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Anniversary tribute to Albert Ballin

Hamburg, Germany marks 150th birthday of the man who helped millions emigrate to the United States



Alfred Ballin

Albert Ballin was the inventor of cruise shipping and founder of the Emigrants' Halls in Hamburg, Germany. He helped millions of people emigrate to the United States.

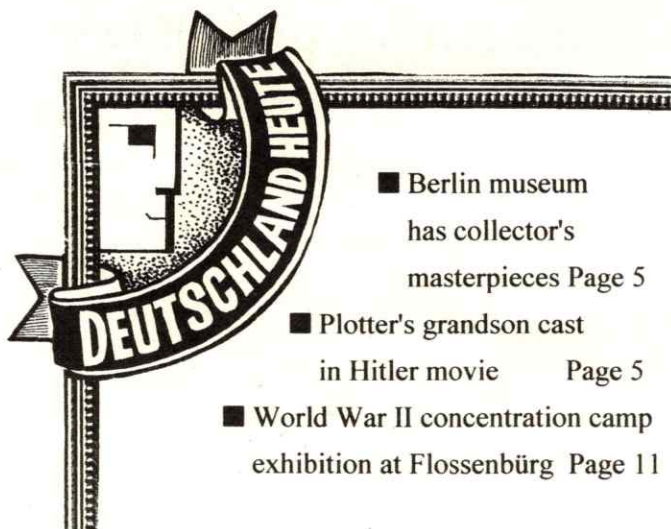
A century and a half ago, on August 15th, 1857, Ballin was born in Hamburg, the man after whom the "BallinStadt" is named. In his honor, Europe's unique emigration museum bears his name:

"Port of Dreams BallinStadt History of Emigration Hamburg." The museum was opened on July 4th, 2007. It is dedicated to the over five million people who departed on their journey to the New World from Hamburg.

Ballin was the founder of the Hamburg "Auswandererhallen" (Emigrants' Halls), and was one of the leading personalities of his day. Ballin was not only a close friend of the Kaiser, but was also General Director of the Hamburg-Amerikanische Packetfahrt-Actien-Gesellschaft (HAPAG), at the time the largest shipping company in the world. Some of his life's achievements include the successful direction of the HAPAG, the invention of cruise shipping, and the establishment of the "Auswandererhallen," a city constructed solely for emigrants.

Ballin was just 17 when he entered the business of his Jewish father. His involvement in this agency, which arranged ship's passage for would-be emigrants, was soon crowned by success. From 1881 to 1914, a wave of emigration took place in Europe which is

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From the President

Normally at this time of year, we at Goethe Haus are in a two-stage mode of recovery from all the work at GermanFest and the annual picnic. Meantime, we are scheduling our language class program for the fall and winter terms. But lest we be remiss, let us express our gratitude for all the hard work of our members for these two annual events. Included in the first category are the successful efforts of Sabina Beirold and her enthusiastic German honor students from Rufus King High School who provided the computer language testing service. Lending a great assist in this effort was also Sy Kreilein and Mark Wagner. There were 361 students who participated in the testing. Thanks are also in order to Dan Sweeney and Professor Umlaut's creator, Carl Ruppert. For the annual picnic, we are indeed indebted to Gudrun Hren and our Executive Director Katharina Hren. Thanks to the two of you.

So what new is happening this fall? Due to our new close relationship with the Milwaukee Turners, we have arranged for the appearance of German Professor Udo Simonis, an internationally recognized expert on environmental policy at the 4th Street Forum at Turners' Hall on Oct. 11 at noon.

One final note, don't forget our annual dinner meeting on Thursday December 6th at Karl Ratzsch's.

Alles Gute Alles Goethe!
Ted E. Wedemeyer Jr.

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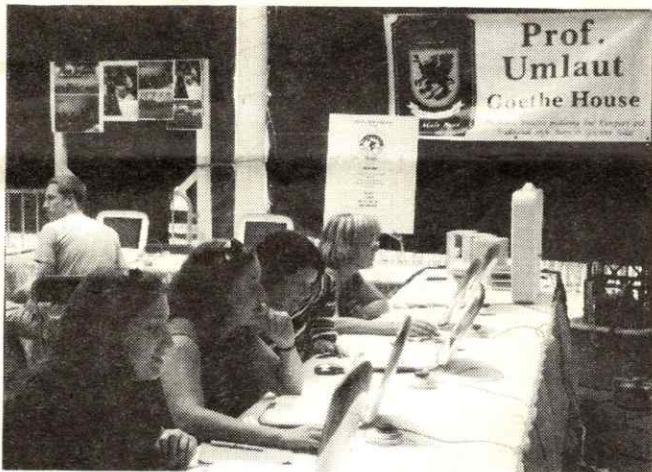


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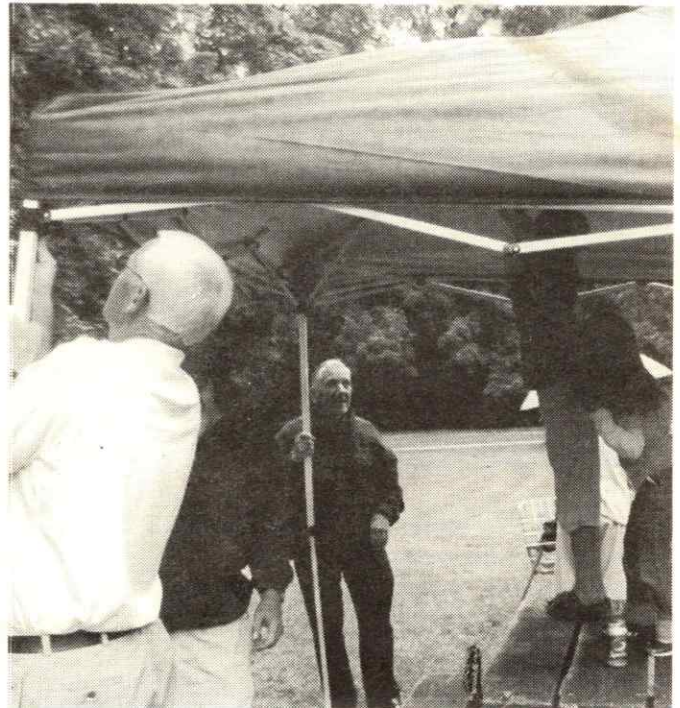
A busy summer for Goethe House

By Katharina Hren
Executive Director

Greetings, friends of Goethe House! Thanks to all of you who stopped by our booth at GermanFest! We had a fantastic location at the front of the Cultural Heritage tent, and we offered our popular computer tests, once again thanks to the dynamic Sabine Beirold, German teacher at Rufus King High School, along with several of her energetic high school students. Our board member Alexis LaJoie played the daring role of dj: he played numerous musical offerings currently popular in Germany. The Milwaukee International Film Festival had a table in our booth, and we once again had our members only area, with beer and sodas provided by Sprecher Brewery.



On Saturday, August 18th, we held our annual picnic in Lake Park. The rain did not daunt any of the attendees: board member Heiner Giese provided a small tent. I remarked that we Germans are tenacious, and someone else joked, isn't that just another word for stubborn?! Ah, but a little rain certainly doesn't keep us from our fun. Heartfelt thanks must be given once again to our gourmet grill chef, my mother Gudrun Hren. However, the highlight for me was the Bienenstich (bee sting dessert) provided by our board member Dan Sweeney. Dan also brought a foreign exchange student from Hong Kong! Board member James Benz brought the beer provided by our president, and board member Sy Kreilein watched the weather, making sure that we were covered and that supplies were ferried to vehicles. Thanks to member Rick Schroeder for saving



the day and providing a multicultural feeling to the event by bringing plates (with Spanish text) when we ran out. German Immersion principal Albert Brugger brought some delicious Kuchen, and Kinder Camp teachers Andrew Richardson and Kendra Jaskowiak brought their children. Board member Alexis LaJoie brought his family friendly pups. We also had several other educators present: Susanne Jones (UWM), Sebastian Luft (Marquette), F. Peter Wagner (UW-Whitewater), Christiane Grauert (MIAD), Hans Schroeder (MSOE). I apologize if I have forgotten anyone! And we had several of our students in attendance. There was a bit of soccer playing between raindrops. Not a dull moment to be had at a Goethe House picnic in the summer rain...!

We held three Kinder camps this year: at Milwaukee Kickers (soccer),



First Congregational Church (food) in Wauwatosa and
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A busy summer for Goethe House



[Katharina, from Page 3]

Tamarack Community Waldorf School (fairytales). Our teachers were Andrew Richardson, Amy Mondry and Kendra Jaskowiak, and I had the privilege of co-teaching at two of the camps. This is an important way for me to get to know our younger members and to keep our curriculum fresh. We at the Goethe House feel very fortunate about the creative and engaging German teachers with whom we work.

My desk is being set up at Turner Hall, 1034 N. 4th Street, and I am in the process of getting a small browsing corner and some office hours set up. Please contact me via telephone or email if you would like to set up an appointment. I am very excited to be working with the Turner Hall/Fourth Street Forum to bring the distinguished Professor Udo Simonis to Milwaukee on October 11th (his birthday), for a panel discussion on environmental politics to be broadcast on October 12th and 14th. Please see the following links for more information on Mr. Simonis:

German: <http://www.wz-berlin.de/alt/uta/simonis.de.htm>

English: <http://www.wz-berlin.de/alt/uta/simonis.en.htm>

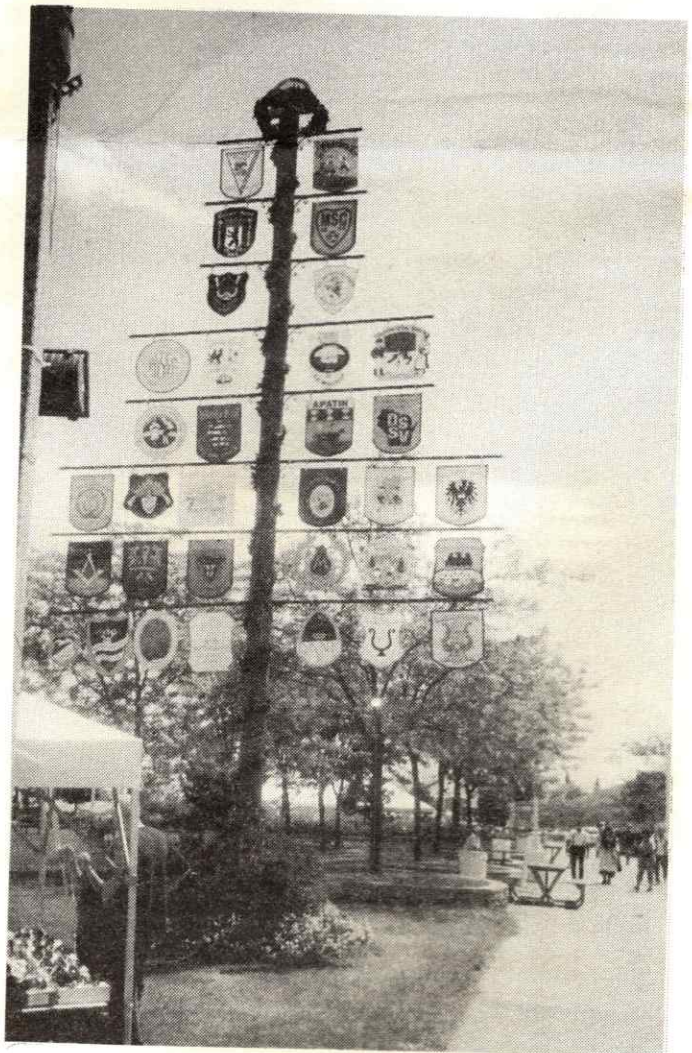
Don't forget to check out the following events!
Hope to see you there.

Viel Spass,
Katharina

Adult German Classes to be held at Bavarian Inn
Beginners' 1 (Tuesdays), 2 (Wednesdays), 3 (Thursdays) taught by Benno Treu 10 week classes 9/24 to 12/6 (No classes week of Thanksgiving 11/22)
Intermediate German and Advanced German offered by Sabine Connerton (location to be announced)

Deutsche Spielgruppe (German play group for children ages 0 to 6) to be held at Turner Hall Saturdays beginning September 15, 2007
Fall/Winter 9/15 to 12/15 (no session week of Thanksgiving)

Please contact Turner Hall at 272.1733 or check out <http://milwaukee.turners.org/> to find out about any of the following classes (already in session for the fall): Rock Climbing, Fitness, Fencing, Self Defense and Gymnastics!



Art Collector's Heirs Loan Masterpieces to Berlin

Heinz Berggruen's art collection considered important worldwide

Berlin's celebrated arts scene got richer this summer when deceased collector Heinz Berggruen's heirs said they were loaning the city over 50 works from his collection, including paintings by Picasso, Matisse and Klee.

The masterpieces will be displayed at the Berggruen Museum in Berlin, which is located opposite the baroque Schloss Charlottenburg and is a major draw on the German capital's arts and museum circuit. In return, the Berlin government is donating a building neighboring the museum to house the artworks.

"My family supports the idea that the Berggruen Museum will be expanded," Nicolas Berggruen, son and heir of the collector Heinz Berggruen, who passed away in February, told the *Berliner Zeitung* paper.

Nicolas Berggruen has indicated that he may also show some of the artworks he has collected himself in Berlin. At the beginning of the 1990s, he began buying works by Andy Warhol, Damien Hirst and Jeff Koons.

Nicolas Berggruen's father, Heinz, was a German-born Jewish art collector. He forgave the country which persecuted him, and in 1996, brought his collection "Picasso and His Era" to Berlin on loan. He then sold it to the city, his birthplace, for a fraction of its market value in 2000. The collection is housed in the Berggruen Museum near the city's Schloss Charlottenburg.

The mayor of Berlin, Klaus Wowereit, said earlier this year that Berggruen's decision to transfer the majority of his extensive modern art collection back to Berlin in 1996 was "an extraordinary gesture of reconciliation."

Berggruen died in Paris in February at the age of 93. In 1936, he fled Nazi Germany, heading first to the United States and then to Paris.

There, he established a reputation as a gallery owner who was firm friends with Pablo Picasso. He was also a specialist on the works of artists such as Van Gogh, Cezanne and Paul Klee.

Heinz Berggruen's artworks are considered to be one of the most important private collections of modern art in the world. - Deutsche Welle



Plotter's grandson cast in Hitler movie with Tom Cruise

Germany's Stauffenberg family has broken ranks over a controversial true-life movie in which Tom Cruise is to depict their ancestor who tried to kill Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler, on July 20, 1944, with a family member playing in the film.

The film's production company said that Philipp von Schulthess, who is a grandson of Count Claus von Stauffenberg, would play the role of a German Army adjutant in the film "Valkyrie." The late hero's son Berthold von Stauffenberg had forecast the film would be "rubbish" and said it was "not nice" that a "practicing Scientologist" was playing the part of his father.

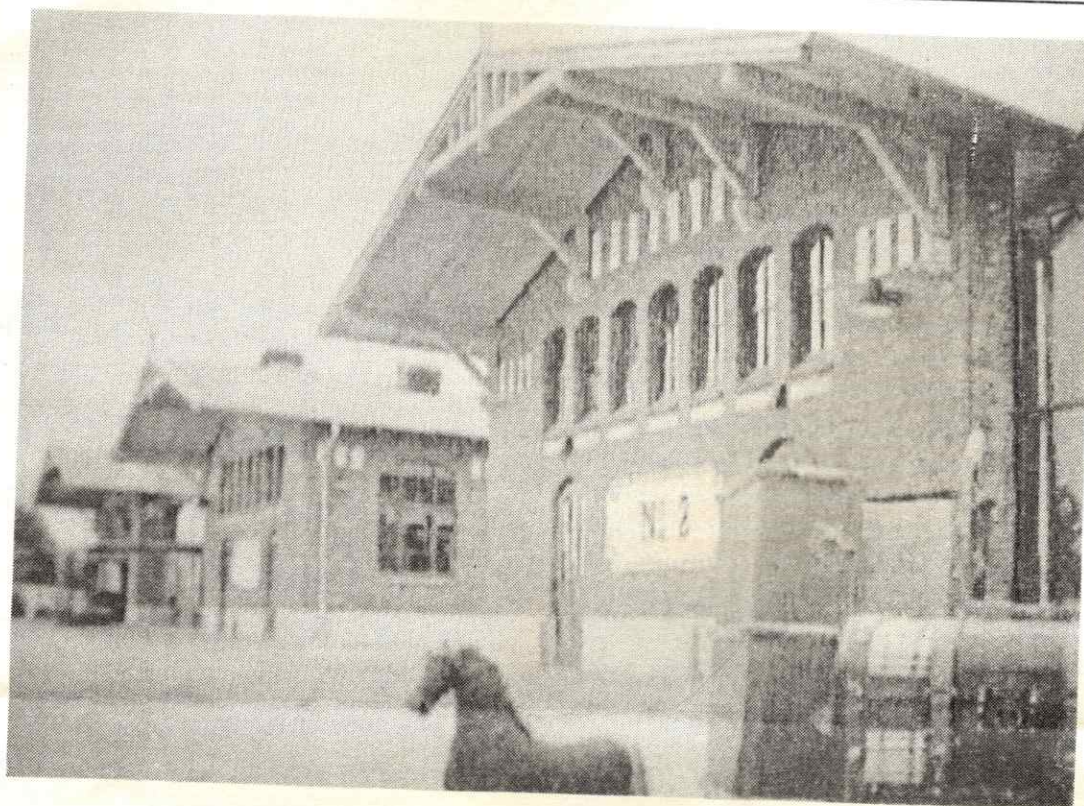
German politicians have continued to assail Cruise's philosophy of life as harmful, outraging U.S. commentators who said he was being victimized on account of his creed.

The film is a joint production by U.S. and German studios and has qualified for 4.8 million euros (\$6.6 million) in grants from Germany's film industry board.

It was not known how Schulthess came to be in the cast, but it appeared he had attended an audition. Germany, which bans anti-democracy groups and monitors neo-Nazis, keeps Scientology under surveillance. German politicians have continued to attack Cruise.

-Deutsche Welle

Anniversary tribute to Albert Ballin



The "Port of Dreams BallinStadt History of Emigration Hamburg" is an emigration museum which is unique in Europe. Situated on the historic location where the "Emigrants' Halls" once stood, the story of more than five million emigrants is movingly told. Of those who left their homes between 1850 and 1934 via the Port of Hamburg on their journey to start a new life in America. Eighty-one per cent of them went to the United States. Today, around every fifth American has German "roots." The Family Research Center, which the "BallinStadt" has jointly established with ancestry.com, is the scientific core of the exhibition. Here, persons researching their ancestry can trace their roots. Trained genealogical specialists can assist in researching and constructing a family tree. The ships' passenger lists offer a wealth of information about the emigrants who departed via Hamburg and are an invaluable source of information for family researchers. You can find further information on Albert Ballin and the "BallinStadt" on the Internet under www.ballinstadt.com.

[Ballin, From Page 1]

referred to in the United States as the "New Immigration." Ballin's contribution was in establishing better conditions for the emigrants on board than had ever been known before.

Until this time, it was unthinkable that members of society's different classes could actually meet on board. Emigrants pinched for money experienced their passage to the New World in cramped quarters in the 'tween decks. Ballin nearly eliminated these class barriers, enabling a more comfortable journey with greater room for movement. As General Director of HAPAG, in 1906 he introduced a third class which cost only slightly more than passage in the 'tween decks.

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Anniversary tribute to Albert Ballin

[Ballin, from Page 6]

but which offered individual cabins.

In 1891 he carried out an idea which had been laughed at by colleagues and competitors but which was soon to become a worldwide success: cruise shipping. In order to make better use of his ships during the winter months, he organized cruises to warmer destinations with the sole purpose of traveling in a relaxed atmosphere. Ballin himself was the host on the cruise and invited important journalists. The cruise was a complete success. There was another important innovation which soon gained widespread popularity: during the cruise the first on-board newspaper was published, where passengers could read the latest daily information about their voyage.

One of Ballin's business mainstays, however, remained emigration. The HAPAG and its agents offered all-round service to the emigrants: they were provided with railroad and ship tickets, as well as pre-embarkation lodging in Hamburg. On the Veddel in southern Hamburg, Ballin constructed departure facilities which were unique in the world: sleeping wards with room for up to 5,000 persons daily, dining salons, churches, a synagogue and even a music pavilion and rooms for the required medical examinations. In this "exemplary facility," persons from widely differing cultures came together to wait for their crossing to the "New World."

At this historic location, on July 4th, 2007, a museum was opened which is dedicated to this man and the history of emigration: the "BallinStadt." The story of emigration from Hamburg is told, as well as the story of the man who to a large degree made large-scale emigration possible: Albert Ballin cannot be described merely through his success as HAPAG General Director.

His name is present at many locations in modern Hamburg. Along with the "BallinStadt," there is also Ballindamm street. In house number 25, the Ballin Haus, the modern-day Hapag-Lloyd, has their headquarters.

Goethe House of Wisconsin is a non-profit German-American cultural institute serving Wisconsin since 1958. Our mission is to serve as a statewide resource for information about the past and present culture of all German-speaking people - especially those in the Federal Republic of Germany. Goethe House of Wisconsin invites the financial support of individuals, companies and organizations who share our mission and recognize the value of this important cultural exchange. Goethe House of Wisconsin is a not-for-profit (501) (c) (3) organization. Donations are tax deductible as the law allows.

Goethe House of Wisconsin is now online. Visit us at and send your friends to:

www.goethehousewis.com

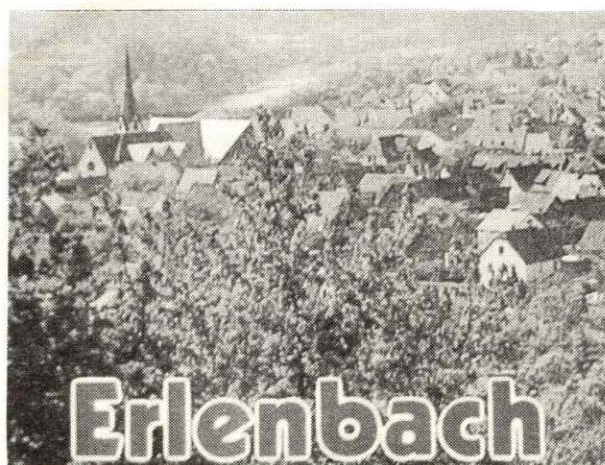
Information available on Goethe House events, membership and other resources. Satisfy your need for German culture 24 hours a day. Use our web site or e-mail address to send

Letters to the Editor:

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From Germany to the USA

Gone but not forgotten, chasing "American Dreams"



By Daniel P. Hanley Jr.

In the summer of 2000, at the Rathaus in Erlenbach am Main, the German community paid tribute to the native sons and daughters who had over the years emigrated to the United States to pursue "American Dreams."

Among the individual histories on display at the City Hall exhibit was a story I had written about Anton Zöller, my great grandfather.

Anton, born in Erlenbach on April 19, 1853, was the seventh and last child of Michael Anton Zöller and his wife Catharina Zengel.

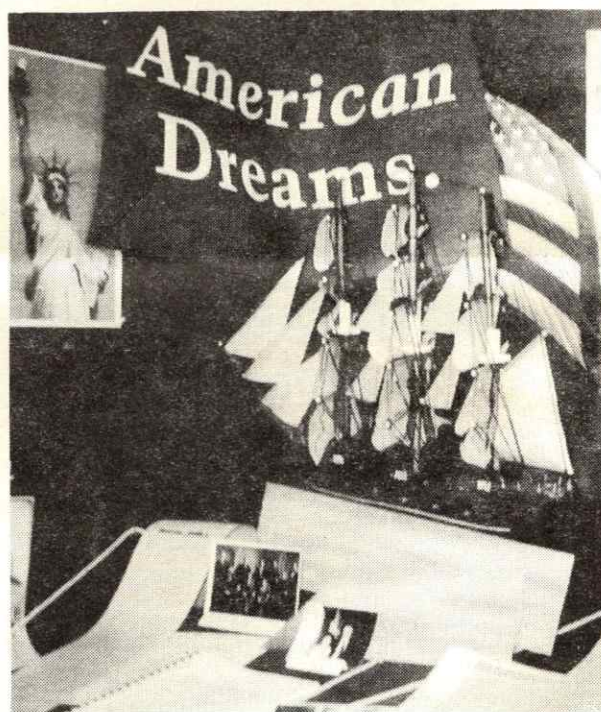
After the conclusion of the Franco-Prussian War, King William I of Prussia, as German emperor in 1871, ordered that all men of military age join the army or leave the country.

On April 18, 1871, the day before his 18th birthday, an emigration report issued by the Royal Bavarian District Office at Obernburg stated:

"It is hereby verified that this unmarried applicant from Erlenbach will find no objection to his plan to emigrate to the United States so long as he complies with all legal requirements. However, the formal written release from his obligations as a citizen of the Bavarian State can only be granted after he had submitted proof of...naturalization in the United States via legal documentation; until this time his obligations to the Bavarian State & all associated legal implications remain active."

With limited assets and a modest education, Anton sailed in steerage class into the port of New York on May 23, 1871, became an American citizen and added a chapter to the rich culture of Gemütlichkeit in his adopted city of Milwaukee.

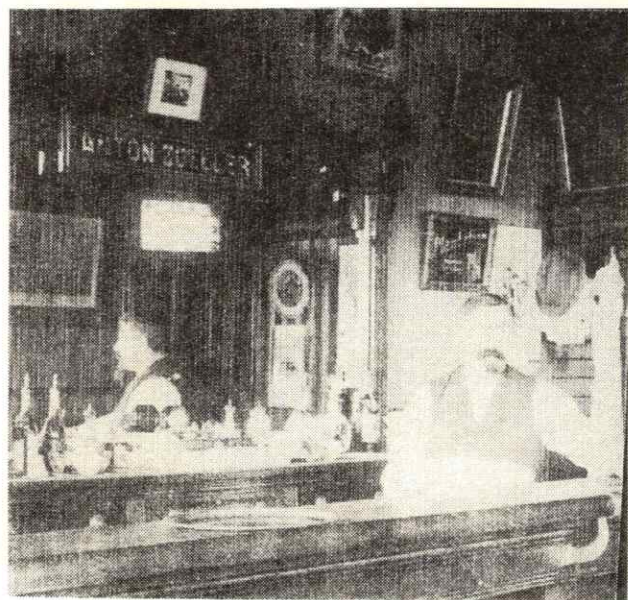
Young Anton planted a family tree that would spread for generations across America. More than a hundred years after his death, two of his American great great granddaughters would marry natives of Germany to complete a circle that began with his emigration.



Decorating the colorful exhibit in the Erlenbach Rathaus were a picture of the Statue of Liberty, an American flag and a replica of a three-masted sailing ship such as the ones which carried Erlenbach natives across the Atlantic Ocean to the U.S. shores.

From Germany to the USA

Gone but not forgotten, chasing "American Dreams"



Anton Zöller looked very comfortable behind the bar in the saloon and boarding house he and family members operated on the south side of Milwaukee's Menomonee River Valley in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Anton Zöller had made the trip from Erlenbach to New York in 35 days after getting permission to leave Bavaria.

First, he traveled to Liverpool, England, where he boarded a steamer named the SS Italy. He was among 1,258 passengers who made the crossing.

His occupation, required to be on the passenger list, was laborer.

A record of the passenger list was found on microfilm at the Family History Center of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Hales Corners, WI. People at the center said a German immigrant wanting to get to the United States at the time generally crossed the Atlantic from Liverpool because that's where the cheapest passage could be found.

The record of the SS Italy noted that before heading into the Atlantic for the crossing, the ship made a stop to pick up passengers in Queenstown, Ireland, after leaving Liverpool. Queenstown, now called Cobh, is in the Cork Harbor in County Cork.

There was Anton Zöller, the German immigrant, having a look at the Irish landscape. Little could he envision having a granddaughter - Ruth Emma Zöller - my mother - who more than 50 years later would marry the son - Daniel P. Hanley - my father - of Irish immigrants James Hanley and Catharine Sullivan, natives of County Cork, who, too, would sail to the United States within a decade or so of his crossing.

He made his way to Milwaukee where his older brother, Honobert Zöller, and two sisters, Zolestine and Mathilda - all Erlenbach natives - had settled in an area just south of the Menomonee River Valley in the then fledgling city where he would also live for the rest of his life.

Honobert Zöller had become a foreman at the Milwaukee stockyards and slaughter houses in the Menomonee River valley near his home on W. Pierce St. between 24th and 25th Streets.

Anton worked as a laborer and petitioned for United States citizenship.

Anton's older brother had married Wilhelmina Kusserow, who had emigrated from Pomerania with her family. In 1874, Anton married Wilhelmina's sister, Bertha.

My mother told the story that her grandmother Bertha had tended geese on a Prussian estate before emigrating and that her favorite name was Emma after the estate landlord's daughter. Subsequently, Emma was my mother's middle name.

Saving his money, Anton paid \$850 in 1882 for property on the southeast corner of 24th and Pierce where within three years he had built a two-story building with a saloon and family quarters on the first floor and boarding house rooms on the upper floor. There was a stable behind the building. He named his family business Stock Yard Exchange.

Meantime, Anton had completed the process for United States citizenship on October 16, 1884.

[Please turn to Anton, Page 10]

From Germany to the USA

Gone but not forgotten, chasing "American Dreams"



The family of Anton Zöller [seated left] in the parlor of living quarters of the Stockyard Exchange, 1895. Anton Zöller Jr., grandfather of Daniel P. Hanley Jr., stands [second from left] behind his father.

[Anton, from Page 9]

According to official naturalization papers on file at the Milwaukee County Historical Society, Anton made sure he had cleanly cut his ties to his homeland. He swore "to renounce forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state or sovereignty whatever, and particularly to Ludwig II, king of Bavaria whereof he is a subject." He made the same declaration for William I, the German emperor.

With that, Anton Zöller clearly had completed the legal documentation to end forever "obligation as a citizen of the Bavarian State."

Anton operated the Stock Yard Exchange for more than two decades. Through the years, the seven children of Anton and Bertha helped out and there were hired maids. Their oldest child, Anton Jr., was my maternal grandfather.

My great grandfather died March 8, 1906.

Anton Zöller's occupation on the death certificate is listed as saloon keeper, a self-made man of the fin de siècle era.

The Stock Yard Exchange stayed in the Zöller family until after the death of the widow Bertha on January 22, 1924. The Stock Yard Exchange felt the blow of Prohibition. The 1920 City Directory noted that Bertha Zöller was in the "soft drinks" business, what a

comedown for an establishment where taps for barrels of beer had glittered at the bar from day one in 1885.

Into the 21st century that building was still in use as a tavern with apartments on the upper floor.



The cover of the book, "Menschen aus Erlenbach - Treibholz der Geschichte," which tells the stories of Erlenbach emigrants



Germans remember “forgotten” concentration camp

Flossenbürg has memorial exhibition some 60 years after liberation

For years Flossenbürg - a small town on the German-Czech border - has been regarded as one of the “forgotten” concentration camps of World War II. Now a new exhibition has opened which tells the story of those who were incarcerated and lost their lives there.

A postcard in one of the first display rooms of the new museum reads: “Greetings from Flossenbürg.”

The friendly greeting is positioned under a picture of the historic castle ruins for which the community is still well known for. In fact, while the postcard is from the 1920s, it could be from the present day.

What Flossenbürg is less famous - or notorious - for is that it was the location for one of the Nazis' 12 largest concentration camps; the camp where German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer died along with tens of thousands of other victims. After the war, the camp and its history slowly slipped into oblivion.

But the new exhibition, which opened to the public earlier this summer, more than 60 years after the camp was liberated, aims to commemorate those who lost their lives at Flossenbürg and its surrounding camps and return its role in the “Final Solution” to the modern

The process of recounting the stories and compiling the evidence could only begin after the Iron Curtain fell and the former prisoners were able to visit the camp in 1995, on the 50th anniversary of its liberation. - Christian Omonsky, a coordinator of the Flossenbürg exhibit.

history books.

One of the main reasons it took so long for the camp to be remembered has much to do with the demographics of those who were imprisoned there.

“Two thirds of the prisoners were Eastern Europeans,” said Christian Omonsky, the press coordinator of the Flossenbürg exhibit, adding that the process of recounting the stories and compiling the evidence could only begin after the Iron Curtain fell and the former prisoners were able to visit the camp in 1995, on the 50th anniversary of its liberation.

Since then - with the help of survivors, local people and historians - Omonsky, museum director Jürg Skriebeleit and the rest of the museum's staff have created a memorial for the concentration camp.

The exhibition is the result of four years of

[Please turn to Camp, Page 12]

Germans remember "forgotten" concentration camp

"We would like to give these victims who had disappeared from the public consciousness for decades a human face."

-Jürg Skriebeleit,
director of the Flossenbürg museum

"We want to tell school children, for instance, about our history in the hope that we can warn them about the dangers of fascism." -
Lisa Mikova from Prague, who was sent to the camp in 1942 because she was Jewish.

[Camp, from Page 11]

extensive research by Skriebeleit and his team. Their research included hundreds of interviews with former prisoners to fill in the gaps of the camp's history. The work recreates an authentic snapshot of everyday life in the camp, one which not only shows the suffering of the prisoners but also the lives of those responsible for the suffering. For example, photos of SS officers enjoying leisure time feature alongside pictures of emaciated inmates.

During World War II, Flossenbürg - located about 100 kilometers northeast of Nürnberg - was an administrative center for 90 camps in Bavaria, Bohemia and Saxony. Jews, Sinti and Roma were locked up in these camps along with political dissidents, prisoners of war, homosexuals and "professional criminals." In total, the camps held around 16,000 women and 84,000 men.

In Flossenbürg and its surrounding camps almost 30,000 prisoners died as a result of murder by SS officers, hard labor and accidents in the nearby stone quarry, frostbite or illnesses such as pneumonia and tuberculosis. Until recently, those who died were only numbers in a ledger.

"We would like to give these victims who had disappeared from the public consciousness for decades a human face," said Skriebeleit.

The central hall of the exhibition attempts to do just that with a selection of personal photographs from prisoners, taken before they were deported. The images of families, holidays, young lovers, weddings and smiling youths give a clear indication of what was taken from these people when imprisoned within the confines of the camp.

Texts accompanying the photos explain the victims' fates and artwork from survivors depict the horrors they may have experienced. One drawing shows

the execution of five prisoners in front of a Christmas tree while the rest of the camp looks on.

While it has taken many years to bring Flossenbürg out of the shadows of history, the survivors of the camp have visited regularly since they have been able to.

"For the survivors, returning always reminds us of the past," said Lisa Mikova from Prague. "But we want to tell school children, for instance, about our history in the hope that we can warn them about the dangers of fascism." Mikova was sent to the camp in 1942 because she was Jewish. Her parents, her parents-in-law and a brother-in-law were killed in Auschwitz. She was sent to a camp in Freiberg.

"There we had to work extremely hard in an airplane factory, for 12 hours a day," Mikova said. "Then we had to go through the town to get to the camp huts. It was very cold, because we were dressed very poorly, without underwear and we only had clogs. Our heads were shaved bald. And there was not a lot to eat - only a little bit of brown water that they called coffee as well as weak soup and a piece of bread."

The opening of the exhibit attracted a number of prominent figures. Bavarian Premier Edmund Stoiber and German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier attended along with Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko, whose father was a prisoner in Flossenbürg. Charlotte Knobloch of Germany's Central Council of Jews, Romani Rose from the Central Council of the Sinti and Roma and Israeli ambassador Shimon Stein were also there.

There were also 84 former prisoners among those viewing the exhibition, an experience that was difficult for many. Mikova, however, was one of those ready to face the past. "Of course there are things which remain with us, things that one can never forget or get over," she said. - **DEUTSCHE WELLE**

Germany's maestro Masur marks 80th birthday

**For over three decades,
Kurt Masur was
both one of the world's
best classical-music
conductors and the most
prominent one from
communist East Germany.
But perhaps
his finest hour
came in 1989.**

Kurt Masur was born on July 18, 1927 in what is now the city of Brzeg in Poland. The son of an engineer, he taught himself piano as a young child and quickly specialized in conducting – despite suffering from a nervous stutter.

In 1970, Masur became *Kapellmeister* at Leipzig's Gewandhaus Orchestra – the musical ensemble with which he remains most closely associated.

He stayed in the post for 27 years, putting the orchestra back on the international map and presiding over the building of a new concert hall to replace the former one that had been badly damaged by Allied bombing during World War II.

In Leipzig, Masur established an international reputation as a sensitive and innovative interpreter of the Classical and Romantic repertoire -- and specifically Mendelssohn, Brahms and Tchaikovsky.

His best-known recording came in 1982 with an interpretation of Richard Strauss's "Four Last Songs." Masur drastically slowed the tempo to create expressive space for soprano Jessye Norman's booming, gospel-tinged voice, turning what is often a quiet meditation on impending mortality into a hike through a particularly lush cemetery.

Decried by some as sluggish bombast, the recording is still in print after 25 years and regularly shows up on classical-music critics' "best-of" lists.

Masur has also wielded the baton for New York and London Philharmonic Orchestras.

Despite plans to scale back his activities, he continues to be one of the world's most sought after and active conductors.

Masur declined offers to leave East Germany through much of his career and enjoyed cordial relations with former GDR leader Erich Honecker. But he never joined the Communist Party.

In 1989, amidst growing anti-government protests in Leipzig, Masur criticized violence by riot police against the demonstrators.

On Oct. 9 of that year, he read a public appeal for freedom of discussion in the socialist state – an act widely regarded as helping convince Leipzig police to disregard orders from Berlin and allow the weekly "Monday protests" to continue.

"In the same century that saw two world wars, I was witness to a peaceful revolution," Masur told the DPA news agency. "No television cameras captured the entire drama of what happened on that night in Leipzig."

In 1990, after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany, Masur was sometimes mentioned as a possible candidate for the German presidency, but he demurred, saying he was a musician, not a politician. In interviews since then, Masur has played down his role in the "peaceful revolution" of 1989.

"I was only one among many people who overcame their fear," he said.

Masur has received numerous honors from Leipzig and Germany for his musical achievements and personal courage.

The night of July 18 was set aside for a concert as part of the London proms with Masur conducting the London Philharmonic and the Orchestre National de France in performances of Bruckner and Tchaikovsky – a fitting way for a musician who's always close to the people to spend his eightieth birthday.

-DEUTSCHE WELLE

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