

## German-Iowan Studies: Selected Essays

LaVern J. Rippley

ISSN 0003-4827

Copyright © 2005 State Historical Society of Iowa. This article is posted here for personal use, not for redistribution.

---

### Recommended Citation

Rippley, LaVern J. "German-Iowan Studies: Selected Essays." *The Annals of Iowa* 64 (2005), 379-381.  
Available at: <http://ir.uiowa.edu/annals-of-iowa/vol64/iss4/9>

Hosted by [Iowa Research Online](#)

terson Brown's *Retreat From Gettysburg: Lee, Logistics, and the Pennsylvania Campaign*. Brown studies the Army of Northern Virginia's retreat from Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, back across the Potomac River into Virginia. That portion of the campaign has occasionally been examined before, but not from a logistical perspective. Brown uses many previously uncited documents, basing his study around the Army of Northern Virginia's June and July 1863 quartermaster records. He argues that Robert E. Lee's superb handling of the retreat in shepherding the army back to friendly territory, while simultaneously stocking up on supplies, allowed him to maintain the balance of power in the Eastern Theater throughout the rest of 1863.

*Retreat From Gettysburg* is an excellent study, one that should set the standard for future logistical studies of other campaigns. Furthermore, for students of the Gettysburg campaign, it should be required reading. It is a significant addition to Civil War historiography.

*German-Iowan Studies: Selected Essays*, by William Roba. New German-American Studies 25. New York: Peter Lang, 2004. xiii, 132 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$54.95 cloth.

Reviewer LaVern J. Rippley is professor of German at St. Olaf College. His publications include biographical studies of German immigrants Hans Reimer Claussen, Conrad Kornmann, and F. W. Sallet.

In an introduction and eight unrelated chapters, William Roba roams Iowa, presenting specific themes. In an overarching first chapter, he describes the beginnings of German settlement in Iowa. He concludes with insightful perspectives on German politicians—Gulich, Claussen, Olshausen and others, mostly Schleswig-Holsteiners, who dominated early Iowa emigration from Germany—and their influence on Iowa history. Chapter two takes up the cultural unifiers of the Germans in Iowa during their heyday; parades, public speeches, community festivals, and the like reduced tensions between Germans and local Yankees as well as other Germans, when Schleswig-Holsteiners aggravated "lesser" arrivals from Germany. The dominance of the northern East Elbian settlers created certain myths and generated pageantry, such as the re-enactment in 1883 of the 1683 arrival of Germans in Philadelphia, the 1888 dedication ceremonies of the new Central Turner Hall in Davenport, and the Turner Jubilee of 1902 in the tricity area. Such events created an air of arrogant and distasteful German ethnocentrism that later exploded negatively when the United States entered World War I.

Although William F. Cody (Buffalo Bill, 1846-1917) was born in Scott County, Iowa, where his father managed a Pennsylvania German's farm with 15 German immigrant laborers, he left the state in 1854 and rarely revisited. In 1866 he married Louisa Frederici (of German-Alsace origins) in St. Louis before moving to North Platte, Nebraska, in 1878. Through the personage of Ohio-born (of German immigrants) sharpshooter Annie Oakley, Cody's Wild West Show gained popularity during a tour in Germany and thus receives detailed treatment in chapter three.

More in the German vein is chapter four, on Davenport-born congressman Henry Vollmer (1867-1930), who represented Iowa's Second District during the tumultuous anti-German World War I period. He vociferously defended Germany before America's entry into the war in 1917 with such inflammatory rhetoric as "the selfish interests and the whole snarling pack of hysterical war-shouters and gory-eyed jingos are not able to bully and intimidate American safe-and-sound citizenship" (54).

In chapter five Roba compares German socialism as propounded by Austrian Victor Berger and German "leftists" in Milwaukee, where third-party socialists thrived, to its fate in Davenport, "the wickedest city in America," which offered the party less than 10 percent of its overall vote. However, during World War I socialists under the leadership of sometime Milwaukee resident Harold Metcalf brought the party to near triumphs in Davenport, prompting the conclusion that German-backed socialists in Davenport were overreaching. Lacking success at the polls and in public opinion after 1916, Germans in Davenport and eastern Iowa hunkered down in clubrooms while German-language books were burned outside Davenport's high school, the story of chapter six, which includes a biographical checklist of activists.

Chapters seven and eight treat two giants, German-language newspaper publisher August Richter and William Petersen, a German American from Dubuque. Roba discusses Petersen's role in promoting the State Historical Society of Iowa and the *Palimpsest*, while shutting down the *Iowa Journal of History*. When he retired in 1973, well-wishers collected money to send the Petersens to Germany to "see if steam boating on the Rhine and Danube is comparable to the Mississippi" (120).

Accompanied by an index and footnoting, the volume imparts scholarship, but faulty editing mars the product. Erratic parentheses (50), the lack of periods between sentences (xii, 33), and similar gaffes can be overlooked, but such errors as the use of *toleration* instead of *tolerance*, incorrect adverbs ("they were historically *significantly*"), and names such as Franziska Allen Ott for Franziska Ott Allen reflect real

carelessness. The large type for the footnotes gives the book a clumsy look, while the bibliography seems inaptly small. That said, we welcome the advances of German American history in Iowa, given here in the best tradition of Schleswig-Holstein descendant and State Historical Society leader William Petersen.

*Immigrant Women in the Settlement of Missouri*, by Robyn Burnett and Ken Luebbering. Missouri Heritage Readers. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2005. xiii, 137 pp. Illustrations, reading list, index. \$12.95 paper.

Reviewer Betty Bergland is professor of history at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. She is the author of several articles about Norwegian immigrants and curated a Vesterheim exhibit, "Frontier Encounters: Native Americans as Portrayed by Norwegian-American Artists."

Authors Robyn Burnett and Ken Luebbering begin their introduction to *Immigrant Women in the Settlement of Missouri* with Elise Dubach. Born in 1842 in Switzerland to tenant farmers, Elise described relative contentment in her family's rural life, which was suddenly disrupted in 1856 when her father received a letter from his brother depicting a "better life" in America. The Dubach family migrated when Elise was 12. The story of her life in Missouri reveals many patterns in nineteenth-century migration to the Midwest: primarily rural, essentially economic, invariably a family matter, migration evoked a "chain," as relatives followed relatives, inspired by "America Letters." Women, an integral part of the journey, only recently appear as critical to the story, and much of that history draws on women's letters, diaries, and neglected memoirs, such as Elise's, *Sunbonnet Days*, used throughout the book.

This history, focused on migration to one state and emphasizing women's experiences over time, illustrates the many complexities of migration still requiring a telling. An introduction for young adult readers, this work should also appeal to a wide audience. In 17 chapters—effectively illustrated with photographs, contemporary sketches, and extensive quotations taken from letters, diaries, memoirs, and autobiographies—the authors trace the shifting patterns of migration from the early eighteenth-century French settlers along the Mississippi (for lead mining); through the nineteenth-century Scotch-Irish, second-generation migrants from the East; to the significant German migration starting in the 1830s; and, finally, to the industrial migration from eastern and southern Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Such progressions of European migration are replicated

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.