

# **Historical Perspectives**

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



**Antonin Dvorak in 1882**

**Credit: Antonin Dvorak Museum  
Czech Museum of Music, Prague**

**Issue # 19, Spring/Summer 2025**

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

**Mission Statement:** Preserve the Past, Celebrate the Presence, and Embrace the Future

**About Historical Perspectives:** Historical Perspectives, Historische Betrachtungen, publishes work in fields such as the arts, humanities, history, literature, and social and physical sciences.

**German American Museum 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 such as baseball, basketball, and softball, national defense service, economic change, and preserving and celebrating cultural heritages.



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

July 26, 2025

Dear friends of the Museum:

This issue examines Martin Luther's seminal translation of the New Testament into German and its imprint on the Modern German Language. We also highlight the historic town of Spillville and its role in the compositions of Antonin Dvorak. And take a close look at one immigrant pioneer family, the Tillmann family.

The past months were quite exciting times with our annual Maifest event, family reunions, and the popular Monthly Speaker Series. The speaker series began in May with Marilyn Pecinovsky on the Art of Basic. In June Brian Fankhauser spoke on the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation: state and local activities. In late June, Russell Baldner spoke on Ethnicity, Political Boundaries and European History.

In July Cecelia Rokusek, CEO of the National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library spoke about the museum's new astronomical clock. This event was co-sponsored with the Czech Heritage Partnership.

Upcoming speaker topics include rock hounding, artifact collecting, Ho Chunk Nation removals in the 1800s and Fort Atkinson upgrades, unique antiques and photos, working as a Peace Corps agricultural advisor in Jamacia and Kenya, and Czech composers' influence on German classical music.

We hope you find these stories interesting and enjoyable. Please inform us of potential historical topics for future Journal issues, as well as recommendations for speakers for the upcoming year.

Sincerely,

Clair Blong  
President

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

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# **LORD, KEEP US STEADFAST IN YOUR WORD<sup>i</sup>**

## **Martin Luther and His Seminal Translation of the New Testament into German and Imprint on the Modern German Language**

### **COMMEMORATING THE 500<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE *SEPTEMBER TESTAMENT***

Russell P. Baldner

Author's note: To provide necessary historical context, the following introduction includes an abbreviated narrative of the primary events which led to Martin Luther's pivotal work.  
All photos taken on-site in Germany by the author; other sources are as noted.

### **Introduction: Worms, Germany**

In the city center of Worms, Germany, where in 1521 Martin Luther once confessed his faith before Emperor and Empire, stands an impressive monument honoring historical figures associated with the Protestant Reformation. The bronze statue of Luther, standing tallest at center with Bible in hand, dominates the memorial. Surrounding the likeness of the sixteenth-century Saxon friar, Doctor of Theology, and Great Reformer are statues and relief sculptures of princes,



*Lutherdenkmal*—Reformation  
Monument

Worms, Germany

scholars, and early leaders of the church, all of whom, in their own way, were contributors to the Reformation. Among these are Luther's devout Roman Catholic sovereign and protector, Prince Elector Frederick III—the Wise—of Saxony, with sword raised; his scholarly university colleague Philipp Melancthon; and Czech priest and theologian Jan Hus.

Although the Reformation monument at Worms, dedicated in 1868, memorializes the contributions of many, it is nonetheless commonly known in Germany as the *Lutherdenkmal*, the Luther Monument, a popular acknowledgement of the historic role of Martin Luther in the Protestant Reformation. And not unlike the *Lutherdenkmal* at Worms, it is not by coincidence in Germany, and elsewhere, that other memorials to the prominent sixteenth-century Saxon reformer invariably portray Martin Luther with Bible in hand.

## Historical Context: Germany 1517—1521

In 1517, Martin Luther, professor of biblical studies at the University of Wittenberg, in Electoral Saxony, Germany, set forth 95 theses, propositions or statements intended for academic theological debate. According to popular tradition but inconclusive historical evidence, Luther



Martin Luther  
by  
Lucas Cranach d. Ä. (the  
Elder)

nailed or posted the theses, written in Latin, on the door of the *Schlosskirche*—the Castle Church—which also served as a university hall, its door as a bulletin board.<sup>ii</sup>

However, rather than an invitation prompting a formal scholarly debate among theologians, as was intended, the rapid dissemination throughout Germany of Luther's 95 Theses, and shortly thereafter his Sermon on Indulgences and Grace, written and published in German, soon ignited a religious, political, and social firestorm.<sup>iii</sup>

A primary instrument facilitating the widespread distribution of Luther's theses was the moveable type printing press, a revolutionary medium developed in mid-fifteenth-century

Germany by Johannes Gutenberg of Mainz.<sup>iv</sup> By Luther's time, the innovation in print technology had become the sixteenth-century equivalent of the internet. Western Christianity was to be permanently altered.

The 95 Theses arose out of Luther's concern over the sale and use of indulgences by the Church and, in his view, the resulting danger of misleading fellow Christians and jeopardizing their spiritual wellbeing. His intent was to bring attention to, examine, and correct what he considered to be a questionable, if not perilous practice, not, however, to divide the Church.<sup>v</sup> Reflecting years later, in 1545, on the Protestant Reformation and its dramatic turn of events, Luther observed, "I got into these turmoils by accident and not by will or intention. I call upon God himself as witness."<sup>vi</sup>

Prompted by Luther's 95 Theses and subsequent theological writings, and following several years of confrontation between Luther and the Church, intensifying theological differences which reached far beyond the sale of indulgences, and negotiations and political maneuvering, Luther was ultimately summoned in 1521 to appear in person before Emperor Charles V and the Estates of the Holy Roman Empire (Germany) at the imperial Diet—German: *Reichstag*—convening in the city of Worms. The *Reichstag* was an imposing assembly of prominent nobles, high churchmen, and representatives from throughout the entire Empire—the *Reich*.



Schlosskirche—Castle  
Church  
(All Saints' Church)  
Wittenberg, Germany

Wearing a humble black monastic habit and entering the Reichstag chamber, Luther stood before an august assembly of sumptuously dressed princes and prelates. Present were Charles, the twenty-one-year-old German King and Holy Roman Emperor, six imperial prince electors, seven margraves, twenty-four dukes, thirty bishops, knights, and representatives of the free imperial cities. Not a vacant seat was to be had.

Stacked on a nearby table were Luther's many publications. However, rather than being afforded an opportunity to discuss and debate issues of faith, Luther was summarily asked if he wished to recant, to renounce what he had written during the preceding four years.

Appearing again on the following day before Emperor and Reich, and standing in the flickering light of the candle and torch-lit chamber, Luther delivered his historic response:<sup>vii</sup>



Martin Luther  
by  
Lucas Cranach d. Ä.,

Es sei denn, daß ich durch Zeugnisse der (heiligen) Schrift oder einleuchtende Gründe überwunden werde . . . so bin ich überwunden durch die heiligen Schriften . . . von mir angeführt . . . , und mein Gewissen ist gefangen in Gottes Wort. Derhalben kann und will ich nichts widerrufen, dieweil wider das Gewissen zu handeln beschwerlich, unheilsam und gefährlich ist. (Ich kann nichts anders. Hier stehe ich.) Gott helf mir! Amen!<sup>viii</sup>

Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the scriptures or clear reason . . . I am bound to the Scriptures . . . I have quoted . . . , and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. [Therefore,] I cannot and will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. I cannot do otherwise. Here I stand. God Help me. Amen.<sup>ix</sup>

Whether the conclusion of Luther's response in fact included the oft quoted words "I cannot do otherwise. Here I stand" is uncertain; his last sentences were drowned out by the noise!<sup>x</sup> Boldly spoken by a humbly-clad Augustinian monk before Emperor and Empire, Luther's dramatic reply and refusal to recant likely caused quite a stir. Although the two statements traditionally attributed to Luther were not recorded at the time he spoke, they appeared in the earliest printed version of the proceedings and may be genuine.<sup>xi</sup> Regardless of their authenticity, Luther's closing words and steadfast refusal to recant capture a seminal moment in Western Civilization.

Already excommunicated by the Church and about to be officially condemned as a heretic and outlaw in the imperial Edict of Worms, Luther departed for home, in Wittenberg, his life soon to be in mortal danger upon expiration of the imperial letter of safe conduct issued by Charles V. On the way, however, Luther was "kidnapped," whisked away by friendly forces and secretly delivered to and hidden away in protective seclusion *auf der Wartburg*—at the Wartburg—a medieval fortress, standing at the summit of a craggy mountain, overlooking the city of Eisenach in Electoral Saxony. Some now feared him perhaps dead.<sup>xii</sup>





Frederick III—The Wise  
Prince Elector of Saxony  
by Lucas Cranach d. Ä.,

To his good fortune, however, Luther had allies in high places, among them his sovereign, Prince Elector Frederick III—the Wise—of Saxony, one of the seven prominent nobles having the right to choose German emperors and who had recently elected to the imperial throne the youthful Hapsburg scion, Charles V.

The Wartburg was Prince Frederick's fortress and provided a secret redoubt, a safe haven, for Luther. The Saxon Elector, himself a devout Roman Catholic, was not about to forfeit his now famous professor of theology at the Elector's recently founded (1502) University of Wittenberg. Nor did Frederick necessarily wish his harboring Luther, in defiance of imperial authority, to become public.<sup>xiii</sup> It is for very good reason that the imposing robust bronze figure of Frederick the Wise, sword raised, stands next to Luther on the monument at Worms.

Luther remained hiding at mountaintop Wartburg for nearly a year. Almost exactly a century earlier, in 1415, Jan Hus, a Czech reformer deemed heretic, whose bronze figure is seated below Luther at Worms, had been burned at the stake.

Now, one-hundred years later, Luther himself was both sympathetically hailed by his supporters, and soundly denounced by his detractors, as a "Saxon Hus." There was good reason to fear for his safety.<sup>xiv</sup>



Wartburg Castle  
Eisenach

## Martin Luther and the Bible



Martin Luther as Junker  
Jörg  
by Lucas Cranach d. Ä.

Central to Luther's theology, teaching, and challenge to the Roman Church was the primacy of Holy Scripture, the written word of God originally expressed in Hebrew in the Old Testament and Greek in the New.<sup>xv</sup>

While in hiding, bearded, and disguised as *Junker Jörg* (Knight George) at fortress Wartburg, Luther set about translation of the New Testament, rendering the sacred writ from the original Greek into a brilliant and pleasing form of German that not only had far reaching religious and social impact but also greatly influenced the development of the modern German language.

In translating the New Testament from Greek, Luther was following the example of humanist scholars of the Renaissance by returning *ad fontes*, to the original source. Unlike previous

German translations based on the fourth-century Latin Vulgate, which were found to be wanting, Luther's rendering of the New Testament employed a natural authentic style of German and masterful command of language that was engaging, easily understood, and eagerly received by the general population.<sup>xvi</sup>

In translating the New Testament, Luther drew on two contrasting sources of German, the first being *sächsische Kanzleisprache*, or *Kanzleideutsch*, the formal administrative language, *Amtssprache*, used by the chancery of Electoral Saxony. The second was the everyday German vernacular, the *Umgangssprache*, spoken by ordinary people. Chancery German provided the foundation, the *Grundlage*, of the translation to which Luther applied and integrated the colloquial speech of the common workaday public.<sup>xvii</sup> Regarding the first, Luther observed:



Luther's Quarters at  
Wartburg

*Ich habe keine gewisse, sonderliche, eigene sprach im teutschen, sondern brauche der gemeinen teutsch sprach, daß mich beide Ober- und Niederländer verstehen mögen. Ich rede nach der sächsischen cantzeley, welcher nachfolgen alle fürsten und könige im deutsch lande, alle reichstätte, fürstenhöfe schreiben nach der sächsischen und unsers fürsten cantzeley, darumb ists auch die gemeinste teutsche sprach. Kaiser Maximilian und Churfürst Friderich hertzog von Sachsen haben im römischen reiche die deutschen sprachen also in eine gewisse sprach zusammengezogen.*<sup>xviii</sup>

I have no certain, special, form of German of my own, but use the general German language which both Upper [southern] and Low [northern] Germans may understand. I speak according to the Saxon chancery which all princes and kings in Germany follow; all imperial cities, princely courts, write according to the Saxon chancery of our prince, therefore it is also the most common German language. In the Holy Roman Empire, Emperor Maximilian and Prince Elector Frederick, duke of Saxony, have thus drawn the German dialects together into a single language.

Regarding the more common colloquial German, the vernacular, and translation, Luther stated:

*Denn man muß nicht die Buchstaben in der lateinischen Sprache fragen, wie man sol deudsch reden . . . sondern man muß die Mutter im Hause, die Kinder auf der Gassen, den gemeinen Mann auf dem Markt drümb fragen, und denselbigen auf das Maul sehen, wie sie reden, und darnach dolmetschen. So verstehen sie es denn, und merken, daß man deudsch mit ihn redet.*<sup>xix</sup>

For one does not have to ask the letters in the Latin language [i.e., “inquire of the literal Latin”<sup>xx</sup>], how one should speak German . . . rather one must consult the mother in the home, the children on the street, the common man in the marketplace, and pay attention to their language, how they speak, and translate accordingly. Then they will understand and recognize that one is speaking German with them.



“Luther Translates.”

500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Special  
Exhibit

Luther’s German  
New Testament Translation  
1522–2022

Wartburg Castle

Electoral Saxony and the chancery were located in northeastern Germany, by a coincidence of history an area of colonization that earlier had attracted immigration from all regions of Germany.<sup>xxi</sup> The convergence of diverse regional populations and manners of speech in the eastern provinces led to a blending of the German dialects.<sup>xxii</sup> The resulting linguistic fusion, *Ausgleichssprache*, or koiné language, occupied a middle position between the regional dialects of the North and South, the East and West.<sup>xxiii</sup> And accordingly, the form of German used by the Saxon chancery, *Kanzleideutsch*, also reflected this linguistic blending, in contrast to the separate, distinct, and sometimes mutually unintelligible dialects of German so traditionally characteristic of the spoken language.<sup>xxiv</sup>

By the end of the fifteenth century, the German of the Saxon chancery came to enjoy significantly broader use and greater prestige within Germany following its adoption by the episcopal chancery of the Archbishop of Mainz and its subsequent utilization in official accounts of imperial *Reichstag* proceedings, many of which were held in that city. *Kanzleisprache* served as a model and provided a largely standardized means of communication that transcended regional dialects.

Thus, when embarking on his translation of the New Testament into German, Luther had in the *Kanzleideutsch* of the Saxon chancery a well-suited, supraregional, linguistic vehicle at the ready.<sup>xxv</sup>

Luther’s New Testament translation was much more, however, than the dry, stiff, convoluted formal German of the Saxon chancery. It was Luther’s deliberate and close attention to the language actually spoken by ordinary people and his creative skill and linguistic genius in integrating and seamlessly fusing that resource with that of the Saxon chancery that brought his German New Testament translation to successful fruition in a fluid, versatile, unparalleled manner that was intelligible, vibrant, and extraordinarily pleasing. It appealed broadly, both to those with little or no education as well as the scholarly.<sup>xxvi</sup>

Whereas earlier German translations of the Bible—and there were several—suffered from awkward word-for-word renderings from the Latin Vulgate, including its numerous errors, and tended to be unnatural, opaque, and foreign to the German ear, the vivid powerful language of Luther’s New Testament conveyed a welcome familiarity and authenticity. Through the use of idiom or figures of speech, innovations in vocabulary and skillful phrasing, and the natural rhythm and cadence of language, Luther’s stylistic talent and remarkable facility in German injected new vitality into Holy Writ, captured its essence, and did honest justice to the heart and spirit of Scripture.

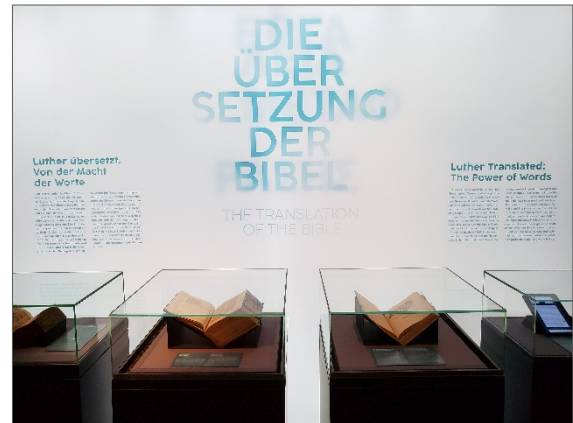


Not only was Luther's translation of the New Testament crafted in a manner that everyday Germans understood and had meaning and significance for them, his expressive prose spoke to ordinary people in a familiar homely manner, was inviting, and provided a language with which they themselves could readily identify.<sup>xxvii</sup> A brief example is helpful.

In the Annunciation as recorded in the Gospel of Luke, Luther observed that no German would really understand a literal translation of the Latin Vulgate, "Hail, Mary, full of Grace." A full keg of beer perhaps, or a pocket full of money, yes, easily understood, but what was the everyday German to make of a young woman "full of grace!" Whatever did that mean?

In the Luther translation, instead of a word-for-word rendering of the Angelic Salutation, the angel Gabriel addresses Mary as "*holdselig*"—fair, lovely, pleasing. Yet, for that alleged corruption of the Vulgate's angelic greeting, his Roman Catholic opponents, in Luther's words, "*wöllen . . . toll werden*"—are throwing a fit.

But, in fact, Luther actually preferred an even simpler everyday idiom that would have captured Gabriel's intentions even better had the angel addressed Mary in German, a personal greeting which to the German ear would have made immediate and perfect sense: "*liebe Maria*." "*Liebe*"—in English: dear, sweet, kind, love, affection—that small humble German word, but one so richly endowed with meaning.<sup>xxviii</sup>



"The Translation of the Bible"

500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Special Exhibit  
Luther's German New Testament  
Translation

In yet another instance, a single word in Luther's translation elicited much controversy and criticism.

In the third chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans, verse 28, Luther added the word "*allein*"—alone—thus rendering justification "by faith" in contrast to works, as justification "*alone* through faith"—"*allein durch den Glauben*." However, the word "alone" does not appear in the original Greek text. Luther, citing examples from everyday speech, vigorously defended the addition of "alone" on the linguistic basis of idiomatic German usage, the additional "*allein*"—alone—being necessary and commonly expressed in German to clearly convey meaning and emphasis, and so also in the verse from Romans, the sense, force, of the original Greek passage.

Regarding the addition of "alone," Luther never yielded.<sup>xxix</sup>

A powerful poetic and rhetorical device that has deep Germanic roots and is already evident in very early German literature is alliteration—in German: *Stabreim*—the repetition of the same consonant sound or vowel sound in the initial accented syllable of adjacent or closely occurring words. In the form of noun doublets, alliteration is common in modern vernacular German, thus, *Wind und Wetter* (wind and weather), *Haus und Hof* (hearth and home), *Nacht und Nebel* (night

and fog).<sup>xxx</sup> Luther was fond of alliteration and employed it with compelling effect in his translation of Scripture. Two passages, in this case from the Old Testament, the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, provide examples that are perhaps most familiar.<sup>xxxi</sup>

*Der HERR ist mein Hirte; mir wird nichts mangeln.*  
The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

*Dein Stecken und Stab trösten mich.*<sup>xxxii</sup>  
Thy rod and thy staff comfort me.

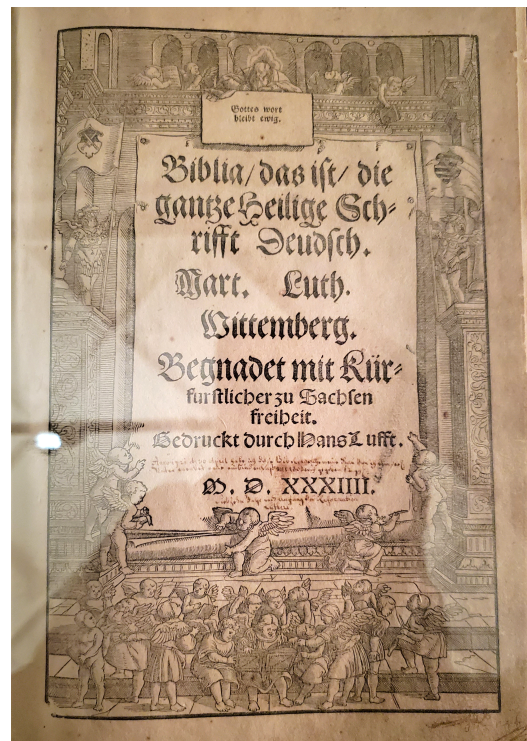
Luther completed the initial German translation of the New Testament in an astonishingly brief eleven weeks! Following collaboration and fine tuning of the text with Philipp Melanchthon, his university colleague and brilliant superior in Greek, and publication in September 1522, Luther's translation, *Das Neue Testament Deutzsch*—the New Testament in German—also known as the *September Testament* became straightaway a best seller. The first printing of 3000 copies sold out immediately as did in short order the nearly 2000 of the second—approximately 5000 in only two months! In the 1520s, 10,000 copies were printed and sold throughout Germany!

In



(above)  
title page  
*Das Neue Testament Deutzsch*  
(The New Testament in German)  
1522

(right)  
title page  
*die ganze Heilige Schrift Deusch*  
(the entire Holy Scripture in German)  
1534



collaboration with other scholars, translation of the Old Testament into German followed and resulted in the publication of *die ganze Heilige Schrift Deusch*, the entire Holy Scripture in German, or *die Lutherbibel*—the Luther Bible—in 1534. Even up to his death in 1546, in Eisleben, the town where in 1483 he also was born and baptized, Luther continued to refine the central feature of his life's work, the Holy Bible.<sup>xxxiii</sup> By that time, an astounding 100,000 copies of the complete 1534 Luther Bible had been printed *just in Wittenberg*—and throughout the whole of Germany, a nearly unbelievable 500,000!<sup>xxxiv</sup>

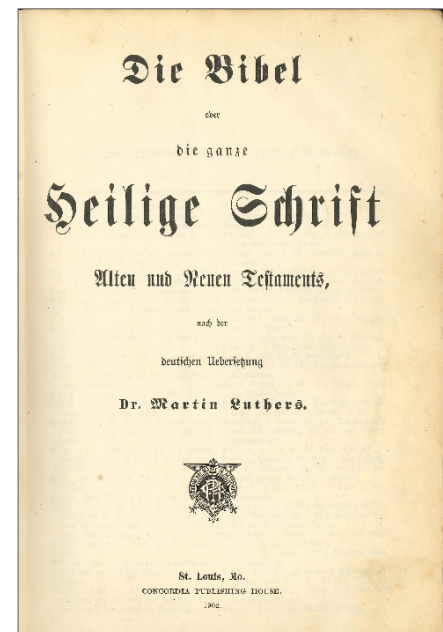
The *September Testament*—in time entire Bible—its mass production, and wide adoption provided direct and unprecedented public access to Holy Scripture.<sup>xxxv</sup> First and foremost, however, in a sixteenth-century Germany where only one in twenty was literate, the Word of God was to be recited, read aloud, and heard. For the vast majority, that meant during public worship, and Luther insisted that the translation sound right.<sup>xxxvi</sup> According to Luther, the church was to be a “*Mundhaus*”—a “mouth-” or “speech-house”—an acoustical experience in which parishioners hear and participate in the spoken Word, in preaching, praise and prayer, music and song.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

Luther had an ear for and great appreciation of music, and the rhythmic quality of his translation, echoing the natural melodic structure and tempo of language, was accordingly well suited to aural worship use. But whether readily heard during *Gottesdienst*, public worship, on Sunday morning or held in hand and eagerly read aloud or silently in the privacy of one’s own home, Luther’s remarkable proficiency in language and devotion to scripture provided—and still affords—a refreshed and engaging interpretation of faith and life. Five-hundred years after its first publication, Luther’s translation remains in use or has served as the basis of other editions of the Bible.

My Lutheran grandparents’ German Bible, published in 1902, in America, and dating from the time of their marriage, is, not surprisingly, *die ganze Heilige Schrift*, the complete Martin Luther translation of Holy Scripture.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

The Luther Bible, revised in 2017 in conjunction with the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation, serves the *Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland* (EKD), the Protestant Church in Germany, as its authoritative standard, the EKD being a national federation of twenty *Landeskirchen*, Protestant territorial churches.<sup>xxxix</sup>

The impact of the Luther Bible was not limited to editions in the German language however. Luther’s translation served as the basis of Bibles in the Netherlands and Scandinavia, its influence also extending elsewhere. The September Testament left its mark on the English translation of the Bible by William Tyndale, a contemporary of Luther, and thereby also on the subsequent King James Version of the Bible in the 1600s.<sup>xl</sup>



Grandparents’ Bible  
*die ganze Heilige Schrift*  
1902

## Luther and His Critics

Despite the notable success of the September Testament, Luther, perhaps not surprisingly, had his detractors. As in the aforementioned Angelic Salutation and the addition of “alone,” Roman Catholic theologians were highly critical of Luther and accused him of deliberately corrupting the biblical text.<sup>xli</sup>

Luther put pen to paper in 1530 and responded to his critics in his famous *Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen* (Open Letter on Translating), in which he elucidates the requirements and justifies

the art of faithful translation, takes his critics squarely to task, derides their lack of linguistic competence, and lays bare their brazen hypocrisy. Said Luther:

If I, Dr. Luther, had expected that all the papists together were capable of translating even one chapter of Scripture correctly and well into German, I would have gathered up enough humility to ask for their aid and assistance in translating the New Testament into German. However, because I knew (and still see with my own eyes) that not one of them knows how to translate or speak German, I spared them and myself the trouble. It is evident, however, that they are learning to speak and write German from my translation, and so they are stealing my language from me, a language they had little knowledge of before this. Yet they do not thank me for this, but instead they use it against me. However, I readily grant them this, for it tickles me to know that I have taught my ungrateful pupils, even my enemies, how to speak.<sup>xlii</sup>

Luther continued:

I would like to see a papist come forward and translate even one epistle of St. Paul's or one of the prophets without making use of Luther's German or translation. . . . We have seen that scribbler from Dresden play the master to my New Testament. I will not mention his name again in my books, as he has his Judge now, and is already well-known. He admits that my German is sweet and good. He saw that he could not improve upon it. Yet, eager to dishonor it, he took my New Testament nearly word for word as it was written, and removed my prefaces and notes, replaced them with his own, and thus published my New Testament under his name! Oh, Dear Children, how it pained me when his prince in a detestable preface condemned Luther's New Testament and forbade the reading of it, while commanding the Scribbler's New Testament to be read, even though it was the very same one Luther had done!

So that no one may think that I am lying, put Luther's and the Scribbler's New Testament side by side and compare them. You will see who is the translator of both. He has patched it and altered it in a few places. Not all of it pleases me, but I can let it pass; it does no particular harm as far as the text is concerned. For this reason, I had decided not to write against it. But I did have to laugh at the great wisdom that so terribly slandered, condemned and forbade my New Testament when it was published under my name, but required it to be read when published under the name of another! What kind of virtue is this, that slanders and heaps shame on someone else's work, and then steals it, and publishes it under one's own name, thereby seeking praise and a good reputation through the slandered work of someone else! I leave that for his judge to say. As for me, I am well satisfied that my work (as Paul also boasts) will be furthered by my enemies, and that Luther's work, without Luther's name but under that of his enemy, is to be read. What better revenge could I have than this?<sup>xliii</sup>

Luther's reference to the "nearly word for word" theft of his New Testament and the "scribbler from Dresden" and "his prince" was in response to the flagrant, essentially wholesale plagiarism of the September Testament by Hieronymus (Jerome) Emser, a severe critic of Luther and secretary to Duke George of neighboring Albertine Saxony.





Duke George of Ducal  
Saxony  
(cousin of Frederick III)

Duke George, himself a Reformation antagonist, had forbidden the sale of Luther's New Testament in ducal Saxony—not to be confused with Electoral Saxony—and appointed Emser to produce an authorized German version of the Bible from the Roman Catholic perspective. Despite the harsh Roman Catholic criticism of Luther's translation, Emser's version of the New Testament, published in 1527, was essentially Luther's September Testament, edited here and there in favor of the Vulgate and with the addition of anti-Lutheran annotations.<sup>xliv</sup>

Furthermore, despite Catholic condemnation of Luther's translation, Emser was not alone in the unabashed appropriation of Luther's work to serve Catholic purposes. Much of Johann Dietenberger's translation of the complete Bible, published in 1534, was based on the Luther Bible, and despite—or perhaps because of—its considerable Lutheran roots, the Dietenberger Bible became for a time the most popular Catholic version of the Holy Scriptures in German.<sup>xlv</sup>

## Martin Luther and the German Language

No less than in matters of faith, Luther bequeathed a profound and indelible imprint on the German language itself. In describing the “September Bible” in his comprehensive history of Germany, German historian Eberhard Orthbandt writes (in translation), “The September Testament represented a masterstroke never again achieved . . . suddenly everyone learned what the German language, which previously had been so neglected, really was and could be.”<sup>xlvi</sup> Whether due to his numerous lexical creations, articulate phrasing, and creative turns of speech, or, more broadly, the engaging pulse and rhetorical richness, both direct and poetic, of the whole,<sup>xlvii</sup> Luther's “*ungeheure Ausdruckskraft*”<sup>xlviii</sup>—his tremendous power of expression—“reshaped,” transformed, the German language.<sup>xlix</sup>

### Wörter und Redewendungen aus der Lutherbibel

(Words and Expressions from the Luther Bible)

Stiftung Lutherhaus Eisenach  
Germany

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Luther bestowed countless words, phrases, and idiomatic expressions or figures of speech on the German language: *friedfertig*—peace ready, hence, peaceable; *wetterwendisch*—changeable like the weather, thus, fickle; *Feuereifer*—fire ardor, hence, zeal; *Morgenland*—morning land, the eastern world, thus, the Orient; *wie Sand am Meer*—like sand at the sea, countless, beyond number;

*Stein des Anstoßes*—stone struck against, a stumbling block, a bone of contention; *Sündenbock*—a goat of sins or evils, a scapegoat. Some are very familiar to us even yet: *sein Licht unter den Scheffel stellen*—to hide one's light under a bushel; *Wolf im Schafspelz*—a wolf in sheep's clothing; *Der Mensch lebt nicht vom Brot allein*.—Man does not live by bread alone; *Niemand kann zwei Herren dienen*.—No one can serve two masters.<sup>i</sup>

And from my personal notebook and undergraduate “Introduction to German Literature” course at the university, lo these many years ago: *tägliches Brot*—daily bread; *das Haus auf Sand bauen*—to build one's house on sand; and *unrecht Gut gedeiht nicht*—ill-gotten goods never prosper.<sup>li</sup> Just to name a few.

In the recent words of a contemporary German author, Luther's translation of the Bible “*ist tatsächlich der Same*”—is in fact the seed—from which our modern standard German arose.”<sup>lii</sup> While a meaningful and evocative comparison, the metaphor requires some qualification, however, lest it encourage a false impression or greatly oversimplified misunderstanding. Despite his instinctive, linguistically sensitive intellect and nimble facility with words—in a word, his *Sprachgefühl*, his innate feeling for language<sup>liii</sup>—Luther did not by himself, singlehandedly, invent or create a new modern German language as has sometimes been mistakenly suggested or implied. Nor was his primary contribution the introduction of new grammatical or syntactical forms.<sup>liv</sup>

Luther did, however, exert an enormous and lasting influence on the German language.<sup>lv</sup> This was due in part to his pure dialectical understanding, and especially from his heart “his deep appreciation in translating for the way of thinking and feeling, for the language of the people.”<sup>lvi</sup> First and foremost, Luther's influence is to be found in the field of stylistics, his skillful wielding and fashioning of existing linguistic resources together with personal innovations into masterful pivotal biblical prose and, secondly and equally, in the broad appeal and widespread adoption of his seminal work.<sup>lvii</sup> Once again, an example of the latter is helpful, in this instance a small dialectical feature whose seemingly insignificant size yet disproportionately controversial role provides telling evidence of Luther's prevailing and permanent imprint on the modern German language.

In translating from Greek into German, Luther initially favored the southern, Upper German, dialectal form of certain words that had lost their terminal unstressed “e” syllable. Luther originally opted, for example, for a single-syllable *Kron* (crown) instead of a two-syllable *Krone*; *Leut* (people) instead of *Leute*; *Seel* (soul) instead of *Seele*; *Sonn* (sun) instead of *Sonne*; *ich mach* (I do, I make) instead of *ich mache*, and so on.<sup>lviii</sup> By the fourteenth century, most dialects of German in these instances had abandoned the final unstressed “e,” however, the East Middle German dialects of Saxony and Thuringia, those of Luther's homeland and with which he was most familiar, had not.<sup>lix</sup> Following his translation of the New Testament, Luther continued to revisit and revise his translation of scripture throughout his entire life and eventually settled not on the southern, but the northern, East Middle German dialectal form which retained the final unstressed “e,” thus, *Krone*, *Leute*, and so on.<sup>lx</sup>

Although much of Germany embraced Luther's translation of scripture and style of German, other regions, many of which were predominantly Catholic, were less receptive of the Luther Bible and its “Protestant dialect.” These included the Rhineland in western Germany and Bavaria in the

South.<sup>lxi</sup> It seems that an especially prickly point of contention accompanying the emergence of a written German literary standard was none other than the final unstressed “Lutheran e”—as in *Krone, mache*, etc., which Luther ultimately favored and featured—and stiff opposition to it in Catholic Bavaria, Austria, and the Rhineland. In the end, however, the retention of the “heretical” “Saxon” unstressed “Lutheran e” prevailed and in due time became a permanent component of the modern standard German language.<sup>lxii</sup>

The wide dissemination and adoption of the *September Testament* and the complete *Lutherbibel* throughout Germany resulted in a greatly expanded use and adoption of that form of German so effectively employed by Luther in his translation of scripture.<sup>lxiii</sup> By the end of the sixteenth-century, the German language written and understood in much of Germany was that of the Luther Bible.<sup>lxiv</sup> That form of German became the “model” for a “*hochdeutsche Einheitssprache*,” a High German unified language which stood above the various regional dialects, and the “mother” of Standard High German as it is written and spoken today. Even so, German-speaking Europe was not fully united in a common German *Schriftsprache*, a standard literary language, until the end of the eighteenth-century.<sup>lxv</sup>

In characterizing the extraordinary linguistic impact of the *September Testament* and *Lutherbibel*, biographer Heinrich Bornkamm writes, “It was from Luther’s Bible that the German people learned to speak the language they were to have in common.”<sup>lxvi</sup>

In a remarkable and extraordinarily productive eleven weeks spent in secluded quarters at mountaintop Wartburg, in what he characterized as “the kingdom of the birds,”<sup>lxvii</sup> Martin Luther not only aided the people of Germany in finding a “national voice,” as judged by Eric Metaxas in his excellent recent history of the Great Reformer, he also was instrumental in creating “a German national identity.”<sup>lxviii</sup>



(right page of Bible, above)  
*Das Neue Testament  
 verdeutscht von  
 Doktor Martin Luther*

—  
 The New Testament translated  
 into German by  
 Doctor Martin Luther

Luther Monument  
 Marktplatz  
 Wittenberg, Germany

## Stepping Back and Reflecting

Stepping back for a moment and viewing from a more distant perspective the historical circumstances surrounding Martin Luther, his translation of the Bible, and the subsequent development and role of the German language, several observations attract our attention and invite reflection.

First, had Luther inspired the Reformation and conducted his translation of the Bible, not in Electoral Saxony, but rather in the far North where Low German, *Plattdeutsch*, was spoken, or in

the South, which had its own unique dialects, such as Bavarian or Swabian, everything likely would have been far different and much more difficult.<sup>lxi</sup>

Second, despite his devotion to the Roman Catholic faith, had Prince Elector Frederick III—the Wise—not risen to the occasion and served as Luther’s skillful and steadfast protector, everything also might have been very different.<sup>lxx</sup> Indeed, following the Diet of Worms, Martin Luther may have soon fallen victim, lost his life, and become little more than an obscure historical footnote. Instead, Luther became, in essence, not only a national hero, but also one of the most prominent and influential figures in Western Civilization.

Third, Germany was for centuries a land divided into numerous, sometimes hundreds, of semi-independent governing entities. In large part thanks to Luther, his translation of the Bible, and its enormous impact, Germany, despite its long tradition of disunity, was united in its written language long before it was united politically as a modern nation-state, in 1871.<sup>lxxi</sup>

Fourth, Germany also remained united in that commonly shared language, even when more recently, following the Second World War (1945–1990), it was again politically divided during the Cold War.<sup>lxxii</sup> In their historical account of the German language, authors C. R. Goedsche and W. S. Seiferth write (in translation):

The Luther Bible is the first great success of a German unified language. Luther’s word unified the Germans spiritually; his German was the linguistic bond that henceforth held all Germans together spiritually and culturally.<sup>lxxiii</sup>

And finally. Martin Luther, the 95 Theses, Frederick the Wise, the Wartburg, and the September Testament; it is difficult to overstate their collective impact, not only on modern Germany and the modern German language, but also more broadly on Christian faith and our present world. It was, to borrow Luther’s word, quite an “accident.”

## In Closing

Luther had a great love of music and joyfully observed that “music is a fair and lovely gift of God . . . next after theology I give to music the highest place and the greatest honor.”<sup>lxxiv</sup> A rich heritage of congregational singing—even in unrehearsed four-part harmony—and instrumental music became hallmarks of the Lutheran Church. And consistent with active participation by the congregation and worship in the language spoken by parishioners, were new German hymns, many of which written by Luther himself. Of these, one in particular, written in 1541, seems especially appropriate to recall on this the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the *September Testament*:

***Erhalt uns, Herr, bei Deinem Wort—Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word***

hymn number 517 in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*,  
commended for use in the  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America<sup>lxxv</sup>

▪ Soli Deo Gloria ▪



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<sup>xxi</sup> Heine; König, 75, 93; Metaxas, 273–274; Waterman, 110–116.

<sup>xxii</sup> König, 75, 93; Metaxas, 273; Sanders, 137; Waterman, 115.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Glaser, Lehmann, and Lubos, 52; Heine; König, 75, 93; Sanders, 137.

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<sup>xxviii</sup> Bainton, *Here I Stand*, 328;;

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<sup>xxx</sup> Sanders 31; Waterman 23.

<sup>xxxi</sup> Joan Acocella, “How Martin Luther Changed the World, *New Yorker*, 30 Oct. 2017, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/10/30/how-martin-luther-changed-the-world>, accessed 25 Apr. 2023; Sanders 147.

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<sup>xxxiv</sup> Sanders, 141–142.

<sup>xxxv</sup> König, 97; Zecher, 37.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Heine; Jones, 17; Metaxas, 295; Orthbandt, 470; Treu, 55–57; Zecher, 36.

<sup>xxxix</sup> Thomas Schattauer, “The Enduring Impact of Luther’s Liturgical Revolution,” 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation, Luther College, Decorah, IA, April 1, 2017.

<sup>xl</sup> Bainton, *Here I Stand*, 326–327; Biese, 301–302; Heine; Jones, 18; Metaxas, 272–273; Orthbandt, 496; Roper, 196; Sanders, 142; Zecher, 37.

<sup>xli</sup> <https://www.ekd.de/Lutherbibel-2017-10854.htm>, accessed January 14, 2023.

<sup>xlii</sup> Sanders, 148–149; Zecher, 37.

<sup>xliii</sup> Waterman, 131.

- <sup>xlili</sup> Martin Luther, *Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen*, <https://www.bible-researcher.com/luther01.html>, accessed Dec. 26, 2022, Jan. 14, 2023.
- <sup>xliv</sup> Martin Luther, *Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen*, <https://www.bible-researcher.com/luther01.html>, accessed Dec. 26, 2022, Jan. 14, 2023.
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- <sup>xlvi</sup> Sanders, 140; Waterman, 134.
- <sup>xlvi</sup> Translated from Orthbandt, 496.
- <sup>xlvi</sup> Bainton, *Here I Stand*, 326–329; Heine; Orthbandt, 496; Sanders, 138–139.
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- <sup>viii</sup> Sanders 150.
- <sup>ix</sup> Heine.
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- <sup>xi</sup> Sanders 138; Waterman 133–134.
- <sup>xii</sup> König 101; Waterman 145–147.
- <sup>xiii</sup> König, 97; Waterman, 128–129.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Sanders, 138; Waterman 133–135.
- <sup>xv</sup> C. R. Goedsche and W. S. Seiferth, *Deutschland: Land und Sprache*, Cultural Graded Readers, German Series: VI (Intermediate) (New York, Cincinnati, Chicago, Atlanta, Dallas, San Francisco: American Book Company, 1956), 48–49; Koepke, 54; Sanders, 138; Waterman, 145–147.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther in Mid-career, 1521–1530*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983, 50, quoted in Metaxas, 273.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Joestel, 32; Kittelson, 163; Metaxas, 239; Roper, 183.
- <sup>xviii</sup> Metaxas, 273–274.
- <sup>xix</sup> Heine.
- <sup>xx</sup> Heine.
- <sup>xxi</sup> Biese, 302; Goedsche and Seiferth, 49–50; Heine; Stroebe and Whitney, 76.
- <sup>xxii</sup> Heine.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Goedsche and Seiferth, 49.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Martin Luther, quoted in Bainton, *Here I Stand*, 341.
- <sup>xxv</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 4.

## **The Spillville of Antonin Dvorak's Sojourn**

### **by Michael F. Klemish**

Spillville (Spielville) came into being on May 7, 1860, when Joseph Spielman subdivided a forty-acre parcel of land near his crude grist and sawmill and submitted a plat for record. Eleven years earlier, in February 1849 with several other families, he had left Indiana to settle in northeast Iowa. Recently vacated by the forced removal of the Winnebago, this Iowa land surveyed would soon be on the market. The "Iowa bound caravan of Oldenburgers (Indiana) plodded up over the western rim of the valley on the Enochsburg State Road and disappeared."

In April 1849 the travelers arrived at Fort Atkinson, a frontier army post recently (February 24, 1849) abandoned by the US Army following the relocation (forced removal) of the Native Americans. After a brief stay, exercising their "squatter's rights" under the Preemption Act of 1838, the settlers moved onto the acreage they wished to own. When the land became available, they could buy it for \$1.25 an acre if standard improvements like plowing and fencing were made.

### **Spielman, the Master Entrepreneur**

Joseph Spielman headed north and laid claim to what had been the site of an Indian village with grain and vegetable fields. Selection of the Indian farm permitted Spielman to plant a substantial crop during the first year in Iowa. Further, since the Indians had cultivated the fields for several years, the required improvements were already in place. In November 1850, after Winneshiek County lands were released for sale, Spielman purchased 160 acres, the first of the many parcels he would acquire for subdivision or resale.

For several years Spielman had few neighbors. Most of the land was being purchased by speculators or, as they were commonly called, "land sharks". During 1854 the population near Spielman's cabin more than doubled. The newcomers included several German, about twenty Czech, and four Swiss families. What had been a trickle now became a steady stream, which continued all the available land was taken.





Joseph Spielman portrait, founder of Spillville.

(Born 1801 in Bavaria, died in Spillville in 1888)

Not only had there been a large increase in the number of settlers, but their character was changing. In 1854 and later, most were relative newcomers to the nation, individuals and families who had only recently emigrated from Europe to escape adverse economic and political conditions. Unlike their predecessors who had brought stock and farm tools and household goods, most of these people were at or near poverty level. They came to this place with little more than their bare hands and a grim determination to successfully meet the challenges of the Iowa frontier.

Czech settlers to the area were now outnumbering all the other ethnic groups. This started a trend that would make Spillville and its environs a predominately Czech community. The first Czechs came to Winneshiek County purely by chance. When they left Bohemia (mostly from the area of Pisek, Tabor and Cezka Budejovice), their destination was Cleveland, Ohio. There they knew of Leopold Levy who in 1848 had come to Cleveland from Smetanova Lhota, a village not from their own in southern Bohemia. Knowing that in 1852 he had helped a group of Czech migrants get settled, they were drawn to him also. Levy informed them about the Dubuque, Iowa land office and that government land was being sold in Winneshiek County, organized on January 15, 1851.

By year's end in 1860 nine families were living near Spielman's mill. A hotel and brewery were being built, and several trades and craftsmen provided the nucleus of a business center to serve the farmers scattered through Calmar, Washington, Sumner, and Jackson townships. The businesses included two merchants, a blacksmith, a wagon maker, a tinsmith and a master carpenter. And in early 1860s twenty-two Spillvillians marched off to the American Civil War.

## **German and Czech Catholic Churches**

There were two churches. The Catholic Germans, under the patronage of St. Clement and served by the priest from Festina, about nine miles Southeast of Spillville, first temporarily worshipped in a log cabin at an underdetermined location. The St. Clement (German) Church brick structure (built in 1864) that replaced it still (July 2025) stands about a mile south of Spillville.



**St. Clement Church**

Desiring their own church, the Czech Catholic families built a limestone structure dedicated to St. Wenceslaus on a hill about a miles North of St. Clement Church and just off the northwest corner of the original (May 7, 1860) plat of Spillville. The first holy mass was celebrated on 28th of September 1860. Today (July 2025) Spillville's St. Wenceslaus Church is the oldest standing Czech Catholic church in the United States.



**St. Wenceslaus Church, Spillville, Iowa, July 2025**  
**Photo by Clair Blong**





Early Photographs of Spillville.

As Spielman sold off his lots, the village slowly grew. By the 1870's the population had reached 400, a figure around which it has fluctuated little since. Additional businesses established during this period include two breweries, a hotel, a butcher shop, several saloons, a creamery, a harness shop, two flour mills, a furniture store and two or three black smiths.

During Spillville's early period, several individuals were noteworthy. The first, of course, is Spillville's founder, **Joseph Spielman**. He is reputed to have been a rugged but kindhearted individual to whom many families owed their prosperity. He was fluent in Czech, as well as German and his skills were many. At one time or another he served the community as a realtor, banker, miller, lawyer, blacksmith advisor, brewer, merchant, civil servant and licensed physician.

### **Haug, the Progressive Businessman**

**John J. Haug**, who came from Switzerland to Spillville in 1854, was the community's foremost merchant and throughout his life he was involved in civic affairs. Like Spielman, he also spoke Czech fluently. Then he established a general merchandise business near the mill. In 1860, Haug secured a post office for the village that was forming, and he became the first postmaster. Over the years, Haug conducted his business with several different partners. Eventually, to permit time for his other business and civic interests, he sold the store to John Henry Haug, his nephew. At one time or another he was involved with the Big Stone Mill, a creamery, a bank, and owner 1,500 acres of land. After being a justice of the peace for three years he was county supervisor for six years. He sat on the Calmar Township war committee during the Civil War and was a Calmar Township clerk.

John J. Haug was a progressive and astute businessman who believed in giving his customers a square deal. It was probably natural in such a small community that, given his role as merchant and the constant contact that he had with the local people as well as the outside world, Haug would assume a role as civic leader. As a Swiss, with a natural characteristic of deep concern for personal freedom and being multilingual, he was better prepared for such a function than his Czech or German contemporaries.

J.J. Haug and then John Henry extended credit to the customers at the stores. That spirit helped many in the community through hard times. A frequent spokesman for his community, the

Czechs accepted him as one of their own. Their esteem for him was demonstrated in 1910 when the St. Wenceslaus Church celebrated its Golden Jubilee. He was the only speaker who was not a Czech, not a Catholic, nor a clergyman. It was an honor they would not extend to a lesser man.

Notable also is **Othmar Kapler**, a native of Wurttemberg, Germany. He came to Calmar Township with his parents in 1855. After he returned from military service in the civil War, Kaplar opened a boarding house. He was a notary public, served several terms as a justice of the peace, was active in civic and church affairs, ran a saloon, and had a general conveyance business. He was Spillville's first mayor, an office he was appointed to by the council after the man who had been elected refused to serve. Mr. Kaplar was a highly respected and popular member of the community.

**Charles (Karel) Andrea** was a lad of 12 years when he came from Bohemia with his parents in 1866. After marriage in 1875 he opened a furniture store and worked as a carpenter and cabinetmaker. Commuting by bicycle, he crafted the alters in the Catholic churches in Protivin and Fort Atkinson. Most notable are the unique cast iron cruciform grave markers that he crafted. Examples of thee may be found in Czech Catholic cemeteries from Texas to the Canadian border, from Prague, Oklahoma, to Bohemia, New York. St. Wenceslaus Church Cemetery has a beautiful section of these cast iron grave markers.



Cast Iron Grave Markers, St. Wenceslaus Cemetery,  
Spillville, Iowa, July 21, 2025

### **Kovarik, the Master Teacher**

Another person whose impact is still being felt was **John J. Kovarik** (born August 10, 1850, in Vsetec, Bohemia) who came with his parents, John and Mary, in 1866. His love of music infuses

many of his students and would indirectly lead to a summer sojourn in Spillville by the noted composer Antonin Dvorak.

Until a school could be built classes were held in the rectory built in 1866, and then in the dance hall above Thomas Dvorak's saloon. Only part of the new two-story stone structure was used for education. The rest served as living quarters for Kovarik and his family. Earlier and until his departure to Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, in 1866, the children attended classes in the log cabin one mile East of Spillville. This Bouska log cabin school structure has been preserved and is now on the grounds of the "Bily Clocks Museum", which is the Schmitt house of 1893 where Dvorak lived in Spillville.

J.J. Kovarik taught the immigrant children, and their children for over a quarter of a century. As a teacher, he had the distinct advantage over his counterparts in the township schools by being able to instruct in all three of the languages spoken by his pupils-Czech, German and English. The last he learned by attending classes in Decorah, to which he walked. The average number of pupils was about 60. In winter when the children were not needed for planting or harvesting, attendance increased as much as 110. With that many students Kovarik was forced to restrict his curriculum to basics.

It might appear that with such a large group his charges would be short-changed but that doesn't seem to be the case. He worked hard to give more than a cursory education, and he did so well that several of his pupils went on to become top notch professional educators. **Prokopius Neuzil** became a teacher, a priest, and at the age of 36, founded St. Procopius College in Lisle, Illinois.

**Alois Kovarik**, a nephew, went on to earn a doctorate at the University of Minnesota and he became professor of physics at Yale University. **James S. Mikes**, an author and theologian taught at Yale and Harvard.

Mary Klimesh, one of his pupils, called J.J. Kovarik a very good teacher, he was very strict but kind. The school day started with Holy Mass at which Kovarik played the organ, and the children sang. One evening a week he devoted himself to choir practice. At other times, he taught music to his children and to others. His family's leisure activities were focused on music. Periodically the town's people gathered at the school to sing. He also formed and conducted an orchestra. Frank Bily, one of its members, went on to play in the Minneapolis Symphony. John J. Kovarik and his wife Elizabeth were the parents of six children, four of whom adopted music as their life's work.

**Joseph Kovarik**, son of John J. and Elizabeth, who demonstrated exceptional talent, was sent to music school in Milwaukee at the age 13, and then at 18 to the Conservatory in Prague, Bohemia. While there, Joseph chanced to meet composer, Antonin Dvorak. They became friends and after completing this training, Kovarik reluctantly extended his stay in Bohemia. Having accepted the position as Director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York, Dvorak invited Kovarik to accompany him to New York and to serve as his secretary.





**Joseph Jan Kovarik (1870-1951)**



**Antonin Dvorak birth house in Bohemia**

### **Dvorak Comes to America**

They arrived in New York on St. Wenceslaus Day, September 28, 1892. While in New York, Kovarik taught violin at the Conservatory and lived with the Dvorak family. Dvorak taught composition, acted as a conductor at the New York Philharmonic, and composed, including his famous 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony, "From the New World".

Dvorak was a country gentleman. He disliked the hustle and bustle of the city. The noise irritated him. He did not like dressing up. Preparing for the concerts gave him stage fright. Social obligations distressed and bored him.



**Antonin Dvorak (1841-1904)**

Dvorak planned to spend the summer of 1893 at his home in Vysoka, Bohemia. But fascinated by Kovarik's vivid description of Spillville and its people, the composer changed his mind and notified his children still in Bohemia to join him. A pleased Joseph Kovarik, who had not seen his family in five years, began making the arrangements to travel to Spillville.

Aboard the train leaving New York at 8:00 AM on 3 June 1893, were Antonin Dvorak, his wife Anna, their six children: Otilie, Anna, Magdalena, Antonin, Otakar, Aloisia, sister-in-law Mrs. Koutecka, housemaid Baruska Klerova, and Joseph Kovarik. Interested by locomotives from childhood Dvorak was fascinated by the train's speed and the ever-changing American countryside. At 11:00 AM on 5 June they arrived at Calmar, Iowa, about five miles east of Spillville.

There they were met by Joseph's father, with a wagon, and Spillville's Father Thomas Bily and Protivin's Father Frantisek Vrba, each with a carriage. After an exchange of excited greetings, the party settled into the carriages for the final leg of their journey to Spillville. Joseph stayed behind with the wagon to bring the luggage. Driving home he was anxious. What if the Master did not like Spillville? As he approached, Dvorak was standing by the school, smiling and smoking his long pipe. The others were sitting around the table. When he saw Kvorak, the Master called to him, "What a pleasant welcome to Spillville." Joseph need not have worried.

During lunch Dvorak learned that the family had a piano and arranged to borrow it. In the newspaper KATOLIK, Joseph Kovarik wrote:

"The Master occupied the upper floor in the home of Mr. Schmitt (now the "Bily Clocks/Dvorak Museum"). After the piano was tuned, repaired and moved into the dwelling, the Master undertook a new work. When the piano did not suffice for the outline of his work, he used a reed organ which he had searched out at his neighbors across the street, at Kovarik's, my father's

cousin, who had a harness shop. He went there often, played a couple of musical measures, then quickly returned home. So began Master's new work, a piece of chamber music for strings, a quartet in F Major, Opus 96.

The Master began his outline on the new work on the third day following his arrival in Spillville on 8 June and on 10 June the outline of the first movement was finished. This was an unusually short time, only three days. It is interesting to note that following the last line of his outline he wrote: Thank God, completed 10.6.1893-Spillville. I am satisfied it went rapidly." The first movement of the score of his work the Master wrote from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup>; the second movement from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup>, the third on the 18<sup>th</sup>; and the last movement from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> of June".

Pleased that his new work had been finished in so short a time, and anxious to hear it played, Dvorak instructed Joseph to copy the parts and form a quartet. Joseph wrote: "The parts were transcribed and play it we did. The Master first and my father second violin, my sister Cecelia viola and I the cello. We played the quartet every day, usually in the afternoon. I don't know how a professional would have judged our "harmony", but the Master kept commenting to himself from day to day that the quartet was improving." These first playings were in the J.J. Kovarik home, the Old School (1870), St. Wenceslaus School in Spillville.

The Spillville Quartet, as Dvorak first called it, was first played in a public performance in Boston on 1 January 1894. Writing about the event, a newspaper reporter called it the American Quartet. The name stuck.

Since Dvorak never talked about his music, not even to family and friends, one can only contemplate as to the inspirations that led to his Opus96. The work appears to focus on the sights and sounds of Spillville, the composer's experiences and excitement of the first two days blended with his joy at being with his family amongst countrymen in a rural atmosphere.

From his son Otakar we do know that although he found much interest in New York City, he did not like living there. In New York, he was homesick for the quiet, simple life with his family and friends in Vysoka. As a young musician he had composed not for money, but for the sheer pleasure of putting his thoughts and observations into music-and at his own pace. In New York the demands of his contract left him little time for this.

So.....How might Antonin Dvorak, the Great Composer, country gentleman, Bohemian now among countrymen after nearly a year away from Bohemia, creatively express his inspiration, satisfaction and joy? In music, his specialty. And from what might his inspiration in that "...unusually short time, only three days"—and just two days after arriving—spring. Our imagination must lead us to the most euphoric joy and contentment of his coming to Spillville.

In the **first movement** Dvorak tells of his ride to Spillville in Father Bily's carriage pulled by a spirited team of white horses that Dvorak credited with having a "gait like thunder" as together they "flew like birds". Today the road is relatively more or less smooth and level, but in

Dvorak's time the road was not surface and more followed the rise and fall and curves of the rolling land. Occasionally the grades were quite steep, forcing the horses to slow down. As the grade changed so did the clip-pity--clap of the team. The theme of the horses' gait is repeated in the third and fourth movements.

During his stay Dvorak would borrow the team frequently to take his family on rides through wide expanse of fields he called "prairie" though by then most of the prairie had been converted to fields and pastures. The day was fair and pleasant as we know from Kovarik's comment when Dvorak arrived, about Dvorak standing by the school and the others sitting around a table.

The **second movement** is one of **contentment**. As the day ends, the summer sun sinks to the Northwest. As dusk bats start to skim through the evening sky, the bird songs gradually die down. By dark, now settled in their rooms and weary from the day's event, the travelers are ready to call it a day. With the interesting and scenic travel from New York still fresh in his mind, Dvorak feels great satisfaction at having chosen Spillville for his vacation. Houses go dark. On the street, unlike New York, other than an occasional patron departing the tavern across the street, there is no traffic and all is quiet. The village has settled down for the night.

Then comes the **third movement, morning and a new day**. Roosters start crowing and the birds are beginning to greet the new day with song. Dvorak is up before most of the residents and walking along a cow path under towering oak trees on the shore of the Turkey River. The melody of a red bird with black wings catches his attention and excites him. Its trill is unlike any in his motherland. He is delighted yet irritated. The song is so rapid that he has trouble recording it. The bird was a scarlet tanager. At the bottom of his outline of the third movement he identified the bird that so exasperated him as "that damned bird".

In 1925 a monument commemorating Dvorak's visit to Spillville and his contribution to American classical music was erected on the riverbank of what is now Riverside Park. The site, near a ripple in the stream and opposite the mouth of Spielman Creek, was identified by his son Otakar as being the composer's favorite spot for his communion with nature.



**Antonin Dvorak Monument, Spillville Riverside Park**

It was here that Dvorak is said to have heard the bird song that so excited him. Did the Master perhaps also incorporate the rhythm of this particular ripple in Opus 96 as later he would the music of Minnesota's Minnehaha Falls in his Opus 100?

The **fourth movement** reflects Dvorak's **exuberance** at being away from **stresses and troubles** related to his work at the conservatory. By seven, he is at the organ in the church loft. In the pews, the grandmothers and grandfather pray silently as they wait for Father Bily to start Holy Mass. When Dvorak begins playing an old Czech hymn they are startled, then join in with song. Normally on weekdays during the summer when children are no longer in school the organ is silent. Following the service, Dvorak joins them as they excitedly chatter about the surprise event. Though he has never met any of them, he knew most by name and occupation and quickly becomes acquainted. They call him Squire Dvorak and accept him as one of their own.

Earlier in the year, following Joseph Kovarik's vivid description of Spillville, Dvorak had decided to forego his panned return to Vysoka during his four-month summer vacation and accept Kovarik's invitation to spend the summer in Spillville. In the meantime, Dvorak had Kovarik draw a map of Spillville and quizzed him almost daily about the residents—so he had a good grasp of the place and people before he arrived.



## Thoughts and Observations about a typical Dvorak Day in Spillville

Opus 96 went very quickly, three days from arrival to start and only eleven more days to completion. It must have been an intense experience and feelings he wanted to express. The Master called it the Spillville Quartet. The time of his sojourn—two weeks before summer starts to one week before its ends—a pleasant time of year. Dvorak rose at 4:00, walked, returned to work and went to Mass at 7:00.

So...What might the start of the day look, sound, smell and feel like? On Corpus Christi Sunday, June 22, 2003, the longest day of the year and first full day of summer, it was like this:

4:00 AM, CDT Very, very faint light on North side of Pletka's hill.

4:30 Almost enough light to walk an open street with no other light.

4:40 Light blue sky, with a few little clouds, to Northeast. The moon is about one third. Enough light to walk the town streets. Birds are now singing. They rise too early too. Several distant owls answer each other. The breeze is pleasant from the South.

4:45 A chorus of birds sing—cardinals, the other red bird, robins, crows and others.

4:50 signs of life intensify. Many, many crows raucous on the West side of town. Various birds everywhere. The first human soul of the day passes.

4:50 At Schmitt house doves mourn. Many, many birds now fly and call all around. A rabbit here and there crosses the lawn.

5:00 From the East Bridge Pletka's hill silhouettes against a light blue, whitely streaked sky. It is light enough to walk easily in all but the darkest woods.

5:06 At the (since 1925) Dvorak Memorial in riverside Park, where Spielman's Creek joins the Turkey River, there is silence all around but for the sounds of birds (Maybe smoke a pipe?) Where is "that damn bird" today?

5:17 Back toward the East Bridge the wind makes that special sound as if rustles through the cottonwood trees.

5:25 More people stirring. Rabbits on the lawns. Chimney Swifts dot the sky.

5:35 The lenses of clouds on the horizon where the sun will rise are shades of purple and rose. Grackles scold.

5:45 The sun clears the Northeast horizon, and the first rays touch the cross on St. Wenceslaus steeple, the tallest structure in the village.

5:50 The North and East side of the limestone St. Wenceslaus Church in bright gold and the old cemetery are blanketed in the light of a new day.

5:50 The sun has reached out to the old School (1870), down the hill and across the street below the church.

6:00 Schmitt's Tin Shop and the whole town are bright. The sun has fully cleared Pletka's hill.

Imagine—other sights and sounds and smells in those 1893 days would be typical of a rural, highly self-sufficient, old country farming community—many geese, ducks, chickens (and roosters crowing), pigs, cows, and horses—all kept liberally by the many/most village households.

6:10 The town is mostly still and quiet. The early risers have gone their way. It is sixty degrees. The two-hour walk has passed quickly and pleasantly.

Like in New York, Dvorak usually spent his evenings at home playing cards with Joseph. In mid-June this routine was interrupted by the arrival in Spillville of an Indian Medicine Show. During the 14-day stay Dvorak was there each evening listening to their songs with keen interest. Three members of the troupe he became acquainted with were named Big Moon, John Fox and John Deer. Following the completion of the quartet, Opus 96, Dvorak began working on a quintet in E major, Opus 97. This work, which reflects some of the Indian melodies, was finished on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August.

Contrary to public opinion during the early decades following Dvorak's return to his home in Bohemia, neither his symphony, *From the New world*, nor the world-famous *Humoresque* were written in Spillville. The former was finished in New York but was copied for publication in Spillville by Joseph Kovarik. The latter, based on one of several sketches he had made in Spillville, was not finished until a year later while he was on vacation in Bohemia.

Homesick for Bohemia, in New York yet wishing to see Midwest frontier Antonin Dvorak had debated his options—Iowa or Bohemia, then chose to accept Joseph Kovarik's invitation. By coming to Spillville he had, in effect, managed both. In Spillville he found an environment that in most aspects was like a transplant from his motherland. From the moment he stepped off the train in Calmar and all those who awaited him spoke Czech he had felt at home. He enjoyed chatting with the villagers whatever their age. Much of his leisure he spent with his "Trio", namely oldsters Mathias Bily, his neighbor, Joseph's grandfather John Kovarik and John (Jan) Klimesh.

Spillville was settled by a German, the principal merchant was a Swiss but the community's pioneers were predominantly Czechs. More than any other, due to his love for music, John J. Kovarik put Spillville on the music world map. Had not Dvorak seen and fallen in love with Spillville, the *American Quartet*, one of his best-received compositions, would never have been written.

Interviewed upon his return to New York by a reporter of the Evening Post, Dvorak had this to say: "I grew very fond of the people there and they seemed to like me. There was a little Bohemian school (Built in 1870, in 2003 it was the oldest Czech Catholic school in the United States) and my pupil's father was the schoolmaster. Here I played the organ for them every day and on Sunday I played the organ in the church (Built in 1860, in 2003 it is the oldest Czech Catholic Church in the United States). It was a lovely place, miles away from a railroad and all the time I was there I fancied myself in Bohemia.

Dvořák described Vysoká, Bohemia, as a place where he felt "very happy" and where he could truly be himself, according to the Antonín Dvořák Memorial website. He would often spend his days walking in the woods, near the pond (later named Rusalka's Pond), and in the park, which featured 1,500 trees and a birch gazebo.



Dvorak Family in Vysoka, Bohemia, 1894

## **Friederich Tillmann, Immigrant Pioneer**

**By Joe Tillman**

Friederich Tillmann was born at Bork, Unna, North-Rhine, Westphalia, Germany, in 1831. His father died when he was 9 years old and his mother died when he was 14. It is unknown who Friederich lived with after the deaths of his parents.

Friederich obtained his emigration papers to leave Germany on February 6, 1856. He traveled about 20 miles to Munster, Germany, to get permission to emigrate to America. Friederich sailed from Antwerp, Belgium, and landed at Castle Garden, New York City, on June 27, 1856. (Before Ellis Island opened, Castle Garden was the immigration center.) He and 155 other passengers were on the sailing ship, Catherine, which took 5-6 weeks to cross the ocean. Ship's passage cost about \$20.

Friederich then took a steam ship up the Hudson River to the Erie Canal. He traveled across the Erie Canal and across the 5 Great Lakes before landing at Racine, Wisconsin. He traveled 30 miles to Wheatland, Wisconsin, where his brother, Wilhelm, was living. Wilhelm and his wife had immigrated to this area before 1854. He is listed in the Wisconsin State Census of 1855. Several of the early settlers of the Festina/St. Lucas area previously lived at Burlington, Wheatland and Waterford, Wisconsin.

Wilhelm later moved near Sauk Centre, Minnesota. Since help was needed to build a town on the frontier, Friederich probably worked odd jobs at Wheatland until he saved enough money to purchase a farm. Friederich bought 160 acres of land in Section 35 of Washington Township, Winneshiek County, Iowa, on June 2, 1858, and moved there. He purchased the land from Christopher and Lena Waterkotte. (The Waterkotte family was also listed in the 1855 Wisconsin Census, in Wheatland, Wisconsin, where Christopher was a shoemaker.)

Friederich paid \$400 for the farm, at \$2.50 an acre. Christopher had originally purchased the land at the Dubuque, Iowa, Land Office in 1855, for \$200, at \$1.25 an acre. Friederich married Mary Anne Gehling on November 8, 1859, at Festina, Iowa. Mary Gehling made her wedding dress from flax.

Mary Anne Gehling was born at Wessum, Borken, North-Rhine, Westphalia, Germany, in 1834. (She was a twin to Bernard Gehling, who also later immigrated to the Festina area, as did her parents.) She was hired by her uncle and aunt, Gerhard and Margaretha (Geeling) Huinker, to help keep their young children (Gerhard, Herman, Henry, Mary and John) safe during the ship's voyage across the Atlantic Ocean. In return, she received free passage to America.

Mary's group left from Antwerp, Belgium, on April 2, 1859, and arrived at Castle Garden on May 12, 1859. Mary's group included Henry and Mary Anne (Bullermann) Einck, Theodore

Bullermann, Bernhard Lukentenhau, Gertrude Huinker and Johanna Huinker. Here's how things changed for the Tillmann family.

Sources used include: The Agricultural Censuses of 1860 and 1870 plus Friederich's Probate records. 1860 Agricultural Census for Friederich: Post Office was Fort Atkinson. The land was valued at \$1600. (4 times his original purchase price in 1858.) The value of his farm equipment was \$100. The livestock value was \$275. Slaughtered livestock value was \$20.

Friederich tilled 25 acres and 135 acres were unimproved. He owned: 1 Milch cow, 2 other cattle, 4 swine and 4 working oxen. He grew 120 bushels of wheat, 300 bushels of Indian corn, 85 bushels of oats, 40 bushels of Irish potatoes and 25 tons of hay. He made 400 pounds of butter. 1870

Agricultural Census for Friederich: Post Office was Calmar. Land was valued at \$3,000. The farm equipment's value was \$150. The livestock was valued at \$508. The value of the processed livestock was \$150. There were 100 acres designated as improved land, 40 acres classified as woodland, and 20 acres identified as unimproved. Livestock was valued at \$508. He owned: 5 Milch cows, 2 other cattle, 2 horses and 10 swine. He grew 500 bushels of wheat, 300 bushels of Indian corn, 300 bushels of oats, 10 bushels of Irish potatoes and 10 tons of hay. He made 400 pounds of butter. He also sold \$45 forest products.

Friederich died of a heart attack in August of 1877. He left behind his wife and 8 children, ages 2 to 16. (The Probate Record for Friederich Tillmann should be listed here) Things were difficult for the family after Friederich's death. Some of the children worked as servants or hired hands for area families. They gave the money they earned to help support the family. Mary Gehling Tillmann married John Wolf after the probate was settled in 1879. John and the Tillmann boys worked on the land for several years.

The 160-acre farm remained in the Tillmann name until 1891, when Anna Tillmann Bengfort and her husband, Gerhard, bought the farm from her mother and siblings. Each person received \$200 for their share. (It is surprising that the widow didn't receive all the money from Friederich's estate.)

Mary Anne Gehling Tillmann Wolf and John Wolf retired and moved to Festina, after the farm was sold. The children of Friedrich and Mary Ann (Gehling) Tillman went on to have lives of their own. Here is some of their information. Anna Tillmann Bengfort lived on the family farm. She and Gerhard had 6 children. Anna died of pneumonia in 1900.

Mary Tillmann married Mathias Mattes in 1889 at Festina. They moved to a farm by Roselle, Carroll County, Iowa. They farmed in that area until they retired to Dedham, Iowa. They had 10 children, including Rev. Peter Mattes, Sister Reginatta FSPA, Sister Reginalda FSPA and Sister Alverna FSPA.

Henry Tillmann married Caroline Brincks in 1911 at New Hampton, Iowa. (Henry decided to get married and asked Mr. Brincks if he could marry one of his daughters. Mr. Brincks said Caroline was loading manure behind the barn. Henry asked Caroline to marry him, and she responded, "How soon?". They were married 2 weeks later. Henry and Caroline lived at Festina. Henry was a house painter and later served as custodian for the church and school. They adopted Clara Remke, Caroline's niece, after her mother died.

John Tillmann married Mary Dohm in 1889 at St. Lucas, Iowa. John and Mary bought her parents' farm, north of St. Lucas, from her siblings to settle an estate. They lived on the farm their entire lives. They had 8 children, 3 sons and 5 daughters. 5 of the children lived in the St. Lucas area.

Theodore Tillmann married Elizabeth Wiscus at Willey, Carroll County, Iowa, in 1893. They farmed for a few years. Theodore bought a store in Dedham, Iowa, in 1899. He ran a general store and lunchroom. In 1902, he bought another store, remodeled it, and opened a saloon. Theo and Lizzie had 7 children, including Sister Jovina FSPA. He died in 1911 at the age of 41. Bernard Tillmann left the Festina area in the late 1890's. He went to Oklahoma to homestead. He became ill from the drinking water. Bernard returned to the Dedham area after he became ill. He died at a hospital in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1899.

Maggie Tillmann married Edward Reicks at Festina in 1892. They first rented a farm in the Willey, Iowa, area.

Later, they lived at Festina. Edward was a day laborer for farmers during the summer and took care of the cemetery. He made firewood for the church and school at Festina in the winter. Maggie and Ed had 10 children, 3 of whom died young. Most of their children moved to the Cresco, Iowa, area.



## **Museum News and Activities**

### **Appreciation Dinner for Roofing Team**

The Museum roof rehabilitation project was completed in November 2024 and has transformed the appearance of this magnificent school, now museum building. Lifetime Construction of St. Lucas did an outstanding job. In April 2025, we celebrated with an appreciation dinner for the skilled carpenter team and Jordan Jirak for bringing this complex roof rehabilitation project to completion.



**Clair Blong, Jordan Jirak, Leo (LJ) Balk, Janet Bodensteiner, Andy Riha, Mel Bodensteiner with cake celebrating the completion of the German American Museum roof rehabilitation project. April 2025.**



**Lifetime Construction Team at the Appreciation Dinner, April 2025**

April 19, 2025

Hi Clair,

I just wanted to thank you and your team for the wonderful supper you hosted for us this week. It truly meant a lot. The meal was excellent, and the time taken to recognize our work on the cedar shake roof at the German Heritage building was something we all appreciated.

The commemorative coin and the photo album you gave us were incredibly thoughtful and will be something we'll remember for a long time. It's clear how much this project means to your group, and we're proud to have been a part of preserving the building.

I'll be finishing up the landscaping this coming week, and we'll be taking care of the chimney shortly after that to make sure everything is complete and buttoned up right.

Thanks again for your generosity and for letting us be part of something meaningful.

All the best,

Jordan Jirak

Lifetime Construction Company LLC



## German Maifest at Pivo Brewery



### Guttenberg German Band

The St. Lucas Historical Society sponsored the 3rd annual German Maifest at the Pivo Brewery on Saturday, April 26th, from 12:00 to 4:00 PM to raise funds for new computers and software to catalogue the German American Museum, Library and Family History Center collections and repair the blacksmith shop roof.

Maifest is the traditional German celebration of the arrival of Spring. Maifest is still celebrated throughout Germany, especially Bavaria, with the maypole (maibaum) decorated to show off the history and crafts of the local village or town. Mayfest, like Oktoberfest, has now become a popular fest throughout many American cities and towns celebrating elements of their German cultural heritage.

The Guttenberg German Band will provide musical entertainment for the afternoon. The Guttenberg German Band was established in September 1988, initiated by Father Paul Peters of St. Mary's Catholic Church in Guttenberg, who invited local church members to create a band for the yearly fall polka Mass. Thus, the Guttenberg German Band was born. Sister Jean Evelyn Menster BVM was a founding member of this band who played the accordion. She died in a car accident in 2004. Her favorite song was "Edelweiss" from the Sound of Music. The Guttenberg German Band specializes in playing authentic German music including marches, polkas, and waltzes, with a few specialty numbers.

The volunteers at the St. Lucas Historical Society served a tasty German style dinner starting at noon. To rouse your appetite, Janet Bodensteiner, event organizer, says the

meal includes delicious roasted pork loin, turkey casserole, homemade hot German potato salad, and all the trimmings.

“Our German style Maifest dinner, the traditional music of the Guttenberg German Band, and Pivo Brewery's many amazing German beers are a great way to invigorate yourself and celebrate springtime.” says Kathryn Kuennen. “In addition, we are offering over 70 amazing baskets of new and antique items at our silent auction this year. At the two previous Mayfest's, we raised funds from the silent auction for the rehabilitation of the German American Museum building roof. That restoration project is now completed,” states Kathryn.



**Maifest German Cake prepared by and donated by Norske of Ossian.**





### **Annie's Dancers performing at Maifest 2025**

"Your participation in this family friendly afternoon with traditional musical entertainment is very much encouraged," states Clair Blong with the German American Museum. , "The Guttenberg German Band is a traditional and growing German village band with members from Guttenberg, Iowa, and surrounding towns." We are friends who practice together for the love of German music. Our members come from all walks of life." states the band's website. The band will be playing from 1:00 to 4:00 PM at Pivo Brewery.

At 2:00 PM, the dancers from Annie's Dance Studio from Waucoma presented traditional dances around the Maypole, constructed by Ralph Steinlage of Lawler. Ralph likes the Maypole project because it unites community youth in celebrating heritage.

Craig Neuzil of Pivo Brewery says Pivo's hospitality team served Pivo's many styles of beer, including the popular St. Lucas Honey Weiss Bier. There was no admission charge to this family friendly event.

Craig also notes that PIVO Brewery kept the Maifest party going into the evening with numerous German style beers on tap and free live music by the Madlee from 6:00 to 9:00 PM.



## **The Art of Bee Keeping**

On May 7th from 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM at the German American Museum, Library and Family History Center, 212 E Main Street, St. Lucas. Beekeeper Marilyn Pecinovsky gave an excellent presentation on their motivation to become beekeepers and their many family experiences in beekeeping over the past decade.

Their son in Rochester, got Clair and Marilyn into the beekeeping business. Beekeeping is an art form that is gradually being re-establish in our communities. Thirty folks attended and joined the discussion that last two hours. Folks shared their beekeeping experiences and enjoyed the deserts and refreshments.



**Marilyn Pecinovsky of Protivin.**

## Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation: Local and State Efforts

On Wednesday, June 11th, Brian Fankhauser, Senior Land Stewardship and Bluffs land Director, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Decorah, presented on the **Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation: Local and State Efforts**. The attendees learned about the many land stewardship projects of this critical Iowa stewardship nonprofit organization. The attendees joined the discussion about land stewardship and conservation experiences. And enjoyed some excellent deserts and refreshments.



**Brian Fankhauser and Map of Adams property and Gouldsburg Park.**



**Mel Bodensteiner, Norbert Hackman, Dan Kuennen,  
Ben Kuennen and Brian Fankhauser, June 2025.**

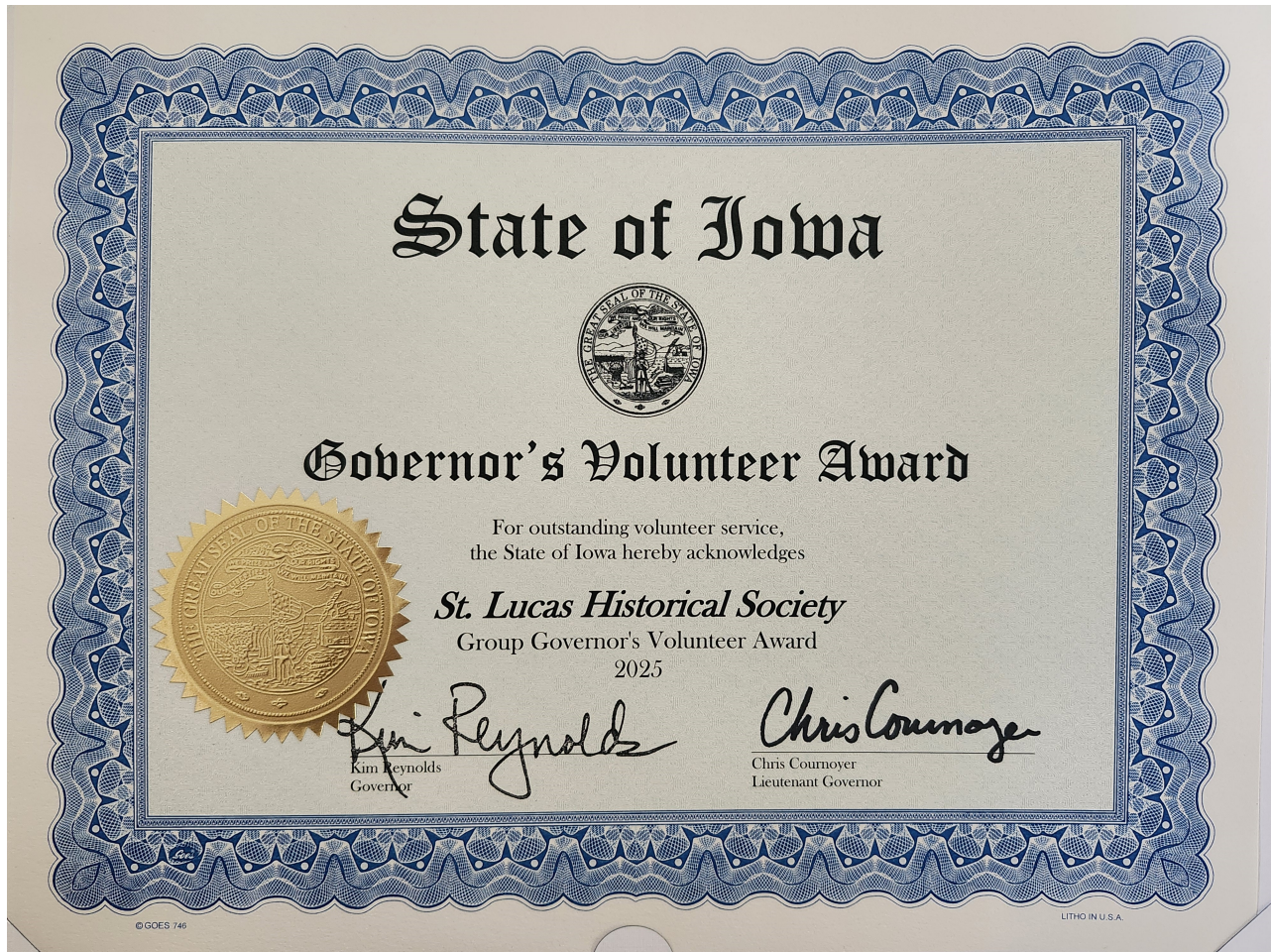


## **Governor's Volunteer Award**



**FR: Janet Bodensteiner, Kathryn Kuennen, Clair Blong, Marie Schneberger,  
and Jackson Dietzenbach.**

**BR: Carl Most, Rosemary Most, Diane McCarty, Glenn Blong, Luke Blong,  
and Mel Bodensteiner.**



**Governor's Volunteer Award presented to the St. Lucas Historical Society for two decades of volunteer service to the community and the region. Presented June 4, 2025, in Urbandale, Iowa. This certificate acknowledges the thousands of hours of volunteer service to establish, maintain and grow the German American Museum, Library and Family History Center.**



## Cataloguing the Museum Collections



**Jackson Dietzenbach**



**Cy Kuennen, Carl Most and Clair Blong reviewing the museum cataloguing project.  
July 2025.**





**Janet and Mel Bodensteiner drove the Jirak family 1937 antique Ford 4 door (with suicide doors) car in the Irish Fest parade in Lawler in June.**

## **Explore Your Family History, and the Ever-changing Map of Europe**

On June 25<sup>th</sup>, at 6:30 in the evening, Russell Baldner will be unraveling and making genealogical sense of ethnic heritage, political borders, European history, and personal roots, at the German American Museum in St. Lucas, Iowa. Russell will provide an interpretive look at historical Central and Eastern Europe, its ethnic-linguistic divisions and their distribution, often-shifting borders and political arrangements, and the evolution of historical and modern European states.

Russell's presentation features an extensive series of graphics which illustrate the ethnic, cultural, and international context of Europe and the corresponding significance for family history and heritage. Russell begins by surveying European languages and language families, as well as contrasting religious and writing traditions.

Russ will also clarify concepts like ethnicity, identity, nation, state, nation-state, nationality, and citizenship. Also featured, both to enrich and instruct—and simply to enjoy—is a selection of striking and favorite photographs recently taken by the presenter in several Central and Eastern European countries. Please join us as we explore and take a closer look at—and better understand—our European roots! Refreshments follow.



**Russell Baldner**



## The Amazing Amana Colonies Story

On Wednesday, July 9th, from 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM, Jon Childers, executive director of the Amana Heritage Society, will present the **Amana Colonies Story** at the German American Museum, Library and Family History Center in St. Lucas. Jon Childers, Amana native and heritage advocate, leads a small staff with a big mission to share the three-hundred-year heritage of the Amana Colonies-National Historic Landmark with the rest of the world.



Amana Colonies today.

Jon's focus is on the long-term sustainability of the AHS while telling the Amana story in new and more experiential ways. Since joining the AHS in 2016, Jon successfully worked to build membership, grow admissions, increase grant activity, and develop lasting programs to share Amana's unique culture. Discover insights from a fellow German historical society. The event will feature refreshments, including cake and cookies.

Jon recently led the successful acquisition of the Communal Kitchen Museum in Middle Amana, the only surviving kitchen house from Amana's communal era (1855-1932). Now, the entire property will show daily life in one of America's most successful communal religious societies.



**Jon Childers**

Jon's full-time colleagues are curator Rebecca Simpson, and Elise Heitman, program director, who together are amid transforming the Amana Heritage Society, its museums, and collections into one of the jewels of Iowa. Jon earned an M.A. in German Linguistics & Literature and an M.B.A. from the University of Iowa.

Beginning in the 1840s, the Inspirationists were forced to leave Germany due to their beliefs and worsening economic conditions. Living first in New York and later in Iowa as the Amana Society, they adopted a communal lifestyle to bond together a community of 2,600 members wishing to make the journey. Seven villages were established in the Amanas, with leadership vested in a board of trustees who oversaw all aspects of daily life. In 1932, the members voted to abandon communal living.

Today, the Amana Community reflects its German heritage in quality and innovation to be the home of the world's first microwave oven, one of the largest and most progressive farms in Iowa, and a traditional leader in Midwest tourism. Many organizations are tasked with preserving the legacy and cultural heritage of the Community of True Inspiration.

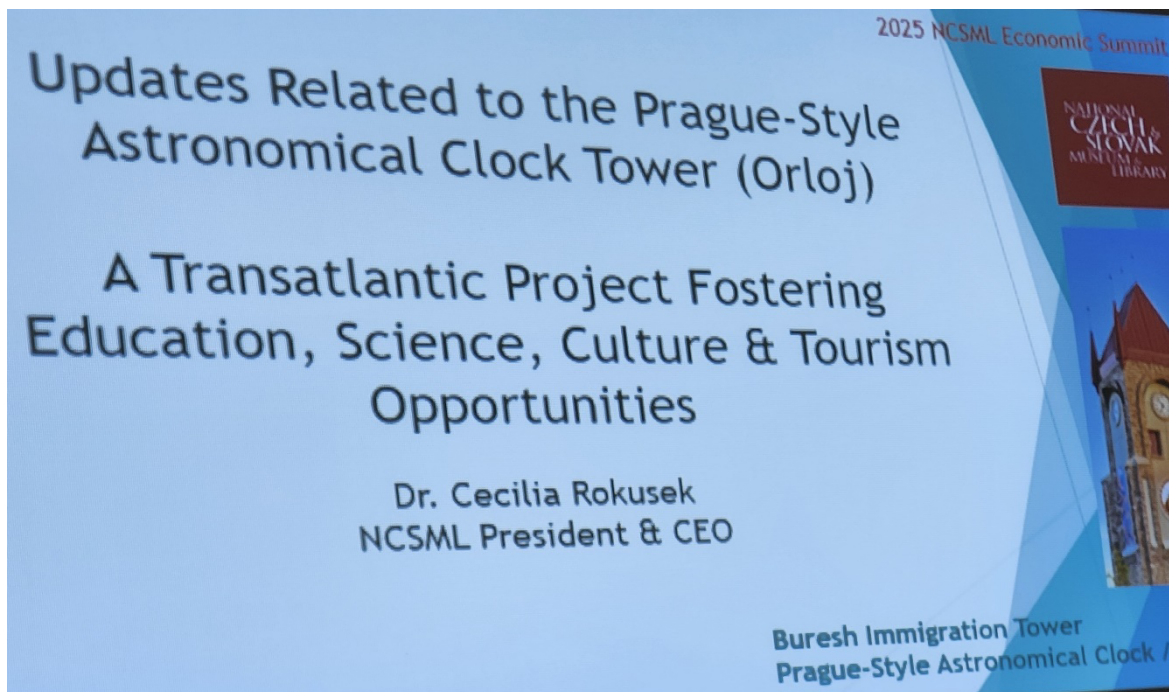
With over 450 communal-era buildings, 26,000 acres of land, and a living community, there is no doubt that both triumphs and challenges occur in our efforts to keep the Amana Colonies relevant with the hope to remain faithful' to the past.



## **Celebrating the Astronomical Clock at the National Czech & Slovak Museum and Library**

On Wednesday, July 23<sup>rd</sup> from 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM, Dr. Cecelia Rokusek, CEO, National Czech & Slovak Museum and Library, will present on the famous Czech Astronomical Clock and Tower in Cedar Rapids. The presentation is at the German American Museum in St. Lucas.

Dr. Rokusek was instrumental in the renovation of the clock tower and the installation of the new astronomical clock. This event is jointly sponsored by the Czech heritage Partnership of Protovin and the German American Museum of St. Lucas. Dr. Rokusek's presentation was followed by refreshments and great informal discussions.



Located in the Czech Village by the Cedar River, North America's only Orloj—a Prague-style astronomical clock—stands in front of the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library. Unveiled in 2024 for the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library's 50th anniversary, the clocktower is modeled after the Prague astronomical clock built in 1410. The renovated clock tower includes an astrolabe with both astronomical and timekeeping functions. All components were manufactured by the SPEL Company in Prague, using stainless steel; the symbols are gilded with 24-karat gold.

The tower houses 12 figurines sculpted by Andrej Harsany of Bratislava, Slovakia, each approximately four feet tall, positioned on two carousels. Every hour, these figures rotate in sync with music composed by Czech composers Antonin Dvorak and Bedrich Smetana. The figurines

represent various immigrant stories, including figures such as a farmer, coal miner, and meatpacker, symbolizing groups who settled in Cedar Rapids from Czechia, Slovakia, Moravia, and other regions.



**Clair Blong, Paul Wermers, Cecelia Rokusek, Ken Zajicek, Bob Petrik.**



**Cecelia Rokusek and Clair Blong**

## **Conference on Ho-Chunk Forced Removals and Turkey River Reservation of the 1840s and Recent Fort Atkinson Restoration Efforts**

The German American Museum and the Winneshiek County Historic Preservation Commission will host the “Conference on the Ho-Chunk Turkey River Reservation and Restoration of Fort Atkinson” on Tuesday, Sept. 17, 2025, at the German American Museum in St. Lucas, Iowa.

The daylong conference will include presentations at the German American Museum and field trips to the site of the Ho-Chunk Turkey River Reservation and the Fort Atkinson grounds.

Bill Quackenbush, Ho-Chunk Nation tribal historic preservation officer and cultural resources division manager, will speak on “The Ho-Chunk Nation History: Forced Removals of the 1800s–Turkey River Reservation.” This series of federal forced removals of Ho-Chunk people to Iowa, Minnesota, South Dakota and Nebraska had devastating consequences for the Ho-Chunk Nation’s survival, recovery and long-term well-being.

A tribal member of the Ho-Chunk Deer Clan, Quackenbush has played a role helping coordinate tribal, state, local and private efforts to preserve a host of ancient dugout canoes found in Lake Mendota in Madison, Wisconsin. He previously presented on Ho-Chunk history and culture at the German American Museum's 2018 workshop on “Native American Presence: Hidden in Plain Sight.”

“It Took a Team: Recent Preservation Work at Iowa’s Fort Atkinson Historic District” will be presented by Kathy Gourley, retired archaeologist and historian who served on the staff of the State Historical Society of Iowa for more than 30 years. Gourley was the lead developer of a successful grant proposal funded by the National Park Service “Save America’s Treasures” program which provided a \$497,500 award for continued preservation and restoration of the Fort Atkinson grounds.

Following the Quackenbush presentation, conference participants will take a field trip to the site of the Ho-Chunk Turkey River Reservation, with a sack lunch provided.

Participants will return to the German American Museum for Gourley’s presentation, followed by a field trip to the Fort Atkinson grounds.

The conference schedule is as follows:

- 9:30-10 a.m.: Registration at German American Museum and St. Lucas Historical Society, 212 E. Main St., St. Lucas, Iowa
- 10-11 a.m.: “The Ho-Chunk Nation History: Forced Removals of the 1800s–Turkey River Reservation,” Bill Quackenbush, Ho-Chunk Nation tribal historic preservation officer and cultural resources division manager
- 11:15-noon: Field trip to the site of the Ho-Chunk Turkey River Reservation
- noon-2 p.m.: Lunch along Turkey River and travel back to museum

- 2-3 p.m.: “It Took a Team: Recent Preservation Work at Iowa’s Fort Atkinson Historic District,” Kathy Gourley, retired archaeologist and historian
- 3-4 p.m.: Field trip to the Fort Atkinson grounds, Fort Atkinson, Iowa

Participants will provide their own field trip transportation (carpooling encouraged); note that the conference will end at Fort Atkinson.

The conference registration and lunch cost are \$20, with advance registration required by Sept. 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025. Complete conference information and a registration form can be found online.

### Conference Speakers

The keynote speaker will be William “Naąwacekǵize” Quackenbush. William is the Ho-Chunk Nation Tribal Historic Preservation Officer and Cultural Resources Division Manager. He will be speaking on “The Ho-Chunk Nation: Forced Removals of the 1800s –Turkey River Reservation”. This series of U. S. Government forced removals of Ho-Chunk people to Iowa, Minnesota, South Dakota and Nebraska, and other Federal policies had devastating consequences for the Ho-Chunk Nation's survival, recovery and long-term well-being. Mr. Quackenbush previously presented on Ho-Chunk history and culture at the German American Museum's 2018 Workshop on "Native American Presence: Hidden in Plain Sight".

William is a Ho-Chunk Deer Clan Tribal Member. He began a career in the Ho-Chunk Nation Heritage Preservation Department as a Land Specialist focusing on Realty, Land into Trust Applications and Cultural and Natural Resource Management. His role is to preserve, protect, and serve as a cultural resource for the Ho-Chunk Nation. An example of this preservation work is William's tribal partnership with state, local and private organizations to save the thousand-year-old log dugout boats found in Lake Mendota in Madison, Wisconsin.

The afternoon speaker will be Kathy Gourley, retired archaeologist and historian. Kathy will be presenting a successful National Park Service grant to the Fort Atkinson State Preserve in Winneshiek County. The \$497,500 award was part of the national Save America’s Treasures program. Kathy grew up in Ames and earned both her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in anthropology at Iowa State University. She spent more than 30 years as a staff member with the State Historical Society of Iowa, retiring in early 2017. Kathy held a variety of jobs there, including stints as local government coordinator, staff archaeologist, field historian, grants manager, and preservation education and outreach coordinator. Kathy took the lead in developing the National Park Service's Save America’s Treasures grant application. With the aid of many experts including DNR staff, Fort Atkinson citizens, archaeologists, historians, historical architects, stone masons, preservation construction experts, and financial personnel, an application was successfully submitted.



## Historic Kuennen Family Photo



**Front row (seated) left to right: Francis (Reicks) and Carl Kuennen, John H. and Theresa (Martin) Kuennen, Barbara (Kuennen) and Konrad Wurzer.**

**Second row left to right: Edward and Elizabeth (Kuennen) Wurzer, Clem and Tilly (Croatt) Kuennen, Sister Rosaria (Anna Kuennen), and Emma (Buchheit) Kuennen, Katherine (Lusson) Kuennen.**

**Third row left to right: (Inset with tall man) Arnold and Clementine (Kuennen) Blong, Leo and Elizabeth (Kuehner) Kuennen, Connie Kuennen (with wife Katherine at end of row 2).**

**Fourth row left to right: Herman and Clotiel (Frana) Kuennen, Neal and Melania (Kuennen) Kruse, Lawrence and Teresa (Kuennen) Bruch.**

**Photo taken in 1952 in St. Luke Church, St. Lucas, Iowa.**



**July 2025. Presentation of historic Kuennen Family photo from 1952.  
Adrian Kuennen, Clair Blong, Cy Kuennen and Judy Kuennen, July 6, 2025.**



## **German Walnut Cabinet**

In June and July, the Society raised funds to purchase the handsome German walnut cabinet that now stands in our main hallway. Ten donors stepped forward and made it happen.



**German Wanut Cabinet**

## **Franzen Family Repair and Oil Wooden Artifacts**



**Members of the Leo Franzen Family touring the Franzen collection of wooden models.**



**Round hay bales near St. Lucas, Iowa, June 2025.**



