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German Pioneers on the American Prairie: the Wagners in Texas and Illinois

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vealingly, the names of Frederick Jackson Turner, Walter Prescott Webb, Herbert Eugene Bolton, and James Malin, as well as those of the leading New Western historians, do not appear in the book's index.

Especially troubling are the more than 75 mistaken facts, misspellings, problems of form, and incorrect conclusions marring the text, notes, and index. Abraham Lincoln did not begin his life in a log cabin in Illinois (129), Theodore Roosevelt was already president in 1902 and did not run for reelection in 1908 (37, 21), and the Homestead Act did not provide free land (47). Authors' names are misspelled, with Rodman W. Paul becoming Paul W. Rodman (293) and Patricia Nelson Limerick changed into Patricia Limerick Nelson (263). Many western scholars will not agree that the late nineteenth-century West spawned a "unique culture which defined the period of westward expansion and which continues to shape the West today" (150). Continuities and changes led—and lead—to an even more complex West.

Also, the author never defines her West. At times it encompasses Niagara Falls, Lincoln's Illinois, and the bluegrass country. But the volume includes little on the Pacific Northwest, the northern Rockies, or the range of states just west of the Mississippi. Iowa readers will benefit from the general discussions of farmers, sod houses, and agricultural experiences but will wonder why Iowa writers such as Emerson Hough, Ruth Suckow, and Frederick Manfred are not discussed.

Nonspecialist readers may be less critical. Quay's book is a helpful guide to popular culture, but much less so for the American West. If used with caution and alongside more authoritative and dependable sources, *Westward Expansion* can be a handy reference source for public school teachers and students. Graduate students and western historians will find the volume less helpful.

German Pioneers on the American Prairie: The Wagners in Texas and Illinois, by Andreas V. Reichstein. Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2001. xii, 288 pp. Illustrations, maps, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. \$32.95 cloth.

Reviewer Eleanor L. Turk is professor of history emerita at Indiana University East. She has published a number of articles on German Americans in Kansas.

Andreas Reichstein is a lecturer in American history at the University of Hamburg, Germany, long a center for the study of German emigration. His breadth of knowledge of both countries grounds this multi-generational portrait of a family that migrated both within Germany and to the United States. He sketches the social and political changes in nineteenth-century Germany that prompted brothers Wilhelm and

Julius Wagner to emigrate from southwestern Germany to the United States. The study's core provides the history of their families' lives in the Midwest. He identifies historical factors that affected the immigrants' success in adapting to their new homeland. Following the families to the present generation, Reichstein concludes with a discussion of assimilation and acculturation.

Starting with an edited collection of 142 letters exchanged by the extended Wagner family between 1811 and 1871, Reichstein also examined a wide range of archival sources and secondary works and conducted interviews with contemporary descendants of the brothers. He has appended genealogical tables for the families of each.

Wilhelm (1803–1877) was the oldest of the six children of Peter Wagner, a well-educated, politically liberal Lutheran pastor. Wilhelm grew up during the Napoleonic wars and the conservative reaction following them. Ordained as a Lutheran pastor, he married and established his family in Germany. In the unsuccessful revolutions of 1848, Wilhelm sided with liberals hoping to unite Germany by constitution. Accused of treason, he lost his state-appointed pastorate and income. Outlawed and unable to find work, he emigrated alone in 1851. After his initial attempt to establish a farmstead in Wisconsin foundered, he accepted a pastorate in Yellow Creek, Illinois. He then returned to Europe for his wife and six children. Later he left the church to become a newspaper owner and businessman. Through participation in the economy and German American social organizations, he built a comfortable middle-class existence for his immediate family and descendants.

Julius Wagner (1816–1903), the fifth of Peter's six children, was also caught up in the political unrest of the 1840s while a university student. Fired with idealism, he became intrigued by the efforts of Prince Solms-Braunfels to sponsor a communal colony in Texas under the auspices of the so-called *Adelsverein* (or "noble's commune"). Thus, in 1847, even before the revolution, Julius joined the idealists and departed for a new life in Texas. Reichstein presents a thorough examination of the discussions and discords within the colony that led to its fragmentation and ultimate failure. Those familiar with the Amana Colonies of Iowa will find this an interesting contrast. Julius left the group shortly after arrival, establishing his own ranch and working in various business firms. He returned to Germany to marry and bring his bride to Texas. During the Civil War, however, his abolitionist idealism put him at odds with his Confederate neighbors. Forced to flee to Mexico for safety, he alienated his children and had difficulty finding acceptance in Texas on his return. Thus the brothers' families lost contact, a fact Reichstein actually reestablished through his research.

Reichstein concludes that it took three generations for assimilation to occur. His expertise falters, however, in the final chapter, where he discusses migration from psychological and philosophical perspectives. Almost Nietzschean in interpretation, he asserts that the *frontier* is not simply a geographical concept, but should be recognized as "the will to change what is bad, to strive for the better" (219). Despite this lapse, this is a careful and thorough examination of the German migration that helped form midwestern society. The research model wed genealogical work with academic analysis, and the bibliography is an excellent starting point for those interested in the scholarly discussions of assimilation, acculturation, and the frontier.

Danes in America: Danish-American Lutheranism from 1860-1908, edited by Peder Kjolhede, Peter Sorensen Vig, and Ivar Marius Hansen. *Danske I Amerika (Danes in America)* 1. Blair, NE: Lur Publications, 2001. xx, 186 pp. Illustrations, glossary, appendix, index. \$22.50 paper.

Reviewer Mark Granquist teaches in the Religion Department at Gustavus Adolphus College. His primary research interest is the nature of religion among Scandinavian American immigrants.

Throughout American history, immigrants have struggled to "translate" the religion of their homeland into a new and often strange American idiom. This was especially true of the Danish immigrants who settled in Iowa and the Midwest. The words and stories of these settlers are often locked into the immigrant languages of the past and inaccessible to historians and general readers. In this volume, the religious world of Danish Americans is unlocked by the efforts of skilled translators, so that we can hear their stories firsthand.

Danish American immigrants divided into two separate Lutheran denominations, and for many years the community was influenced by their struggles for identity. This volume translates parts of a much larger work, dating from 1908 to 1916, in which historians of both denominations told their stories and offered their own perspectives on the divisions within the immigrant community. In places, readers are able to see both sides of a conflict, with each group trying to explain and defend its own position. A wealth of illustrations and tables help to clarify the various groups and their leaders.

This is an interesting work of immigrant religious history, carefully translated and explained by the editors. It enhances our understanding of nineteenth-century immigrants and the religious organizations they established.

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