

Book Review: *The German Pioneer Legacy: The Life and Work of Heinrich A. Rattermann*, edited by Don Heinrich Tolzmann, review by Franziska C. Ott, in *Yearbook of German-American Studies*, 39(2004), pp.173-175.

The German Pioneer Legacy: The Life and Work of Heinrich A. Rattermann.

By Sister Mary Edmund Spanheimer, 2d edition, ed. by Don Heinrich Tolzmann. New German-American Studies/Neue Deutsch-Amerikanische Studien, vol. 26. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2004. xxx + 152 pp. \$42.95.

The first edition of Sister Mary Edmund Spanheimer's book about Heinrich A. Rattermann was published in 1937. It was, as Don Heinrich Tolzmann points out, the first full-length study of Rattermann, a man who searched out and assembled so much previously unknown historical data about the German immigrants and their contributions to the development of the United States, and who collected information on German-American literary life. Spanheimer had the good fortune to work at a time when some of Rattermann's friends and family were still alive and could be interviewed. She also based her study on primary source material: Rattermann's files and manuscripts which had been acquired by the University of Illinois Library.

This second edition of Spanheimer's *Heinrich Armin Rattermann* makes Spanheimer's work available again, but it does much more. Don Heinrich Tolzmann has added a short Foreword. Its footnotes (nine times as long as the Foreword) can be read as a bibliographical essay on resources useful for studying Rattermann. Next, in his Introduction, Tolzmann describes how he became interested in Heinrich A. Rattermann. Tolzmann, who lives in Cincinnati, was able to meet some of the Rattermann descendants and recalls especially the granddaughter, Dorothy Rattermann, who reminisced about her grandfather. Also useful is the addition of the essay "Rattermann's Life and Work" by A. E. Zucker. This appeared in 1939 after Spanheimer's book. Zucker acknowledges the use of her work for his essay and says, "Fortunately Rattermann has now found a capable and enthusiastic biographer whose book gives us in detail well-documented information on the many phases of his active life" (xxviii). The essay is a good overview of Rattermann's life and work and his

importance in the field of German-American studies. Thus, rather than hunt for a hard-to-find copy of the first edition, this reviewer suggests acquiring the second edition.

Spanheimer begins her study with the section "Rattermann, the man" in which she gives biographical information. Rattermann was born in Ankum, north Germany. As a child he was an eager student, but his studies were cut short when the family emigrated. After the family arrived in Cincinnati he worked at a variety of jobs to help out financially. Then his father died, and at age 17 Rattermann had to support the family. He studied bookkeeping to get a better paying job, and only six years later launched a successful insurance company. In Cincinnati he educated himself in literature and history, especially the history of the German element in the United States. Rattermann was active in many cultural organizations; as Spanheimer notes, he gave 150 lectures at the Deutscher Literarischer Klub von Cincinnati, which he helped to found.

Part two is titled "Rattermann, the poet." Spanheimer states that Rattermann's early life close to nature in Germany as well as the influence of his teacher there instilled a love of poetry and music. In Cincinnati he educated himself by studying poetic forms, the poetry of classical antiquity and German literature. Rattermann valued poets such as Klopstock, Platen, Hölderlin, and Goethe. Spanheimer states that he was most influenced by Herder, and he had no use for Sturm und Drang or the new Naturalism. Rattermann wrote poems in all forms, but she says, his forte was odes and sonnets. Writing poetry was only part of his work in literature. He made perhaps an even greater contribution by collecting the work of other German-American poets, keeping these works from getting lost. He often lectured or wrote about German-American authors and used the material he collected in his study/anthology of eighty-five German-American poets.

Spanheimer's third section is "Rattermann, the German-American historian." Rattermann valued his American citizenship and admired the founders of the nation, but he noticed that American history was overlooking the contributions of its German immigrants, so he set out to change that. Spanheimer describes how Rattermann collected his information from primary sources, such as a government archive; "he aimed at a rigid objectivity, never injecting himself, but stating facts as they are" (101). Rattermann was self-taught in history also, and Spanheimer says that he modeled his output after that of Justis von Moeser and Leopold von Ranke. Rattermann did the spade work for later historians. She discusses his eleven years of labor on *Der Deutsche Pionier*, his next project—the *Deutsch-Amerikanisches Magazin*—and the *Bio-graphikon* that was part of the collected works which he printed near the end of his life. Finally, she describes the Rattermann library of 8,000 volumes, the files, clippings and manuscript volumes. He collected these over the span of fifty years to do serious research.

Spanheimer concludes that Rattermann had to divide his time between providing for "material needs" and the work he loved in history and literature, and he made great contributions to the fields of German-American history and literature. Don Heinrich Tolzmann has added a section, "For Further Reading," to her bibliography.

Sister Spanheimer has an engaging writing style and the book is a pleasure to read. She does look more closely at Rattermann's relationship to religion than one might expect. This second edition of the Spanheimer book should be on one's reference shelf. It is also a very good book for students in the field of German-American studies because of the clarity of its presentation and the way it invites further study.

Heinrich Armin Rattermann has brought many treasures to the field of

German-American studies. His contemporary, Gustav Brühl, summarized what Rattermann was about so beautifully in his poem dedicated to Rattermann, which Tolzmann has included in the preliminary pages.

University of Cincinnati

Franziska C. Ott