

# The German Influence in Manitowoc County

by EDWARD EHLERT

The first white settlement in Manitowoc County was at Manitowoc Rapids in 1835, with Jacob Conroe of Middlebury, Vermont, the settler. In the spring of 1836 about 30 other men joined him to build a saw mill.

The second settlement in the county was at Manitowoc with Benjamin Jones, a Chicago merchant and land speculator, the man who started the settlement. In 1835 he purchased all of the land south of the mouth of the Manitowoc river from the lake to the boundary line of Manitowoc township, and to a distance of about three miles to the south. A log cabin was built on the north side of the river, where he lived with his family when he came here in 1836.

The third and fourth settlements were at Two Rivers and Neshoto. Neshoto was located about eight miles from the mouth of the West Twin River where there was good water power. An interesting story is told about its founding.

In 1837 a Mr. Burnham of Detroit settled on the land at Neshoto without paying for it at the government land office, or otherwise acquiring title to the land. Lumber was ordered to be shipped on a schooner from Chicago for his mill, with delivery of the lumber at Manitowoc. Some weeks later, some young men at Manitowoc, desirous of doing this pioneer settler a good turn, trudged to Two Rivers on the beach and from thence up the river to Neshoto to inform Mr. Burnham of the schooner's arrival. He received the news without saying a word of thanks. This angered the boys and they were determined that they were going to get revenge.

Knowing that Mr. Burnham was a squatter, one of the boys hurried to Green Bay with \$350 and had entered in his own name three eighty acre tracts of land on which the mill site was located. On his way back he met Burnham and made him pay \$2,000 for the property, half in cash and the rest on a note, before he would part with his rights. The firm of Stringham and Burnham was formed and

before winter came the mill was in operation. The Neshoto mill was operated by the first owners until 1841 when it was sold to Frederick Borchardt, the first German settler in the county. He ran the mill for seven years with no white neighbors until later in the '40's.

Growth in white population in the county in the 1840's was slow. There were only about 240 settlers in the county in 1840. The census further showed that there were only 11 horses and 80 cattle. In 1845 the white population was about 600. During these years not enough food stuff was produced in the county so that people could become self-sufficient.

Mr. Borchardt was very intent to have some German neighbors so he had brochures printed which would advertise the virtues of the county as a good place to live and earn a livelihood. He extolled the climate of the county and also praised the productive capacity of the soil. He said that the fields had luxurious stands of clover with feed sufficient to feed the animals through the winter, and pastures so bountiful that there was plenty of food for the other seasons of the year. When settlers left Germany to come to the American frontier, in what is now the

mid-west, he arranged to meet the boats at Detroit. He induced some of these settlers to locate at Neshoto. Probably the first group of Germans to come here was a group from Holstein. There were settlers from Saxony in Germany and these settled in the Mishicot area. This was about 1847. Incidentally, in 1847, Manitowoc had a population of 87.

Between 1847 and 1859 a large number of Mecklenburgers and Pomeranians located in the county. Most of these settlers were Lutherans, and became members of eleven of the congregations of that denomination scattered around the county.

In 1847 about one hundred families came under the leadership of Frederick Reineking and others, and these settled in the Sheboygan and Manitowoc county area. Herman Kemper was a land agent, and he saw to it that when the settlers arrived, he was available to help them find land on which to settle. Those who came to Manitowoc county settled at Newton, Centerville, the village of Manitowoc, and a few in Kossuth and Cooperstown. The first settlers were poor and were compelled to work in the saw mills.

Table One

## MANITOWOC COUNTY POPULATION STATISTICS

Year	Total Population in Manitowoc County	Total Manitowoc	Total Two Rivers	Total Rest of County
1847	1,285	87	200	998
1850	3,702	1,300	924	1,478
1855*	13,048	2,185	1,852	9,011
1860	22,416	3,065	1,340	18,011
1870	33,369	5,168	1,365	26,836
1880	37,506	6,367	2,052	29,087
1885	38,692	6,881	2,500	29,311
1890	37,831	7,710	2,870	27,251
1895	40,802	9,427	3,593	27,782
1900	42,261	11,786	3,784	26,691
1910	44,978	13,027	4,850	27,101

Note: in 1855 there was a foreign born population in Manitowoc of 1,385; in Two Rivers 1,075 were foreign born.

Another land agent was Charles Esslinger. Although a citizen of Manitowoc he had an office at Buffalo, New York, where he was the agent of a firm known as Jones and Allen. During the winter of 1849, fifty-six German immigrants were compelled to remain at Buffalo since they did not have enough money to travel the rest of the way. Esslinger met them, and

persuaded them to locate in Manitowoc. Some remained in the city, but most of them settled on farms. The population of the county in 1859 was 3,702, with about 1300 of these located in Manitowoc. It was in the 1850's that the great migration began, with the population of the county increasing as Table One indicates.

The influx of settlers into Wisconsin during the 1850's through the 1880's was general, with each of the counties having its share of these immigrants. In the table which follows is shown the number of immigrants who came from the countries of northern Europe:

**Table Two**  
**NUMBER OF IMMIGRANTS WHO CAME FROM**  
**NORTHERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES TO AMERICA**

	1860	1870	1880	1890
<b>Total Number of Foreign Born in Wisconsin</b>	276,927	364,499	405,425	519,199
Germany	116,798	162,314	184,328	259,819
Ireland	49,961	48,479	41,907	33,306
England and Wales	37,021	34,932	30,380	27,930
Norway	21,442	40,046	49,349	65,696
Sweden	673	2,799	8,138	20,157
Polish	417	1,290	5,263	17,660

The above table shows that in 1860 about 43% of the immigrants to Wisconsin were from Germany. By 1890 this had increased to about 50 per cent. Why was there such a large migration from Germany during these years? The reasons were numerous. We shall relate only the more predominant reasons.

#### **Reasons for Heavy Emigration from Germany**

Germany was divided into about twenty different states. Each was ruled by a governor who was responsible to the emperor. The government was autocratic with little of democracy evident. Men of wealth dominated.

The German legislature had two houses. The upper house was a hereditary body composed of the Prussian "Junker" nobility. The lower house was elected and all male citizens were supposed to have a voice in choosing it. People voted in three classes, according to wealth, in such a way as to give two-thirds of the representatives to the richest one-sixth of the voters. In Berlin in 1900 a rich man's vote counted as much as fifty poor men. The legislature had little authority with the king or emperor empowered to adjourn it or dissolve it at his discretion. He had the power of absolute veto.

#### **The Spirit of Militarism Prevails**

The spirit of militarism was predominant in Germany. West's "Modern Progress," states, (p. 507) "A policeman's evidence in court had undue weight

against independent witnesses, and his rule was all-pervading. A foreign observer said, 'The policeman strolls into your house or garden when he likes, much as a school master enters a classroom to see that all is going properly. To live in Germany always seems like a return to the nursery.' "

Even worse was the contemptuous and often times brutal treatment of civilians by army officers. There were gross and unprovoked insults and oftentimes violent assaults by officers upon unoffending and helpless citizens, for which it was difficult to obtain redress in the courts.

Perhaps most offensive of all was the Prussian army system. At the age of twenty, each man was required to enter the army for two years. For five or more years he was in the active reserves with the requirement of two months of service each year in a military camp. For twelve more years he was listed in the territorial reserve army, liable for army service when needed. The German army system soon became the pattern for all European countries, as other countries were convinced of the superiority of the Prussian army system.

#### **A German Citizen's Personal Rights**

A citizen in Germany had no security for personal rights. While the constitution contained a bill of rights, the courts had no power to declare null and void an unconstitutional law. As a result trial by jury, freedom of the press, freedom of public assembly, and free speech existed only in limited degree. To criticize the emperor in the press ever so lightly was likely to land the offender in jail for a considerable term. In 1898 it was reported that there were 70 German editors in jail for having been indiscrete in their remarks about the emperor.

#### **Conflict Between Church and State**

Catholic and Protestant Germany had been brought together under one government. This resulted at once in a serious conflict between church and state. In 1870 the famous decree of the Vatican Council affirming the pope to be infallible in matters of faith and morals was enacted. This resulted in great conflict between the German bishops and other segments of the church. Within a year the matter was resolved; however, certain dissenters became members of a group known as "Old Catholics." Bismark then stepped in, in defense of the Old Catholics, and asserted the supremacy of the state over the church. Under his influence the legislature took marriage and all education, private and public, from the control of the church. The Jesuits were expelled from Germany. The state assumed control over the education of priests, and the church was forbidden to exclude its own members except with government permission. Things gradually worsened with relations between the government and the Vatican so strained that between 1875 and 1879 many of the parishes in Germany were closed altogether. Finally, an opposition party to Bismark developed and they were able to block some of his other state measures. In 1880 the government began its retreat from its former autocratic position over and against the Catholic church.

Actually, Protestants also experienced difficulty. The governor of a "state" influenced the religion of the people under his rule. If there were people whose religious views differed from the governor's views, those people found practicing their religion difficult. There was much unhappiness all over Germany with the interference of the state in matters of faith.

## Other Issues

There were other issues which made people unhappy in Germany. When attractive brochures arrived extolling the virtues of living in America, many made plans to leave the fatherland to undertake the severe life of a pioneer in frontier America. America was said to be "the home of the free," and these people cherished freedom so much that they were willing to leave families and friends in Germany for it. Thus the migration began and continued through most of the later years of the 19th century.

While the reasons given above were ones that caused many to leave Germany, each family had his own personal reasons for emigrating from Germany. We shall relate the reasons individual families and groups had for leaving the fatherland to take up a new life in frontier America. All of the families of whom we shall write located in Manitowoc County.

### THE JOHN SCHUETTE FAMILY

In the occupational monograph relating to the John Schuette family (No. 15, 1971 series) there are these paragraphs:

"In the spring of 1848 the spirit of discontent hovered over all the German states, threatening serious results. Freedom and equality were the slogans. The revolutionary spirit was wafted from the southern states to the northern, among them the grand duchy of Oldenburg, where our family lived, and where I was born. (Editor's Note: This province bordered the North Sea in western Germany. It was not far from the Netherlands.)

The actual warfare lasted only forty-eight hours, after the leaders were put to flight. Among the leading spirits were Schurz, Kinkel, Sigel, and Hecker, all of whom took refuge in the United States, with many others of less renown, owing to which the years of 1848 and 1849 brought to our shores a larger number of this class of immigrants, than ever before or after.

At this time Prussia was at war with Denmark. The soldiers marched through our village with fife and drum, prancing cavalry, rattling artillery, flags waving, bands playing. Oh! what an exhilarating scene, what a treat for the boys.

I was at that time eleven years of age and enjoyed the spectacle immensely. My mother, however, cried, and when my father inquired about the reason, she answered, "That which gives the boys the greatest enjoyment is to me the greatest grief. I hoped that I had nearly passed a mother's anxiety for her children's growth, but this reminds me of more to

come, when in a few years our four growing boys, one after another, will be taken away by order of the duke, and march like these, perhaps to death; then there will be worry to the end of my days." When he saw my mother in tears, the die was cast. He said, "Don't you worry about our boys. They will never serve a duke or potentate. We will take them to a land where the battles for freedom have already been fought . . . where freedom really exists, where war is remote, where there are opportunities for young men." And so this family left Germany in the spring of 1848 and began the long trip to America and to Manitowoc.

### THE SIEKER FAMILY

In an unpublished manuscript written by the late Josephine Sieker, she told about the emigration of her ancestors from Germany thus: "In 1850 my parents decided to emigrate to America. My father had joined the militia to be of service to the community only in case of hunger, sickness, or mob action. This association, however, earned him ill fame, which mortified him no end. The thought of perhaps having his six sons compelled to serve with the Bavarian military was repulsive to him. (Bavaria was in southern Germany bordering on Austria and Czechoslovakia. In Bavaria were such famous places as Nuremberg, Augsburg, and Munich.) Thus the decision was made to leave Germany and go to America.

The economic situation in those days made selling one's property possible at only great personal loss. The parents had through thrift and self-denial acquired a home, a potato lot and garden next to the state moat. During these years everything had depreciated in value. The sale of the personal property and real estate was made at a considerable loss. Our journey to America began in June 1850."

### The Settlers at St. Nazianz

One of the most interesting accounts relating to people leaving Germany related to the people who settled at St. Nazianz. These people lived in the Grand Duchy of Baden, a little province in the extreme southwest corner of what once was Germany. The western boundary of the province was the Rhine River. To the south of Baden was Switzerland. Across the Rhine was Alsace Lorraine.

In the March, 1971, Manitowoc County Historical Society Newsletter there are these paragraphs: "This little state was quite similar in many of its features to the State of Wisconsin. It had

pretty lakes and the rolling hills of the Black Forest were covered with beautiful woodlands. Farming was the principal occupation of the people of Baden. The people were a gay, lively sort who were deeply religious in the practice of the Catholic faith.

In 1840, however, when the notion of emigration to America began to be thought of, the people were not gay. They were not free to practice their religion, and the political, economic and social conditions were all very disturbing to them. What was happening in the province of Baden was not at all unique. Developments there were characteristic of most of Germany, and for that matter also other countries of Europe.

This was a period of ferment — radical departures from the past had invaded the religious, political, economic and social areas of living. Centralized government tried to organize national armies and schools, and the privileges of people were severely restricted. The liberals sought toleration of all religions."

Why did these people wish to leave Germany and go to America? It was because reports had come to them that there was cheap land to be had in America, taxes were low, and the opportunity to become financially independent in a short time were good, that is, if one were willing to work hard, and to make some personal sacrifices for a time. Besides, it was the land of the free where there were none of the infringements of rights, privileges, and beliefs which they held sacred and dear. That was reason enough to leave Germany. They left Germany in 1854, with their parish priest, the Rev. Fr. Oschwald, as their leader.

### A Quotation from First German Lutheran's Centennial Booklet

From the Centennial booklet of this congregation in Manitowoc we quote this paragraph: "Economic, political, and religious conditions in Europe were deplorable. Added to this, the common people were limited to the estate where they were born. There was no prospect for advancement, neither for them nor their children. Shipowners and land speculators knew how to portray the United States as a land of unlimited possibilities, hence, it can be easily understood why many people of the "Old Country" turned their faces to America which offered them cheap land, light taxes, work for all, and equality for their neighbors . . . The decade from 1846 to 1856 saw a million Germans enter the U.S.A., with many of them seeking homes in Wisconsin, Iowa, Missouri and Texas."

# German Settlements in Manitowoc County

In the early years of immigration to Manitowoc County, many of the families coming here were Lutheran, with the majority coming from Mecklenburg-Schwerin in northern Germany. These people located in various places in the county, and formed the Lutheran congregations that still today are scattered about the county. These locations are: Louis Corners in the Town of Schleswig, Reedsville, Newtonburg, Cleveland, Liberty, Mishicot, Two Creeks, Rockland, Maribel, Collins, Two Rivers and Manitowoc.

The people who located at Mishicot were Saxons. There is an area near Mishicot that still is known as Saxonburg. As for St. Nazianz, the people who located there were Catholics from the Baden area in southeast Germany. In Two Rivers and Manitowoc, Germans from several areas of Germany located in these communities.

Judge Emil Baensch, the first president of the Manitowoc County Historical Society, which was founded in 1906 said, "The revolution of 1848 to establish a republic in Germany was a failure. But it proved a great benefit to Uncle Sam, for those who were active in it and those who were friendly to it, merged into a mass migration which swarmed our shores. Imbued as they were with republican tendencies (government by representatives of the people) they met a warm welcome as "ready-made Americans." States vied with each other in efforts to induce them to locate within their respective boundaries. In Wisconsin, Manitowoc County was one of the most active."

## John F. Diederich's Letters

In 1849 a book was published at Leipsig, Germany, entitled, "Letters and Diary of John F. Diederichs." It details the experiences, day by day, of Diederichs, his wife and four children, during their journey from Elberfeld in western Germany to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. (Elberfeld was located about twenty miles from the Rhine River and about 50 or 60 miles from the Netherlands.)

The letters describe weeks of travel, with fellow emigrants looking over the lands in eastern Wisconsin. Finally an "eighty" in the town of Newton is found which satisfies him. He buys it and it became his homestead the rest of his life. And then the letters grow enthusiastic about the beautiful scenery, the pleasant climate, the wonderfully fertile soil, the

nearness of markets for lumber and farm products, the friendliness of the neighbors, etc. He closes by advising his friends to follow his example. We know that many Elberfelders did so.

## Writings by Gustav Richter

In 1849 another book appeared which was entitled "The Free State of Wisconsin," published at Wesel on the Rhine, by Gustav Richter. This book was a very comprehensive description of the state. Its government is explained, and included is a copy of the State Constitution. (Wisconsin had become a state in the union in 1848) Details of the various natural resources of the state were related, and a great future for it was envisioned. Mr. Richter pointed out that "The products of Europe can be shipped to eastern U.S.A. seaports, then shipped by water to the lake ports, and then by rail to the Pacific. He shows by figures that the Orient is much nearer by that route than it would be to ship from Liverpool via the Cape of Good Hope in southern Africa, and then to the Orient by way of the Indian Ocean.

Included in this book was a folding map two feet square of Wisconsin counties that were then surveyed and platted. These counties generally were south and east of the Wisconsin and Fox Rivers. To the emigrant he especially recommends Manitowoc County on account of its large German population. Mr. Richter was the first treasurer of the Village of Manitowoc, and was greatly involved in the sale of real estate. In fact, the east side of the block on North Eighth Street between Commercial and York Streets, was still owned by his descendants about 65 years ago.

## Some Pioneer Settlers Advertise by Mail

Obviously the first settlers from Germany in Manitowoc County felt strange when they located here. They knew little of the English language, and so communication with residents was difficult. They longed for companionship, and especially of those former neighbors in Germany whom they had left behind when they decided to become immigrants to America. To induce others in the Fatherland to come to America, and hopefully to Manitowoc County, they decided to try advertising by mail. They prepared a letter to prospective emi-

grants, and had several thousand copies printed. These were distributed among residents of Manitowoc county, with the request that they mail them to friends and acquaintances in Germany. Judge Emil Baensch wrote in his memoirs, "My mother, who came to Manitowoc with her parents, (the John Schuettes) at the age of 17, sent copies of the letter to several of her former schoolmates in Delmenhorst, Oldenberg. One was returned with a friendly poem written on the back of it, showing a preference for Oldenberg, but wishing mother a happy home in the wilderness."

Did these advertisements bring results? The census figures of 1860 and years following tell us that they did.

## A Family Named Gerhard Kremer Settle in Manitowoc County

In 1970 the State Historical Society of Wisconsin published in Badger History an article which was entitled "Early Wisconsin Through the Eyes of a German Immigrant." We quote:

"The Kremers left New York city for Wisconsin on May 19, 1848. Describing the sea voyage to New York, Mr. Kremer wrote, 'Our ship, the Argonaut, had room for about 130 passengers. Fortunately most of the emigrants were friendly. Nevertheless conditions were bad, and the food was even worse. The seas were rough for most of the 37-day trip.'

At New York the Kremers scarcely found room at the dock to put down their baggage. The city itself, however, impressed them. "The buildings are made of red bricks and made the streets look dark and dignified. And the traffic! Not one of us had imagined anything so great. Many wagons and carts roll over the pavement. At any moment you expect them to run into each other."

The Kremer family took a steamer north to Albany. "A floating hotel!" Gerhard called the three-story high ship. In Albany the family boarded a train to Buffalo. "Here", he wrote, "as in other American cities, pigs run loose in the streets." For \$6.00 each the Kremers bought steamer tickets to Wisconsin. Arriving at Sheboygan they were met with an unhappy surprise. They were charged a high toll to unload their luggage. "It would have been cheaper to land at Manitowoc," wrote young Gerhard.

Leaving the mother and smaller children, Gerhard, his father, and older brothers set off to find land. At night

they stopped at a farmhouse to eat and rest. After spending the night in the loft of the cabin, the men woke to find it had turned cold. "We were surprised to find the small wheat and rye field covered with frost. We were told that a frost might be expected any month of the year. Not very encouraging for settlers from the lower Rhine who planned to farm. However, these light frosts are not as serious as we at first thought."

Leaving this friendly farmer the men traveled on. "The soil as far west as Lake Winnebago and farther is very fertile," wrote Gerhard. Finally the family found land near Manitowoc. Two of the 160 acres had been cleared and fenced. Corn, potatoes and oats had been planted. The owner wanted \$40 for his work. The land itself cost \$1.25 an acre. Pine trees grew on some of the land. Gerhard and his brothers decided to make wood shingles from these trees. They hoped to earn money to pay for the land they had bought.

The men were pleased with their choice of land. It was good to live near a city; Manitowoc had fifty houses. Gerhard wrote, "Manitowoc has fairly good stores, several good inns, and an English school. A church for both German and English services is to be built. In addition, two physicians and one drug store serve the needs of the sick. Both cities (Manitowoc and Manitowoc Rapids) are located in a beautiful valley. The region from here to Manitowoc has ridges between which are located lakes of many sizes. Creeks rush down slopes and drive sawmills."

Although there were untold acres of prairie and forest, Wisconsin was not entirely a wilderness. "Men have done wonderful things here in just ten short years," wrote Kremers. "Roads lead in all directions through forests to growing cities. Mail is carried even into the heart of the forest."

From the former owners of the farm, the Kremers' father bought 2 oxen, yokes, and a heavy chain for \$60.00. While some of the men returned to Sheboygan for the family and belongings, others worked to finish the log house. Oxen dragged logs to the home site. German and Yankee neighbors came to help put up the walls. German immigrants who had come to Wisconsin a short time earlier lived only minutes away. Yankees were people who had come from the eastern United States. "In house building," Gerhard noted, "Yankees are especially skillful."

Young Kremers often wrote about the Yankees. Probably describing Sunday clothes, he wrote, "The women appear

stylishly dressed, sometimes on horseback, more commonly seated next to their husbands on the wagon seat. Silk dresses, hats with silk veils, silk parasols (for sun), and umbrellas (for rain), are common. This sex receives great attention here and little work is expected of them. German girls are more willing to work and do not smoke, whereas some American girls do." Kremers suggested that young Germans marry before coming to Wisconsin, "Here," he wrote, "the choice is poor."

With the cabin made liveable, the immigrants turned to the job of clearing the fields. Trees were cut and logs trimmed. Poles suitable for fences were set aside. The brush was piled up and burned. Oxen dragged logs and stumps to the piles. The freshly cut wood burned slowly. Frequent showers put out the flames, so fires burned long into the summer. All of this was a strange experience for German farmers. "But now, what had been accomplished during the first eight weeks? The log cabin had been erected and two acres cleared. One acre was planted with potatoes, one half acre with a vegetable garden, and the remainder was our farmyard." The Kremers were surprised at how fast crops grew on their land.

To help in their work the family bought a wagon and several cows in Milwaukee. The 90-mile trip took thirty hours. One cow had a calf on the way. The new-born animal had to be carted in a wheelbarrow.

There were still some Indians in the area, but they kept to themselves. Said the Kremers, "One need not fear them. No longer have they any claim on the land."

German, English and Norwegian families bought farms in the area too. Mr. Kremers loved to talk and his home became a favorite gathering place for neighbors. Most neighbors were young couples with small children.

As an experienced emigrant Gerhard often gave advice. "Emigrants," he said, "need dried fruit and vegetables to eat aboard ship and wooden shoes with leather soles for walking the slippery decks. Settlers should have at least \$300 cash for supplies and equipment in Wisconsin." He suggested also that the travelers bring carpenter tools, a coffee mill, feather beds, a spade or shovel, and clothing. All of these items were expensive to buy in Wisconsin. He recommended purchase of land close to Lake Michigan. "High costs for hauling produce to market from far inland cut profits in half," he said.

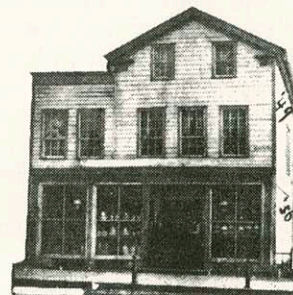
"Not everyone is happy here," Ger-

hard Kremers wrote. "Some people could not break their ties with the Fatherland. But we were so many we did not get lonesome." For most young people, living in a new land was no problem. Men like Gerhard's father, however, often felt like strangers in a strange country. But his father once said, "Transplanted trees will take root in new soil even though it takes time to overcome the shock of being moved." Some people were never able to make America their home. These men drifted from place to place and often wandered back to Germany.

### The First German Settler In Manitowoc

The first German settler in Manitowoc was George Dusold, a shoemaker. He came to Manitowoc in 1847 from Manitowoc Rapids. He had located there the year before. Mr. Dusold made himself a committee of one to meet the new arrivals from the Fatherland. He met them at the south pier in his shirt sleeves, a clay pipe in his mouth, and carpet slippers on his feet. They were conducted to his little hotel located in the middle of the block on Jay Street, between 6th and 7th Streets, where they were made to feel at home as he conversed with them in their native tongue.

It was in this year that Dusold was offered the entire block on which Schuette's store is now located, the Wood block building, the Victoria Hotel, and other buildings for the sum of \$50. He, however, with many others, thought that when the first bridge would be constructed across the Manitowoc river, that it would be located between 6th and 7th Streets. He erected a 3-story frame building at the corner of 7th and Jay Streets, on which he paid taxes in the amount of 27 cents that year. This was the hotel to which we referred earlier. There was a dance hall on the third floor. Incidentally, when the court house was relocated from Manitowoc Rapids to Manitowoc the county offices were in Dusold's building from 1853 through 1857. It was in that year that the county's second courthouse building was put into use.



SCHUETTE'S STORE, 1849

# Life in Manitowoc in 1850 and the Years Following

What were conditions like when the German immigrants arrived in 1850 and the years thereafter? Falge in his "History of Manitowoc County" (pages 350-351) writes: "In those days there were hard times in the town as well as in the country. Money there was none. The products of labor went for trade for the necessities of life. In the summer an occasional sailing vessel would anchor in the bay and land provisions. Sailing vessels were frequent and were loaded with lumber, shingles, and cord wood. As to the amount of business done here, there was little to speak of. Up to 1854 there were no brick houses here and few had brick chimneys. A stovepipe stuck through the roof of a shanty would answer the purpose. For all the lack of 'modern conveniences' the people were content, happy and hospitable. From time to time a dance would be arranged. Beer was brewed but not always of the best. As an old settler remarked, 'the south side is distinctly a German settlement; it contains 30 houses and three breweries.' Whiskey was cheap (20 to 30 cents a gallon). Money was not required. The landlord was paid with shingles, fence

posts, or cord wood. Pfeffer's Hotel at the corner of Tenth and Marshall Streets was one of the popular pleasure resorts. In a space of 12' x 12' as many as twenty couples would swing themselves in a waltz or gallop. Treading on some young dame's feet mattered not as these were usually encased in heavy leather. "After the ball" one morning, Landlord Pfeffer found to his chagrin that the hotel receipts of the night before amounted to four bunches of shingles, the "tickets" having been deposited out of doors, and had been in the dark, used over and over again.

There were dense forests to the south between what is now Hamilton Street and Lincoln High School. Falge tells about a woman who became lost in this forest. To find her way out she listened to the sound of the waves, found her way to the lake, and then out of the forest.

Women were scarce in the early days, and to supply the need of his countrymen in this respect, a blacksmith, residing on Washington Street, wrote to his old home and induced a number of fair maidens to venture across the 'big pond.' He met them at the pier and introduced them to

their would-be husbands, and if all were satisfactory, they were married on the spot.

Travel in those days was mostly on foot. A. Wittman and P. J. Blesch, who were chosen as delegates to the Democratic Convention at Watertown, traveled there on foot. Many merchants did the same in going to Milwaukee to purchase supplies that were to be shipped to Manitowoc by boat.

The first vehicles used by farmers in bringing their products to market in some instances defied description. Indian drags and two-wheeled carts, the wheels being discs sawed from well-rounded tree trunks, and an ox or a cow furnishing the motive power, were not infrequent.

There was no bridge across the river in 1850. An Indian girl ferried the few travelers across in a canoe, the fare being a penny a trip. As soon as the first bridge of timbers was constructed in 1851, the travelers walked across, and the ferry was abandoned. The first bridge was not a drawbridge, as there was a sand bar across the channel which prevented vessels from entering the river.

## The German Influence on Manitowoc

### Religion and Education

Since many of the German immigrants were unhappy about the restrictions that were placed upon them in the practice of their religion in the Fatherland, it is obvious that this concern would carry over into America. Churches were among the first buildings to be erected in a settlement. For example, the colony at St. Nazianz erected a log cabin on the first day that they were here. It was a rainy day, and regardless of the weather, it was necessary that some kind of shelter be constructed by nightfall. On the second day work began on a church.

The first Lutheran church in a German settlement was built at Newtonburg in 1850. The pastor of the church was very mission minded, and regularly he walked to Manitowoc to serve members of his faith in the village. The centennial booklet published by First German congregation on South 8th Street contains this paragraph: "In the village of Manitowoc there lived a number of strict Reformed families. Here also resided many Mecklenburgers and Hannoverans. In contrast to the many rationalists who came to

America in 1848 and were known as the '48'ers', these people gathered to hear the Word of God. Pastor Goldammer served them from the beginning of his coming to Manitowoc county, walking the distance to Manitowoc every Tuesday. Services were held in the evening in a district schoolhouse located on the corner of Washington and 7th Streets. These services were also attended by the Reformed families. The following year the missionary was able to purchase a horse, and was now able to conduct services in Manitowoc every Sunday evening.

In the spring of 1853 the little group purchased a lot on the corner of Marshall and South Tenth Streets as a site for a future church building. The lot cost \$110. In February, 1855, the Manitowoc church adopted a church constitution, the congregation to be known as Ev. Lutheran Trinity congregation of Manitowoc. However, in 1860, the state legislature was petitioned to change the name to First German Lutheran Congregation, by which name it has been known ever since. The constitution adopted in 1855 was signed by 71 families.

A church building was dedicated in 1856, this building being built on the lot where the present church stands. This building was used until 1873, when it was sold to St. Mary's Catholic congregation for \$650. The building served them for many years. The present First German Church was dedicated in December, 1873. Its dimensions were 48' x 96' with the cost not to exceed \$13,000.

St. Boniface became the first Catholic church to be built in Manitowoc. Rev. Joseph Brenner was sent to the county in 1850 to begin mission activity and in the next three years, congregations were established at Manitowoc Rapids, Two Rivers, Cooperstown, Meeme, Maple Grove, and Francis Creek. It was in 1854 that St. Boniface was founded. The first church was 40' x 70' in size.

Space limitations prevent a complete history of the founding of other congregations in Manitowoc. Each has a history of its own. We would therefore restrict this discussion to the first two of the German language churches to be founded in Manitowoc. Both of these congregations seemed agreed that the best means

to perpetuate themselves and the culture of their members was to have church schools. Thus, both First German and St. Boniface had schools in which the young were taught the fundamentals of the Christian faith. They were taught also certain secular subjects. They were intent on the preservation of the German culture in America, and the schools represented the best means of making this possible. The language used in these schools, of course, was German. It was in the 1880's that having a dual system of schools became an issue, and Governor Hoard tried to enact the so-called Bennett law which would have made parochial schools unconstitutional. Lutherans and Catholics all over Wisconsin were aroused and they soundly defeated this effort to restrain them from having private schools.

John Nagle was then the county superintendent of schools in Manitowoc County. He was one of the ablest and best known educators in Wisconsin. He felt that his work as an educator was hampered because there were so many parochial schools in the county. He found that there were four teachers in these schools who could not speak English.

While the Americanization of the German immigrants was a slow process, in view of the fact that their children attended German schools, a turn came in 1916. It was then that World War I began, with the United States joining Great Britain and France in a war against Germany. These were difficult days for the German people. In every community there were people who watched every move of aliens, especially Germans. People became so radical in their views that they even changed the names of some of the popular foods in the restaurants. Sauerkraut and cole slaw, for example, became Liberty cabbage. Many German-Americans were jailed because of some supposed offense which made their patriotism questionable.

In an atmosphere such as this it became a necessity that the language used in the parochial schools be English, since anything German was suspect. Thus, World War I marks the transition from German to English of many of the churches. While English was the predominant language in the churches, some continued to have at least one German language service each Sunday. Some of the older people did not feel that God could be present in a church service in which a language other than German was used. During the week many of these people used the English language in their business life, and they were able to use it well, but on Sunday the language of worship had to be German.

The story is told of a woman who came to America from Schleswig-Holstein when she was a girl of 18 years. She attended German church services until the day she died, and once said, "I tried English church services once, but every-time Herr Pastor said, Jesus Christ, it sounded like he was swearing."

With the transition to the use of the English language the German population became increasingly American in their actions and customs. Another factor to hasten the Americanization process was the inter-marriage that occurred among the various nationalities. Germans married Norwegians, Germans with people of Polish descent, and Germans with Yankees. All of these factors hastened the breakdown of the customs and attitudes that the German immigrant brought to America. The result is that today it is difficult to tell about the national origin of most people.

### Politics

Since the German immigrants came from the "have-nots" in Germany, it could be expected that they would be attracted to the Democratic party in America. During the decade of the 1850's Manitowoc's immigrant population was predominately Democratic. However, when slavery became an issue, they supported Abraham Lincoln for president in 1860. While some of the German population did not relish war or going to war, they were very patriotic as a group. The Salamon brothers were perhaps typical of the attitude that many of German descent had toward the Civil War. In the post-Civil War period many of Manitowoc's German population became Democratic in their politics again, and when the Progressives of the 1912 - 1935 era were prominent in politics, the German were prominent in that political group.

One of the Salamon brothers in 1854 was a candidate for Register of Deeds and won the election. In 1860 he became the Lieutenant Governor of Wisconsin. A company of soldiers from Manitowoc county fought in a battle in the south, and suffered many casualties. A number were wounded and were in great need of medical supplies and treatment. The Governor of Wisconsin took a boat load of medical supplies and bandages down the Mississippi River, and enroute fell overboard and drowned. Mr. Salamon then became the Governor of Wisconsin, the only Governor of our state ever to come from Manitowoc. During his administration there were draft riots. One was especially severe in Port Washington.

### Industry

The German immigrants were a very industrious lot. They were willing to work long and hard, were intelligent and competent. The German people serve well, and according to Charles House, an editorial writer of the Milwaukee Journal, "to a greater extent than any other ethnic group." While Wisconsin is not the greatest industrial state in the U.S.A., it nevertheless has a high rank among the states in industry. Perhaps you saw the report issued shortly after the New Year in which the virtues of Wisconsin as a state were portrayed. One of the greatest assets that Wisconsin has is a plentiful supply of skilled labor. Industrialists who have located in Wisconsin feel that the great number of men and women available for whatever is required in the way of skilled labor is one reason for Wisconsin's progress in the industrial world.

The people are eager and anxious to improve themselves educationally, and generally are fair and reasonable in their demands.

### Germans and "Gemuechtlichkeit."

From the time of their arrival in America, the German people have been known as a friendly people. They enjoy getting together in a social way, and having good times. It seems that much of their "gemuechtlichkeit" was demonstrated in what was once known as a "saloon." To attract business, the keeper of the tavern would not only dispense beer, but also served free lunches to go with the beer. One of the wives said, "My husband put up a lunch that was almost a banquet. There were pickled pig knuckles, sauerkraut, cucumber and herring salads, cheese, sausage, and other food." Another said, "We used to serve sauerbraten once a week. Now we serve it every day, even on Sunday."

Germans have their favorite foods. They like boiled dinners of pork hocks and sauerkraut, pork roasts, pot roasts, and potato salads are traditional German favorites.

The Germans were a gay people who enjoyed many kinds of social activity. Dancing was a favorite pastime. They developed a tradition for being lovers of music. Even today, any child in a German home, if he shows any musical inclination, gets music lessons. In 1855, there was organized in Manitowoc a group known as the Freier Saengerbund, a men's singing society. This organization lasted until well after World War II. There were singing societies in other communities and once each year they had a "Saengerfest." One of the oldest musical

groups in Manitowoc is the Marine Band. While the persons in the band have come from many ethnic groups, the predominant group have been those of German ethnic origin.

#### Agriculture

In the early years agriculture was the predominant occupation of German immigrants. At first they specialized in cash crops, for most immigrants had little money. The necessities of life were procured by means of barter; however, at certain times it was required that payment be made in cash, with payment of taxes a prime example. The products of the forest and field became the means by which their wants and needs were supplied.

The German settlers were good farmers, and they brought with them good farming techniques. They knew about the need for rotation of crops, and they were students of good agricultural and horticultural practices. One of the early leaders in improvement of farming practices was Jacob Lueps who lived where the Manitowoc Company is now located. He wondered whether the vegetables and farm crops which thrived in Germany would grow well here. Thus, he kept weather records of temperature and rainfall. His records were so complete and exact that they were accepted by the Smithsonian Institute in Washington,

D.C., as one of the earliest weather records in Wisconsin. Mr. Lueps was one of the founders of the County Fair Association. In the beginning this institution was for the purpose of encouraging farmers to improve the quality of their produce and livestock. The Manitowoc County Fair has had an illustrious history since its founding in 1859. The County Fair was first held in Washington Park on South 11th and Marshall Streets. Then it was moved to "the hill," and finally to Clarks Mills. However, in 1884 it was moved to New York Avenue and North 18th Street, where it was held annually until 1972.

In the 1880's it became obvious that "wheat was not king," and the farmers of the county then began to diversify their agricultural practices. It was then that they turned to dairying. This county has always been one of Wisconsin's most prominent counties in the production of dairy products.

#### SUMMARY

We would not want to leave the impression that Manitowoc's "character" became what it is solely because of the German influence. There are a number of other ethnic groups who helped also. These ethnic groups were as positive in shaping the Manitowoc community as were the Germans. If the German in-

fluence was predominant it was only because of their superiority in numbers. We have an excellent community. It has always had good government. Our schools are regarded as among the best in Wisconsin. The fact that we have the qualities that make for the good community in which to work and live is not an accident. It happened because people wanted just that kind of community. While our people are sometimes slow in adopting new ways of doing things, when they proceed with caution they are very much in character. The German people have always been that way and Manitowoc reflects that while they may not be the first to adopt a new idea, when they do, then there is willingness to do that which is best for the community.

There is no doubt that our German ancestry has influenced Manitowoc much. It seems that the people are quite satisfied with what the city has provided in the way of services and cultural opportunities. While some of the long-time residents of the community may not always fully appreciate the good things that are provided, when newcomers come they praise us for what we have. As we take a closer look, we then realize that this is the kind of community of which we ought to be very proud. It should make us proud to be able to say that, "I live in Manitowoc County, Wisconsin, and my home is in Manitowoc."

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