

Book Review: *Missouri's German Heritage*, edited by Don Heinrich Tolzmann, review by William Keel, in *Yearbook of German-American Studies*, 39(2004), pp.175-176.

**Missouri's German Heritage.**

*Edited by Don Heinrich Tolzmann. Milford, OH: Little Miami Publishing Co. 152 pp. \$15.95.*

Those familiar with the history of German immigration and settlement in the American Midwest need not be reminded of the significance of that ethnic group in the history of the state of Missouri. With a plethora of scholarship on the language, culture, social and political life and the commercial importance of the German element in Missouri, it is, indeed, a Herculean task to condense that wealth of information into a short volume that addresses a general audience. Given that framework, Tolzmann has done an admirable job of making the story of the Germans in Missouri accessible to the general public.

In doing so, Tolzmann has also brought to life an English translation of the three chapters by Gustav Körner on the Germans in Missouri from his 1880 *Das deutsche Element in den Vereinigten Staaten von Nordamerika, 1818-1848*. The previously unpublished translation of those chapters by noted regional historian William G. Bek (1873-1948) comprises the first three chapters of Tolzmann's edition. Two subsequent chapters focus on two individuals of undisputed importance for the early history of Missouri's Germans: Gottfried Duden (1789-1856), whose *Bericht über eine Reise* (1829) induced thousands of Germans to immigrate to Missouri, and Friedrich Münch (1799-1881), who came to symbolize as the author "Far West" the positive contributions of the Germans to the intellectual, political and social fabric of the state in the nineteenth century. The chapter on Duden is an original contribution by Doris Keeven Franke while the chapter on Münch is an English translation by Siegmur Muehl of Heinrich Rattermann's account of a visit to Münch's Missouri farm in December 1874 (originally published in the April 1875 issue of *Der Deutsche Pionier*). In a concluding chapter, Tolzmann attempts to summarize the development of German Missourians from where Körner stopped in 1848 to the present day. In addition to providing an introduction and index to the volume, Tolzmann also appends an annotated list of selected sources as well as web sites relating to the German heritage of Missouri.

The highlight of the volume is without doubt the depiction of Rattermann's visit with Münch in 1874. Without being able to compare the translation to the original, the English version by Muehl provides a vivid portrayal of Münch in his later years, having survived the trials and tribulations of the hardships of pioneer life and even Civil War in his new homeland. Franke also offers a few new insights into the background of Duden and on his life after his sojourn in Missouri. Bek's translation of the Körner chapters often gives us glimpses of truly significant events such as the tumultuous reception accorded 1848 Revolutionary hero Friedrich

Hecker upon his arrival in St. Louis in December 1848 as well as the earlier mass demonstration in support of the Revolution in October 1848 (pp. 79-81).

The Körner chapters overwhelm, however, with much detail that in retrospect only clutters the description of the historical evolution of the German element in Missouri. And at times the translation misses key terms, such as translating *Freistaat* as “free state” instead of “republic” (e.g., pp. 8, 15). In addition to a fair number of typographical errors (“Westphalia” p. 29; “Barnard” instead of “Bernard Bruns” p. 35), one of the chapters of the Körner account also omits note number 3 in the endnotes, rendering the numeration of all remaining 44 notes incorrect and totally confusing for the general reader.

Tolzmann's own final chapter tries to condense such momentous episodes in the history of Missouri's Germans as the efforts to preserve Missouri for the Union in 1861, the period of anti-German hysteria during World War II—involving not only the Prager lynching but also a major court case against the state and local leader of the Deutsch-Amerikanischer National-Bund in St. Louis, Dr. Charles Weinsberg and the revival of Missouri's German heritage in the late twentieth century. Each of these periods easily deserves its own chapter. Yet the highlights are sketched so that the reader has some idea of what has transpired in the last 150 years in Missouri's German community. Especially moving is the depiction of the 1914 dedication of the statue “Die nackte Wahrheit” honoring the liberal German newspaper editors in St. Louis such as Carl Schurz, Carl Dänzer and Emil Preetorius (pp. 118-21), marking the high water mark of the German element in Missouri prior to its rapid retreat during World War I. Again, however, several glaring errors such as labeling Franz Sigel as a “major” instead of a “major-general” in the caption for his equestrian statue (p. 113) and the use of square brackets around the first name of every U.S. president mentioned in the text (e.g., “[Woodrow] Wilson” p. 123), mar the overall impression of the chapter.

Despite the relatively minor editorial flaws, Tolzmann has done a masterful job in putting together significant historical texts together with modern accounts that highlight the history of Germans in Missouri. The suggestions for further reading and information about web sites as well as the detailed notes provide the depth for the interested student or researcher. A second edition of the volume with editorial corrections will make a handsome guide to the history of the Germans of Missouri.