The German Newspapers of Kansas

Eleanor L. Turk

THURSDAY, Friday, or Saturday was "newspaper day" for most of the residents of Kansas during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Although daily papers circulated in urban centers such as Leavenworth, Topeka, Lawrence, and Wichita, the residents of the many and widely dispersed rural communities depended upon local weeklies for news and entertainment. These homely publications compacted news, editorials, train schedules, social announcements, commodity reports, fiction, jokes, and advertisements into a basic, four-page format. Simple as they were, these little weeklies formed the sturdy foundation of an unusually substantial press which distinguished Kansas from other rural states during that period.

The debut of the Kansas Weekly Herald of Leavenworth on September 15, 1854, marked the beginning of the state's press. Newspapers played a vital role thereafter in attracting settlers to the newly opened territory and in bringing them together into communities. They chronicled the political turmoil of the slave and Free-Soil contest, sharing in the multiple election campaigns and in the dreadful Civil War that followed. This press proudly proclaimed Kansas statehood in 1861 and boosted the boomtown attitudes of railroads and land developers in the 1870s. The temperance and populist movements in the last two decades of the century also found their arena in the press.

The press of Kansas grew rapidly as settlers fanned out across the state. In 1865, despite a population base of only 140,000, there were thirty-seven newspapers in Kansas; by 1870,

One reason for the growth of the German immigrant population in Kansas was the push to develop railroads and railroad lands in the American West. Railroad companies promoted immigration with the establishment of branch offices in European cities offering land at reasonable prices and other assistance to those who would settle on railroad lands. C. B. Schmidt, Lawrence, was appointed a commissioner of immigration for the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad in 1873 and was instrumental in recruiting the Mennonite colonies that settled on railroad lands in south-central Kansas. German newspaper editors promoted immigration of their countrymen to areas served by their papers, and agents such as Schmidt used the German-language press as a recruiting tool abroad.

with a population of only 364,000, the number of newspapers had grown to eighty. Rowell’s American Newspaper Directory for 1871 shows that Kansas already ranked seventeenth out of the thirty-seven states in the average circulation of newspapers and journals, with an average readership which exceeded that of older and more settled rural states such as Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin. In 1880, ranking approximately twentieth among the states in population, Kansas ranked twelfth in the number of locally produced newspapers and periodicals; by 1890 the state ranked fifth among the forty-two states, with 807 local publications (see Table 1). Only the far more urbanized states of Illinois, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania exceeded this output. This extraordinary tradition of local newspapers forms the background for this study. These papers reflected and articulated the goals and accomplishments of the Kansans, providing a sense of cohesion, identity, and pride for the many towns established on the Kansas prairies. And an integral part of this Kansas tradition was a vigorous and diverse German-language press.

On the eve of the Civil War two immigrant populations composed almost seventy percent of the foreign-born settlers in the United States. They were the Irish, with 1.6 million

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<th>Table 1</th>
<th>GROWTH OF KANSAS NEWSPAPERS, 1875-1890</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number Published</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>Triseptly</td>
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<td>Weekly</td>
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<td>Bimonthly</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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Source: Rowell’s American Newspaper Directory for the years cited. This directory, published as a guide for advertisers, generally omits the German-language press.


persons, and the Germans, 1,3 million strong. Heavy German immigration followed the war, and after 1880 the Germans became, and remained, the largest segment of the foreign-born population in the nation until 1930. Although Irish and Germans had been entering North America since colonial days, their settlement patterns differed significantly. The English-speaking Irish became concentrated in and around the eastern seaboard, by 1870 forming the major immigrant contingent in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Pittsburgh, Charleston, and Mobile, as well as in the small manufacturing cities of New England. The Germans, although well represented in these areas, made their major impact farther west. They formed the largest immigrant faction in St. Louis, Chicago, Cincinnati, Detroit, and Milwaukee, as well as a substantial portion of the rural population of the midwestern states.

As they spread out across the nation, the Germans took with them a strong sense of cultural identity. German-American immigration societies, to assist new arrivals and to promote economic and cultural ties among them, were founded prior to the American Revolution and spread westward during the nineteenth century. The German turnvereins, musical groups, and churches similarly flourished on American soil. Among the entrenched traditions these Germans brought with them was a strong attachment to local newspapers. Central Europe, which consisted of numerous smaller and larger states prior to German unification (1871), retained until the twentieth century an extraordinary sense of regionalism and particularism which was reflected in the nature of its press. In 1855, for a population of only 47 million, there were 3,069 newspapers in Germany, a number which increased again by one-third before World War I. The German immigrants thus regarded local newspapers in their own language as a natural part of their community, not as a reaction to resettling abroad. They brought their appetite for newspapers with them to America where, between 1732 and 1855, they initiated over 5,000 separate publications in their native language. Moreover, they maintained this tradition in the face of stiff competition. Between 1860 and 1900 the American press grew rapidly, from approximately 4,000 publications to over 21,000. Carl Wittke argues in *The German-Language Press in America* that the expansion and persistence of the German papers, despite this competition, attests to their significance in maintaining the vitality of the German-American identity. In 1900 there were 750 German-language newspapers circulating in the United States. Although they were prominent voices in several midwestern cities, most German publications circulated in small communities, arriving weekly in the mailboxes of rural America. The Germans of Kansas, therefore, demonstrated both a continuity of tradition and the maintenance of their identity in their new homeland when they established a network of newspapers in the cities and towns of Kansas.

**From the Outset,** Germans were the largest foreign-born component of the

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Edward Flescher,  
Einige Print u. M.  


THE  

Atchison Courier  
PUBLISHED EVERY FRIDAY.  

Ed. Flescher, Editor and Proprietor.  

SUBSCRIPTION: $2 per annum.  
Office in Topka, Ks., with the Topeka "Blade," where orders for advertisements and subscriptions may be left.  

Advertisements $2.50 each for a sum, for a shorter period extra charges.  
Local notices on the third page 10 cents per line.  
Editorial notices on the second page given only to Industrial Enterprises of the State of Kansas.  

The "Courier." has a larger circulation among the Germans living along the A. T. and S. H. R. than by any other German paper in the United States. 

National Republican  

Post Ticket.  

für Präsident:  
Rutherford B. Hayes,  
from Ohio.  

für Vize-Präsident:  
William A. Wheeler,  
from New York.  

FOR GOVERNOR:  
John M. Price  
from Atchison County.  

The raiding meeting of the Atchison democracy reminded us of a joke of honest Abe Lincoln, when a Prussian General complimented Genl McClellan after one of his famous dress parades. Yes, said Lincoln, he is hell on dress-parades, but when it comes to action, he is not worth a damn.  

Why is it that Guthrie will not tell the truth and go round telling folks that he voted straight republican tickets? We advise Guthrie to be a little more truthful, the people won't stand his lies, the truth is just as cheap.  

"We might say of the Courier that it is not enthusiastic for Hayes, for its editor has no hesitation in saying that he would prefer Hayes' defeat to Guthrie's election."—Atchison Patriot.  

When your soul, brother Paul, there is no danger of Hayes defeat or Guthrie's election. We do not deny that Guthrie's nomination would be less


Sobald einige Vorteile, die wir, die Deutschen von Kansas, in delegierten Conventionen wohnt, und damit verbunden, von je zu je zu betrachten, immer von neuerem Gewissheit unserer Legion, leitete sich von dort, dass wir, die Deutschen von Kansas, in delegierten Conventionen gewachsen, und damit verbunden, über diejenige, die wir, die Deutschen von Kansas, in delegierten Conventionen wohnten, und hiermit verbunden, von je zu je zu betrachten, immer von neuerem Gewissheit unserer Legion, leitete sich von dort, dass wir, die Deutschen von Kansas, in delegierten Conventionen gewachsen, und damit verbunden, über diejenige, die wir, die Deutschen von Kansas, in delegierten Conventionen wohnten, und hiermit verbunden, von je zu je zu betrachten, immer von neuerem Gewissheit unserer Legion, leitete sich von dort, dass wir, die Deutschen von Kansas, in delegierten Conventionen gewachsen, und damit verbunden, über diejenige, die wir, die Deutschen von Kansas, in delegierten Conventionen wohnten, und hiermit verbunden, von je zu je zu betrachten, immer von neuerem Gewissheit unserer Legion, leitete sich von dort, dass wir, die Deutschen von Kansas, in delegierten Conventionen gewachsen, und damit verbunden, über diejenige, die wir, die Deutschen von Kansas, in delegierten Conventionen wohnten, und hiermit verbunden, von je zu je zu betrachten, immer von neuerem Gewissheit unserer Legion, leitete sich von dort, dass wir, die Deutschen von Kansas, in delegierten Conventionen gewachsen, und damit verbunden, über diejenige, die wir, die Deutschen von Kansas, in delegierten Conventionen wohnten, und hiermit verbunden, von je zu je zu betrachten, immer von neuerem Gewissheit unserer Legion, leitete sich von dort, dass wir, die Deutschen von Kansas, in delegierten Conventionen gewachsen, und damit verbunden, über diejenige, die wir, die Deutschen von Kansas, in delegierten Conventionen wohnten, und hiermit verbunden, von je zu je zu betrachten, immer von neuerem Gewissheit unserer Legion, leitete sich von dort, dass wir, die Deutschen von Kansas, in delegierten Conventionen gewachsen, und damit verbunden, über diejenige, die wir, die Deutschen von Kansas, in delegierten Conventionen wohnten, und hiermit verbunden, von je zu je zu betrachten, immer von neuerem Gewissheit unserer Legion, leitete sich von dort, dass wir, die Deutschen von Kansas, in delegierten Conventionen gewachsen, und damit verbunden, über diejenige, die wir, die Deutschen von Kansas, in delegierten Conventionen wohnten, und hiermit verbunden, von je zu je zu betrachten, immer von neuerem Gewissheit unserer Legion, leitete sich von dort, dass wir, die Deutschen von Kansas, in delegierten Conventionen gewachsen, und damit verbunden, über diejenige, die wir, die Deutschen von Kansas, in delegierten Conventionen wohnten, und hiermit verbunden, von je zu je zu betrachten, immer von neuerem Gewissheit unserer Legion, leitete sich von dort, dass wir, die Deutschen von Kansas, in delegierten Conventionen gewachsen, und damit verbunden, über diejenige, die wir, die Deutschen von Kansas, in delegierten Conventionen wohnten, und hiermit verbunden, von je zu je zu betrachten, immer von neuerem Gewissheit unserer Legion, leitete sich von dort, dass wir, die Deutschen von Kansas, in delegierten Conventionen gewachsen, und damit verbunden, über diejenige, die wir, die Deutschen von Kansas, in delegierten Conventionen wohnten, und hiermit verbunden, von je zu je zu betrachten, immer von neuerem Gewissheit unserer Legion, leitete sich von dort, dass wir, die Deutschen von Kansas, in delegierten Conventionen gewachsen, und damit verbunden, über diejenige, die wir, die Deutschen von Kansas, in delegierten Conventionen wohnten, und hiermit verbunden, von je zu je zu betrachten, immer von neuerem Gewissheit unserer Legion, leitete sich von dort, dass wir, die Deutschen von Kansas, in delegierten Conventionen gewachsen, und damit verbunden, über diejenige, die wir, die Deutschen von Kansas, in delegierten Conventionen wohnten, und hiermit verbunden, von je zu je zu betrachten, immer von neuerem Gewissheit unserer Legion, leitete sich von dort, dass wir, die Deutschen von Kansas, in delegierten Conventionen gewachsen, und damit verbunden, über diejenige, die wir, die Deutschen von Kansas, in delegierten Conventionen wohnten, und hiermit verbunden, von je zu je zu betrachten, immer von neuerem Gewissheit unserer Legion, leitete sich von d...
Kansas population, totaling thirty-four percent of the foreign immigrants in the territorial census of 1860, dipping to twenty-five percent during the heavy immigration recorded in the state census of 1870 and 1880, then leveling off at approximately thirty-one percent for the 1890 and 1900 census. The earliest German-language newspaper to serve these settlers was the Kansas Zeitung, founded in Atchison City, Kansas Territory, on July 22, 1857. It was followed by two other papers in the pre-Civil War era. During the 1860s eight different short-lived German-language papers circulated in Kansas. Thereafter, despite a number of enterprises which failed, the Germans of Kansas continued to found newspapers at an astonishing rate. In the 1870s twenty German-language papers were started; nearly fifty more began publication in the 1880s and 1890s; an additional fifty-seven started up between the turn of the century and World War I. In the 1920s, despite the antagonism against German-Americans caused by the war, there were fifteen German-language publications originating in Kansas. By the mid-1950s there were still three such publications, each in operation for over fifty years. In all, for the century between 1855 and 1955, over 120 German-language publications had originated and circulated in Kansas.

By contrast, the foreign immigrant populations in the state were not able to establish viable native-language presses in the face of local, English-language newspaper competition. Large numbers of Swedes, Czechs, Italians, and French immigrated to Kansas in the nineteenth century, yet fewer than twenty local newspapers appeared in all their languages combined. Prior to 1900 the Swedes published six papers, the Czechs three, the French and Welsh each one. Following the turn of the century only five new non-German foreign-language newspapers were inaugurated in Kansas before World War I, produced by the Italians, Czechs, and Swedes.

The German-language press of Kansas had two major orientations: secular and religious. Although the early press was predominantly secular, a vigorous Mennonite press in German emerged soon after these immigrants arrived in Kansas following their exit from Russia in the 1870s. The Mennonites introduced a number of religious periodicals, and by 1900 their religious press began to rival the secular papers of the central European immigrants in both numbers and persistence. It was the Mennonite religious press which was sustained after World War I. This study will focus, however, on the secular German-language papers which flourished in Kansas before the war—on their development, their persistence, and their demise.

Kansas' first German-language newspaper was not the voice of an immigrant enclave. Rather, it was founded by Americans from Massachusetts who had formed an enterprising quasi-political organization known as the New England Emigrant Aid Company. Their purpose in starting the paper was to attract Germans, well-known in the East for their Free-Soil sentiments, to settle in Kansas and counteract the early surge of settlers from Missouri and other Proslavery states. In 1857, three years after the opening of the Kansas Territory, the company sent Charles F. Kob, a German-born surgeon, to Atchison City and provided him with a subsidy to start the Kansas Zeitung. Kob's columns were filled with a combination of enthusiastic descriptions of the Kansas paradise and political sentiments in support of the Free-Soil cause. He assured his countrymen that with one hundred dollars, sufficient clothing, and a flint rifle, they would

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Edward Fleischer, editor of the Atchison Courier, promoted the establishment of a German Emigration Society for Kansas. In this issue he called for a meeting in January 1878, which was attended by representatives from all over the state. Subsequently, Fleischer visited many areas throughout Kansas and described them in his newspaper as attractive places for settlement.

15. The tabulation of the other, non-German, foreign-language newspapers of Kansas is based on information in Connelly's *History of Kansas Newspapers*.
do very well in Kansas, "but even with nothing," he wrote, "you can find plenty of work, and Kansas offers definite security for the emigrant and his family." 17

Despite these assurances, Kob's efforts were premature. The little paper could not flourish in the frontier hamlet of Atchison which, in the territorial census of 1855, registered only three Germans and one Swiss-German. 18 Relinquishing his interests in the paper in March 1858 to L. Soussman, who nursed it for another six months, Kob went to Leavenworth, where he established a land agency. In November 1858 an advertisement announcing his full-time medical practice appeared in the second issue of the new Leavenworth Zeitung. 19 This short-lived weekly was the second German-language newspaper in the territory, but it also disappeared after approximately six months.

Other attempts to establish German-language newspapers during the territorial period were equally unsuccessful. 20 The shifting population of the frontier and the unsettled political circumstances made it difficult to sustain and circulate a paper with such a specific audience. Yet, by 1860 there were approximately 4,500 Germans in Kansas, scattered in settlements throughout the northeast quarter of the territory. 21 Their newspapers began to emerge following the Civil War, a product of their community development and a reflection of their sense of identity.

In 1865 there were almost 5,500 Germans in Kansas, with noticeable concentrations in three eastern areas: Leavenworth County, with 1,700 Germans; Douglas County, where 640 Germans clustered in settlements around Lawrence; and Atchison County, where 500 Germans settled in and around the growing commercial and railroad center at Atchison City. 22 Once again there were attempts to establish a German-language press, this time by resident Germans without apparent support or subsidy. In 1865 Soussman, formerly of the Atchison Kansas Zeitung, started the Kansas Journal in Leavenworth. It survived for three years before Soussman went into partnership with Louis Weil in a new but short-lived publication, the Kansas Staats-Zeitung, in 1869. In Atchison a weekly publication called Die Fackel (The torch) appeared briefly in 1866, but was soon absorbed by the Westliches Volksblatt of St. Joseph, Missouri. In Lawrence, another weekly, Die Freie Presse, was started by John Häberlein in 1868. When this paper faltered in Lawrence, Häberlein moved it to Leavenworth, where he developed it into the first persistent German-language newspaper in the state. With a daily edition for Leavenworth readers and a weekly issue circulated throughout the state, Häberlein and his sons published Die Freie Presse regularly for almost twenty years until its demise in 1886. 23

Between 1865 and 1870 the German-speaking population in Kansas nearly tripled. Unrest in central Europe due to Bismarck's wars of unification spurred emigration. This, coupled with the end of the American Civil War and the push to develop the railroads and railroad lands of the American West, sparked the growth of Kansas. During this brief period the state's German-born population rose from

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17. Kansas Zeitung, March 27, 1858.
18. Territory of Kansas, census of 1855, microfilm copy, archives department, Kansas State Historical Society.
19. Leavenworth Zeitung, November 27, 1858.
20. Records for this period are confusing. For example, neither the Leavenworth Zeitung nor the Kansas Beobachter, which it attacked editorially in November 1858, are cited in either Arndt and Olson or Connelley. Copies of the Leavenworth paper were discovered only in 1978 by Archivist Terry Harmon in the holdings of the Kansas State Historical Society. Harmon's research also revealed a list of territorial newspapers compiled by the Kansas Weekly Herald of Leavenworth on July 1, 1858. This list included a Leavenworth Staats-Zeitung which is nowhere else recorded. Similarly, Arndt and Olson list an unnamed Atchison paper for 1859 and record that the Kansas Zeitung was published in Leavenworth from 1858 to 1868. German-American Newspapers, p. 160. One extant issue of the Kansas Zeitung from 1863 is on microfilm in the Kansas State Historical Society. Connelley has no reference to either of these publications. Clearly, more research is needed on the press of the territorial period.

The Germania, Lawrence, published from 1877 to 1918, encouraged German settlement in Kansas by presenting full pages of pictures depicting Lawrence as an attractive and progressive city with substantial buildings, churches, and a university. This page arrays pictures and descriptions of the area, suggesting that Germans would find in Kansas many of the amenities of the more settled lands of the East.

23. Arndt and Olson, German-American Newspapers, pp. 152, 159-160.
Separated from their homelands, German settlers in Kansas sought to identify with their new country while continuing to preserve their own language and culture. Their newspapers played a vital role in fostering a distinctively German-American tradition. Some German-Russian immigrants who came in the 1870s were Roman Catholic. Their communities in Ellis, Russell, and Rush counties reflected the names of the Volga River country of their homeland and were marked by spired churches which could be seen for miles. This family of German immigrants had settled in Liebenthal, Rush County.

approximately 5,500 to over 14,500. Two-thirds of these settlers remained in the eastern counties.

Then, in the mid-seventies, Mennonites and Volga Germans, whose ancestors had left central Europe for Russia during the eighteenth century, emigrated to Kansas. Whereas the central European immigrants had tended to relocate in Kansas as individuals or small groups within larger communities, these German-speaking Russians traveled as congregations and town groups to start colonies on the Kansas prairies. The Mennonites, many of whom had prospered through the Crimean grain trade in Russia, purchased railroad lands in the fertile hills of east central Marion, McPherson, and Harvey counties. The Volga Germans, a less affluent Catholic and Lutheran population from the rural villages of the Volga basin, homesteaded the open plains lands of Russell and Ellis counties. Although born in Russia, these immigrants had retained their German heritage and language, but their eighteenth-century characteristics tended to separate these settlers from the central European immigrants. With these two new sources of immigration, however, the state’s German-speaking component jumped by 1880 to 38,500, and the majority of this population was now located beyond the eastern counties in the agricultural interior west of Topeka.

These settlement trends were reflected in the extension of the German-language newspapers across the state. In 1870 there is evidence of only one paper, Härberlein’s Freie Presse, in Leavenworth. By 1880 there were fifteen papers published in eleven locations: small towns like Atwood, Great Bend, Halsey, Kinsley, Marysville, and Newton joined the growing cities of Topeka, Wichita, Atchison, and


son, Leavenworth, and Lawrence as publication centers.27

THE IMMIGRANT PRESS performed three major functions. The first was to promote settlement by countrymen in the area served by the newspaper. As this proved to be successful, the paper then also served as a voice within the German-American community to support social and cultural identity and to promote issues of interest to the group. Finally, the press performed the dual function of keeping settlers in touch with both their past and present homelands. To survive, the immigrant papers did not require an exclusively German settlement. They frequently coexisted easily with the English-language newspapers of the town, and occasionally they even contained articles or advertisements in English. They relied on circulation by mail or on railroad delivery to readers outside the town in which they were published. On the other hand, a high mortality rate among these papers indicates that they could not survive simply on the basis of publishing in German. To be truly persistent, the immigrant paper had to reach beyond the medium of language to help identify and build the German-American character of the community. As long as the press acted to protect that sense of uniqueness and the cohesion which language and common heritage conferred, it, in turn, would hold and attract readers and prosper within the greater community.28

As we have seen, Kansas’ first German-language newspaper, the Atchison Kansas Zeitung (1857-1858), was the result of American, not German, initiative. The German population was too small and diffuse to sustain it, despite active efforts by the editor to attract German immigrants and to speak for their community.29 But in the 1870s, with John Häberlein’s Freie Presse (1868-1886) leading the way, German newspapers blossomed across the state. Typically, these papers promoted immigration and settlement, editorially focusing on the particular advantages of Kansas for German immigrants. Edward Fleischer, editor of the Atchison Courier (1876-1879), epitomized this tone in an editorial written in 1877:

... in this state you will find everywhere Germans who operate industrial establishments and who are always the first to lend a helping hand to any public endeavor. Is it any wonder, my friends, that cultured Americans make every effort to maintain good relations with Germans, and that citizens of every state seek to continue German immigration?—You, my friends, have the obligation to set a good example as Germans, and to influence those Germans who are seeking a new homeland. Haven’t you the right to be proud of Kansas in just the same way you are proud of your birthplace?30

The Germania of Lawrence (1877-1918) employed a more subtle and charming way to attract Germans, presenting full pages of pictures to portray Lawrence as an attractive and progressive city, with substantial buildings, churches, and a university. Considerable practical and financial information was provided in the accompanying text, and other county settlements were mentioned as well. Particular attention was paid to educational facilities. This was a special effort to demonstrate the attractiveness of the area and to show that it could provide Germans with many of the amenities found in the more settled lands of the East.31

There was a clear relationship between the expansion of railroads in the 1870s and the growth of both the English- and the German-language press in Kansas. The railroads, which were granted lands from the public domain to sell as a means of financing new lines across the state, worked to attract immigrants as both buyers of land and customers of railroad services. They appointed agents to travel abroad and recruit immigrant settlers. For example, C. B. Schmidt of Lawrence was appointed commissioner of immigration for the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad in 1873 and was instrumental in recruiting the Mennonite colonies to settle railroad lands in south-central Kansas.32 Agents such as Schmidt used the German-language press as a recruiting tool.

27. Arndt and Olson, German-American Newspapers, pp. 153ff.
30. Atchison Courier, October 4, 1877.
31. Germania, Lawrence, January 8, 1880.
abroad, and editors such as Edward Fleischer used this relationship to advantage. Fleischer emphasized his access to railroads in order to attract readers and advertisers. He developed a network of subscription outlets among German retailers in nineteen towns across the whole eastern portion of the state and pledged to serve more Germans along the Santa Fe than any other paper. Fleischer also promoted the establishment of a German Emigration Society for Kansas, calling a formal meeting in January 1878 which was attended by representatives from all over the state. Subsequently, Fleischer visited numerous areas throughout Kansas and wrote them up in his paper as attractive places for settlement.

As Germans began to move into the state, their local newspapers began to play a vital role in efforts to develop and sustain a distinctively German-American presence. There was a definite sense of separation from the central European homeland and a strong sense of self-identification as Americans who preserved German culture and language in the new homeland. This is reflected clearly in the way references to Germany were handled by these papers. Although there were frequent, lengthy articles about central European affairs, the long distance and weekly format precluded close coverage of the news from abroad. Typically, therefore, the papers presented a full page of formatted short articles from each of the major German states such as Prussia, Hanover, and Bavaria. No effort was made to keep readers informed of current events or developments in those states; instead, the tone was almost gossipy, presuming a familiarity with affairs of the homeland. For example, the lead item in one report from the Grand Duchy of Hesse read:

Bensheim. A certain major industrialist is seeking as son-in-law an individual with technical ability who will be able to develop the concession for a gas plant in our city; he is willing to invest 150,000 to 200,000 Marks in the project.

Along with this news digest, the "boiler plate" provided advertisements and sometimes serialized fiction. This distinctive format appears in many of the German-language papers of Kansas, and was probably available on a syndicated basis from news services in the East.

By contrast, the German-American papers paid close attention to national events in the United States and to local items of interest to the German population. For example, the Marysville Post (1882-1901) gave first-page precedence on August 20, 1881, to the daily bulletins describing the condition of President Garfield, lingering in life despite an assassin's bullet. Then, in order, the major articles discussed an increase in commodity prices, the interstate turnverein competition in Missouri, the docket for the next district court session, a speech by an Iowa schoolteacher on the importance of preserving the German language among German-Americans, and political intrigue in the Prussian government. This paper, clearly, placed its emphasis on American citizenship and events, together with German-American cultural concerns. These priorities were echoed constantly by other German-language papers across the state.

There was no apparent movement among the Kansas Germans to develop an ethnic voting block out of their numbers. They joined existing American political parties and, on the whole, the German-language press took a moderate stance on political issues. As had been the custom in Germany, most papers identified themselves as non-partisan in the hope of securing as many readers as possible. Nonetheless, eleven papers came out in support of the Republican party, and seven for the Democratic party. The German-American Advocate of Hays (1882-1886) supported the Farmers' Alliance during the 1880s and regularly attacked the railroad monopoly. Similarly, in 1890 the Fort Scott Herald (1890) militated against prohibitionists in both par-

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German-language newspapers provided their readers with a link to their central European homelands. But the long distance from Europe and the weekly format of most of the papers precluded close coverage of news from abroad. Instead, the papers published full pages of boiler plate material available on a syndicated basis from news services in the East. This page from the Lawrence Germania is typical of the boiler plate material which included advertisements and fiction, along with short features from such German states as Prussia, Hanover, and Bavaria.
ties. In a rare English-language editorial the Atchison Courier asserted the political independence of German-American voters:

The German Americans are independent, they vote not for the party but for men as well as principle and if a candidate on the ticket of the republican party is dishonest, the German Republicans will not vote for him no more than the German Democrats will vote for a dishonest Democrat. If a German is on the ticket of one or the other party they will naturally [sic] support without distinction of the party the German just as well as the Americans prefer [sic] an American to a German and vote for him in preference to a German even if he is on the right ticket.36

The Courier's statement reveals the underlying current of cultural tension which tended to characterize relations between the American-born and the German immigrant populations of the state. As early as 1857 a correspondent from the frontier settlement of Alma, west of Topeka, wrote to the Kansas Zeitung:

The settlement has grown considerably this season and consists, now as before, with two exceptions, entirely of Germans. For the local Americans this is obviously "too much Dutch." Otherwise we have an excellent relationship with our Yankee neighbors in Wabaunsee [sic] and Mission Creek, which is not surprising, because 80 to 100 who are unified and voters are not to be taken lightly.37

Nothing caused such lasting controversy between "Yankees" and German-Americans as their differing attitudes toward alcohol. Whereas the Yankees tended to favor Sunday laws and temperance, the Germans saw nothing wrong with taking beer or wine with meals or in leisure hours and resented the American moralizing which restricted them. In Atchison and Leavenworth the German papers led the struggle in 1858 to have these statutes repealed or revised; in Atchison a German petition for Sunday hours successfully passed the town council.

In the 1880s the friction was still there, appearing in an interesting variation in Hays. There, Charles Miller ran a bilingual paper, the German-American Advocate, of which the first two pages were in English and the last two were in German. The news items in each section, though not identical, were similar, and advertisements for both German-American and Yankee merchants appeared in both languages. In November 1882 Miller published a warning on page one for his American readers: "We hear that a new saloon is to be built soon on the old Krueger corner. May the gods forbid." However, on page four, his German readers received an entirely different message: "A reliable source tells us that a new tavern will be opened here soon. Let's hope that we can get a big glass of beer (a schooner) at half price." Clearly, editor Miller had no scruples about appealing to the special interests of both his constituencies.38

Bilingual publications were rare, however, and generally short-lived in Kansas. Records indicate only eleven publications with a regular or intermittent bilingual format. The Atchison Kansas Staats-Anzeiger (1881-1882), the Marion Central Kansas Telegraph (1880-1881), the Canada Arcade (1886-1887), and the Burton Anzeiger (1892) each survived only about one year. The German-American Advocate (1882-1886), the Hays Free Press (1882-1890), the Hillsboro Herald (1886-1890), and the Leavenworth Advertiser (1899-1908) were slightly more successful, but did not persist. Only three papers which appeared in a bilingual format managed to sustain publication: the Hillsboro Journal (1902-1953) and Der Wahrheitsfreund (1915-1947), both Mennonite publications, and the Coopers International Journal (1890-1918) published by the labor union in Kansas City, which ultimately converted to the English language.39

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35. Arnitz and Olson, German-American Newspapers, pp. 181ff, identifies partisan affiliations.
36. Atchison Courier, November 2, 1876.
38. German-American Advocate, Hays, November 15, 1882.
39. Arnitz and Olson, German-American Newspapers, and Connelley, History of Kansas Newspapers, identify bilingual publications. The Kansas Staats-Anzeiger was published between 1879 and 1915 in the German language, it was associated briefly with the English-language daily, the Atchison Journal, from 1881 to 1882.
THE FAILURE of the bilingual mode reinforces the conclusion that the German-Americans preferred to maintain separate papers and readership. But on numerous occasions specific articles, usually with a strong political message directed at the non-German community, were printed in English by the German papers. This practice increased markedly during the period leading up to the United States’ entry into World War I. German-American editors generally supported the German cause rather than that of the European allies and tried to convince other Americans of the peaceful nature of Germans at home and abroad. In September 1914 the Wichita *Herald* (1885-1922), the cornerstone of John Hoenschel’s eleven-paper chain of German-language newspapers, published in English a major editorial entitled “Let’s Have Fair Play,” which read in part:

About one-fourth of the American people came from Germany or are of German descent. Most of those who came here years ago have since become American citizens, and according to the United States census, a greater percentage of Germans has acquired citizenship than any other foreign nationality.

Could anyone justly complain about their German fellow citizens of being peace disturbers? Can it be said that the Germans here, in celebrating their “Turnerfest” or “Saengerfest” indulge in fights or scrapping? And the German in this country, as a rule, are [sic] not different from the Germans living in Europe.⁴⁰

After the first year of the war, however, British propaganda about alleged German atrocities had clearly swayed Americans, and anti-German sentiment was rising. At Christmastime 1915 the *Neue Kansas Staats-Zeitung* of Kansas City (1894-1916) reacted in anguish and outrage to the demand by a Topeka paper that loyal Americans refuse to buy German toys for their children. The paper replied in a prominent, English-language editorial:

...only an inhuman brute and monster would lend himself to assist in planting the seed of hate in the innocent hearts of American children against a country which has never done them a wrong. ... German emigrants have brought to American little children the Christmas tree. Germany has given them the thousand and one little playthings that fill their innocent little hearts with joy; it has given them the kindergaten, the thousand little fables, stories and songs in translation they enjoy so immensely. ... Not satisfied with poisoning the minds of the public with damnable lies against Germany, even the children are now being taught also this hate.⁴¹

But the German-American papers could not stem the inevitable tide of anti-German feeling generated by the war. Those who spoke German were considered disloyal and dangerous, and even the pacifist German Mennonites were subjected to insult and violence in Kansas because they refused to buy war bonds or enter military service.⁴² Early in 1918 the Wichita *Herald* announced to its readers that all German-born aliens had to register and obtain special identity papers. By the end of the year most of the German-American newspapers of Kansas ceased publication. They did not attempt to convert to standard English-language editions; they simply closed down.

Of the German-language publications which survived the hostility of the war era in Kansas, ten were Mennonite. Sustained by a German scripture and tradition which was reinforced by a religious lifestyle and one hundred years of practiced cultural autonomy in imperial Russia, the Mennonite sects sustained publications which circulated in Kansas and in Mennonite communities and missions across the world. This particularist and secular press had developed apart from the other German-language papers in Kansas, although it demonstrated some of the characteristics of the other immigrant papers. The earliest papers reflected the impulse to confirm and expand the settlement. *Zur Heimath* (To the homeland, 1875-1881) and *Nachrichten aus der Heidenwelt* (Report from the wilderness, 1878-1881) were established shortly after settlement and were sent back to Russia and to the missions. As competition grew between

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⁴⁰ Wichita *Herald*, September 11, 1914.


two rival Mennonite sects in Kansas, the General Conference Mennonites and the Mennonite Brethren, the number of publications grew. In all, the Mennonites initiated almost thirty different publications in Kansas, most of them monthly or quarterly religious periodicals, although some, such as the Newton 
*Harold* (1897-1941) carried news and editorials like the secular papers. Americanization eventually took its toll of these publications as well, as they either ceased publication or were converted to English.

It is tempting to think of German-language newspapers as something quaint or exotic, as an interesting but impractical effort of the immigrant population to retain its identity. But that was not the case. The German-language papers of Kansas were definitely commercial enterprises, designed and proven to be profitable. During the last half of the nineteenth century, twenty-one companies formed in Kansas for the purpose of publishing these papers. Ranging from simple partnerships to a major chain, these papers prospered with local and national advertising, loyal subscribers, and full participation in the regular business affairs of the community. John Hoenscheidt was clearly the press baron of the Kansas Germans. Starting from the base of the Wichita 
*Harold*, he developed a chain of weekly papers which were published in Atchison, Ellinwood, Kingman, Marysville, and Pittsburg, as well as in Joplin, Missouri, and in four towns in Oklahoma. H. von Langen had papers in Atchison, Newton, Topeka, and Marion. The Häberlein family, father and sons, worked on papers in Leavenworth and Lawrence. Some editors secured local contracts for official governmental announcements. L. Soussman contracted to publish a number of state orders and laws during 1863 in his *Kansas Zeitung*, and his reporter-partner, Louis Weil, was an officially accredited legislative reporter. Charles Miller of the German-American *Advocate* secured the contract to publish land claim notices required of homesteaders. Indicative of his interaction with the Volga Germans, his name frequently appears as one of the witnesses for their land claims in Ellis County.

Not all of these business ventures proved successful. Of the approximately 120 German-language publications from Kansas there were many, in fact, which went out of business after only a few years. However, between 1885 and 1915 there were never fewer than fifteen German publications circulating in the state, and from 1895 to 1910 there were at least twenty or more. Aside from the Mennonite publications, the German-language papers which proved most durable were the provincial weeklies serving both urban and rural communities. By preserving the German language for periods of the readers' relaxation and contemplation, these papers persisted because they did not seriously try to compete with the more assertive newspapers of the local American journals. Only six German papers tried to function in a daily format, and only three of them persisted for more than two years: the Häberleins' *Freie Presse*, which circulated virtually without competition during the early 1870s; the Leavenworth *Post* (1887-1897); and the Leavenworth *Tribune* (1887-1917). Significantly, each of these papers had a more widely circulated weekly edition as well.

Although there are no reliable or consistent records of circulation, it is clear that none of these papers reached mass audiences. The stated circulation in 1900 of representative papers mentioned above reflects their selective appeal:

- *Lawrence Germania*: 1,200
- *Leavenworth Tribune*: 885
- *Marysville Post*: 960
- *Newton Harold*: 960

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43. Arndt and Olson, *German-American Newspapers*, pp. 154, 164.
As we have seen, the state of Kansas had an unusually strong tradition of local newspapers during the nineteenth century, a tradition which contrasted with that of many other rural states. The German-language press was a part of that tradition, and yet separate from it. It represented a major German cultural heritage which was deliberately perpetuated despite the strong competition from local American papers. The fortunes of the German papers were closely tied to the growth of the immigrant communities across the state, yet language and numbers alone were not sufficient to support them. The editors had to adopt strategies to develop and sustain their readers' conscious pride in being both German and American. By focusing on materials which would support that duality, the weekly German-language press reinforced that unique quality of being a “hyphenated-American.” An individual could participate fully in the daily public life of the English-speaking American community, yet have ever at hand the proud ethnic heritage pooled in the reservoir of the press. The continuing success of the German-language press in Kansas defies the “melting pot” theory of frontier life. It clearly demonstrates the coalescence behind the Kansas frontier of a durable German-American identity. Only the devastating hostilities generated in World War I could force these German-Americans to suppress their continental heritage, and with it, their rich and versatile German-American press.