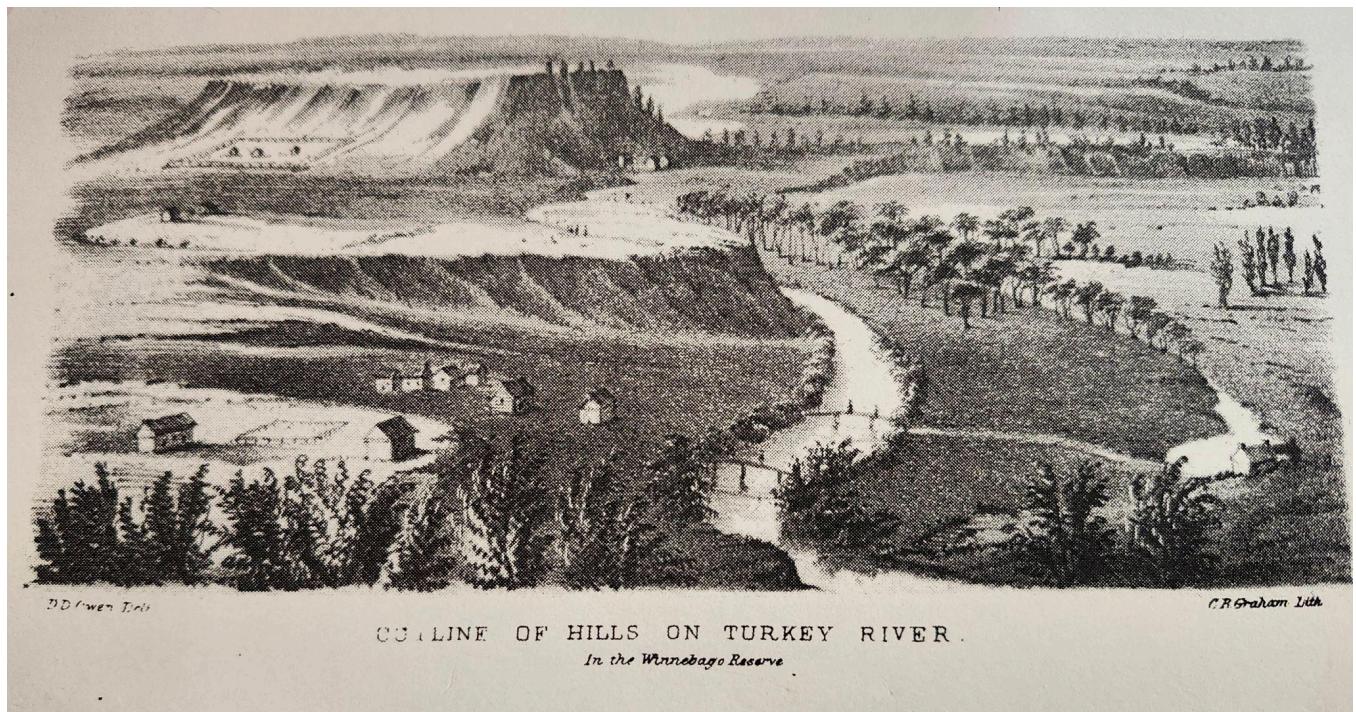


# Historical Perspectives

A Journal of the  
German American Museum,  
Library and Family History Center



Sketch of the Outline of Hills on Turkey River in the Winnebago Reserve,  
1847. By David Dale Owens, U.S. Geologist for Wisconsin. Report of a  
Geological Reconnaissance of the Chippewa Land District of Wisconsin, a  
Portion of the Kickapoo Country, a Part of Iowa, and the Minnesota  
Territory, Plate 15. (Three miles Northeast of St. Lucas).

Issue # 18, Autumn/Winter 2024

# **German American Museum, Library and Family History Center**

## **Mission Statement:**

Preserve the Past

Celebrate the Presence

Embrace the Future

## **About Historical Perspectives**

With the publication of **Historical Perspectives, Historische Betrachtungen**, we focus on many disciplines including the arts, humanities, history, literature, and the social and physical sciences.

## **German American Museum Exhibit Theme Areas:**

Geographic features of the landscape

Indigenous Peoples: removal policies and tribal revival

Europeans coming to Northeast Iowa

Role of religion and the clergy in the community

Importance of education and the teaching nuns

Development of farming and industrial arts

Evolution of family social life

Sports: baseball, basketball, and softball

National defense service and economic change

Preserving and celebrating cultural heritages

**St. Lucas Historical Society  
German American Museum, Library  
and Family History Center**

December 2024

Dear friends of the Museum:

The Summer and Autumn months were quite exciting times with our annual Oktoberfest event, family reunions, educational groups, and the popular Monthly Speaker Series.

The speaker series began in June with Cecelia Rokusek, CEO of the National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library. This event was co-sponsored by the German American Museum and the Czech Heritage Partnership. Other speaker topics included: Berlin: Then and Now; the Historic Mills of Winneshiek County, the Historical Novel on Josef Spielmann, and Brahms “Nanie”. The public interest in these speaking events were very impressive and heartwarming.

The Museum roof rehabilitation project was completed in November and has transformed the appearance of this magnificent building. Lifetime Construction of St. Lucas did an outstanding job. Many thanks to its skilled carpenters and Jordan Jirak for leading this complex restoration project to fruition.

This Autumn/Winter journal issue highlights the historic visit of Prosper Waukon, a renowned Ho Chunk elder and his family. The cover page image from 1847 is the earliest known sketch of the Winnebago Nation site on the Turkey River. Special thanks to Michael Klemish for researching this important historical sketch.

The main articles are the Prosper Waukon visit to the local Winnebago Indian Sub Agency sites and the World War II Camp for German POWs at Algona. In addition, we feature the speakers who shared their excellent presentations in recent months.

We hope you find these stories interesting and enjoyable. Let us know of possible historic topics for future Journal issues and speakers for the coming Spring, Summer, and Autumn.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you and yours.

Sincerely,

Clair Blong  
President

**212 East Main Street, P.O. Box 195, St. Lucas, Iowa 52166**

## Contents of Issue # 18

Prosper Waukon Family Visits Winnebago Indian Historic Sites Along the Turkey River Clair Blong and Luke Ellis Blong	5
A History of POW Camp Algona and its Impact on Northwest Iowa Communities Sarah Hill	16
Exploring Brahms "Nanie" James Griesheimer	31
Joseph Spielman and His Life in Bavaria Barbara Ortwein	35
Winneshiek County Mills: A Survey Shay Gooder	38
Berlin: Before and After the Wall Fell Russell Baldner	40
Our Collective Heritage: Strength Through Understanding Cecilia Rokisek	45
Society and Museum Activities	
Museum Training	49
Courthouse Exhibit	51
Window Treatments	52
Museum Roof Rehabilitation	54
Jeanette Dietzenbach Memorial	66
Mississippi River Valley Tour	68
Smith Family Reunion	70
Visitors	72
Christmas Reflections	73
Christmas Stollen Recipe	76

## **Prosper Waukon Family Visits Former Winnebago Indian Sub Agency Sites Near the Turkey River**

**By Clair Blong and Luke Blong**

On Friday afternoon June 14<sup>th</sup>, a sunny and exceptionally clear and beautiful low-humidity afternoon, Prosper Waukon and his family visited the former Winnebago Indian Subagency on the Turkey River near St. Lucas. In the early 1840s the Winnebago Tribe was forcefully relocated from the Yellow River area to the Turkey River bend area three miles northeast of St. Lucas.

Prosper Waukon, of the Winneshiek and Waukon family lineage, has a direct heritage in the Ho Chunk Nation with the towns Decorah and Waukon named after them in northeast Iowa. Prosper grew up on the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska lands. Their visit to northeast Iowa was facilitated by the Winneshiek County Historical Society, the Town of Decorah, interested individuals, and supportive businesses.



**Saint Anthony de Padua Chapel on Turkey River.**

The Waukon family tour began at the St. Anthony de Padua Chapel located on the banks of the Turkey River. This site contains over 50 unmarked Winnebago graves according to Tom Huber of the extended Huber family, the caretakers of this historic site. In addition, the only remaining structure, a restored log cabin of the original Winnebago Indian Sub Agency, is now on the church grounds.

The Prosper Waukon family visited the sole surviving cabin of the Winnebago Indian Sub Agency of the 1840s at the St. Anthony de Padua Chapel near the Turkey River northeast of St. Lucas and southwest of Festina.

The Huber family restored the log cabin and moved it to the church grounds to preserve it. The annual Mass was just held at the smallest church on Sunday, June 16<sup>th</sup>. This gathering attracts nearly 150 Huber family descendants and neighboring families interested in maintaining the rich history of the church.



**Prosper Waukon**



**Rt. Rev. Terry Landsgaard at the St. Anthony de Padua Chapel.**

Rt. Rev. Terry Landsgaard, an avid student on Winnebago and Ho Chunk history, gave a brief history of the Winnebago Indian Sub Agency on the Turkey River in the 1840s. Terry noted that with the removal of Winnebago to northwestern Minnesota in the late 1840s, some Winnebago people remained in the northeast Iowa area.

Prosper Waukon, a teacher of indigenous philosophy and tribal customs, was asked several questions by enthusiasts of Native American history and culture. Among these questions, the subject of the differences between Christian and Native beliefs became an important talking topic. Prosper Waukon responded that there is a lot more in common than some would want to admit. There were a few important differences, but both ways of knowing could learn much from one another.

Prosper, as an example, explained how Native American families are structured to ensure there would never be children without parents, where the mother's sisters act as mothers as well, with the father's brothers, or *Tega* (day-gah) acting as fathers as well. Prosper joked that his people long ago learned that parents cannot be very objective with their children, so secondary mothers and *Tegas* would function as disciplinarians and share in the responsibility for raising the children. He also spoke on how Native social structures pre-contact with Europeans were historically matriarchal and matrilineal, but likely began to become more patriarchal because Europeans would not deal with women elders.

Waukon stressed the importance of the inclusion of the natural realm (grass, animals, birds, insects) in their spiritual way of life, as well as diplomacy and understanding other peoples. Christianity tends to place mankind atop the natural order as caretaker or dominator rather than as the youngest and deservedly most deferent and respectful members of the natural order.

Waukon explained that though tribes may have different beliefs, they would respect the spiritual life of other tribes. There was not seen to be a division between the natural realm and the spiritual realm, and Waukon explained the role of tobacco in mediating between mankind and the spirits.



**Prosper Waukon explaining HoChunk cultural and philosophical concepts.**



**The Prosper Waukon family at the sole surviving cabin of the Winnebago Indian Sub Agency of the 1840s at the St. Anthony de Padua Chapel near the Turkey River 3 miles northeast of St. Lucas and southwest of Festina.**



**Annette Kuennen, Neil Lansing, Ben Kuennen and John Kuennen at St. Anthony of Padua chapel. John explains likely burial sites on nearby hill tops.**

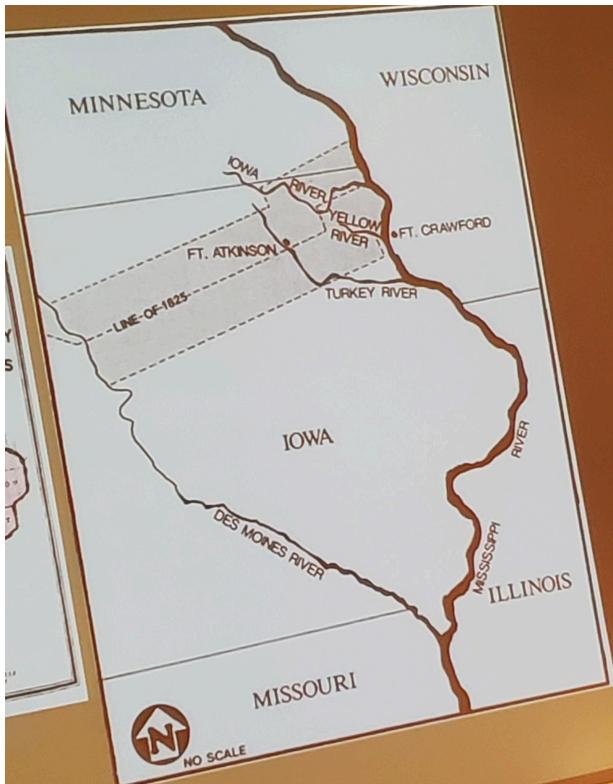


**Tom Huber, foreground.**

Tom Huber noted the role of St. Francis is blending the natural order into our spiritual well being. Waukon highlighted the importance of Vine Deloria, a native American author, theologian, and historian, in blending these two realms, the spiritual and the natural, when understanding indigenous peoples' belief systems.

This outdoor discussion on the quest for our spiritual well-being only scratched the surface on many social problems facing indigenous people. Prosper stated the government and religious run boarding schools of decades past caused great hardship to families and the students.

Prosper stated that this past week the Catholic bishops issued a report apologizing to Native people for the mistreatment and trauma perpetrated by the Church's reservation boarding schools. These tragedies led to addiction, domestic abuse, abandonment and neglect that harmed families. A sobering note on the many issues facing Native peoples in our society.



**Neutral Zone Map.**

To acknowledge the Winnebago ancestors buried on a large mesa-like hill and other sites near the Turkey River and its tributary creeks, Prosper Waukon led a traditional Ho Chunk ceremony of prayer to honor them and their descendants. John and Annette Kuennen, Ben Kuennen and Neil Lansing were invited into this very touching and sacred ceremony with offerings of tobacco to the seven dimensions: the east, the south, the west, the north, the sky, the earth and self. In this human circle, Prosper prayed for the ancestors and the living and made tobacco offerings.

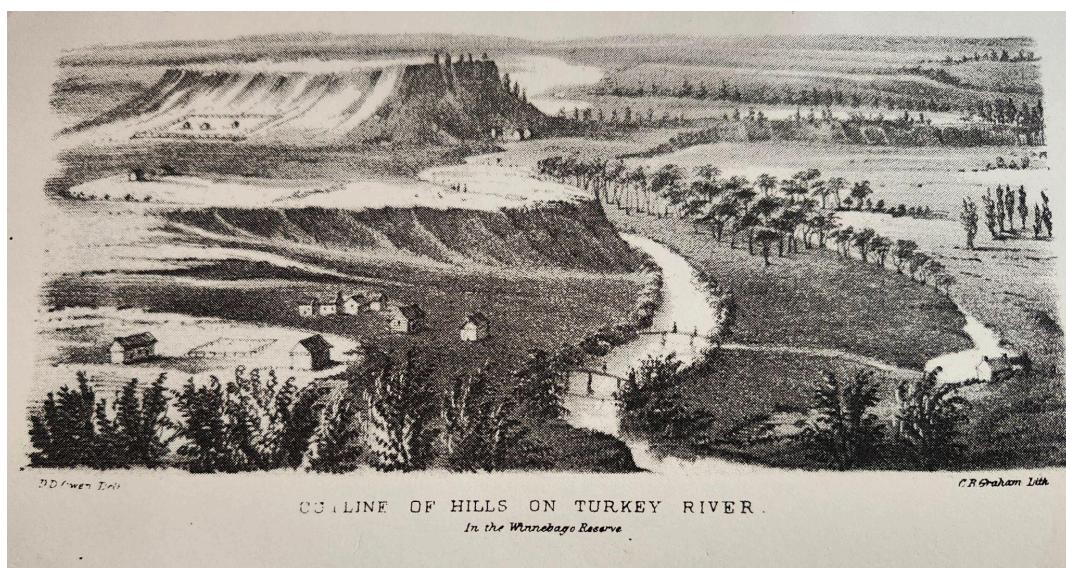
Tobacco holds a special place in Native American culture. Prosper explained that in the Ho Chunk creation story, all animals were created first, and given great gifts. When man was made, Mystery had run out of gifts to give to man, who was weak and without claws or fangs or fur. Man was given tobacco, which they could use to beseech the spirits to give them whatever they needed. In the tobacco offering, prayer is given to the four cardinal directions, as well as the earth and sky, before bringing focus back to the self and the present moment.



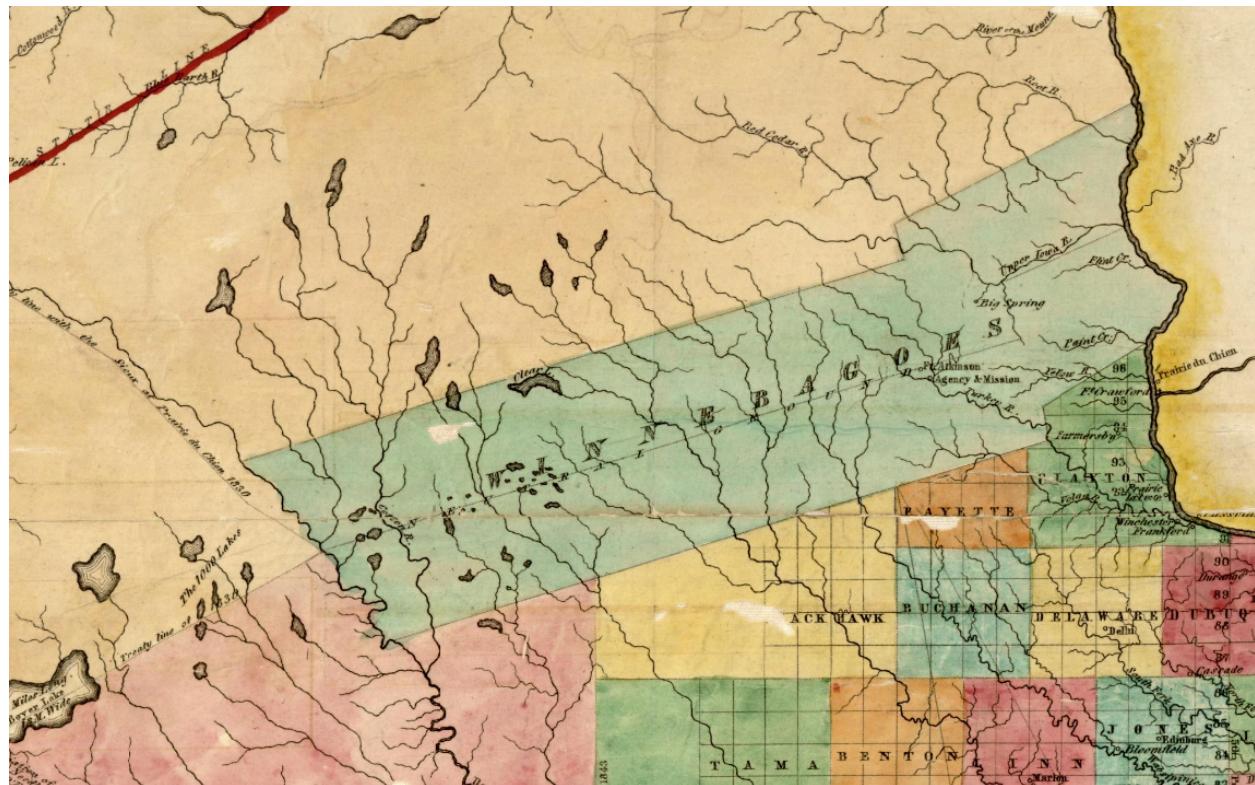
**John Kuennen, Rt. Rev. Terry Landsgaard, Unknown, Luke Blong, and Prosper Waukon near the 1840s Winnebago Indian Sub Agency School site.**

Then the group of 20 historically minded folks journeyed to the site of the former Subagency school site located on John and Annette Kuennen's farmland. Rt. Rev. Landsgaard noted that approximately 250 Winnebago learned farming practices at this school in the 1840s, in a failed attempt to convert a hunting and gathering tribe into farmers.

This attempt was significantly hindered when the Turkey River flooded and destroyed their tilled fields and the waterway for the grist mill. Another factor, tending gardens and crops was women's work and not something hunting men were very interested in doing.



**David Dale Owen Sketch of Winnebago Reserve, 1847**



## Map of NE Iowa, Cincinnati: Doolittle and Munson, 1845.

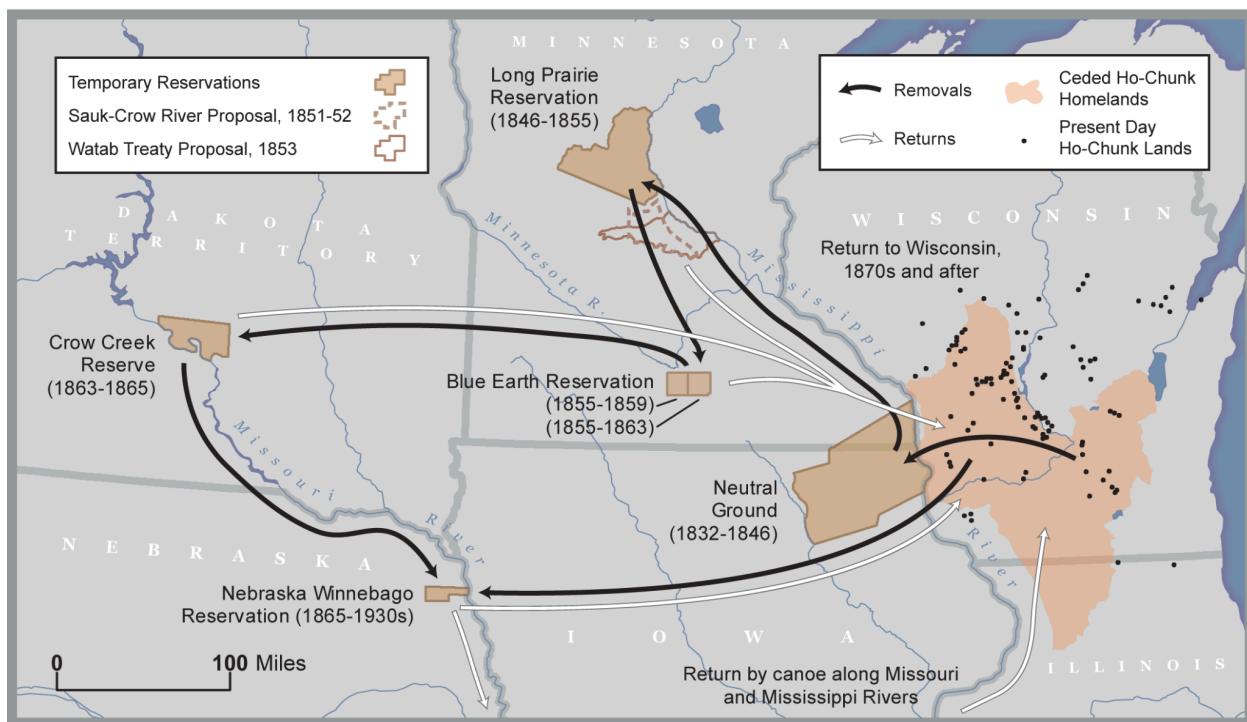
The Waukon family also toured the German American Museum and Library in St. Lucas. They were especially interested in the Native American theme area in the Museum. Clair Blong noted that the museum is working with the staff of the Ho Chunk Nation of Black River Falls, Wisconsin, to identify themes and appropriate display materials. Waukon's family was especially interested in the Ho Chunk Nation artifacts of recent decades: like Emma Big Bear wooden baskets, Ojibway decorated dresses, and Ho Chunk post-World War II leather snow boots with khaki lined interiors.

The highlight of their weekend visit was Prosper Waukon addressing over 90 people at the Hotel Winneshiek Opera House in Decorah on Saturday evening. Prosper's talk was entitled: "The Waukon Decorah Family Legacy: Understanding Your Community's Roots". Waukon traced the family genealogy over the many decades.

Prosper also delved into the 19<sup>th</sup> century government treaties and removal acts that inflicted great suffering and loss of life on the Winnebago people. When the five forced relocations finally ended, the Winnebago were a scattered people: some living in northeast Nebraska, most in southwest Wisconsin and even some in northeast Iowa.

Prosper stated that his parents and he attended Christian boarding schools. These schools significantly eroded Native people's identity and their cultures. Only now are the churches and government agencies admitting the great harm and abuse inflicted on indigenous children and trying to make amends. The harm was the eradication of their language and cultural ways.

## Relocations of the Ho-Chunk Tribe



Map by Cole Sutton on his Blog site.

Despite this somber tone, Prosper encouraged future generations to get over the past and seek redemption and unity. In the discussion period, the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and people was highlighted as a chronic problem requiring more Federal, State and local law enforcement resource assistance to help tribal governments. The silence of the media and law enforcement further exasperates a major challenge with jurisdictional complications, as well as communication and coordination problems between Federal, State and local agencies.



**Prosper Waukon and Ciarrah Reine Waukon -Latrille,  
Hotel Winneshiek, Decorah, Iowa**

The situation is bleak; the murder rate is ten times higher than the national average for women living on reservations, with murder being the third leading cause of death for Native women.



**The Prosper Waukon Family at Hotel Winneshiek, Decorah, Iowa. L to R: Hannah Dream Waukon, Wolf Takotah – Spirit Waukon – Latraile, Takotah has his hand on Luna Lazulie Waukon Martinez (little girl in front), Ciarrah Reine Waukon -Latrille, Margaret Mary (Smith) Waukon, Prosper Ramon (Smith) Waukon, and Jan Waukon.**

In concluding their stay in Northeast Iowa, the Waukon family visited Effigy Mounds National Monument. The Late Woodland Period (1400-750 B.P.) along the Upper Mississippi River and extending east to Lake Michigan is associated with the culture known today as the Effigy Moundbuilders. The construction of effigy mounds was a regional cultural phenomenon. Mounds of earth in the shapes of birds, bears, deer, bison, lynx, turtle, panther or water spirit are the most common images. 1

Like earlier groups, the Effigy Mound Builders continued to build conical mounds for burial purposes, but their burial sites lacked the trade goods of the preceding Middle Woodland Culture. The Effigy Mound Builders also built linear or long rectangular mounds that were used for ceremonial purposes that remain a mystery. Some archeologists believe they were built to mark celestial events or seasonal observances. Others speculate they were constructed as territorial markers or as boundaries between groups. 2

**Footnotes:** 1 and 2, from Effigy Mounds Monument Website, 2024.

# **A History of POW Camp Algona and its Impact on Northwest Iowa Communities**

**By Sarah Hill**

Camp Algona was a prisoner of war camp located in Algona, Kossuth County, Iowa that operated from April 1944 to February 1946. Camp Algona was commanded (for most of the time) by Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Lobdell. After its closure in 1946, the camp was dismantled, and the city acquired the land to build an airport on the site where it once stood. During its existence, the German POWs at Camp Algona had an influence on multiple fields; for example, they positively impacted the Midwestern economy by filling labor shortages in many industries (such as agriculture, food processing, construction, etc.). In addition to German POWs making an impact on the economy, they also made an impression on the City of Algona through some of their actions and artworks which still resonate with the community today.

Alternately, Camp Algona also made a strong impression on POWs, who often had positive experiences at the camp and continued to maintain their relationship with Algona decades after the war. In this paper, I will give some background information about Camp Algona, along with exploring the lasting impressions that Algona made on former prisoners of war and vice versa through local museums, the rotating museum exhibit *Impressions: How Camp Algona Impacted German POWs After the War* at the Camp Algona POW Museum and the Nativity Scene that the prisoners of war built there in 1945.

## **Background of Camp Algona: Where Did the Prisoners Come From?**

Throughout its time as a POW camp, Camp Algona housed ten thousand German prisoners; the first group was captured in North Africa in 1943.[1] By 1943, the Axis Powers had controlled much of continental Europe and through Vichy France and Italian colonies, also occupied countries in North Africa. In 1943, this began to change with the Allied military successes in North Africa that year and those in northern Europe in 1944. At first, the Allies took many Axis soldiers prisoner and put them into POW camps in England. However, due to the extremely successful nature of these military campaigns, the prisoner of war camps in England were beginning to see overwhelming numbers of POWs that they were no longer able to contain. During this time, German and Italian POWs were beginning to be shipped from ports in Southampton and Glasgow in the United Kingdom, Le Havre, France and North Africa to Camp Shanks, New York and Norfolk, Virginia, where they would be put on trains and transported to prisoner of war camps all over the United States (Figure 1).

When the prisoner of war camps in the United States were closed after WWII, PWs were often shipped to Europe via two routes—they would go on a train to San Francisco and then travel through the Pacific Ocean until they reached the Panama Canal. Once they were in Panama, they crossed the Panama Canal and then travelled northward through the Atlantic Ocean, where they would port in Le Havre, France or Southampton, England (Figure 1). The alternate route was to

travel by rail to Camp Shanks, NY and then they were put on a trip to travel back to Le Havre or Southampton (Figure 1). Once in Europe, they worked in French and British prisoner of war camps for a few years after the war doing jobs for which there were labor shortages, such as working in coal mines.



**Figure 1:** Diagram of Departure and Arrival Routes of the POW Camps in the US, UK, France and North Africa, Camp Algona POW Museum, Algona, IA. Photo: Sarah Hill. Note: The red arrows on the map represent the departure route of POWs back to Europe, whereas the blue ones denote the arrival routes. Also note that the Axis Powers countries are represented in pink, the countries they occupied are depicted in purple and the Allied controlled countries are illustrated in red.

### What Did the POWs Do While in Camp Algona?

Since many of the people who typically held agricultural, food processing and industrial jobs were off fighting in the war, one of the main tasks that the prisoners had was to fill the labor shortages in these fields at Camp Algona and its branch camps. Camp Algona was an especially important base camp, as it was the headquarters for all of the branch camps in Minnesota, North and South Dakota, along with most of Iowa (Figure 2). Though there are many theories as to why Algona was chosen as the site for the camp, the most likely reason is for its ideal location to operate branch camps in Minnesota, Iowa and North and South Dakota.[2] POWs were often sent to branch camps when needed, and the jobs at these camps varied based on each community's need.

For example, at the northern Minnesota branch camps of Bena, Deer River (Cut Foot Sioux), Remer and Grand Rapids, prisoners primarily did logging, as the lumber industry is particularly important in that part of the state. In addition to doing work for the base camps, prisoners were also allowed to be hired by private employers, especially farmers to help with harvesting crops. The prisoners helped to fill many of the positions needed at the time, such as harvesting vegetables, constructing silos, digging drainage ditches, working in creameries, nurseries, meat processing (chickens), canning plants, box and barrel factories and making tiles and bricks.[3]



**Figure 2:** Post Engineer's Office at Camp Algona, Map of Camp Algona and its Branch Camps, 1945. Camp Algona POW Museum, Algona, Iowa. Photo: Author. Note that the branch camps are represented as squares and Camp Algona itself is depicted with the seven-pointed star. The star was the insignia for the Seventh Service Division that Camp Algona was a part of.

Prisoners of War who were in branch camps often had to stay in tents or existing structures, as federal funds were not allowed to be used in the construction of branch camp housing as with the base camp living accommodations.[4] As a result the prisoners of war sometimes had unique accommodations, such as staying in Civilian Conservation Corps housing built as a part of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal in the 1930's, a college dormitory, a mansion of a former state senator in Minnesota, the Whitewater State Park in St. Charles, MN and even a fish hatchery.[5] As with the branch camps, private employers were responsible for housing the prisoners themselves.[6]

During their free time at the camp, the POWs were encouraged to participate in positive activities, which was one of the main articles of the 1929 Geneva Prisoner of War Convention. Prisoners were compensated for their work, by being paid ten cents an hour in military scrip tickets. These tickets were issued to prisoners of war instead of cash, in case they escaped. According to the Geneva Prisoner of War Convention, POWs were also provided a canteen with personal supplies (such as toiletries, art supplies, books, sheet music and sports equipment) that they could buy with their scrip.[7] Certain key people and organizations worked tirelessly to give these POWs materials for recreational activities.

The YMCA and Red Cross particularly helped obtain recreational materials for POWs, such as books, sports equipment, materials for building theatre sets, costumes, board games, etc., to help cure boredom. They also provided classes to the POWs in which they could learn a variety of subjects, such as history and English. One invaluable person who helped organize these activities was Howard Hong. Hong was a professor of philosophy at St. Olaf College in Northfield, MN. During World War II, however, he worked with German POWs through the War Prisoners Aid of the World Alliance of YMCAs, which helped to supply necessities and recreational supplies to prisoners of war.[8] Through his work in the YMCA, Hong arranged for recreational materials, such as wood for carpentry, costume supplies for theatrical productions, books and musical instruments.[9]

As a result of the YMCA, Red Cross and Howard Hong's efforts in securing and providing recreational supplies at Camp Algona, the POWs at the camp often participated in a wide variety of leisure activities, including sports, music, theatre or the visual arts. The most popular mediums that the POWs used to create artworks were painting and sketches; some of the most common subjects of these artworks were scenes of European cities, life in the prison camps, portraits of American personnel and landscapes. In addition to being able to purchase art supplies at the canteen with their scrip tickets, the prisoners also had access to a carpentry and metalworking area in their garrison. Prisoners of war used their creativity to make rotating calendars, a jewelry box and a tobacco humidor in the carpentry area, along with jewelry in the metalworking building of the garrison, such as the bracelet and ring made by a prisoner of war for his fellow prisoner, Alfred Mueller as seen in Figure 2a and 2b:



2a:



2b:

2a: Bracelet made for Alfred Mueller, 1943-1945. Silver. Camp Algona POW Museum, Algona, IA. Photo: Author.

2b: Ring made for Alfred Mueller, 1943-1945. Silver. Camp Algona POW Museum, Algona, IA. Photo: Author.

In addition to the visual arts, POWs could also participate in musical and theatrical arts at the camps. With the instruments that were provided at the camp canteen, POWs within the Camp Algona system were able to create their own orchestras and even hold concerts for camp personnel. At Camp Algona, there was a fifteen-piece orchestra that was conducted by POW Willi Schwoebel. This particular band gave regular performances for the other prisoners to attend and they even held holiday concerts for camp personnel. Like Camp Algona, the Bena camp also had an orchestra that consisted of an accordion, trombone, violins, guitars, a base drum, mandolins and a piano.[10]

Prisoners of War also gave theatrical performances as well as musical ones. With the materials that they got in the canteen, prisoners made costumes, props and sets to hold plays. Both Camp Algona and its branch camps had theatrical performances.[11] At Camp Algona, PWs performed plays by notable playwrights such as Molière and Friedrich Schiller, along with writing their own.

### **Community Impact of the POWs- The Nativity Scene**

One of the most famous artworks created by the prisoners of war in Algona is a half life-sized Nativity Scene built by the POWs in 1945 (Figure 3). It was designed by the former POW Eduard Kaib and constructed by him and five other prisoners. Though Kaib and his five assistants would build and complete the Nativity Scene in 1945, the idea for the project came the year before. Prior to the war, Kaib was a department store architect who designed displays; during Christmas of 1944, he used his occupational skills to create a twelve-foot-wide manger and nativity scene to decorate the prisoners' dining room.[12] He then shared an idea for a larger nativity scene with the American assistant executive officer in charge of recreational and cultural

activities for POWs, Captain Gunnar A. Norgaard, who then passed it along to Lt. Col. Lobdell.[13]

Lobdell approved and supported the project enthusiastically, and so Kaib made a plan for the project. According to Kaib, this nativity scene was to be broken down into four parts: “the town scene” (a painted background meant to represent Bethlehem) on the left, the “manger scene” in the center, the “shepherd” scene on the right and the Three Kings and their retinue were also included. This was designed to be set inside a circular display area.[14]

Financial support for the project came from two main sources; the prisoner’s canteen and donations made by the POWs themselves. Since POWs were paid in military script and not cash, these funds would go into an account for which they could use coupons to buy goods at the canteen or make donations to authorized causes. Kaib himself and many other prisoners used funds from their POW accounts to fund the project, along with a disbursement of funds from the camp canteen that was approved by a board of American officers and German POWs.[15] In total, Kaib spent eight thousand dollars on materials to create this Nativity Scene, which to put it in perspective, would equal the amount of money two thousand POWs would be paid in a week.[16] Some of the material for the POWs to make the scene (such as the concrete) was arranged and brought by Howard Hong.

In June 1945, Eduard Kaib began construction of the Nativity Scene. Kaib and his five-man team hand sculpted and painted seventy-five figures for the scene. In order to create the sculptures, they made wire frames that were then coated with concrete and then covered with plaster, so that they were more life-like and could add details and features. During construction, the POWs were allowed to use a storage building for sports equipment to house and make their creations.[17] Shortly before completion of the project, Lt. Col. Lobdell cleared out a warehouse in the camp so that the POWs may display their artwork there. The warehouse was transformed into a display area, with a stage and columns that disguised the rafters and also split the statuary into four parts: the Magi on the left, the Manger in the center and the shepherds on the right.[18]

When the Nativity Scene was completed, Kaib suggested to Lt. Col. Lobdell that they should let the public see the scene, to which Lobdell agreed. Lobdell had the public relations officer release a press statement with public viewing times.[19] During the time that the Nativity Scene was opened to the public during its first year in 1945, three thousand six hundred people came to visit the scene, including two thousand from Algona itself, one thousand six hundred from other places in Iowa and one hundred from other states.[20] Not only could the public visit the Nativity Scene to see the beautiful craftsmanship of the POWs, but they could also attend brief church services that were held at the site.

This had a profound impact on the local people of Algona, such as the Lutheran pastor Reverend Kitterman, who was a pastor at a parish just north of the city at the time the Nativity Scene was opened. In the following description, he describes how emotional it was to see this nativity scene for the first time in 1945: “I was glad I was in the dark for there I stood, tears streaming down my face. We were giving inspiration on the Iowa hillsides in war time and that

deeper cry for Peace on Earth. Our bodies were cold but our hearts were burning within.” [21] As in the description by Reverend Kitterman, it must have been incredibly overwhelming to see the beautiful creations that the POWs made for the city of Algona, considering that their home country was at war with the United States. The fact that the POWs made this Nativity Scene as a gesture of peace during wartime is rather profound and has never been forgotten.



**Figure 3:** Nativity Scene built by German Prisoners of War, 1945. Wood, concrete, plaster and paint, half-life Sized. Kossuth County Fairgrounds, Algona, IA. Photo: Author.

After the camp was dismantled in 1946, Lt. Col. Lobdell had Kaib, the German POW Lutheran chaplain, Alex Funke, and the POW spokesman for Camp Algona, Friedrich Henkel, decide where and what they should do with the Nativity Scene. The three men decided that it should stay in Algona, provided that they could arrange for proper storage and care for the set.[22] The Junior Chamber of Commerce stepped up and volunteered to house the Nativity

Scene at the Kossuth County Fairgrounds. In 1958, the Junior Chamber of Commerce turned over the responsibility to the United Methodist Men’s Club in Algona who still takes care of it today.[23] The current building in which the nativity scene is housed was built in 1963. Just as it was when it first opened in 1945, The Nativity Scene in Algona is still a beloved Christmas tradition which attracts visitors from all over Iowa, the United States and the world during the holidays.

In the entryway to the Nativity Scene building at the Kossuth County Fairgrounds, there is a small museum dedicated to the memory of the prisoners of war, which is one of the three institutions dedicated to preserving the memory of the PWs in Algona, along with the Camp Algona POW Museum and the historical site marker where the camp was located. Prior to the opening of the Camp Algona POW Museum in 2004, this small museum was the main museum in Algona dedicated to preserving the memory of the prisoners of war in Algona; in addition to housing the Nativity Scene, it also includes artworks donated to the city by former prisoners, such as Werner Meinel's *Correlation*, newspaper articles about the Nativity Scene and a copy of the 1929 Geneva Prisoner of War Convention.

The second museum to open in Algona about the history of POWs in the city was the Camp Algona POW Museum in July 2004. The Camp Algona POW Museum continues to preserve the memory of the German prisoners through their exhibits that detail the prisoners' experiences at the camp, as well as honor men and women from Kossuth County, IA who served in the Armed Forces during WWII, along with American POWs in Axis prison camps in Germany, Austria, Japan and the Philippines, those who were missing in action (MIA) and killed in action (KIA). In addition to the museums, the City of Algona also constructed a historical marker to honor the memory of the camp on the site where the prison camp stood, which is now the city airport.

### ***Lasting Impact on POWs of Camp Algona After the War: Impressions: How Camp Algona Impacted German POWs After the War***

At the Camp Algona POW Museum, there are many exhibits dedicated to telling the story of the prisoners and their experiences during and after their time at the camp. The following exhibition, *Impressions: How Camp Algona Impacted German POWs After the War*, a rotating exhibit at the museum curated by Sarah Hill focuses on the (often) positive impact that the camp had on the prisoners after the war, along with the connections that POWs made with American personnel and the City of Algona, and how these relationships that they made while at the camp influenced their lives in the short and long-term. The following section includes the stories and creations of three former POWs featured in the exhibition, Wilhelm Martens, Eduard Kaib and Werner Meinel, to illustrate the impact that Camp Algona had on POWs in both the short term (*Post-War Connections*) and the long term (*New Alliances: Werner Meinel's Correlation*).

#### ***Post-War Connections***

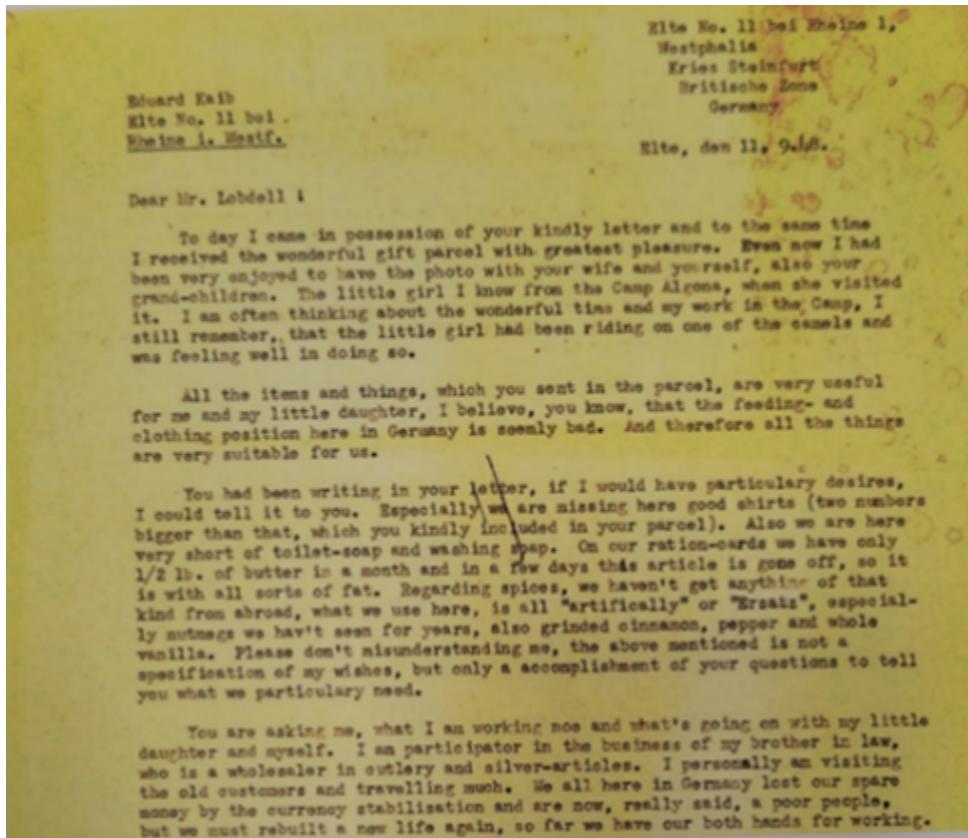
Many POWs were affected by the German economic crisis immediately following WWII when they came home, and often faced financial hardships. However, some of the German POWs made connections with the American personnel after the war who sent them the occasional care packages with necessities like toiletries or clothing to help them through this difficult financial period in German history. The *Post-War Connections* portion of the exhibition will explore some of the connections that POWs had with American personnel, as well as this period and its impact on German culture and art.



**Figure 4:** Wilhelm Martens, „*Der Schwarze Markt hat Alles*,“ (The Black Market has everything), Sketch from Martens’ Journal, ca. 1945-1950. Pencil on paper, 7.5 inches (19 cm) x 8 in (20 cm), Camp Algona Prisoner of War Museum, Algona, Iowa. Photo: Author.

This particular sketch was made by one of the former POWs at Camp Algona, Wilhelm Martens (Figure 4). During his time as a prisoner, Martens kept a journal in which he recorded observations of the camps he went to (since he was also a prisoner at Camp Fairmount in Minnesota and at a PW camp in Horbling, England), the jobs that the PWs were assigned to (such as fishing, processing chickens, etc.) and the journey back to Germany. Upon his arrival in Germany, Martens made this striking observation of the German economy that many POWs faced when they came home.

The top portion of the drawing shows a policeman chasing after a peddler, which signifies how prevalent the Black Market was during this period in German history. On the bottom of the sketch, there is a depiction of a group of people standing outside of a building; on the window of this building hangs a sign that reads “Lebensmittel” (grocery store) and another sign that says “Heute Geschlossen” (closed today). The grocery store would likely be closed due to shortages, as it was common during this time. The message that Martens writes on the sketch particularly emphasizes the prevalence of the Black Market during this time in German history: “Der Schwarze Markt hat Alles! Die “Anderen” Nichts!” (The Black Market has everything! Die “Anderen” Nichts!).



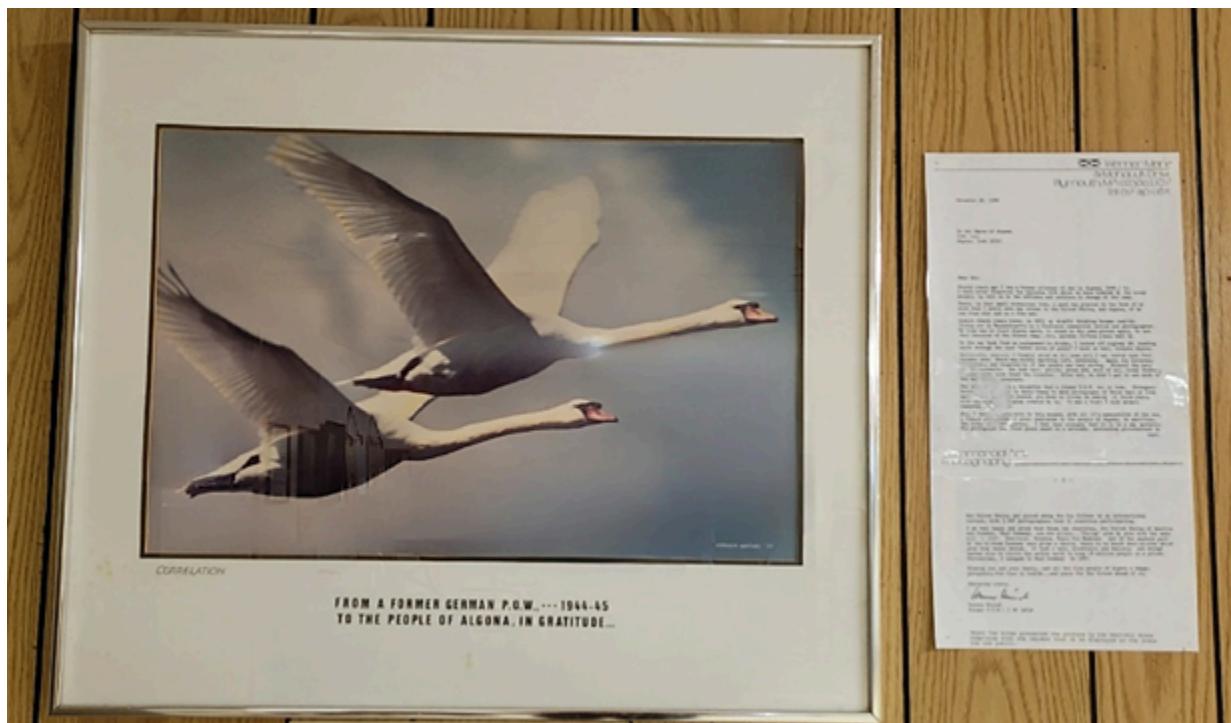
**Figure 5:** Excerpt of a 1948 Letter from former POW Eduard Kaib to Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Lobdell, Camp Algona POW Museum, Algona, Iowa. Photo: Author.

Even after he returned to Germany, Eduard Kaib continued to keep in contact with Lt. Col. Arthur Lobdell for many years. Like many prisoners, Kaib also faced financial difficulties due to the poor economy in Germany at the time. To help him out, Lt. Col. Lobdell sent him and his daughter care packages with necessities, such as soap and clothing, as these items were difficult to come by in Germany then. This letter is meant to highlight both the dire economic situation in Germany during this period and the connections that some of the POWs made with

American Personnel after the war. A quote from the letter particularly emphasizes the short-term impact of Camp Algona on the POWs, along with the financial hardships many POWs had to face at this time in Germany: "All the items and things, which you sent in the parcel, are very useful for me and my little daughter, I believe, you know, that the feeding--- and clothing position here in Germany is seemingly bad. And therefore all things are very suitable for us." [24] In 1968, Kaib and his wife were able to visit the Nativity Scene that he had made twenty-three years earlier in Algona. While they were visiting in Algona, he also was able to reunite with Lt. Col. and Mrs. Lobdell who were also in town visiting at the time; they were able to tour the Nativity Scene and reminisce about old times.

### New Alliances: Werner Meinel's *Correlation*

In addition to Eduard Kaib, Camp Algona had a strong influence on many prisoners, such as Werner Meinel. Meinel had originally joined the German Luftwaffe (Air Force) in 1941 and was a radio operator in Greece; he was captured by British Forces in 1943, and then transferred to the United States. Once in the US, Meinel was a prisoner of war at both the Owatonna branch camp and at Camp Algona. Prior to joining the German Air Force (Luftwaffe) in 1941, Meinel was studying to be an artist. During the war, he continued his art career, as he made oil portrait paintings of the American officers and personnel. After the war, Meinel continued his career as an artist and became a prominent photographer and commercial artist.



**Figure 6.** Werner Meinel, *Correlation*, 1984. Color photograph, 2.2 feet x 1.10 ft. Kossuth County Fairgrounds, Algona, IA. Photo: Author.

In 1984, Werner Meinel donated his prize-winning photograph, *Correlation*, to Algona (Figure 7). The artwork itself depicts a pair of swans flying through the air together. This photo is particularly prestigious, as it won first place in a nation-wide photography contest in the United States and placed among the top fifteen in an international contest.[25] *Correlation* is displayed in the entryway of the Nativity Scene Barn next to a letter written by Meinel himself, which describes the meaning and symbolism of the work:

Sir, I want to contribute to this museum, with all its memorabilia of the era, a framed photograph of mine: dedicated to the people of Algona, in gratitude. The title is: Correlation. I feel very strongly that it is in a way symbolic...

I am very happy and proud that these two countries, the United States of America and Germany, West Germany, are now allies... “flying” side by side with the same goal in mind: Democracy, Freedom, Peace for Mankind.[26]

As the sentiment reflects from his letter, Meinel’s time at Camp Algona impacted his life greatly. When Meinel returned from Germany after the war, he originally settled in East Germany where his family was from. However, when Werner Meinel learned that he would be automatically placed in an unsuitable job by the East German government, Meinel decided to flee the country in 1947. After he escaped from East Germany, Mr. Meinel established his art career in West Germany. When Meinel was a prisoner, he was particularly struck by the fair treatment of the local Algonans and American personnel that he wanted to come back to the United States to live.

In 1963, Meinel was finally able to move to Massachusetts, where he lived until his death in 1992. In addition to donating *Correlation*, he continued to maintain connections with Algona decades after the war, as he visited the city multiple times starting in the late 1970’s to 1990 in order to see the Nativity Scene and *Correlation*. In addition to visiting *Correlation* and the Nativity Scene in Algona, Werner Meinel also reunited with an old friend that he made while he was a prisoner. During his time in the camp, he befriended and fell in love with a typist at the camp hospital named Vuanita Wegener Rentz. While at Camp Algona, he painted a portrait of Wegener Rentz and even tried to escape in order to spend time with her. After the war, they lost contact for decades until they were able to finally find each other once again and ended up being pen pals until Meinel’s death.

### **Conclusion**

Even though the prisoners of war were in Algona for a short period of time, the city made a strong impression on them that lasted sometimes for decades; some of the prisoners came back to visit old friends in Algona or kept correspondences with American personnel or their former employers for years. The prisoners made an impact on Algona, as well, that still reverberates on the city today; we may see this with the popularity of the beloved Nativity Scene today and the care that goes into preserving it.

The city and separate institutions have also taken steps to preserve this unique time in Iowa’s history, such as the Camp Algona Museum, Nativity Scene Barn Museum and the historical marker. Both museums have worked to preserve the memory of this unique episode in Iowa history through their exhibits, such as those describing the experiences of the POWs, displaying the artwork they made while in the camp and *Impressions: How Camp Algona Impacted German POWs After the War*. Through this work, the City of Algona has ensured that the history of this particular era will be preserved for years to come.

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<https://wp.stolaf.edu/kierkegaard/files/2019/03/Howard-Hong-Obituary-2010.pdf>.

## Footnotes

[1] *Camp Algona POW Museum Introductory Video*, written by Taylor Setzer and Mikayla Torpy, directed by Brian Connick (2012; Algona, Iowa), USB.

[2] *Camp Algona POW Museum Introductory Video*, written by Taylor Setzer and Mikayla Torpy, directed by Brian Connick (2012; Algona, Iowa), USB.

[3] *Camp Algona POW Museum Introductory Video*, written by Taylor Setzer and Mikayla Torpy, directed by Brian Connick (2012; Algona, Iowa), USB.

[4] *Camp Algona POW Museum Introductory Video*, written by Taylor Setzer and Mikayla Torpy, directed by Brian Connick (2012; Algona, Iowa), USB.

[5] *Camp Algona POW Museum Introductory Video*, written by Taylor Setzer and Mikayla Torpy, directed by Brian Connick (2012; Algona, Iowa), USB.

[6] *Camp Algona POW Museum Introductory Video*, written by Taylor Setzer and Mikayla Torpy, directed by Brian Connick (2012; Algona, Iowa), USB.

[7] *Camp Algona POW Museum Introductory Video*, written by Taylor Setzer and Mikayla Torpy, directed by Brian Connick (2012; Algona, Iowa), USB.

[8] “Howard Hong Obituary, 2010,” St. Olaf College, accessed November 18, 2024.  
<https://wp.stolaf.edu/kierkegaard/files/2019/03/Howard-Hong-Obituary-2010.pdf>.

[9] Anita Buck, *Behind Barbed Wire: German Prisoner of War Camps in Minnesota* (St. Cloud: North Star Press of St. Cloud, Inc., 1998), 9-10.

[10] Buck, *Behind Barbed Wire*, 47.

[11] Buck, *Behind Barbed Wire*, 9.

[12] George H. Lobdell, *The Golden Rule Challenge: Command of World War II German POW Camps In the Upper Midwest* (Seattle: Classic Day Publishing, 2004), 320.

[13] Lobdell, *The Golden Rule Challenge*, 320.

[14] Lobdell, *The Golden Rule Challenge*, 320-321.

[15] Lobdell, *The Golden Rule Challenge*, 321.

[16] Lobdell, *The Golden Rule Challenge*, 321.

[17] Lobdell, *The Golden Rule Challenge*, 321-322.

[18] Lobdell, *The Golden Rule Challenge*, 322-323.

[19] Lobdell, *The Golden Rule Challenge*, 323-324.

[20] Lobdell, *The Golden Rule Challenge*, 324.

[21] Wes Bartlett, “A Collection of Memories of the Algona Prisoner of War Camp 1943-1946,” (Booklet, Algona, IA, 1994), 23.

[22] Lobdell, *The Golden Rule Challenge*, 324.

[23] Lobdell, *The Golden Rule Challenge*, 324.

[24] Eduard Kaib, Correspondence with Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Lobdell, September 11, 1948.

[25] Werner Meinel, Correspondence with Mayor of Algona, December 26, 1984.

[26] Werner Meinel, Correspondence with Mayor of Algona, December 26, 1984.

## **Exploring Brahms "Nanie" Presentation by James Griesheimer**

On Wednesday, November 20th, from 6:30 to 8:00 PM, the renowned expert on German classical music, Professor James Griesheimer presented on Brahms' funerary piece called Nanie, the tragedy of untimely death.

Professor Griesheimer says "We shall do a survey of these with particular attention to a funerary piece called Nanie. Inspired by the death of a young artist friend, Brahms draws on a poem by Schiller, a poem that laments the tragedy of untimely death. Rich in classical allusion, the fates of Euridice, Adonis and Achilles pass in review as reminders that "even the beautiful die." The rich and complex piece ends on a note of consolation and a meditation on the mystery of immortality."



**Professor Emeritus of Classical Music, Dr. James Griesheimer  
November 20, 2024 At German American Museum.**

As background: "Nänie" is a Germanized version of the Latin "nenia," meaning a funeral ode. Schiller's words make references to three stories from classical mythology: Orpheus and Eurydice, Venus (Aphrodite) and Adonis, and the death of Achilles, in that order. Brahms's setting was a response to the death of his friend, the painter Anselm Feuerbach, at age 50. Feuerbach's subjects were often based on Greco-Roman myths. It is dedicated to the painter's stepmother. The piece is exceedingly beautiful, with a lush choral and instrumental sound, says Jim.

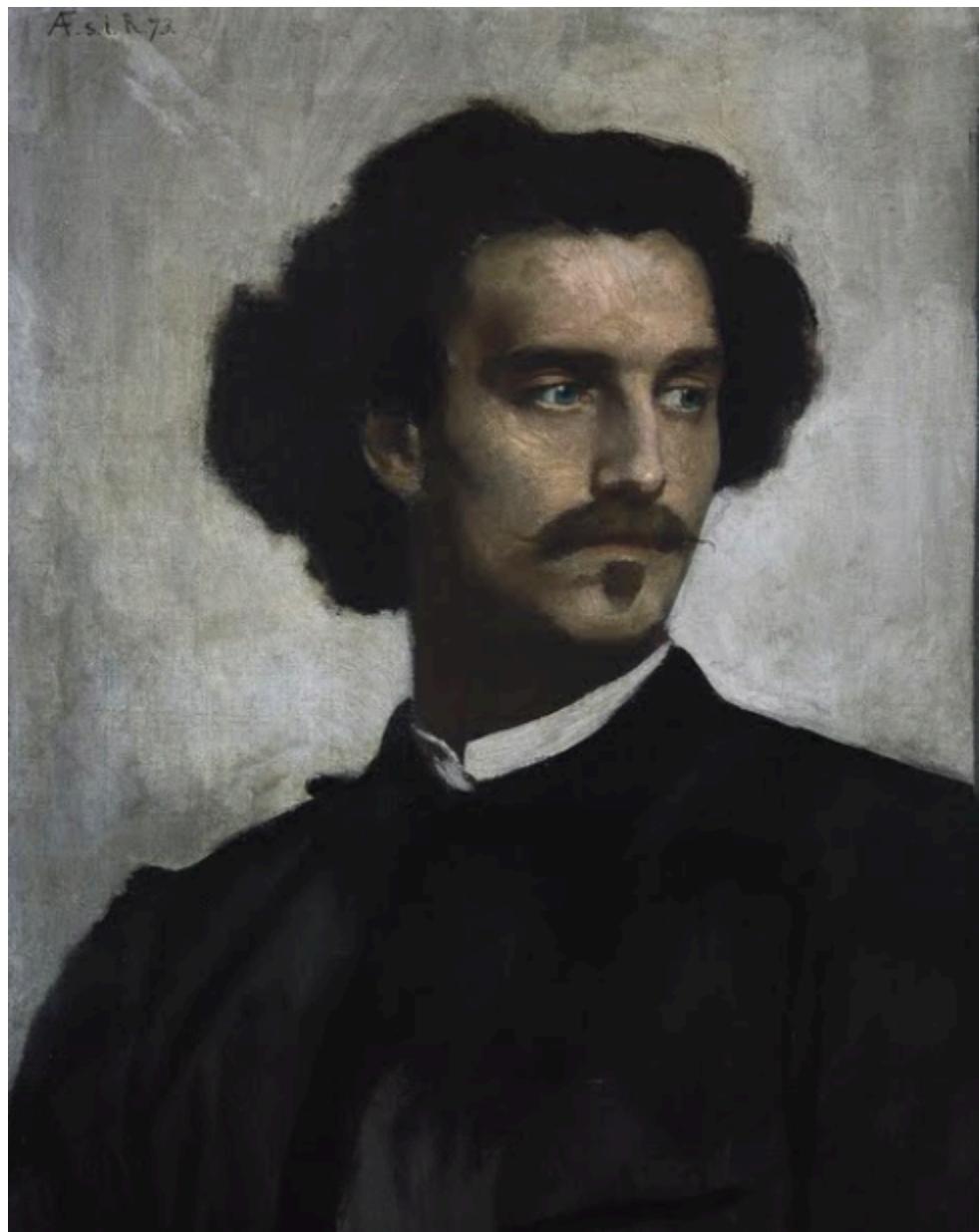
Professor Griesheimer states "To most music lovers, the name of Brahms evokes a great master of the symphony and, in that, the successor of Beethoven. Almost equally well known are his chamber works and piano music. It therefore is surprising to many that there is a large corpus of works for voice and especially for chorus. Many of these have keyboard accompaniment, but others are large and elaborate and have a full orchestral complement."

Dr. Griesheimer is an emeritus professor of music from Luther College. Professor Griesheimer studied music at Ohio State, Arizona State and Indiana University. He was a principal oboist and played in symphony orchestras in Chicago, Phoenix, El Paso, Pittsburgh, Dubuque and Rochester. He taught music at New Mexico State University, Middlebury College and most recently at Luther College. He received a Fulbright Scholarship to study in Germany from 1973 to 1975. Griesheimer is a much beloved Professor of Luther College. He is known for his brilliant mind and for his absolute passion for music and music history. Jim is highly regarded by his students for his amazing grasp of all the classical composers and his analysis of classical music.

Come and enjoy Jim's exploration of Brahms music that touches on the mystery of life and death. The Church does it in its holy days on the cusp of October and November, on All Souls Day and All Saints Day. After Jim's presentation, we enjoy great conversation, refreshments and cookies.



**Young Brahms at the Piano**



**Anselm Fuerbach**

## **Joseph Spielman and His Life in Bavaria**

### **Presentation by Barbara Ortwein**

Barbara Ortwein took us on a trip to the roots of Iowan pioneer Joseph Spielman (1801-1888), the founder of Spillville. Barbara book talk included live music and an exhibit. Barbara is a retired teacher from Germany but spends much of her time in her new home in Prague. She spent recent months in Bavaria researching this book on Spielman.



**Barbara Ortwein**

When Joseph Spielman was 35 years old, he emigrated from Germany to the United States. For 13 years he settled in the area of Oldenburg, Indiana, with his wife and his 5 children. In 1849 he finally moved to today's Winneshiek County with a group of other German families.

Joseph Spielman purchased a lot of land in this north-east corner of Iowa and managed to pull other settlers to this region – among them Swiss, Norwegian and especially Czech speaking people from Southern Bohemia.

But till this day the first 35 years of his life in the village Dietersdorf in Upper Franconia in today's German state of Bavaria had been shrouded in mystery. Thanks to her research work in Joseph Spielman's Bavarian hometown and the archives of the region Barbara Ortwein will unveil these forgotten beginnings of his bio and how they shaped his later life in Iowa.



**Joseph Spielman portrait, founder of Spillville.**

The author read from her new book Joseph Spielmann: A Bavarian Pioneer in Iowa, and from her earlier book about Dvorak's stay in Spillville, A Summer in Spillville 1893.

When Josef Spielmann was born on 24 June 1801, his father, Johann Valentin Spielmann, was 31 and his mother, Ottilie Heuschler, was 32. He married Eva Margrethe Munch on 13 November 1825, in Dietersdorf, Schwabach, Bavaria, Germany.



**Old 1880s photo of Spillville, Iowa. Church on top right.**



**Jody Steinlage and Barbara Ortwein at the book signing event.**

Josef and Eva were the parents of at least 2 sons and 3 daughters. He immigrated to New York County, New York, United States in 1836 and lived in Calmar, Winneshiek, Iowa, United States for about 10 years. Josef died on 19 February 1888, in Spillville, Winneshiek, Iowa, United States, at the age of 86, and was buried in Spillville, Winneshiek, Iowa, United States.



**Barbara Ortwein hosting a German dinner with Michael Klimesh, Virginia Gehling, Cindy Lensing and Clair Blong, October 2024. .**

## Winneshiek County Mills

**Presentation by Shay Gooder, Project Archeologist  
Bear Creek Archeology, Inc.**



**Photograph of the Trout River Mill ca. 1900  
(photo courtesy of the Winneshiek County Historic Preservation Commission)**

The Winneshiek County mill project (2022–2024) represents an “intensive” reconnaissance-level investigation merging archival research, Geographic Information System (GIS) analysis, and non-invasive archeological survey techniques in the identification and evaluation of mill sites within the county. The project was developed in coordination with the Winneshiek County Historic Preservation Commission (WCHPC) based on a concern over the lack of information regarding these mill sites and their current status.

Utilizing historic-age maps, newspaper archives, county histories, and previous survey work, a comprehensive dataset was generated of 71 unique locations pertaining to sawmills, grist mills, woolen mills, and other water-powered industries that once operated within Winneshiek County. Where accessible, mill locations were subject to field investigations implementing visual assessments, digital photography, GPS-mapping, soil profiling, and landowner interviews.

The result of this survey work was the documentation of a surprising amount of evidence pertaining to these mill sites despite a majority being abandoned for well over a century, with these survey results compiled in a detailed report entitled *Winneshiek County Mills*. The presentation covered the foundation for the project, the survey methodology employed, organization of the final report, interpretations of the archeological record associated with mill sites, and recommendations for future investigative work.

Since 2010, Shay Gooder has served as a Project Archeologist at Bear Creek Archeology, Inc. (BCA), of Cresco, Iowa, where he has specialized in GIS analysis, digital site mapping, geomorphic evaluation, faunal identification, and community outreach services. While at BCA, Mr. Gooder has participated in numerous cultural resource surveys, site testing projects, and intensive data recovery efforts, in addition to authoring over 100 technical reports.

Since 2012, BCA has partnered with the WCHPC in conducting countywide reconnaissance-level assessments of important historical resources. Mr. Gooder has directed field investigations and completed GIS-intensive reports for these projects, which include rural schoolhouses, notable stone structures, and most recently, water-powered mills. Currently, Mr. Gooder's research is focused on abandoned townsites of Iowa, with active studies ongoing in Benton and Howard counties.

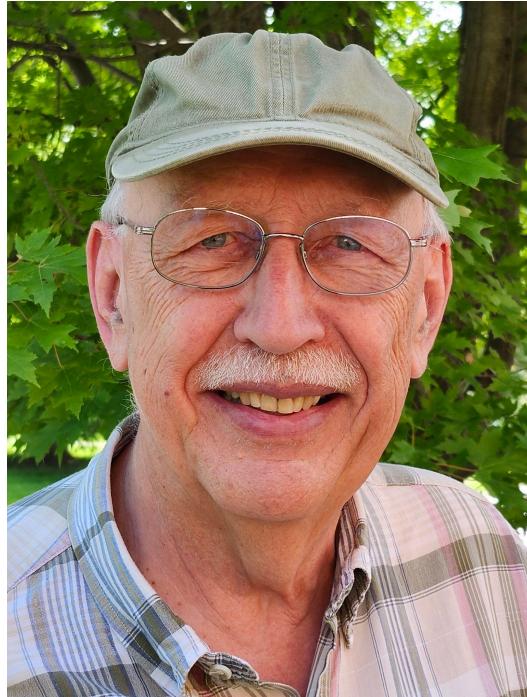


**Shay Gooder**

## **Berlin: Before and After the Wall Fell**

### **Presentation by Russell Baldner**

Russell Baldner presented "Berlin: Before and After the Wall Fell" on Wednesday evening, July 17th, at 6:30 PM at the German American Museum in St. Lucas. Russell began with the context of post-World War II Germany and the Cold War. His talk was richly illustrated with numerous photos.



**Russell Baldner**

Berlin, Germany's capital, dates to the 13th century. Reminders of the city's turbulent 20th-century history include its Holocaust memorial and the Berlin Wall's graffiti remains. Divided during the Cold War, its 18th-century Brandenburg Gate has become a symbol of reunification. The city's also known for its art scene and modern landmarks like the gold-colored, swoop-roofed Berliner Philharmonie, built in 1963, per Google.



### From Printable Maps

“Berlin: Before and After the Wall Fell” featured historical interpretation and photos of Berlin and the infamous Berlin Wall taken by Mr. Baldner in 1969, eight years after the wall was raised, juxtaposed with the same contrasting locations today. Iconic Berlin landmarks include the Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtniskirche (Emperor William Memorial Church), including its poignant “judgment of God” acknowledgement and admonition as well as Sunday morning Gottesdienst (worship).

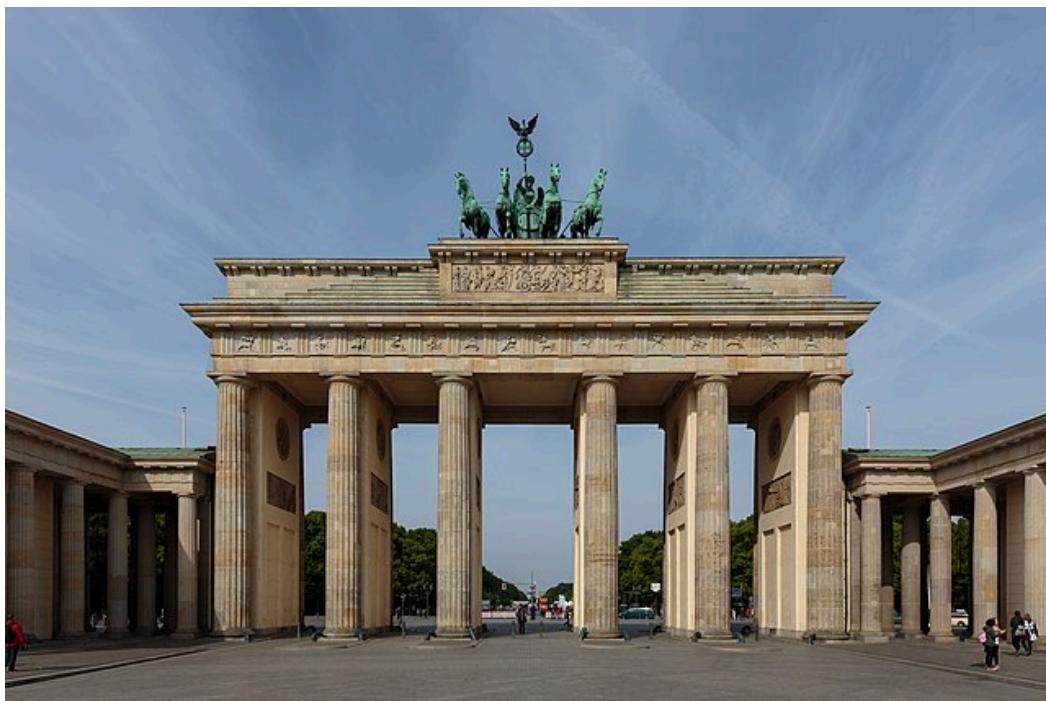


Source: the Independent, 7 November 2014

The presentation also covered the historic and beautifully restored Reichstag national capitol building, including its “black box” death of democracy memorial and a dramatic ascent of its spectacular, new, sparkling glass dome; and the classic Brandenburger Tor (Brandenburg Gate), a historic prominent symbol of Berlin.



**German Reichstag, German Tourist Office.**



**Brandenburg Gate. German Tourist Office.**

The Brandenburg Gate was a memorial to political division from 1961 to 1989. After the construction of the Berlin Wall, it was located in the restricted area and could not be visited by East or West Germans. After the fall of the Wall, the gate became a symbol of German unity. Berlin.de Website.

Located nearby and on a stroll along Unter den Linden (Under the Linden Trees), Berlin's Main Street, are sober memorials and poignant reminders of the Murdered Jews of Europe, the Nazi era purging and burning of books, and the Victims of War and Dictatorship, all of which also serve as cautionary lessons for present and future generations.

Russ's walk across the heart of the city included the lovely Museum Island, the opulent Berliner Dom (cathedral), the soaring Fernsehturm (TV tower). He showed photos of the view of the city from more than 650 feet above it, and a perfect day blue-sky cruise on the River Spree through the heart of Berlin.



**Berlin Dom, German Tourist Office.**

Russ's presentation shared nuggets of Berliner wit and a little light-hearted fare, both historical and current. The program closed on a reflective note with historical ironies and a retrospective look at the dramatic events which led to the Fall of the Wall, soon 35 years ago, and photographs and prophetic words—spoken five days after the erection of the wall—which require no comment.

Come and enjoy a step back into recent German history, said Carl Most, a founding member of the St. Lucas Historical Society. Twenty five persons enjoyed the presentation that was followed by lively discussion with light refreshments, cookies and pastries.

## **Our Collective Heritage: Strength through Understanding Presentation by Dr. Cecilia Rokusek, President and CEO National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library**

On Wednesday evening, June 19th, Dr. Cecilia Rokusek, the head of the National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library in Cedar Rapids, spoke from 6:30 to 8:00 PM at the German American Museum in St. Lucas, Iowa. Dr. Rokusek's topic is "Our Collective Heritage: Strength through Understanding". This speaking event was jointly sponsored by the Czech Heritage Partnership of Protivin and the German American Museum, Library and Family History Center of St. Lucas.

"Cecilia is the lead off speaker of our monthly speaker series. We are very excited to have her address the importance of cultural heritage in our lives," said Clair Blong, head of the St. Lucas Historical Society.



**Ken Zajicek, Robert and Cecilia Rokusek, Clair Blong  
and Melvin Bodensteiner, June 19, 2024.**

Dr. Rokusek also opened a traveling exhibit on "Czechs in America" in the German American Museum dining room. The presentation is followed by informal discussions with the speaker and everyone can taste delicious Czech kolaches and enjoy refreshments. "Come and learn about the importance of Czech, Slovak and other ethnic groups in America's history and culture", said Ken Zajicek, the head of the Czech Heritage Partnership.

Dr. Cecilia Rokusek, is the President and CEO of the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library in Cedar Rapids Iowa. This is the premier National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library in the U.S. and is an active affiliate of the Smithsonian Institute.

Dr. Rokusek has held top academic and administrative positions at numerous colleges and universities for more than four decades. In addition to serving as Florida's Slovak Honorary Consul for the past 16 years, she has established many academic affiliations with institutions in the Czech and Slovak Republics, in several other European countries, and in South Korea.

Dr. Rokusek is fluent in the Czech and Slovak languages, she holds a doctorate in educational leadership degree from the University of South Dakota and a Master's of Science in nutrition research from the University of Nebraska in Lincoln.

"As a fourth-generation Czechoslovak, I am especially proud of my ancestral heritage", says Cecilia. I am passionate about preserving and celebrating our rich cultural history and in laying a foundation for the future that will strengthen our footprints for all generations and all peoples. Seeing the energy and spirit of those involved in Czech and Slovak affairs is truly inspiring for the present and the future."



**Cecilia Rokusek delivering her presentation.**



**Robert and Cecilia Rokusek, Ken and Lois Zaijeck, Janet and Mel Bodensteiner, Clair Blong and Luke Blong, enjoying German schnitzel dinner at Sips and Savors Restaurant in St. Lucas. June 19, 2024.**



**Enjoying good conversation. Cecelia Rokusek and Ken Zaijeck  
at Sips and Savors Restaurant, St. Lucas, Iowa.**



**Rob Rokusek Playing the Lorraine Kuennen Piano, June 19, 2024.**

## Museum Activities

### Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area Training



**Kathryn Kuennen, Janet Bodensteiner and Mel Bodensteiner participated in a day-long training session.**

The team training was held at the Grout Museum in Waterloo on November 14, 2024. Over 50 Silos and Smokestack heritage sites were participating. The training covered writing of grant proposals, developing hands-on agricultural exhibits, and ways of dealing with conflict situations. The German American Museum is an Emerging Member of the Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area and this personnel training is mandatory for new members.

### **German American Museum Benefits from Iowa Museum Association Training Program**

In December 2023, Cynthia Sweet, the Executive Director of the Iowa Museum Association (IMA), has announced that Janet Bodensteiner and Kathryn Kuennen of the German American Museum, Library and Family History Center in St. Lucas, have been chosen to be part of the 24-month learning group utilizing a national level museum staff training program.

Recently Janet and Kathy completed a unit on road signage and with their leadership the Iowa Department of Transportation will be installing signage on highways 18, 24 and 150 to direct visitors to the Museum in St. Lucas. This is a major accomplishment in public outreach.



**Janet Bodensteiner and Kathryn Kuennen**  
participate in the video training course every month.



**Highway 24 Westbound. The “German American Museum” sign  
would be co-located with the directional sign, per Iowa DOT.**

## Exhibit at Fayette County Courthouse



**Janet and Melvin Bodensteiner prepared the handsome poster of "St. Lucas: Past and Present" for display in the Fayette County CourtHouse in West Union, Iowa. October 12, 2024.**

On Saturday, October 12, 2024, the Fayette County community celebrated the 100th Anniversary of its 1924 Nouveau Art style Court House. The Order of Masons reenacted the 1924 dedication of the cornerstone ceremony. This day of music and courthouse building tours was the highlight of the celebration. The St. Lucas Historical Society was asked to represent the St. Lucas community at the event.



**Fayette County Courthouse, West Union, December 27, 2024.**

## Controlling Exterior Light with Traditional Black Shades.



**Luke Blong and Maria Schneeberger hanging shades.  
Dan Kuennen sharing advice.**



**Archive Room North Windows With New Shades. July 2024.**

## September Board Meeting



**St. Lucas Historical Society, Board Meeting, September 25, 2024**

**BR: Dan Kuennen, Mel Bodensteiner, Ken Ehler.**

**MR: Kathryn Kuennen, Marie Schneeberger, Janet Bodensteiner, Diane McCarthy.**

**FR: Clair Blong, Virginia Manderfield, Helen Pinter, Cathy Ehler.**



**Attending the St. Lucas Historical Society Board Meeting at the Earthmoving Legacy Center in Elkader were: Dan Kuennen, Dan Smith, Ben Kuennen, Jim Boeding, Cathy Ehler, Kathryn Kuennen, Ken Ehler and Clair Blong, December 12, 2024.**



**Luther College Woman's Club visited the  
German American Museum on September 24, 2024,  
for a tour and a homemade German style luncheon.**

Diane McCarthy led the Museum team in welcoming the Luther College Woman's Club and giving them an overview of the museum and enjoying a German style luncheon. They were very impressed with the extensive museum holdings and the warm hospitality of the museum team.



**Luther College Campus Bell Tower, Decorah.**

## Museum Roof Rehabilitation Project

The rehabilitation of the German American Museum roof systems was completed in A formal contract was signed on February 2, 2024, with Lifetime Construction to do this roof rehabilitation project in the Spring and Summer months.

We are restoring this roof system in full compliance with the Department of Interior, National Park Service guidelines for historic preservation for National Register of Historic Sites structures. The contractor removed all three layers of old roof materials and replaced it with the original roofing material, red cedar shingles.

The contractor has already ordered the # 1 red cedar shingles red cedar shingles for the sloped roof systems. These shingles are on site. The two flat roofs will be replaced with new rubber membrane systems and new gutters installed as well. This work was completed over the summer and Autumn months.

Many private donors have been very generous in helping us raise the necessary funds for this project. We are excited that we can finally could move forward with this important roof rehabilitation project.



Red cedar shingles from Canada are the basic material in this rehabilitation project. They are the original material placed on the roof in 1911.

**Wood Shingles arrived in late June 2024**



**Ripping off the old layers of roofing materials. 25 June 2024.**  
**Over twenty workers stripped the entire roof and installed the OSB board in one day.**



**Roof Structures After Three Layers Were Removed. 25 June 2024**



**E & D Repair truck loaded with huge amounts of roof debris.**



New OSB board going on the roof.



Lift support for the workers.



**No Fear of Heights.**



**Installing the OSB plywood sheets.**



New # 1 red cedar shingles.





**New shingles look great.**



**Shingling continues on the East side gable.**



**Placing water guard on North slope of East Gable of German American Museum,  
August 8, 2024.**



Finish work on the East Facade of the German American Museum, October 12, 2024.



**Roof Rehabilitation Project Completed with red cedar wood shingles, galvanized ridge liners, new gutters and downspouts, two new rubber flat roofs, lightning rods with glass bulbs and newly painted soffits. November 9, 2024.**

## **Jeanette Hlubek Kruse Dietzenbach Passes Away**

Jeanette Hlubek Dietzenbach, age 78, of Decorah, IA passed away on Saturday, July 13, 2024, at Mayo Clinic – Methodist Hospital in Rochester, MN after a recent metastatic adenocarcinoma diagnosis.

Mass of Christian Burial was 10:30 a.m., Friday, July 19, 2024, at the St. Luke's Catholic Church at 215 East Main St. St. Lucas, IA with Rev. Nick Radloff presiding. Burial was in the St. Luke's Cemetery. Visitation was from 4:00 – 7:00 p.m. Thursday, July 18, 2024, at St. Luke's Catholic Church and after 9:30 a.m. on Friday morning at the church. The Helms Funeral Home handled arrangements.



Jeanette Hlubek was born on September 6, 1945, the daughter of Clement and Mathilda (Balk) Hlubek. Jeanette grew up in Fort Atkinson, Iowa where her grandparents and parents owned and operated the Commercial Hotel. She attended St. John Nepomucene Elementary School and graduated from St. Luke's Catholic High School. Jeanette married Don Kruse on June 5, 1965, and they raised two children. They later divorced.

Jeanette attended Business Institute of Technology in Cedar Falls and earned a paralegal degree that enabled her to work in various law offices in northeast Iowa. She sold World Book Encyclopedias for many years, worked as an administrative assistant in the Education Department at Luther College, coordinated adult basic education classes at NICC, taught piano lessons and music at local Catholic schools, and was a member of the performing group, Fusion.

Jeanette's most treasured role was as a church organist. You might be hard pressed to enter a room of people and not find someone that Jeanette had helped through a jubilant or solemn celebration. When a family was experiencing a loss, Jeanette was often the first one to contact families to help plan beautiful celebrations to ease difficult times. Her last days in the hospital were spent meticulously planning the music for her own celebration of life.

Jeanette had an eye for detail. Jeanette created beautiful Christmas trees, wrapped Christmas gifts impeccably, made the most incredible turkey and dressing for Thanksgiving (from her

mother's recipe), and decorated her home for special celebrations in a manner worthy of a magazine article. Jeanette was fond of Barbra Streisand and played her records and CDs frequently along with recordings of thunderstorms.

On November 28th, 1997, she married Mel Dietzenbach. Together they enjoyed gardening and traveling, particularly to Hayward, Wisconsin. They also spent time researching genealogy and were members of the St. Lucas Historical Society. They were entertained by the three cats they adopted over the years: Jupiter, Apollo, and Jasmine.

Her grandchildren were her most treasured gifts from God and they all knew how much they were loved. "Grammy" was known to send mailboxes of "junk" to her grandchildren at every holiday and also sent flowers or balloons for any special event they might experience. They might have preferred fewer photographs in her presence, but they knew of her great appreciation and admiration of their talents and abilities. She attended many of their concerts, school events, and competitions.

Jeanette is survived by her husband: Mel Dietzenbach, Decorah, IA. Daughters: Kim (Collin) Bender, Waconia, MN and Kelley (Joe) Pujol, Cape Girardeau, MO. Six grandchildren: Brock (Mykenzie), Blake, and Haley Bender and Allie, Jacie, and Carly Pujol. One great-grandchild: Bridger Bender. One brother, Robert (Maggie) Hlubek, Ridgeway, IA.

Jeanette was preceded in death by her father, Clement in 1990, her mother, Mathilda in 1995, and brother, Richard in 2008.

### **Remembrances**

"I always recall Jeanette freely sharing her views and opinions at historical society meetings and her willingness to take strong stands for the integrity of historical preservation when many sought less costly solutions."

"A debt of gratitude to Jeanette who took ownership and worked for three years on the very difficult application to get the St. Luke School Building placed on the National Register of Historic Sites. This was a very major accomplishment and the critical basis for many of our grants and donations."

"Christmas at the Museum. Jeanette loved Christmas. She would bring her personal decorations to adorn a tree and several display cabinets. These decorations would remain in place for months. In April or July (one year) they still evoked the peacefulness of the Christmas season." Clair Blong

"Jeanette always sought out young people to learn about their life journey. Two days (July 11th) before Jeanette's passing, she asked about my education and marriage plans. She asked that we reserve a chair for her at the wedding ceremony." Luke Blong

## Exploring the Mississippi River Valley: Journey of a Lifetime

Vas Uppal is on a once in a lifetime journey. His full name is Srinivas Uppalpati, originally from India. Vas is traveling from the delta of the Mississippi River in Louisiana to its headwaters in Northern Minnesota. Others may have done this trip but his approach is unique.

Vas is visiting many small towns along the way to gain a sense of the heartbeat of America. In Iowa, he is visiting around 20 towns and villages.



Vas travels at his own pace. His van is well equipped for the logistic challenges he faces for food, sleep and work. Yes, Vas works remotely for Oracle Corporation in Austin, Texas, and spends time each day doing reports and advising others.

How did Vas become a nomad? As he explained to Dan Kuennen and I, his daughters are now in college, so he decided to sell his house in Atlanta, Georgia, and explore the heartland. He has lived in America for 30 years and always had the urge to see life across the Nation.

This journey up the Mississippi began some months ago. He enjoys the warm hospitality he receives in the small towns. What attracted him to St. Lucas? He saw a reference to the German American Museum on the internet. It piqued his interest to learn of such a large museum in a tiny town.

When we met Vas on Saturday morning at the appointed hour of 10 AM at the Museum, his first question was "What is the size of St. Lucas? Such a small town and such a big museum." The population is around 155 people. The workshop we held in 2018 on "Native Americans: Hidden in Plain Sight" drew 185 participants. That doubled the populace on that mid June day.

Vas enjoyed his tour of the German American Museum and doubled back to the map to learn more about those connections in Europe. We asked him to share his impressions of the museum in an article or email it to us. We wish Vas well as he heads into Minnesota visiting the many historic sites he has already selected, as he journeys to the Mississippi River headwaters.

**Map of the Mississippi River Basin, 2013.**



## Milton and Margaret Mihm Smith Family Reunion



**Milton and Margaret Smith Family Reunion, August 3, 2024.  
On Entrance Steps of St. Luke Church, St. Lucas, Iowa.**



**Back Row: Ruth Ann, Robert, Daniel, Norma Jean and Jerome Smith.  
Front Row: Milton, Kenneth, Louis, Ronald, and Margaret Smith, 1958.**



**Front row: Ken Smith, Mark and Ruth Ann Stoltzman**  
**Back Row: Jake Steinberg, Linda Novitt, and Nick Steinberg.**



**Smith's tour of the Museum, August 3, 2024.**

## Museum Visitors



**St. Luke's High School, Class of 1964.  
60th Year Reunion Dinner at Sips and Savors Restaurant, St. Lucas, Iowa**



**Edgar Schmitt Family Touring the Museum**



**Joe and Anna (Blong) Schmitt Family visit the Museum, September 13, 2024.  
L to R: Roger Kleve, Raymond Schmitt, Matthew Schmitt, Albin Massman, Elaine  
Schmitt Kleve, Nancy Schmitt, Carl Schmitt. August 2024.**

### **Christmas Reflections 2024**

The traditional Christmas Reflections Open House was held on Sunday, December 8th, from 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM at the German American Museum, Library and Family History Center in St. Lucas. The Christmas Reflections meal was served in the attractive Museum dining room decorated for the Christmas holiday season.



**Enjoying the meal.**

This year the abundant meal consisted of three all-time favorites: chicken dumpling (spätzle) soup, harvest squash with sausage and rice, and hearty chili soup. The meal is topped off with delicious Black Forest ham sandwiches. The meal included a wide variety of desserts: traditional Christmas cookies with hot apple cider, bottled water, coffee and an adult refreshment.

This Christmas Reflections event was supported by the Melissa Lea Reicks Foundation of Lawler, Iowa, and the 1891 Financial Life (formerly the National Catholic Society of Foresters), St. Lucia Court # 233, St. Lucas, Iowa. This Christmas Reflections event helps with upgrading of the electrical system and fire/security doors of the museum.



**Christmas Reflections cookies.**

See what's new at the German American Museum. Check out the extensive Hummel artifact collection, the 1860s German antique baby grand piano, the stunning 100 year old beaded Ojibwe Nation handbag, the many Christmas displays, new display cases populated with family exhibits, and recent Czech and Native American artifacts. "We are happy to note that the museum roof rehabilitation project was completed very recently. The new roof is made of red cedar shingles. These were the original roofing material on this 1911 building," says Clair Blong. "We now have a very handsome and beautiful building," says Janet Bodensteiner.

A traditional St. Nicholas will be greeting the children in the museum. St. Nicholas wants to share a holiday goodies gift bag with each child who ventures in the auditorium to watch classic Christmas movies.



**Christmas Reflections Santa and Mrs. Santa**

According to the St. Nicholas Center Website: “The true story of Santa Claus begins with Nicholas, who was born during the third century in the village of Patara in Asia Minor. At the time the area was Greek and is now on the southern coast of Turkey.

St. Nic's wealthy parents, who raised him to be a devout Christian, died in an epidemic while Nicholas was still young. Obeying Jesus' words to “sell what you own and give the money to the poor,” Nicholas used his whole inheritance to assist the needy, the sick, and the suffering. He dedicated his life to serving God and was made Bishop of Myra while still a young man. Bishop Nicholas became known throughout the land for his generosity to those in need, his love for children, and his concern for sailors and ships.” Hence, the good Saint Nic.

Treat yourselves, your children and grandchildren to an enjoyable time exploring the three levels of the Museum and awaken the magic and spirit of Christmas in you.



**Mel Bodensteiner, Annette Kuennen, Ruth Boeding Huffman, Janet Bodensteiner, Virginia Manderfield, Jodi Steinlage, Marie Schneeberger, Kathryn and Dan Kuennen.**

### **Christmas Stollen A Viking Cruise Line Recipe, 2024.**

Stollen is the classic German Christmas fruitcake: a rich yeast dough studded with nuts and dried fruit. This particular version uses raisins and candied fruit as well as marzipan. It is good served with butter and jam while still warm from the oven, and is also delicious days later toasted and topped with honey or preserves.

#### **Ingredients**

2 tsp (6 g) active dry yeast  
 $\frac{2}{3}$  C (150 ml) milk, warm (110°F/45°C)  
1 lg egg  
6 Tbsp (72 g) fine granulated sugar  
1½ tsp (7 mg) salt  
 $\frac{1}{3}$  C (76 g) unsalted butter, softened  
2¾ C (300 g) bread flour, plus flour for dusting  
 $\frac{1}{3}$  C (50 g) currants  
 $\frac{1}{3}$  C (50 g) raisins  
 $\frac{1}{3}$  C (50 g) red glacé cherries, quartered  
¾ C (170 g) mixed candied citrus peel, diced  
1 C (230 g) marzipan

#### **Garnish**

1 Tbsp (8 g) confectioners' sugar  
½ tsp (1.5 g) ground cinnamon  
¼ C (25 g) sliced almonds, toasted

## Directions

Sprinkle yeast over milk and let stand until foamy, about 10 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl and add egg, sugar, salt, butter and 2 C (222 g) of flour, stirring well to combine. Add remaining flour a little at a time, stirring well after each addition. When dough begins to pull together, turn out onto a flour-dusted surface and knead in currants, raisins, cherries and citrus peel. Continue kneading until smooth, about 8 minutes. Transfer dough to a lightly oiled bowl, turning coat with oil. Cover with a damp cloth and let rise in a warm place until doubled in volume, about 1 hour.

Lightly grease a baking tray. Punch down dough; turn onto a flour-dusted surface. Roll marzipan into a rope and place in the center of dough; fold over to cover; pinch to seal. Place loaf seam side down on a baking tray, cover with a clean, damp kitchen towel and let rise to double in volume, about 40 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C). Bake for 10 minutes, then reduce heat to 300°F (150°C) and bake another 30–40 minutes until golden brown. Cool on a wire rack, then dust with confectioners' sugar and sprinkle with cinnamon and almond flakes. Prep time: 32 minutes. Cook time: 50 minutes. Makes 8–12 servings.



**Marie Schneeberger, Dan Kueunnen, Clair Blong and Kathryn Kuennen touring Villa Louis Mansion Museum in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, December 14, 2024.**



**Board Members being briefed by Ross Kurth, Executive Director, of the Earthmoving Legacy Center in Elkader. December 12, 2024.**



**Dan Smith, Ken Ehler, Jim Boeding, Ross Kurth, Ben Kuennen and Dan Kuennen at Earthmoving Legacy Center, Elkader, Iowa, December 12, 2024.**



**Foggy morning, East of St. Lucas, early December 2024.**

