



# SOCIETY FOR GERMAN-AMERICAN STUDIES NEWSLETTER

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings SGAS Members!

In anticipation of our 46th Annual Symposium, which will take place April 21-23, 2022, on the campus of the University of Iowa in Iowa City, this issue features two articles related to the German heritage in Iowa. The first, by UI German professor Glenn Ehrstine, discusses the successful "German Iowa and the Global Midwest" (GIGM) public humanities project that Glenn undertook with two historian colleagues starting in 2015. The GIGM project is an excellent example of how the fruits of scholarship can be disseminated to a broad audience outside of the academy. As many of us working in German-American studies have experienced, there is a lot of interest in the topics we research among the curious public. Community organizations such as public libraries, local museums, and historical societies offer wonderful venues for outreach projects like GIGM.

The second article on German Iowa, by Jon Childers, Executive Director of the Amana Heritage Society, discusses the fascinating history of the Amana Colonies. The colonies, which are located about 25 miles from Iowa City, will be the destination for the traditional excursion held on the final afternoon of the SGAS symposium. There we will visit the Amana Heritage Museum and other sites of interest, including the Amana Archives. We will stay in Amana for the evening banquet, which will be held at the Hotel Millwright. SGAS participants may also decide to spend the night in Amana and attend the German-language worship service at the Middle Amana church on Sunday morning.

On behalf of my colleague, SGAS North America Membership Coordinator and Webmaster Antje Petty, and I who are organizing the symposium, I want to express our sincere gratitude to both Glenn and Jon for their excellent work on site to help make our symposium a memorable one. Public health conditions permitting, the event will take place in person. As guests of the University of Iowa, we will abide by any safety measures in place for campus events.

## LEARN. JOIN. DONATE.

[SGAS.org](https://www.sgas.org)

The theme of next year's symposium is "German Americans in Multicultural Societies," which underscores the important fact that German-speaking immigrants to North America and their descendants never lived in linguistic and cultural vacuums. On the contrary, essentially every aspect of German-American life has been affected in some way due to contact between German Americans and their neighbors of different backgrounds. The various materials collected by the GIGM project nicely exemplify the dynamic, interactive character of German-American society.

Jon Childers's essay on the history of the migration of German-speaking Inspirationists to the United States shows that even among groups who as a matter of religious principle originally strove to maintain a measure of distance, spiritually and economically, between themselves and their neighbors, contacts with people from outside the community shaped the course of their his-

tory in this country. In that respect, the experiences of Inspirationists in Europe prior to emigration were similar: distinct subgroups in diverse human societies never live in true cultural "islands."

As is our practice, we welcome submissions on a wide range of topics for consideration for presentation at our annual symposium, though I hope presenters will consider emphasizing multicultural aspects of the German-American topics they present on. I have been pleased to receive several submissions already and look forward to getting more by the January 7 deadline.

I wish all of you and your families a restful holiday season *und einen guten Rutsch ins Neue Jahr!*

Mit freundlichen Grüßen,

Mark

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#### 46th Annual Symposium

April 21-23, 2022

—University of Iowa in Iowa City—

#### "German Americans in Multicultural Societies"

When German speakers came to the Americas, their experiences were profoundly affected by the cultural, linguistic, environmental, social, and aesthetic landscapes of the places they settled and explored. And vice versa, German speakers and their descendants contributed to the fabric of emerging societies in the Americas.

We invite proposals for presentations centering on the dynamic contact, past and present, between Germans in the Americas and their neighbors of different backgrounds, both indigenous and immigrant, with a special focus on the records and sources (written, oral, or other media) that are available to scholars today. As is our tradition, we also accept proposals dealing with other aspects of German-American studies. Speakers should plan on 20 minutes for their presentations plus 10 minutes for discussion.

This year's symposium will feature a Saturday afternoon excursion on April 23 to the Amana Colonies, where we will visit the Colonies' unique historical archives and other sites of interest. This will be followed by the SGAS banquet at the same site on Saturday evening. Membership in the Society for German-American Studies is required of those whose papers are presented. Jointly authored proposals are welcome, but only the names of authors who are present at the Symposium will be listed in the program.

Using the subject line "SGAS Symposium 2022," please email to SGAS President Mark Loudon (mllouden@wisc.edu) an abstract of your proposed presentation (not more than 250 words) as a Word document by January 7, 2022. The abstract should include your paper title, your full name as you wish it to appear in the program, your email address, your complete mailing address, and your academic affiliation, if any.

Note that we are planning that the symposium will take place in person. Should the University of Iowa, the Amana Colonies, and/or public health authorities require us to impose restrictions due to the pandemic (e.g., a requirement that all participants be masked indoors), we will communicate that to participants in a timely fashion.



The Old Capitol building on the University of Iowa campus, one of the venues for the 46th Annual SGAS Symposium.  
Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Old\\_Capitol\\_Iowa\\_City.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Old_Capitol_Iowa_City.jpg)

# GERMAN IOWA AND THE GLOBAL MIDWEST

GLENN EHRSTINE

In 2015, three University of Iowa faculty members – H. Glenn Penny (UI History), Elizabeth Heineman (UI History), and Glenn Ehrstine (UI German) – responded to the closing of the German language program in the Iowa City Community School District by founding the public humanities project “German Iowa and the Global Midwest” (GIGM). While GIGM’s primary focus is the history of Germanophone immigration to Iowa – a surprisingly underresearched field when compared to neighboring “German Belt” states of the Midwest – it also strives to place that history in the broader present-day context of migration to and from the United States. Furthermore, the project intentionally links state-supported higher education with local stakeholders in the preservation of German language and culture. GIGM co-organizers have worked closely with established institutions such as the Amana Heritage Society and the German American Heritage Center of Davenport to gain from their associates’ expertise, heighten awareness of their collections, and benefit from their public outreach networks. (Warm thanks to Jon Childers, Bill Roba, and Kelly Lao, among others.) At the same time, the project has sought to engage with and give voice to lesser-known tales of German-Iowan history and culture, such as those told by the St. Lucas German American Museum in northeast Iowa. The recent COVID-19 pandemic, which regrettably caused the cancellation of “German Cultural Heritage in the Midwest: Past, Present, and Future,” the planned St. Lucas workshop for summer 2020, has made both the fragility and the necessity of such work even more apparent.

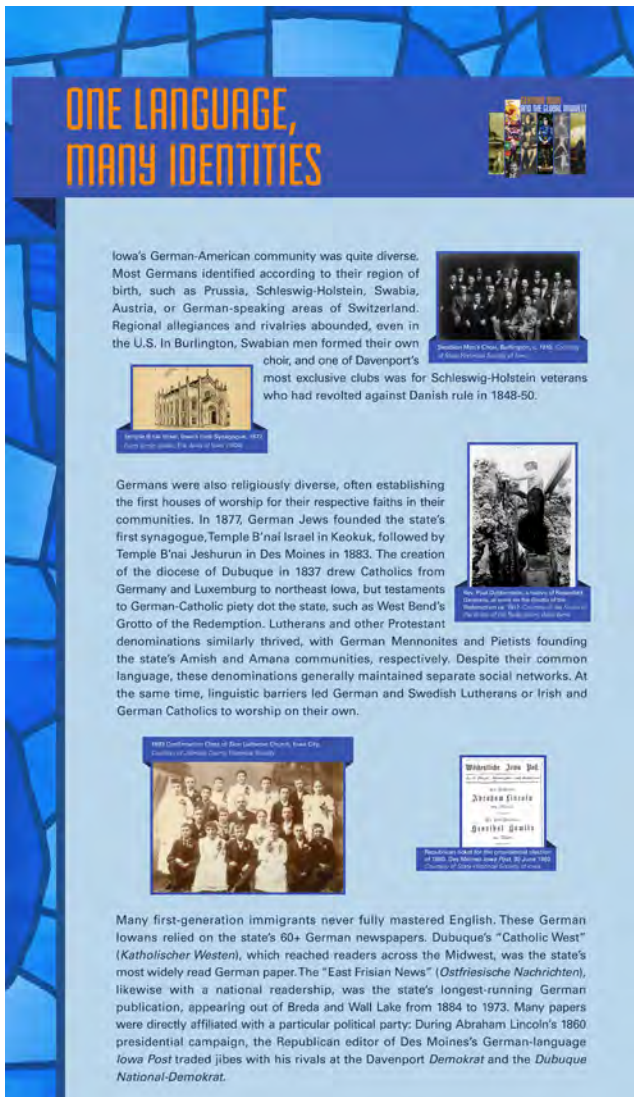
Thanks to the combined munificence of various supporters, not least the Chicago Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany, our campus team initially organized two academic conferences alongside a semester-long standing exhibit in Fall 2016. Most importantly, the University of Iowa provided two consecutive years of graduate research support, without which our main public outreach components would not have been possible: 1) a 2017 traveling exhibit hosted by thirty-four communities, schools, and museums in the state, timed to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the U.S. entry into World War I; and 2) an online Digital



Archive, for which our two research assistants scanned or photographed original source materials from the State Historical Society of Iowa and the State Archives in Des Moines. Additional research occurred in courses taught in the UI Departments of History, German, Music, and American Studies. We additionally engaged the Iowa chapter of the American Association of Teachers of German (AATG) to recruit hosts for our traveling exhibit, distribute sample lesson plans, and discuss ways of integrating the project into high school classrooms.

Students at all levels were invariably excited to discover that they could apply their German language skills to the study of local history and find sources pertaining to world events in repositories so close to home. Between 2015 and 2019, students in the capstone research course for UI German majors gained practice in transliterating and translating primary sources, such as handwritten correspondence from the Iowa Women’s Archives or select sections of *Die Deutschen von Iowa und deren Errungenschaften*, published in 1900 by Joseph Eiboek, editor of the *Iowa Staats-Anzeiger* in Des Moines. Here as well, we remain indebted to several project partners near and far, above all Prof. Heike Bungert of the Universität Münster, whose students aided in the processing and proofreading of source materials while corresponding via email with their Iowa peers. A small number of students engaged in independent study research for the project as well. The Spring 2016 translation assistance of honors student Lucas Gibbs was indispensable for our interactive German-Iowan newspaper map and the subsequent *Annals of Iowa* publication of “Iowa’s Prohibition





An example banner that will be on display for SGAS members at the Old Capitol Museum

Plague': Joseph Eiboeck's Account of the Battle over Prohibition, 1846-1900," an annotated translation of "Die Prohibitionsseuche in Iowa," chapter 11 of Eiboeck's *Die Deutschen von Iowa*. SGAS members can find our collection of German-language source materials, alongside English translations of select sections, on our Omeka-powered Digital Archive site:

[germansiniowa.lib.uiowa.edu](http://germansiniowa.lib.uiowa.edu)

Our main website ([germansiniowa.com](http://germansiniowa.com)) offers an overview of other project components, including additional events, relevant press coverage, and other publications.

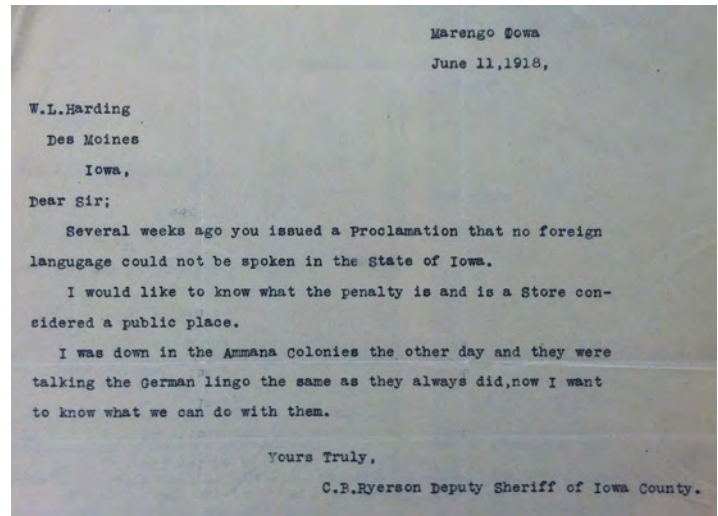
Currently, the overwhelming majority of our Digital Archive materials in English pertains to the so-called Babel Proclamation, the May 1918 executive order of Iowa Governor William Harding that outlawed the

speaking of all foreign languages in public for the remainder of World War I. Visitors to the Digital Archive can access over 1100 pieces of correspondence from across the state that deal with the proclamation and its aftermath: letters written to the governor reporting on the suspected seditious activities of neighboring German Iowans; missives from Secretary H.J. Metcalf of the Iowa Council of National Defense, advising county officials to remove German books from public schools and libraries; and concerns expressed by Germanophone Protestant clergy, requesting exemptions from the proclamation so that they might continue to meet the spiritual needs of their elderly parishioners, who often spoke little English. German Catholics also inquired, apparently without irony, whether the ban prohibited the use of Latin during Mass. Visitors to the Digital Archive site can access these letters by clicking on "Browse" in the main navigation bar, scrolling down to the "By Subject Tag" link, and then locating the "Babel Proclamation" tag in the alphabetized list of topics.

Expanding our Digital Archive collection in the future will require additional funding. We would like to think optimistically and welcome recommendations from SGAS members regarding relevant Iowa-based material whose digitization could enhance comparative studies across state borders. Although our campus GIGM team is engaged in other research projects at the moment, we nonetheless hope to have uploaded by April several letters written by Peter Zimmerman, a young Amana resident who, despite the pacifist beliefs of the Amana Community of True Inspiration, was reluctantly conscripted for military service during World War I. Jon Childers and Rebecca Simpson of the Amana Heritage Society kindly took the initiative to digitize the original handwritten Zimmerman correspondence some four years ago, and Heike Bungert's Münster students transliterated them prior to the pandemic. Next April's symposium now provides a welcome occasion to make them available online.

We are grateful to the SGAS Executive Committee for proposing Iowa City as the site of the 46th Annual SGAS Symposium and eagerly anticipate the opportunity to host attendees on campus. We have arranged for the twelve banners of our 2017 traveling exhibit to be on display throughout the symposium in the Old Capitol Museum, where SGAS mem-

bers will convene on 21 April 2022 for the traditional welcoming *Gemütliches Beisammensein*. If attendees have time, we will gladly accompany them on Sunday's satellite excursion to the German American Heritage Center in Davenport for a sneak preview of the GAHC's new exhibit on "Hidden Habsburgs" in Iowa. Above all, if symposium participants overhear anyone "talking the German lingo" during Saturday's banquet in Amana, we hope that they will respond differently than the deputy sheriff of Iowa County who wrote in dismay to Governor Harding in June of 1918.



## FROM GERMANY TO IOWA — A BELIEF FORGED IN FIRE, MAINTAINED IN FREEDOM

### JON CHILDERS

Three distinct developments occurred around the turn of the eighteenth century in Europe that fueled the fire leading to the founding of the Community of True Inspiration. The Inspirationists' beliefs were shaped out of a strong desire for peace following years of war, the high regard for human life, and the earnest desire to seek God in a very personal way.

First, Lutheran minister Philipp Jakob Spener founded a new approach to religion called Pietism. Working in Frankfurt, he observed what he felt was a lack of piety among his congregation. In response, he organized the first *collegia pietatis*, or pious assemblies, in which the faithful met regularly for devotional reading and spiritual edification. His famous work *Pia Desideria* (1675) assessed the weakness he observed in the Church and offered ways to reform. Eventually, Pietism spread throughout the German lands, Switzerland, and Scandinavia. Pietism was meant to reform the Church from within, yet it ultimately split into several distinct branches. One of these was radical Pietism, referring often to the individuals as Separatists.

The second step towards the Inspirationist Community was the belief in Inspiration itself, traced in modern times to the rugged Cévennes Mountains in southern France in the 1680s. A regional group of French

Huguenots, the Camisards, resisted the French military following the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, which removed the protection offered to French Protestants. While many Huguenots fled to other countries, the Camisards remained in their mountain homeland and came under pressure to convert to Catholicism. Around 1700, individuals began to speak out in prophecy. These ecstatic speeches helped spark an armed revolt against King Louis XIV's forces between 1702 and 1710. Some participants in the rebellion eventually relocated to London and established a Separatist community, becoming known as the French Prophets.

In 1713, two of the French Prophets undertook a missionary journey and spent time in Halle, where they met Pietist leader August Herrmann Francke. Here, three brothers by the name of Pott were students at the university and heard them prophesy. Soon after, the three Pott brothers began to deliver these same inspired testimonies. Their missionary journey in the fall of 1714 brought them to the Wetterau region of Hesse, a refuge for religious minorities — including radical Pietists, Waldensians, Moravians, conservative Catholics, and Orthodox Jews.

The final puzzle piece is the 1712 Edict of Tolerance that Earl Ernst Casimir I zu Ysenburg-Büdingen de-

clared shortly after taking over his family lands. He had witnessed the results of the devastation of his lands and local population through the Thirty Years' War and Bubonic plague and wanted to rebuild his local economy by inviting these refugees to repopulate the area.

Along with another ruling family, the entire Wetterau region welcomed these minority believers who brought their expertise in book printing and cloth weaving. Among the Separatists who had already been living in the small village of Himbach were the two men considered the founders of the Community of True Inspiration – the theologian Eberhard Ludwig Gruber and court saddler Johann Friedrich Rock. Their efforts led to Inspirationist Communities forming in Pietist strongholds in Hesse, the Palatinate, Swabia, Alsace, northern Switzerland, and Saxony.

Along with the belief in Inspiration, Rock and Gruber advocated faith renewal through reflection, prayer, and devoted study of scripture. They believed in living a moderate, simple life and were pacifists. Many who became attracted to this new life continued to withdraw from the established Church. Over the next century, the center of Inspirationist leadership remained in the Hessian Wetterau in the shadows of the 13th-century Ronneburg castle. From here, they continued to undertake missionary journeys to other provinces to encourage the faithful.

### Seeking Freedom

In the 1840s, renewed persecution, drought, and eventual economic depression forced the Community to begin searching for a new home. Led by Christian Metz, they hoped to find religious freedom in America. In order to move the entire faith Community from Europe to America, members pooled their resources and purchased 5,000 acres near Buffalo, New York. Migration began in 1843. All who were willing to venture to a new land were invited to join the Community. By working cooperatively and sharing their property, their numbers grew to 1,200 members. They called their Community the “Ebenezer Society” and adopted a constitution that formalized their communal way of life.

In 1855 due to numerous reasons, Inspirationists looked to remove to the new state of Iowa with its available fertile soil, stone, wood, and water power to build and expand the Community.

### Remaining True

After an inspired testimony directed the people to call their village “Bleibtreu” or “remain faithful,” the leaders chose the name Amana from the Song of Solomon 4:8. Amana means to “remain true.” Six villages were established, a mile or two apart, across a river valley tract of some 26,000 acres – Amana, East Amana, West Amana, South Amana, High Amana, and Middle Amana. The



*View of Amana with millrace, Amana Hotel, and Amana Woolen Mill*



village of Homestead was purchased in 1861, giving the Community access to the railroad. Ebenezer was dissolved and by 1864, all members had relocated to their villages in Iowa. New members continued to join from Germany for the next several decades.

### **Communal Life**

In the seven villages, residents received a home, medical care, meals, all household necessities, and schooling for their children. Property and resources were shared. Men and women were assigned jobs by their village Elders. No one received a wage, but instead credit to the village store was given to allow members to purchase “outside” products.



*Middle Amana cobbler Carl Hergert, Sr.*

Farming and the production of wool and calico supported the Community, but village enterprises, everything from clock making to brewing, were vital. Well-crafted products became a hallmark of the Amanas. They took special pride in their work as a testament of both their faith and the communal bonds.

Up before dawn, called to work by the gentle tolling of the bell in the village tower, the unhurried routinized life in communal Amana was reassuring. Amana prayer meetinghouses, or *Saale*, located in the center of each village, built of brick or stone, have no stained glass windows, no steeple or spire, and reflect the ethos of simplicity and humility. Inspirationists attended worship services 11 times a week, their quiet worship punctuating the days.

Over 50 communal kitchens provided three daily meals, as well as a mid-morning and mid-afternoon snack to all Colonists. These kitchens were operated by the women of each village and were well supplied by the village smokehouse, bakery, ice house and dairy, and by the

huge gardens, orchards, and vineyards maintained by the villagers.

Children attended school six days a week, year-round until the age of 14. Boys were assigned jobs on the farm or in the craft shops, while girls were assigned to a communal kitchen or garden. A few boys were sent to college for training as teachers, doctors, and dentists.



*Liebesmahl in Amana ca. 1900*

In 1932, amidst America’s Great Depression, Amana set aside its communal way of life. A ruinous farm market and changes in the rural economy were contributing factors, but what finally propelled the change was a strong desire on the part of residents to maintain their community and religious beliefs. By 1932, the communal way of life was seen as a barrier to achieving individual goals, so rather than leave or watch their children leave, they changed. They established the Amana Society, Inc. a profit-sharing corporation to manage the farmland, mills, and larger enterprises. Private business was encouraged. The Amana Church thrives yet today.

### **Amana Colonies Today**

Today the Amana Colonies represent a German American success story; a thriving Community founded by religious faith and community spirit. Declared a National Historic Landmark in 1965, the Amana Colonies attract hundreds of thousands of visitors annually, all of whom come to see and enjoy a place where the past is cherished and where hospitality is a way of life. The 2022 SGAS tour of the Amana Colonies will include an introduction to Amana’s heritage and a visit to the Amana Church Society archive and the print shop and bindery exhibit at the Communal Kitchen Museum & Cooper Shop. Both sites are located in Middle Amana.

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