The Great War and the Northern Plains
(1914-2014)

Papers of the Forty-Sixth Annual
DAKOTA CONFERENCE
A National Conference on the Northern Plains

U.S. soldiers parading down Phillips Avenue, Sioux Falls, 1919. Center for Western Studies.

THE CENTER FOR WESTERN STUDIES

AUGUSTANA COLLEGE
2014
The Great War and the Northern Plains (1914-2014)

Papers of the Forty-Sixth Annual
Dakota Conference

A National Conference on the Northern Plains

The Center for Western Studies
Augustana College
Sioux Falls, South Dakota

April 25-26, 2014

Compiled by:
Jasmin Graves
Amy Nelson
Harry F. Thompson

Major funding for the Forty-Sixth Annual Dakota Conference was provided by:
Loren and Mavis Amundson CWS Endowment/SFACF
Deadwood Historic Preservation Commission
Tony & Anne Haga
Carol Rae Hansen, Andrew Gilmour & Grace Hansen-Gilmour
Mellon Fund Committee of Augustana College
Rex Myers & Susan Richards
Joyce Nelson, in Memory of V.R. Nelson
Rollyn H. Samp, in Honor of Ardyce Samp
Roger & Shirley Schuller, in Honor of Matthew Schuller
Jerry & Gail Simmons
Robert & Sharon Steensma
Blair & Linda Tremere
Richard & Michelle Van Demark
Jamie & Penny Volin
# Table of Contents

**Preface**

Anderson, Grant K.

A Microhistory of South Dakota Agriculture 1919-1920 .............................................................. v

Christopherson, Stan

Fred C. Christopherson: WW I Bomber Pilot and South Dakota Native ........................................ 15

Douglas, Bill R.

“Truly a Dangerous Character!” The Iverson Family’s Resistance to World War I ............................ 20

Edler, Frank H. W.

Progressivism, Pacifism, and World War I: the Nebraska Peace Society 1912-1918 ................. 35

Fanebust, Wayne

The Indian Commission of 1882: A “Cracker and Molasses” Treaty ............................................ 49

Gasque, Thomas J.

Place Name Changes as the Result of Anti-German Feeling in the Great War ............................ 66

Johnson, Barbara

World War I and Stained Glass ........................................................................................................ 81

Jones, Ruth Page

Banishing Loneliness by Creating Community: The Golden Age of Agriculture 1910-1920 ............... 93

Kirby, Joe

South Dakota’s Role in the History of Free Speech ........................................................................ 111

Knutson, Esther Marie

The Home Front, 1918: Letters from Millie .................................................................................... 116

Lundborg, Paul S.

Death of a Dream .......................................................................................................................... 125

Miller, John E.

South Dakota at 125: Interpreting the Past, Assessing the Present, and Imagining the Future ........ 133

Muller, Richard

The Kaisers Totebag: Fundraising, German-Americans and World War I ........................................ 148

Mullin, Michael J.

The Little Engine that Could: The Role of the Sioux Falls Stockyard in the Development of Sioux Falls ......................................................................................................................... 164

Oyos, Lynwood E.

Clash Between Norwegian Ethnic Preservation and Anti-Hyphenism in the Upper Midwest 1914-1922 ....................................................................................................................................... 187

Porter, Kimberly K.

The “Shadow Huns”: Theodore Roosevelt and the Nonpartisan League ...................................... 198

Rahja, Jean Elliott

Frank Farrar: Twenty-Fourth Governor of South Dakota .................................................................. 212
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sougstad, Myron</td>
<td>Anna Thompson: A Prairie Woman’s Journey through the War Years</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swanson, Carol Jean</td>
<td>Dearest Ida of the Wild West: One Woman’s Journey of Life and Love</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timm, John</td>
<td>Settlement of the Dakotas: Indian Wars, Politics, Drought and</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Governor Mellette’s Lonely Mission</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wise, Charles T.</td>
<td>I Had A Bird Named Enza (The Spanish Flu in the Dakotas, 1918)</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodard, Aaron Robert</td>
<td>Warrior in the Family—My Grandfather’s Experience in WW I</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PREFACE

With the approach of the international centennial of World War I in the summer of 2014, the Center for Western Studies chose to observe this momentous event by dedicating the 46th Annual Dakota Conference to the theme of *The Great War and the Northern Plains, 1914-2014*. Although the United States did not officially enter the war until 1917, Americans across the country felt the impact of the war long before engagement, none more so than those of German descent living in the Plains, who were often suspected of being German sympathizers. As noted in the CWS publication *A New South Dakota History* (2nd ed.), in reference to the Hutterites, or communal Mennonites, “Their religious doctrine of nonresistance and nonviolence forbade Hutterites to serve in the military or take part in any activity that contributed to the war effort. In the hysteria of wartime, state and federal authorities did not tolerate these religious convictions, and several young Hutterite men were sentenced to long prison terms for refusing to support the war effort.”

For others, World War I brought affluence as the price of crops and agricultural land soared. The federal government urged intensive planting using such slogans as “Plow to the fence for national defense,” “If you can’t fight, farm,” and “Wheat will win the war.” The advent of the tractor at this time contributed to an economic boom during and after the war. Plowing up the Plains and over-mortgaging farms, combined with extended drought years and the Great Depression, resulted in the Dust Bowl of the 1930s. World War I and its immediate aftermath changed the people of the Plains and their values in many ways.

Fifteen sessions were devoted to the World War I era, with speakers coming from fourteen states—Georgia, New Jersey, Florida, Washington, Virginia, Ohio, Missouri, and South Carolina, as well as several Plains states. In addition to the topics represented in this compilation, one presenter provided a case study of anti-German sentiment in the community of Aberdeen, SD. A session by three Augustana faculty addressed “making sense of the U.S. experience in the Great War.” Two sessions were devoted to a review of digital resources about the war, one of which featured a team presentation representing the National World War I Museum in Kansas City and the State Historical Society in Columbia. The conference closed with an insider’s view of military life at Camp Dodge, Iowa.
Presentations on topics other than World War I included South Dakota politics in the 1970s, the orphan trains in the West, Norwegian-American female identity, and the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862. The session on the rebirth of the Midwest brought together panelists from Southwest Minnesota State University, Iowa State University, Dordt College, and Augustana College to discuss two new books on the Midwest: *The Lost Region: Toward a Revival of Midwestern History*, by Jon Lauck, and *Small-Town Dreams: Stories of Midwestern Boys Who Shaped America*, by John Miller. These authors and fourteen others participated in the Northern Plains Autograph Party. Two books received their debut at the conference: *Reveille for Sioux Falls: A World War II Army Air Forces Technical School Changes a South Dakota City*, by Lynwood Oyos, and *Twenty Thousand Years of Human History: As Recorded on Historical Markers in Minnehaha County, South Dakota*, compiled by Bruce Blake and members of the Minnehaha County Historical Society.

Dedicated to examining contemporary issues in their historical and cultural contexts, the Dakota Conference is a signature event of the Center for Western Studies, which provides programming in Northern Plains studies at Augustana College and in the surrounding area and is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Harry F. Thompson, Ph.D.
Executive Director
The Center for Western Studies
European demand for American foodstuffs generated large agricultural market price increases during World War I. The trend continued in 1919 before plummeting in mid 1920. These were the golden years of South Dakota agriculture.¹ Average value per farm of all South Dakota agricultural property increased 151.9% between 1910 and 1920. Wheat that sold for 89c per bushel in 1910 fetched $2.40 in 1919. Corn skyrocketed from 40c per bushel to $1.10 over the same period. The average value of barley per acre more than doubled. Total value of South Dakota's crops in 1919 was 148.6% higher than that of a decade earlier.²

Buoyed by robust markets, farmers mortgaged their holdings to expand and modernize their operations. The number of South Dakota farms carrying mortgage debt grew by 5571, or 21.6% between 1909 and 1919. Average mortgage debt per farm increased 121% in the same period. The state's ratio of debt to value stood at 21.8% in 1920.³ Governor Peter Norbeck encouraged economic expansion in a 9 February 1920 press release. He explained, “South Dakota says to all her young men: 'We will loan you money to

pay most of the cost of your farm; we will loan it to you on thirty years time at an interest rate so low that you need have no fear; you can pay for the land out of the products of your labor." The chief executive's optimism was short lived.

Post World War I saw a decline in demand for agricultural products that translated into lower market prices. Mortgage payments became harder, if not impossible to meet. Weather compounded the problem and difficult times ensued.

Conditions in Lake County illustrate those statewide. Located between the Big Sioux and Vermillion valleys in southeastern South Dakota, the political subdivision is one county west of the Minnesota border. Its extreme northeastern corner is home to Summit township which was organized in 1886 largely by Norwegian immigrants. The records kept by the township assessor help provide a picture of farming at the time.

"Without the assessor's books in the spring and his threshing machine in the fall, Magnus wouldn't get to visit all his neighbors," mused the Volga Tribune. The editor was referring to 35 year old Magnus Lee whose parents lived in Summit township. Magnus had been elected tax assessor for the township. He visited every township farm each spring to determine the value of personal property for tax purposes. Personal property was defined as any property not real property. It included livestock, machinery, stored grain, household furniture and automobiles. The assessor forwarded his figures to the county auditor who applied the prevailing tax rate to the values and determined taxes due.

---

5 Volga Tribune, 10 March 1921, 7.
Beginning in 1919 assessors' duties expanded to include enrolling farmers in the fledgling state sponsored hail insurance system created by the 16th legislature. For each farm, the owner's, and tenant's name, if applicable, were listed as well as the number of acres devoted to each crop. Farmers were automatically enrolled in the state program with the premium payable with their real and personal property taxes the following spring. Those that did not wish coverage must opt out by filing the necessary paperwork with the County Auditor prior to June 1.6

Once tabulated, the hail insurance listing blanks were stored with the other county records. They reposed in a vault for decades until Governor Richard F Kneip consolidated state agencies in the early 1970's. The subsequent streamlining led to paperwork reduction by county agencies due to space constraints. The hail insurance listing blanks are a case in point. Few still exist. Those that do offer a unique lens through which to view post World War I South Dakota agriculture at the township level.

Fortunately this author photocopied two Summit township hail insurance assessor's books several decades ago. Although dusty from years in storage, they recently saw daylight again. Those records form the basis for this study.7

---

7 Photocopies of List of Agricultural Lands Subject to Taxation Under the State State Hail Insurance Act, Summit Township, Lake County, South Dakota for 1919 and 1920 in author's possession. Originals were located in basement vault of Lake County Courthouse, Madison, South Dakota. Statistics and information in this paper are based on examination of these sources.
Magnus Lee began his rounds May 13 and completed them June 11, 1919. The latter date is noteworthy as the hail insurance law stated the closing date for enrollment was June 1 of any year. For reasons unknown, Magnus Lee did not sign up 62 township farmers, 43% of total enrollees, until the deadline had passed. The majority of these were in the southern half of the township. Technically their fields were not enrolled in the state hail insurance program. Should hail have visited the township these fields would not have been insured, leaving the farmers liable for their individual losses.

One hundred forty eight Summit township farmers eventually enrolled in the state venture. Tenants outnumbered owners 83-65. Many township acres lay fallow in 1919. Ole Bredeson, in Section 26, listed only twenty crop acres in 1919. Oscar Bortnem, Section 15, insured 23 acres and Paul Eggebraaten, Section 14, protected 43 acres. At the other end of the spectrum, Ole Gauthun, Section 18, requested coverage for 265 of his 320 acres. All in all township residents enrolled 13,675 acres in the inaugural state venture.

Premiums one half those of old line insurance companies made the state program appealing. To illustrate, a local weekly explained: “...let us take...the sowing of 100 acres of wheat. Wheat on the market ...is worth $2.25 per bushel. Seed wheat...is worth at last calculation $2.50 per bushel. You sow at least 1 ¾ bushels to the acre, so that the seed alone for an acre of wheat would approximate $3.12. Add to this the cost of plowing, or $2 per acre, and $1.00 an acre for drilling and dragging the ground and you have already invested in you land $6.12 to say nothing of rentals. ...Taking into consideration 100 acres of
crop you can get $1000 protection on your investment of $6.12 so far as hail is concerned by paying $35, or 3 ½ per cent for insurance.”

Residents of the southern tier of township sections were heavily enrolled in the program. This area, closer to the established settlements, and more firmly rooted, protected a large percentage of its acres. Mrs Daniel Forde, in Section 31, insured 140 acres of her quarter section farm. Section 32 contained the most protected acres of the township. Alton Windon insured 110 cropped acres and Theodore Volby 135 cropped acres on their 160 acre farms. Neighbor Peter Hildal requested insurance for 70% of his half section parcel. Four miles east, Helmer Eggrebraaten's policy was for 85% of his holdings. Lars Overskei's enrollment listed 150 acres in the "SW ¼ and what there is on the west side of the RR in SE ¼," of Section 19.

The assessors' hail insurance forms provide interesting information on the types of crops being raised at this time in history in South Dakota. Again looking at Summit township, of 12 crops listed on state hail insurance forms, only proso and cane were not grown. Oats and corn each covered approximately one third of the township's insured acres. Such figures greatly exceeded statewide averages where oats grew on only 10% and corn 15% of the total improved acres. Barley's 19% of covered township acres was four times as large as the state figure for that cereal. Wheat, in great demand during the war years, was planted on 21% of improved land statewide but accounted for a mere 9% of Summit township's insured fields.

---

8 Volga Tribune, 1 May 1919, 1.
Lesser amounts were found in the assessor’s hail listing blanks for other crops. Sixty six acres of rye was divided among 4 farms. The cereal grain millet grew on 215 total acres. Plots between two and fifteen acres were planted on 37 different township farms. A scant 64 acres of alfalfa appeared on enrollment pages with almost half growing on the Ray Wilcox farm in Section 15. Speltz, also known as dinkel wheat or hulled wheat, was grown as an alternative feed grain to oats or barley. Joseph Delmage’s four acre field in Section 35 was the only township land listed as growing that crop.

1919 “...was a favorable one in that hail storms were less frequent and not so severe as in many former years.”9 Hail Insurance Commissioner William N Van Camp commended “…the wholehearted support and cooperation of the County Auditors...and...township and county assessors,” provided to launch this new program.10 Township totals were not recorded but in all, Lake County farmers paid $37,455.30 in premiums. Seventy two claims totaling $16,239 were paid out. The Commissioner’s annual report named individual claimants per county and the amount paid each. No Summit township policy holder was on this list.

Optimism abounded with the arrival of 1920. Wheat was 27c, and barley 29c a bushel higher than a year earlier. A county seat weekly boasted, “A real land boom struck the county last March. Prices of farm lands began to soar until by mid-summer and early fall land values had nearly doubled.”11 A “....rising plane of high living...” would ensue predicted

10IBID., 6.
11 Madison Weekly Sentinel, 2 January 1920, 2.
an editor. “Those engaged in agricultural pursuits have no cause for complaint,” concurred a crosstown rival.\textsuperscript{12}

As thoughts turned to the upcoming planting season however, farmers found reason for concern. Shriveled and diseased wheat kernels made “seed wheat...so bad this year that it will be necessary to do some very radical cleaning....”\textsuperscript{13} Reports indicated almost all farmers had enough seed wheat on their farms “…if the fanning and grading is done severely enough.”\textsuperscript{14}

Corn faced a similar problem. The South Dakota Farm Extension division discovered cold weather arrived in the fall of 1919 before cribbed corn had dried. As a result the germ cells in the corn grains were frozen and burst. “The germ cells that have been frozen has completely lost its germinating quality,” concluded the report that recommended farmers exercise especial caution when testing their seed corn that spring.\textsuperscript{15}

South Dakota “…ranked fourth among the great corn producing states...” in 1919.\textsuperscript{16} Despite seed issues H O Herbrandson, field agent in South Dakota for the US Department of Agriculture predicted state corn acreage would be increased in 1920. The market price of corn had increased 30c a bushel since January 1920. Potential labor shortages for small grain

\textsuperscript{12} Madison Daily Leader, 6 February 1920, 3.
\textsuperscript{13} IBID.
\textsuperscript{14} IBID.
\textsuperscript{15} IBID, 27 February 1920, 2.
\textsuperscript{16} IBID.
threshing were another consideration. Farmers were also turning to cultivated crops “with the object of cleaning their fields of foul weeds,” in his opinion.\(^\text{17}\)

Herbrandson also foresaw “...a proportionately larger decrease in spring wheat” caused by unprofitable returns in 1919 and the frequency of crop damage from rust in the past years. He forecasted little change in oats acreage, “tendency toward an increase. Barley same as oats depending on the weather conditions at the time of sowing,” in his opinion.\(^\text{18}\) Herbrandson envisioned a small increase in flax acreage and a growth in land lying idle this growing season.

A cool, wet spring retarded farm field work around Summit township in 1920. Slightly over half of the spring plowing was completed by May 1st—15% less than the previous year. Lake County corn planting was about 40% completed by the last week in May.\(^\text{19}\) Seed corn advertisements appeared in the *Madison Daily Leader* throughout early June including one for white seed corn “...that will test 90%” germination rate. Others stated confidently “it all grows,” and encouraged farmers to conduct their own tests if in doubt.\(^\text{20}\)

Magnus Lee spent three May weeks assessing personal property and enrolling Summit township farms in the state hail insurance program. He completed his rounds 16 June when he enrolled the final three farms where he had failed to find anyone home on his previous stops.

\(^{17}\) *IBID*, 13 May 1920, 1.
\(^{18}\) *IBID*, 13 April 1920, 1.
\(^{19}\) *IBID*, 13 May 1920, 1.
\(^{20}\) *IBID*, 28 May 1920, 5; see also 4 June 1920 3.
Lee enrolled 11 additional Summit township farmers for the 1920 state sponsored hail insurance. Overall tenants exceeded owner policyholders by 18%. Six parcels of Summit township farm land changed hands in the last year. The number of tenants enrolled increased by 14% over the first year. Names of sixteen different tenants appeared in 1920 from those of the previous year. New on the 1920 enrollment forms was a question asking the terms of the rental agreement and also the year it was entered into.

A majority of leases required the crop be divided between land owner and tenant. The equal division between parties was the most common clause agreed to in Summit township. Another 15 agreements stipulated the landowner receive one third of the harvest and the tenant receive two thirds. Nine contracts stipulated shares of two fifths and three fifths. An unusual agreement for the NE ¼ of Section 35 awarded owner J D Huntimer the 3/5 portion rather than the customary 2/5. This suggests he provided the seed and machinery while tenant Joe Golic supplied only the labor.

Contracts that specified varying amounts per crop were negotiated for 18 parcels of land. Adolph Bortnem leased the NE ¼ Section 21 and the NW ¼ of Section 22 from Mrs Andrew Thompson of Madison. They agreed she would receive 1/3 of the corn crop and ½ of the small grain. John Wadden leased the SW ¼, Section 29, to S S Thorson on the condition the grain harvest would be split 1/3—2/3 while Thorson would receive the entire alfalfa crop.

The notation “owner—none, tenant—all” appeared on 19 rental agreements. This suggests it was a cash rent agreement with the tenant entitled to the entire harvest. No details were provided on twenty application forms. Either Marcus Lee did not write them
down or the farmer did not supply the details. Either action violated the state hail insurance statute but no record of legal action could be found.

The Northwestern Loan and Banking Company owned two quarter sections of Summit township land. The financial agency leased 160 acres in Section 4 to John Peterson on terms of $1/3$ and $2/3$ shares. Gustav Johnson rented the SE $¼$, Section 24, on shares of $½$ and $½$. Financial institutions would acquire numerous additional parcels in the next decade as difficult times struck the agricultural sector of the economy.

Also new on the 1920 enrollment forms was a blank calling for the date the lease was entered into. The current year was recorded on 56 forms. Twenty others listed 1919 with thirteen of these finalized in October to take effect the present growing season. The earliest rental date provided was January 1915. Helmer Eggebraaten rented 160 acres in Section 36 from A C Stewart. Eggebraaten tilled 67 acres with the stipulation he was entitled to one half the oats yield and all the corn.

A final addition to the 1920 forms required the assessor plot the location of every field on every farm insured. Magnus Lee was unknowingly creating a still shot of agriculture in 1920 Summit township.

It revealed 13621.5 acres were enrolled in the state program, a decrease of 55.5 acres over 1919 even with the 11 additional farmers enrolled in 1920. Farmers planted and insured varying amounts of acres from one year to the next. A L Larson, Section 24, insured 205 acres in 1919 but only 111 in 1920. Christopher Olson, Section 9, insured 50 less acres
in 1920 than the previous year. Conversely Lars Fleming, Section 18, insured an additional 40 acres and Clarence Davis, Section 21, insured 75 more acres than in 1920.

Once again corn and oats acres dominated. Each was planted on 5000 protected acres. This represented 800 acres for oats, and 300 for corn, of the past year's insured acres. Next was barley that was grown on 3000 acres. Summit township farmers abandoned wheat in 1920 just as H O Hebrandson of the US Department of Agriculture had predicted. A mere 115.5 acres were planted whereas the previous year wheat was grown on nearly 1300 township acres.

Rye plantings were half that of 1919 with 34 total acres spread among four farms. Alfalfa fields increased to 16 covering 84 insured acres. Ten farmers planted a total of 129 acres of flax. Those planting millet fell to half their 1919 level. The typical plot of 5.5 acres was planted in 20 fields around the township. Speltz saw a small increase as residents planted 30 acres total compared to only four the year before.

Contemporary accounts promised a bountiful harvest in 1920. Journalists employed phrasing like “...crop conditions were never better,”\(^{21}\) “crops... will be...greater and better than those of 1919,”\(^{22}\) and “...observing farmers hold out a great prospect for splendid yields “to describe the upcoming harvest.\(^{23}\) Their predictions were realized but postwar deflation led to a steep drop in market prices. Federal price supports on wheat were abolished.

\(^{21}\) *IBID.*, 12 June 1920, 2.
\(^{22}\) *IBID.*, 21 July 1920, 2.
\(^{23}\) *IBID.*, 22 July, 1920, 4.
Foreign markets declined as European nations resumed agricultural production. Agrarian prosperity declined sharply and rapidly by latter 1920.

To what depths the decline reached was illustrated by a central South Dakota newspaper. A December column explained, “A Lake County farmer hauled a load of wheat to Madison but was unable to sell it. He could not find a single buyer...who would quote him a price owing to the uncertainty of the wheat market.”24 The farmer was compelled to haul his grain back to the farm. By year’s end the farm economy teetered on the brink of disaster.

Falling prices, seed selection, rental agreements and field rotations were not unique to Summit township Lake County, South Dakota. The issues were the norm for farmers of all townships, in all counties, of eastern South Dakota.

The assessor’s records, including data collected for the state hail insurance program, offer a small scale or microcosm which reflects in miniature the dynamics of agriculture on a larger scale in Post World War I South Dakota. By understanding what has occurred in a small area, one can begin to see more clearly the forces shaping the larger historical landscape.

24 *Chamberlain Democrat*, 30 December, 1920, 6.
### Land and Agricultural Land for the Year 1919

Subject to taxation under the State Hall Insurance Act of 1917.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Township</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>S. 8. 1/4</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OATS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BARLEY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EYE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLAX</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWPELTZ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CANE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALFALFA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROSO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MILLET</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONITYUM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total**

---

I, [Name], do solemnly swear that the foregoing is a true, full, and correct statement, to the best of my knowledge and belief, of the acreage of agricultural lands in my possession above, of which I am the owner, lessee or tenant; that I have in no way sought to mislead the assessor in any way, or contravene any requirements of the law in relation to the assessment of property under the State Hall Insurance Act.

[Signature]

A.D. 1919

---

**Assessor's Notice.**

The above is a correct copy of the acreage of crops belonging to you as listed and ascertained under the State Hall Insurance Act for the year 1919. Provision is made for total exemption from insurance, or reduction of insurance to $5.00 per acre, or correction is required made to assortment by filing objection with County Assessor, or such furnished by him, on or before June 1st of each year. This assessment is also subject to revision by the State Board of Specification which meets the first Thursday in July, each year.

[Signature]

Assessor.
LIST OF AGRICULTURAL LAND FOR THE YEAR 1920

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of acres</th>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Sec.</th>
<th>Twp.</th>
<th>Rang.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Oats</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Barley</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rye</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flax</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Corn</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cane or Sorghum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alfalfa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proso</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Millet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA,

County of

I, Oglesby Houde, do solemnly swear that the foregoing is a true, full, correct and complete statement, to the best of my knowledge and belief, of the acreage of agricultural lands in crop as hereinabove, of which I am the owner, lessee; that I have not sought to mislead the Assessor in any way or caused at any violation or evasion of the requirements of the law in relation to the assessment of property under the State Hail Insurance Act.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 20 day of May, 1920.

Assessor.

NOTICE TO ASSESSOR

MARK ON DIAGRAM LOCATION OF CROP.
LIST DESCRIPTION FOR SEPARATE SECTIONS ON SEPARATE BLANKS.

BE ACCURATE: See Section 32 of the Hail Insurance Act which states penalty for failure to do your duty.

ASSESSOR'S NOTICE

The above is a correct copy of the acres of crop belonging to you as listed and assessed under the State Hail Insurance Act for the year 1920. Provision is made for total exemption from insurance; or correcting in report and to Assessor by filing statement with County Auditor, on or before June 1st of each year.

Assessor.
Fred Christopherson enlisted in the United States Army’s Signal Corps, the nation’s fledgling air force on February 4, 1918. He wanted to be an officer as quickly as possible. The flying service offered the best possibility of advancement. He had planned on being a ground observer but there was a shortage of pilots. He said he told his commanding officer he knew nothing about flying but was told, “Well, nobody else does either”. And before he knew it, he was a pilot trainee. Fred told me on many occasions he flew an airplane before he drove a car!

Fred is my great uncle. He was born and raised in Toronto, South Dakota. He attended Luther College and the University of South Dakota and obtained a journalism degree. At the time of his enlistment he was city editor of the Sioux Falls Press newspaper. The information for this paper comes from personal talks with Fred, two newspaper articles from 1918 and 1981 and his training pilot’s book.

Fred was 21 years of age when he started his training at the United States School of Military Aeronautics at the University of California, Berkeley, California along with 600 other cadets. This ground training was from February 4, 1918 to April 13, 1918. On April 17, 1918 he began his flying field school at Rockwell Field, San Diego, California. Before he was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant, he was required to do a week of stunt flying which included loops, tail spins, side slips, Immelman turns and whip stalls. He was classified as a
bomber pilot July 11, 1918. 2nd Lieutenant Christopherson departed San Diego on July 24, 1918 and reported to the aviation concentration camp at Camp Dick, Dallas, Texas. He was transferred to New York City and from there sailed to Sussex, England on September 3, 1918.

Fred continued his bomber pilot flying at the Ford Junction Aerodrome, Sussex, England, preparing to fly combat missions over the channel. He piloted the Handley-Page model 0/400 bombing plane. This was the largest aircraft of the British Air Force. The British described the aircraft as the “bloody paralyzer” as it had a range of 700 miles and carried 2000 pounds of bombs.

Fred relates he was at Sussex when word of the Armistice signing came and he and his buddies hurried into London. They reached London the night of November 11. The celebration continued and grew in fervor to such an extent that by the next day an order was issued prohibiting any officer of the Allied army to enter the city. Fred said two encounters stuck out in his mind the night of the 11th during a luxurious hotel celebration. He stated he heard a lady say, “These Americans will be insufferable now. They’ll think they won the war.” Later that night, another woman with a much different reaction embraced Fred and the others and said, “Thank God for you Americans. You won the war.”

Fred left England for New York City on the first ship to leave after the Armistice. The SS Lapland of the White Star Line departed Liverpool November 24, 1918 and arrived in New York City December 4, 1918. He expressed experiences aboard the ship.
“Coming back on our boat were a number of Englishmen who had been ‘fed up’ considerable on the marvels of our country. As we entered New York harbor and they first caught a view of it, they did not say much, but their faces expressed a great deal!”

“President Woodrow Wilson’s boat pulled out as we entered the harbor. The genial smiling president was out on the deck to wave us welcome. A patrol boat conveying high officials including Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker, came out and met our boat, while whistles and sirens on all the boats and buildings near the harbor shrieked their loudest, bands played and people shouted.”

Since arriving in New York City on December 4, Fred and other soldiers spent their time at Garden City, NY (located on Long Island and home to Mitchel Air Force Field) with generous privileges which permitted “whiling” away most of their time in New York City.

“The people of New York certainly treat the soldiers fine. All soldiers are given 50 per cent reduction in the majority of the best hotels and cafes, and 10, 15 to 30 and sometimes 35 per cent off on purchases made in many of the leading stores.”

He said these courtesies were extended through the War Camp Community Service. This service was a home front organization formed to raise money to rally support for the military and help welcome home troops. Fred also extolled the virtues of the Red Cross and YMCA during his military time.

Fred came home December 17, 1918 on a brief furlough, now 22 years of age. He accompanied the body of Lieutenant Lyle Hubbard, son of former Senator Hubbard of Iowa, to Sioux City for burial on Tuesday, December 17. Lieutenant Hubbard who died in New York City of pneumonia was a chum of Fred. They took their training together and stayed together for most of their military life.
Fred expressed the following thoughts upon his return home:

“It is needless for me to say that I am glad to be back in the United States and again to mingle with my friends in Sioux Falls. I have a deeper admiration than before for Sioux Falls, which is to my notion one of the most progressive and finest business centers of any city of its’ size I have seen during my travels. The soldiers returning now to the United States are coming back better Americans than when they left, with a deeper respect for American women, with higher ideals and henceforth interested in things only that are ‘made in America’.”

Fred, or Chris as he was later known, continued his journalism career in Sioux Falls after his military duty. He was city editor of the Sioux Falls Press until 1928 when he became editor of the Argus Leader newspaper. He married Marie Cilley in 1926. Marie was a reporter for the Sioux Falls Press. Fred was the Argus Leader editor for 33 years until 1961. He continued as contributing editor until 1972. He was credited with promoting the construction of Mount Rushmore and routing Interstate 29 through South Dakota. He promoted flood control on the Missouri and Big Sioux Rivers and helped organize the first Community Chest drive, now known as the United Way. He also helped establish the American Legion in the state. He served in many organizations and received many honors. One honor of which he was very proud was the St. Olav medal presented to him by King Haakon of Norway in 1947. He was elected to the South Dakota Hall of Fame and is listed in “Who’s Who in America”.

Fred and Marie traveled the world and were hosted by world leaders. They readily shared their experiences in print and verbally. They died six months apart in 1989. They did not have children. In their will they shared generous financial gifts with their community family. Their legacy lives on in these gifts and in the establishment of Christopherson
scholarships granted through the Sioux Falls Area Community Foundation for high school students and at Augustana College for upper classmen.

From the dusty roads of a small Midwestern town to the bustling streets of New York City and London, Fred was a witness to events that shaped world history. His story is one that needs to be told.
On December 6, 1918, the Intelligence Officer at Camp Dodge, Iowa sent a list to the Intelligence Officer at the military prison at Ft. Leavenworth, noting that the prisoner Ingmar Iverson, recently arrived from camp to prison, “had received a considerable amount of mail from the following persons who are under observation by the Department of Justice agents:”

Annie Iverson  
Lilly Iverson  
Palma Iverson  
Bernard Iverson  
H M Norfjer

Since, with the exception of the last name, those listed were siblings or mother of said Iverson, perhaps a non-subversive explanation for the correspondence could be imagined. But Captain Jackson R. Day did not believe in taking chances, and had spent his time at Camp Dodge keeping close tabs on war resisters.\(^2\)

The war that Woodrow Wilson had kept us out of, until he didn’t, was not universally welcomed by Americans, but there quickly arose serious incentives not to act on that dissent: the Selective Service Act, the Espionage and Sedition Acts, and an unprecedented network of spying on Americans that would embarrass the NSA, if its official

\(^1\) National Archives (hereafter NA), Washington, DC, Record Group 165, 10487-804.  
\(^2\) Captain C. M. Wilhelm to Chief, Military Intelligence Branch, July 23, 1918, NA, RG 165, 10425-68: “Capt. Day is not very strong on anything but Con. Obs.”
statements could be believed. Still, there were those willing to challenge the manufactured pro-war consensus, and thanks to the unprecedented spying, among other sources, we can document that dissent. Ingmar Iverson of Madison, South Dakota, refused, in his sister Lily’s words, to “engage in the slaughter of his fellow workers of this or any other land.” His family’s support for him shows that pockets of resistance to the war could not be eliminated, despite extensive surveillance and repression.

In addition to Lily and Annie, Ingmar’s immediate family included his sister Stella, who does not seem to have been a letter writer; his younger brother Bernard, whom Lily assured the National Civil Liberties Bureau would also resist the war when he came of age; and his mother Palma.

Ingmar Iverson, a Socialist Party member for six years and currently chairman of the South Dakota Socialist Party, acted in accordance with the party’s official position in refusing conscription. At about the same time Iverson was being involuntarily drafted, the party’s national leader, Eugene Debs, was being indicted for anti-war remarks he made in Canton, Ohio that the government claimed violated the Espionage Act. While the South Dakota party had enjoyed a temporary resurgence, according to its historian, as a result of the United States declaration of war in April 1917, “no state organization... survived World

---


The indictment of twenty-seven Hutchinson County Socialists for violating the Espionage Act because they petitioned the governor about perceived irregularities in the draft call-up did not make party membership more attractive. Nor did the breakup of the party’s state convention by local police in Mitchell in January 1918.

The crackdown on dissent was three-pronged: an assault on radical organizations, a close monitoring of German-Americans, and pressure on religious groups with conscientious objections to war to accede to government conscription demands. For religious conscientious objectors, being drafted meant facing pressures at training camps such as Camp Dodge to wear the uniform, work, march and bear weapons. In South Dakota, the major religious pacifist groups were Mennonites and Hutterites; Mennonites had a sophisticated national network to assist their members who had been drafted, although it took the better part of a year for the War Department to figure out how to deal with religious objectors who were not willing to be non-combatant soldiers. In contrast, their Anabaptist cousins, the less acculturated Hutterites, who had been promised conscientious objector status here after fleeing tsarist Russia’s conscription, felt betrayed by the Selective Service Act and reacted as if they were back in tsarist Russia. The federal and state governments reacted in kind.

---

8 Peterson and Fite, 161.
Even a restrictive reading of the definition of torture must concede, if serious bodily harm or death must occur to trigger the legal threshold, that some Hutterites’ camp and prison experiences met that criteria.

The German language press felt the brunt of the pressure on German-Americans in South Dakota. The editors of both major German newspapers were indicted and the papers ceased publication.\(^{10}\)

The government’s most forthright repression of dissent was against political radicals. While religious objectors to war often waited months at Camp Dodge or other induction centers for the War Department to figure out what to do with them, political dissenters were treated with dispatch, and almost immediate court-martial.\(^{11}\) In particular, those who resisted draft registration or the draft were immediately drafted and then treated as deserters for resisting military control. Religious objectors were also treated with prompt court-martial if they arrived at training camps having resisted the draft—even if their inductions were illegal.

Ingmar Iverson arrived at Camp Dodge at a particularly volatile time. Absolutist religious objectors, who refused to wear military uniforms, march, or sometimes even engage in work that might be construed as supporting the war effort, had engaged in a

---


\(^{11}\) See my “The Germans Would Court-Martial Me, Too,’ St. Paul’s Socialist World War I Resisters,” *Minnesota History* 55 (Fall 1997), 286-301.
months-long resistance to military demands and had been accruing seniority at a base that was premised on training and sending soldiers off to Europe. July 1918 was a time of particular stress at Camp Dodge. The national three-member Board of Inquiry, finally set up to adjudicate the sincerity of religious objectors, arrived at Camp Dodge in early July. And rather than venturing on to Camp Funston, Kansas, it ordered 161 objectors to come meet the board in Iowa—an entrainment that included many from South Dakota. After a day of hearings, proceedings were temporarily suspended as the whole camp was ordered to attend the execution of three African-American soldiers for rape, a charge that has lingering questions about consent. In ordering conscientious objectors to be in the front row to witness what was a mandatory exercise for all, the power of the military was reinforced.\textsuperscript{12}

It was into this context that Ingmar arrived at Camp Dodge. What we know about Ingmar is primarily due to the attempted interventions of his sisters, Lily and Annie—and to the interceptions of their concern by Military Intelligence. Aside from being state chair of the South Dakota Socialist Party—a task, we might imagine, that could well have fallen upon him by default—we don’t know with certainty about his occupation. Norman Thomas, who received a letter from Ingmar after the war, calls him “a Western farmer;”\textsuperscript{13} but his mother’s house was in town, and the draft board wanted to send him not to a regular

\textsuperscript{13} Norman Thomas, \textit{Is Conscience a Crime?} New York, 1923, 250.
military training camp but to a mechanics training camp, which suggests that he had mechanical experience.\textsuperscript{14}

In April and May of 1918, Lake County sent a dozen or so draftees into the military every couple of weeks with amazing regularity--as the \textit{Madison Daily Leader} described it: “With monotonous frequency of seeing men depart from Lake County to join the army, another company of 11 were sent away this morning by the local exemption board.” But if one read further, the monotony was broken by the fact that one person had refused induction.\textsuperscript{15}

The draft board turned the matter over to the sheriff, who let Ingmar stay out of jail on his own recognizance, pending a trip to the nearest army base. The local paper was conflicted about reporting on the matter. “The less said about this case the better...It is with regret that the small amount of publicity already accorded him has been given. Draw a curtain over the picture, and forget.” Iverson sought martyrdom because he “is boastfully a socialist. In the simplicity of his mind he reads of the martyrdom and oppression of those so called champions of the common people, believes, and is obsessed with a desire to emulate their examples.”\textsuperscript{16} \textit{The Leader} would violate its pledge of silence upon Ingmar’s homecoming.

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Madison Daily Leader}, October 1919, May 16, 1918.
\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Madison Daily Leader}, May 16, 1918; April 10, April 18, April 27, May 7, May 9, May 23, 1918.
\textsuperscript{16} “Iverson, Martyr?,” \textit{Madison Daily Leader}, May 17, 1918.
Within the week Ingmar was escorted to the nearest military base, Ft. Snelling, Minnesota. There, awaiting transfer to Camp Dodge and court-martial, he was beaten by fellow prisoners.\(^{17}\)

Lily Iverson sensibly wrote the National Civil Liberties Bureau, (the predecessor of the ACLU, set up to defend wartime dissent and conscientious objection) and engaged in an important correspondence with Roger Baldwin.\(^{18}\) While they at first talked past each other—she fraught with concern for her brother, he trying frantically to find out what was going on at the camps—eventually Baldwin realized she was a valuable resource for reporting what was happening to objectors at Camp Dodge. She would be more helpful to him than he was able to be for her brother.

In her first letter, Lily, aware that Ingmar was to be tried for desertion, asked an obvious question: “Can a man be a ‘deserter’ from something he has never belonged to?” It took several exchanges of correspondence, with Baldwin not paying attention at first, but eventually he grasped that Ingmar had refused induction and was therefore a “technical” deserter.\(^{19}\)

Lily reported that Ingmar was fairly well-treated at Camp Dodge, but was denied newspapers and was in solitary. Later he would be confined with other objectors in a large, over-crowded room where they not allowed to converse, “If my brother had his library

\(^{17}\) Lily Iverson to NCLB, June 29, 1918, ACLU Papers, v. 6, 495.


\(^{19}\) Lily R. Iverson to NCLB, May 28, June 29, July 3, July 12, 1918; Roger Baldwin to Lily R. Iverson, June 1, July 3, July 10, 1918.
there he could enjoy the rest, but this incarceration must be maddening for one of his nature,” Lily thought. Channeling Ibsen, she wrote of Ingmar, “Truly a dangerous character--a man who dares to stand up for what he believes is right and who is true to his God and his friends!”

Court-martial proceedings for Ingmar began on July 9, and Lily wrote the NCLB for proof that Ingmar had been a long-time member of the Americans United Against Militarism (of which the NCLB was an offshoot.) After rumors (and a threat from an officer) about receiving the death penalty--fellow resister Ben Salmon was actually sentenced to death that month at Camp Dodge, although his sentence was quickly commuted--on August 23 Ingmar was sentenced to twenty years. After his court-martial Ingmar was confined to the Military Police Guardhouse for months, in contrast to most other political objectors who were shipped out to military prisons very quickly.

Baldwin soon found that Lily was a valuable and reliable source for what was happening to objectors in the camp. She was particularly sympathetic to the political objectors. “The purely religious objectors,” she thought, “are individualists--their aim is solely to save themselves.” But she did admire the Hutterites, who “may not accept the offer [of farm furloughs], for they are quite anti-militaristic and are men with more of a social vision than the other religious objectors.” She concluded her July 26 letter, “I’m

---

20 Lily Iverson to NCLB, July 12, 1918.
21 Lily Iverson to NCLB, June 29, July 15, August 27, 1918; Roger Baldwin to Lily R. Iverson, December 18, 1918.
passing on these fragments from human lives[’] history in the hope that you will bestir yourselves on their behalf.”

Lily’s July 26 letter finally got a more than perfunctory response from Roger Baldwin. He called her description of conditions for objectors “exceedingly helpful. I read it to our committee yesterday.” Lily responded, fiercely, if melodramatically, “My life will have been worth living, if I can help secure justice for one solitary individual who for some reason or another refuses to join this murderfest.”

Of the other objectors Lily wrote of, three deserve special mention. Ben Salmon was one of those objectors sent to Camp Dodge from Camp Funston to meet the Board of Inquiry. Unlike any of his trainmates, he was a Single-Taxer and a Roman Catholic. His tendency to take his resistance just a little further than anyone else may help explain the rationale for his sentence of death. After the war, still in prison, he engaged in a hunger strike to seek freedom for the remaining war resisters.

The other two objectors were brothers from northern Denmark, Peter Rasmussen and Lars Sorenson. They were members of something called “Free Mission,” probably a Pentecostal group. They farmed near Fenton, Iowa; Although they were not citizens, they were picked up for failure to appear for induction and sent to Camp Dodge. Shortly after the war, they were released from Ft. Leavenworth when it was discovered that as non-citizens they had been illegally drafted. Whether Lily’s reporting of their citizenship status to Roger

22 Lily Iverson to NCLB, July 26, August 26, 1918.
23 Roger Baldwin to Lily Iverson, July 30, 1918, Lily Iverson to NCLB, August 2, 1918.
Baldwin led to this action is unclear. She wrote this letter from Blunt, South Dakota where she was applying for a state government job, passing on (she thought) “an uncensored message from Guard House Building 647, Camp Dodge.”

The Iverson family certainly suffered economic hardship as a result of their support for war resistance. Annie complained in September 1918 that her sisters “Lily and Stella both lost good positions because of the war.” The next month, Camp Dodge’s ever-vigilant Captain Day wrote Agent McCaley of the Department of Justice in Sioux Falls that he had learned that Lily and Stella had taken civil service tests in Pierre. He recommended against hiring them.

Lily’s letters to the NCLB were intense and serious. In contrast, her sister Annie’s interventions tended to be flamboyant and mischievous. For example, she wrote the American Protective League asking them to investigate mistreatment of prisoners at Camp Dodge! The APL, a volunteer amateur spy agency, did investigate conscientious objectors at the camp, but not abuses. It hired detectives to pretend to be Mennonites and go undercover into camp--but with predictable results, given their ignorance of Anabaptism.

The much aggrieved Jackson Day complained that “Miss Annie Iverson has caused a great deal of trouble by writing different officials at this camp and to the NCLB in New York. She is

---

26 NA, RG 165, 10487-804.
27 October 13, 1818, NA, RG 165, 10487-84.
28 August 4, 1918, NA, RG 165, 10487-804.
29 Earlis Kissinger interview, tape 56, Iowa Mennonite Archives, Kalona, IA; Emerson Hough, The Web, Chicago, 1919, 412; Roy Buchanan, Roy Buchanan Papers, Archives of the Mennonite Church, Goshen, IN, 88-90.
clever enough in her remarks so as not to cause her arrest.” Annie’s politics diverged from the rest of the Iversons—in a letter to O. H. Christiansen of Los Angeles, she admitted, “Bernard and the girls are all members of the party but I never joined. Feel more like joining the IWW myself.” Jackson Day, or a similar official, marked this intercepted correspondence as a “violation of the Espionage Act.”

In early December 1918 Ingmar was sent, not to the military prison at Ft. Leavenworth, but to the federal prison nearby.

If Ingmar left Madison a hopeless idealist, in the eyes of the town, he came back “a dangerous Bolshevik,” although there is no evidence that his own political views had changed. What had hardened were the town’s, and the country’s, views of dissent.

In October 1919, in Washington, DC, the director of Military Intelligence wrote the Adjutant General, suggesting a reply to Rev. Crawford McKibben, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Madison, who had complained about the release of Ingmar. Iverson, the Rev. McKibben maintained, was “a most dangerous Bolshevik. The whole county is very much incensed about his release.” After the war and the dissolution of the conscript army, the long sentences meted out to conscientious objectors were commuted, somewhat haphazardly. In July the Clemency Board had reduced Ingmar’s sentence to three years, and he was released October 10. The suggested reply to Rev. McKibben assured that there was

---

30 October 13, 1918, NA, RG 165, 10487-804. Annie does not seem to have written the NCLB--did Day conflate the two sisters?
31 September 9, 1918, NA, RG 165, 10487-804.
“no evidence of Bolshevik activity” and enclosed a pamphlet on the War Department’s treatment of conscientious objectors.\footnote{NA, RG 165, 10487-804.}

It is unclear whether the helpful pamphlet arrived in Madison before tensions began to boil. Ingmar arrived back in town on Sunday evening, October 12. The first salvo in the local paper was fired by “one of the mothers” of a returned soldier. The anonymous letter reported on an indignation meeting “held at the home of one of our prominent ladies in the south central part of town.” The meeting called upon the “[m]en of Eugene McKibben Post [of the American Legion]” not to stand by idly while “this ‘slacker’... would...steal in, settle down and get ready to stir up a seething caldron of Bolshevism (which is only another name for ‘socialism’) in our midst.”\footnote{Madison Daily Leader, October 16, 1919. On the American Legion’s sometimes violent opposition to radicalism in the immediate post-war period, see William Pencak, \textit{For God and Country: The American Legion, 1919-1941}, Boston, 1989, Chapter 6 and Christopher Nehls, “‘Treason Is Treason’: The Iowa American Legion and the Meaning of Disloyalty After World War I, \textit{Annals of Iowa} 66 (2007), 131-160. For a study that well contextualizes one of the most infamous cases of wartime vigilantism, see Carl R. Weinberg, \textit{Labor, Loyalty, Rebellion: Southwestern Illinois Coal Miners and World War I}, Carbondale, 2005.}

The men of the post, or at least of the town, took up the challenge. A confrontation with Ingmar on the street on Tuesday was unsuccessful in persuading him to leave town. On Friday night a large group gathered and proceeded to Palma Iverson’s house on the north end of town, where Ingmar was staying. There are two newspaper accounts of what happened that night; they differ a bit in details, and a great deal in tone, with the local \textit{Daily Leader} mounting a full-throated defense of the mob action--and of course does not use the word mob--and the Sioux Falls \textit{Argus Leader} much more dispassionate. The Madison paper went so far as to contradict its contemporaneous account of Ingmar’s draft resistance to
paint him in a more negative light, claiming he had hidden from the authorities. One significant discrepancy in the accounts is the number of people involved; the Madison paper put the number of vigilantes at about two hundred men, while the Sioux Falls daily estimated the crowd at 350, “including some women.”

The two accounts agree substantially about what happened at 114 Ninth Street Northwest. Ingmar was not at home when the mob--or the patriotic citizens, depending on the account--arrived, but he soon returned home with a cousin-bodyguard. Somehow the two managed to get into the house, but the crowd followed. Ingmar barricaded himself in the attic. The more enterprising among the patriots found a way to the roof, produced axes, and proceeded to hack their way into the attic. In the ensuing capture, the attic floor was also destroyed as the combatants fell through. Accounts differ as to whether yellow paint or tar and feathers was to be applied to Ingmar as further inducement for him to leave town, but as the parade of patriots proceeded downtown around midnight with car horns blaring, the authorities were alerted--the out-of-town paper said, awakened. At this point the sheriff and mayor intervened. The sheriff took Ingmar into protective custody, told him he could not guarantee his safety, and suggested he leave town. Majority ruled.

At least one person in Madison was appalled enough by the episode to register his dissent in the local paper. George A. Rensvold’s signed letter is reproduced here in full:

---

34 Madison Daily Leader, October 18, 1919; Sioux Falls The Daily Argus-Leader, October 18, 1919.
35 Ibid.
As a soldier who fought in the war for democracy and as a member of the American Legion, I wish to go on record as opposing the recent outburst of Bolshevistic mob-rule in our loyal little city of Madison. Such an act is anarchistic in character because it shows utter disregard for law and authority and follows a precedent established by the very lowest elements that are trying to besmirch and revolutionize our fair country. We, as Americans, believe in the Constitution of the United States and know that it guarantees personal liberty and the protection of that liberty to every individual. We believe that our courts are more capable of meting out justice than is mob-rule. Furthermore, we profess to be a Christian nation, whereas an act of violence such as this is base heathenism. I believe it the duty of patriotic and law-abiding citizens to place a stamp of disapproval on this outrage which has wrecked a home and broken down a mother’s health.36

I have uncovered only one subsequent mention of the Iversons. On February 20, 1920, Ingmar wrote of his wartime experiences in a letter to Norman Thomas. Thomas, who was also a member of a family that had been conflicted and strained by the war,37 was writing a history of American conscientious objection to the war. In his letter, Ingmar, as his sister Lily had done, spoke not only of his own situation but also of injustices to other objectors that he had witnessed.38

Much of Christopher Capozzola’s ambitious synthesis about how World War I changed American conceptions of citizenship39 is neatly illustrated in the Iversons’ story; the provocation by the government in spying on and interfering with the lives of dissenters; the ambivalence between citizen vigilance and vigilantism, and the government’s post-war need to rein in extra-legal actions; and the glimmers of a new framework for civil liberties, seen in

36 Madison Daily Leader, October 21, 1919.
38 Norman Thomas, 169.
39 See especially chapter 4.
both the Lily Iverson-Roger Baldwin correspondence and in Madison veteran George
Rensvold’s letter to the editor.

The Iverson family’s experience in its steadfast opposition to the war has several
implications that seem all too relevant in another new century. The intense surveillance on
the family, and of virtually all dissent, raised questions that resulted in a movement for civil
liberties, but we seem to be on the cusp of another surveillance crisis. The intolerance of
anti-war activism that erupted in Madison no longer seems as likely, perhaps because of the
repeal of the draft, but Ingmar and Lily would still urge upon us the larger question: Can we
not begin to move toward nonviolent alternatives to war?

Perhaps two letters from a couple in Philip, South Dakota to Ingmar while he was in
the Military Police Guard House in Camp Dodge can serve as a conclusion. Of course, they
were intercepted by military intelligence. Bertha Anderson reported that her husband
Orville’s charges have been dismissed--for violating the Espionage Act, presumably--but that
she is worried because he is too blunt about speaking his mind. In his letter, Orville
maintains, “The right will prevail but it is some times damn slow about getting around.”

Bill R. Douglas
1406 Mondamin Ave.
Des Moines, IA 50314-1948
iowarh@gmail.com

40 NA, RG 165 10487-804, both letters dated November 30, 1918.
With the centennial anniversary of the First World War fast approaching, I am reminded of John Keegan’s assessment that the war “was a tragic and unnecessary conflict” (3). And yet two years before the war began, the United States was in the midst of an incredible process of transformation called the Progressive Era. People forget the astonishing degree of progressivism (much of it coming from Republicans) that existed in Nebraska and other Midwestern states in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many people seem to remember only the Teddy Roosevelt who carried a big stick and vilified pacifists as sissies and cowards as opposed to the one who bolted from the Republican Party in Chicago in 1912 and ran as the presidential candidate of a new third party called the Progressive Party. Roosevelt was the first presidential candidate whose nomination was seconded by a woman, namely, Jane Addams. People forget that Roosevelt and progressives at the party convention in August of 1912 were waving red bandannas, a symbol taken from the Socialist Party that won six per cent of the popular vote in that election (Goodwin, 720-721). Indeed, Eugene Debs pointed out that “the really progressive planks in the Progressive platform were taken bodily from the Socialist platform” (Flehinger 5). Social reformers and other progressives were euphoric that they at last had a national party that would represent them and champion their views.
Only a few months before the national party conventions in the summer of 1912, Nebraskans organized the Nebraska Peace Society. The first meeting was held on February 5, 1912, at St. Paul’s Methodist Church in Lincoln. The society existed from 1912 to 1918, and it was the second branch of the American Peace Society established in the Midwest after the Chicago Peace Society in 1909. As the national umbrella organization, the American Peace Society was a rather conservative society that was established in 1828 when the New York and the Massachusetts Peace Societies along with a number of others merged together into one organization under the leadership of William Ladd (Brock 461). Essentially, it was what may be called a “resolutions society,” that is, a society that debated questions in the genteel Victorian manner of Boston Brahmins and made resolutions about them that were sent to the president of the United States and congressional representatives (Marchand 7-9). That was the extent of their activism.

The membership of the Nebraska Peace Society was composed almost entirely of middle-class progressives from both Republican and Democratic parties. The Nebraska version of the peace society did not conform to the Boston model insofar as the emphasis of the Nebraska Peace Society was on social reform and included the working class. In 1912 the Peace Society had 118 members, and by the following year membership shot up to 216. Members were lawyers, businessmen, university presidents, leaders of women’s clubs, professors, clergy, members of the woman’s suffrage movement, politicians, and newspaper editors. The list of the officers of the society reads like a cross-section of a who’s who of Nebraska.
After The Hague peace conferences of 1899 and 1907 and the donation of millions of dollars by the publisher Edwin Ginn and the industrialist Andrew Carnegie to the cause of peace, it became fashionable to belong to a peace society. Before they took office in 1913, both Woodrow Wilson and William Jennings Bryan had been vice presidents of the American Peace Society (Kraft 4). Indeed, throughout the existence of the Nebraska Peace Society, William Jennings Bryan was elected honorary president; George Elliott Howard, nationally known historian and sociologist at the University of Nebraska, was the first president; Don L. Love, ex-mayor of Lincoln, was president from 1913 to 1916; Arthur L. Weatherly, minister of All Souls Unitarian Church in Lincoln, was secretary-treasurer throughout its existence. Christian Abraham Sorensen (father of Ted Sorensen, counselor for John F. Kennedy) was assistant secretary from 1915 to 1918.

Although all members of the peace society were pacifists in the broad sense of being champions of peace, the society reflected a spectrum of viewpoints. There were absolute pacifists who believed that war was never morally justified such as Weatherly and Sorensen. There were also those who may be called nearly absolute pacifists like William Jennings Bryan. Although Bryan agreed with Tolstoy’s belief in non-resistance when he met the Count in 1903 at Yasnaya Polyana, he, nevertheless, as Merle Curti has shown, would “not hesitate to move the line to permit the use of force” when it involved matters of national honor (Brock 936). There is no doubt, however, that Bryan was the first Secretary of State who advocated a foreign policy based on pacifist principles. In this regard, he was the antithesis of Roosevelt, and Roosevelt knew it.
In addition to pacifists who were nearly absolutists, there were also moderate pacifists who believed that wars conducted in self-defense were justified and even more moderate pacifists who believed that the best way to champion peace was to be prepared militarily for self-defense. Fred Morrow Fling, head of the Department of European History and Chancellor Samuel Avery, both of the University of Nebraska and officers in the Nebraska Peace Society, were representatives of this position. There were some pacifists, although they could hardly be called pacifists, who believed the best way to maintain peace was to build up the country’s armed forces and weaponry to such an extent that other nations would not even dream of attacking. This belief that arming oneself to the teeth was the best way to champion peace belongs more to the position of militarism than it does to pacifism, and Theodore Roosevelt is perhaps the best known proponent of this form of militarism. If it were true that arming oneself to the teeth was the best way to preserve peace, then the Great War would very likely never have occurred. Both Wilson and Bryan believed that pursuing European power politics with its strong belief in militarism was detrimental to democracy and a free society.

These differences among the various shades of pacifism became more and more pronounced as the country moved closer and closer to declaring war in 1917 and will eventually tear the Nebraska Peace Society apart. The same can be said for progressivism which included a wide range of approaches. According to Gary Gerstle, the “ideological intensity of the war revealed the underlying irreconcilability of these divergent Progressive approaches. With Roosevelt and his allies [what Gerstle calls right-leaning progressives]
screaming for ‘100 percent Americanism’ and Kallen, Bourne, and others [left-leaning progressives] denouncing the ugly coercion and conformity they saw as central to such campaigns, Progressivism lost its coherence as a politic movement” (1052).

Since the United States did not wish to pursue European power politics and declared itself neutral at the beginning of the war, the decision was open as to how the United States would develop this position of neutrality. It could isolate itself as much as possible from the European conflict and practice a policy of strict neutrality without getting involved with the belligerent nations or it could use its position as the largest and strongest of the neutral nations to lead them as an international consortium that could demand attention from the belligerents and insert itself into the dialogue to begin a process of mediation. The American Peace Society, however, offered no initiatives and in his report of June, 1915, Arthur Deerin Call, the executive secretary of the society “made no comment on the present war” (Marchand 147).

Since none of the older peace societies had taken any public action, women in New York organized the first public expression against the war almost spontaneously on August 29, 1914. As C. Roland Marchand has shown, most of these women, led by Lillian Wald and Fanny Garrison Villard, were not members of peace societies, but came from the ranks of “active social workers and settlement house residents, leaders of the Women’s Trade Union League, presidents of women’s clubs and veteran women suffrage workers” (Marchand 183). They decided to hold a simple parade of mourning expressed by women marching silently in black to muffled drums. An estimate of anywhere between 1,500 and 2,000
women marched down Fifth Avenue from 59th Street to Union Square (“Host of Women in Peace Parade” 1; “Protesting Women March in Mourning” 11). Mrs. Harriot Stanton Blatch is quoted as saying “We shall make our parade a demand on the President to call all neutral nations to unite in stopping the war” (“Women in Parade to Make Protest Against Militarism” 6).

Time and again during the period of American neutrality, appeals were made to President Wilson to organize the neutral nations and to lead them in an effort to begin mediation efforts with the belligerents. Time and again Wilson would demur that the timing wasn’t right or that there was not a sufficient guarantee of success. The new peace organizations that emerged from 1915 to 1917 like the Woman’s Peace Party, the American Union Against Militarism, the Emergency Peace Federation went to extraordinary lengths to try to persuade President Wilson to take a more active role as a mediator. Two members of the Nebraska Peace Society were especially active in this area, Arthur Weatherly and Christian Abraham Sorensen.

Both were members of the Henry Ford peace expedition that went to the neutral nations of Europe on board the Oscar II in December of 1915. Sorensen, still a law student at the University of Nebraska, took a number of incompletes in his courses in order to go. Ford met Wilson at the White House and told him he had decided to back the mediation plan that the women at the International Congress of Women had proposed. When Ford encouraged him to take a more active role in mediation, Wilson refused. He was not inclined to get involved “with a multi-national conference whose decisions he could not
control” (Kraft 66). Ford then said that he would step into the breach himself and get the boys home by Christmas (Kraft 67). This, of course, was ludicrous, but it shows the level of frustration that many had – not just pacifists – with a president who had been dithering for well over a year about whether to take a more active role as a neutral. As soon as the ships left (there were two ships, the Oscar II left first followed later by the Noordam), Theodore Roosevelt ridiculed the whole idea: “And Henry Ford selects this as a time to go on his ridiculous and mischievous jitney peace junket!” (“Roosevelt Urges Unity In Defense” 3).

In essence, Ford funded the establishment of an unofficial conference among the neutral countries for continuous mediation in the attempt to engage the belligerents. This conference which was proposed seven months earlier by the International Congress of Women at The Hague was indeed established in Stockholm and met for the first time on February 28, 1916, although the American press having ridiculed the peace expedition mercilessly hardly mentioned it (Kraft 207). On February 28 delegates met from Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States. Jane Addams was chosen as one of the U. S. delegates, but she could not attend due to illness; Emily Greene Balch went as her alternate (Kraft 210).

During the expedition, Sorensen became fast friends with two women, Lella Faye Secor and Rebecca Shelly, who would figure prominently in his life for the next four years. Shelly, a Phi Beta Kappa University of Michigan graduate who had taught school in Wisconsin and paid her own way to the International Congress of Women and who was responsible for penetrating the bureaucratic wall around Henry Ford to get him to
participate in an international peace initiative invited her friend Lella Faye Secor to join the expedition (Florence 5, 8; Kraft 31). Secor was in Seattle at the time working for a newspaper and had to travel across the country with barely enough time to catch the ship before it departed.

On the last day of their voyage back to the United States aboard the *Rotterdam*, Shelly, Secor, and Sorensen made a pact to start an international youth movement whose aim was to put an end to war. Their bond was so strong that even a year after they returned from Europe, Lella wrote to Sorensen telling him the following:

> I cannot tell you how often we have longed for you or how frequently I, myself, have drawn upon your fine strength and courage. Both Rebecca and I feel that the fight we are making now is only preliminary to that tremendous struggle into which you and we shall enter when the war is over. Our young people’s plan thrills and inspires me. It has stood out as a sort of beacon light, through all these hard months when we have had to fight conservatives [sic] on every hand (Sorensen archives. Nebraska State Historical Society).

It is as though the three had formed a kind of international self, one that went beyond nationality – one that Randolph S. Bourne may have intimated in his 1916 article “Trans-National America” in which he characterized the contribution that America would make to intellectual internationalism in the following way: “It will be an intellectual sympathy which is not satisfied until it has got at the heart of the different cultural expressions, and felt as they feel. ... it will make understanding and not indignation its end. Such a sympathy will unite and not divide” (119).
On their return from Europe, Shelly and Secor stayed in New York and went on to establish the American Neutral Conference Committee which later was transformed into the Emergency Peace Federation while Sorensen went back to Nebraska to finish his law degree, became assistant director of the legislative reference bureau and continued his correspondence with Shelly and Secor in relation to peace efforts in New York and Nebraska.

When Germany resumed unrestricted submarine warfare and Wilson broke off diplomatic relations, Shelly and Secor mobilized the Emergency Peace Federation to go to Washington to present resolutions to the White House. Sorensen was one of the three delegates who met with Joseph Tumulty in the White House in February of 1917 in a last ditch effort to avert war. According to the Washington Post, the delegation “crowded into President Wilson’s private office” and Reverend Norman Thomas presented the resolutions of the federation to Secretary Tumulty “urging a referendum before a declaration of war” (“Present Peace Appeal” 4). Sorensen who said he represented farmers and peace organizations in Nebraska poured out his heart for twenty minutes in a plea to keep the country out of war.

After war was declared on April 6, 1917, the last and most radical of the peace societies emerged out of the Emergency Peace Federation. A conference was held at Madison Square Garden on May 30-31. The name of the conference was the First American Conference on Democracy and Terms of Peace, and it is from this conference that the People’s Council of America, the most radical of the peace societies, was born. It included a
broad coalition of pacifists, socialists, labor unions, social reform advocates, farmers’ unions and single-taxers.

On the second day of the conference, Shelly gave a speech that electrified the delegates. The People’s Council was to be modeled on the Petrograd Council (or Soviet) of Workmen’s and Soldiers’ Delegates. Since Congress no longer represented the people, the People’s Council would step into that role. As Secor recalled later, “The People’s Council of America was Rebecca’s idea. It was to set up a kind of Soviet in Washington which would keep the country informed of the real truths behind the war propaganda and the war behavior. Every time Washington made a pronouncement, the People’s Council was to issue one of its own, outlining the steps that it considered should have been taken. It was to keep the peace flag flying, and to encourage any possible opening for negotiating peace between the belligerents” (Bell 123).

During the summer of 1917, the People’s Council claimed to have a membership of one and a half million. Shelly was on the executive committee and also financial secretary; Secor was organizing secretary. In October of 1917, Sorensen was elected to the new General Committee of the People’s Council (Florence 161; Sorensen archives, Nebraska State Historical Society). The fact alone that Sorensen accepted membership on the General Committee was a courageous act because his name would be listed on the letterhead of the People’s Council for all to see. This was at a time when the full repressive weight of the government was being felt through office raids and the confiscation of
materials, arrests in the name of the Espionage Act, and the suppression of publications like *The Masses*, not to mention vigilante whippings and tar-and-featherings.

Weatherly had strong support in his church, but he also had powerful enemies. Barbara S. Kraft states that Weatherly by January of 1918 was “forced from his pulpit by the monied members of his congregation, who refused to pay his salary” (275). How early the pressure started is unclear, but Fred Morrow Fling, a founding member of the Unitarian Church and a Francophile member of the Nebraska Peace Society who wanted the United States to enter the war on the side of the Allies, may not have taken kindly to Weatherly’s strong pacifist position.

Weatherly was finally hired by the War Camp Community Service to work at the Army and Navy Club in the small town of Southport, North Carolina, on the tip of Cape Fear. Located on the ground floor of the Masonic Building, the club attracted large numbers of soldiers on Thursdays, Saturdays, and Sundays. In his letter to Sorensen in March of 1918, Weatherly described his job: “It is my business chiefly to make this place attractive and to pull off such other stunts as can be in a small town. Yesterday I went to Wilmington and met the local commander there. Soldiers go up there for Sat. and Sunday in considerable numbers. But there is plenty of money and people who can do things in Wilmington. So I got magazines, records . . . sheet music and above all a piano. (Sorensen Archives. Nebraska State Historical Society). He also confided to Sorensen that “I have to keep my mouth shut on all subjects” (Ibid).
More importantly, near the end of his March 28, 1918, letter to Weatherly, Sorensen mentions the Nebraska Peace Society and the conscious decision he made to let it die. After mentioning that the Sunday School was keeping up a fair attendance, he told Weatherly “I didn’t make a stir about the Nebraska Peace Society. Why should people be hounded to join a dead peace society xxxxxxxx the American Peace Society. xxxxxxxxxxx Better death than prostitution” (Ibid). The Advocate of Peace, the official publication of the American Peace Society, confirmed in the June 1918 issue “that the local peace societies have little to do at present except to co-operate with the Government in every way to win the war” (“The Ninetieth Annual Report of the Directors of the American Peace Society” 173). The editor went on to say that “Our work in Nebraska is practically at a standstill” (Ibid). This marked the death knell of the Nebraska Peace Society.

After the war, Weatherly left for a church in Dayton, Ohio, where he stayed for nine years. He then returned to All Souls Unitarian Church for a second ministry in Lincoln. Sorensen, a conscientious objector, was drafted near the end of the war, but his induction was delayed because of the influenza epidemic. By the time of his induction, the armistice had already been signed. He continued to work as a counselor for the Non-Partisan League of Nebraska and was instrumental in stopping the Nebraska State Council of Defense from harassing and repressing Non-Partisan League recruitment efforts. As Robert N. Manley has shown, the State Council of Defense considered itself to be above the Constitution because the war justified any action to maintain loyalty. When the home guard militia arrested members of the Non-Partisan League, the State Council of Defense claimed that the
“guardsmen needed no warrants to enter places where League meetings were held since they acted on the authority of ‘an unwritten, higher law in regard to disloyalty’” (Manley 241). Later Sorensen will serve two consecutive terms as attorney general of Nebraska from 1928 to 1932.

The disillusion after the war with Wilson and the Treaty of Versailles was great. No permanent peace had been established and the world was not made any safer for democracy. Progressives who advocated for social reform were easily painted as socialists or communists. It took the Great Depression to rekindle the desire for progressive reform.
Works Cited


In 1882, a three-man commission was created to engage the Sioux Indians and
convince them to agree to a treaty opening up the Great Sioux Reservation. The federal
government’s goal was to shrink the size of the reservation and force the tribes to live on
smaller parcels of land as farmers. The commission was authorized by way of an
amendment to an appropriations bill known as the Sundry Civil Act of August 7, 1882. It was
supported in Congress by R. F. Pettigrew, Dakota’s delegate to the national legislature.

On March 4, 1882, Pettigrew had introduced a bill in Congress “empowering a
commission to negotiate with the Sioux Indians....” Although Pettigrew’s bill failed, the issue
was advanced rather quickly by way of the appropriation measure. In short order $10,000
appropriated by Congress to pay the expenses of the commission, and a grand plan began
to unfold. Rather than induce a war with the Indians, the government—under pressure
from the public to do something—decided that talking was better than shooting.

The Great Sioux Reservation, as it existed in 1882, consisted of all the land lying west
of the Missouri River in present day South Dakota, except for the Blacks Hills, for a total of
35,000 square miles, worth at least seven million dollars. Throughout the 1860’s and 1870’s,
when there was still thousands of acres of good land east of the Missouri for settlement,
there was little or no pressure on the federal government to take more land by treaty,
except for the gold rich Black Hills, taken in 1877.
By 1882 Dakota found itself in the midst of a booming economy. Between 1878 and 1887 settlers claimed more than 2.4 million acres of land in Dakota. While land fever caused droves of people to exercise their rights under the Homestead Act and other federal land laws, it was railroads, politicians and business interests that were applying the most pressure on Uncle Sam to do what he always did in the past: take more Indian land by treaty.

The commission consisted of Peter C. Shannon, former chief justice of the Dakota Territory Supreme Court, James C. Teller, of Ohio, a younger brother to Secretary of Interior Henry Teller and Newton Edmunds, ex-governor of Dakota. The trio of distinguished men was appointed effective September 15, 1882, with compensation set for each at ten dollars per day.

Newton Edmunds emerged as the leader of the commission. He was a man of considerable experience in dealing with the Indians and the “Indian problem.” He was known as the “Treaty Maker” for Dakota, and always seemed willing to step into the breach, whenever an “Indian problem” arose.

Edmunds first came to Dakota in 1861. About two and one-half years after his arrival, the forceful Newton Edmunds was appointed the second governor of Dakota Territory by President Abraham Lincoln. He served one term as governor but it was enough time for him to put his personal stamp on Dakota, and while he had political enemies, he was generally well-liked and respected. Early on, Edmunds concluded that it was useless
and very costly to make war against the Sioux. It would be better, he insisted, to take a strong position, talk to them and create treaties.

Edmunds went to work in earnest, believing, utterly, in his ability to impose his will on the less sophisticated Indians. His forceful and determined manner made him a natural for dealing with the Sioux and he had negotiated treaties in 1865-1866, following extensive and bloody military campaigns in Dakota. The Indians listened to him while he pretended to listen to them.

The famous Treaty of 1868 created the Great Sioux Reservation which, by its terms, indicated that the parties intended that the huge reservation, including the Black Hills, would be permanent. Unauthorized whites were forbidden to enter any part of the reservation. But since most of the land included in the treaty was believed to be a part of the “Great American Desert,” and therefore essentially worthless, most Americans accepted the restrictions. But the treaty—created at Fort Laramie in far western Dakota Territory—contained a sleeper clause, destined to create problems once people were awakened to the fact that the land was not a part of a desert. It provided that the approval of three-fourths of the male Indian population would be necessary to make any changes to the existing treaty or to establish new treaties.

By laboring toward a new treaty, Edmunds and the other commissioners were advancing the federal government’s policy of assimilation, adopted in the early 1860’s. To assimilate meant to make the Indians live like white men—that is to say, assimilate and isolate. It was never the intent of the government, or religious leaders, to force the natives
and non-natives to actually live side by side, as friends and neighbors. Assimilation was a
nice word with an ugly outcome; for all practical purposes, assimilation was another word
for cultural destruction.

When U. S. Grant became president in 1868, he initiated his own phase of the
assimilation process, called the “Peace Policy.” The goal of Grant’s Peace Policy was to clear
“the Western lands for white settlement” and to usher the Indians into the circle of
civilization. It had some support from reformers and religious leaders, particularly the
Protestants, but Grant met with stubborn opposition and neglect in Congress which refused
to appropriate money to implement it. It wasn’t that men in the House and Senate were
opposed to the idea of peace, or Indian conversion to white ways, it was merely that they
didn’t want to spend money on it, even though doing so would provide protection for white
people.

Military leaders vacillated between supporting assimilation and advocating outright
extermination of the Indians. For example, George A. Custer, a former Civil War general,
was frequently and blatantly outspoken in his low opinion of Indian rights. In an interview
conducted in Ohio, just a few months before he was killed in the Little Big Horn massacre,
Custer spoke to a journalist from the Toledo Journal. Custer cursed the “tomfoolery of the
Quakers and sentimentalists” back East who had long stood in the way of any progress
toward subduing the Indians. It was Custer’s stated belief that “you can’t civilize an Indian
any more than you can teach a rooster to lay goose eggs.”
While few urban Americans were as wildly outspoken in their hatred of Indians, those who lived on the frontier and those wanted to make a home there, were pretty much on the same page as Custer. This included the three men appointed and tasked with breaking up the Great Sioux Reservation. They went about their work in confidence, buoyed up by their firm belief in the righteousness of their cause. When a man believes that a race of people is condemned due to its inherent inferiority, it is easy then, to deny them basic humanity.

To understand the thinking of men like Custer, Edmunds, Shannon and Teller, one should first acquire an understanding of the concept known as “Social Darwinism” and its impact on American thought. The term was drawn from the epic works of the naturalist and scientist, Charles Darwin. Although Darwin was writing about the state of nature in his books, including *Origin of the Species*, he was forced to watch as his survivalist ideas were applied to society and civilization.

The advocates of “Social Darwinism” believed that in human society a struggle was slowly taking place, and those who were primitive, unfit and weak fell away, leaving only those who were strong, intellectually superior and otherwise successful, to fill the ranks of an improved mankind.

Social Darwinism, along with the older shibboleth, “Manifest Destiny,” provided the rationale for upholding the great divide between the rich and the poor, as well as the destruction of the Indian cultures that had for centuries, flourished on the American continent. Just as poor people were believed to be the victims of their own moral failure,
Indian culture was doomed because of its poverty of invention and its inherent inability to compete in the human arena.

If the Indians, as a race, were to be saved, their path to salvation was on the white man’s road to civilization. It was now up to Edmunds, Shannon and Teller to lead them on their way. The team went about its mission with grim determination, as if it represented the last chance for the tribes to see the light and convert.

The instructions from commissioner of Indian affairs in Washington to the commission was to simply visit with the various tribes and ask the Indians if they were interested in selling any of their Dakota Territory land. But Edmunds and his team were not about to ask for anything, for asking was something that Newton Edmunds was not accustomed to do.

The “Edmunds Commission,” as it was called, ignored its instructions and met secretly in Yankton on October 2, 1882. The result was a proposed treaty: a short but deceptive document, consisting of eight articles, designed to trick the Indians. The trick was to conceal the fact that the tribes were actually giving up land. The commission had its sights set on a region of about 16,000 square miles containing approximately 10,240,000 acres, between the Big Cheyenne River on the north and the White River on the South. The rest of the reservation would remain tribal land, but it would be split up into separate entities, with great distances between them so as to isolate the tribes.

Under Edmunds’ treaty, called a “cracker and molasses” treaty, the Indians would receive no cash in exchange for the land they were asked to give up. Instead, the proposed
treaty offered cattle: 1000 bulls and 25,000 cows. These animals were to be distributed proportionately, among the tribes, but the Indians were not permitted to slaughter an animal for food without first getting the consent of the department of interior. The total value of the livestock was about $1,000,000.00. Therefore, if successful in making the treaty, the government would be getting an enormous amount of land very cheap—about eight cents per acre. Edmunds knew that the Indians would understand and see value in receiving cattle as opposed to money that meant very little to them.

Another part of the plan would give parcels of land in the amount of 320 acres to heads of families to own and farm. For every minor child under the age of eighteen, the head of the family received an additional 80 acres. This was not a strong selling point however, for individual land ownership was an alien concept to the Plains Indians. For the Indians, ancestral lands were owned in common, by the tribes. No individual could claim for himself, any portion of the land and defend it against all others.

To assist in the facilitating their work, the commissioners requested an interpreter and a military escort. For an interpreter they had in mind Episcopalian missionary Rev. Samuel D. Hinman, a man who understood the Lakota language very well. Hinman was well-known and experienced, having been an interpreter for the 1868 treaty.

On October 16, 1882, with the proposed treaty drafted to their satisfaction, the commission left Yankton to meet with the tribes. No one in the public or press knew what was in the proposed treaty, and the commissioners wanted to keep it a secret. The three commissioners were confident, and were not all that concerned with the fall weather.
But they were faced with one singular concern: Dakota Territory was about to hang an Indian. The condemned man was Brave Bear, a son-in-law of Sitting Bull. Brave Bear was called a “shrewd and intelligent Indian, one of the incorrigibles,” who had recently been convicted of murdering a white man in 1879. The commissioners insisted that the timing was bad, for, in addition to Sitting Bull, they would have to deal with the condemned man’s father and three brothers at the Standing Rock Agency. For these reasons they made a strong attempt to get the execution postponed. The president, however, would not grant an extension and Brave Bear was hanged in Yankton on November 15, 1882.

The traveling group didn’t wait for the execution; it left Yankton to do some talking and convincing. The entourage included some other well-known religious luminaries in addition to Hinman, including Episcopal Bishop William H. Hare and Catholic Bishop Martin Marty. Both were well-known and well-respected in Dakota, and both were expected to speak on behalf of the treaty and smooth out any rough spots. Hare would prove to be uncooperative, but Marty was willing to and did argue in favor of the treaty. If more persuasion was needed, the commissioners hired “half-breeds” to pitch in.

The entourage traveled about Dakota, stopping at all the agencies, delivering glowing speeches about the glories of the new treaty and how much the Indians would benefit from it. The chiefs were told they would get separate reservations for their tribes, but there were not told that the new agencies would be created on land they already owned.
Sometimes it worked well and sometimes it didn’t. At Pine Ridge, Newton Edmunds was recognized by an Indian who exclaimed: “There is the man that got the Black Hills from us for nothing; get out of here!” Edmunds showed no fear or concern; he merely turned the argument against the Indians and diffused the situation. He insisted that it had cost the government more money to feed and clothe the Indians, as a result of the Black Hills Treaty, than all the gold “the white man has taken from the Black Hills....” When cajoling didn’t work, they tried coercion and threats, telling the chiefs that if they did not agree to the treaty, the army would come and take the entire tribes far away from their ancestral lands to Indian Territory.

The work of the commissioners drew praise from the Yankton press. Although the trio had yet to meet with the up river tribes, their success at Pine Ridge and Rosebud was worthy of printed applause, for they had dealt successfully, with the “worst bands.” Overall the Press and Dakotaiian concluded that “they have succeeded so far almost beyond their expectations.”

A reporter from the St. Paul Pioneer Press questioned Shannon and he talked freely and in detail about the commission’s trip to the Pine Ridge Agency. The ex-judge recalled that the treaty travelers were ushered in to Pine Ridge by a mounted group of warriors in blue uniforms, carrying the American flag. He said that the white men were greeted warmly, and with dignity, by representatives of the Oglala tribe, including the principal chief, Red Cloud. Shannon declared that the Indians were eager to have separate reservations and the promised cattle and schools. He expressed some doubt as to the
willingness of the Indians to adapt to agriculture, but he was certain that they “are natural herdsmen” and would take to cattle-raising “like ducks to water.”

Shannon also talked about their visit to the Rosebud Agency, where he was impressed with the Brule Sioux, noting their progress toward civilization and their eagerness for the proposed treaty. Shannon was more than pleased with the way the process had gone to date, but he cautiously asserted that while they had met in council with the majority of the western Sioux, they still had to meet with the more northern tribes, and was therefore, not willing to “form any conclusions as to what will be done....”

The treaty makers took a break for holidays while, on December 19, 1882, Congress met amid “ugly rumors concerning the operations of the Sioux land commission.” Still, no member of Congress seemed anxious to deal with the matter. The Arthur administration was mum on it as well. Then a Senate resolution came forth, demanding all the paperwork on the treaty. This caused a mild panic among the treaty makers, and Secretary Teller wired Edmunds to get back to work and get the deal done. Finally, after more subterfuge and frantic coercion, the treaty was sent to Washington where Teller hurriedly approved it, as did President Arthur, on February 3, 1883.

But that wasn’t the end of it. The Treaty of 1868 required that three-fourths of the male population approve and sign a new treaty. Edmunds chose to ignore this requirement, reminding his superiors in Washington that when the Black Hills treaty was signed, no one bothered to follow the law. Since it had been violated already, a precedent was set so as to permit a second violation. One can only wonder just what ex-judge Shannon—once a
stickler for following strictly, the rule of law—thought about the blatant violation of law that he now seemed to allow as convenient and appropriate. In his heart of hearts, he must have known it was wrong.

The seriously flawed and incomplete treaty was, nevertheless, presented to the Senate for examination and approval, but the senators seemed to be in no hurry to get at it. Meanwhile in Dakota, the commission continued to hammer away at the recalcitrant Lower Brules and the Crow Creek Indians, who stubbornly refused to agree to the treaty. The inability of the commissioners to convince the Lower Brules to give in caused the Dakota press to wax pessimistic. The Chamberlain Register groaned that the Brules “still hang off about the treaty…” Edmunds and Shannon, however, were not willing to give up and the latter summed up his frustration in a speech to the stubborn Indians.

A few days later, Shannon was talking to a Register reporter about the Brules and was sounding more optimistic. He had attended a church service at the Brule Agency and was impressed with the decorum, the formality and the sermon given by an Indian missionary, Rev. Luke Walker. He insisted that the “singing was exceptionally good” and that the congregation was as “attentive as one will ever see in any white people’s church.”

Although Shannon saw signs of religious progress, the Brules were unrelenting in their opposition to the treaty. They stuck to their beliefs with great tenacity, amid threats that their reservations would be closed down and their people would be hauled off to Indian Territory. The Lower Brules even considered sending a delegation to Washington to appeal directly to the “Great Father.” The worried Indians made plans to sell hides in order
to make enough money to travel to Washington. But hearing this, Shannon and Hinman contacted Secretary Teller and were able to get him to issue an order forbidding the sale of hides.

At Crow Creek the commissioners fared better. White settlers had gathered at the reservation border, ready to rush in and stake out land claims. Some whites actually crossed the line and forcefully occupied the Indians’ cabins and farms. Finally, when all seemed lost, the Crow Creek Indians gave in and “approved” the treaty. At this point the commission deemed its work was finished.

The Crow Creek incident represented the high mark of intimidation, and it convinced some members of other tribes to break down and sign. The Lower Brules, however, held out to the end, refusing to give consent—a gesture that consisted of a touch of the pen followed by the interpreter writing the signers’ names in English. While many Americans were marveling over the wonders of the telephone, and how it would revolutionize communication on the new frontier of technology, the treaty makers were engaged in an old-fashioned attempt to extract consents from reluctant Indians.

But the treaty was destined to fail due to the shortage of signatures. In fact, the number of signatures was “absurdly small in proportion to the number of Indians concerned....” A total of only 384 signatures were collected. While this was sufficient for the commissioners, as time passed, the treaty, approved by Secretary Teller and President Arthur, languished in the Senate. Meanwhile the voices of protest from among Indian rights groups slammed Edmunds’ rationale for collecting so few signatures. Finally, the Senate
decreed that the proposed treaty be sent back to Dakota and another attempt be made to obtain the legally required amount of signatures.

Undaunted the Interior Department reappointed Edmunds, Teller and Shannon to the commission and ordered the crew back to Indian country and get the required amount of signatures. This Edmunds was willing to do as he was determined to make a treaty that would put his name in historical lights for all time to come. Instead of going themselves, however, the commission sent out the indomitable Rev. Hinman for more arm twisting. In April of 1883, Hinman went at it with a passion but at this point, the Indians were so angry and riled up that his efforts were futile. Still, he gave it his all; throughout the spring and summer of 1883, he labored intensely, meeting resistance everywhere. Chief Red Cloud took the lead, insisting that the Indians refuse to sign.

In desperation Hinman padded the total with names of boys under the age of eighteen, including one boy who was only three years old. But it wasn’t nearly enough, and sensing that he was on the losing end, Hinman threw in the towel. Historian George W. Kingsbury, a contemporary of Edmunds and his fellow commissioners, would later write: “it was well understood that the Indians had now assumed a negative position toward the Edmunds agreement.”

People in Yankton had adopted the same opinion. In an article captioned: “Not Very Encouraging,” the *Press and Dakotaiian*, blamed “Pale Faces of the East” for ruining a treaty that had started out with so much promise. The Yankton newspaper also blamed a Senate committee, consisting of Senators Henry L. Dawes, John Logan and James D. Cameron, for
intruding on the work of the Edmunds Commission. The Senate trio was cited for turning the Indians against the treaty.

Despite the heavy doom and gloom, Edmunds, was not ready to give up. He, Shannon and Hinman, along with a delegation of other prominent Dakotans, went to Omaha to meet with the Senate committee. The treaty advocates urged the senators to accept the treaty, even though it lacked the required signatures. The senators were reminded that the Senate had accepted the Black Hills treaty “as is,” without bothering to fuss over signatures. Shannon was cited by the *Dakota Herald* for “giving the senators some pretty direct hints as to the futility of congressional interference and the harm caused thereby.” Showing incredible, condescending gall, the commissioners and their political allies, eager to ignore the law, essentially scolded the senators and blamed congressional foot dragging and meddling, for the lack of a treaty. But for all practical purposes, the game was over and the travesty that tried to be a treaty withered and could not be resuscitated.

The failure of the treaty was bitter medicine for white Dakotans, ready to take a big bite out of someone. The principal target of public wrath was Bishop Hare, whose stubborn opposition to the treaty was seen as the main reason for its defeat. He was called an obstructionist, and was “condemned by the people,” for taking a position outside the mainstream.

Edmunds and his colleagues had overplayed their hand and lost. It wasn’t just the signature issue that undermined the work of Edmunds, Teller and Shannon. The year before the commission was created, a powerful reform organization called the Indian Rights
Association (IRA), came together in Philadelphia. At its head was Herbert Welsh, whose uncle William Welsh had worked on Grant’s Peace Policy. Using the Edmunds treaty as an opportunity to assert itself, the IRA began making inquiries into the methods and means of the commission. It was a bold and gutsy effort by an upstart group of eastern “sentimentalists,” as they were called, and it was loud and strong enough to send a wave of protest from the East to the western plains, thus washing away and exposing all the pretence and lies. The poison in the Dakota gumbo was hatched out for all to see.

Criticism came from unlikely sources. Agent James McLaughlin at the Standing Rock Indian Agency, when interviewed said: “The whole thing was a misapprehension of the meaning of the terms of the treaty with the Sioux made in 1868.” He was referring to the requirement that three-fourths of the adult, male Indians approve the treaty.

In his massive work of history published in 1915, George W. Kingsbury concluded that “certain parties” got to the Indians and convinced them not to approve the treaty unless they were “paid in cash.” He believed had the Indians been offered cash in one-half the amount “to be expended for their benefit,” they would have agreed to the land cession.

But it was the lack of the required signatures and heavy scrutiny from reform groups that proved to be the Achilles’ heel for the Edmunds commission. It led to a rejection of the treaty by the Senate. It never became the law of the land. The Senate committee, headed by Senator Henry L. Dawes, conducted an investigation of the commission and its tactics. Testimony revealed the deceptive nature of the three commissioners, who “tried to conceal the fact that document the leaders signed called for the cession of land.” The
commissioners through their interpreters simply told the Indian people that the one big reservation would be carved up into smaller ones. Nothing was said about the “Great Father” taking the lion’s share of the land.

Dawes personally spoke at “every counsel” and encouraged the Indians to “talk freely.” They did speak and were especially critical of Hinman. Red Cloud, for one, told the committee that “he [Hinman] had “lied outrageously....” Another man, Little No Heart, reminded the committee that when the Indians gave up the Black Hills, they were promised a cow, but did not receive it. He went on to say that the Edmunds commission “again offered the same old government cow...for more of their land.” The Indians, did, however, praise the efforts of Dawes “as the first white man who didn’t want to get something from them besides words.” Dawes, on the other hand, “had cleared the waters and the fish were able to see.” But it was the Indians who made sure Dawes saw the light.

Concerning the required signatures, the Dawes committee made the following conclusion:

“It is claimed by the commission that because we took the Black Hills from these Indians in violation of the 12th article of this treaty [1868] in 1876, we have a right to violate it again and take this land also....[but] any previous violation of it is a disgrace to be shunned not a precedent to be followed.”

The National Indian Defence (sp) Association, joined in the condemnation of the commissioners and “their pliant tools,” including Rev. Hinman. Citing the 400 page Dawes report, the Association condemned the treaty makers who “deceived the Indians in the
most shameful manner,” obtaining signatures to the treaty “by means of falsehood, treachery and threats.” Still, no formal charges were made against the commissioners,

The commissioners were probably not worried about the verdict of history, but they were frustrated by their lack of success. Still, the final act in the drama was something that waited in the future. The commissioners and their knowledgeable contemporaries understood that although the treaty had failed, acquisition of the desired land was inevitable and merely postponed until some time in the future.
PLACE NAME CHANGES AS THE RESULT OF ANTI-GERMAN FEELING IN THE GREAT WAR
Thomas J. Gasque

I’m old enough to remember the Second World War, though vaguely. The name German was very much in the air, and as I learned about germs, I assumed they were somehow the same: both bad. Similarly, the word Nazi, when pronounced /nat-zi/, blended with those pesky insects, gnats. I got over my distrust of Germany and Germans and even spent more than a year living in that country. Nazi, however, still causes me to shudder, even though I know that it is just a shortened form of the word national.

Names are part of language, and both words and names have power. If the connection of words and names to unpleasant events is strong enough, the desire is to get rid of them or to replace them with something more pleasant. I’m not old enough to remember the First World War, but I have found that for some people at the time anything that reminded them of Germany needed to be disposed of.

For most people and for all of us at times, names, like words, simply label; they serve to identify, and little consideration is given the origin of the name or the etymology of the word. If we go beyond that level, we are aware of the relationship of the name to something else, such as the environment which the name describes, the historical events that might have taken place nearby, or the person associated with the creation or discovery of the place. Examples in South Dakota might include, respectively, the cities Sioux Falls, Yankton, and Mitchell. If we are more curious, we seek more information, such as why a
settlement came to be known by the name of the falls on the Sioux River, what the connection between the group known as the Yankton Sioux and the city, and who was Mitchell and why was a town named for him? At the first level, a town named, for example, Berlin, would be simply a label without being concerned that is also the name of a city in Germany. If the residents of a town don’t think about the origin of the name they would not likely to want to change it.

Also, Americans have not been inclined to change names for political reasons, unlike, say, in Eastern Europe in the years after the Bolshevik Revolution when dozens of places were renamed to honor Lenin, most notably Leningrad, which replaced St. Petersburg, or Petrograd. Of course, after the fall of the Soviet Union, the name went back to St. Petersburg.¹

GERMAN NAMES BEFORE THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Many immigrants to this country came from Germany. Some fifty million Americans today identify themselves as having German ancestry, making them the largest ancestry group, ahead of Irish-Americans, English-Americans, and African-Americans. Large numbers of Germans arrived between 1670 and 1760, most of them settling in Pennsylvania and Up-

¹ Adrian Room, Place-Name Changes Since 1900: A World Gazetteer (Metuchen, N. J.: Scarecrow Press, 1979), pp. 82-83. An exception in America, though, is the number of streets whose names were changed after the assassinations of John F. Kennedy in 1963 and Martin Luther King in 1968. See Roger W. Stump, “Toponymic Commemoration of National Figures: The Cases of Kennedy and King,” Names 36.3/4 (Sept./Dec. 1988), pp. 203-16. In the period after Kennedy’s death, one of the earliest recorded place names in the country, Cape Canaveral, was changed in 1963 to Cape Kennedy, but a few years, in 1968, it reverted to its old name and the facility located there was called the Kennedy Space Center. Donald J. Orth, “The Mountain Was Wronged: The Story of the Naming of Mt. Rainier and Other Domestic Names Activities of the US Board on Geographic Names,” Names 32.4 (Dec. 1984), pp. 429-30.
State New York. Most were Lutheran or German Reform (Calvinists), although there were also Moravians and Mennonites. German Catholics did not begin to arrive until after the War of 1812, but between 1820 and the First World War, some six million Germans, of all religious persuasions, arrived. Among these should be counted those Germans who had been living in Russia since the 1700s. The majority of those settled in the Dakotas, Nebraska, and Kansas.²

Most of these immigrants settled in groups. They brought their customs and folkways with them, including naming traditions, and many of their settlements were named to remind them of the places that had left behind. In Pennsylvania in 1681, a village settled by German Quakers and Mennonites was named Germantown. Now a part of Philadelphia, a large neighborhood is still called Germantown.³ In New York the city of New Paltz was settled by Germans from the Palatinate. The town, organized in 1677, honors that region, called in German Pfaltz.⁴

While most place names of German origin in America show loyalty and devotion to the Fatherland, a few honor individuals. Probably the most honored German is Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859), one of the leading scientists of the 19th century. Across the nation, mostly in the Midwest and West, we find 18 counties, townships, towns, and villages that are named for him, plus the largest river in Nevada. Otto von Bismarck, who brought the

---

separate German states together to form the nation of Germany in the 1870s, is also recognized. Seven places, all in the Midwest, commemorate him.\(^5\)

Despite the large number of German immigrants, there are not many German names on the U. S. Map. In the Upper Midwest, Minnesota and North Dakota have the most, far more than Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota. A sample of names from Minnesota includes the townships of \textit{Augsburg} and \textit{Bremen} and the towns or villages of \textit{Cologne}, \textit{Darmstadt}, \textit{Flensburg}, \textit{Frankfort}, \textit{Fulda}, \textit{Hamburg}, \textit{Heidelberg}, \textit{New Munich}, \textit{New Trier}, \textit{New Ulm}, and \textit{Potsdam}.\(^6\) North Dakota has (or had, since many of these places no longer exist) \textit{Berlin}, \textit{Bismarck}, \textit{Bremen}, \textit{Darmstadt}, \textit{Dresden}, \textit{Germantown}, \textit{Hamburg}, \textit{Hannover}, \textit{Leipzig}, \textit{Munich}, \textit{Osnabrock}, \textit{Potsdam}, \textit{Rhein}, and \textit{Trier}.\(^7\)

Iowa has a \textit{Humboldt} County, honoring the German scientist. I found only a few towns: \textit{Schlveswig} (for the province at the border with Denmark), \textit{Hamburg}, \textit{Humboldt}, \textit{Germantown}, and \textit{Westphalia}. A town in Cass County is called \textit{Marne}, for a small town in Germany near Hamburg, and there was a \textit{Berlin} and a \textit{Germania}.\(^8\) In Nebraska, there are

\(^6\) Upham, Warren. \textit{Minnesota Place Names}. 3\textsuperscript{rd} ed. (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2001), pp. 344, 440, 86, 256, 378, 640, 392, 640, 325, 570, 170, 74, 416. The German city is spelled Frankfurt, but Upham claims the name is from that city (p. 640).
several: Bismarck, Breslau, Brunswick, Germanville, Humboldt, Berlin, Frankfort, and Germantown. Not all of these names are still used.⁹

Of all these five states, South Dakota has the fewest place names of German origin. A search of place name sources and post office records yields only one town that is named for a place in Germany, and that one, Frankfort, is highly questionable. Names of two towns near here are German: Humboldt (Minnehaha County) honors the scientist and Chancellor (Turner County) was apparently named for Otto von Bismarck, “The Iron Chancellor” of Germany. Menno (Hutchinson County) honors the founder of the Mennonites; he was actually Frisian, but most of his followers were German. Ziebach County was named for Frank Ziebach. He came to Dakota from Pennsylvania, though his background was certainly German.¹⁰ There are Germantown townships in Turner and Codington Counties, and a German township in Hutchinson, which also has a township named Wittenberg and one named Kassell.¹¹

The difference in the number of German-named towns in the two Dakotas is hard to explain. South Dakota had—and has—many more German-speaking Hutterites than North Dakota. A recent website claims that there are fifty-three colonies in South Dakota and only seven in North Dakota.¹² Since these people had spent several generations in Russia before

---

¹¹ Abate, pp. 634, 654, 655.
coming to America, they would not likely have had any reasons to use place names from Germany.

Despite the uneven distribution, there are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of place names across the country which can be traced to German origins, either for places in Germany or from German surnames. Only a few were affected by the anti-German attitude that affected so much of life during World War I.

THE WAR STARTS

As this conference recognizes, the First World War began in Europe one hundred years ago this year, in August 1914. The causes of the war were many, but the trigger was the assassination in Serbia, on June 29, 1914, of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir apparent to the throne in Austria. This led to Austria-Hungary’s declaration of war on Serbia and Germany’s involvement. On August 4, the United Kingdom declared war on Germany to fulfill their treaty obligation to Belgium, which Germany had invaded. By early August, British Expeditionary troops were in France, digging trenches they would occupy for the next four years.¹³

Whether out of excessive patriotism or excessive boredom, young men in Britain lined up to enlist in this war, and soon anti-German feelings dominated the country. Even the royal family changed its family name. Queen Victoria had married the German nobleman, Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, and that label was applied to the dynasty until July 1917, when by royal proclamation King George V changed the name to Windsor, the name of a

favorite castle. The French changed the name of a Paris street from Rue de Berlin to Rue de Liege, and Eau de Cologne became Eau de Provence. In America the signature German vegetable, sauerkraut, came to be called “liberty cabbage.”

There were few if any German place names in Britain, so changes were not an issue. But in those nations bound to Britain, especially Canada and Australia, names did change. In September 1916, the city of Berlin, Ontario, became Kitchener, honoring Horatio Herbert Kitchener (1850-1916), the British Field Marshal. In Australia many names were changed. At least three Bismarcks, a New Hamburg, and a Heidelberg were given aboriginal names. Names of natural features also changed. Kaiserstuhl became Mount Kitchener, the North Rhine River was changed to Somme Creek, and the South Rhine River to Marne River. Even the name of a favorite pastry changed. The Berliner, a jelly-filled doughnut, became a Kitchener bun.

In a reversal of the usual pattern, Miss Anne Halsey, a woman in New Jersey who raised pigs, hated the Germans so much that she gave her pigs names like Hindenberg and Kaiser Bill so that she wouldn’t feel bad when she had to kill them.

---

14 “House of Windsor,” http://en.wikipedia/wiki/House_of_Windsor. Accessed April 13, 2014. Queen Elizabeth’s husband, Prince Philip, also her cousin, had the surname Mountbatten, which at the time of World War I was translated from Battenberg.
20 New York Sun, July 14, 1918, sect. 5, p. 10.
The United States did not enter the War until April 1917. In the three years before that, attitudes toward Germany were mixed. In North Dakota, where one fifth of the population was of “German stock,” many rejected the war as “needless and foolish,” and they didn’t believe the stories of German atrocities. Some newspapers defended the Germans, and one, Der Staats-Anzeiger, “exulted over German victories.” But most Americans wanted to stay neutral, and President Woodrow Wilson was credited with keeping the U.S. out of the war, a position that led to Democratic victories in the congressional election of 1914. 21 But once we entered the war in 1917, most North Dakotans, like most of the country, gave all-out support for the effort, and a growing number began to be suspicious of anything that reminded them of Germany.22

The number of Americans, even among German-Americans, who did not support the war effort was small. In South Dakota, Hutterites, completely committed to non-violence, were treated with suspicion because of this stance and because they spoke German, and most of the colonies moved to Canada. In North Dakota, the Non-Partisan League, which promoted neutrality in the early years of the War and did not formally support the war in the later years, came under heavy fire from conservatives. A Socialist speaker from California who spoke to a group in Fargo in June 1918, claiming that “sons of farmers were

22 On Standing Rock Reservation, Lakota Sioux performed victory dances, counting coup on an effigy of Kaiser Wilhelm. In a comment loaded with several meanings, one old man proposed that when the war ended, the Kaiser’s punishment should be to give him an allotment of land to earn a living and then to say to him: “Now you lazy bad man, you farm and make your living by farming, rain or no rain; and if you do not make your own living, don’t come to the Agency whining when you have no food in your stomach and no money, but stay on your farm and grow fat until you starve” (Robinson, p. 362).
dying while sons of bankers, merchants, and chamber of commerce members were not,”
was indicted for sedition. The case was thrown out of court, and the judge who threw it out
was ostracized. Businessmen refused to speak to him and crossed the street to avoid him;
even church people moved from the pew he sat in.23

At the national level, The Justice Department tried to put together a list of German
aliens, identifying nearly a half million names, and more than 4,000 were imprisoned.
Accusations including spying for Germany or endorsing the German military. The Red Cross
would not allow people with German surnames to join because of a fear of sabotage. In
Illinois, a German-born man was pulled from his cell as a suspected spy and lynched, and in
Minnesota a minister was “tarred and feathered when he was overheard praying in German
with a dying woman.”24

THE EFFORT TO CHANGE THE NAMES OF PLACES

One of the ways that Americans expressed their antipathy toward the Germans was to
attempt to change the names of places. In May 1918 a U. S. congressman from Michigan,
John M. C. Smith, introduced a bill that would require that the

names of all cities, villages, counties, townships, boroughs, and of all streets,
highways, and avenues in the United States, its Territories or possessions, named
Berlin or Germany, be changed from the name Berlin or Germany to the name of
Liberty, Victory, or other patriotic designation.

23 Robinson, p. 365.
The bill further specified that mail addressed to anyone living in a place called Berlin or Germany “shall be prohibited from transportation or delivery.” The bill did not pass.

A short time later, a letter to the New York Sun picked up the theme. A Mr. R. Kuner from Nutley, New Jersey, wrote:

*What is the matter with the people residing in these German named places? Can’t they get together—and at once, quickly—and immediately rename such places with good American names? We don’t want anything German over here. We have had enough. We don’t want any more. Let us start at once and begin a nationwide movement to discard anything that has the stench of German. Let us begin on the cities, and if these places are majority German let some other city do it for them. It didn’t take Newark long to get busy. We renamed all the German named streets and Newark feels proud of it and relieved.*

*In addition to Potsdam, N. Y.; Kaiser, Mo., and the hamlet in Pennsylvania which boasts of its name ‘King of Prussia,’ we have Berlin, N. H. No doubt a great many more exist.*

*Get busy, you people of these German named places and show the stuff in you by giving your town, city or hamlet a real name, and by real I mean American. Get busy. Wake up. Do something. Be ashamed that you live in a place with a German name. We will all feel mighty proud of you if you do, and you must.*

Neither the congressman nor the letter writer was as persuasive as he hoped to be. Yet the Federal Government became involved in a few changes. In May 1917, one month after the U. S. entered the War, The Justice Department established a Council of National Defense and asked each state to set up its own Council. Duties varied from state to state, including prohibiting speaking and teaching the German language and closing German-

---


26 R. Kuner, Letter to the Editor, New York Sun, September 6, 1918, p. 6.
language newspapers. For some, including Oklahoma, name changes were mandated, and three names were changed. The village of Kiel, in Kingfisher County, named for the important industrial city in the north of Germany, became Loyal, “to show loyalty to the United States.” Bismark [sic], like the capital city of North Dakota, honored Otto von Bismarck, the “Iron Chancellor” of Germany, became Wright (now Wright City), chosen to honor the memory of William W. Wright, the first man from the county to be killed in the war. The town of Korn (spelled with a K), established in 1896 with a post office located in a corn field, was respelled with a C. It’s hard to see how such a simple change of a K to a C might have been demanded by the authorities.

In Missouri, the State Council voted to ask the citizens of Potsdam, Muellerstown, Kaiser, and Hamburg to change the names of their towns “to American names” Potsdam was changed to Pershing, honoring the general who led the American Expeditionary Forces to Europe. I have found no evidence that the others were changed. Germantown, Kansas, became Mercier to “honor a Belgian Catholic Cardinal persecuted by the Germans.” Brandenburg, Texas, was renamed Old Glory, and Thalheim, California, a German name

28 George H. Shirk, Oklahoma Place Names (Norman, Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1965), pp. 1-2, 54, 225-26. I am indebted to Jerry Wilson, of Vermillion, S. D., a native of Kingfisher County, Oklahoma, for first alerting me to the change from Kiel to Loyal.
30 Robert L. Ramsay, Our Storehouse of Missouri Place Names, 2nd ed. (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1973), pp. 61, 121.
which means “valley home,” was simply translated as Valley Home.\textsuperscript{32} Most of these new names did not stick. A few reverted to the German names they had before the War. In Illinois, German Valley was changed in 1919 to Meekin and then, hard feelings forgotten, back to German Valley in 1922.\textsuperscript{33} A little town in Michigan, just northwest of Grand Rapids, was called Berlin because of the many German settlers. After the War the name was changed to Marne, “to honor those soldiers who fought in the Second Battle of the Marne.”\textsuperscript{34} Ironically, Marne is not only a French place name. It is also the name of a small town in Germany, northwest of Hamburg, near the North Sea.\textsuperscript{35} Rather than change their names, at least two places changed the pronunciation. Ber-LIN, New Hampshire, is now BER-lin,\textsuperscript{36} and New Ber-LIN, a suburb of Milwaukee, is New BER-lin.\textsuperscript{37}

**CHANGES IN THE UPPER MIDWEST**

Of the five states of the Upper Midwest, the two with the most German names are the two with the fewest changes. I have found no evidence so far that any of the names in Minnesota or North Dakota were changed. Bismarck, North Dakota, with its clear reference to the founder of the modern German state, apparently was never considered a candidate for change. Berlin, Nebraska, in Otoe County, east of Lincoln, was changed to Otoe during the War, “in honor of the county,” and Germantown (Seward County) became Garland, “in

honor of Ray Garland, a soldier from the vicinity, who died in France. In Iowa, a Kossuth County place was called Germania “because of the concentration of German settlers.” But “to avoid unpleasant associations” in the War, the name was changed to Lakota. Berlin (Tama County) was intended to be Bellin, “for a town in Scotland,” but the post office misread the application and it came back as Berlin. “The name was used until World War I, when hostile attitudes toward everything German” resulted in changing the name to Lincoln.

THE CASE OF RHINE CREEK

Most of the names discussed so far have been the names of towns and villages, but there is one name in South Dakota that came under attack during the war. Through the city of Yankton flows a small stream called Marne Creek. As early as 1859 it was known as Rhine Creek, resembling the great German river in name only. In his history of Yankton, Robert Karolevitz mentions the creek a number of times, and the image we get is not as pleasant as the one we may have today. In 1883 a notice from the city marshal demanded that anyone having manure or rubbish in their alleys should dump it in the Rhine near the railroad bridge. Not surprisingly, a few years later, August 31, 1889, an editorialist in the Yankton Press and Dakotan wrote that “the water of the Rhine is sufficiently tinctured with poisonous ingredients to destroy life. A considerably number of cattle have died from the effects of this water. Other animals have died from the effects of the poison in the

---

38 Fitzpatrick, pp. 109, 131.
39 Dilts, pp. 112, 117.
carcasses of the Rhine’s victims.” The writer goes on to say that in the interest of public health, the creek should be cleaned up. But that didn’t happen. Six years later, in 1895, in light of widespread illness in the city, the Press and Dakotan noted: “A physician asked what he thought might produce sickness in Yankton, said it might be the Rhine, ... [which] is liberally served with manure ...” But it wasn’t until the 1930s that a serious effort was made to clean up the creek, work done by the Civil Works Administration, a forerunner of the Works Projects Administration (WPA). By then it was no longer Rhine Creek.40

It occurred to me that the bad condition of Rhine Creek would have made it an appropriate name for those who found any reminder of things German to be offensive, like Miss Halsey’s naming her pigs Hindenburg and Kaiser Bill; but it was during World War I that the name Rhine was dropped in favor of Marne, the name it still has today.

Marne Creek commemorates the name of a river in France, the location of two major battles during the Great War. The First Battle of the Marne was early in the war, beginning September 5, 1914. French and British troops stopped the German advance on Paris, and the eight-day battle marked the beginning of trench warfare.41 The Second was late in the war, July 15-August 6, 1918, finally stopping the German attempt to reach Paris. The Allies, including American troops, pushed the Germans back, marking the beginning of the end of the war with Germany, the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm on November 9 and the Armistice

on November 22. It was this battle that the present name of the creek in Yankton commemorates.

CONCLUSION

In this brief discussion I have touched on only a few examples of changes and attempted changes. No doubt there are many more. But in the end, not many German names were changed, and those that were changed were of very small places. The eminent scholar of names, George R. Stewart, sums up the issue this way:

_There was plenty of hatred and hysteria [during the War], but the attitude seemed to be: “It’s our name now!” Moreover, two hundred years of German immigration had planted thousands of names; an unlettered American could not distinguish German from Iroquoian, and might himself be of German origin. When Germantown in Texas made the change [to Schroeder], the citizens honored a local boy killed in France, not realizing or caring that Schroeder was a thoroughly German name._

German culture is so much a part of American life that it is not surprising that any serious effort to root out German-ness was doomed to fail. We still have sauerkraut, and I suspect that children no longer confuse Germans and germs.

---

43 Stewart, p. 373.
World War I and Stained Glass
Dr. Barbara Johnson

Before Roy Rogers and John Wayne…..before Bugs Bunny and Mickey Mouse… before the FBI, CIA and WPA… Before the Space Shuttle and Sputnik and the Hindenberg… Before Saigon, Nuremberg … and Pearl Harbor… Before the Pill and Pampers and Penicillin… Medicare and Social Security… Before the Sears Tower and the Twin Towers… the In Crowd and the “A” Train and Tupperware and the refrigerator…Before the Iraq War, the Gulf War, the Cold War, the Vietnam War, the Korean War and the Second World War…There was the GREAT WAR… World War I, the First World War….

...THE WAR TO END ALL WARS.

In this litany that introduces his work, Richard Rubin in “The Last of the Doughboys: The Forgotten Generation and their forgotten World War” thus characterizes and places in a historical context the cataclysmic world event that cost more than three million young men and women their lives. Memorials to these brave soldiers took many forms, including a large number of stained glass windows - both in Europe and America. These art works employed a craft that was older than any of this catalogue of events, an art almost more ancient than time itself.

Colored glass, the key element of stained glass works, is created when sand and metallic oxides are heated to the molten state, either naturally by lightening. They may also be heated in a large furnace where the raw materials are fused. This naturally created substance - glass- was first used in art work that portrayed men and women who were
saints--warriors for Christ who gave their lives in a Holy War. The early use of this art form started a trend to memorialize those who also gave their lives in many other wars including the American Revolution, the American Civil War and World War II. The stained glass of the World War I era, however, is especially important because it was created during the flowering of the Arts and Crafts movement. Handcrafted stained glass was extremely prevalent during this era. During this time, the age old techniques were revitalized by a world torn apart by the burgeoning use of technology and mechanization. Stained glass became extremely popular and wide spread in ecclesiastical and governmental settings, as well as in private homes. The art form lent itself especially well to use in memorials to battles, armies, as well as individual soldiers. Stained glass could tell the stories of the sacrifices in a beautiful and permanent way. The windows were graphic as well as personal reminders of all that had been endured. It could celebrate patriotic and spiritual themes at the same time.

Because the actual battles of the Great War took place in Europe, the stained glass “Over There” is perhaps the most graphic. It portrays specific battles and does not shy away from illustrating the horrors of the war. At the Lafayette Escadrille Memorial near Versailles, France, World War One Flying Aces are honored in the stained glass. Between 1916 and 1918 more than 200 Americans flew with the French and are credited with 199 air victories. Sixty three of the Americans, many from the American West, were killed in action and two others died of illness or accident prior to the Armistice. Many are buried at this memorial in France. One window here portrays an eagle, representing the American
Forces, protecting the cathedral at Rheims, France. Another window shows the aviators of the Lafayette Flying Corps supporting French tanks in their push against the Craonne plateau in 1917. A third window shows a swarm of aircraft diving on German positions near Chateau-Thierry, the scene of major American fighting in 1918.

On this side of the Atlantic, major battles of World War I are shown in the stained glass windows at Memorial Hall in City Hall in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. The military operations at the Somme, St. Eloi, Jutland, Vimy Ridge, Lens, Passchendaele, Sanctuary Woods, Cambrai, Mons and Sapa Flow are all vividly illustrated. Canadian Regimental and Divisional insignia are also prominently portrayed. Some of the windows show warriors struggling with large artillery pieces or helping civilians flee from their war torn county.

An especially vivid representation of the horrors of battle are also shown in a window installed in the Knox Presbyterian Church, in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. According to Jonathan F. Vance in his article “Sacrifice in Stained Glass Memorial Windows of the Great War” the horrible human cost of the war is expressed in a very visual form. “The dominant vocabulary... was one of Christian sacrifice and was entirely consistent with the religious interpretation of the war as it had been articulated during the war,” Vance wrote. By focusing on the defense of Christianity against Germany as the pagan enemy, the war was portrayed as a crusade. There was a connection between the soldier and Christ, all strong elements of the public and religious wartime discourse. Through the windows, congregations across the country, affirmed that four years of war had done little to shake their patriotic assumptions or religious values under which they had gone to battle in 1914.”
At the center of the window is the Risen Christ and spanning all 5 panels there are medieval knights representing the virtues of fidelity, nobility, honor, patience, sincerity, brotherly love and charity are shown. Below the knights, images of soldiers. One wounded doughboy is tended by a nurse, another gazes up at Christ and a third covers his face with his hands. The battlefield is littered with the dead and dying and a smoking artillery piece. A village in ruins is shown and a penitent figure is seen praying at a wayside chapel. These warriors are depicted as soldiers of Christ and the entire windows draws a “direct parallel between the Knights and the values they represent and the.... Soldiers of the Great War.”

The relationship between Christ and the individual soldier was perhaps best articulated by British poet Sargent Joyce Kilmer who also penned the well-known poem about trees. Kilmer wrote at the this shortly before he was killed in battle on July 30, 1918. Kilmer was considered a leading American Roman Catholic poet and was often compared to his British contemporaries such as G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc. He enlisted in the New York National Guard and was deployed to France in 1917. He was killed by a sniper’s bullet at the Second Battle of Marne at the age of 31.
My shoulders ache beneath my pack
(Lie easier cross, upon my back)
I march with feet that burn and smart
(tread holy feet, upon my heart)
Men shout at me who may not speak
(they scourged thy back and smote thy cheek)
I may not lift a hand to clear
My eyes of salty drops that sear
(Then shall my fickle soul forget)
My rifle hand is stiff and numb
(From thy pierced palm, red rivers come)
Lord, thou didst suffer more for me
Than all the hosts of land and sea
So let me render back again
This millionth of Thy gift
Amen

The connection between the doughboys and Christ is strongly suggested in the stained glass at the Fort Richardson Post Chapel in Alaska. The windows contain the insignia of the army branches as well as a war weary soldier who walks with Christ. This image is similar to one at the United Methodist Church in Pittsfield, Illinois. The window, given by a parishioner, is dedicated to the “Soldier Boys of the World War.” It features the inscription “Surely he has borne our grief and carried our sorrows.”

Military insignia and the American flag are prominent images in the windows of the Lexington, Nebraska First United Methodist Church. The town is named after the New England village where the American Revolution began and its Nebraska counterpart is proud of its military heritage and affiliations dating back to the Civil War. These windows were donated by the local veteran’s group, Reno Post No. 112, Department of Nebraska,
and while they show no graphic images of battle, they celebrate the victory and honor local soldiers.

Hot Springs, South Dakota also has a strong military heritage going back to the Civil War. Vibrant windows at St. Luke’s Episcopal Church honor Civil War veterans. The town is also home to two military hospitals and has a rich history of caring for the wounded of war. The images in the windows here, however, do not illustrate the horrors of war. Instead, the windows are a tribute to the caring nature of the community and its role in restoring veterans to health so they may participate in the life of a peaceful nation. At St. Anthony of Padua Church in Hot Springs a soldier is shown praying to Christ and a wounded soldier being given flowers by a visitor, demonstrating the Christian value of charity. There are images of tanks in one window, however, they are presented in the context of peace.

Perhaps one of the most interesting World War One stained glass stories in South Dakota can be found in Hoven, a small, rural community in the middle of the state. The sale of Liberty War Bonds financed the construction of the elaborate, ornate church and paid for the beautiful stained glass there as well. There were five Liberty Fund drives between May 1917 and May 1919 and each was oversubscribed in Potter County, where Hoven is located. South Dakota was part of the Ninth Federal Reserve District, which was in charge of distributing the bonds by selling them to local banks or directly to the residents. The county established a Liberty Loan committee headed by prominent local businessmen. A card index was prepared and contained the amount and value of land owned, other property owned, amount of indebtedness, estimate of net worth and yearly income, amounts
subscribed to the Red Cross and other war charities and subscriptions to previous loans. An allotment for each person in the county was prepared, and according to the county history “for the most part there was no protest ... the people of the county were merely waiting to find out how much they were expected to do and they would do it.” About $800,000 in Liberty Bonds were bought by the people of Potter County, an average of $200 for every man, woman and child in the county. “At the close of the war there was probably not a person in Potter County, who could be reasonably expected to own a bond or bonds, who did not own at least a $50 bond and there were many children and people of very limited means who had never been asked to buy bonds, who had one or more to their credit,” the local newspaper editor bragged. Arthur R. Rogers, chairman of the 9th District Federal Reserve War Loan Organization, said the program would make “better Americans” and that the people of his district “have laid always for a rainy day millions of dollars in the world’s best securities.” In his final report, Rogers asserted that the extensive fundraising “made better American citizens with a deep and abiding faith in American institutions.”

When the securities came due in 1923, Monsignor Anthony C. Helmbrecht of what was then called St. Bernard’s Church in Hoven, asked his parishioners for help to pay for the beautiful new edifice in the community. Between 1912 and 1923, worship had been held in the basement of a dugout in Hoven after the original church was battered and destroyed by a severe summer storm. In his annual report to the parish in 1917—in both German and English—, Helmbrecht observed that his parishioners had generously contributed more than $17,000 to just one of the Liberty Fund drives. It is interesting to note that most of the
parishioners were of German ancestry and perhaps were anxious to demonstrate their loyalty to and patriotism for their new homeland. In the words of the parish history, “During World War I, Liberty Bonds were sold to aid our country in the tremendous cost of the war effort. Hovenites, although many of them newly come to America themselves, patriotically did their best to help their new country. It was these bonds that many chose to give to Fr. Helmbrecht as he went from house to house to urge his parishioners to donate for the new church.” When the building was completed in 1923, the parish was free of the debt of the construction costs.

At least one parishioner, 23 year old John J. Peters died during the conflict. He is buried in Flanders Field in France. Peters was a Private First Class, in the 34th Engineer Regiment of the United States Army and was drafted in June 1917. He applied for an exemption from service to help his father on the family farm near Tolstoy, but his request was denied by the local draft board, chaired by the chairman of the Tolstoy bank, who noted that Peters “has 2 brothers younger than him and over 12 years old and at home that probably could support the parents.” According to the Hoven Diamond Jubilee Historical Book, the Peters family immigrated to America in 1887. They homesteaded about four miles east of Hoven in a small sod house that they later expanded as the family grew. They ultimately had eight children, including three girls and one son older than John. The town history also relates that the Peters family “tried farming as they had in Germany, sowing the seed by hand, then cutting it by hand with a big scythe. They threshed it by spreading it out on the ground and having horses tramp it. They then put it through sort of a fanning mill."
For heat they had a straw burner. The history also notes that the elder Peters took photographs, did watch repairing, and tested eyes in his home. The elder Peter lost his eyesight and was blind for many years before he died in 1933. The military records note that young John Peters died of tuberculosis or other respiratory disease such as influenza.

The American Legion post in Hoven was named after him. While the windows in the Hoven church are not specifically war related and contain no obvious military symbolism, several of the windows speak to living in a land of exile and the agricultural nature of the community. They also reflect the cultural values of hard work and paternalism prevalent in the community.

Finally, the ultimate goal of the War, Peace, is the theme of the window dedicated to World War One soldiers at the University of Minnesota at Moorhead. The figure of a woman—probably Lady Liberty—is the center piece of this triptych window. She carries a sword that is lowered in a gesture of harmony and reconciliation. Palm branches and other symbols of peace adorn and surround the window. The panel of the figure representing liberty and Peace is flanked by two other panels containing figures. On the left, there is a young man in a panel entitled “Self Sacrifice.” He lifts a palm or laurel branch in supplication and while he is armed, his sword is contained within its scabbard. On the right, a female figure portrays “undying loyalty,” perhaps representing the sacrifices of those on active duty as well as those who assisted at home. Again, these windows do not relate the horror of war, but are more ascetic in nature. They honor and glorify the sacrifices American Doughboys made without dwelling on the physical or mental hardships these men
suffered and endured. While American troops bled and died and suffered from the atrocities of war, they returned home, their communities chose to frame their sacrifices in comforting and safe imagery. What was apparently important to remember was not the horrors, but the preservation of proud ideals—at least for a short time—by the War to End All Wars.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Johnson, Barbara, consulting scholar.  “*Light of the Prairie: South Dakota Stained Glass.*”  Stephanie Rissler, Producer.  South Dakota Public Television. 2013.  DVD.


Potter County News.  “*Potter County Asked to Buy $175,000 Victory Bonds.*”  Gettysburg, Potter County, South Dakota.  April 17, 1919.  Pg. 1.

Potter County News.  “*Did They Quit?*”  Gettysburg, Potter County, South Dakota, April 15, 1919.  Pg. 8.
Potter County News. “Liberty Loan Allotment has been reached: Potter County Comes through with the full amount of Liberty Loan Allotment.” Gettysburg, Potter County, South Dakota. May 15, 1919. Pg.1.

State of South Dakota 1915 Census. John J. Peter census card, Potter County, Logan Township, Card No. 182.


Townsley, J.B. and Harris, Chas.E. In the World War:1917-1918-1919. Potter County, So. Dak. With the Colors from Potter County. Townsley and Harris, publishers. Gettysburg, S.D. 1919


Banishing Loneliness By Creating Community
The Golden Age of Agriculture: 1910-1920
Ruth Page Jones

During the Golden Age of agriculture, 1910-1920, American farmers were experiencing a new prosperity. Their extra income allowed them to indulge in consumer goods like cameras, mail order items, and new automobiles.\(^1\) By 1920, fifty-three percent of farmers in the Midwest owned cars compared to twenty-five percent of all non-farm households in America. These automobiles were highly valued because they spared horses, saved time and labor, and enhanced social life.\(^2\) While farmers were prospering as never before, they were also migrating in large numbers from farms to cities, escaping the isolation and drudgery of rural life. Between 1890 and 1920, the number of people working in agriculture dropped from forty-two and one half percent to less than a twenty-five percent of the nation’s employed.\(^3\) What about those who stayed? How did they cope with the harsh conditions on the farm?

This paper examines the consumer choices displayed in three related photo postcards during the Golden Age in South Dakota to determine what these choices tell us about the societal values of this particular time and place. Living in a sparsely populated, rather desolate rural area, the subjects in these photographs chose to purchase items that made life more fun, connected them to their community, and enhanced quality of life for themselves and their society. These photos give

---
evidence that, rather than suffering a lonely life, some people in rural America overcame their isolation by actively creating and documenting opportunities for social interaction.

This photo postcard from 1917 captures the intriguing dichotomy between that new prosperity and the harshness of rural life in this era. Here we see five people dressed in clothes from another century, enjoying life in an open-top motor car eager to drive out of a muddy, treeless, primitive-looking farmyard. Behind them flat, empty fields stretch to the horizon. The hand-hewn fence, towering windmill, fieldstone barn, two buggies and a horse stand testament to a life of hard work. How could they be so happy in this desolate environment?

Called Real Photo postcards, these vernacular photographs were quite popular between 1907 and 1930. In Folk Photography, cultural critic Luc Sante tells us these Real Photo postcards
satisfied a popular documentary impulse that faded with time. The images were less spontaneous and more composed than snapshots, less formal than studio photography, less artistic and more matter-of-fact than art photography. Sante claims that photo postcards were typical in small towns on the plains, “whose lonely citizens felt an urgent need to communicate with absent friends.”

Three Photos

Vernacular photographs, made for and by ordinary people, present great potential as primary sources for revealing the value system of the subject and the society in which they lived. In the introductory essay to the book, Real Photo Postcards, Todd Alden places them in the context of here-and-now,

*Intended to be sent through the mail for a particular and familiar audience, real photo postcards are time-bound registrations of particular things, events, people, or places. Sharing little in common with the pretensions of timeless art, these messages have a workmanlike quality, bearing the characteristic markings of a local, vernacular message intended to be useful only for a short period of time.*

The first photo postcard (found amongst several photographs of my father’s family living in rural South Dakota) suggests competing stories. In this black and white photo postcard, five people pose for the camera in an open-top automobile parked in a farmyard in the early part of the twentieth century. The foreground and background reveal two separate narratives. The foreground, dominated by five passengers ready to travel in an automobile, tells about movement and enjoyment of life. The background illustrates the harshness of everyday life on a farm just after the turn of the last century.

---

The passengers look ready to drive off to the lower-right with no obvious road in sight. Mud is visible on the wheels and running board. All five of the passengers look intensely at the camera without smiling. Sante warns us not to interpret solemn expressions as solemn feelings. Photography convention had not yet required subjects to smile; that came later with movies and advertising.\(^6\) Body language, composition and setting can be interpreted to conclude that the five people seated in the automobile were enjoying themselves this day.

In the background we see evidence of a working farm. The line between earth and sky cuts across the center of the photograph, left to right. The sky itself is completely blank, but there are many items of visible interest on this line between earth and sky. To the far left we see the front and roofline of a small shed. Moving to the right, behind a handmade fence, appears to be the house garden space and then a flat field stretching to the horizon. Only the bump of a haystack gives shape to this landscape. A little further to the right, not quite center, emerges the tallest item in the picture, a windmill that ascends to the top of the photo. A wooden hay wagon stands in front of a stone barn to the right of the windmill. The last objects we see on this line between earth and sky are two buggies and a horse. In the space between the line just described and the front of the photo, we see nothing but dirt, mud, tire tracks and the automobile with its passengers.

By examining an enlarged digital copy of the postcard, the year 1917 becomes visible on the license plate. Time of year is more difficult to discern as there is no plant life, no trees, and no shrubs to indicate season. The only clues come from the passengers’ light coats, and a blanket over the older woman’s lap. Behind the fence appears to be an end-of-season garden, leading to conjecture that this photo was taken in early spring or late fall.

\(^6\) Luc Sante, *Folk Photography*, 14.
The names of the passengers are handwritten on the back of the postcard, in positions matching their seating arrangement: back row ‘Charlie, Grandma, Ern’ (behind driver), front row ‘Frank, Bernice’.

To fully understand the meaning in this postcard, we should consider the different perspectives of people viewing this image as it was created and after it was created. Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins introduced the concept of “the intersection of gazes” to be found in photographs and how the social context impacts meaning of the photograph.\(^7\) The most important gazes to consider when evaluating vernacular photos for historical meaning are the subject’s gaze, the intended viewer’s gaze, the photographer’s gaze, and the historian’s gaze. In vernacular photos, the subject, most likely, is in more control of the composition than the photographer. Finding meaning in vernacular photos then requires asking what the subject hoped to convey to the intended audience. The historian’s view is called the academic view by Lutz and Collins and its aim is to “make the pictures tell a different story than they were originally meant to tell, one about their makers and readers rather than their subjects.”\(^8\) In this study, we are the historian, looking back in time and reading a new story in these images.


\(^8\) Lutz and Collins, “The Photograph as an Intersection of Gazes,” 370.
The subjects in this photo are simultaneously gazing at the photographer and the intended recipients. Printed as a postcard, we can infer that sharing the image with distant friends or relatives was the purpose of the photograph. There is no evidence in the photograph to suggest who owned the camera and who clicked the shutter for this picture. It could have been a friend, relative or a small-town entrepreneur, traveling the area taking pictures on commission. The postcard could have been printed in a local darkroom or the film could have been mailed to a photo processing lab. In this era, there was even a small one-step automatic postcard printer offered by Rochester Optical Company for only $7.50.⁹

This image is full of intriguing details and contradictions, primitive and modern co-existing. Most obvious of these is the large motor car dominating the view, while a horse and two buggies are clearly visible in the background, highlighting the contrast between new and old, modern and old-fashioned. Another new and old contrast exists between the young woman in her light open-neck blouse and the older woman in her dark to-the-chin dress.

The picture raises intriguing questions about the message being created for the intended viewer’s gaze. With three young men in the car, why is a young woman in the driver’s seat? The mud on the car appears to be the only thing that connects the background story with the foreground story. Why didn’t they clean the car for this picture? Where is the house and why was it not chosen as the backdrop? The background is a primitive farm, with hand made fence, stone barn, wooden hay wagon, buggies and a horse all lined up, left to right. The windmill, the flat, endless prairie, and no visible road contribute to the sense of a physical space ‘in the middle of nowhere’. The foreground tells

⁹ Luc Sante, *Folk Photography*, 10.
an entirely different story. Here we, with our ‘historian’s gaze’, see five people packed in an automobile with a woman at the wheel, ready to drive ‘somewhere’ towards a new adventure that is sure to be fun.

The photo has duality and complexity, in that we can read both intended and unintended meanings through the choices they have made. As intended, this picture captures a close group of people illustrating pride in their possessions and an eagerness to enjoy experiences away from the farm. The contrast between old and new, primitive and modern, nowhere and somewhere, desolation and anticipation, tells the unintended story of choice between embracing loneliness or community in rural America.

The same subjects are to be found in two additional pictures, along with a business card advertising the Page Orchestra from Stickney, South Dakota. The name of an instrument is typed in each of the four corners. Handwritten next to the instrument is a person’s name, “Violin: Charles, Frank: Drums, Ernest: Cornet.” Next to piano, there are three names: “Gibbs, Parkins, Marjoret.”
From this photo and its text we can be sure this group has placed a high value on making music and performing in public. In their choice of clothing, the men have each chosen to display some uniqueness of personality. With the business card providing evidence they perform in public, the stiff poses and tightly cropped frame hint to us this picture has been framed to help advertise their services. The stylish wallpaper in this background speaks to a desire to create beauty where possible, in contrast to the bleakness of the outdoor landscape. The position of the older woman is intriguing. By virtue of being the only one standing, she is given an elevated position in the group, but her location behind the foursome and beside the piano makes her appear smaller. Therefore, signifying
her role is important to the people in the picture, but not as important to their function as an orchestra. Based on the caption and the business card, “Mother Page” is not a performer with this orchestra.

The third photo is another pose of the four musicians standing outside with their instruments. To the left of the photograph, we see barren landscape, highlighting again the contrast between their harsh living environment and their consumer choices to enjoy life. Once again, this photograph illustrates a strong value system regarding music and performing. Bringing the instruments outdoors for a posed photo clearly indicates the importance of creating this photo to these participants. The effort to pose this photo twice, in two completely different locations, underscores the value they placed on capturing this tableau. One can speculate, that, as a musical group, their gaze is looking at future audiences for their music.
In his discussion of photography in “The Photographic Message,” Roland Barthes, describes photographs as having two meanings; the denoted message, the image itself, and the connoted message, the coded message which can be signified by the chosen pose, the arrangement of objects, the syntax of multiple photographs, and any associated text. In analyzing any photograph, careful examination of all elements of the pose should be considered and evaluated.¹⁰

Having examined the messages of these three photographs without specific knowledge of individuals, we can now review the connoted message signified by the three photographs collectively, as they reveal the subjects’ values about their possessions, their relationship to each other, and about themselves. The pictures clearly reveal pride in the possession and use of an automobile and musical instruments. Mother Page is obviously a valued and involved member of this group. Even though she is older than the others, they included her in the joy of the automobile ride, and gave her a position in one of the orchestra pictures. The three men managed to convey their individuality by their choice of clothing and instrument. The business card and formal poses of the orchestra provide evidence of their interest in connecting to other members of the community, by performing in concert or supplying the music for a community dance. Using the automobile to enjoy experiences off the farm adds to the evidence for connecting to community.

**The People**

Studying these pictures and researching the lives of each of the subjects illuminates the social and cultural life of young adults living in remote, sparsely populated areas with few modern conveniences in the early part of the twentieth century. The historical perspective helps to further decode the messages in this group of photos. During this time period, many country people in

---
America were migrating to the cities. According to William Bowers, in *The Country Life Movement*, causes were mostly economic and technological, but dissatisfaction with rural life contributed to this migration, including “alleged general sterility of farm life.” By studying the lives and society of the people in these pictures, it becomes clear the sterile farm life was not a universal experience.

Additional details about these individuals, the Page orchestra, and the community in which they lived, shows how the values displayed in these photos contributed to the quality of the social and cultural life of their society. These pictures are taken at the Page homestead in Dudley Township, Aurora County, South Dakota. The subjects are a mother, her three bachelor sons, and a young woman from Indiana who is boarding with the family while teaching in the country school across the road. In the automobile picture, my grandfather, Ernest Page, age twenty-seven, is seated in the back seat behind Bernice Gibbs, twenty years old. The mother is Sarah Breiner Page, age seventy. Beside her is Charles (Charlie) Page, age twenty-nine, and in front of him is Frank Page, thirty-one years old.

**The Society**

The Page brothers lived on land their parents had homesteaded in rural South Dakota in 1892. The farm was located close to the southeast section of Dudley township, in the southeastern part of Aurora County in South Dakota. This part of the country was broad, rolling prairie where the buffalo roamed before the Indians were displaced and homesteaders arrived in the early 1880’s, eight years before South Dakota became a

---

The rural township registered a grand population of 264 people in 1910 and peaked in 1915 at 311. The county reached its highest population of 7,246 in 1920. Along with the majority of their neighbors, the three brothers did not attend high school. Although the 1915 South Dakota census reports eighty-nine percent of county residents older than eighteen ended their formal education before graduating from high school, close to one hundred percent of everyone older than nine years was literate. The population was still relatively young with one-third of those over eighteen not yet married and 890 single men outnumbering the 455 single women almost two to one. In the county census of 1915, individuals under the age of twenty comprised forty-seven percent of those living in the county. The economy was based on raising hogs and cattle, cultivating acres in cash crops, and selling milk, butter and cream from dairy cows. Of the sixty-five farms in Dudley township, thirty-seven were occupied by the owner and thirty-two by a renter. The farmers planted most of their cash crop acres in wheat (fifty-four percent), corn (thirty-nine percent) and oats (eight percent) with a smattering of acres planted in barley and speltz. Although sparsely populated and fully engaged in the farm economy, the Pages and their neighbors established institutions and organized entertainment that brought the community together. With a population density of just over seven persons per square mile,

---

13 “History of Our County and State,” Compiled by Donald Dean Parker from all known historical accounts of the county (Brookings, SD: Sout Dakota State College, 1960) 19A-20A.
14 “History of Our County and State,” 20A.
16 “History of Our County and State,” 21A.
17 Third Census of the State of South Dakota, 47-48,68.
18 Ibid., 18,22,52.
this township supported two churches, five schools, and three cemeteries. A history of Dudley township, written in 1983, relates the following venues for entertainment in the early years; a cornet band with nineteen members, a literary society, a ball team, ice cream socials, oyster suppers, Fourth of July celebrations, bazaars and dances held in individual homes.¹⁹

Life on a farm in South Dakota still meant hard work without modern conveniences. No running water, no electricity, no radio, no paved roads, few motorized tractors, very cold winters with lots of snow, very hot summers with flies and mosquitoes. Homes were heated with a hard coal heater in the living room and cooled with cross breezes from open windows. Families preserved fruits and vegetables for home use, raised chickens for eggs, raised hogs and cattle to sell and butcher for their own use, milked cows to sell milk, butter and cream, planted wheat and corn, oats and hay with four horses pulling the plow, drove horse and buggy to church and market, sent their children walking to a country school carrying a lunch pail. The most modern convenience may have been the telephone, connecting on a party line, with a live operator and neighbors listening in on conversations. Although many farmers bought their first automobile by this time, horse and buggy was still a common form of travel, moving about two-three miles per hour.²⁰

Quality of Life

This was where and how, and among whom, the Page family and their schoolteacher boarder lived in 1917. This is the life we see in the background of the first photo; barns and fields

---

¹⁹ *Aurora County History* (Stickney, SD: Aurora County Historical Society, 1983) 48-50.
²⁰ Hershell Page, phone interview, Mesa, AZ, March 2012.
and buggies and mud. What about life in the foreground? How did these five people find ways to enjoy themselves and make life on the farm worth living? How did they influence quality of life for their neighbors?

The three brothers taught themselves how to play drums, violin and cornet by subscribing to correspondence lessons from a Chicago firm. One of their sisters, Agnes Page Bielfeldt, was able to read music and did provide some assistance. A document in the family history collection describes the importance of the purchase of the Kimball brand piano in 1898 for $300, “There were other things needed more than a piano at that time, but it was a delight for the family, always.” The time, effort and cost to buy the instruments and learn music reveal the high value they placed on music making.

The Page Orchestra was their vehicle to engage in one aspect of the social life of their community. Dance events were an incredibly popular form of entertainment during this era; the brothers performing in houses, barns and dance halls. The local Stickney history reports a 1914 New Year’s Day celebration starting with a rabbit hunt (they caught sixty-six rabbits), followed by an oyster supper at a local restaurant, and culminating with a dance at the town hall, music provided by the Page Orchestra.\textsuperscript{21} Family history suggests the band may have started about 1910. For traveling purposes, they used a suitcase organ. The piano player changed over time. One of the players, Mabel Downing, purchased the organ, and later sold it to Charlie Page.

Notes from the family history shed more light on the dance culture of that era in this locality. Most people used horse and buggy to get to the dances, and some dances could be up to twenty-five to thirty miles away. With no lights on the buggies, many dances continued through the

night and the host served breakfast before sending everyone home. The Page family hosted some bowery dances themselves, in their hog barn. During the war years, 1917-1918, as young men were leaving for war, the orchestra often performed several nights in a row. Ernest was one of many young American men who served in World War I. As soon as word was received that the Armistice had been signed, a dance was quickly organized and the Page Orchestra, without Ernest, performed. The dances always ended with the song “Show Me the Way to Go Home,” a song about ending a fun night at the place you most value, your home. The last line of the song spoke to their satisfaction with the lives they were living, “No matter where I roam, On land or sea or foam, You can always hear me singing the song, Show me the way to go home.”

Ernest’s postcard collection from that era helps us understand how important these dances were to the young community at that time. Ernest collected many postcards and saved those mailed between 1910-1922 in a scrapbook that survives today and provides a wonderful record of communication during that era. Nine samples are transcribed to illustrate the value of the dance in this society. These first two messages tell us postcards were a means of advertising the dances. The next card, mailed to Ernest to solicit service, indicates that Page Orchestra may have been paid to

---

22 Page Family Collection.
perform. The last three messages are one-part of a two-way conversation revealing the value participants placed on this entertainment venue:

Postmark: Corsica (SD) Jul 18, 1917: Friend, Our Band will have a dance Sat., July 21st at Aug. Schrauck be sure and come and tell your friends, Fred G. Bormann

Postmark: Mount Vernon (SD) Aug 17: Hello: We are going to have a dance Aug. 24th. Please come & bring a crowd. Your Friend, Edna

Postmark: Mount Vernon (SD) Nov 3, 1914: Be sure and come Nov 6. Dear Sir: We are going to have a dance in our house Friday night this week and would like for you boys to come and play for it if you could come. Suppose you boys will be willing to play according to size of crowd let me know if you cant come, right away. Will Candon, tell W.M.D.J.R.

Postmark: Mount Vernon (SD) Jun 7: Am going to Mitchell this morning to begin institute. Rec’d your card Sat. we was awfully glad to get it. I won’t be able to hear from you before the 10th so I don’t know what to say or do. But I hope to see you in Mt. V. the 9th. Gee, I sure wish I could have been to those dances too. I’ll bet you had a dandy time did you?, Sincerely, Irma Mick...

Postmark: Mount Vernon (SD) Aug 4, 1915: How did you get over the dance? I sure had a good time but I tho’t the mosquitoes would carry us away before we got home. Don’t think I’ll get to Deweys for its right in harvest time. Where will the next dance be? Have a good time Sat I suppose you’ll have your mascot along, Irma.

Postmark: Mount Vernon (SD) Apr 24, 1916: Rec’d your card. All O.K. was very glad to get it. I heard you were to play for a dance on Mon. eve. Were you? My school’s out Fri. Can hardly wait till then. From _

Postmark: Mount Vernon (SD) Sep 7: Dear Friend – Was awfully glad to get your card. Suppose there will be a big crowd at the dance Wed. Is that the one you meant? When are Gerkins going to have their Harvest Festival? If nothing happens we are going Fri. eve. I can hardly wait until then for I haven’t been to a dance for an age. As ever I.M.
Conclusion

The sparsely populated society in which these people lived required hard work and lacked many modern conveniences. Yet, these photos and postcards provide evidence of their ability to overcome barriers of distance, temporarily escape the isolation of the farm and connect with community through performing and attending dances in homes and community halls. The introduction of the camera and the photo postcard was also an important part of this community building process, creating the means to advertise and visually share experiences with friends near and far. The postcards tell us that dances were advertised, held frequently throughout the year, and greatly anticipated. Two of the photos I have analyzed reveal that the subjects placed a high value on working together to produce music, and the third photo reveals their enjoyment and anticipation in activities away from the farm. Rural farm life is often characterized as lonely and harsh. These primary sources provide a counterpoint to that story. Using their purchasing power to acquire musical instruments, working together to perform at community dances, and maintaining a close and egalitarian relationship with each other, the people in this collection of photographs created opportunity for community and enhanced quality of life for themselves and their neighbors. Their lives, like the background in the photo, could have been experienced as desolate and empty, but, instead, they chose a happier life, bringing joy and music to the foreground.

Ruth Page Jones
Graduate Student
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Works Cited

*Aurora County History*. Stickney, SD: Aurora County Historical Society, 1983.


*History of Our County and State, Compiled by Donald Dean Parker from all known historical accounts of the county*. Brookings, SD: South Dakota State College, 1960.


Page, Hershell, phone interview. Mesa, AZ, March 2012.

Page Family Collection.


This is a story about a long forgotten federal case in South Dakota during the first World War and the important role it played in the history of the development of First Amendment law in the US.

In October 2010 I got a call from Carla Williams, a friend at the Sioux Falls public library. A Seton Hall law professor looking for information about my great grandfather had contacted the library. One of his cases apparently was historically important.

I contacted Thomas Healy, the professor, and learned a very interesting story that had apparently escaped our family oral history for reasons which will be clear later.

The story began in August 1917 when a bunch of German farmers in Hutchinson County, SD were upset about America's war with Germany, especially about the draft system in place in SD. That system was established by the Governor and, in their opinion, it put an inordinate burden on their county which was populated by a large number of German immigrants. The German farmers kept their culture and language here in SD, speaking German amongst themselves. One of them, August Friedrich, drafted a petition to the governor and other public officials in English and brought it to a meeting of the German Socialist local in Tripp, SD. He read it out loud in English then it was signed by several people present, some of whom didn't understand what they had heard. Others wandered in and
signed the petitions, not knowing exactly what they were signing. Friedrich gathered the petitions and sent them to various public officials.

The petitions were poorly written with a belligerent tone. Here are some examples of the wording, "we are not satisfied with your action of exempting whole counties (from the draft) and fixing triple quotas for others." "We brand your action as political influenced by our daily papers of the capitalist class." "We the undersigned are organized under the socialist party and demand immediate action and answer and if we fail to get it we demand your resignation and will spell sure defeat for you, your party and your little nation J. P. Morgan as we have the people with us."

Emmanuel Baltzer was one of the farmers, and his was the name that became associated with the case as it went through the courts. He didn't speak English and didn't understand what he had signed.

Once the petitions were received, things started happening fast. Governor Norbeck sent his copy to the local US attorney who soon initiated criminal proceedings under the Espionage Act of 1917. Those were different times; courts operated much more quickly than they do today. On Oct 17, 1917 a grand jury indicted 30 German farmers. Three days later the trial began. Within 3 months of signing the petitions, the farmers were all convicted of violating the Espionage Act and sentenced to time in a federal penitentiary from 1 to 5 years, and a fine of $300 to $1,000. Their attorney, my great grandfather Joe Kirby, appealed the convictions.
In the early 20th century, Joe Kirby was the attorney to go to with a big legal problem in South Dakota. He was born and self educated in eastern Iowa. He "read the law", became a lawyer and moved to Sioux Falls in the mid-1880s. He was prosperous and successful. His law firm was a training ground for a generation of lawyers, judges and politicians, including Congressman Charles Christopherson and US Senator and 12th SD Gov William Bulow.

Joe was also famously contentious and combative. He engaged in ongoing battles with Western Union, a local utility that put a pole in his yard and the Martindale publication for rating attorneys. He was also disbarred for a time in a dispute over his possession of stolen property, stamps held in his safe for a client.

Joe was perhaps the most active SD trial lawyer of his time. By the end of his career he had appeared before the state supreme court 250 times and the US Supreme Court six times. Those are amazing statistics.

What happened to the German farmers in SD was not unique. All over the country people were being prosecuted under the Espionage Act. But the prosecutions were hit and miss. Some US attorneys were vigorous in enforcing the law, some weren't. Inevitably, because of strong war sentiments, judges and juries were often quick to convict. Thousands of Americans were convicted.

On November 6-7, 1918 Joe presented arguments before the US Supreme Court in the Baltzer case on behalf of the German farmers and a couple other SD defendants, all convicted of violating the Espionage Act of 1917. This was the first time the Court had heard
arguments about the constitutionality of this controversial law. Joe focused on the 1st amendment rights of the defendants to petition the government and express their opinions.

Coincidentally, less than a week after Joe presented his arguments, the war ended. That was Nov 11, 1918. Many liberal-minded Americans were hopeful that this 'necessary evil', the Espionage Act, would go away after the war. But it didn't and the government persisted in its prosecutions.

A month and a half after Joe presented his arguments, the government did something shocking. On December 16, 1918, in a surprise move, the government confessed error on the SD cases. The Supreme Ct didn't have to rule. No opinion was published. Joe likely had no idea why he had suddenly won his case, and he may not have cared. The farmers were elated. Their celebratory attitudes irked other patriotic South Dakotans as well as federal officials trying to rally public support and sell war bonds in the area.

What really happened? The true story started to come to light over seven decades later when scholars gained increased access to the private papers of Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes.

After hearing oral arguments, the Court was inclined to vote 7-2 to uphold the SD convictions. But Holmes drafted a short, strongly worded dissent. When the government learned of it through back channels, it gave them pause. They didn't want any sort of negative precedent on the books that might weaken the Espionage Act and imperil the many other cases making their way through the courts.
The government quickly changed its approach to Espionage Act cases in light of the problems uncovered by the Baltzer case. The attorney general of the US centralized the handling of those cases and ordered a full review of the ones already under way. Ultimately, the federal gov't ended up releasing or reducing the sentences of hundreds of people convicted under the Espionage Act. But it only confessed error in the SD cases.

The next several Espionage Act cases that made it to the Court contained more favorable fact situations for the government. The convictions were upheld. The names of those lead defendants are well known to constitutional law experts. Those cases are Schenck vs. US, Debs vs. US and Abrams vs. US. In them Oliver Wendell Holmes virtually invented First Amendment theory and doctrine. But scholars are now starting to recognize the importance of the Baltzer case as a precursor to those three.

A written decision in the Baltzer case was never published because the Court never finalized its decision. The Holmes dissent disappeared into his private papers for decades. In that dissent he said, "It seems to me that this petition to an official by ignorant persons...was nothing in the world but the foolish exercise of a right." He went on to say, "The war effort should not hurry us into intolerance of opinions and speech that could not be imagined to do harm, although opposed to our own."

First Amendment law in the US could look quite different today if the federal government hadn't confessed error in the Baltzer case.
The Home Front, 1918: Letters from Millie
Esther Marie Knutson

The home front, in this case, was Sisseton, the county seat of Roberts County in northeastern South Dakota. The letters from Millie were written in the fall of 1918 to her beau, Elias, serving in France with the American Expeditionary Forces.

Millie had been born near Grenville in 1888, a year before South Dakota’s statehood. She had moved with her family to Sisseton in 1903, after her parents sold their farm in Day County. Her father built a fine, large home and found employment at the Stavig Brothers Department Store. Millie began to work there, too, at the end of the school term in 1906; by 1918 she was a cashier and bookkeeper in the store’s office.

Elias, a naturalized citizen from Norway, had become a salesman in the grocery department of Stavigs’ store in the fall of 1912, and the friendship between Millie and Elias began. He was inducted into the military service of the United States on July 21, 1918, and by August he was in France.

The ten letters, from which edited excerpts were taken for this paper, were all returned to Millie from France, stamped “NO RECORD, 5 DEC 1918.” Millie never opened them. The numbered letters in their sealed envelopes were found after her death; they were among her souvenirs in a trunk in the attic of her home. They introduce us to Millie and her environment during World War I.
Letter Eight
Friday evening, August 30, 1918

“Dear Elias,

“I just received your card. I wish I could have seen New York with you.

“I was lying in the hammock this evening—just at dusk. I had been reading a book. I heard someone coming up the sidewalk, and I heard, too, it seemed, footsteps coming up to the hammock. I looked up. It seemed I should see you, but, oh, how disappointing when I realized it was only my imagination and not a realization. Mostly when the day is done and the light of it is almost gone, then I think of you, the light of my day.

“Josie sure is some funny girl. She was to write you a letter from all of us, when sending that Bible, but, from what she says, it must have been pretty short and not very sweet either. She was to explain to you that if you thought it too large or heavy to carry, you could send it back, and we’d keep it for you till you come back, but she didn’t even do that, I guess.

“J.W. Thomas and family have moved to Aberdeen. I guess our men’s voices for our Choral Union will be rather on the “Silent Order” this fall, but we’ll make up for it, or, rather, you will, when you come back home.

“Write and ask for two pair of knit hose, if they didn’t reach you, because mother made them for you, and we want you to have them. I hope you received the box of candy in due time.”

Letter Fifteen
Sunday, September 15, 1918

“My mind and my thoughts fly back to happy days gone by. Eight weeks ago today you were here to dinner. Today you are where? May God grant victory soon. Reports we have gotten look very good; I hope they are all true. Then the sooner this awful struggle will end, and the many precious lives, be spared. I do hope, dear, that you will be given a lot of training over there, being you were given none here.

“Yesterday was Saturday, and I guess we realized it. Half of the clerks were threshing. It was such a mess. J.A.P. was delivering; Dahl was putting up city orders; only Ben and father were there to wait on trade, on Saturday, mind you. Well, I had to leave my happy home and help. Andrew Stavig stood in the office and laughed at me carrying a 48-lb. flour sack from the delivery corner up to the office—or, rather, the outside counter there.
‘You’ll get some muscle some of these days,’ he says. Bet I sold over $25 in groceries after supper last evening. I got home at eleven—good and tired, I tell you.

“A German helmet sent to Sam Olberg from France by Ole Ruste has been quite a curiosity here these last two days.

“They had quite a laugh at A. L. Stavig’s Friday noon. Mandius was there for dinner. Clifford happened to be placed between Andrew and Mandius at the table. Clif leaned over to his pa and whispered, ‘Pa, is Mandius a German?’ I guess he didn’t feel quite safe.

“I haven’t heard of your safe arrival over there yet. Time has seemed endless, when no word comes from you, but I hope you are well.

“Clifford will go to the University of Minnesota at Minneapolis. He says he sure hopes he’ll be in France by June first. Poor little fool, he’s just scared the war will end before he gets a chance to get into the trenches for actual warfare. I think he really means every word he says.”

Letter Sixteen
Tuesday evening, September 17, 1918

“I must hurry and write you a letter before going to Red Cross. Here’s hoping I receive a card telling me of your safe arrival. Mrs. Smith from north says Markeseths and Ottos had received cards Saturday evening, saying their boys were in France, and they are in the same division as you are, only a different company. But, as they say, no news is good news, so I hope you are well and safely over.

“Bet I can tell you some surprising news. At least it is to us. I heard today that Chris is going to leave us—yes, he has quit the store and has rented a farm next to Axel’s and will go to farming. He went to Hammer today to buy horses, so someone told Magnus today. I will write and tell you more, when we find out more. We sure will miss Chris. It seems we had some part of our bunch as long as he was in the store, but he went out there Friday evening to help Axel thresh, and he just came back this noon and struck right out for Hammer.

“I will try to get the names of boys as they leave, but they aren’t published now, as they were before. The list of all who registered is now at the post office, but the numbers have not been drawn in Washington yet.

“Say, how are you fixed with bedding? Remember, if you need it or should feel you’d like a woolen blanket, just say the word, and I’ll send you one at once. I can send anything, if
I have your words asking for it, see. Melanchton wrote home for a cap and a pair of shoes last week; he’s still at Camp Dodge.

“There was a freight wreck on the main line yesterday, so no mail from the east, therefore, no word from you.”

Letter Eighteen
Thursday, September 19, 1918

“Well, it was quite a relief when we heard you were safely over the “pond,” as they say. Until your card came, it had been two weeks since I received your last letter. Such long two weeks I’ve never lived....

“Well, the papers look good--better, it seems, every day, and as Louis Johnson, the Gamble-Robinson man, said on Monday, ‘I look for something big some of these days.’ We’ll hope he’s right.

“Chris is not in the store today. He was here off and on yesterday. He went out to another sale yesterday afternoon. He’s going farming all right. He is studying whether or not he should buy a tractor now. I should think he’d wait till he gets his serial number.

“Evelyn leads Luther League on Sunday evening. Graverson writes a paper. Agnes Sateren and Agnes Stavig also will take part. It’s so strange--nearly only girls left.

“September 29th Miss Bergen leads League, and I will write a paper, ‘The Bible, the Word of God.’

“Well, here it is, twenty-five minutes to eleven. I just came home from Red Cross. I think we’ll finish our shirts in another week, but we girls decided this evening to spend one evening each week, through the winter, up there sewing for the Red Cross.”

Letter Nineteen
Sunday, September 22, 1918

“Two months ago today...seems that many years since you left--and especially these last three weeks, when I’ve not heard from you. Oh, well, if you are well, all will be well.

“I just wonder how many of my 19 letters you’ve received. I hope you’ve gotten every one. I had to laugh to myself the other day. Lena said, ‘Millie, you are writing Elias, even though you don’t hear, aren’t you?’ ‘Well,’ I thought to myself, ‘guess you don’t know Millie.’
Just as though I’d quit writing. Oh, no! I know you are writing when you can, although I know you won’t have the chance to write like I have.

“Chris had a letter from Melanchton last evening. He says they were under quarantine because of one case of mumps. He said he just had—and passed—his second overseas exam, so I wonder if he, too, won’t leave soon.

“Chris has bought a tractor from Opheim. The way he speaks now, he’s going out there as soon as he gets that to do the plowing, and then he’ll come back here during the winter, or, at least, until Christmas. I have heard several slams about his going farming just now. I don’t think it will make any difference, and maybe he doesn’t do it for that purpose. I should think he’d know better.

“Yesterday was a big day. Josie capped the climax. Some salesman! Here’s an example: a bill to Albert Liens for over $61; Iver Hagens, three coats for $75; Martinson girl, one coat for $40; Ole Gravdahl, $20.75; another coat for $39.50, and so forth. Ben Hanson sold, he told me last evening, 275 pounds of coffee yesterday. So many are buying coffee in fifty- and twenty-five-pound lots.

“Elias, do remember you promised me if there was anything you wanted, you’d let me know. Don’t be afraid to ask me to send you anything you need. But don’t forget it, I’ll see that you get your Christmas box!

“A busy week ahead: Luther League business meeting tomorrow evening; sewing Red Cross, Tuesday and Thursday, and maybe a social out at Sanders one evening. I’m glad, though, to have something to take my time.”

Letter Twenty-Three
September 23, 1918

“Monday evening, but I must write you a few words just the same. We didn’t have the business meeting; it was postponed because his honor, Mr. Townley, the noted Nonpartisan leader of North Dakota, speaks at the courthouse grounds. Oh, such a mob in town. The streets are just lined with automobiles on all streets.

“Oh, dear, the biggest disappointment was mine, when I came to the post office, and there was a ‘Call for Package,’ and, oh! my dear, here were your stockings and the box with candy and gum in it—which I hoped and felt so sure you had gotten by this time. Uff! That’s not the worst. I’m enclosing an item I found in today’s paper in regard to the Christmas boxes. It seems I can’t even have a right to send you all I’d planned for Christmas.
“Please, dear, as soon as you get this letter, write me an order for two pair knit hose (those that were returned, that mother made), a good knit sweater, and a good knit helmet. These last two will be ready for you in another month. I have quite a little done on the sweater already, and I got the finest yarn for that and the helmet. By the clipping, you see you’ll have to send, or someone will, a tag to be put on the Christmas package. Oh, I’m disappointed, not to be allowed to send what I wish, but, of course, it’s the only way for the government to manage it with so many over there.

“We drove up past the courthouse, stayed a little while, saw the speakers, and heard a little of Mr. Bates’ speech; he runs for governor of South Dakota on the Nonpartisan platform.”

Letter Twenty-Four
Wednesday evening, September 25, 1918

“Saturday is the big Liberty Loan day. Letters are out today. Father got another assessment of $200--pretty steep for an old person having such a small salary as he has, and Ben assessed only $50. My, Dahl said a few sweet things; he got $200, too. Lena got $100. Clara and I haven’t got ours yet. Chris says, ‘I guess by the time I get my bonds, I’ll have to give up paying for my tractor.’ He’s waiting so anxiously for that, so he can go west and start plowing. I don’t blame him, because it’s getting late.

“I bought another War Savings stamp for my card today. I wish I had it full.”

Letter Twenty-Seven
October 1, 1918

“Tuesday evening. I’m home for supper. I will go to sew Red Cross shirts again. I hope to finish most of them this evening.

“It’s been a busy day and no help. You should have heard Ben this morning. Quande went to Minneapolis to visit. J.A.P. went out in the country to get his car; he was out last evening and got stalled. Rudolph took Dahl along plumbing. They wanted me to come and help, but I said, ‘No.’ It’s the first, so I have more than I can manage as it is. People are coming and settling bills just fine. Crops were so good, and prices, high all through, so most farmers are feeling fine, including Chris. He says he got almost enough crop on the farm near Lake City to pay for his tractor. That came yesterday and is now going up the hills. Iver
Hagen’s boy is running it out there for him, and Chris went in his car. He’s been wearing his overalls and looks like a full-fledged farmer.

“I see by today’s papers that Camp Dodge has also several cases of influenza, so it may be quarantined. It seems to have just reached Minneapolis. One hundred and fifty cases were reported in last evening’s papers. The University of Minnesota is not open for another week because of that.

“10:30 p.m. I’m home from Red Cross. There was a light in your room, as we came home, and, do you know, it just gave me the blues.”

Letter Twenty-Nine
Sunday, October 6, 1918

“We were awfully busy yesterday. Lena and I came home at 10:30 p.m. Clara and Mabel came about fifteen minutes later, and, then, Josie was still there. There have been some big sales, and collections are good.

“Say, I just heard the grandest news. Can it be true? That Austria and Germany have given up? We had a telephone call from Minneapolis. I hope it’s true—it may be a false report, but, oh, if it’s true, then what rejoicing throughout the world.

“Influenza is bad here, all ‘round, but they have a serum now, so it saves many. Two boys, who left here one month ago for Camp Grant, are coming back dead—a Swenson boy from out east and Knut Veflin. It’s sad. It seems when their time has come, they must go, whether here or over there.

“Quite a joke the other day. Alvina Fordahl was in, and I was waiting on her, when Andrew came up to her and said, ‘Well, when can you come and work here in the store?’ ‘Not till November second,’ she says. ‘Can’t you come before?’ ‘No,’ she says. ‘Well, then,’ he says, ‘what wages would you want?’ ‘Oh, well, I guess I would have to have $75 a month.’ Say, I couldn’t keep sober; I walked off and laughed. I knew that would settle Andrew’s hiring Alvina. Well, they talked awhile, and it wound up by his saying they had to have a clerk right away, so he would let her know later. I thought that was a good one. If she wanted $75, what about the rest of us? I bet Andrew thought she had some nerve.

“Monday morning. Well, the news was a false report. My, everybody was so joyful. I wasn’t the only one who cried with joy when we heard it; I heard of several.”
Letter Thirty-One
Thursday evening, October 10, 1918

“So far, no word from you, but we sure hope your letters are detained somewhere and that you are not sick. So much sickness, one never knows what to think.

“It has been a quiet day; weather, just beautiful. Had someone been here, I sure would have had a date for a nice little stroll. As it is, I have a date, but one of business. Our Supper Committee will meet here.

“I made up the sales report for September. Josie comes in way ahead. When Magnus saw it, he showed Josie that she was Number One. ‘Where is Elias?’ she asked. ‘I can see he’s not here. He always beats us all.’ ‘Yes,’ I thought, ‘where is Elias?’

“Veflins are pretty hard struck. As you see by the clipping enclosed, one boy is held prisoner, while the other died at Camp Grant—or at some camp—from influenza. He just left here about one month ago.

“Magnus, Lena, and Josie went out to Lake View this afternoon and attended the funeral of the Swenson boy. They did not take the casket into the church because of the disease.

“10:30 p.m. I’m all ready to roll in. We had a fine little meeting or, rather, a visit, because that’s what it was. But the train brought me no letter from you, dear. A letter from Carrie in Washington says no gatherings are allowed there at all now to prevent the spreading of influenza. It sure is better to be careful.

“Monday morning. I’m at work now. The last school bell is just ringing. It looks like we’re going to have some rain. Well, dear, be good. I hope these lines find you well.

“Always yours, Millie.”
We know that “these lines” did not “find” Elias, and we know now that he was not “well.” Millie would find out later that Elias had been hospitalized in France with influenza from mid-October until December twenty-second. That may explain why she didn’t hear from him and why these letters never reached him. Nevertheless, their courtship was renewed after the war, and they were eventually married.

Millie and Elias became my good parents.
I spent my working years as a parish pastor and theologian, but in retirement I’m a writer and historian. While all levels of history are important, I’m focusing on what some would say is the most important level--family history. Bruce Feiler, author of many books and occasional essayist in the New York Times wrote in an article published last year: “Children who grow up knowing their family narrative tend to withstand the challenges of life far better than those with little or no sense of that narrative”.

I know that families are full of stories, and I believe that when families begin to collect and examine their stories in a meaningful manner they can discover various chapters in their “family story”. That’s what I’m experiencing, so I want to tell you about that while I introduce you to my book.

I grew up in Milan, Minnesota, a rural community not far from the South Dakota border. I was the youngest of four children, born in 1943, and during my growing up years clueless about family narrative. Both of my grandfathers died before I was born, so I never knew those old history-keepers. Milan was settled in the late 1800’s mostly by Norwegian immigrants. My parents came there in the 1930’s when my father, a butter-maker, found work in the creamery he would eventually own. Growing up I heard my mother speak Norwegian with her sisters at gatherings of her extended family, and I knew her parents came from Norway. My mother said of my father that when he had imbibed too much
brandy he would sometimes recite Swedish poetry. So, I assumed, his ancestors came from Sweden. In the almost entirely Norwegian community of Milan, my classmates knew my surname was Swedish, so I was teased a lot—mostly good-natured, but not always. That was what I knew of family history—no details, no stories, no family narrative.

Knowing anything resembling a family story would remain elusive far longer because my father suffered an untimely death at age 53, when I was but 10. With my mother’s extended family nearby, we naturally gravitated towards them, and I lost contact with most all of the Lundborg relatives during my growing up years.

Fast forward from adolescence to the pivotal moment in my awareness of family history—September 12, 1981. I remember the day. I graduated from high school in 1961, Augustana College in 1965, Luther Seminary in 1969 and in 1981 was 38 years old and the senior pastor at Faith Lutheran Church in Staples, Minnesota. My mother in Milan called to encourage me to drive back to Milan on September 12th that year to attend a picnic where some Lundborg relatives would be gathered. She told me I could meet my dad’s sister, Aunt Amy. I barely remembered Aunt Amy, but I agreed to attend the picnic, and it changed my life.

Aunt Amy was colorful, not the proverbial taciturn Swede, she was talkative, almost perky, and loved to tell stories. As we sat around a table with her as the center of attention, I was drawn to her chatty warmth and her ability to rattle off stories about our common relatives, people I barely knew and seldom considered. She thoroughly captured my attention, however, when she pointed at me and said, “Paul, you wouldn’t even be here
today if your great grandfather Johannes hadn’t survived that Indian attack back in 1862.”

What? Wow! I was fully attentive. I had a great grandfather? I had never even considered the possibility. His name was Johannes? And he was attacked by Indians in 1862? If he hadn’t survived, I wouldn’t be here? Was I stunned? That’s an understatement. I was married, father of 2 sons, in my prime at 38, and she said I might never have been? I was perplexed for a moment, and then I was angry! Why didn’t I know this? It looked like the others weren’t as shocked as I. Did they know and not think it worth telling? Did they talk about it, and I never paid attention? Why was I left out?

I certainly didn’t realize at that moment I would eventually become a keeper of our family’s story, but that is what happened. So here in a nutshell is the family story that made all the difference in my world. It’s a big deal.

In 1861, my great, great grandparents on dad’s Lundborg side—Andreas and Maja Lena Lundborg—left their home in Sweden to come to America. They didn’t come alone. They had borne 11 children and 7 survived. They took 6 of their 7 children, ages 8-28 and joined two other households each with the surname Broberg, and there were 21 of them altogether who settled on Minnesota’s western border next to Dakota Territory, 25 miles northwest of present day Willmar. They became a small Swedish outpost in the relatively new state of Minnesota, just 3 years old in 1861. A few Norwegian settlers were not too far away, and they were all on land formerly lived on first by the Ojibwe, then by the Dakota, and ceded to the US Government by the Dakota through several treaties in 1837 and 1851.

In the summer of 1862, one year after arriving in America, my ancestors were killed by
Dakota Indians, some of the early victims in the US/Dakota War. 13 Lundborgs and Brobergs, all civilians and noncombatants were killed on August 20, the 3rd day of that war. The victims ranged in age from 10 months to 43 years, and included 5 children. Three Lundborg young men ages 25, 23, 22 were killed, and their 9 year old brother was wounded. The 10 other victims were all Brobergs. 28 year old Johannes Lundborg, my great grandfather, escaped death because he was sent to warn the neighbors.

A caveat: The causes of that war were too many and too complex to convey in this context. But it’s important to note this war was not waged by all the Dakota people. There was division among the Dakota about going to war, and a major turning point leading to the war’s cessation took place when the Dakota opposed to the war persuaded those waging war to cease and to release the captives. Settlers and Indians alike suffered gross injustices, but my focus in this context is my family’s story.

I quietly processed this story and attempted to make sense of it for decades. When I retired in 2006, I had the time to begin serious study. It began with a trip to Minnesota to explore the locations of this war along the Minnesota River. This included the area where I had grown up, but now I was looking at my homeland with a new vision. My wife and I visited museums, historical societies, and libraries of all kinds, and there were breakthrough moments. The archivist at the Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, MN showed me a book with photos I had never seen: my grandfather August as a young man looking much alike my sister’s grown sons, my great-grandfather Johannes, my great-great grandfather Andreas. I was 62, and I was seeing for the first time the faces of family members whose
origins dated back to 1810. At the Kandiyohi County Historical Society, I found the volume that contained the largest amount of reliable commentary written about my family’s tragedy while learning that many earlier histories ignored their story because it took place farther away from key battle sites in the war. In my quest to purchase that volume for myself, I found it advertised in the most unlikely location of Mt. Angel Monastery and Seminary outside of Portland, OR.

Then I realized a journey to Sweden was a must. And I needed a genealogist and translator. Online I discovered the “Angel of Genealogy”, as she was once called, Anna-Lena Hultmann of Hössna, Västergotland and her genealogical institute named “Konkordiahuiset”. Six days with her led us to 19th century documents revealing a closely-knit extended family of cousins who shrewdly plotted to sell their farms at just the right time to maximize their profits to pay for not only their families but also for an additional household whose husband/father was both a logger and builder in order to leave Sweden for America. With connections already living in the US, my family members targeted a specific location in Minnesota and pulled up stakes to go there in the summer of 1861. Homesteading was not yet a possibility, but they were able to purchase access to land at half the price from veterans of the Mexican-American War. They were not the proverbial “poor Swedish peasants”, but rather a group of reading, writing, capitalist farmers who were eager to better the lives of their children in a new country with abundant farmland. Anna-Lena was an angelic messenger who opened Sweden’s church records that I might find access to this story.
Then we discovered and visited the birthplace, the home churches, and the farms of these long-ago relatives and met local historians who added to Anna-Lena’s documents with stories based on oral tradition passed down generation to generation in the neighborhood where my ancestors originated. Walking the ground they walked on, seeing the land they farmed, finding the graves of the neighbors left behind, and meeting the descendants of the daughter who stayed home in 1861 were some of the moments when family history moved from head to heart very quickly.

Learning about my ancestors’ life before the great tragedy of 1862 magnified my sense of the depth of their loss. For most of my life I had been unaware of them. Now I was not only aware, but I was taking my place as a bereaved descendant of theirs. I never knew them, but now I grieved their loss. Their tragic deaths were no longer hidden from me, or merely an event located in Minnesota’s history they were now a part of my family’s story and I was now part of theirs.

I am part of a family whose long-held, big dreams, born of inspired planning nurtured for years on Swedish soil, were dashed in 30 minutes of raw violence. The day was August 20, 1862, and the place was a small plot of ground located in present-day Monson Lake State Park near Sunburg, Minnesota. The eight surviving members of this family of 21 fled their lives just days later desperately seeking refuge in the company of fellow Swedes in their new land. Four adults--my great, great grandparents Andreas and Maja Lena Lundborg and my great grandparents Johannes and 8 months pregnant Kristina Lundborg--were in charge. And their charge included two Broberg orphans--cousins 16 year old Anna Stina and
8 year old Peter Broberg, who was ill with typhoid fever, and the two youngest children of Andreas and Maja Lena, 13 year old Johanna and 9 year old Samuel who had been shot in the side and clubbed in the head when his brothers were killed. For three months they were refugees, the collateral damage of a war they didn’t start, until they found safety in Carver County.

So I wrote my impressions of my Lundborg family narrative under the title of “The Death of a Dream”. My Lundborg and Broberg ancestors, all related to one another and to me, all working and farming and beginning families next to one another in the compact confines of Sweden’s breadbasket were grasped by the common dream of farming enough land for their descendants to have a bright future. And they labored together to put legs under that dream--leaving home, launching into the unknown, risking all for a common goal. It was within their grasp, and it disappeared, replaced by anguished grief, a frantic search for safety, and fear centered on the survival of the remaining children. I continue to be touched by the sadness of their story.

Part of the sadness is that apparently few of the surviving generations knew the story. Or even if they knew it, they were reluctant to talk about it because it was a painful memory. But telling the story of this tragedy fuels an awareness of family narrative that serves to inform and enlighten many who hear it. In August 2012, nearly 150 descendants of those 8 original survivors came together in Minnesota to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the US/Dakota War. Their last names were many and varied, but in one way or another each was related to a Lundbord, Broberg, Lundquist, or Paulson. 17 came from
Sweden for this event and spent a day together telling and re-telling this story while meeting each other and asking, “Who are you related to?” They stood together on the site where the 13 were killed. They had their pictures taken at the monument erected to honor the victims. They shared a Swedish meal and a solemn remembrance of the ancestors in the church building linked historically to the original congregation formed in 1861. Did the family dream come back to life? No. But emerging in place of the original dream has come a desire in the descendants of the immigrants to honor their ancestors. The honoring is taking place in family gatherings and sharing of ancestral stories. Lundborg, Broberg, Paulson, and Lundquist relatives have met, talked, shared pictures and stories. Swedes have come to the US, and Americans have traveled to Sweden in order to see the significant places, meet new relatives, and walk in the footsteps of those who came before us. Genealogists have come to life, younger generations have had their curiosity piqued, and distant cousins have re-connected in order to deepen their roots. Family members have learned enough about a significant chapter in their family narrative to have a new awareness of their identity. The study of history has informed us, and it feels like the bonds of family togetherness have created newer and stronger connections. A big dream died long ago, and in our awareness of that dream, new dreams are coming to life.
South Dakota at 125: Interpreting the Past, Assessing the Present, and Imagining the Future
John E. Miller

Birthdays and anniversaries are times for contemplating the past, considering the present, and looking forward toward the future. As South Dakota commemorates its quasquicentennial this year, there will be a requisite amount of celebrations and self-congratulations. As historians, it is fitting that we should take a serious look at 125 years our state’s history and consider this as a time for self-evaluation and profitable preparation for self-improvement and continuing intellectual effort.

In the space available here, only the briefest and most cursory comments can be made on the subject, but since so much of historians’ effort is spent in microscopic considerations of their subjects, it is worthwhile from time to time to peer through the other end of the instrument and take a telescopic view of a state’s history and current status. What is lost thereby in detail may be gained in perspective.

In contemplating South Dakota’s past, the first place to look is the environment and how it has molded and nudged the inhabitants of this varied and formidable land in their thinking and behavior. When asked about what it is that “makes South Dakotans,” as happened two years ago when the South Dakota Humanities Council published its thought-provoking book, What Makes a South Dakotan?, a large (and not to be unexpected) amount of attention got directed toward the land and the weather. While not the richest, most fertile soil on the globe, South Dakota’s—or at least a good part of it—gets solid
endorsement from most observers, both inside and outside of the state. It is what primarily attracted a huge influx of white settlers during the Great Dakota Boom of the 1880s, and, before them, a wide variety of Native American peoples, from prehistoric nomadic bands on through the Arikaras, Dakotas, and other tribes of more recent vintage.¹

As elsewhere, the weather is a topic that draws a huge amount of attention in this region, and whether one is inclined to label South Dakota the “blizzard state” or the “sunshine state”—both terms having proved equally popular over time—one can be sure that weather is one of the factors most commonly called to mind when people think about the state.² Beyond that, volumes could be, and have been, written about the impact of crops, vegetation, rivers (especially the Missouri), land forms (especially the Badlands and Black Hills), and the generally rolling landscape of South Dakota, all of which make it, in some minds, “the Land of Infinite Variety” and which have heavily influenced its historical development.³

Sometimes not receiving full consideration or, in some cases, any consideration at all in the historical narrative is the huge impact of our American Indian population. They, after all, were present untold millennia before the first white settlers arrived, and they established ways of life, institutional arrangements, and environmental practices that continue to have great influence today. Since this paper is inspired by the 125th anniversary of statehood, however, I will quickly move on and treat this major element in our history like all the others by merely mentioning its importance and leave other commentators to fill in the blank spots.⁴
Place matters. “We are formed by our surroundings, and our surroundings contain stories that, if we learn them, form us too. The landscape of the northern prairie, which seems so passive, changeless, and lacking in surprise, is in fact a place of power and mystery to those who know its story,” writes the novelist Kent Meyers. Geography and history are handmaidens, and one basic geographic fact about South Dakota is that in relation to other places on the North American continent, and specifically within the ambit of the United States, it lies in a remote place. This not only makes it somewhat difficult to get to and separates it from places like Chicago, Cleveland, and the East Coast, but it also has made economic growth and development more difficult to achieve. Remoteness affected many aspects of the development of Dakota Territory and, after that, South Dakota. Settlement came later than it did in states further to the east, and that often put the state at a disadvantage economically and culturally, although the situation also had its compensations. For example, it could draw upon the political and constitutional precedents and experiences of previous states in adopting its own constitution, institutions, practices, and even governmental architecture, such as county courthouses and the state capitol. Furthermore, remoteness, combined with environmental factors, meant that modes of transportation would be of prime importance in the area and that population would be thinner than in locations to the east of it, a condition that has had and continues to have huge implications for our people.

The development of transportation should be considered separately as having special influence on our historical development. From the first human presence on the
land thousands of years ago to the relatively recent past, South Dakotans (if we may call them that, even before 1889) have been more inclined to walk in order to get around than their counterparts have been elsewhere. Until the horse arrived on the plains during the mid-1700s, native peoples continued to rely upon their own two feet and used a travois attached to a dog as a primary mode of transporting items from place to place. When it became possible to attach tent poles to a horse and multiply the capacity of the travois by a factor of several times, the Lakota Indians, who had been semi-sedentary, were converted into the “warriors of the plains,” and their whole lifestyle was thereby transformed. In somewhat similar fashion, the Missouri River constituted the first great gateway into the region, providing locomotion for Indians and after that early explorers, trappers, traders, and military personnel. The coming of the steamboat in 1831 changed all that. And then the coming of the railroad, primarily after 1879, led to boom times during the 1880s, during which the influx of white settlers totally transformed the landscape and the social and economic characters of East River South Dakota and the areas around the mining regions in the Black Hills. Railroads not only shipped out farm products, making South Dakota primarily an agricultural state for decades; it also brought in manufactured items, dresses and hats, guns, baseballs and bats, pianos, stained-glass windows, and all the accoutrements of eastern “civilization.” And it was the railroads and their subsidiary land companies that accounted for the laying out and establishing of the majority of the three hundred or so towns, in round figures, which continues to be a rough approximation for the number of substantial (read “incorporated” for the most part) communities in the state.
right up until today (there are, of course, also scores of ghost towns that bit the dust over
time).\textsuperscript{12} The construction, graveling, and hard-surfacing of roads, plus the bridging of major
rivers, also had vast implications for the way in which residents lived. Finally, Interstate
highways, truck transportation, and air travel have all helped give the state’s citizenry an
experience that increasingly converged with that of its counterparts around the nation as
time went by.

Until World War II, at least, farming and ranching remained the economic lynchpins
of the state, as the economy remained more heavily agricultural and the population more
rural than was true of the rest of the country. With industry slow to develop, in large part
because of geographical remoteness and high transportation costs, a major implication was
that a laboring class was much less evident and the labor movement was largely
nonexistent in the state. While the Knights of Labor, the American Federation of Labor, and
other union organizations had some presence here, the numbers involved were miniscule,
compared to what existed in most other states. This, in turn, had major implications for
politics.

One of the chief byproducts of these conditions was that South Dakota, like some of
its neighbors, but unlike most of the rest of the country, was, in a large sense, a small-town
state. The history of South Dakota has to a considerable degree been the history of its small
towns and their rural hinterlands. Today, only Sioux Falls (population: 162,000 in 2013) and
Rapid City (population ca. 70,000) rank on most scales as being more than small towns, and
some people would even put the latter in the small-town category. Aberdeen has remained
stuck at around 25,000 people for decades, and Brookings and Watertown, the fourth and fifth ranking urban places in the state, have only recently moved above the 20,000 mark. These are facts that often bring a look of astonishment to the faces of people from outside the state when they hear them.

Like some of its counterparts in the region, such as North Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming, South Dakota has been characterized by dependency and has been referred to by some commentators as a “colonial” region. Linked to places like Chicago, Omaha, and Minneapolis by railroads and relying upon them as markets for their grain and livestock as well as for credit, banking facilities, investment funds, and manufactured goods, the residents of South Dakota often found themselves in a position of dependency, or at least bargaining inferiority. The money, the power, the influence, and the decision-making authority all tended to concentrate in places other than where they were. Because of its heavy reliance upon agricultural—and to a lesser extent, mining—production and its relative dearth of manufacturing output, South Dakota, like many states in the South and West long depended upon a heavily extractive economy.

All of this contributed to a situation of relatively low wages, incomes, and accumulations of wealth, South Dakota often ranking just above around ten Southern states on numerical scales. Without highly developed manufacturing, merchandising, financial, and banking industries, South Dakota did contain a small number of relatively wealthy individuals, but no James J. Hills, Potter Palmers, John D. Rockefellers, or Andrew Carnegies. What accumulations of wealth did exist paled in comparison to those compiled by elite sets
elsewhere. South Dakotans also were less likely to put on airs or excessive displays of affluence in efforts to engage in “conspicuous consumption,” a term made popular by the economist Thorstein Veblen. But that did not exclude some expressions of achievement in the forms of mansions along tree-lined streets in places like Sioux Falls, Aberdeen, Yankton, Rapid City, Lead, and Huron.¹⁵ As the decades rolled by, South Dakota businessmen, politicians, and boosters for economic development put together an argument that they believed outside investors and entrepreneurs would respond to in deciding whether or not to relocate in South Dakota. They emphasized not only the low-wage environment and lack of unionization but also the hard work ethic, punctuality, and other good work habits of the labor force, as well as low taxes and minimal government regulation. This development philosophy has generally trumped ones emphasizing increased investments in and government backing for education, health care, cultural productions, and social amenities. But to a considerable degree, South Dakotans have managed to benefit from various other favorable conditions despite the contradictions that exist.

A major reason for the high quality of life that does exist in the state is the quality of its people, the values and character they practice and exhibit, and the strong sense of civic participation and degree of institutional health to be found in church, school, and home. While in many ways it contains one of the most homogeneous populations in the United States, South Dakota, somewhat contradictorily, is also in some ways a paradoxical place. In his bicentennial history of the state published in 1977, John R. Milton highlighted the extremes that characterize it and the tensions they engender. “Perhaps it is these extremes
that constitute the basic image,” he concluded. “In the tensions between these extremes, between the beautiful and the harsh, may lie the source of both art and psychology in South Dakota.”\textsuperscript{16}

Lying at the heart of the split image of the culture of the state is the contradiction between people’s strong attraction to individualism and self-reliance, on the one hand, and their equally heartfelt devotion to community, on the other. Linda Hasselstrom’s 2009 book, \textit{No Place Like Home}, places special emphasis on the theme of community, and Josh Garrett-Davis’s 2012 \textit{Ghost Dances: Proving Up on the Great Plains} makes a similar point in discussing his relationship with a second cousin of his: “We share a desire to build communities, \textit{to get us back together}.”\textsuperscript{17} It is that spirit of cooperation and a widely-shared sense that we’re-all-in-this-together that makes living in many of our smaller communities more attractive and satisfying to people.

Central to any discussion of community is the quality of the “human capital” present in a place. In talking about the human capital that exists in South Dakota—that is, the educational level, skills, qualities, and capacities of its people—several things can be mentioned. The Indian presence has been prominent from the beginning, and today around ten percent of the population continues to be Native American, and these groups bring their own assets, as well as vulnerabilities, to the mix. Ever since white agricultural settlers and town-builders entered the state in force, mainly during the 1880s, the dislocation caused to Indian societies by the expropriation of their lands has caused tensions among the groups, a fair amount of difficulty in adjusting to new conditions, and a
set of social problems that usually seems to exceed the substantial creative possibilities that
the various tribal members bring to the table. While numbers of African Americans,
Hispanics, Asian-Americans, and other so-called minority groups have increased
substantially in South Dakota during the past couple of decades, the percentage of the
population that derives ultimately from Europe remains one of the highest in the nation.
From early on, South Dakota’s population has been characterized by an “immigrant stew”
that served to leaven its culture with a wide variety of ethnic traditions and placeways.18
Beyond that, among those from primarily European backgrounds, the vast majority
originally entered the state in migration patterns that led back, first, to the Middle West
and, then, to New England and the Mid-Atlantic states. Only a tiny fraction migrated up
from the South or came back east from the West Coat or up from the Southwest.19

Deriving from the New England and Mid-Atlantic cultural hearths and tracing their
migration, for the most part, across the northern regions of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, and
then through Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota, before arriving in South Dakota, this
northern stream of migration brought its distinctive cultural baggage along with it, including
Puritan morality and social habits; the Congregational church along with related
denominations, including Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, and Episcopalians; county
courthouse politics; and strong faith in the possibilities of education. For the century and a
third since the Great Dakota Boom, however, Catholics and Lutherans have remained the
two most dominant religious presences in the state. Both groups, especially the former,
frequently brought parochial schools and higher educational institutions along with them wherever they settled in the Middle West.

Along with their distinctive ethnic, religious, educational, speech, social, and architectural tendencies and patterns, the individuals and groups that migrated west from New England and the Middle Atlantic states across the northern Middle West brought with them a familiar sort of political culture. Rooted in the town hall meetings of New England and reinforced by the experience of the Civil War, it was exemplified by a small-“R” republican emphasis upon participatory democracy, localism, self-reliance, responsibility to neighbors, and community spirit. Its links to abolitionism and Protestant Christianity, reinforced by Civil War nationalism, attached it closely to the party of Abraham Lincoln, insuring for decades after Appomattox that Dakota Territory and then the state of South Dakota would continue to vote reliably Republican (with a big-“R”), unlike many surrounding states that achieved more partisan balance as time wore on. The absence of a strong labor element in the state has reinforced other factors that have made a tough go of it for Democrats in South Dakota. Yet, South Dakota was also a birthplace of Populism in the 1890s and during the first two decades of the twentieth century was in the vanguard of progressive Republicanism, providing it with a more liberal counter-narrative that from time to time has challenged Republican Party hegemony. Political scientist Alan Clem observes, “Generally, before World War II, South Dakota Republicans were more progressive, even radical, then their Republican counterparts elsewhere in the United States. Since World
War II, South Dakota Republicans for the most part have been among the more conservative Republicans in the nation.”

It is dangerous to get overly specific in trying to identify particular tendencies associated with large groups of people, but it is fair to say that stereotypical qualities frequently attributed to South Dakotans include, in particular, a strong work ethic; a tendency to mind one’s own business, which coexists with a ready willingness to assist neighbors in need; honesty; fairness; diffidence; frugality; and straight-forwardness. Many people have associated “niceness” with South Dakota, but Minnesota, North Dakota, and several other states have been said to exhibit a similar quality. These kinds of attributions are extremely hard to prove and sometimes have unintended consequences, but they always provide plenty of grist for conversation.

While church, school, and home have been elevated to a high position in the pantheon of institutions in the state and all appear to be relatively healthy, compared to their counterparts in some other states, doubts arise about conventional thinking on the matter when one considers the high rate of single motherhood in the state and the high rate of mothers with small children working outside the home; continual low levels of educational funding (resulting in the lowest teacher salaries in the nation); high rates of drug use in some areas; over-addiction to gambling; and a variety of social behaviors and cultural practices that call into question the kinds of values proclaimed by religious bodies and ethics gurus. Contradictions abound, and hypocrisy rears its ugly head here, just like everywhere else. The state is not immune from social and cultural influences washing
across the nation through the ever-expanding media. Starkly stated, we are surrounded, in many ways, by a highly toxic popular culture.

Finally, while our basic institutions still appear to remain relatively strong and vibrant, they are, more than in most other places, thinly spread across the landscape, simply because of the low population density that exists. Thus, churches and schools have been declining, consolidating, and disappearing for years. Where once 5,000 school districts operated in the state, the number has been whittled down lately to less than 170.\textsuperscript{21} This all gets illustrated in the combined names of competing high school football, basketball, and track teams. South Dakota’s vaunted social capital, therefore, while lauded by commentators such as Harvard professor Robert Putnam,\textsuperscript{22} appears to be somewhat vulnerable, and it would behoove our state’s leaders to seriously consider what needs to be done to reinvigorate our historically high levels of participation.

Having spent almost all of my time here looking backward, I can only briefly sketch current trends, which in turn provide a set of challenges and dilemmas which will occupy our attention in the future. Among them I include the following: convergence with other states in per capita income, educational practices, cultural milieu, lifestyles, built environment; cultural advancement (symphonies, art, \textit{South Dakota Magazine}, and other publications, etc.); ethnic mix; demographic challenges; viability of small towns; out-migration of young people; efforts to develop well-paying jobs and good work environments; the rise of Sioux Falls and, to a lesser extent Rapid City, as urban magnets; the concentration of population, business, and industry along the two interstate corridors;
an aging population; infrastructure needs; health; family arrangements; a political system that has been dominated throughout the state’s history almost exclusively by one party; the need to stimulate creativity and entrepreneurship in all of their many manifestations; and the impact of globalizing forces.

These and other developments, trends, issues, and problems will provide challenges aplenty to keep us thinking and working energetically during the next 125 years, at which time our descendants may wish to pause and make a similar assessment.

2 “South Dakota has been dubbed both the Sunshine State and the Blizzard State, and both designations have a basis in fact,” writes Kathleen Norris in Dakota: A Spiritual Geography (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1993), 7.


4 The most prolific producers of Indian history in South Dakota have been native peoples themselves. The work of Herbert T. Hoover, who is only part Indian himself, has also done much to direct notice to the subject. His essays on South Dakota in encyclopedias and his chapter “South Dakota: An Expression of Regional Heritage” in James Madison’s edited volume, Heartland: Comparative Histories of the Midwestern States (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988) devote a large amount of space to the Native American experience.


6 Elwyn B. Robinson made remoteness one of the six major characteristics he used to explain North Dakota history. History of North Dakota (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), vii; Robinson, “The Themes of South Dakota History,” North Dakota History 26 (Winter 1959), 5-24. In teaching my South Dakota history course at South Dakota State University for two decades, I adapted Robinson’s six characteristics to South Dakota and added seven more of my own to round out what I considered to be the major themes of the state’s history.


9 John E. Miller, “Traveling the Road of Change: Historical Forces in the Development of South Dakota Transportation,” South Dakota History 41 (Summer 2011), 267-80.


14 Although William Cronon does not discuss South Dakota specifically in his environmental/economic history of Chicago and the Midwest, the importance of the connection between the Windy City and South Dakota is implied in the book. Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991), 279, 401n110, 448-49.


18 Douglas Chittick, “A Recipe for Nationality Stew,” in Jennewein and Boorman, eds., *Dakota Panorama*, 89-145. See also the article by Ostergren in note #7.


22 Robert Putnam notes that the two Dakotas rank one-two on their levels of social capital, a proxy for community involvement, among all of the states of the Union. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 291, 292, 298, 300.