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As you may have seen, the German American Heritage Center was hit by a vehicle on June 12th of this year. Luckily, no one was hurt. The staff are working hard to get the Center back in shape. Fortunately, aside from some damage to the historic door and some damage inside, there is nothing keeping us from normal operations. In fact, we had a wonderful Best of the Wurst event with many in attendance. We couldn’t have had such a successful event without our dear volunteers and our friends at Jerry’s Market who took home the trophy again this year!

The Center will have to shoulder the burden of our deductible, but we will continue to be open and welcoming visitors all summer. Consider supporting the Center during this time with a visit, a gift, or plans to attend one of our upcoming workshops or special events. The staff is looking forward to the return of Duffy Hudson portraying Audie Murphy on July 17th. We have enjoyed Duffy's portrayals of Einstein, Houdini, and George Burns in the recent past.

See you at the GAHC soon!

Mit freundlichen Grüßen!

Daniel Cabage
Blaudruck: Preserving a "Dyeing" Art

NEW EXHIBITION AND WORKSHOPS AT THE GAHC

Blaudruck is a beautiful and tedious process that is a traditional folk art in Germany, Austria, Czechia, Hungary, and Slovakia. It translates to "blue print" and is a resist-dye technique used on textiles: usually linen or cotton, but it can also be done on hemp, velvet, and even silk. This folk art traces its origins in Europe back to the 16th century. Resist-dyeing techniques were used in the East in places such as India for centuries prior, but it was not until the mass trade and expansion from the Dutch East India Company that these techniques and indigo dye became accessible in Europe. Blaudruck was extremely popular in Europe through the 18th and 19th centuries. During the industrial revolution, most of the dyeing workshops closed. There are now only a handful of family-owned and operated workshops left.

In 2018, the Blaudruck technique became a part of the UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Traditional Blaudruck cannot be mass produced. When done properly, it is handmade to order by skilled artisans following the same techniques and using the same materials that have been used for centuries. One workshop is Blaudruckerei in Jever, Lower Saxony, Germany. Georg Stark opened this workshop in 1985 with printing blocks from former workshops in the area and surrounding countries. Most of the wood printing blocks in Blaudruck workshops are hundreds of years old and have been passed down along with the practice. Therefore, many of the blocks in the Jever studio are from the 17th century. Stark has named a new successor to his studio, who is now the youngest Blaudruckerin or “blue-printer” in the trade. Sabrina Shumaker is 24 years old and is learning the ancient techniques of Blaudruck to preserve them for future generations.

One of my favorite details about the Blaudruck textile process is the dyeing. When the artists first submerge the fabric into the indigo dye vat, it comes out a pale greenish-yellow color. As the dye is exposed to oxygen and dries, the color becomes deeper, turning into a rich indigo color. Depending on how many times the textile is submerged, the deeper the blue.

Our upcoming exhibition, Preserving a Dyeing Art: German Blueprint, will feature textiles made at the Blaudruckerei in Jever, as well as a selection of objects from the National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library in Cedar Rapids, Iowa and the Amana Heritage Museum in Amana, Iowa.

-contributed by Clare Tobin, Assistant Director
Thank a German for Birkenstocks!

Ah...summertime, and global toes are feeling every welcome ray of warmth and freedom. And if they are ensconced in Birkenstock sandals, they carry a bit of German history with them in every step. The Birkenstock family of shoemakers traces its roots to 1774 and its American lineage to 1966. Let’s walk back and learn more!

Johann Adam Birkenstock, a “vassal and shoemaker” began his cobbler shop in central Germany in 1774. His focus was to create shoes which supported and contoured the foot, an innovation since many shoes of that time and well into the future were made with flat soles and no distinguishable differences for left and right feet. Konrad Birkenstock, the great-great-grandson of the company founder, developed the first contoured insole for custom shoes in 1896, and also introduced the new “Fussbett” or footbed insole for use in other common shoes. The company began to sell the first flexible arch support for insertion into factory shoes in 1902, and these two products sold quite well. To boost sales further, Birkenstock created educational courses to spread awareness of the benefits of their products. A large store opened in Frankfurt.

After World War II many soldiers returning from military duty had aching feet from their flat boots, and sales increased yet again. The real boost to domestic and then international success came in 1964, when Konrad Birkenstock redesigned the flexible arch support to be the basis of an actual complete shoe, fashioned as a sandal. Athletes quickly adopted this product because the early design required the wearer to use one’s toes to keep the sandal on, which resulted in toning the calf muscles. Gymnasts were especially keen on this early model. Other designs followed.

In 1966 Margot Fraser, a German dressmaker who lived in California, traveled to Germany for spa treatments in Bavaria. There she was encouraged to wear Birkenstocks to help with a foot ailment. She was so enthused at the result that she introduced the sandals to America, but initial acceptance was limited. Many shoe stores rejected the product because of their quirky appearance. Fraser found much better sales when the sandals were sold in health food stores, specifically near the granola section. By the 1970s the sandals were discovered by flower children of the era. Birkenstock sandals in all their colors, styles, and designs were a big hit. “Back to nature” folks also embraced Birkenstocks for their natural foot shape and foot-friendly comfort.

The original footbed was created from the shock absorbent sole, a layer of jute fiber, a firm corkbed and second layer of jute, and finished with a liner of soft suede. Modern times have developed an alternative foam layer under the suede, and there is also a design featuring waterproof EVA material.

In recent years Birkenstocks have found their way into high fashion. Kate Moss and Gwyneth Paltrow are big fans. “Birks” became standard issue in the Nordstrom shoe departments by 1986. A mink covered style, nicknamed the “Furkenstocks” graced a Paris runway in 2012, followed by Valentino and Givenchy iterations in 2019.

In 2018 PETA gave Birkenstocks an award for being the “Most Animal-Friendly Shoe Company” and the firm is proud to have reduced its energy consumption by over 90% by the 1990s, despite high sales levels and increased production.

1896 Advertisement for Birkenstocks
This article features the story of Balthasar Best and was provided by Sharon Stoakes, Collections Manager of the Traer Historical Museum in Traer, Iowa.

Balthasar Best was born at Darmstadt, Sterkenberg, in the state of Hessen, Germany on March 17, 1838. His father, Jacob, was a doctor. Another doctor friend, who had immigrated to America, encouraged him to do the same. In 1850, Jacob packed up the entire family and sailed to America. The family included the parents and eight children, four boys and four girls.

Once in America, they took a steamer (The G.P. Griffith) from Buffalo, New York intending to settle in Toledo, Ohio. While crossing Lake Erie and near Cleveland, the steamer caught fire and was soon a mass of flames. Jacob gathered his family on the deck, said a brief prayer, and told them to jump. Balthasar alone made it to shore, apparently by holding on to something that floated. His mother, father, and seven siblings were lost. Balthasar was just 12 years old at the time of the accident. A few other passengers also made it to shore. Civilians from town came to help with the rescue.

A German family took Balthasar in, but they treated him cruelly, forcing him to sleep in the cellar. One day he was outside in the yard crying when another boy came by. He also spoke German and when Balthasar related how poorly he was being treated, the other boy, Jacob, encouraged him to come to his house. He did and was soon adopted by the new family. Their name was Kleinschmidt and they treated him as their own.

In 1856, Balthasar moved to Prairie Du Chien, Wisconsin where he learned the trade of cabinet making. In Winona, Minnesota, he learned the trade of sash and door making. These skills would lead him to successful endeavors, but next came the Civil War.

Balthasar was 23 years old when he enlisted. He was mustered into the Minnesota Company K on April 19, 1861. At the time of his enlistment, he was 5'8" tall with a light complexion, grey eyes, and brown hair.

His childhood friend, Jacob, also enlisted. He was believed to be in Company A of the 37th Ohio Infantry in September 1861. He was killed at Princeton, West Virginia on May 17, 1862.

Balthasar kept a diary, which was written in his native German language. Some records indicate Best was wounded at Bristow Station on October 14, 1863. He is listed on the U.S. Army’s list of casualties for that date. He was with the First Minnesota in the terrible charge at Gettysburg, which history records as one of the most daring and brilliant exploits of American soldiers, when Gen. Hancock succeeded in an almost hopeless effort to patch up a second line after the disaster to Sickles. He expected every man of the regiment to be killed, but hoped to hold the field until reserves could reach the spot. He was successful, but at what sacrifice? Nearly every officer lay dead or writhing with bloody wounds. Of the 262 men who made the charge, 215 lay upon the field, stricken down by rebel bullets. Counted among the forty-seven survivors was one
Balthasar Best. At one point during the Battle of Gettysburg, he had a rifle shot right out of his hands.

Balthasar was mustered out with the regiment on May 5, 1864. He had participated in twenty battles during his three years of service. These included Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, and Bristow Station.

Following his service in during the Civil War, Balthasar returned to Winona, Minnesota. There he married Francisca Salentine, also a German immigrant. She was born in Cologne, Prussia on March 28, 1846. The couple settled in Tama, Iowa in 1872. Here he operated a restaurant before moving on to Traer, Iowa. Mr. Best was one of the original members of the old guard who founded Traer in 1873. He erected the first substantial building in the city, operated a restaurant for a time, then he later built the Best House, a hotel which he managed for a quarter of a century. He later added a grocery store and a dry goods store to his enterprises.

The couple had one daughter, Minnie, born January 9, 1876. Minnie, married a William J. Ladd and had two daughters, Wilma and Marione.

Frannie and B, as the couple was affectionately known, both died in 1909 and are buried in Buckingham Cemetery in Traer.

*Balthasar's diary, covering the year 1863, was translated from German in 2000 by Ewald Hausdorf, Austrian military attaché to the United States.*

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**The Griffith Disaster of 1850**

Following the completion of the Erie Canal from Albany to Buffalo, New York, Lake Erie became an important link in an all-water route for immigrants traveling from the eastern seaboard into the Midwest.

The 600-ton lake steamer *G.P. Griffith*, launched in 1847, was one of dozens built to capitalize on this booming trade. On June 17, 1850, the *Griffith*, outbound with more than 300 passengers on a three day voyage from Buffalo to Toledo, caught fire and burned about 220 yards from shore.

Many of the German, English, Irish, and Scandinavian settlers were laden with money sewn into their clothing, and few reached shore. Contemporary accounts list 286 lost. Most were buried in a mass grave on the beach, since reclaimed by Lake Erie. The Griffith incident remains one of the worst maritime disasters on the Great Lakes.

![Engraving from Lloyd's Steamship Directory, 1856. Caption: A depiction of the steamship G. P. Griffith burning on 17 June 1850.](image)

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*Images courtesy Find a Grave website.*
Besides these people some very well-to-do Germans were living here already. They came here with means and now possess a farm of 300-640 acres, and of them 100 to 160 are fenced in and have livestock besides a herd of cows with 30 to 40 head of steers. For pulling the plows and disks, one uses here oxen and horses. In the first years because people always had to clear the land, get materials for living and putting up fences, the people here use oxen predominately and cannot do without them. If one however has his farm set up for the most part, then as a rule one lets them go (the oxen) and afterwards keeps horses.

Good farm horses cost $50 apiece and $1 is equal to 56 Pfennig. Six dollars is about 7 Thalers. A milk cow is $12 to $14. A yoke of oxen is $40 to $50, and ox meat costs 3 to 4 cents a pound. (There are 100 cents to a dollar and 1 cent is therefore a little more than 1 Secholing, 25 cents are equal to 28 Secholinge). Pork is 2 to 3 cents a pound, butter is 10 to 18 cents a pound, eggs are 10 to 12 cents dozen, lard is 6 to 8 cents a pound. Wheat per bushel (1 bushel is equal to 2 scoops), 58 to 60 cents. Barley 60 cents and more, corn 20 cents, peas 25 cents, potatoes 25 to 30 cents, and all these products are always found in Davenport at every time. If one has a significant quantity, around 1000 bushels to sell, then one goes down to St. Louis with it and usually has a price advantage.

Workers and servants one can always get here. A Knecht (servant) earns 10 or 12 to 13 dollars a month; a maid earns 5 to 6 dollars a month. We don’t keep either one; one doesn’t need them here if one has help as I do from the children. Otherwise I hire in the spring during the planting one whom I give $12 (a month). At harvest time when the planting is also so large one is very busy with it and must have more help. Then one pays $1 a day besides meals.

The usual daily wage in the winter is 50 to 75 cents and in the summer 75 cents to a dollar (per day). Craftsmen receive 1 to 1 and a half dollars a day, and this price will not probably go down regardless of the many craftsmen arriving from Holstein. It will probably not go down in the next ten years because in the city there is too much building and almost all the residences in the county should be seen as provisional even if so many (Holsteiners) come after.

By the way one also has many jobs done communally, and sometimes one does better with that, for example, producing fencing, fence posts, and making hay. This last job can be done for a ½ dollar when drying 1000 pounds, and thrown together in this amount it can be delivered. Because the entire German settlement is itself young, the dairy business has been neglected until now. In the first years, one has enough to do with setting up buildings and fencing, plowing and the other tasks involved in farming. If most don’t have enough money to acquire a sizable livestock right away, one tries to acquire it by oneself.

Now however we are right at the point where the existing dairy business is ready to start. Two farmers in my area declared themselves ready to undertake this next spring by themselves. All are increasing their livestock to a degree and during this summer an enterprising man in Davenport has built a splendid basement for storing the butter; with this he thinks he can make a good business shipping to New Orleans. There is no doubt that a dedicated dairy business will be profitable, especially since one can keep so many cows as one wants. In the summer they (the cattle) cost nothing, and the necessary hay for the winter, 2-3000 pounds per cow, is also not very expensive.
Finally, concerning social life here, one is surrounded with the less educated German people here. The educated person misses a lot in this regard even because there are almost no educated people here, and we would wish some educated families will settle here.

With this I have touched on virtually everything which you as immigrants would need to know. By the way if you want to take this step (emigrant), you must decide this by yourself. At least it is my purpose not to rely on just anyone in this regard. It is worse than one believes to separate oneself from his country, his friends and relatives forever. The negative sides of the earlier relationships don’t slide into the background after they have gone overseas. What good one had in the homeland is what I treasured and love. If one surrounds oneself so easily with an unrealistic fascination at a distance then with even the best intentions, the longing for the homeland becomes so strong that your new life loses some of its charm.

However, a trip over the ocean and the land is not without danger. God guided us with His grace. No member of my family was taken from me. Many, however, had to endure a death with their undertaking (just like my father-in-law this fall died of cholera on a trip from here to New York). And in this case, I would have felt guilty if I would have been advised of this outcome. Therefore, talk over this matter with God the Almighty, with your wife and yourself and only if these all decide in favor, would you take on the task; otherwise do not do it.

gahc faqs!

As part of our information gathering for strategic planning, we conducted a survey with consultants Linda Wastyn and Associates. The information gathered will be useful for the Board as they formulate the plan, but it also showed a need to get some information out to our friends and members! Please enjoy some of these facts and answers to help you learn a bit more about the Center; this quarter we highlight Board operations!

- The GAHC Board of Directors is served by 13 volunteers. They meet every other month with committee meetings taking place on opposite months. The committees include: Executive, Governance, Building & Grounds, Program, Endowment, and Marketing.
- The Governance committee provides the full Board with nominations for new members, among other duties. If you are interested in serving on the Board of Directors, contact us!
- Many of the Board committees have members on them that do not serve on the board. One example is the Program Committee. If you have ideas you would like to share with the committee or would like to join, contact us!
- The Endowment Committee oversees our four endowment accounts. The Center takes a modest and industry standard draw from these accounts for operations. These funds account for approximately 12% of our operating budget. Our number one source of funding is from support from our members and friends like you!
- 60% of our Board is under 60! The Board brings in new members quite often using a matrix to help determine diversity in different areas, including industry/expertise, location, and other identity markers.
- The Board meets in a hybrid manner, some are here at the Center and some join us virtually using our OWL technology.
- New Board members are typically voted in at the Annual Meeting. This yearly gathering for an update from staff and directors usually happens in January or February. All current members are invited and is now held in-person and virtually.
- The GAHC has by-laws which govern the Board. We utilize them at meetings and update them when necessary. One new item is that the President serves a three-year term, at the end of which the Vice President becomes President. A new VP is voted on by the other directors and must have previously served on the Board for minimum one year.
- Questions? Contact us at info@gahc.org.
Language Lesson Learned or What Did JFK Really Say?

While watching the famous Kennedy speech delivered at the Berlin Wall in June of 1963, I was taken by his ability to empathize with the citizens of the divided city. His “Ick bin ein Berliner” resonated around the free world. (In their dialect Berliners say “ick” instead of “ich”).

But wait, Germans don’t use the indefinite article “a” (“ein” in German) when they state where they come from. For instance, a native of Frankfurt would say, “Ich bin Frankfurter” (“I am a Frankfurter) and not see the humor. Likewise, a native of Germany’s second-largest city, Hamburg, would say, “Ich bin Hamburger” (“I am a Hamburger). A person from Austria’s capital would proudly state, “Ich bin Wiener” (“I am a Wiener!). A classier sounding translation could be “I am Viennese” or “I am from Vienna.”

Kennedy did say “Ick bin ein Berliner,” which literally means “I am a jelly doughnut.” (A Berliner is also a type of doughnut, not just a citizen of Berlin). Kennedy’s aides probably didn’t know that he should drop the “ein” and say, “Ick bin Berliner.” Still, his message gave hope to those living behind the Iron Curtain during the Cold War. Now knowing that an “Amerikaner” is also a type of doughnut in Germany, how should you say that you reside in the U.S.? “Ich bin Amerikaner,” of course.

Amerikaner Baking

There is quite a bit of confusion when it comes to the genesis of the Amerikaner, those sugar glazed cakelets that are known on the East Coast as the black-and-white cookies. It might seem that these iconic cakelets migrated to Germany, but according to some German culinary historians, the Amerikaner is actually a distortion of the original: Ammoniakaner. This comes from the cakelets being traditionally leavened with ammonium carbonate. So it seems plausible that the little cakes were born in Germany and made passage to the U.S. with the many waves of immigrants arriving in the 19th century.

The black-and-white cookie is commonly traced to Glaser’s Bake Shop in the Yorkville neighborhood of Manhattan, founded in 1902 by Bavarian immigrants. In the post war period, black-and-white cookies became part of the American Jewish culinary repertoire, deeply rooted in the Jewish communities of New York City and elsewhere around the United States.

In Germany, the Amerikaners are often considered a children’s treat and pop up as an after school snack or at birthday parties. The cakelets are often topped with a lemon glaze. For a great recipe, check out Luisa Weiss's recipe in the book Classic German Baking.
We are excited to introduce our new Administrative Assistant to our members and friends! Alexis is the friendly voice you hear when you call the Center. Be sure to say hello to Alexis next time you find yourself at the GAHC!

Hi, my name is Alexis Maldonado and I am the Administrative Assistant here at the German American Heritage Center & Museum. While I am not of German ancestry myself, I am Mexican American, I have always been interested in German history. (Did you know that Germans remained one of the largest foreign ethnic groups in Mexico well into the twentieth century?)

I am currently a student at Western Illinois University and am eager for the opportunity to work at a non-profit organization such as this after graduation. I am originally from the Chicago suburbs and in my free time I enjoy biking around the QC, baking overly complicated desserts, practicing hot yoga, reading (my current favorite author is Polish writer Olga Tocarczuk), and watching movies. I also recently married my long-term partner Tom Lawson.
SATURDAY 9TH. HISTORIC WALKING TOUR. 9:30am. Tickets at eventbrite.com, $5

SUNDAY 10TH. YOUNG ADULT READING CLUB. 10:30am. Info at www.gahc.org/yareadingclub/

SUNDAY 17TH. TO HELL AND BACK: THE STORY OF AUDIE MURPHY. 5pm. Refreshments included! In-person performance with Duffy Hudson. Tickets at eventbrite.com, $5 Non-members

SUNDAY 17TH. 1848ERS LECTURE SERIES PART 3 OF 5. 2pm. Virtual lecture with Yogi Reppmann. Tickets at eventbrite.com, FREE for members, $5 Non-members

THURSDAY 21ST. FERMENTATION WORKSHOP. 2pm. Instructed by Kristin Bogonas. Tickets at eventbrite.com, all materials provided. $5

SATURDAY 23RD. HISTORIC WALKING TOUR. 9:30am. Tickets at eventbrite.com, $5

SUNDAY 31ST. PAINT AND SIP WORKSHOP. 2pm. Tickets at eventbrite.com, all supplies included. $20 Members, $25 Non-members

THURSDAY 4TH. GERMAN AMERICAN DAY. Mark your calendars! Davenport City Council proclaimed Sunday, August 4th German-American Heritage Day in Davenport, Iowa. Celebrate the GAHC anniversary of 28 years!

FRIDAY 29TH. GAHC @ MERCADO ON FIFTH. 5-7pm. Moline, Illinois. Stop by our booth for children's treats!
GERMAN AMERICAN HERITAGE CENTER & MUSEUM

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2022

Fall Frolic

5:00 COCKTAILS & SILENT AUCTION
6:00 GERMAN DINNER
7:00 ENTERTAINMENT

THE OUTING CLUB
2109 BRADY STREET, DAVENPORT

$60 PER PERSON - RSVP 563.322.8844 OR EVENTBRITE.COM

All proceeds benefit Educational Programs & Exhibits!