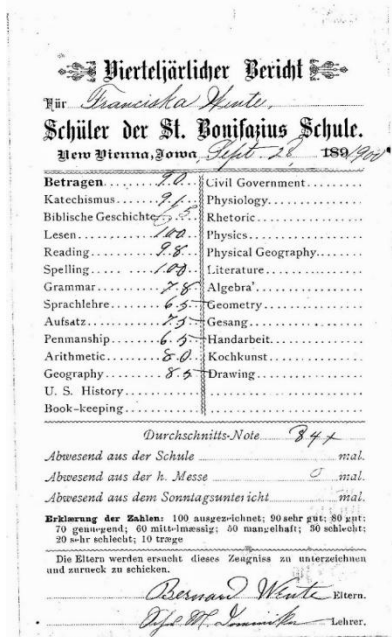
My family, who had started out in this country as Segbers, then had dropped the “g” to become Sebers, now became Sabers, the anglicized version. We had watched with increasing unease and bewilderment as we heard about the growing anti-German mood in the country, particularly in our state, but the news about Robert Prager in Collinsville, Illinois, spread like wildfire in our communities and galvanized real fear. I cannot begin to tell you the level of our shock and horror when we realized that his murderers could get away with killing him just because he was German. Even though Collinsville was 362 miles away from Bloomington, the threat of violence hung over us then like a black cloud. I had just given birth to our fourth child, baby Patricia, on March 23, and I used that excuse to stay away from town except to go to church on Sunday. Johnnie took our hired man with him to make milk deliveries or buy what we needed, and he hid a large club under the front seat of the Ford. We tried very hard to present ourselves as patriotic Americans, hiding our anger at having to do so. Johnnie and I were both third-generation Americans, and it seemed grossly unfair that we could be classified as enemies just because our ancestors were German. President Wilson’s proclamation that Germans were now to be considered “enemy aliens” had unleashed a maelstrom of anger and hatred against German-Americans. It also seemed to some of us that the anti-German mood was driven by jealousy. As a group, German-Americans were prosperous and had growing political power in some of the larger metropolitan areas. Admittedly, it did not help that some of them initially wanted to go to Germany to help the mother country wage war, nor that some of them boasted openly about the superiority of the German culture. In my opinion, though, that was not enough to classify the rest of us as enemies. In my heart I also agreed that there was a certain superiority to the German culture, but I knew that superiority was due to hard work and continued effort, not luck or circumstance. I saw first-hand how the German culture of thrift, industriousness, and a strong focus on family, religion, and education helped them get ahead and thrive. As a female I also experienced the repressive nature of that strongly patriarchal social structure, but I was not aware of that until I was older and heard, for the first time, women voicing the need for women’s rights. But that is another story.

These were hard times for my family and friends. We had grown complacent with pride in our being Germans, pride in our ancestry, our culture, and our heritage. We were used to being treated with respect because of our accomplishments and industrious lives. It was extremely difficult to accept our new status as a people to be shunned and treated with suspicion or hatred. New Vienna and Bloomington were both small communities and everybody knew everybody else, so most

people generally tried to remain civilized and honorable. We still felt the shame of being associated with something the rest of the country hated openly, however.

We lost the comfort of our mother tongue. In our family this was a great hardship for our mother. Seven of her children no longer lived within easy commuting distance for visits, and with the advent of the new telephone service, she had become used to talking regularly by telephone with all her children who lived far away. Speaking German with them was comfortable for both them and her because it was a part of their childhoods and home culture. Freely expressing the give-and-take of normal family conversations suddenly became a little stilted and unnatural. Even when we were able to be together, we were hesitant to allow free expression to our natural gregariousness and enjoyment of life. We became more cautious, more aware that all of our actions and words could be misconstrued and used against us. Interestingly, on the 1920 Census, we were asked to list the “tongue” of the mother and of the father of the head of the household. Was this because of WWI?

As anti-German sentiment grew throughout the summer and fall of 1917 and new restrictions were being set in place, my parents had joined their friends and neighbors in long after-church discussions about the worsening situation for our people and the best ways to safeguard their families and belongings. The attacks on the German culture seemed to be focused primarily on the



German language. For Germans, their rich and complex language was the foundation for their “Germanness”. An attack on their language was a personal attack on them. Nevertheless, they recognized the hopelessness of their situation and quickly made plans to divest themselves of their language in order to keep their families safe. As always in our family, my father took charge. When my parents had decided their personal plan of action, he called everyone to a meeting one night after supper. Only three of his children were still at home, but he would be writing letters to all the rest of us, in English. The next time my mother came to visit me and Joe in Wisconsin she gave us the list: 1. Effective immediately there will be no more German spoken in our house or on our property or on the telephone or in any public place; 2. There

will be no more German newspapers or magazines brought to the house; or read in public 3. All of our German language books, music, artwork, letters, or German-looking needlework will be packed into boxes and hidden in the basement or be sent to South Dakota to be stored with John; 4. There will be no more Brahms, Beethoven, Mozart, Wagner or any other German composer’s music played

father to always do what is best for his family.” Our neighbors and friends in New Vienna faced the same decisions we did. The *Roots & Wings Memories and Stories* book reports:

The New Vienna community was rooted in agriculture and in German traditions. America’s involvement in World War I resulted in changes in the culture of New Vienna – German was no longer used for instruction in the schools, and plays and performances were changed to the language of the land - English. Even the Sunday homilies began a conversion from German to English dialect, eventually resulting in a German homily only one Sunday a month. Some remember that German Shepherd dogs were banned as the community sought to separate itself from the Axis Powers, which included the mother country of the settlers of New Vienna.

However, decisions to throw away everything German was a personal matter and differed among families. Some families managed to retain some, or much, of their German heritage:

My mother’s family never threw anything away. Having the farm in the family from 1851-2004 with no moves, except when my grandmother moved to town in 1942 (but did not clear the attic before she moved!) helped to preserve a lot of items. I have the hand crank, table phonograph with WWI records like “Over there” and the 100+ year old four foot “feather Christmas tree”. We have numerous old books, (even a Bible that was a 1907 wedding gift for my grandparents) that are written in German. There is one small book that was used to show how to write in German and how to convert German alphabet cursive to English. These were on the farm from as early as 1885 when the previous house burned and a new one was built. We have letters from Germany that go as far back as about 1850. When the house was struck by lightning in May of 1885, according to family lore, there was one big trunk/chest that always took two people to move, but my great-grandfather was able to move it out of the house, alone. Our assumption is that the old letters, pictures, etc. were in the trunk and saved from the fire that burned the entire house down.

In 1900, approximately 12% of all Iowans spoke German as their first or second language. The effort to disengage from the German language was indeed wrenching and difficult, especially for older German-Americans, some of whom spoke little or poor English. The disengagement was, however, effective beyond anyone’s expectations. Within six to eight months, a nearly-complete switch was made from German to English. A letter from Pvt. Joseph Klas of New Vienna to his brother reflected on both the comfort of being able to speak one’s own language and the difficulty of doing so when a fear-driven indoctrination had outlawed it. While on route from his training in New Mexico to New York to be sent to France, Pvt. Klas met Rev. Herbers in Washington, D.C., and Rev. Herbers immediately offered to show him the city, then followed with an invitation to his home for “friendly conversation”, which to Pvt. Klas’ delight as well as consternation, was conducted in German. He wrote to his family on February 21, 1918, “I hardly couldn’t get started first talking German as I didn’t talk a word since the time I left Camp Dodge in Iowa.”

Our situation in Bloomington, in Grant County, Wisconsin, was a little different from that of the New Vienna community in that New Vienna was from the first a German settlement and Bloomington was an Anglo-Saxon settlement. The Bloomington Township was first settled in 1831 by Page Blake, and the fairgrounds is still named for him to this day. He was followed by Enos Finn, Mr. Philemlee, Amos Franklin, D. W. Taft, and Richard Shipley in 1850. Other early names from the last half of the 19th century in Bloomington Township were Mr. Schuler, Mr. MacIntosh, Ira Stockwell, Jesse Brooks, William Brown, Prof. M.T. Allen, Mr. Benham, Mr. Glines, Mr. Osborne, David Ballantine, and Elder Lewis, who had owned the farm that my father-in-law eventually bought. By 1881 there were some Germans in Bloomington. An 1881 History of Grant County reported that “The population of the township consists of many different nationalities, including Americans, English, Germans, Norwegians, French, Swedes and Irish.” The first two churches in Bloomington were Baptist (1863), Methodist (1871), and Congregational (1873). It wasn’t until 1899 that a Catholic Church was built to accommodate the growing numbers of Iowa German Catholics coming to Bloomington to buy cheaper land. The farm that Johnnie and I bought was originally owned by Orrie Hatch, then Thomas Harper, from whom we bought it. The farm next to the one that Johnnie’s parents bought was originally owned by Preserve Albee, and the farm Johnnie’s father bought had been owned by the Mose Lewis family.

One issue we faced in Bloomington that we had not faced in New Vienna was the temperance movement, supported by two strong fraternal organizations, the Lodge of the Good Templars and the Sons of Temperance, both with a mission of prohibiting alcohol. There was also a strong Order of Oddfellows, with the accompanying Daughters of Rebekah. We Germans were no longer comfortable with one of our favorite pastimes: the Sunday afternoon German Biergarten, which was seen as a threat by the more Puritanical people of Bloomington. We Germans adjusted by gathering at each other’s farms instead of in a town center. As more and more Germans from Iowa bought farms in the Bloomington area, the English settlers moved on, some, like Thomas Harper, to Texas to grow cotton. The influx of the Germans was occurring at the same time that an agricultural switch from growing wheat to dairy farming was happening. By 1900 the rich soils had been depleted from too many years of growing wheat and would now be more suitable for the grazing of dairy cattle as the soil was rebuilt.

LIBERTY BONDS

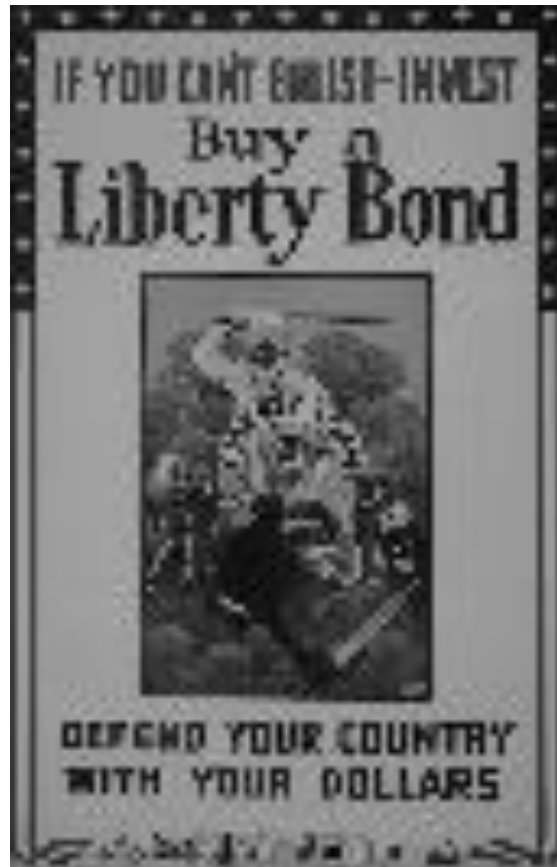
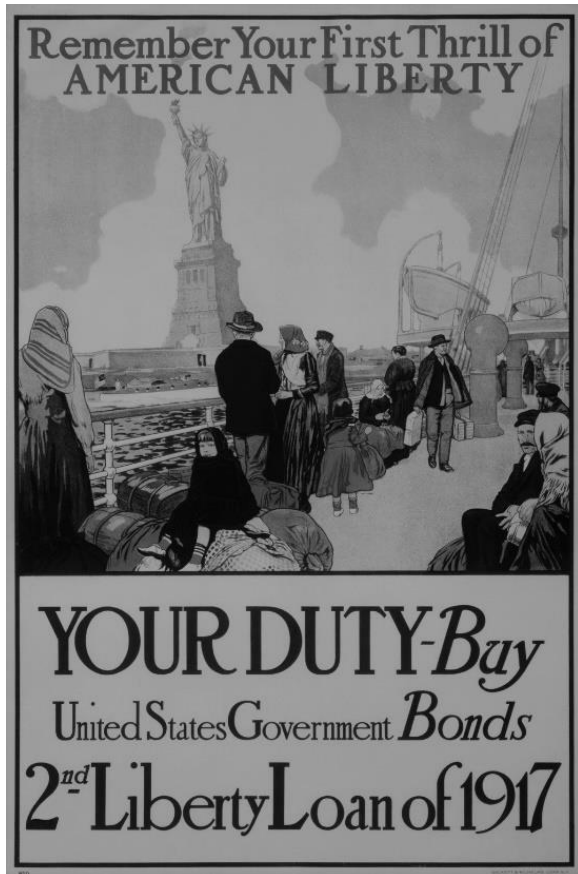
My father paid close attention to the Liberty Bonds Campaigns because they were being promoted as an important way to support the war effort, and of course, for German-Americans, to prove loyalty. In fact, they quickly turned into yet another bludgeon in the war to eradicate the German culture.

A Liberty Bond is a war bond issued in the USA during World War I to finance the war. The US Government named them "Liberty Bonds" in an attempt to appeal to people's patriotic duty; buying a bond was helping to secure the country's liberty. In fact, Liberty Bonds had only limited success, despite a massive publicity campaign.

There were four issues of Liberty Bonds: Apr 24, 1917, Emergency Loan Act authorizes issue of \$1.9 billion in bonds at 3.5 percent; Oct 1, 1917, Second Liberty Loan offers \$3.8 billion in bonds at 3 percent; Apr 5, 1918 Third Liberty Loan offers \$4.1 billion in bonds at 4.15 percent; Sep 28, 1918 Fourth Liberty Loan offers \$6.9 billion in bonds at 4.25 percent. Interest on up to \$30,000 in the bonds was tax exempt.



Because the First World War cost the federal government more than \$30 billion (by way of comparison, total federal expenditures in 1913 were only \$970 million), these programs became vital as a way to raise funds. Vast amounts of promotional materials were manufactured. For example, for the third Liberty Loan nine million posters, five million window stickers and 10 million buttons were produced and distributed. The campaign spurred community efforts across the country and resulted in glowing, patriotically-tinged reports on the "success" of the bonds.



Famous artists helped to make posters and movie stars hosted bond rallies. Al Jolson, Elsie Janis, Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks and Charlie Chaplin were among the celebrities that made public appearances promoting the idea that purchasing a liberty bond was "the patriotic thing to do" during the era. Chaplin also made a short film, *The Bond*, at his own expense for the drive. The Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts sold the bonds, using the slogan "Every Scout to Save a Soldier". Beyond these effective efforts, in 1917 the Aviation Section of the U.S. Army Signal Corps established an elite group of Army pilots assigned to the Liberty Bond campaign. The plan for selling bonds was for the pilots to crisscross the country in their Curtiss JN-4 "Jenny" training aircraft in flights of 3 to 5 aircraft. When they arrived over a town, they would perform acrobatic stunts, and put on mock dog fights for the populace. After performing their air show, they would land on a road, a golf course, or a pasture nearby. By the time they shut down their engines, most of the townspeople, attracted by their performance, would have gathered. At that point, most people had never seen an airplane, nor ridden in one. Routinely each pilot stood in the rear cockpit of his craft and told the assemblage that every person who purchased a Liberty Bond would be taken for a ride in one of the airplanes. The program was successful in raising a substantial amount of money which was used to pay for the war effort. The methodology developed and practiced by the Army was later followed by

numerous entrepreneurial flyers known as Barnstormers, who purchased war surplus Jenny airplanes and flew across the country selling airplane rides.



Volunteers hanging posters, and Douglas Fairbanks addressing a rally for the 3rd Liberty Bond Issue.

Through the selling of "Liberty bonds," the government raised around \$17 billion for the war effort. Considering that there were approximately 100 million Americans during that time, each American, on average, raised \$170 on Liberty bonds.

However, that is misleading, because businesses bought a large share of the Bonds.



This photo shows Senators in Washington lined up to buy Bonds.

When a Bond kiosk came to New Vienna for the 3rd and 4th Bond issue Campaigns, my father was standing conspicuously in line to buy his Liberty Bonds.



These women are standing on the street selling Liberty Bonds. There were quotas that had to be met for the Liberty Bonds. The First Liberty Loan Campaign in May and June of 1917, and the Second in October, 1917, received little publicity and the public demonstrated little interest. Many predominantly rural counties, and some with large numbers of German-American residents, failed

to reach their assigned quotas. The Third Campaign in the spring of 1918, the Fourth in the fall of the same year, and the Fifth in 1919 succeeded in reaching their quotas, and not solely because Iowans were better informed or more aware of the war issues. "Certain methods of pressures and coercion were devised which could not help but bring results." Let's look at this example reported by Carl Wittke on German-Americans and the World War:

Liberty Bond quotas were allotted to its citizens according to their ability to pay. Liberty loans were allotted among the precincts on the basis of assessed values of property; war stamps on the basis of population; Red Cross and all welfare funds one-half on the basis of property values and one-half on the basis of population. Every citizen's assessable property was listed from the tax books, and his income estimated by competent committees and each precinct quota in every drive was then allotted to its citizens as fairly in proportion to their ability to pay as committees of neighbors could distribute the war burden. Additionally, there was a record of the citizens' Liberty Bond purchases and contributions to the various fund drives. Certainly such a list made it easier to apply pressure to those who had not purchased bonds when the Third Campaign began in April, 1918. The object of the survey was to distinguish between loyal Americans and those who were not. A person who failed to give enough was suspected of not being patriotic. In some communities. Liberty Loan committees gave each citizen a card telling him how many bonds to purchase. Frequently warnings of the consequences which would follow a refusal accompanied such instructions. Assessments amounting to approximately two percent of the value of an individual's property were levied in some rural areas. In other areas, a person's share was determined by income, bank accounts, investments, and occasionally even his borrowing capacity. Citizens who failed to cooperate with these quasi-official orders were often compelled to appear before "slacker courts." Cedar Rapids had a "Loyalty Court," Sioux City an "Incognito Military Court," while Johnson County organized a "Loyalty League." Four hundred people answered summonses to appear before the court at Council Bluffs. This organization dealt with alleged disloyal remarks and failure of some citizens to contribute the correct amount to the war campaigns. "Not one dared to ignore the summons of this entirely extra-legal body." In Black Hawk County, the sheriff brought in those who failed to come before the "court" of their own free will and no one questioned his right to do so even though it was an extra-legal body." These "slacker courts" made their appearance at different times during and after the war. Jasper County had one in April and May of 1919 which is typical, except since it occurred after the war, returned servicemen participated. The Jasper County Council for Defense called on the returned soldiers and sailors for help when by April 25, 1919, the county was \$150,000 below its quota in bond sales. This led to the following front-page notice in the Newton Daily News, April 25, 1919:

"RESOLUTIONS passed by Patriotic Investigation Council of Jasper County. Be it resolved that we proceed at once to the investigation of reason for a number of wealthy citizens of Jasper County declining to subscribe to their share of Victory Loan and now be it resolved that we ask each and every person in Jasper County whose allotment was more than \$100 and who failed to take at least 80% of their subscription to Fourth Liberty Loan that they appear before our Organization at Court House in Newton, Iowa and that no one be let off with a Subscription of less than 100% of their Fourth Liberty Loan. Signed. 30 Returned Soldiers."

The bond slackers in the county were notified by telephone by members of this Patriotic Investigation Council to appear and explain why they had failed to purchase their share of bonds.

Citizens were afforded the opportunity to come before the court voluntarily, but if they did not, they could be compelled to appear. In Jasper County, the court met under the direction and with the advice of the county council for defense. Meetings were held in the county courthouse.

Eighteen citizens appeared before the court at its first meeting on April 26, 1919, and all except one purchased their share of bonds. Peter Frahm, a farmer from north of Newton, did not. His allotment was \$1,350. Evidently, he bought the bonds shortly afterward as his name does not appear again. A Newton resident, W. G. Mann, told the soldiers who called and requested his presence before the court to "go to hell." Later the same day Mr. Mann felt it necessary to call the sheriff's office and demand protection. Presumably his safety and that of his family had been threatened as a result of his refusal to cooperate with the soldiers' court." Three days later another front-page notice asked all returned servicemen to come to the courthouse for another meeting of the court where more bond slackers were to be present. Whether any alleged slackers appeared or not is unclear, but Mr. Mann ignored this meeting just as he had the first time. Since he had not chosen to appear voluntarily, guards waited for his appearance downtown the next morning and took him to the courthouse to await the arrival of members of the court. A large crowd that was pro-soldier gathered and Mann was taken out into the courthouse corridor so all could get a good look at him. Mann maintained he could not afford any more than the \$700 worth of bonds he had purchased the day before, but a banker was located who was willing to make him a loan. Mann had to sign for additional bonds, making his investment an even \$5,000.

Mann hesitated but it was made so plain to him that it would be to his best interest in every way that he reconsidered and signed ... He had gone through one of the most grueling ordeals and cross examinations experienced by mortal man.

The court was a very effective way of raising money: five days after its first session in Jasper County, \$35,000 was received in bond subscriptions. The Soldiers' and Sailors' Court did not meet formally again, but letters signed "By Authority of Returned Soldiers' and Sailors' Council Committee" were sent to all alleged bond slackers on May 6 saying, "We must have your subscription or your personal appearance before the committee." As a result, the Newton Daily News reported on May 29 that Jasper County had over-subscribed the Victory Loan.

Methods like those described above led to violations of the law and allowed the force of personal influence and spite to gain control over the unfortunates labeled "slackers." Such methods employed in Iowa were justified by the argument that "the American people have a power higher and greater than the Constitution or law ... to save the Government, to save the Flag, and to save the law itself from destruction at home as well as abroad." James W. Pierce, editor of the Iowa Homestead and member of the State Council for Defense, referred to the intense Liberty bond campaign period during the spring and summer of 1918 as a "reign of terror."

In most cases the pressure to subscribe was so heavy and the fear of the public temper, already set on a hair trigger, became so great that during the last three campaigns in Iowa virtually all that was necessary was to announce to each person the amount of his quota and he subscribed without hesitation.

At war's end, over 65,000 Iowans had bought \$30,740,000 worth of Liberty Bonds, about \$472.92 per person. In 1918 the average annual income in the United States was \$1518, about \$29 a week.

In Wisconsin the Liberty Loan drives to sell war bonds were intense affairs that once again drew on patriotism and social pressure to encourage bond purchases. By the third liberty loan drive in the spring of 1918, an army of volunteers canvassed the state, armed with information about each person or family and their ability to buy bonds. If a subscriber refused to buy the proper amount, the volunteer would reply regrettably that the slacker's unpatriotic behavior would have to be referred to the county Counsel of Defense for action. This was patriotic fervor's dark side.

As Congress assembled for Wilson's war message in the spring of 1917, an article in the *Wisconsin State Journal* helped create the emotional foundation for going to war. It quoted two legislators from the south. Senator Furnifold Simmons of North Carolina stated, "The interests of America demand that tyranny be beaten." Texas Representative Joe Eagle made the struggle more basic and visceral, "The Kaiser is a cave man with murder in his heart. He is bent on the unwavering course of brute force and pillage. He must be put down or the democracies of the world are doomed." The language of peace, neutrality, and forbearance had given way to the language of war: bellicose, dehumanizing, and designed to create a noble enterprise worthy of the sacrifice of thousands of lives.

According to the *State Journal*, a war in defense of "humanity and democracy" was the only choice. The feeling that all of this engendered was that nothing less than the future of the nation was at stake. In this tense climate, a flippant comment could bring social retribution instantly. A Brown County farmer stopped in a local saloon for some refreshment. According to the bartender, the farmer stood at the bar "decrying the strength of the American Navy and Army," "and sneering at the fighting ability of the soldiers." The barkeep found the remarks intolerable, perhaps in part because the farmer was an alien. As he told the municipal court officials the next day, "I reached over, I grabbed him, I hit him. Then I hit him again and threw him out of my bar." The story came to light because the saloon keeper had gone to the municipal court to find out if a warrant had been sworn for his own arrest. Having admitted to assaulting the farmer, the barman walked away from the courthouse a free man. The farmer was unlikely to be as lucky. Municipal court officials were going to report the matter to Federal authorities. During the war, 90 people in Wisconsin were indicted under the Espionage Act for praising Germany, criticizing the United States, or calling the conflict a rich man's war. The reality is that the farmer was only stating the truth: the United States military was indeed poorly prepared for war, as became immediately apparent when mobilizing began.

Additional indictments were handed down to others for criticizing Liberty Bonds, the Allies, charities such as the Red Cross, or food laws, obstructing military recruiting, insulting the flag or uniform, or praising the sinking of a ship. The culture of war eventually had an impact on children as well.

Across Wisconsin the study of anything German, especially language, became suspect as a vehicle for insinuating "German Culture" into American life. In Milwaukee the number of German teachers dropped from two hundred to just one. All over the state, English was the language of patriots.

Into this hostile environment came young Bobby Bizzell of Kaukauna. One day he was playing with friends when two workmen walked by, speaking to each other in German. Bobby picked up a large club and struck one of the men a hard blow. When taken into the house for punishment, his little sister, as little sisters will do, chided him, "Bobby, you shouldn't have hit that man. How do you know but that he was Jesus in working clothes?" To which Bobby replied, "Jesus, do you think he'd be talking German?"

There were voices of reason in Wisconsin. Governor Emanuel Philipp believed in the loyalty and patriotism of the entire state regardless of ethnicity. He had little patience for vigilante justice or for super patriots determined to find traitorous behavior in their communities. In his most strident denunciation of super patriots, Governor Philipp told an audience that the willingness to charge others with disloyalty "is a type of impudence that is indulged in by a class of self-asserted patriots who are the greatest menace to the country today, because they discourage what the country needs above all things during a crisis, and that is the hearty cooperation of all the people in support of the war."

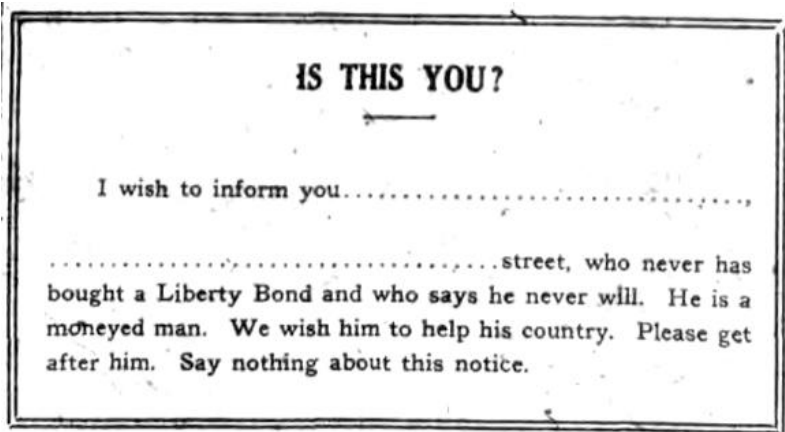
The hostile climate in Wisconsin was, as we have seen, a bitter pill to swallow for Milwaukee's German-Americans. For years, they had been praised for being industrious civic and business leaders. German theater, music and intellectual endeavors were at the pinnacle of the city's cultural landscape. But the war turned everything upside down. Patriots viewed these beloved traditions as treacherous plots to Prussianize America. By 1917, most German-Americans in Milwaukee were 2nd or 3rd-generation Americans and certainly loyal to the U.S., but even those who were natives of Germany recognized their obligation to their adopted homeland. Frederick von Cotzhausen, for example, came to Milwaukee after the 1848 revolutions in Germany. And in July 1918, he celebrated his 80th birthday. As he reminisced, he said he was satisfied that he had returned a full equivalent for the opportunities and advantages the United States provided for him. He acknowledged it was difficult to suppress sympathy for his homeland, but that in no way detracted from his allegiance to the U.S. "I do not need to drop the hyphen, he wrote, "as I dropped it many years ago." He was not ready "to accord to any one of my fellow citizens, whoever he may be, a higher standard of patriotism and Americanism than I claim for myself."

In 1918, the Wisconsin Loyalty Legion tried to stop a local publishing company from circulating a Milwaukee guidebook that praised the Germanic influence on the city's development. "Milwaukee is not the German Athens of America, and we do not wish it to be advertised as such," was the Legion's decision. The toxic environment motivated many Milwaukee Germans to deny their ancestry. Within four months of the declaration of war, 250 people shed their German-sounding names, and that trend continued throughout the war. In June 1918, Edward Lutzenberger changed his name to Edward Lutze because his friends ridiculed him for having a name with berger in it. And Judge John J. Gregory granted Emma Carson a divorce as long as she changed her maiden name, Emma Kaiser. This trend did not sit well with some German-Americans. Anita Nunnemacher Weschler was angered when she learned her neighbors had changed their name from Schwartzburg to Harrison. To Anita, this was an insult to everyone bearing a German name. As though one had to change their name to be patriotic. "I feel I am as loyal to my country as anyone else, and I am doing as much as I can to help, but I can't see the use of changing one's name." Erich Stern was a well-respected lawyer, a member of the Progressive wing of the Republican Party and a member of the celebrated Wisconsin legislature that passed the nation's first workers' compensation laws as well as measures that reined in child

labor. But he also was a pacifist, a stand that cost him professionally and personally. In January 1918, students at Marquette University's Law School circulated a petition trying to have Stern removed as a faculty member because of his anti-war position. Stern's forceful defense of his First Amendment rights saved his job. But not his reputation. Even more dismaying was the loss of his friendship with Arthur Van Dyke and his mother. "With all our beautiful common memories as recent as last summer," he lamented, "how can they judge so harshly, condemn without giving me a hearing of any kind."

Not even religious convictions shielded people from overly zealous patriots. During the fall 1918 Liberty Bond drive, flying squadrons or trains of automobiles carrying anywhere from 35 to 100 people visited Milwaukee County farmers deemed "slackers" because they had not purchased their designated share of Liberty Bonds. On one occasion, a squadron stopped at the farm of William Eschrich. The squad leader asked Eschrich if he would invest \$200 as his fair share, but he refused because, as a member of the Russellite religious sect, he would not in good conscience as a Christian contribute to any purpose that violated God's commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." The squad leader remarked men had been imprisoned for less than what Eschrich had said and claimed that anyone who did not buy bonds was "no better than a worm of the earth." Others in the crowd called Eschrich a "dirty dog," and someone yelled that he should be hung. Despite the pressure, Eschrich refused to compromise his religious principles. As a result, he suffered the indignity of having a yellow placard posted on his home that read, "The occupant of these premises has refused to buy his fair share of liberty bonds. Do not remove this notice." Even after the war ended, this rage was not easily let go. In February 1919, the acting company at the Pabst Theater decided to stage plays in German to raise funds for destitute actors and actresses.

In a way, all of these groups challenged the hyper-patriots' understanding of what it meant to be American and questioned their right to define Americanism. The Wisconsin hyper-patriots were especially threatened by socialists, who were often German-Americans who disdained capitalism and promoted communal welfare while the hyper-patriots viewed capitalism as the cornerstone of the American economic experience and considered rugged individualism more American than a concern for public wellbeing. The pacifist challenged the view of Americans, or the hyper-patriot's view of Americans as tough, strong, masculine individuals who would not step back from a fight.



If this dreaded notice appeared on your neighbor's doors, you could expect unpleasant consequences short-term and sometimes long-term. The similarities to the Salem witch hunts did not go unnoticed.

Coercive acts, especially violent ones, continued to escalate in

Wisconsin even beyond Armistice Day. Wisconsin's hyper-patriots attacked not only German-

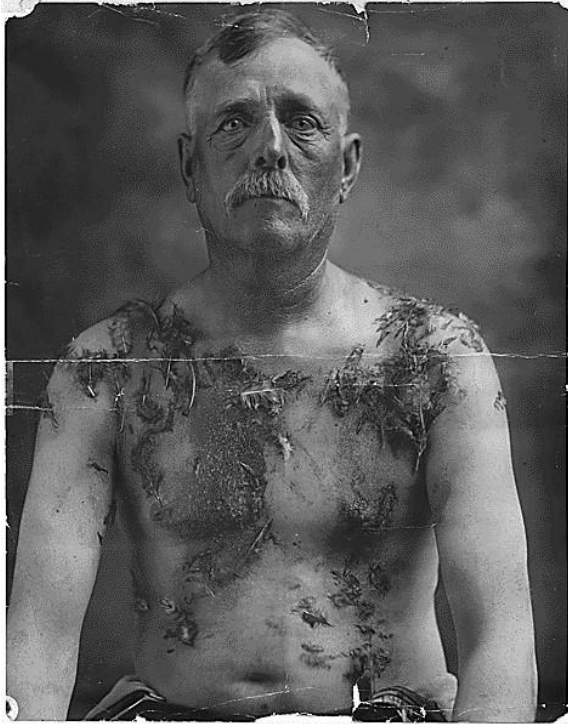
Americans, but also socialists, pacifists and those who they labeled disloyal politicians. Wisconsin was not alone, of course. Let's look at a few news clippings from Wisconsin, Iowa, and other states:

Fond du Lac's first anti-slacker demonstration occurred the other day when a group of citizens visited the farm of Joseph Buechtel, near Marshfield, Wis., and smeared his house, barn, outbuildings, automobile, and machinery with yellow paint and German war crosses. On the sides of the buildings large signs were painted accusing Buechtel with refusing to buy liberty bonds or contribute to war charities. Buechtel is thirty-nine years old and unmarried. He recently was arrested, charged with failing to register for military service.

Reverend William Schumann of Pomeroy, Calhoun County, was convicted, in federal court, of violating the Espionage Act of June 15, 1917. The church he was serving burned under unusual circumstances in December, 1917. The government charged Schumann did ". . . willfully obstruct the recruiting and enlistment service of the United States, by delivering an anti-war sermon in a church of which he was then and there pastor."

Ottumwa, Iowa, March 15 — Leon Battig, an instructor in the high school at Albia, who has been suspected of disloyalty, was dragged to the court house steps by a mob and covered with a coat of yellow paint. Battig said war was against his religion and he had refused to push the sale of Thrift Stamps. He was asked to resign from the school.

The Oswego Daily Palladium, 31 October 1918 - Because of his refusal to buy Liberty bonds of any of the four bond issues or to subscribe to the Y.M.C.A. fund, citizens of Oxford showed their disapproval of the disloyalty of Dr. D.A. Cleason of that village by liberally decorating the front of his house with yellow paint and by painting the word "slacker" on the windows. The doctor is very unpopular in Oxford on account of "nearness." He and his wife have left town for the West on a visit.



The Minneapolis Tribune, 16 November 1919 - All Luverne Greets 32 Citizens Freed in Tar-Feather Case Court Vindicates Men Accused Of Punishing John Meintz As Disloyalist Because He Refused To Buy War Bonds - Welcome home by a large delegation of Luverne (Minn.) citizens, headed by a band, was the sequel yesterday to the acquittal of 32 residents in federal court at Mankato on the charge of kidnapping, tarring and feathering John Meintz, according to dispatches from Luverne last night. Meintz asked personal damages of \$100,000 as balm for the treatment he received on the night of August 19, 1918. The jury denied him any damages, after deliberating one hour and a half. Judge Wilbur F. Booth, in charging the jury, said that the evidence was

overwhelming in support of the contention that Meintz was disloyal and that there was a strong feeling against him in the community. The action of the Luverne citizens in staging a celebration was taken as an indication of strong approval of the acquittal verdict, according to dispatches.

May 9. — Lawrence (Special) — Preacher Given Coat of Tar by Strangers - Called Him Out and Took Him Away in Auto - Pastor Is German, and Used German Language Exclusively in His Sermons, Regardless of Protest. The Rev. Gustav Gastrock, pastor of the Worden German Lutheran church, was taken from his home one mile north of Worden, at about 9:30 o'clock last night by three men, who stripped him and smeared his body with tar. He was then released by his captors, who would give no reason for their actions. Residents of Worden say that in all probability the tar party was held as a result of the alleged refusal of the Rev. Mr. Gastrock to deliver sermons in English on the Red Cross and Liberty loan campaigns, saying that he conducted his services in German exclusively.

Because it is alleged he said "To hell with Liberty bonds, I won't buy any," Henry Lattell, 56, of 128 Adams street, Hoboken, registered German alien, is in St. Mary's Hospital suffering from a much battered head and may die. Joseph McDonald, 43, of 132 Adams street, declares he overheard Lattell make this statement. McDonald says that he demanded that Lattell retract and when he refused McDonald hit him and didn't let up until Lattell was badly beaten. McDonald is held on a charge of assault and battery.

Lincoln, Neb., Tuesday — Persons found guilty of disloyal acts or utterances, with intent to hinder prosecution of the war, are liable to a maximum punishment of twenty years in the penitentiary, under the terms of Nebraska's sedition law, recently enacted by the Legislature and made effective to-day by the signature of Governor Neville. Yellow paint was applied last night to the residence here of the Rev. George Allenbach, one of five German Lutheran clergymen of Lincoln and vicinity who recently declined an invitation to participate in a patriotic Liberty Loan rally.

A shower of yellow paint greeted a Liberty Bond slacker at the Bagley & Sewall plant Tuesday afternoon and as the result of 60 employees in the vise department of that shop refusing to work with him this morning, the slacker quit his job. During the past week the Liberty Bond drive has been at the Bagley & Sewall plant in real earnest and all subscribed liberally but two men. One of those men took the hint Tuesday and subscribed when things were getting a little too hot for him, but another said that he had "enough money to buy a bond but wouldn't." When John Pawlis [?], a member of one of the Liberty Bond teams there handed in this man's card, he wrote the work "impossible" on it. It was then that others started the real drive which resulted in the slacker being driven out. A hole was bored in the floor above his machine Tuesday and a squirt gun filled with yellow paint was showered on him from above. He was so completely covered with the yellow liquid that all of his clothes were spoiled. When he came to work this morning, wearing a new outfit, he found cartoons and signs all about his table bearing the words "pro-German," "slacker," and others. An American flag was also placed on the wall near his machine and when he attempted to take this down he was warned that if he did he would receive a good beating. The employees of the room then gathered about him for the attack, and he gave up his designs on the flag. Later 60 employees of the room told their foreman that they would all quit if the slacker didn't. The man in question is said to be a member of the International Bible Students' Association. The Liberty Bond drive is progressing speedily at the Bagley & Sewall plant today. One man reported that he had sold eight bonds in one hour.

Theodore Pape, former city attorney, and prominent attorney in Quincy Illinois, for whom United States Marshals have been searching since yesterday afternoon, for violation of the Espionage act, walked into the Sheriff's office this morning and gave himself up. Pape is said to have refused to buy Liberty bonds, declaring that he wanted the war to end in a draw, and that the way to realize his hope, was to withhold money from the Government. Pape was hanged in effigy during the night. But the judge did dismiss his case on the basis of the fact that Pape had acted only in the privacy of his home, making his personal decision not to purchase liberty bonds, and he had not incited others to do so.

Anyone seeking a little patriotic excitement might drop around in front of the big Schweinler Press building, No. 421 Hudson Street, at six o'clock this evening and see a German kiss the American flag.

He'll kiss it, all right, because the Mailers' Union says he will, and anyone who knows the rank and file of the Mailers' Union knows that when they say they will make a German kiss the American flag he'll do it.

Pottawatomie County, Kansas, Contains Many Slackers - Yellow Paint, Tar and Feathers Are Employed to Persuade the Unsympathetic to Aid in War Work - But Pottawatomie County is on the yellow paint trail to loyalty. By July 4, the 100 per cent American assert, the county will be a decent place for a patriot to live in. The loyalists are going right down the line. It is either hush up, take a dose of yellow paint, or get out. There is a pot of tar and an old feather bed stored carefully away in a handy nook in Wamego for second offenders. Beside the tar pot is a partly empty can of yellow paint and another full one. "We have quit quarreling with folks because we are Americans," said Floyd Funnell, mayor of Wamego to a representative of The Star. "Until recently we have tried to argue with the slackers and Huns. Every time we mentioned we were Americans it brought on a brawl. Never again. Everybody in this neighborhood is going to be an American or ostensibly an American sympathizer. We can't hope to change the heart of the Hun but we can and will change his actions and his words." The ultimatum went forth some time ago. A lot of slackers laughed then. But by the time the second Red Cross war fund drive was over there was beginning to be a change of tune around Wamego. The tune is changing now throughout the county and is spreading with considerable rapidity into Wabaunsee County, just across the river from Wamego. Wamego residents may have some yellow paint and some tar and feathers to spare for slackers and disloyalists in Wabaunsee County if people there do not apply the proper medicine. Thus far only yellow paint has been applied to slackers in Pottawatomie County. But it has been smeared around over seven residences, one motor car, and two business buildings. Its first use was at Westmoreland, where the Schlessmann butcher shop was daubed when it was said Schlessmann failed to donate to the Red Cross. This was a wholesome lesson. It was asserted not less than 200 voluntary subscriptions to the Red Cross appeared suddenly in Westmoreland after that.

Freudenburg's Shop Decorated - People walking along West Main Street Saturday morning noticed some yellow paint on the shop of Henry Freudenberg and upon inspection found the words "slacker" and "skunk" painted on the building. The assumption is that the painting was done Friday night by some patriotic citizen or citizens whose indignation was aroused by the fact that Henry had not bought a Liberty Bond. Investigation shows that Mr. Freudenburg had not bought a bond of any of the three

preceding issues and refused each and all the Liberty Loan solicitors who endeavored to sell him a bond of the fourth issue.

Horst, Nick Hirsch, E.J. Fischer, Emile Brunner, law offices. Payne, Kramer, Kolterman, Horst, and Hirsch are alleged to have failed to subscribe to the Liberty Loan. They were said to be fully able to do so. After the application of the paint each subscribed. In the case of Payne there is evidence some bad advice was given him by someone in Wamego. It is asserted by friends he is loyal, but given wrong advice in making investments. Louis B. Leach subscribed heavily to the Liberty Loan, but he refused to give to the Red Cross, it is charged, except \$1 a month for six months. Leach is said to have told the committee which called upon him he believed the Red Cross was a great graft. For that the sidewalk in front of his home was painted with a big cross in yellow paint. A few days later, when Leach is declared to have told another committee "You can tar and feather me, or even kill me, I won't give a cent," his motor car was painted yellow. A cross was painted on each side and the word "Slacker" cut in the paint.

Five Austrians who refused to purchase Liberty Bonds at the Lyttle colliery, near here, were taken by the heels by the workmen and dipped into a steel tank used for heating oil for the colliery engines. Threats to sue the ring-leaders of the crowd brought the statement that a suit would result in the Austrians being strung up. The men all purchased bonds today.

Painted a Banker's Car - In Wamego the first yellow paint was applied because of failure to subscribe to the Liberty Loan. The process was carried through the Red Cross drive and culminated in the painting of the motor car of Louis B. Leach, president of the Wamego State Bank, since deposed and no longer an actual resident of Wamego. Paint was applied on property of the following in Wamego: Louis B. Leach, sidewalk in front of home, Louis B. Leach, motor car, John Kramer, William Kolterman, Ed Payne, Henry

When an unconfirmed rumor was received that members of a Mennonite colony at Jamesville [South Dakota] had refused to buy Liberty bonds, officers in charge of the loan campaign visited the colony and drove away 100 head of steers and 1,000 sheep. In a statement issued subsequently it was said the animals would be sold and the money invested in Liberty bonds and applied to the Jamesville quota. The Mennonites offered no opposition to the bond "salesmen."

Efforts to prevent banks from handling the bonds have centered chiefly in Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Missouri and Oklahoma. The President of a Wisconsin bank has advised the Treasury that his depositors, mostly Germans, or of German parentage, have withdrawn many thousands of dollars from his bank because he aided the First Liberty Loan. These depositors, he added, had taken their accounts to two rival banks on the understanding that those

banks would not aid the second Liberty Loan. The two banks, he reported, were not aiding the loan in any way. Liberty Loan enforcers sometimes appeared as underground, Ku Klux Klan-style groups, who would come by in masks in the dead of night and threaten people who did not purchase bonds (or who purchased fewer than the enforcers thought they should) with hanging, tarring & feathering, or various other tortures and degradations.



Images like these are stark reminders of the brutality to which humans can descend. To make matters worse for those persecuted, humiliated and ruined, it became clear as time went by that the federal government would never be able to repay the Liberty Bond loans from its citizens, as it had promised. As early as 1921 the federal government realized that redeeming all the bonds as promised would be a problem. They tried to reschedule the debt to be paid off in the 1930s, and they started issuing short term notes to repay the Victory Loan. Then the country fell into the Great Depression. In 1934 the government defaulted on the loan term, and negotiations were hung up with internal bickering

among federal government agencies. They finally chose a different gold standard as the measure of redemption, and 21 million Americans lost 41% of the value of their Bonds. The dust bowl years of the 1930s were followed by the Second World War and the new atrocities of the Hitler regime in Germany. My father died November 12, 1934. I suspect that many German-Americans like my father chose to keep a low profile and did not try to cash in their Liberty Bonds.

The campaign for Liberty Bonds was, however, to have an unexpected outcome: the spreading of the Spanish Flu.

In the summer of 1918, Philadelphia organized a grand spectacle to bolster morale and support the war effort: a procession for the ages to bring together marching bands, Boy Scouts, women's auxiliaries, and uniformed troops to promote Liberty Loans –government bonds issued to pay for the war. The day would be capped off with a concert led by the “March King” himself –John Philip Sousa. When the Fourth Liberty Loan Drive parade stepped off on September 28, some 200,000 people jammed Broad Street, cheering wildly as the line of marchers stretched for two miles. Floats showcased the latest addition to America’s arsenal –floating biplanes built in Philadelphia’s Navy Yard. Brassy tunes filled the air along a route where spectators were crushed together like sardines in a can. Each time the music stopped, bond salesmen singled out war widows in the crowd, a

move designed to evoke sympathy and ensure that Philadelphia met its Liberty Loan quota. This was a perfect breeding ground for the flu. Within five weeks 12,000 Philadelphians had died of the Spanish Flu.



One wit commented at the time: What you got out of this war was ... well, you got prohibition and the Spanish Flu – that’s all you got out of this war, prohibition and flu."

The Enlistment Law was another one German-Americans found a difficult pill to swallow. Conscription (military draft) was the first effect of the war in Iowa. It was especially hard on families of immigrant heritage whose ancestors had left Europe to avoid conscription there. Anti-draft meetings and petitions were held immediately after the declaration of war in April 1917. But threats of violence usually put an end to these expressions of dissent. There were many documented suicides, especially in rural areas, caused by the draft law. Conscientious objectors were subject to harassment and persecution, even if they came legally under the deferment or exemption categories. Unfortunately, there was no surer way to prove your loyalty to America than to give your son to the cause of war.

By law, registration was required of all men between the ages of 21 and 30 whose birthdays fell before June 5, 1917. A total of 216,299 Iowa men were subject to conscription. Of these, 1,822 were German-born, and as "alien enemies," they could not be inducted into the army. Draft quotas were imposed by counties. And county boards handled registrations, exemptions and deferments. Anyone placed in the "Class 1" category was eligible for immediate induction. Others were "deferred" for a variety of reasons. They might work in "strategic occupations" such as farming and telegraph operations. They might have dependent relatives. Or they might have physical handicaps. There was a great amount of hostility, especially among farmers, who believed that money and

political power could influence draft boards to offer deferments and exemptions. The draft board for New Vienna was in Dyersville.

My father paid close attention to the Enlistment Law and immediately reviewed the specific provisions and instructions. By 1917 when War was declared, all his children except the youngest three were married and established on farms, either in South Dakota, Wisconsin, or Iowa, and they all except those three had dependent children. That left only the two youngest sons vulnerable to conscription. Arthur, 23 and single, escaped the first draft call because his birthday did not fall between March and June. Andrew, the youngest, who was at that time in South Dakota working for his brother Will, escaped that call because he was still 18. My parents let it be known that 23-year-old Arthur was in charge of the Sabers farm, and they made plans for him to buy it. The owner of a producing farm should be eligible for deferment in the event of a second draft call. My father was then 64 years old and my mother was 60. They built a small Craftsman-style house in the town of New Vienna and had moved there by 1920. Arthur married in January of 1920, and by the time of the 1920 Census only he and his wife Elizabeth were residing on the home farm.

When Andrew turned 19 on March 7, 1918, he was immediately drafted, and my father took him to the District draft board in Dyersville, where he got classified based on his skill with horses. Andrew would be in the army as part of a cavalry unit assigned to deliver horses to the front lines. My father thought this would be safer than sending his son to the front lines as an infantryman. The war killed about 8 million horses, and new horses were always needed at the front. Andrew's job would be delivering those horses. Mama was still very nervous about her baby going off to war, but, like all the mothers, had to stoically accept the sacrifice. She and my father had breathed a huge sigh of relief that for the first draft call, none of their six sons or five sons-in-law would be called up. They knew they were lucky. Now their prayers would be for a quick end to the war and Andrew's safe return home. Andrew did return safely and lived a long and fruitful life before dying at age 90. My parents could not have imagined that the war would claim, not a son, but one of their daughters.



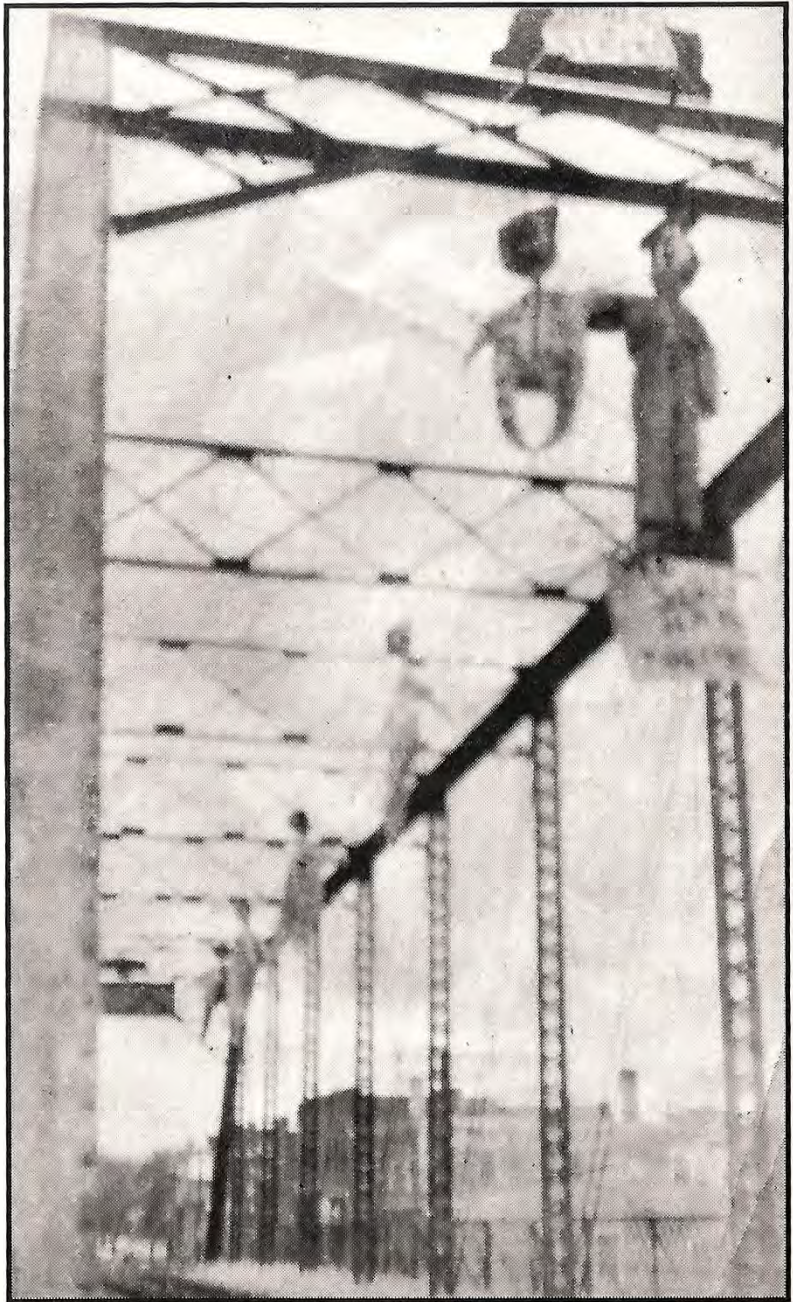
As enlistment intensified during the summer of 1917, patriotic fervor grew in Iowa and in Wisconsin. On one of her visits to us in Wisconsin, my mother showed us this photo of New Vienna townspeople coming together to send their young men off to war.

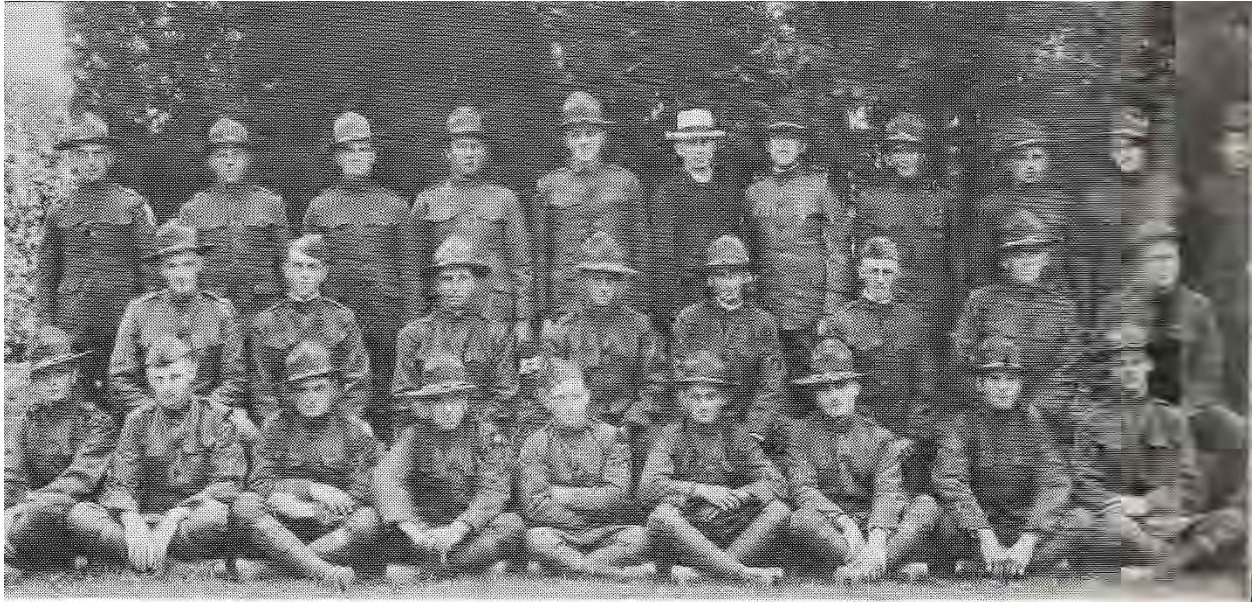
I have always wondered how much of that fervor was driven by true patriotism and how much was driven by simple fear, or at the minimum, the German way of understanding realities that must be accepted, and then acting upon those realities in the way most likely to bring about a good outcome.

"Slackers"

Dummies (called Slackers) were hung from the bridge in Dyersville in condemnation of those who found a way to get out of going to WWI. (1917-18)

*Photo submitted by
Kathleen Joester*





New Vienna soldiers in WW I: Front row, left to right; Edward V. Neuhaus, Joseph Schroeder, Henry Neuhaus, Joseph Fisher, Hubert Gaul, Eugene Hoefer, James Gireoux, Herbert Kass and Anthony Hellman. Second row; Arthur Rahe, Gustave Wilhelm, William Hermsen, Peter Ries, Joseph Klas, Lawrence Kluesner, Alois Klosterman and Edward Neuhaus. Third row; Raymond Hoefer, Emil Schuster, Dominic Becker, William Wentz, Frank Schroeder, Rev. Henry Reinert, William (Levi) Kramer, Gregor Welchert, Gregor Roling, Joseph Welchert and John Wedewer.

Whatever the cause, it was not long before my mother would bring us news and pictures about all the young men from New Vienna who were enlisting, and how the whole community showed so much pride and support for them. She pointed out my cousins and talked about how hard it was for some of the mothers to see their sons leaving for the war, but that in public they had to show complete support. For the first time, she was happy that five of her children were settled in South Dakota, where the climate of suspicion and hatred seemed less intense. Because land was so much cheaper in South Dakota, my father had over the years been able to help his children buy farms there, starting with John, his oldest son. My mother had always been sad that so many of her grandchildren lived so far away. With two children in Bloomington, only five of her children remained in the New Vienna area, two married with children of their own and three as yet unmarried. But now, as she saw that anti-German sentiment seemed not as strong in South Dakota, she was grateful so many of her family lived in a safer place.

U. S. NATIONAL ARMY CANTONMENT, CAMP DODGE, DES MOINES, IOWA.



BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF THE CAMP.

Like the rest of the Iowa men, Andrew was sent to Camp Didge in Des Moines, Iowa, for training during the spring of 1918. It was a large camp with military barracks housing the soldiers. After several months in Camp Dodge, he was sent to Camp Cody for the rest of his military training before being sent to New York for shipment to Europe. On August 8, 1918, Andrew mailed his last stateside postcard to his parents from the ship and told them he would not be allowed to write until he got to France, at which time they could expect a telegram from the military and a card from him with "Arrived safe" but nothing else. However, they could send him letters to the address on the postcard in care of "Soldiers' Letters."



He arrived overseas after a month-long trip by ship, landing in Liverpool, England and crossing the English Channel to arrive in France by train, riding in a boxcar. The soldiers then hiked to the battle front, sleeping in cow barns along the way. In his casual and easy-going way, Andrew joked later that *his* biggest battle was trying to get a three-day leave in Paris. Those who knew him knew that his humor was his way to deal with his sorrow and helplessness watching beautiful horses destroyed by shells, sniper fire and broken legs or simple exhaustion from being overworked. Over the course of the four years of the war an estimated eight million horses were killed.

Some, like this one, had to be shot because of a broken leg from the uneven terrain, some could not continue to carry the heavy loads expected, many were killed by mortar or sniper fire.



In true patriotic fashion, New Vienna showered its returning war veterans with pride and support. But the long-term effects of the war would manifest only over time and would include not only the immediate feelings of shame, anger, simmering hatreds and unrest on a personal level, but more destructively the seeds of violence on a global scale as the injustices of the Treaty of Versailles sought revenge and redress through World War II. As I struggle now with these big issues, I think that this was the period in our country more than any other when Americans began their descent from their proud and self-proclaimed pinnacle role as the world's melting pot to their becoming a land of nationalistic partisanship, division and fighting.

During the years of the war, I was young, and so busy trying to take care of my children and help your grandfather build up a farm, that the true nature of what was happening to my people, and to my country, did not really come home to me. I was sad when everything in our house that looked German or had the German language on it disappeared, or was stored, or burned, and I was bewildered by and sometimes feared the angry and hostile mood of the country that I had thought was mine, but mostly, I think, I was involved in building my new life as a wife, mother, and farm owner. There were so many new things happening in my life then. It is only now, when I have time to make Stories and reflect on their meanings, that I understand more clearly the reality of what

happened to my country and to my cultural heritage during these years. Was it all really necessary? My father made the decisions he did in order to protect his family. He and my mother read everything they could about the growing hostility against German-Americans, and they had relatives back in Ohio who told them how their friends in Pennsylvania in the Amish community had their livestock stolen and their barns burned because they would not force their sons to enlist in the military. My brother John in South Dakota told us how the Mennonites there were treated. There were six farms in our family by now, and my father feared that if all our livestock would be taken, we would no longer have the financial means to start over.

As I ponder all of our personal and national losses now, it is hard not to feel strong anger against the xenophobes who caused this. What right did they have to try to destroy an entire culture and impose their will upon a whole nation? It is hard for me to forgive a nationalism that could encourage the burning of books and music, or support and condone the violence the super-patriots practiced that included even unpunished murder. And I know it must have been even harder for my parents. They had spent their lives being good and productive citizens. They were used to talking with their friends and family or with shopkeepers in German. Now all business had to be conducted in English, and they were cautious to even gather on the church steps after Sunday Mass to talk with their friends and neighbors for fear such a gathering might be construed wrongly. Teachers and shop keepers and tradesmen suffered with the difficulties of speaking correctly and appropriately in a language that felt foreign, where they had to weigh their thoughts and words to be sure they would not be misinterpreted or would allow for them to be cheated. We were afraid to stand up for ourselves when unscrupulous merchants took advantage of us, or when our classmates called us Huns or Krauts. In a word, we were persecuted, dear little Johnnie, and it is truly a very bad feeling.

**And The Lesson to Take Away from This Is a Question:
What Does It Mean to Be American and Who Gets to Decide
That?**

It has been said that the war benefited German-Americans by forcing them to quickly adopt the English language. As future generations are showing us, that is not necessarily true. The xenophobia of these war years contributed to a decided reticence in this country to learn any foreign language, which has resulted in the United States being one of the few developed nations quite significantly deficient in an ability to be fluent in any language other than English, and therefore, very poor indeed in ability to access the richness of other cultures or be able to understand and appreciate them. The wealth of a culture is in the expression of its language.

Nevertheless, my Little Dear One, it cannot be denied that the war did bring benefits to our lives in some very practical ways. The commercial demands of the war significantly speeded up the development of electricity, transportation, and certain forms of communication, especially the telephone. It also had one unexpected result: women finally won the right to vote, after nearly 80 years of working for that. Since you love cars, and so do I, let's talk about cars first.