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& ITS IMPACT ON GERMAN IMMIGRATION TO THE STATE

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Introduction

Why an Office for Emigrants to Wisconsin?

Richard Current opens the second volume of *The History of Wisconsin* with a quote from Governor Nelson Dewey's 1848 inaugural address to the State Legislature:

> Wisconsin possesses the natural elements, fostered by the judicious system of legislation to become one of the most populous and prosperous States of the American Union.

Dewey continued, observing that Wisconsin possessed fertile soils, mineral wealth, manufacturing abilities as well as "commercial advantages."[1]

So it did, but what it lacked at the time of Dewey's address were people sufficiently numbered to exploit these advantages. Although Wisconsin's population was large enough to support its bid for statehood in 1848 (the required minimum was 60,000), it amounted to no more than 210,546 in 1847. This figure would expand to 305,390 (with only approximately one fifth born in Wisconsin) in 1850—a 45% increase in three years, and an explosion of 2,514% over the 11,683 residents of 1836—but even so, the white settlers were scattered thinly across the southeastern one-third of the state's total land mass (roughly south of a line from Green Bay in the northeast to Portage in south-central Wisconsin to Prairie du Chien in the southwest). The vast majority of Wisconsin's land area of approximately 54,000 square miles was unpopulated and its forests and prairies, although freed for the most part of Indian claims, remained largely as pristine as never having been touched by humans.[2]

Yet, from where would come all the people needed to settle this new state whose charge, according to Dewey, was to exploit its abundant resources? Certainly, countless pioneers from the Atlantic seaboard, especially the state of New York, and the trans-Alleghenian plateau continued the westward thrust of white settlement,[3] but they came neither swiftly enough nor in sufficient numbers to fill out the contours of this vast wilderness. If, on the other hand, Wisconsin steadily were to increase its share in the seemingly endless flow of

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1. Richard N. Current, *The History of Wisconsin, Vol. II: The Civil War Era 1848–1873*, 1.
2. Cf. Alice E. Smith, *The History of Wisconsin, Vol. I: From Exploration to Statehood*, p. 465.
3. Ibid.

European immigrants that for years now had been pouring into the New World, it could enjoy a substantial and rapid rise in its population. In 1853, State Commissioner of Emigration Herman Haertel noted that "every unprejudiced citizen and observer of our State must confess and acknowledge that the continued prosperity of its inhabitants, is to a great degree dependent upon further accessions of its population from abroad."[4]

Even in the twelve years of territorial status preceding statehood, Wisconsin had attracted sizable numbers of European immigrants, notably of German ethnic origin but from throughout northern and central Europe, as well.[5] For example, rich lead deposits in the southwestern corner of the territory attracted, among others, a large contingent of Cornish miners.[6] Gradually, however, the center of human activities shifted from that area to the east, where Congress made large tracts of land available to white settlers, and on whose Lake Michigan shores the new steamships could land emigrants coming directly from the eastern seaboard. By 1850, the port city of Milwaukee, with the highest concentration of people in the state, had a foreign-born population of 64%, two-thirds of which was German.[7]

The emigrants who found their way to Wisconsin in the 1830s and 1840s encouraged more and more of their fellow citizens to join them on the American frontier. One such emigrant was Dr. Carl de Haas, a German from Elberfeld in the Ruhr valley who in 1848 and 1849 published two volumes of a book entitled, *Nordamerika, Wisconsin, Calumet: Winke für Auswanderer*, providing practical advice to Germans inclined to emigrate and covering in detail most aspects of travel and settlement. Not surprisingly, he recommended Calumet on the shores of Lake Winnebago in Wisconsin as a final destination, the place to which he had been attracted. Many similar accounts during this period, in the form of books, pamphlets, letters and advertisements, sought to attract Europeans to the New World,[8] and to Wisconsin, in particular.

Before we explore in more detail the characteristics of German emigration to Wisconsin in the 1850s and public efforts to encourage it, a word about the so-called "Kettenwanderung" or chain migration fueled by personal correspondence is in order. The question of how many emigrants were induced

4. HHAR 10 (see Key to Abbreviations, p. 145).

5. For an overview of the early European immigration to Wisconsin, broken down by ethnicities, cf. LaVern Rippley, *The Immigrant Experience in Wisconsin,* 2–8.

6. Cf., e.g., op. cit. 4, and Smith 490.

7. Cf. Smith 542, and Baird Still, *Milwaukee. The History of a City*, 112. See also Theodore Mueller, "Milwaukee's German Heritage."

8. See chapter 3 below.

by private letters as opposed to by published travel guides and other literature cannot be answered with certainty. It is safe to assume that both vehicles played an important role in encouraging emigration in the first place and providing advice on the voyage as well as places of settlement. Indeed, numerous sources reveal that the increase of early settlement in Wisconsin from a trickle to a flow—where it was not owed to entire groups, such as the Old Lutherans, the Glarus-Swiss, or the Lippe-Detmolders—was predominantly driven by personal letters and, in many instances, also great sums of money sent home to help finance the trip to the New World.[9]

Once established, however, the steady stream of emigrants triggered a wave of publications by authors who could rightfully expect a wider readership. Likewise, logic would suggest that, as the numbers of German settlers in Wisconsin reached new heights after the Civil War (and as advances in transport and communication accelerated the delivery of transatlantic mail), personal correspondence regained importance. This is simultaneously borne out by the declining number of emigrant travel guides and the sharp, more than proportionate, increase of letter correspondence after 1860.[10] Furthermore, considering that the earlier waves of German emigrants to the United States had a more educated background than later contingents,[11] it may be assumed that their likelihood of consulting published literature was greater. Whichever the findings in regard to chain migration fueled by personal correspondence may be,[12] in this study we are primarily concerned with comparing the quality of private *publications* with that of official government literature. After all, any attempt by the emigration commissioners to compete with the flood of personal letters, whose content they would not have been able to know, would have been doomed from the beginning.

Emigration during the 1840s was both an arduous and a perilous task for the ordinary person of limited means and life experience. First one had to

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9. See, e.g., Current 43 (re: letters) and Wilhelm Hense-Jensen, *Wisconsin's Deutsch-Amerikaner*, 119–120: "Wie viele Tausende von Dollars sind aus Wisconsin in die Hütten der Tagelöhner von Mecklenburg und Pommern gewandert, damit die in harter Frohne scharwerkenden Freunde über das Meer gelangen und sich im freien Lande ihr eigenes Schicksal schmieden könnten!" (How many thousands of dollars have made their way into the huts of day laborers in Mecklenburg and Pomerania who slave away for the overlord, so that they may be able to travel across the sea and become masters of their own lives in a free country!)

10. Cf. Walter D. Kamphoefner et al., *News from the Land of Freedom*, 27–28.

11. Cf. Mack Walker, *Germany and the Emigration 1816–1885*, passim, but. esp. 51.

12. Cf., e.g., Helmut Schmahl, *Verpflanzt, aber nicht entwurzelt,* 121–123. See also p. 57 below.

travel from home to a port city, in and of itself for many people the longest and most costly journey they had ever undertaken. Next one had to brave the crossing of the Atlantic by sail or steam, taking a month or two, only to be accosted by hordes of ticket sellers, hucksters, crooks, and thieves in port cities like New York before setting out for the North American interior[13]. Some of the emigrants knew where they were going, if only in general terms. Others had a specific location in mind or a job lined up or land which had already been purchased. Yet others were following relatives and neighbors. But many knew little or nothing about where precisely to set down their roots.

One Rudolph Puchner, a native of Baden who had just recently graduated from college, read de Haas's book in 1849 and, having determined to emigrate, decided on Calumet as his new home. He never quite made it there, however, for he became lost in the forest and wound up ten miles east of Calumet in the newly founded settlement of New Holstein. In 1894, when looking back on the pioneer days of New Holstein, he recalled the halcyon days of early Wisconsin and of its countless immigrants:

> No state in the union could be placed in the same category as that of the mecca of immigrants, the State of Wisconsin. In the east one would see caravans of immigrants, of whom the question would be asked: "Where are you going?" Nine times out of ten the answer would be "to Wisconsin" with the emphasis on the last syllable.[14]

This observation is supported by, among other, Alexander Ziegler who in 1847 speaks of the extraordinary attention among Europeans that Wisconsin has commanded in recent years.[15] Kate A. Everest quotes a citizen of Fond du Lac who remembered that, in New York around 1848, "every hotelkeeper and railroad agent, every one who was approached for advice, directed men to Wisconsin."[16]

Indeed, immigrants already formed a sizable proportion of the rapidly growing population of Wisconsin. Still, Wisconsin was only one of several states and territories competing for European settlers, and the emigrants were often directed elsewhere. In many cases they were also misguided, misdirected, and mistreated at every step in the path. How then could Wisconsin attract

13. After the completion in 1825 of the Erie Canal linking the Hudson River to Lake Erie and thus to the country's interior, New York quickly surpassed Philadelphia as the primary port of immigration.

14. Rudolph Puchner, *Memories of the First Years of the Settlement of New Holstein*, 15.

15. I, 200. See pp. 118–121 below for a summary of his book.

16. Kate A. Everest, "How Wisconsin Came by Its Large German Element," 318.

and retain its share of the tidal wave of immigrants washing up on America's shores to fill its needs for laborers, farmers, and men of capital? Despite its advantages extolled by Governor Dewey, Wisconsin lay in what was then the far northwestern corner of the United States, at a great distance from its ports and commercial centers. And it was a time when more specific news about Wisconsin's resources was just beginning to spread throughout the country. Indeed, in the case of the Germans, Wisconsin owed its erstwhile popularity more to hearsay than facts.

The most burning question, then, to be raised by the boosters and businessmen, as well as by the state government, was undoubtedly this: How could word about Wisconsin's numerous attractions best reach prospective immigrants before they left the home farm, village, or city in order to escape the misery in Europe? Should Wisconsin rely on private sources of information, such as the book written by de Haas, or letters by emigrants, or material provided by promoters, at the risk that the interests served by these authors might conflict with the state's official purpose and intent of attracting immigrants? In other words, were the motives for which these materials had been conceived allied to those of the state? Would their advice steer the emigrant clear of thieves, vagabonds, and cutthroats and secure their ultimate arrival on Wisconsin's Lake Michigan shoreline, or would they still be subject to enticements, good, bad, or indifferent, from competing regions or states?

In an attempt to confront these and other perceived needs and problems surrounding immigration and the settling of the state, Wisconsin created the Office of State Commissioner of Emigration in 1852. It thus became the second state in the Union, after Michigan,[17] to make immigration a matter of policy and subsequent action. Despite the continued, if varying, flow of German emigrants to the shores of the United States throughout the second half of the century, the office was allowed, for the time being, to operate for all but three years.

The only publication that deals exclusively with Wisconsin's effort at attracting European emigrants to the state is by LaVern J. Rippley who, in his article, "Official Action by Wisconsin to Recruit Immigrants, 1850–1890," gives a sweeping account of the office's fate not only during its first existence, from 1852 to 1855, but also during its later resurgences (1867–1875 and 1879–1886). Ingrid Schöberl, in her book, *Amerikanische Auswandererwerbung in*

17. From 1845 to 1849, Michigan posted an agent in New York City in order to promote that state for immigration from Europe. Cf. Schöberl, *Amerikanische Einwandererwerbung in Deutschland* 1845–1914, 19–25.

Deutschland 1848–1914, devotes part of her methodical study to Wisconsin's efforts at recruiting immigrants. The greatest value of her contribution, however, lies in a comparison of immigration offices and their practices among various Midwestern states. Furthermore, as the title of her study suggests, she painstakingly traces advertisements of American immigration offices in German periodicals, especially the two German weeklies devoted exclusively to emigration,[18] providing a solid base for our study and surely others, as well. For all references on Wisconsin, we depend on more general histories of the state and articles of related focus, with the commissioner of emigration being mentioned in passing only.[19] As to the emigrants' fate during their stay in New York, a number of American and German studies have laid the groundwork there, among them especially Robert Ernst's *Immigrant Life in New York City 1825–1863* and Agnes Bretting's *Soziale Probleme deutscher Einwanderer in New York City 1800–1860*. Most important for our work, though, are the few government documents from that period that have survived. By presenting a detailed treatment of the Wisconsin state government's involvement with immigration during the early, heady years of settlement, we hope to shed more light on a phenomenon that in our consideration must not be overlooked when studying the history of German immigration to Wisconsin.

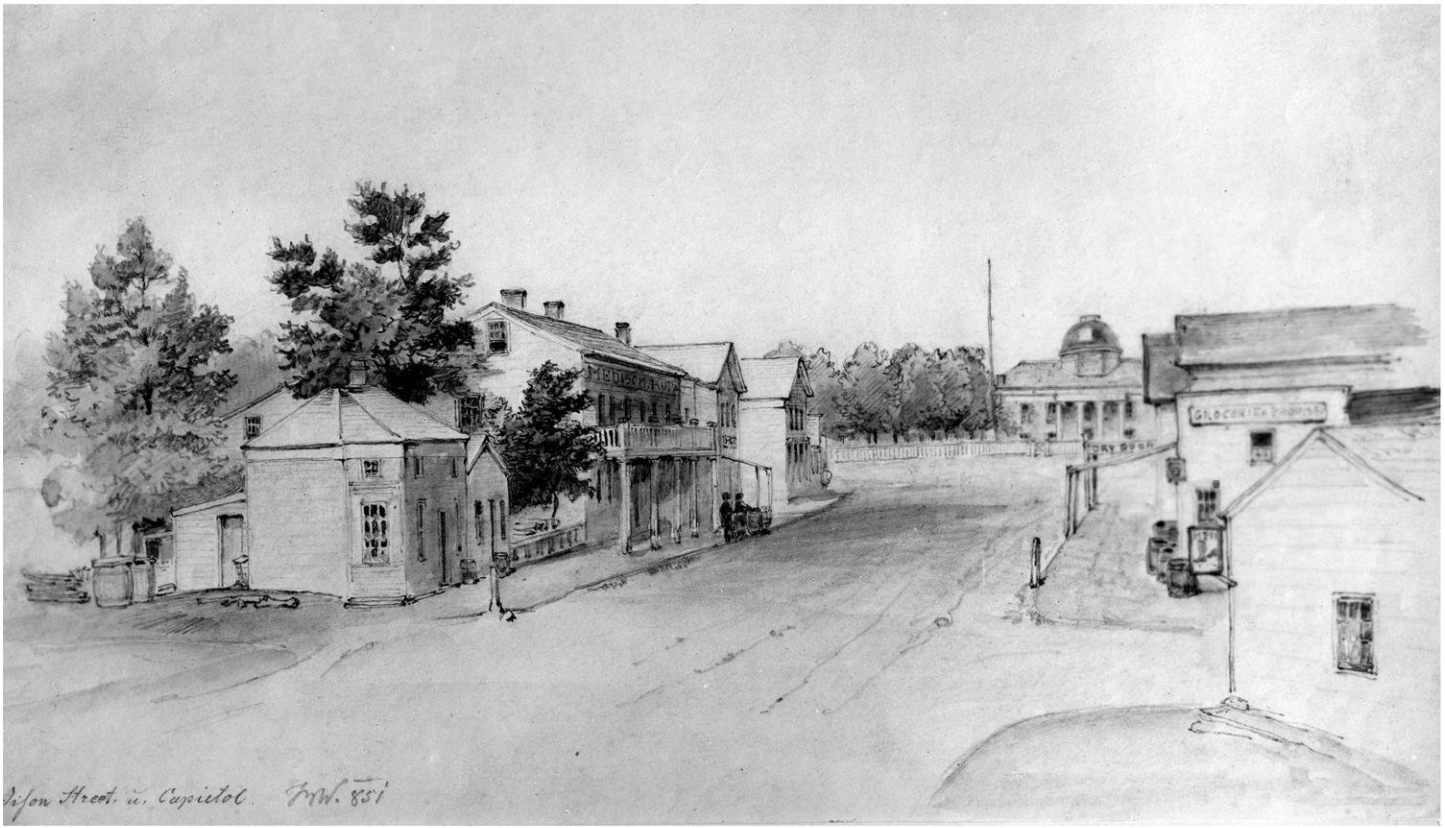
In the first part of this monograph, we will trace the history of this agency during the years 1852 to1855 by concentrating on its legal and political background and by describing its day-by-day operation. In order to evaluate the advice given by the commissioners of emigration, we will devote the second part to one of the pamphlets distributed in Germany by the agency, as well as to the two likely sources for this pamphlet, before assessing their respective accuracy and completeness with what we know today about the state of Wisconsin in the 1850s. In the third part, we will compare the agency's services, especially to German emigrants, with the information provided through the private sector by describing, by both summary and brief analysis, a number of publications by German immigrants and travelers, intended to assist their fellow countrymen in their decision to leave home for a new life overseas. The conclusion will then deal with the question of whether or not the Wisconsin Office of Commissioner of Emigration did in fact offer much-needed assistance to emigrants, and if so, whether or not the office, during the

18. See p. 127 below.

19. E.g., Hense-Jensen 124–127; Conzen, *Immigrant Milwaukee*, 1836–1860, 37. In Current's otherwise superb illustration of Wisconsin's early years as a state, a consideration of the Office of Commissioner of Emigration is strangely missing.

years of its existence, played a significant role in contributing to the rising tide of immigration to Wisconsin—especially from Germany.[20]

20. An abridged version of this study can be found in the essay collection, *Wisconsin German Land and Life*, ed. by Heike Bungert et al. (forthcoming).



1851 watercolor view of Madison by Johann B. Wengler, an Austrian who traveled in America, 1850–1851. This is the earliest known representation of the second Capitol and its Madison environs. (WHS: WHi-2933)

1

Legal History and Political Background

Just four years after statehood, the Wisconsin legislature took a historic step when it adopted chapter 432 of the laws of 1852 in which it created the Office of the Commissioner of Emigration[21] for the state. In his inaugural address, Governor Farwell pointed out that Wisconsin had more to offer to emigrants than any other state in the Union, and that foreigners brought with them their love for freedom, their ambition, industriousness and enterprising spirit, which all were needed to make this state flourish. He therefore recommended the establishment of an emigration agency both in Wisconsin and on the east coast, with the charge to induce emigrants to choose Wisconsin as their place of settlement and to protect them from swindlers and other defrauders along the way. Letters by recent immigrants to family members and friends in Europe, as well as the contemporary political unrest in the old world no doubt contributed to the vigorous migration experienced at present. This migration would still increase in the years to come, and, for political, patriotic, and humanitarian reasons it was the state's duty not only to open its land to the emigrants but also to encourage and protect them.[22]

The path from the governor's recommendation in January of 1852 to the actual passing of a bill authorizing a Wisconsin emigration agency appears to

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21. While to modern observers the term "immigration" may appear more suitable for naming the office, rather than "emigration," it must be noted that, in the 1850s, the latter was far more widely used to describe the process of leaving one's homeland and traveling—mostly across water—to a new area. Arguably, the focus of the agency's attention was primarily Europe, from where the migration, preferably to Wisconsin, began. Once the places of destination have become almost as densely populated as the places of origin, forcing newcomers to immerse themselves in an existing, clearly defined culture and infrastructure, the former term gains prominence (cf. the same agency's name in 1868, "Wisconsin Office of Commissioner of *Immigration*"). Likewise, the terms "emigrant" and "immigrant" have largely been used indiscriminately in the literature. In the absence of clearer definitions (the more recent use of simply "migrant" skirts the issue rather than confronting it), we will call the migrant *in transit* "emigrant," while the foreign *settler* who has succeeded in carving out an existence in the new environment will be referred to as "immigrant."

22. Inaugural Address by Governor Farwell, January 15, 1852. (Also printed in German in the Milwaukee daily, *Tägliches Wisconsin-Banner,* of Jan. 16, 1852). The term "emigration agency" could not have been new to the public. Private businesses of the same name to assist the emigrant, with mostly pecuniary motives, have existed all along. The paper cited above regularly (e.g., on July 23, 1852) ran ads in the 1850s for an "Allgemeines Einwanderungs-

have been a rocky one, though. An editorial in the April 9, 1852, issue of the *Tägliches Wisconsin-Banner*, a German-language paper of Milwaukee, accused the legislature of foot-dragging. "Wir wissen nicht, aus welchem Grunde die Legislatur ihre halbjährige Aufgabe nach ihrem eigenen Beschlusse verlottert hat, wir glauben aber, daß sie vor lauter Bäumen nicht den Wald sehen und vor lauter Agentur-Candidaten nicht hat zur Agentur kommen können."[23] The second part of this comment points to an extended discussion among lawmakers as to who would be best suited to head the new agency. This discussion apparently did not lack delicacy, especially when it came to the ethnic background of the appointee. The same editorial, for example, demands that the commissioner be of German origin, in light of the prevalence of Germans among the emigrants to this country. However, when the governor appointed a certain Mr. Lange to the post (whose name certainly suggests a German background), he opened himself to allegations of a conflict of interest. Not only, the editor of the *Tägliches Wisconsin-Banner* contended, was Mr. Lange a former clerk in Mr. Farwell's employ but also an entrepreneur who borrowed substantially from his superior in order to develop land, owned by Farwell, into some thousand building sites.[24] The governor, therefore, might be more interested in selling off his ample land possessions than serving the emigrants.

Indeed, Wilhelm Hense-Jensen argues in his book, *Wisconsin's Deutsch-Amerikaner bis zum Schluß des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, that it was land speculators who cleverly timed their lobbying efforts with the failed democratic revolutions in Europe. Especially land developers in and around the capital city of Madison, where access to the Wisconsin legislature was obviously facilitated by its close proximity, supposedly saw their wealth increased by eager settlers from Europe.[25] And who was closer to the government than the governor himself!

As for his initial appointee, Mr. Lange, Governor Farwell must have heeded the criticism raised by some of his constituents, because shortly later

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und Wechsel-Bureau, etabliert in 1849," which offered assistance to German and French emigrants in obtaining passage from Bremen, Hamburg, Rotterdam, or Le Havre, and from New York to Wisconsin. As security for those unable to pay, the firm accepted liens on land, for whose purchase, by the way, the client could avail himself of the same firm's services.

23. We don't know why the legislature has allowed itself to fumble this charge that it gave to itself half a year ago. But we believe that our legislators do not see the forest for the trees, and for all the fuss about candidates for the agency have not found the time to take care of the agency itself.

24. *Tägliches Wisconsin-Banner*, April 21, 1852.

25. I, 124–125

he revoked his decision. The fact that the new, and final, appointment went to Gysbert Van Steenwijk, a Dutchman, was interpreted by some as a snub against the Germans who had dared to question the governor's motives. On June 17, 1852, for example, the *Tägliches Wisconsin-Banner* editor approved of Steenwijk's choice—despite the overwhelming number of Germans among the emigrants—only because the German emigrants would find their way to Wisconsin at any rate, no matter who the commissioner was. After all, Wisconsin's advantages were well known by now, also in Europe. So all that was left to the commissioner, the writer concludes somewhat acerbically, was to make sure that the emigrants were well treated on board ship and while traveling inland. "Mehr kann er rücksichtlich der deutschen Einwanderung für Wisconsin nicht thun."[26]

The bill that would sanction the actual creation of an Office of Commissioner of Emigration and the establishment of an agency in New York finally passed the assembly on April 13, 1852. With a razor-thin victory of a 31 to 29 vote,[27] its supporters had little reason to rejoice. In fact, the *Tägliches Wisconsin-Banner* reported that the bill was facing certain death in the upcoming senate vote.[28] Fortunately, this prediction proved to be wrong, as the senate passed the bill only a few days later.[29]

The law itself was very simple, consisting of the five following subdivisions:

1) A commissioner to be appointed by the governor whose office was to be located in New York City for a term beginning on May 1, 1852, and ending April 30, 1853, whose duties were to include:

— being present at his office during the "usual business hours;"

— giving to emigrants information regarding the soil and limate of Wisconsin, together with information on the state and lines of business (occupations) which might be pursued there "with advantage;"

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26. As far as the German immigration to Wisconsin is concerned, that is really all he can do.
27. Cf. *Tägliches Wisconsin-Banner*, April 14, 1852.
28. Ibid.
29. Neither the vote count nor the exact date could be ascertained, but the time frame is given by the assembly vote on April 13 and the first appointment of a Commisioner of Emigration (Mr. Lange) prior to April 21, 1852 (see previous page).

— advising emigrants about the "cheapest and most expeditious" route by which to reach Wisconsin;

— giving such further information as will protect emigrants against "the impositions often practiced upon them;"

— reporting to the governor as often as required and in the manner prescribed by him;

— reporting the number of emigrants seen by the office, their nationalities, and the occupations they intended to pursue in the state; and

— to employ "such assistance" in the office as is approved of by the governor.

2) The commissioner was to answer directly to the governor and could be terminated for inefficiency and misconduct.

3) The salary of $1,500 with further appropriations of not to exceed $1,250 for publications describing the state; $250 for office rent; $100 for maps; and $700 for "assistance."

4) Salary to be paid quarterly and the remainder of the appropriations on order of the governor.

5) Effective date of Act: June 9,1852.[30]

Less than one year after its original adoption, this law was amended calling for the commissioner to be elected by the legislature (on a "joint ballot of both houses") for a one year term. This act took effect in time for the annual reappointment of the commissioner, scheduled for May 1.[31] Yet another bill, adopted in the same session as chapter 53, reiterated the office's powers, but also went beyond the 1852 law by specifically directing the commissioner to "distribute free of expense, to [...] emigrants, pamphlets in their respective languages" describing Wisconsin. The commissioner was also charged with

30. *General Laws of 1852,* chapter 432.

31. *General Laws of 1853,* chapter 34.

"keeping up correspondence with some of the most extensively circulated newspapers in Europe," as well as employing assistants for the express purpose of sending them to cities other than New York to establish satellite offices.

The 1853 law authorized a salary for the commissioner of $1,500 and appropriations not to exceed $2,300 for salary for an assistant, rent, other expenses of the office, printing, correspondence, and advertising.[32] (This is the same total amount as allocated in 1852. One can see that while the mandate for the office increased, funding did not.) It also required the commissioner to submit an annual report to the governor.

The passing of these two laws again occurred not without resistance. Some lawmakers, mostly Whigs, opposed the idea of electing the commissioner annually in both houses. They preferred to leave the decision to the governor, thus excluding input from the liberal Democrats. One senator, a Democrat, would not vote in favor of the bill simply because his constituents, most of them immigrants, were not interested in a state-run emigration agency, nor in increased immigration, in the first place.[33] To provide the debate in both houses with some substance, the governor appointed a "Select Committee" to which this matter had been referred. After its deliberations, this committee recommended favorable consideration of what would become chapter 34 of the laws of 1853. In its report, it observed that in the first year of the office the commissioner had induced many emigrants to relocate to Wisconsin, bringing with them "a large amount of capital, together with known frugality, industry and economy which characterizes a great portion of our immigration." Through his contacts with agents in Europe he guided people to Wisconsin, and through his efforts in meeting them upon their arrival in New York, he protected their interests and "speed[ed] them, with as little delay and expense as possible, to find a home and a new fatherland within the limits of Wisconsin." The committee also felt that by distributing statistical information about Wisconsin in Europe, the commissioner would induce capital to flow from that continent with which to exploit the state's resources. It added that in the ensuing year many immigrants, who had heeded the commissioner's call to come to Wisconsin, should be able to rely on the commissioner's assistance in New York. In fact, should his office there be closed a tremendous downturn in immigration to Wisconsin would be the result. Finally, the committee submitted that at that time there was a great need for laborers in the state, especially in railroad

32. Compared to other states, these amounts were generous. See Schöberl 27.

33. Cf. *Tägliches Wisconsin-Banner*, March 12, 1853.

construction, and that a large part of that workforce would have to be recruited, with the commissioner's help, from among European emigrants.[34]

From the general tone of this committee report it may be inferred that already after its first year there was a danger that the commissioner's office might be abolished. Even as early as in his "First Annual Report of the Commissioner of Emigration" of December 23, 1852, Gysbert Van Steenwijk, the first commissioner to head the agency, anticipates this apprehension:

> The giving up of our agency [...] would prove just at this period of a very disasterous [*sic*] character and the results of our exertions might be turned into a different channel, so as to make the benefits designed for Wisconsin go to the State of Iowa.[35]

When reading the "Legislatur" column of the March 16, 1853, issue of the *Tägliches Wisconsin-Banner*, the ominous tone struck by both Van Steenwijk and the select committee appears to be justified. After an apparently innocuous introduction that castigates the legislators for their passivity of late and their distracting manners, the reader stumbles on a bombshell:

> [...], nur traf es gleich einem Blitze aus heiterer Luft die Bewerber für die Emigrations-Agentur und die Freunde dieser Maßregel, daß der Senat plötzlich die Aufhebung derselben beschloß, obgleich er sich erst am 10. d.M. mit achtzehn gegen sechs Stimmen für die Beibehaltung der Agentur erklärt hatte.[36]

The editor surmises that the reason for such a sudden change of mind had less to do with opposition to the agency as such than with the lawmakers' displeasure with certain candidates for the Office of Commissioner. In any event, the fickle senate must shortly later have again reverted itself. In what way this body's possible aversion to certain candidates for commissioner may

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34. "Report of the Select Committee to Whom Had Been Referred so much of the Message of His Excellency the Governor as it Relates to the Subject of the Commissioner Of Emigration," *The Journal of the Senate of the State of Wisconsin,* 1853, Appendix [with respect to proposed legislation in 1853].

35. VSAR 11. Although the state of Iowa did not provide for a commissioner of immigration until 1860, Van Steenwijk was no doubt aware of Iowa Governor Hempstead's first biennial message of 1852 in which he encouraged, unsuccessfully as it turned out, the appointment of a commissioner of emigration. Cf. Marcus Lee Hansen, "Official Encouragement of Immigration to Iowa,"164.

36. [...], however, it hit supporters and friends of the emigration agency like a bolt out of the blue that the senate all of a sudden decided to terminate the same, despite the fact that only on March 10 it had decreed the continuation of the agency by a vote of 18 to 6.

have influenced the choice of Herman Haertel as Van Steenwijk's successor, could not be uncovered. We only know that he was already elected to the office during the session of March 8, 1853.[37]

While both houses were reluctant at first to approve an extension of the commissioner of emigration bill, the lawmakers seemed to offer little resistance to another bill aimed at facilitating immigration to Wisconsin, presumably by Anglo-Saxons. First passed in the Senate on March 22, 1853,[38] the bill proposed the appointment by the governor of a traveling agent who would commute between Wisconsin and the East Coast in order to seek out persons, "emigrants," from the established eastern states, to resettle in Wisconsin and protect them from fraud and exploitation during their passage to the frontier. His annual salary would be fixed at $1,500, "falls er dem Staate nützlich wird, denn sonst erhält er keinen Cent," as stated by the *Tägliches Wisconsin-Banner*.[39] The writer doubts that anyone would be found to accept the position under this condition. After the bill passed the assembly by a clear majority,[40] the agent appointed for the year 1853 was one Thomas J. Townsend. He is alleged to have traveled 42,000 miles and visited all of the important cities in the eastern United States and Canada, including many villages in New York and New England. He claimed to have experienced great prejudice against Wisconsin in the east but was able largely to dispel any misconceptions.[41]

Meanwhile, the pressures on the Office of the Commissioner of Emigration continued to be felt. The 1852 act, as amended in 1853, would remain in effect for all of three years. In fact, in each year of its short existence attempts were made to abolish it. Early in 1855, the office's opponents finally succeeded in convincing their fellow lawmakers. As a result, the Office of the Wisconsin Commissioner of Emigration was to be closed within three months. It lasted exactly two years, ten months, twenty-one days, from June 9, 1852, to April 30, 1855. During this time, it saw three successive commissioners, each appointed to serve a one-year term.

On first impression, it seems hard to understand why a new state in the Union in need of vigorous population growth would abandon a potentially

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37. Cf. *Tägliches Wisconsin-Banner*, March 9, 1853.

38. Cf. *Tägliches Wisconsin-Banner*, March 23, 1853.

39. March 29, 1853. (Provided he proves useful to the state, for otherwise he will not receive a cent.)

40. Forty-nine to 11. (Cf. *Tägliches Wisconsin-Banner*, March 23, 1853.) The senate vote tally could not be found.

41. Cf. Theodore C. Blegen, "The Competition of the Northwestern States for Immigrants," 8. On prejudices against the state of Wisconsin, see also pp. 58 below.

successful strategy for attracting eager and industrious immigrants so soon after its implementation, especially when one considers what Haertel, Wisconsin's second commissioner of emigration, writes in his annual report of 1853:

> The capital which, besides intelligence and physical strength, is brought hither by European emigrants, is much larger than usually supposed. To give an example only, I state that 120 persons, including women and children, who landed from a single ship from Germany, in August last, and were nearly all induced by me to locate in Wisconsin, had in their possession nearly sixty thousand dollars. It is a well known fact that in the new states the value of imports greatly exceeds that of exports, often, indeed, by one-half, and yet the condition of those States improves, and their wealth increases year by year. Who supplies the deficit but the immigrant?[42]

Haertel thus substantiated the claim made by the state legislature's select committee that immigration not only brought people to Wisconsin but capital, as well. [43] So which were the reasons that brought down the office after such a brief existence? Surely it was not because the state had become fully settled in three years; it had not.

The era that saw the rise and early fall of Wisconsin's commissioner of emigration was marked by great political instability.[44] Highly divisive issues of local and national scope fueled public debate, such as the question of slavery and the prospect of prohibition, not to mention money and banking, states' rights and immigration policies, all accompanied by a fracturing of party politics and a disruption of seemingly traditional voting patterns. After all, for the first time since its founding some seventy-five years earlier, the nation was undergoing a fundamental change: A small democracy with largely direct representation, yet marked by the feudal structures separating the landowners from the laborers—a great proportion of them slaves—opened its floodgates to mass immigration in order to settle huge tracts of land acquired from the Native Americans. It was only a matter of a few years before the middle and lower class newcomers began to challenge the existing order, especially slavery, but also voting traditions and customs—such as Sunday rest and the prohibition of drinking in public-—enshrined in an Anglo-Saxon political system.

42. HHAR 11–12.

43. See p. 13 above.

44. The following information is based on Edward Pessen, *Jacksonian America*, chapters 10 and 11. Cf. also Current, chapter 6, and Conzen, "Precocious Reformers: Immigrant and Party Politics in Ante-bellum Milwaukee."

In the early 1850s, two major parties, the Democrats and the Whigs, dominated the political scene. They owed their existence to the ascendency of Andrew Jackson to the presidency in 1829, for earlier the two-party system as we know it today did not yet exist. These original two parties defined themselves as pro-Jackson (Democrats) and anti-Jackson (Whigs). When Van Buren succeeded Jackson in 1837, a conservative wing of the Democratic Party formed coalitions with other political camps who opposed Van Buren's adherence to Jeffersonian views of democracy: agrarianism, hard currency, free trade, states' rights, and strict construction of the constitution in the interest of the common citizen. The Whigs, on the other hand, both in Wisconsin and nationwide, were composed of federalists, anti-Masons (who opposed free trade), and dissenting Democrats. Studies of voting trends, issues, and party affiliations, however, do not show a distinct difference between Democrats and Whigs. Both parties had liberal as well as conservative wings. Voting during this era therefore had more to do with ethnicity, religion, and lifestyle, than with loyal party allegiance.

The Democrats of the 1840s and 1850s retained the Jacksonian image about themselves as the party of the common people, while the Whigs were portrayed as the party of the conservatives and the wealthy.[45] Neither of these labels was accurate; each party was beset by internal strife and dissension. In the end, the upheaval caused by the rapid demographic changes in the country led to intense political confusion. The Democrats were split between those with southern leanings in favor of slavery and those who opposed it. In 1848, the year of statehood for Wisconsin, the Democrats and Whigs shared, to some degree, the political scene with the Liberty Party, which in the long run, however, garnered few votes. Disaffected Democrats, who opposed slavery, abandoned their party for the Free Soil Party, which sought the creation of new slave-free states. In the election that autumn in Wisconsin, the three congressional seats were split among the Democratic, Whig, and Liberty Party candidates. For their part, the Democrats gained a majority in the state senate and controlled the assembly through a plurality coalition.

The election of 1849 only solidified the hold of the Democratic Party on state offices, for members who had abandoned it the year before returned to its fold after the party had reversed its position on slavery. Despite a renewed

45. Cf. the "Aufruf eines deutschen Demokraten" (appeal by a German democrat), occasioned by the upcoming election of delegates to the Wisconsin Constitutional Convention, 1847, inserted by Alexander Ziegler in his travel book (I, 254–265) introduced on pp. 118–121 below. The author of the appeal cautions German immigrants to beware of Whigs who pander to them while hiding their true nativist nature.

setting forth the fact and describing the land on which the tax has been so paid; and the holder of said certificate shall be entitled to draw the money from any office or person who may have the custody of the same at any time when the tax on such land or any part of it shall be paid by the owner.

How money expended.

Sec. 10. It shall be the duty of said commissioners to expend the moneys collected and apply the labor to be done on said road in such manner as will improve the same to the best advantage; and they shall proceed with the same without unnecessary delay.

Compensation.

Sec. 11. Each of said commissioners shall receive one dollar and fifty cents per day for every day actually and necessarily spent in the discharge of their duties under this act.

Jurisdiction.

Sec. 12. The said commissioners and the said town and county officers shall act only in the county in which they reside or belong; and the acts of any two of the commissioners in each of said counties shall be valid, any thing in this act to the contrary notwithstanding.

J. McM. SHAFTER,
Speaker of the Assembly.

E. B. DEAN, Jr.
President pro tem. of the Senate.

Approved, April 17, 1852.

LEONARD J. FARWELL.

[*Published June* 22, 1852.]

An Act to provide for the establishment of a Commissioner of Emigration for the State of Wisconsin in the City of New York.

Chap 432

The people of the State of Wisconsin represented in Senate and Assembly do enact as follows:

Governor to appoint commissioner of emmigration.

Section 1. A commissioner of emigration for the state of Wisconsin shall be appointed by the governor, whose duty it shall be to reside and to keep an office in the city of New York from the first day of May next to the first day of May of the year 1853; to be present during the usual business hours at such office and to give to emigrants the necessary information in relation to the soil and climate of the state and the branches of business to be pursued with advantage therein, and the cheapest and most expeditious route by which the same can reach the state, and to give such further information as will, as far as practicable,

protect emigrants against the impositions often practiced upon them; to report to the governor as often as required, and in the manner to be prescribed by him, the number of emigrants sent by him to the state, their nationality, and the branches of business intended to be pursued by them; to employ such assistance in the business of his office as will be required and approved by the governor.

May remove from office.

Sec. 2. The governor shall have power to remove such commissioner for inefficiency and misconduct in the discharge of the duties of his office, and to appoint some proper person in his place.

Money appropriated.

Sec. 3. The following sums of money are hereby appropriated out of any moneys in the state treasury not otherwise appropriated, to carry out the objects of this act: the sum of fifteen hundred dollars for the salary of the said commissioner of emigration; a sum not exceeding twelve hundred and fifty dollars, to be expended under the direction of the governor, in the publication of a description of the state in English, German, and such other languages as the governor shall deem advisable; a sum not exceeding two hundred and fifty dollars, for office rent; a sum not exceeding one hundred dollars for maps, to be used in the office of the commissioner of emigration, and for furnishing the same; a sum not exceeding seven hundred dollars for assistance of said commissioner.

How paid.

Sec. 4. The salary of said commissioner shall be paid to him quarterly in advance, and the remainder of the sums appropriated shall be paid on the order of the governor, for said purposes, in such sums and at such times as the governor shall direct.

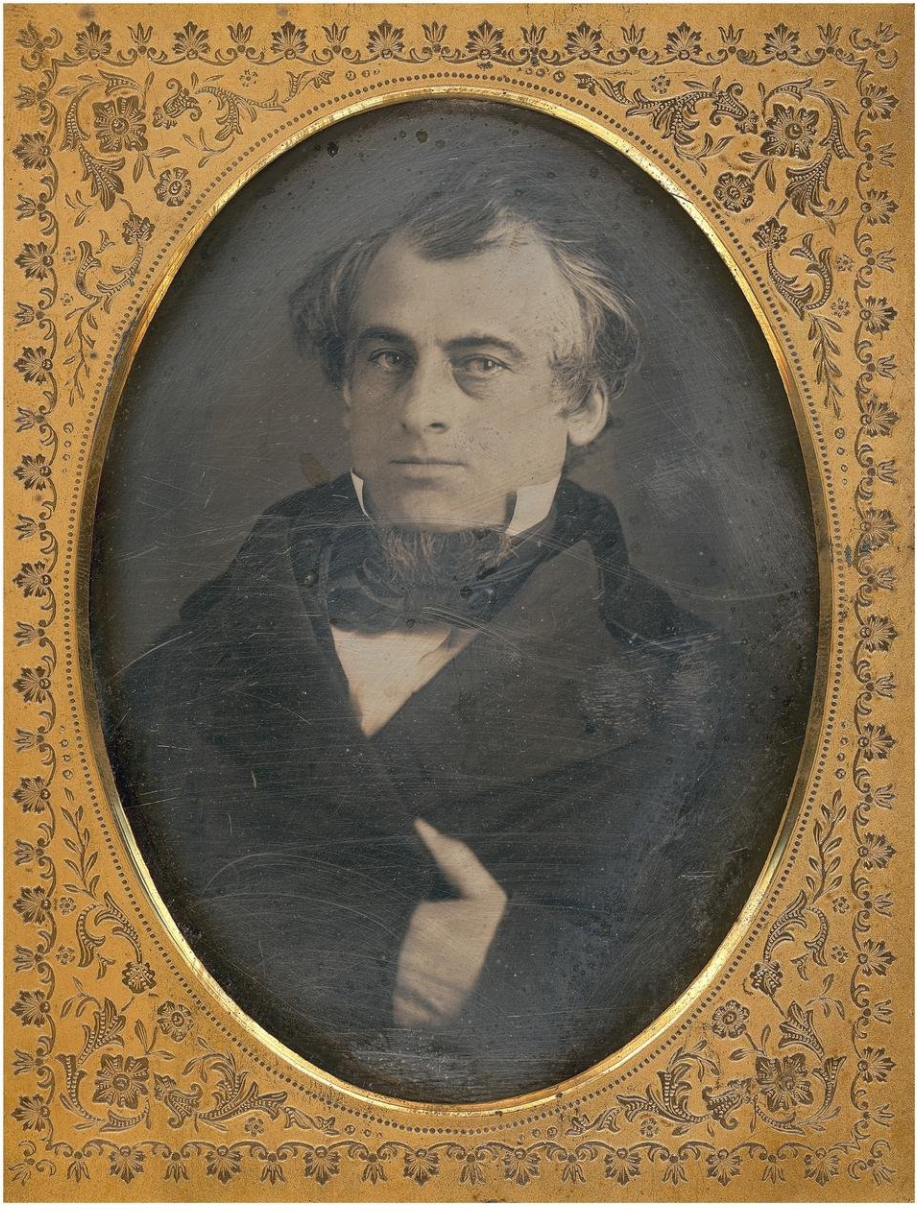
Sec. 5. This act shall take effect from and after its passage.

J. McM. SHAFTER,
Speaker of the Assembly.
E. B. DEAN, Jr.,
President pro tem. of the Senate.

Approved, April 17, 1852.
LEONARD J. FARWELL.

[*Published, June 9, 1852.*]

General Laws of Wisconsin 1852, Chapter 432, establishing the Office of the Commissioner of Emigration. (WHS Library Rare Book Collection)



Daguerrotype of Governor William A. Barstow, 1853. (WHS: WHi-32642)

Portrait of Governor Leonard J. Farwell, painted by William Cogswell, 1865.
(WHS: WHi-2650)

Portrait of Commissioner Gysbert Van Steenwijk. (From: Albert H. Sanford/ H. J. Hirschheimer, *A History of La Crosse, Wisconsin 1841–1900.* La Crosse: La Crosse County Historical Society, 1951, p. 83.)

Portrait of Commissioner Herman Haertel, n.d. (WHS: WHi-32641)

Portrait of Commissioner Frederick W. Horn painted by Hugo Broich.
(WHS: WHi-50397)

three-way split of congressional seats, the Democrats now controlled both chambers by a majority, further weakening their Whig opponents. In 1851 the slavery question was put aside and this time the Free Soilers united with the Whigs to elect Leonard Farwell as governor. Despite Farwell's victory, all other offices remained under the control of the Democrats. House rule was now split between Democrats (senate) and Whigs (assembly).

With internal improvements for the state being the central issue for the elections of 1852, the Democrats swept all three congressional seats as well as both houses of the legislature. This left the Whigs in a state of panic, and many of its members sought affiliations with other parties or factions grouped around single issues. One wing, concerned with the slavery question, now joined forces with the Free Soilers. The Democrats continued to maintain their total domination of state and federal offices during the following year when the Whig-Free Soil alliance was split over the issue of prohibition.

The year 1854, however, saw a major shift within the political power spectrum of the state. It was the year the Republican Party was born, its members consisting largely of former Whigs, although the new group actively sought out Democrats and Free Soilers, as well. The Democrats were divided by squabbling between two factions, one controlled by what was referred to as the Milwaukee "machine," the other by traditional Democrats from outside the state. The Republicans hoped to undercut the Democrats by appealing to immigrant voters, but the Democrats retaliated by reminding voters of the Republican Party's Whig and nativist pedigree. Slavery was, once again, the issue of the day in the 1854 elections, at least for the Republicans who saw to it that neither prohibition nor nativism appeared in their platform. When the Democrats fell in the trap of advancing prohibition, German Democrats stayed away from the elections.[46] As a result, the Republicans took two of three congressional seats and, through coalitions, assumed effective control of the senate.

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46. For one, State Commissioner Haertel had foreseen the inevitable conflict between the politics of prohibition and the alcohol-tolerant culture of European immigrants. In a letter to Governor Farwell, he writes in reference to the adoption of prohibition in Michigan and the threat of Wisconsin following suit: "If our state should also enact such a law it would not only stop emigration to a considerable extent but also erase its reputation as one of the most enlightened states of the union. I spoke with many on the subject here [in New York], Emigrants as well as old citizens who are most unanimous of the same opinion and hold it decidedly for the best policy not to meddle with such a law at all, all I wish is that the assembly may keep similar Bill now before them quietly on the table where it now rests." (HHL [June 20, 1853]).

When the Office of the Commissioner of Emigration was abolished by the legislature in January of 1855, leading to its dissolution three months later, the young Republican Party was in control of the state, a fact that cannot be gleaned from simply reading the official act of the legislature. Its language was notable for its sparseness, stating in terse terms what was to be accomplished. Was the dismantling of the office a result of nativist sentiments? Perhaps. Both the Republicans and Democrats harbored nativist ideas at this time; some of them even had adopted the program of the nascent "Know-Nothing" movement, which called for the exclusion of all foreigners and Catholics from public office. [47] It is nonetheless difficult to ferret out the precise positions of the politicians, for those who truly espoused "Know-Nothing" principles were highly secretive about this aspect of their political views. Certainly, most members of the new Republican Party had Whig backgrounds, and it was the Whigs who, as mentioned before, were identified with conservative ideologies, sharing the interests of property- and capital-owners and opposing immigrants.

As we have seen, the survival of the Office of Commissioner of Emigration may already have been in question in 1853. Thus, it may be less surprising that, in its 1854 session, the state legislature staged a serious attempt to abolish it. After the governor, in his annual address to the legislature, recommended its continuation, the senate appointed a special committee, similar in name to the one of 1853, to study the office. In its report, the committee concluded that it was good policy for the state to continue it, as well as to expand its efforts.[48]

The report first reiterates the arguments held forth by the select committee of the 1853 legislative session:

> The large increase in the number of emigrants that have chosen Wisconsin for their future home can in a great measure be attributed to the efficient operation of these agencies,[49] and in view of the

47. On October 16, 1854, the Milwaukee *Tägliches Wisconsin-Banner* reprinted the draft of a law proposed by the Know Nothings of Pennsylvania, according to which citizens born outside the United States would be barred, by penalty of $500 or prison, from holding political office or serving in the (Pennsylvania) state militia, from occupying any formal position, executive or otherwise, in banks or in manufacturing, railroad, insurance, coal, or other incorporated companies, from owning stocks, from representing any foreign company or agency, from any church or religious function without the (Pennsylvania) governor's permission, and from traveling within Pennsylvania without a passport, to be shown to any official upon request. "Interesting prospects indeed!" is the concluding remark by the Milwaukee editor.

48. "Report of the Select Committee to Whom Was Referred so much of the Governor's Message as Refers to the Emigrant Agency," Appendix.

> increased demand for physical labor in our State, consequent on the improvements in almost every branch of industry, it is well to do all in our power to bring the hardy and the industrious emigrant here, where we can, at the same time, hold out to him the best inducements and the greatest surety for his future prosperity.[50]

Remarkably, the report appeals to the philanthropic instincts among the legislators, presaging sentiments that later would rally the entire nation to the cause of liberty and to the erection of a statue in its name:

> While the political storms which agitate the old world keep thousands of families in the most anxious suspense, the only star of hope for them seems to be our own beloved land, and while those weary wanderers are tossed about on the ocean of fear and doubt, it is gratifying that we are able to beacon them to this our haven of peace, where the richest blessings are so abundantly provided.

In order to attract the "weary wanderer" to Wisconsin and, so to speak, place him behind the plow that will free its land from the clutches of the wilderness, the state depended, in the view of the committee, on the active support of the lawmakers:

> Wisconsin needs to be known to be preferred—known as she is, with all her riches and her still unemployed treasures, such as nature in her luxury has massed together in our State, and which it needs the strong arm and firm will of the pioneer to make available. To spread such knowledge broad-cast over the world, to instruct, protect and guide the emigrant to our shores, seems to your committee a worthy and a profitable undertaking—one which in its philanthropic bearing is eminent, and in its national importance deserves the best efforts of the legislature.

Consequently, the committee recommended that not only should the commissioner's office be continued, but that a subagency be established in Québec "during the summer months." As for the cost to the taxpayer it noted:

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49. The reference to "these agencies" applies not only to the commissioner of emigration, whose duties were to attract and protect emigrants as well as to facilitate their transportation from New York to Wisconsin, but also to "travelling agent" whose position was created in 1853 by the legislature. See p. 12 above.

50. "Report ..." (see note 48).

> The expenses connected with such agencies are but trifling compared with the good designed to be accomplished, and your committee does think it a matter of good financial policy to the State to maintain them in an efficient manner.[51]

The committee's appeal to the state legislature was successful. For the time being the continued existence of the office was ensured, but it was to be on borrowed time.

In 1855 the national anti-immigrant Know-Nothing Party picked up steam. Both the Wisconsin Republicans and Democrats, mindful of their immigrant voter base, attempted to distance themselves from the Know-Nothings and even placed some prominent Germans on the ticket.[52] In the governor's race, incumbent Democrat Barstow prevailed over his Republican challenger, Coles Bashford, but the state supreme court, finding that the election was tainted by fraud, ultimately held that Bashford was entitled to the office whose term was to begin in 1856.[53]

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51. Ibid. It is interesting to see how this legal development was observed by the German emigrant press. On May 9, 1854, the *Allgemeine Auswanderungs-Zeitung* (see p. 79 below), announces that the New York agency of the Wisconsin Office of Emigration was terminated and that instead a Québec branch was opened. Two weeks later, the same paper reports that the bill terminating the New York agency and opening the Québec branch (ostensibly to attract Norwegian emigrants) did not pass, and that for now Wisconsin continued to be represented in New York. The reader is left to assume that efforts to establish an agency in Québec failed. The article also mentions that the third commissioner would be a Mr. H. W. [*sic*] Horn.

52. Obviously, these Germans served as tokens in order to attract the German immigrant vote. By and large, German immigrants, although politically interested and active, did not play a major role in running the political affairs of the state and the nation. Notable exceptions were Franz Huebschmann, who helped frame the state's constitution in 1848, Carl Schurz, who rose through the ranks of the Republican Party all the way to become Lincoln's presidential campaign adviser and Army General during the Civil War, Peter Deuster and Richard Guenther, who were elected to the United States House of Representatives, and Eduard Salomon, who from 1862 to 1864 held the position of governor of Wisconsin after his predecessor had died in office. The control of the political institutions remained firmly in Yankee hands, mainly for two reasons: the language barrier and nativist sentiments among the Yankees, both voters and elected officials, who were eager to maintain ethnic supremacy in the political arena. Indeed, the more strongly felt presence of German Forty-eighters in American political life after 1850 only "increased that militant fury of the Know Nothings, which had heretofore been directed against Irish popery" (A. E. Zucker, *The Forty-eighters*, 116). Eventually, these sentiments escalated into bloody confrontations, such as the Cincinnati riots of 1855. Generally, though, German immigrants did play a significant role in community affairs but rarely on a broader level. Cf. Herman J. Deutsch, "Yankee-Teuton Rivalry in Wisconsin Politics," and Nesbit, *The History of Wisconsin, Vol. III: Urbanization and Industrialization 1873–1893*, ch. 11.

Thus, by 1855, Democratic control of state politics, already declining the year before, was effectively ended. The Republicans had become the new majority party. Despite their efforts to appeal to the immigrants in the state, both parties were accused of nativist and prohibitionist leanings. That these allegations were not entirely unfounded, can be inferred—if not proven—by the abolition of the Office of the Commissioner of Emigration.

On January 19, 1855, a bill demanding the rescission of all laws pertaining to state agencies of emigration was introduced by a Republican senator.[54] The act to terminate the office was adopted on January 29, 1855 (chapter 3, laws of 1855), published on March 24 of that year. Some debate must have preceded this decision, for just seventeen days before the vote, Governor Barstow, in his annual message to the senate and the assembly, made the following entreaty in support of the office, in vain, as it would turn out:

> Emigration to our State is annually on the increase, furnishing further evidence of the adaptation of our soil and climate to the habits and wants of the emigrant, and of the high estimate abroad placed upon our resources. The Commissioner of Emigration, in his annual report, calculates the number of emigrants from foreign countries who have found their home in Wisconsin, to be much greater during the past than any former year. A large portion of this, I am induced to believe, resulted from the continuance of the agency in New York, and through the sub-agency, established at Quebec, under it. My former expressed views, in regard to the propriety of such agencies, I have had, as yet, no reason to change.[55]

But even earlier, the fate of the Office of Commissioner of Emigration may have been the subject of a heated public discussion, if not directly, so at least through the increasingly felt nativist influence. On October 19, 1854, a columnist in the Tägliches Wisconsin-Banner, under the title, "Ansichten eines Amerikaners über die Einwanderung,"56 (no doubt with a tacit accent on "Amerikaner") took issue with the notion, spread apparently by certain politicians, that the ongoing emigration to this country was a curse that needed to be gotten under control. After all, the writer argued, without the tremendous

53. Cf. Current, ch. 6.

54. Cf. *Tägliches Wisconsin-Banner*, Jan. 23, 1855. The senator was Mr. West.

55. *Annual Message of William A. Barstow, Governor of the State of Wisconsin, Jan. 12, 1855.* The German text of the address appeared in the *Tägliches Wisconsin-Banner* of Jan. 13, 1855.

56. Immigration as seen by an American.

accession of immigrants since gaining independence, the United States would still be a country as unimportant as Sweden, Denmark, or Norway. How else but through the incessant settlement by incoming foreigners could this seemingly ever-expanding territory be populated and managed? Rather than a torrential river, the contemporary stream of immigrants should be seen as a nourishing rain filling the deserts and wildernesses, formerly inhabited by Indians and buffalo, with civilization and economic activity.

The neighboring news column provides additional background: More emigrants than ever before were returning to Europe. Since August 1854, some 6,000 persons were filling the formerly empty bunks of eastbound passenger ships leaving New York. The reasons for this reversal are variously seen in the rise of the Know-Nothings, in a general nativist sentiment among Americans, in the widening gulf between falling wages and rising consumer prices due to an oversupply of workers, and in the uneven development of land through a concentration of transport routes, creating densely populated, unhealthy areas of population here and underpopulated stretches of land there.

And just in case that hostility against foreigners might be directed against German immigrants, the Milwaukee paper, on September 26 of the same year, reprinted an apotheosis of the German character that first appeared in the *Home Journal*, one of the most highly regarded and widely read weeklies, as the editor reminded his readers, enjoyed foremost by educated American families. The German element, according to this friendly portrayal, was marked by physical power and strength. No matter which region the Germans came from, wherever they went, they infused every branch of trade with industry and courage. Everything the Germans produced was made to last as long as their caps and their pipes. According to the writer, they came with gold that they would not squander but invest wisely, thus increasing their wealth. A country that sent such strong, solid people could itself certainly not be in decay.

The intent of this message—and of its reprinting—may have been manifold, but whatever it was, it apparently did not manage to change the mood among a majority of politicians. According to the act passed in the Wisconsin legislature, the Office of Commissioner of Emigration was to be closed at the end of its then existing term. Frederick W. Horn, the last commissioner, issued a letter to Governor Barstow in May 1855, advising him that he had shut down the agency on April 30, 1855. In a final accounting report of November 1855, he listed the assets and expenditures of the office, noting that for the year of May 1, 1854, to April 30, 1855, expenses were incurred in the amount of

$3,217.50, against appropriations of $2,414.00 (including $14.00 from the sale of furniture), leaving a balance of $803.50 owed by the state treasury.57

57. The report, entitled *The State of Wisconsin to Fr. W. Horn, State Commissioner of Emigration,* and concluding with the parenthetical note, "Account sworn before Notary Public Edward M. Hunter on Nov. 27, 1855 in Dane County, Wisconsin," was found in the same folder as Horn's "Quarterly Report."

2

The Function of the Office of Commissioner of Emigration

In the following, we distinguish between the duties of the commissioner of emigration as assigned by the Wisconsin legislature, on the one hand, and the means employed by the commissioners in order to carry out these assignments, on the other. In the first part, the emphasis is placed on the information on Wisconsin available to the commissioners during their time. This information was the basis for the office's publications for the emigrants, in fulfillment of their first duty. In order to assess the validity of that information it is contrasted with what we know today about the state in the 1850s. From there we proceed to the office's other two duties before moving to the second part, the office's actual activities.

As is reflected in the act creating the office in 1852,[58] the commissioner of emigration had a number of responsibilities. However, the main charge was threefold: (1) to advise emigrants about the attractions of the state of Wisconsin as a place to settle; (2) to advise emigrants about the best, least expensive and swiftest means of traveling to Wisconsin; and (3) to protect emigrants from fraud and deception during their passage.

These assignments were carried out by the commissioner through his offices in the heart of New York's dock district, where the emigrants disembarked from their ships and began to filter into the city, often being steered or hustled into taverns, hotels, and boarding houses by employees of these establishments. The first commissioner, as mentioned earlier, was Gysbert Van Steenwijk from Milwaukee, the former Dutch consul to the state.[59] He rented premises "in the middle of that part of Greenwich Street where the largest and most of those

58. See p. 10 above. Cf. also VSAR 3–4.

59. In its choice of commissioners, the state government was apparently interested in candidates who underwent the emigration experience themselves, were knowledgeable about Wisconsin, and who also enjoyed public prominence (cf. Schöberl 103). This is the case for all three commissioners of emigration during the time period under consideration. Van Steenwijk, who had held the consular position for five months only before assuming the commissioner post, was a graduate of the University of Utrecht (Netherlands). Besides Dutch and English, he spoke German and French fluently. He was later elected to the State Assembly, became the State Banking Commissioner, then retired to La Crosse where he served as mayor before opening his own finance institute, the Batavian Bank. See Albert H. Sanford/Hirschheimer, *A History of La Crosse*, 82–83, and Robert G. Carroon, "Consuls in Milwaukee," 110. Moreover,

taverns [frequented by emigrants] are." Van Steenwijk and his agents not only staffed the office daily from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., but also visited the docks, taverns, hotels, and other houses in the area that catered to the newcomers, asking the owners to send their foreign guests to his office. Moreover, Van Steenwijk developed a close working relationship with the German Society, an association of German volunteers with the aim of mitigating the hardships experienced by German emigrants in New York.[60] To further accommodate the needs of German emigrants, he first hired an "intelligent and well-educated German," and soon later another German, "the German emigration to the West and especially Wisconsin being the most considerable."[61]

Large signs, advertising the office's services in both German and English, were posted in the area. Likewise, advertisements, editorial articles and other announcements were placed in the New York City press as well as in a number of European newspapers. Moreover, pamphlets written in several languages were distributed in New York and Europe directly to emigrants or through shipping houses, private persons traveling to Europe, and in the office's correspondence.[62]

Herman Haertel, Van Steenwijk's successor,[63] continued in the same pattern. In a letter to Governor Farwell of June 1853,[64] he indicated that he had given information to the press throughout New York and New England and that he also had distributed pamphlets in "public houses, saloons and reading rooms."

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political and personal considerations may also have played a role, a taste of which was given in the previous chapter.

60. Cf. VSAR 9. It is possible that Van Steenwijk's decision to hire Germans also served to deflect criticism on the part of Germans in Wisconsin who had voiced concerns about appointing a Dutchman to the post of commissioner (see p. 9 above). For a history of German societies for the protection of emigrants, see Hartmut Bickelmann in Michael Just et al., *Auswanderung und Schiffahrtsinteressen—"Little Germanies" in New York—Deutschamerikanische Gesellschaften,* and Agnes Bretting, *Soziale Probleme deutscher Einwanderer in New York City 1800–1860*, ch. II, 2.

61. VSAR 5.

62. VSAR 9.

63. Haertel, a merchant and industrialist from Saxony who immigrated in 1842, had made a name for himself as a political leader in Milwaukee. Apart from the commissioner of emigration post, he held offices with the city council, the school board and county board of supervisors, and the state assembly, among others. After leaving the Office of Commissioner of Emigration, Haertel became president and chief shareholder of the Milwaukee Peoples Bank, and a newspaper publisher. See Flower, *History of Milwaukee, Wisconsin* vol. II, 1594; Conzen 118, 186. (The *Tägliches Wisconsin-Banner* regularly ran ads for "Greulich & Härtel," general store in Milwaukee, e.g., on March 25, 1852.)

64. HHL (n. d.).

Circulars and pamphlets had already been sent to Europe.[65] He furthermore pointed out to the governor that he visited all the foreign consuls in New York City as well as agents of transportation lines and the officers of the various societies formed to protect the emigrants. He enlisted the services of five men whose duty it was to visit "all emigrant ships" on their arrival in the port, to hand descriptions of Wisconsin to the passengers, speak with them, and give them Haertel's business card along with advertisements printed in English and German. Finally, he made arrangements for direct ticketing of emigrants from Germany to Wisconsin through the port of New York.[66]

The last commissioner, Frederick W. Horn,[67] retained his predecessor's practices in New York, but also, following the special committee's suggestion, appointed a subagent who was deployed to Québec.[68]

Each of the three commissioners, Van Steenwijk, Haertel, and Horn, compiled reports to the governor on their respective activities. These documents appear to have consisted of periodic letters (for several of them remain in existence) as well as of annual reports. The annual reports for 1852 (authored by Van Steenwijk) and for 1853 (Haertel) are found in bound volumes, appended to the laws for the years of 1853 and 1854. Commissioner Horn's annual report for 1854 was never printed nor finalized. To this day it only exists in handwritten manuscript form, edited by the author but never formally submitted to the governor.[69]

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65. HHAR 4–5. He specifically indicated that he had sent copies of the office's pamphlets to the editors of "a large number of newspapers in the United States, Germany, Ireland, Scotland, Norway, Sweden, Holland, and Switzerland with the request to insert extracts therefrom in their respective journals." He also noted that he had selected a number of newspapers for both correspondence and advertisements, including the *Tribune, Herald* and *Democrat* (New York), the *Daily Wisconsin, Sentinel, Wisconsin Banner, Volksfreund* (Milwaukee), *Nieuwsbode* (Sheboygan), the *Newarker Zeitung, Phoenix, Anzeiger des Nordwestens,* and *Republicaner in America* (Newark), the *London Times* and *Tablet* (England), the *Tipperary Free Press* (Ireland), in the German states the *Leipziger Allgemeine Zeitung, Schwäbischer Kurier, Casselsche Zeitung, Allgemeine Auswanderungs-Zeitung* (Bremen & New York), *Nürnberger Correspondent, Leipziger Zeitung, Bremer Auswanderungs-Zeitung,* and in Switzerland the *Baseler Zeitung* (HHAR 5).

66. Cf. HHL (n.d.).

67. Originally from Prussia, Horn, a judge in Mequon (Ozaukee County), served as Ozaukee County School Superintendent and also as Speaker of the Assembly (1853). Cf. Conzen 121; Joseph Schafer, *Four Wisconsin Counties*, 157, 236; Current 217, 299.

68. See p. 26–27 above. Cf. also FHQR and next note.

69. This report is cited by Blegen. He notes that correspondence concerning the commisioner's office and between the commissioner and the governor is to be found in the "Governor's vault, box 123," State Capitol (Blegen 9, note 13). Efforts to ascertain the

Advice on the State of Wisconsin

Through advertisements, articles and editorial comments in newspapers, circulars, pamphlets, as well as through personal contacts with emigrants, the commissioners sought to achieve their objective of disseminating information on the attractions of the state of Wisconsin as a place of settlement. The most important communication, however, consisted of pamphlets that were prepared in English, German, Norwegian, and Dutch, and perhaps in other languages, as well.[70] At least the text of Van Steenwijk's pamphlet was likely patterned after a single article whose source has been variously attributed to either Increase A. Lapham, State Geographer, or John H. Lathrop, Chancellor of the University of Wisconsin. Current speculates that the sole author was, in fact, Lathrop.[71] This seems plausible when one considers the size of each source. Lathrop's article occupies eight narrowly printed pages, compared to Lapham's book of 208 pages. While Lathrop's piece could have been transferred to a sixteen-page pamphlet (bound or folded from four sheets) without changes, Lapham's book would have required extensive editing and cutting. However, nowhere is there mention of such an effort nor of an editor who would have undertaken

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existence of such a repository some 80 years later resulted in the discovery that any contents of "box 123" had been transferred years ago to the State Historical Society of Wisconsin where they are held in the Archives under "Governor, Series 34, Special Correspondence." All correspondence that could be found in that file consists of a few letters from the commissioners to the governors, which are cited in this study. No correspondence from the governors (Barstow and Farwell) to the commissioners appears to be extant. According to the archive staff, preservation and cataloguing of governors' correspondence goes only back to material of the last seventy years.

70. Whether a number of pamphlets were printed also in Czech could not be ascertained, although Czechs, who at the time were living within the borders of the Habsburg monarchy, were attracted to and settled in Wisconsin, as well (cf. Blegen 5, and Karel D. Bicha, "The Czechs in Wisconsin History"). Most Czechs read and spoke German as their second language.

71. Cf. Current 43, and 45, note 5. Notwithstanding the speculation about Lapham's (joint or sole) authorship of the pamphlet distributed to the emigrants, it is certain that he wrote a similar pamphlet in 1867, published by the reinstated office in two editions, under the title *Statistics, Exhibiting the History, Climate and Productions of the State of Wisconsin*, which was translated into German in 1868 under the lengthier, albeit more descriptive, title, *Wisconsin. Ein Bericht über Bevölkerung, Boden, Klima, Handel und die industriellen Verhältnisse dieses reichen Staates im Nordwesten der nordamerikanischen Union. Veröffentlicht von den Staats-Einwanderungs-Commissaren* [Wisconsin. A Report on the Population, Soil, Climate, Trade and Industrial Conditions of this Rich State in the Northwestern Part of the North American Union, published by the State Commissioners of Immigration].

this task. Moreover, in a time when data and statistics about a developing state community were subject to rapid change, a source published seven years earlier would hardly have been reliable where it concerned human activities. This, too, must have been on Van Steenwijk's mind when he recommended in his annual report of 1852 that Lapham should be commissioned to publish a new edition of his 1846 book on Wisconsin, "adapted to [its] present condition [...] with all the resources of our beautiful and rich country."[72]

Apart from Van Steenwijk himself, evidence of his efforts toward publication of a pamphlet advertising Wisconsin to German emigrants is indirectly provided by a somewhat querulous note in the *Tägliches Wisconsin-Banner* of July 20, 1852, where mention is made that, apart from contacting German newspapers, the commissioner had just published a pamphlet in German detailing the advantages of Wisconsin to the emigrant. This, the writer acknowledges, clears Van Steenwijk from the earlier blame of inaction but does not change the fact that his measure comes late in the year (when presumably most emigrants had already arrived or at least left their home). The pamphlet should have been published months earlier, in the author's opinion.[73]

By contrast, archival sources have yielded access to the German language pamphlet of 1853, produced by Commissioner Haertel.[74] Assuming that this pamphlet is representative of those written by each of the three commissioners, the following analysis of its contents could be termed authoritative. The pamphlet of four pages is divided into an introduction (p. 1), a description of Wisconsin and its attraction to German settlers (pp. 2–3), and advice on means of transportation from New York to Wisconsin (p. 4).

The introduction is prominently marked by Haertel's name in large boldface and includes his exact title (State Commissioner in New York for the Conveyance and Protection of Immigration to Wisconsin[75]) as well as the precise location of his office.[76] This is followed by the list of duties as specified

72 . SAR 14–15 (on his pamphlet in various languages and on Lapham's book). See also a discussion of Lapham's book on pp. 45–47 below.

73. On June 17, 1852, already, the same paper admonishes Van Steenwijk (and also, by extension, Governor Farwell, who appointed a Dutchman instead of a German; see pp. 10–11 above) for being incapable of bringing even ten German emigrants to Wisconsin. For the actual distribution of Van Steenwijk's pamphlets in the United States and in German states, see pp. 40 and 56 below.

74. "Wisconsin," pamphlet by "Hermann Härtel" (Staatsarchiv Bremen).

75. "Staats-Commissär zur Beförderung und Beschützung der Auswanderung nach Wisconsin in New York."

76. "Office: Nr. 89, Ecke von Greenwich- und Rector-Straße, eine Treppe hoch" (corner of Greenwich and Rector Streets, one flight up).

in the act of law, and a statement with the signatures of the Wisconsin governor and secretary of state, and the official seal. By including this official title of appointment ("Anstellungs-Dekret"), Haertel obviously intended to impress upon his readers his legitimacy as a designated representative of the state of Wisconsin.

The narrative description of Wisconsin is prefaced by a brief list of the most important factors that, in the author's eyes, should determine a settler's choice of place, namely health, quality and price of land, and political equality. "If there is any state in the union," Haertel concludes, "that unanimously and favorably responds to these conditions, it certainly must be Wisconsin."[77] The remainder of the narrative provides both factual information and persuasive commentary designed to promote immigration to Wisconsin. For instance, Haertel mentions the large number of Germans already in the state (one-third of the entire population[78]), the similarity of climate, soil, and land forms to those of the homeland. He continues by relating brief descriptions of mineral resources, timber, agricultural and industrial opportunities, and the availability of land at low cost. Political freedom and the ability to vote after but one year's residence—the latter of which the commissioner promotes as a unique feature only offered in Wisconsin—are also emphasized. To drive his point home, he underscores the strong German cultural tradition already established in the state, such as the societies for playing music, singing, theater, and education. In conclusion, Haertel summarizes his remarks by evoking the picture of a new German fatherland in America's heartland and by extolling Wisconsin as the promised land where Germans would exclaim, "Hier ist gut sein, hier laßt uns Hütten bauen!"[79]

The last page of the pamphlet consists of recommendations on transportation from New York to Wisconsin, including travel routes, modes and convenience of transportation, and agents who could be trusted. He adds practical advice as to the cost of such transportation, noting even the ticket price for children and infants and the weight limits for luggage.

Seen from a marketing perspective, Haertel's pamphlet constitutes a remarkable achievement in conciseness and persuasion. In four pages, he managed to represent his office and himself as a legitimate resource of information and protection, to exhort the attention of the potential emigrant

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77. "Darf sich irgend ein Staat der Union auf ein fast einstimmiges, günstiges Urtheil berufen, so ist es gewiß Wisconsin ..."

78. This was quite optimistic. Cf. the figures on pp. 40-41 below.

79. "It is good here, let's settle here!"

to Wisconsin, to introduce the most salient features of the state, and to offer guidance and assistance. However, in the available space, he could only provide his reader with a spartan overview of the many attractions of the state to the German emigrant. Details would have to be supplied through other sources or personal contact with Haertel. In comparison, the German-language pamphlet of 1867, spanning a total of thirty-one pages, goes into great detail about most aspects of the state's economy, natural, social, and political history, and the future settler's prospects of relocation there.[80]

With this in mind, Haertel was justified in indicating in his annual report that he had as his chief aim the presentation of information on Wisconsin "in general; its advantages above other states, descriptions of particular localities; its commerce; the wealth of its mineral, timber and agricultural districts; its climate, public institutions, political privileges, means of education, &c." He noted that he had distributed 30,000 of the pamphlets, one-half of which in Europe, and that he had "seldom failed to give descriptions of Wisconsin, even to those who were influenced by relatives and friends to settle in other States," observing that a number of those to whom he had spoken changed their minds and went to Wisconsin, writing to him, expressing their appreciation for his advice. Indeed, he writes that, as of the month of July 1853, hardly an emigrant ship would anchor in New York harbor whose passengers were not in possession of the pamphlet, or at least had not seen his office's ads or read his articles in German papers, or who had not been given his office's address by some emigrant society or the ship agent.[81] In his old friend, William Hildebrand, who happened to be the American consul in Bremen, Haertel found an active supporter of his cause. Hildebrand, assisted by his deputy, Luther Whittlesey—also from Wisconsin—apparently did not miss a chance to hand the Wisconsin pamphlet to as many German emigrants passing through Bremen as possible.[82] This was confirmed by a German emigrant who had witnessed how pamphlets touting the advantages of Wisconsin were distributed in Bremen through agents placed there by the "speculativsten Yankees."[83]

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80. See note 71. The volume of state pamphlets addressed to emigrants, published in the second half of the nineteenth century, varied widely. Generally, volume seems to have been growing with the passing of time. Around 1900, entire books describing a state were the rule, complete with illustrations and maps. See Schöberl, ch. 5.

81. HHAR, 7.

82. Cf. Schöberl 172.

83. Hense-Jensen I, 29. The witness, a certain Mr. Adolph Meinecke from Milwaukee, claims to have seen such pamphlets already as a boy in Oldenburg (ibid.). This observation

Although, as mentioned earlier, we could not locate any extant copy, Commissioner Van Steenwijk, by his own account, had 20,000 pamphlets printed in German, 5,000 in Norwegian, and 4,000 in Dutch that were distributed "on vessels [...], in hotels and in taverns, mostly to the immigrants personally; by sending them across the Atlantic for distribution among emigrants leaving port."[84] He felt that information on Wisconsin should, additionally, be made available not only in New York but in New Orleans, Québec, Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. No figures on pamphlets issued are available from the last commissioner, Horn.

Merely from the numerical proportions of pamphlets distributed among the various ethnicities in Europe, it is evident that the efforts of the state commissioner of emigration were primarily aimed at attracting and assisting Germans–not because Germans necessarily were the most desirable of the European immigrants, or the best educated, and not because they necessarily possessed the skills needed in the frontier state, or that they brought with them more capital than other immigrants. Instead, the commissioners simply had realized that the majority of emigrants landing on Wisconsin's shores were of German origin.

A review of the 1850 census for the state supports this observation. Of the 305,538 Wisconsin residents counted for that year, 40,348, or 13.2%, reported German states as their country of origin. Beginning in the late 1840s, Wisconsin had become a favored destination among German emigrants who were pouring into the state in unprecedented numbers. The letters written by the three commissioners speak to this trend. Van Steenwijk commented that the German immigration to Wisconsin in 1853 was "most considerable," and that most of the emigrants who visited his office were German. The majority of newspapers to which he contributed articles, editorials, and advertisements overseas were German, and when he had the act of legislature that created his office translated, his target language of choice was German.[85] Haertel similarly noted a predominance of German visitors to his office, and a substantial amount

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suggests that the commissioners' pamphlets on Wisconsin were not the first to be circulated in Europe. Advertisements for the state and for the United States in general were carried by the German emigration periodicals, inserted in most local newspapers, and directly distributed by agents. Their information consisted of a mix between neutral information and business promotion. See Bretting in Agnes Bretting/Bickelmann, *Auswanderungsagenturen und Auswanderungsvereine im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, 74–79. See also pp. 127–128 below.

84. VSAR, 5–6

85. Ibid., 11, 12, 5, respectively.

of his foreign correspondence was with German newspapers.[86] In his annual report, he estimated that the number of German immigrants who had settled in Wisconsin during the year of 1853 was approximately 16,000 to 18,000, with the next highest group, the Irish, at a distant 4,000 to 5,000. He also remarked that 50 million people in Europe spoke German, a huge reservoir of potential emigrants to Wisconsin.[87] Frederick Horn noted that it was the middle class of Germany that was on the move, driven by high taxes and the chaos of war. He added that in 1854, during the months of May through July, 67,048 Germans passed through New York harbor while all other ethnic groups totaled 48,084, and that roughly 16,000 of the Germans in question were headed in the direction of Wisconsin.[88]

Besides pamphlets, there were other ways by which the state office could convey useful advice to emigrants. From the letters and official reports of Commissioners Van Steenwijk, Haertel, and Horn, it appears that more specific information, perhaps along the lines of the factual and statistical material in Lapham's 1846 book on Wisconsin, was made available to those interested in settling in the state. In doing this, Haertel underscores again the importance of newspapers as a tool of persuasion in getting emigrants to choose Wisconsin:

> One of the most prominent aids, I unquestionably found in the Press, which by means of books and newspaper reports upon single states or the United States in general, of statistical information upon particular branches of industry—as agriculture, trade, mining, &c.—not only excites attention, but especially gives a determinate direction to the steps of the emigrant, as to the State, in which to fix his residence.

Judging by the available documents, then, it may be concluded that one of the chief responsibilities of the commissioner of emigration was attended to with diligence. All three commissioners apparently thought it among their foremost duties to spread the news about a state that encouraged immigration and offered numerous advantages, in order to entice those who had not yet heard of Wisconsin, to encourage those who were still undecided, and to reassure the ones who had already set their sights on Wisconsin as their new home.

On the basis of the 1853 pamphlet published by Haertel, we can note the attempt of the commissioner to include very basic information on Wisconsin's natural resources, its political and social settings, all the while obviously

86. HHAR, 13 (German visitors). For newspaper correspondence see note 65.

87. HHAR, 9.

88. See FHAR.

keeping in mind the educational levels of his readers. Still, the nature of the information provided evinces reliance on the commissioner's own familiarity with the state, together with reliance on authoritative sources of information, such as Lathrop and Lapham. Both Lapham's and Lathrop's texts, one of which or the two combined may have served as the source for the pamphlets, are still accessible. In order to provide the modern reader with a clearer understanding of the way the young state of Wisconsin was viewed by two of its most astute observers, both works are briefly discussed and summarized.

Lathrop's Article

Lathrop's original article describing the state of Wisconsin was published in 1853 in the periodical, *De Bouws Review*, appearing in two parts.[89] Assuming that this text served as a source for the commissioners' pamphlets, it must previously have been available to the first state commissioner of emigration in other form, possibly as a manuscript.[90]

The article contains a wealth of information on the state of Wisconsin. First it describes its geographical location in the United States and its situation on two of the Great Lakes, as well as referring to its many rivers and lakes. A brief review of its population is presented together with prospects for rail and water transportation. The author continues with a statistical account of the "imports and exports" of the several port cities in the state for 1851–1852, as well as for the state as a whole in 1852.[91]

After this general contemporaneous overview, the author provides a brief history of Wisconsin and a detailed account of the migration of settlers to the state up to that point, followed by a description of the state's physical geography and geology together with particularly interesting features (such as the portage between the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers). Lathrop continues with an assessment of the state's forest resources, its educational facilities, and mining opportunities ("To the practical miner, as capitalist or operative, *the lead region of the Upper Mississippi offers the most substantial inducements to*

89. These parts are titled, "Wisconsin. Population, Resources and Statistics" and "Wisconsin and the Growth of the Northwest," respectively.

90. Van Steenwijk obliquely refers to the pamphlet as having been "prepared under the direction of your Excellency [the governor]" (VSAR 5).

91. Examples include, for the port of Milwaukee: Imports—merchandise, sundries, salt, fruit, fish, lumber, lath, shingles, alcohol, coal, lime and stone, iron, railroad engines (four), fruit trees and potter's clay. Exports—flour, pork, beef, wheat, oats, barley, corn, wool, hides, ashes, lard, merchandise, sundries, lead, lime and brick (op. cit. 26).

settlement.'"[92]) Lumbering is given a great degree of prominence in the article. Speaking of the forest resource the author states that "[t]hat of the Upper Wisconsin and its tributaries is the most extensive and distinguished still more for the fine quality than the inexhaustible quantities of lumber" (235).

The article goes on to describe the bright future of agriculture in the state. In part, a comparison is drawn between the oak openings and small sized prairies of Wisconsin, on the one hand, and the vast expanses of prairie lands in Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, and Minnesota, on the other, to which Lathrop adds that Wisconsin's great advantage for the farmer is the plentiful supply of wood adjacent to good farmland.[93] The author generalizes in this respect, his remarks pertaining to the southern part of the state only (although the European reader would not have known this), when he states that in relatively short order, a new quarter-section of land could be converted into "an *old farm"* without the privations that accompanied such an effort in the forests of Ohio (235; emphasis Lathrop). All types of farming "suitable to the latitude" are deemed possible in Wisconsin by Lathrop. And, of added benefit to the person wanting to own the land that he farms, Lathrop advises that there remains much good farmland for sale at the government price of $1.25 per acre. He even adds that

92. Op. cit. 234 (emphasis Lathrop).

93. It is of interest to note this observation for it does not merely reflect a cultural bias about wooded land being the best farmland nor the economic necessity of having supplies of wood on one's own farm. Schafer notes in his book, *Four Wisconsin Counties* (chs. 6 and 7), that although at first even the Yankee settlers of southern Wisconsin avoided the large prairies for the reason cited by Lathrop, once they discovered the fertility of the soil and realized that the expense of buying lumber and wood for fuel from elsewhere would be more than offset by profits from the sale of wheat, they began to claim prairie land for farming. It is yet for another reason that Lathrop's observation is of relevance, because until ten to twenty years prior to 1853 the prairies of southern Wisconsin were not viewed as valuable by the farmer. In his history of the early years of the community of Sugar Creek, just east of Springfield, Ill., John Mack Faragher reminds us that the majority of this country, with the exception of the river bottoms, was high grass prairie and that, at the time of initial settlement (circa 1818) this land could not be used as cropland because the prairie grass roots were too thick and too deep for the crude plows of the time to cut through and plow under. It was not until the heavy prairie plow was developed in the 1830s (pulled by a team of five to ten yoke of oxen—the expense of which was beyond most settlers) and, later in the 1840s and 1850s, the advent of the John Deere steel plow that the settlers ventured from the margins of the woodlands into the true prairie and began to cultivate it for crops of corn and wheat *(Sugar Creek Life on the Illinois Prairie*, 62–64). In his autobiography, *My Boyhood and Youth*, John Muir comments on the difficulty of breaking the sod of the prairies and oak openings of his father's farm in Marquette County, noting that the large plow used for this task was called a "breaking plow," pulled by four or five yoke of oxen, cutting a furrow up to two feet wide (181). These plows were necessary to cut through the prairie grass roots and the "grubs" or roots of trees (some four to five inches in diameter) which lurked just below the surface of the earth.

the California gold rush has placed improved land on the market at reduced prices (236).[94]

From agriculture, Lathrop's focus shifts to manufacturing in Wisconsin. "The artisan will find a fair field of labor, and for the employment of capital in Wisconsin." Builders and millwrights are reputed to be in high demand. The flour and timber industries are both in need of workers and capital for development, and woolen, cotton and flax mills "must soon become fixed facts in Wisconsin." The Lake Michigan shoreline lends itself to the marine industry and soon Wisconsin will, in Lathrop's opinion, no longer be dependent on eastern factories for its steam engines (236).

For both manufacturing and trade, Lathrop underscores Wisconsin's prime situation on the Great Lakes. Milwaukee, in particular, is touted as a commercial center "unexampled in the history of American cities," having grown in population to 25,000 in the 17 years since its founding in 1835 (236).

Because of the importance of transportation routes for bringing produce to market and finished goods back, Lathrop places emphasis on the development of "internal improvements," the rivers, canals, actual and proposed railroads, and major roads. He projects that there would soon be a canal linking the Great Lakes with the Mississippi and that improvements would also be made to the link between the Erie Canal and the Hudson River. Already, the author notes, the telegraph has connected Milwaukee with Chicago and the outside world and soon a network of telegraph lines would crisscross the interior of the state (238).

Lathrop concludes his narrative with this optimistic outlook for the settler on Wisconsin's immediate future:

> Indeed, looking at the fact that nature has prepared the soil of Wisconsin for the plow and its herbage for the immediate sustentation of domestic animals—contemplating the appliances of civilization, which art brings to the very doors of his cabin—he will not doubt—as in truth he need not—that twenty years will do for Wisconsin what fifty years have barely sufficed to do for Ohio; that in all that goes to constitute a healthy and refined civilization, Wisconsin is destined to a more rapid development and an earlier maturity than has heretofore marked the history of states under the most favorable of conditions.

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94. See also note 256.

> These views are not extravagant. They are conclusions fully warranted by the premises. The predictions of today will be sober history in 1872. (238)

With the "immigrant," Lathrop apparently had mostly Germans, Irish, and Scandinavians in mind. At one point he writes:

> There is a Germany in America which is destined to be greater than the German's fatherland. Ireland is already cis atlantic and regenerate. The Scandinavian with his remarkable power of assimilation, touches our shores, and is American in thought, feeling and language. (231)[95]

To the extent that the pamphlets about Wisconsin distributed by the commissioner of emigration in New York, New England, and in Europe consisted of part or all of Lathrop's article, what the prospective emigrant would have learned about Wisconsin was by and large general in nature. With the exception of the building trade, it did not tell the emigrant exactly what jobs or occupations were in need of workers, what specific crops a farmer could raise, what wages might be expected, nor what it would cost to start up a farm. On the other hand, it did advise the emigrant about the general environment of the place called Wisconsin and of the fact that opportunities abounded, for the farmer, the artisan, the "mechanic," and the capitalist alike.

The article is relatively free of boosterism. Even the conclusion cited above has some merit. Wisconsin with its untapped natural resources and its unsettled lands could, perhaps not as early as 1872 but thereafter, become a leader among the United States, for it was then indeed situated at a strategic location for transportation from and to markets, and it possessed, from the vantage point of the 1850s, an "inexhaustible" supply of timber, prime farmland, plentiful water resources, and mineral wealth.

Lapham's Book

As already mentioned, Commissioner Van Steenwijk called on the legislature to subscribe to a new edition of Lapham's book, *Wisconsin—Its*

95. Thomas J. Townsend, the state-appointed traveler between Wisconsin and New York (see p. 15 above), to whom Rippley (187) attributes these lines, must have quoted from Lathrop. Lathrop's observation is remarkable also for the distinction between a "Germany in America" and fully assimilated Irish and Scandinavian settlers. While it is true that German immigrants tended to preserve their language longer than the Scandinavians (the Irish, of course, faced no language barrier), they did eventually integrate themselves fully, putting to rest certain fears among Anglo-Saxons that German culture and language might subvert American traditions. (On nativist tendences, see especially chapter 1.)

Geography and Topography, History, Geology, and Mineralogy, which had first appeared in in 1846.[96] In contrast to Lathrop's article, Lapham's book is extremely detailed and, considering that the territory was insufficiently explored and sparsely settled at the time, provides a fairly complete portrayal of the future state's features.

The wide range of topics includes a history of the territory, with an explanation of the origin of its boundaries, as well as a description of its topography, lakes, rivers, and prehistoric residents, followed by a portrayal of its modern day native tribes (9–28). In describing the territory's government, Lapham gives a full account of the means by which public lands were surveyed and delineated (28–36). He also provides information on the territory's university and secondary schools (36–38). A separate section deals with Wisconsin's phenomenal growth in population, its production statistics, and its internal improvements. At the time, these consisted of roads and piers, but Lapham envisions the completion of canal projects and railways as well (38–48). It follows a list of altitudes, latitudes, and longitudes of various sites and communities, and a description of four geological zones (the northern, "primitive" zone, the central sandstone zone, the southwestern "mineral" zone, and the southeastern limestone zone), complete with an exhaustive list of minerals, including proven and suspected reserves of lead, copper, zinc, and iron ore (48–70). Ever the student of botany and biology, Lapham identifies trees and animals and even provides a detailed list of plants recently discovered in Wisconsin, both native and introduced (70–75). He also describes the territory's climate, including weather statistics, and growing seasons from north to south.[97]

The next, most extensive, section of the book contains a description of each county in the territory, including location, topography, rivers (with proven or potential water power sites), notable lakes, soils, vegetation, population, crops and animal husbandry, towns (as administrative units), municipalities,

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96. See p. 37 above. *Together with Brief Sketches of Its Antiquities, Natural History, Soil, Productions, Population; and Government*. Lapham's "Streifzüge durch das Innere von Wisconsin" (Exploring Wisconsin's Interior) were serialized in the *Tägliches Wisconsin-Banner*, June 24–July 1, 1852.

97. Op. cit. 75–80. The weather statistics are from a number of locations, including Ft. Howard, Ft. Crawford, and Milwaukee. The mean January temperatures are given as 18, 20, and 22°F, the mean July temperatures as 72, 72, and 70°F, the annual precipitation amounts to 38.8, 29.5, and 27.9 inches, respectively for each location (79). Although statistically questionable (the readings span observation periods from three to eleven years only), they provided the settler with an idea of the climate across the territory. See also p. 50 below.

and post offices. Special attention is given to the Lakes Superior and Michigan and the Fox, Rock, and Mississippi Rivers (81–202).

Considering the paucity of first-hand information available to Lapham, his achievement is indeed most remarkable, both in its accuracy and its wealth of detail. For the commissioners, Lapham's book would have far surpassed Lathrop's article in value to the prospective settler. Lathrop concentrates on the state's economic activity, present and future. Lapham's book presents a multi-disciplined overview of Wisconsin's attributes with an emphasis on natural history (and prospects for agricultural exploitation), both in general and county by county, including an assessment of settlement and remaining available land in each. While Lathrop's article may have enticed persons to settle in Wisconsin for economic reasons, pointing out as it did the abundant opportunities for the infusion of both labor and capital, Lapham's book offers a wealth of information on the physical appearance of Wisconsin and its degree of social development.

Along with other source materials (books, letters, pamphlets, and word-of-mouth descriptions), the insights provided in Lapham's book could have directed the emigrant of the time to the state and, although no particular locality was promoted, perhaps to specific areas, giving him enough information in the process to know what weather to anticipate, what soils or minerals to find, the location of post offices (the primary means of communication on the frontier) and, in light of the described resources, what types of enterprise might be successful in a given community.

After reviewing Lapham's work and comparing its physical observations with modern references, as well as considering the practical information offered by the author on land forms, soils, human activity, cities, and villages, it becomes evident just how valuable a source of information this book must have been, and it comes as no surprise that Van Steenwijk would recommend this work as a helpful compendium for emigrants even seven years after its first publication. Because of its scope, however, it seems unlikely that Lapham's detailed work would have served as blueprint for a general picture of Wisconsin to be offered potential settlers as a first impression.

Wisconsin in the Early 1850s

Enjoying a vantage point of 150 years of state history and research, we are able to describe Wisconsin as it looked in the 1850s, in great detail, and in the process, underscore the relative accuracy of Lapham and Lathrop, who were largely left to their own devices in describing the nascent state. A brief

summary based on modern research of what we know today about this state when it was in its infancy—relating to both its natural and cultural history—will help illustrate what the immigrants were facing on their arrival. This will allow us to understand better the information that was available to the German settlers through reliance on Lathrop and Lapham and other private sources, as well as the commissioners of emigration.[98]

Wisconsin is a state of 35,928,277 acres (1,129,131 acres of which are in surface waters and excluding 6,439,700 acres covered by Lakes Michigan and Superior and another 94,669 acres of the Mississippi River). Together with the state of Michigan, it shares roughly one-half of the water supply of the United States. It contains 14,000 inland lakes, with a concentration of lakes in the far north central part of the state unlike any other cluster except in Minnesota, Ontario, and Finland. It also is the home to a number of major rivers, foremost of which is the 300-plus-mile-long Wisconsin River, as well as the Rock, Fox (Wisconsin-Illinois), Fox-Wolf system,[99] Milwaukee, Black, Chippewa-Flambeau, and St. Croix Rivers, not to mention the Mississippi on its western border.

The state possesses several natural ports on its Lake Michigan shoreline, among them Milwaukee, Kenosha, Racine, Sheboygan, Manitowoc, and Green Bay, together with Superior and Ashland on Lake Superior. It also benefits from its connection with the Mississippi River and the water transportation route it provides.

Wisconsin has a rich geological heritage. Precambrian bedrock (described by Lapham as being "primitive" formations) defines the surface in the northern region. It is surrounded by a so-called belted plain, which includes layers of sandstone, dolomite (referred to by Lapham as limestone), sandstone again, shale, and a second belt of dolomite, which extend in waves, like rippling water, in wide ranging semi-circles to the south away from the bedrock dome. There are no mountains. Whatever relief there might have been was flattened and rearranged by the glaciers that swept across and covered this portion of North America between 70,000 and 10,000 years ago. The most dramatic relief in the state, relatively speaking, is found in its southwestern corner, the so-called Driftless Area, thought to have been encircled but not covered by the last glacial advances. Wisconsin's topography, therefore, is traditionally divided

98. The statistics in this section are taken from *The State of Wisconsin Blue Book, 2000.*

99. Wisconsin has two rivers named Fox, one in the northeast (flowing north), the other in the southeast of the state (flowing south).

into the Northern Highlands, the Central Plain, the Western Uplands, and the Eastern Ridges and Lowlands.

Although generally poor in mineral wealth, Wisconsin has (or, in some cases, had) some deposits of minerals, including lead, zinc, iron, copper and, to a lesser extent, gold and silver. Owing to the glaciers, there is an abundance of sand and gravel, and with bedrock so close to the surface in places, it features localized, commercial deposits of granite.

Soil, the fundamental key to success for any agricultural community, is abundant in Wisconsin. On average, soil layers are four to five feet thick. One-third of the state's soil was derived from glacial outwash sand and gravel, another third from glacial deposits, a tenth from glacial lake deposits, and another tenth from bedrock residuals, while wetland soils make up the remainder. Forty percent of the state is covered by wind driven loess, and the state is roughly divided from northwest to southeast between cool forest soils and warm prairie and forest-prairie transition soils. Clay is a major constituent in 10% of the state, silt in 40%, loams in 25%, sand in 20%, and peat and muck in 5%. According to its soil composition, Wisconsin has nine regions: (1) the southwest with its deep ridge and valley soils interspersed with shallow and rocky hills; (2) the southeastern upland with wetlands and plains, hills, drumlins and ridges; (3) the central sandy uplands; (4) the western sandstone uplands; (5) northern and eastern sand and loam with a mixture of sand and clay; (6) the northern silt uplands over glacial drift composed of sand barrens; (7) the northern uplands with moraines and stony plains; (8) northern and eastern clay soils; and (9) stream bottoms and wetlands. These soils are aged up to 24,000 years.

Where the soils are deep and the growing season moderate in length, Wisconsin offers good land for farming, especially for crops typical of northern Europe, among them hay, wheat, rye, barley, buckwheat, and root and vegetable crops while, being situated on the northern edge of the so-called Corn Belt, the state is also productive in corn and soybeans. Dairy farming has always been of importance in Wisconsin, more so between the 1880s and the 1970s, due to the favorable climate for both fodder and the raising of dairy cattle.

Settlement of the state has had a great effect on its soils. The destruction of native plant communities through cropping and pasturing by early settlers rapidly deprived the soils of their natural nutrients. This was offset to some extent by adding limestone, fertilizers, and wood ash, but in general soils remained less fertile or, in some cases, became depleted.[100]

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100. For the history of Wisconsin's soils, see Francis D. Hole, *Soils of Wisconsin*, 1, 25–29.

Wisconsin has a so-called humid continental climate with harsh, cold, dry winters and warm to hot, humid summer months. Its average annual temperature varies between 40°F in the Northern Highlands and 48°F in the southeast, while the January average ranges from 10°F in the far northwest to 26°F in the far southeast, the July average from 65°F in the Apostle Islands to 74°F in Grant County. Extreme temperatures run from -50°F to 110°F with the state experiencing between 10 and 50 days per year of 0°F or below temperatures and from 2 to 22 days with 90°F and above.[101] Precipitation varies between 27 and 35 inches (with average annual snowfall ranging from less than 40 inches in the far south to more than 110 inches in the Hurley area near Lake Superior). Most precipitation occurs during the growing season, which ranges from 90 frost-free days in the Northern Highlands to over 160 days in the southwest and along Lake Michigan. In two-thirds of the state there is a better than 20% probability of frost as late as May 20th (in the far north as great as 80%), and in autumn, over one-half of the state has a chance of frost before September 20th (with the northern one-fifth having a 60% to 80% chance).

In *The Vegetation of Wisconsin,* John Curtis divides the state into sections defined by their plant communities prevalent between roughly 1830 and 1850. In the broadest terms, he concludes that northern forests comprised 46.4% of the land area with southern forests taking another 15%, while prairie occupied 6%, oak savanna 20.7%, pine savanna 6.7%, with the remainder classified as sedge meadows (3.2%) and boreal forest (2%).[102] Thus, at the time of settlement—not taking into account land clearing and other interventions to place land into production, as well as urban development, all of which were ongoing during this time period—63.3% of Wisconsin was covered by forest, 27.4% by savanna, and the remaining 9.3% by grasslands. The southeastern third of the state, where the vast majority of settlers had concentrated up to 1850, was divided between oak savanna, southern forests, prairie, and a fringe of northern forests. To the south and west of Lake Winnebago and east and south of the Wisconsin River, most of the land was in savanna or prairie with limited areas of heavy timber, while Lake Michigan was framed by a deep, unbroken forest.

The following species specifically defined the seven plant communities suggested by Curtis. The largest, the northern forest, varied between pure hardwood stands of birch, maple, oak, basswood, and beech, and mixed

101. Cf. Lapham's findings, note 96.

102. John Curtis, *The Vegetation of Wisconsin*, 61, Table 3: "Areas of Major Plant Communities at the Time of Settlement (1830–1850)."

hardwoods interspersed with white and red pines and hemlock. Lowlands of ash, birch, maple, cedar, and tamarack were also common. The southern forest consisted of white and red oaks, black cherry, shagbark hickory, and walnut with areas of ash, elm, basswood, and butternut. The oak savanna—an area described as being parklike because of its groves of trees surrounded by grasslands—consisted of white and burr oaks, hickory, and black cherry, while the pine savanna featured aspen and jack and red pine. The grasslands, both prairies and savannas, must have offered a view of tall prairie grass dotted with flowers. The sedge meadow was a wet plant community, dominated by shrubs, forbs, and grasses, while the boreal forest was part of the circumpolar belt of birch, maple, fir, pine and spruce. At the time of settlement, Wisconsin possessed great botanic diversity, standing as it does at the northwestern edge of the great eastern North American deciduous forest, the southern edge of the boreal forest zone, and on the eastern edge of the great American prairie.[103]

Although Wisconsin's forest featured a variety of species, first and foremost in the minds of the capitalists was its great reserve of pine, described by John Lathrop in his article as being "inexhaustible." Found in mixed stands with hardwoods, the white pine stood in abundance to the north of a line extending from Sheboygan on Lake Michigan to Appleton, southwest to Wisconsin Dells and northwest to Hudson on the St. Croix River, a part of the state that was commonly referred to as the Pinery. Taking advantage of the major rivers and tributaries that watered this area, pine logs were floated to mills in Wisconsin and locations further south. White pine trees often reached 200 feet in height and could be as old as 500 years. Because of their desirable properties for construction, these trees were in high demand throughout the logging era, which lasted from the 1830s to 1900, by which time the "inexhaustible" reserve had been depleted. Lumber production in Wisconsin literally exploded from less than 200 million board feet of pine sawed in 1853 to a peak of 3 billion board feet in 1893, before the harvest rapidly declined. Between 1878 and 1900 the sawmills of Eau Claire alone produced 4.5 billion board feet of lumber.[104]

Timber and the resulting wood products—paper, furniture, doors and windows, rough lumber, shingles, lathwork, and the like—have always been of importance. Having yielded tremendous supplies of both hard- and softwoods, Wisconsin's forests have demonstrated a resilience at recovery that one might have thought impossible when, taking into consideration even John Lathrop's

103. Cf. op. cit., Appendix (miscellaneous tables).

104. Cf. Charles E. Twining, *Downriver: Orin H. Ingram and the Empire Lumber Company*, 291.

optimism, by 1925 the primeval forest had been totally destroyed. Today, the state's timberlands have been restored and between them and woodlots, over 40% of the state is again forested.

Despite the presence of over 300,000 white residents, Wisconsin in the early 1850s was not very far removed from the wilderness encountered by Nicolet when he landed in Green Bay in 1634. Of the state's total area, only one-third had been surveyed and was open to white settlement. There were few villages and only one city, Milwaukee, with a population of over 14,000.[105] In 1848, when a colony of people from Lippe-Detmold in west central Germany took land in northern Sheboygan County, it had to wend its way through a dense forest without roads.[106] In the nearby town of New Holstein, which had been an unbroken tract of forest before 1848, the land owners needed three years to clear 2.6% of a total acquired acreage of 31.5 square miles.[107] Current, in his volume on the history of Wisconsin, noted that although most of the land along Lake Michigan and fifty miles inland, from the Illinois border to north of Milwaukee, had been claimed, predominantly for farming, it was still a vast, wild forest at the time of statehood, while to the west of Watertown the prairies and oak openings were still sparsely settled, with only the southwest corner having a concentration of population in the lead mining district of Grant, Iowa, and Lafayette Counties.[108]

Several travelogs of this period are instructive. In his account of 1847, Freimund Goldmann describes his journey on foot westward from Milwaukee, in search of land. He depicts a raw countryside in the process of settlement. Finding the Mineral Point area to his liking (to the east he thought the land to be too hilly) he bought a parcel with a piece of woods on it (which he intended to enlarge), springs, and open land for farming. Wilhelm Dames tells of his wanderings back and forth in south central Wisconsin before finding land of his choice to the west of Oshkosh. He speaks enthusiastically of lush prairies and oak openings (savannas) abundant in wild birds and animals, as well as a wealth of lakes and streams teeming with fish. Alexander Ziegler, who traveled through the southern part of the state, provides numerous glimpses of the scenery, vegetation, wildlife, and early settlement in the area.[109]

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105. Cf. Current 5.
106. Cf. Jerome Arpke, *Das Lippe-Detmolder Settlement in Wisconsin*.
107. Cf. William G. Thiel, "Whipporwill and Axes."
108. Cf. Current, ch. 14.
109. These works are discussed in chapter 3 below.

Current also describes what the visitor or settler would have discovered in journeying through southern Wisconsin at this time. Farmsteads, whose houses were already being constructed of sawed lumber, could be seen in half-mile distances from each other, with much land having been taken in the southern (present day) counties of Milwaukee, Waukesha, Racine, Kenosha, Walworth, and Jefferson, primarily by transplanted New Yorkers and New Englanders. There was still available land, though, and as one traveled west, the deep forest, interrupted here and there by budding farms, gradually thinned, and as one approached Watertown, the scenery had changed into oak openings set among scattered prairies. Even this land was in the process of being claimed, but the settlements were farther apart, their dwellings more crude than to the east.[110] The lead district in the southwest of the state, bordered by the Wisconsin River in the north and the Mississippi in the west, only hosted several bustling communities prospering from mining and farming.

It would not be long, however, before southeastern and south central Wisconsin was filled with settlers. Ironically, even the Yankees initially tended to prefer woodlands with a free supply of building material for fencing and housing, rather than choosing prairieland. However, they soon realized the potential for growing wheat in the open land, which in their eyes outweighed the expense for purchasing lumber. Thus, the Yankees took the most productive lands in the southeastern corner of the state, with convenient transportation routes to the eastern markets.[111]

According to Current, transportation and travel were primitive on the frontier. There were no roads to speak of except for incipient plank roads connecting major centers of population—thirty-two such roads were chartered as of 1852.[112] In his book of 1846, Lapham comments on a government road from Sauk Harbor (Port Washington) to Dekorra on the Wisconsin River in Columbia County that was so overgrown with bushes and small trees as to be impassable.[113] Work to improve rivers had begun and canals were being built or planned, but as time passed, these projects, with the notable exception of the Fox River between Appleton and Green Bay, were abandoned due to competition from the railroads. As for the latter, in the early 1850s there were yet few rail lines in the state (the Milwaukee & Mississippi Railroad would not

110. Cf. Current, ch. 14.

111. Cf. ibid. and note 93.

112. Cf. Current, ch. 14.

113. Lapham 106.

even reach Madison until 1854); however, ambitious plans were championed, even projecting lines from Milwaukee to the Pacific Coast.[114]

These modern data on the natural and cultural history of the state, though abridged for our purposes, could only have been dreamed of by the commissioners of emigration in the 1850s. Still, when compared to what they already knew in their day and were able to pass on to the potential settler, one cannot help but be impressed with the general accuracy and completeness of the information that had been made available to them by pioneers like Lathrop and Lapham.

For example, both authors correctly—though in the terminology available at the time—outlined the geological formations of the region. Lapham's description of the state's vegetation and fauna still stands as a model of scientific observation. On top of this, Lapham provides a natural and population history of the state that remains unmatched even today. The geographical and meteorological statistics submitted by Lapham, though sparse, have been confirmed by modern data. Both authors saw the great agricultural potential of Wisconsin as well as the promising prospects for the exploitation of the state's forests. They foresaw the rapidly growing need for workers and capital in all branches of business associated with a mushrooming economy based in agriculture, lumber, and transportation. For this, both Lathrop and Lapham singled out Wisconsin's strategic location between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi. However, in predicting improved rivers and new canals for navigation, Lathrop did not anticipate the degree to which the railroads would supersede river and canal traffic. Regarding the apparently infinite supply of lumber, both authors failed to foresee the advances in technology that helped to accelerate its depletion. Still, these developments did not adversely affect the immigrants of the 1850s in significant ways. The building of railroads only speeded up their travel from the seacoast inland (at the same time, though, decreasing Wisconsin's competitiveness for easy access), and the clearcutting of ever larger tracts of land, though deplorable from a modern, environmentalist standpoint, only meant an exponential rise in the availability of farmland, a welcome trend for the many emigrants who had been farmers in the Old World, as well, and who continued their exodus throughout the 19th century.

Information Distributed by the Commissioners

Whereas the commissioners' pamphlets, fashioned after Lathrop and/or Lapham, likely constituted the agency's principal vehicle for carrying its

114. Cf. David H. Bain, *Empire Express*, 20.

message to the target audience, there were other means by which the state office could convey useful advice to emigrants. From the letters and official reports of Commissioners Van Steenwijk, Haertel, and Horn, it appears that more specific information, perhaps along the line of the factual and statistical material in Lapham's 1846 book on Wisconsin, was made available to those interested in settling in the state.

Seen from the perspective of the emigrant, Haertel's 1853 pamphlet on Wisconsin likely raised more questions than it answered. Its main purpose was no doubt to inspire curiosity, to draw the emigrant's attention to the state, but not to satisfy the reader to the point where he needed no more further guidance. On the contrary, once the appetite for Wisconsin was whetted, the emigrant would turn to the services of the commissioner, among other sources, to meet his particular needs and desires. Using the pamphlet as a point of departure, he could ask a number of questions that pertained to his individual situation. For example, if he was a farmer or farmer to be, he could have learned from the office staff that crops such as wheat, oats, corn, potatoes, rye, barley, buckwheat, tobacco, and hay were successful in Wisconsin. He could also have learned of the market prices for those crops at the time, allowing him to predict potential profits or losses. He would have been able to find out which specialty crops, for example, apples, peas and beans, clover, flax, hemp, sorghum, and grapes could be grown, and that there was a market for butter, cheese, and maple syrup. He might have learned where land was available in the state, the condition of the soils in certain areas and the extent to which he would have to exert labor to clear the land and place it into production. He might also have inquired about the average wages for laborers in order to calculate how many man-hours he could afford while establishing his farm in Wisconsin. On the other hand, if our emigrant had been a laborer, tradesman, or artisan he could have found out what trades and occupations were in demand and where. If interested, he might also have learned more than was offered by the pamphlet about Wisconsin's legal climate—the right to vote after but one year's residence,[115] its laws of inheritance and taxation, its governmental structure, and its school system.

Apparently the commissioners did indeed provide specific information about Wisconsin's climate and geography, its cities, and routes of transportation.

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115. Rippley's account of the introduction of the residency requirement for voting (185f.) is at least misleading when he speaks of an attempt to shrink the requirement from twelve to six months and then continues, "In the end, the liberals prevailed and the short residency provision remained in effect in Wisconsin until 1912." Indeed, it was the twelve months' requirement that ruled during that period (cf. Current 47).

The first commissioner, Van Steenwijk, noted in his Annual Report for 1852 that he

> had long known and appreciated Wisconsin's great advantages in regard to healthy situation, moderate temperature, richness of soil and easy access to the best markets of the United States, its liberal political institutions, richly endowed and excellent schools, the true progressive spirit of its American and European population and the rapid growth of fine internal improvements (4),

which led him to the belief that he could well contribute to the advancement of the state in advising the emigrants to relocate here. He also recommended in his report that to facilitate this objective the state should authorize the employment of a delegate

> with the necessary instructions, recommendations and introductions [who] should go to the principal ports and starting points in England, Scotland and Ireland, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Sweden and Norway, and perhaps Switzerland, and that pamphlets be distributed and personal information be given there (13).

As discussed above, Van Steenwijk distributed pamphlets to a variety of Europeans who sought to relocate in the United States.[116] On February 23, 1853, the *Allgemeine Auswanderungs-Zeitung* featured a brief article introducing Van Steenwijk to its German readers as Wisconsin's emigration agent, appointed by that state's governor, and outlining his activities. Here, only 5,000 pamphlets are mentioned as having been sent to Europe. The article goes on by citing, among other numbers, 4,551 emigrants who have come to see Van Steenwijk at his New York office, most of whom were Germans headed for Wisconsin. Furthermore, the author claims that Van Steenwijk would offer employment to agents in all European states, as well as in Québec, Philadelphia, and New Orleans. Whether the Wisconsin commissioner of emigration did in fact hire additional staff to be placed in the field cannot be ascertained, but it remains doubtful given his tight budget.

In his Annual Report for 1853, Haertel indicated that he had as his chief aim the presentation of information on Wisconsin "in general; its advantages above other states, descriptions of particular localities; its commerce; the wealth of its mineral, timber and agricultural districts; its climate, public institutions, political privileges, means of education, &c." This task, he

116. See p. 40 above.

claimed, was rendered more difficult by certain "unfavorable impressions" that he encountered, and he "lost no opportunity to refute these infamous slanders" (7–8). Without any closer elaboration by Haertel, it is difficult to trace the identity of those who had an obvious stake in misleading the emigrants, but it is conceivable that certain private agents who may have represented land or railroad interests (there were at the time no other state commissioners, with the exception of New York) stood behind such schemes. Apart from distributing 30,000 copies of his pamphlet, as we have seen,[117] Haertel has "seldom failed to give descriptions of Wisconsin, even to those who were influenced by relatives and friends to settle in other States," observing that a number of those to whom he had spoken changed their minds and went to Wisconsin, writing to him, expressing their appreciation for his advice (7).

He also underscored the importance of newspapers as a tool of persuasion in getting emigrants to choose Wisconsin:

> One of the most prominent aids, I unquestionably found in the Press, which by means of books and newspaper reports upon single states or the United States in general, of statistical information upon particular branches of industry—as agriculture, trade, mining, &c. —not only excites attention, but especially gives a determinate direction to the steps of the emigrant, as to the State, in which to fix his residence.

He noted that he missed no opportunity to pass along knowledge about Wisconsin, "its advantages above other States; descriptions of particular localities; its commerce; the wealth of its mineral, timber and agricultural districts; its climate; public institutions; political privileges, means of education &c" (4).

Apparently, Haertel also counted on German immigrants already settled in the Milwaukee area to help spread the word about Wisconsin. Whether his well-meant appeal to German Americans, published in the *Wisconsin Tägliches Banner* of December 7, 1853, was successful cannot be proven. In the article Haertel offers seven reasons for Wisconsin's attractiveness, reasons that, so he must have hoped, would convince relatives and friends still in the homeland to relocate here. While we agree with Schmahl, who cites the article in his book (122–123), that Haertel recognized the relative importance of personal letters

117. See ibid.

in the inducement to emigrate, we would not go as far as to claim that they were generally underestimated by other agents who advertised for the state.[118]

Interestingly, just as newspapers may help disseminate information to further a widely acknowledged cause, they also can lend themselves to slander, with the potential aim to sabotage the very same cause. The latter seems to have been the case when Haertel, in his Annual Report of 1853, complained about misrepresentations in newspaper articles from "neighboring States," which presumably were attacking not the state of Wisconsin but his own person. Their authors "attempted to place my official character in a false light, and I am even personally assailed." He attributes these attacks to jealousy, which is understandable "when one sees whole trains filled with emigrants passing directly through those States [...] in order to reach Wisconsin" (8). Unfortunately, we have thus far not been able to identify the source for Haertel's allegations. A year earlier, though, Van Steenwijk commented on a speech by Iowa's Governer Hempstedt, suggesting similar measures to attract immigrants to his state as Wisconsin had implemented. The first Wisconsin commissioner of emigration did not appear too worried, however, by the potential competitor but did recommend vigilance. [119]

While the existing correspondence of the last commissioner, Horn, makes no explicit mention of his efforts to disseminate information on the state of Wisconsin, this may be inferred from the distribution of the ubiquitous pamphlets and his personal availability as well as of his agents for advice. From all the commissioners' reports, we know that sometimes they responded to readers' mail in newspapers, to individual questions and inquiries in order to dispel concerns or to confirm hopes.

Based on the available documents, then, it may be concluded that one of the chief responsibilities of the commissioner of emigration was attended to with diligence. All three commissioners apparently thought it among their foremost duties to spread the news on a state that welcomes emigrants and offers them numerous advantages, in order to entice those who had not yet heard

118. "Haertel hatte somit eine wichtige psychologische Komponente erkannt, die von anderen Werbern meist unterschätzt wurde .." (123). The absence of evidence that other agents solicited the assistance from letter-writing German Americans is not proof in and of itself that they were not aware of the role of private correspondence. They simply may not have been equally resourceful as Haertel was. (See also p. 3 above on the importance of personal letters and "Kettenwanderung").

119. Whether or not there is a connection between Iowa's ambitions toward its own office of commissioner of emigration and Haertel's complaint is open to speculation, but it may be suggested that ensuing nativist sentiment in Iowa, delaying such plans by eight years, may have played a role. Cf. Hansen 163–164; Schöberl 32–33. See also pp. 88–89 below.

of Wisconsin, to encourage those who were still undecided, and to reassure the ones who had already set their sights on Wisconsin as their new home.

Advice on Travel to Wisconsin

Before the rise of Chicago as the trade center of the Midwest, Wisconsin was in an enviable position, not only in terms of the state's resources but also in terms of accessibility. It was Wisconsin's unique location in the American Northwest, as it was called at the time, that allowed it to capture a sizable share of the emigrant stream. At a time when other areas to the south, east, and west (west of the Allegheny Mountains) were accessible only with great difficulty, Wisconsin was conveniently located at the end of a combined natural and artificial route connecting the East Coast with the country's interior. Travelers who wanted to reach states and territories to the south and west of Wisconsin depended on trails and "roads," among them the Cumberland Road through the Appalachians, or, approaching from the south and east, on rivers, including the Ohio and the Mississippi.

Wisconsin was directly linked with the greatest of the American ports of entry emigrants: New York. The route comprised three main sections: (1) From New York by rail alongside, or by steamship on the Hudson River, to Albany; (2) from Albany west, either by train or by boat on the Erie Canal, to Buffalo; (3) from Buffalo by steamboat through Lakes Erie, Huron, and Michigan to one of the developing lake ports on the western shore of Lake Michigan—Manitowoc, Sheboygan, Milwaukee, Southport [Kenosha], Chicago and, to a lesser degree, Green Bay. A map of Wisconsin published in a German guide to emigrants in 1849 prominently features a line connecting these ports captioned as "Hauptdampfschiffahrts-Linie zwischen Buffalo und Chicago."[120]

The importance of the Great Lakes connection, as evidenced by this map notation, cannot be understated. It simply was a major drawing point. As it turned out, the window of opportunity presented by this advantage would not stay open for long. While the infant state took root, depending on a burgeoning population to fill its contours, railway lines were stretching their tentacles westward, soon reaching Chicago and other points south and west of Wisconsin. However, for the decade from 1845 to 1855, the Great Lakes-Erie Canal connection reigned supreme, serving as Wisconsin's lifeline during the critical years of its development.

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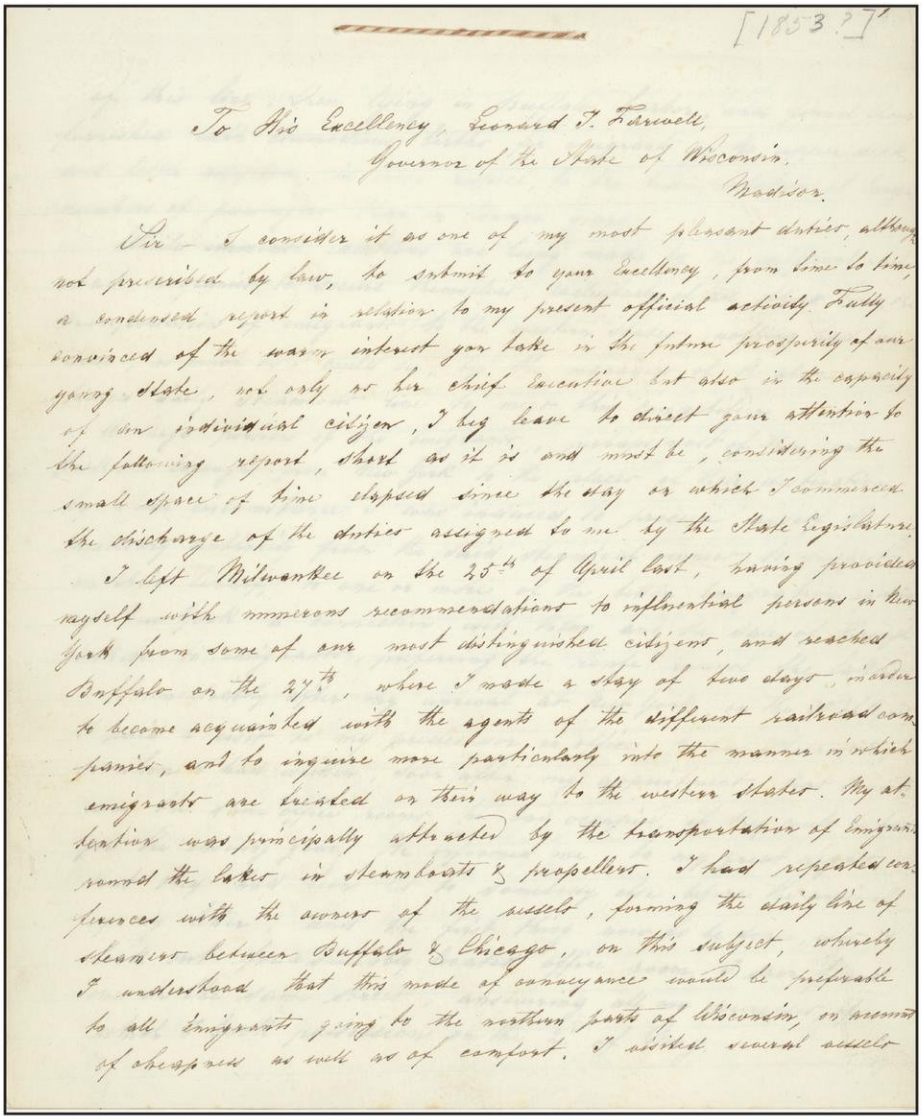
120. Main Steamship Line between Buffalo and Chicago. See also p. 107 below.



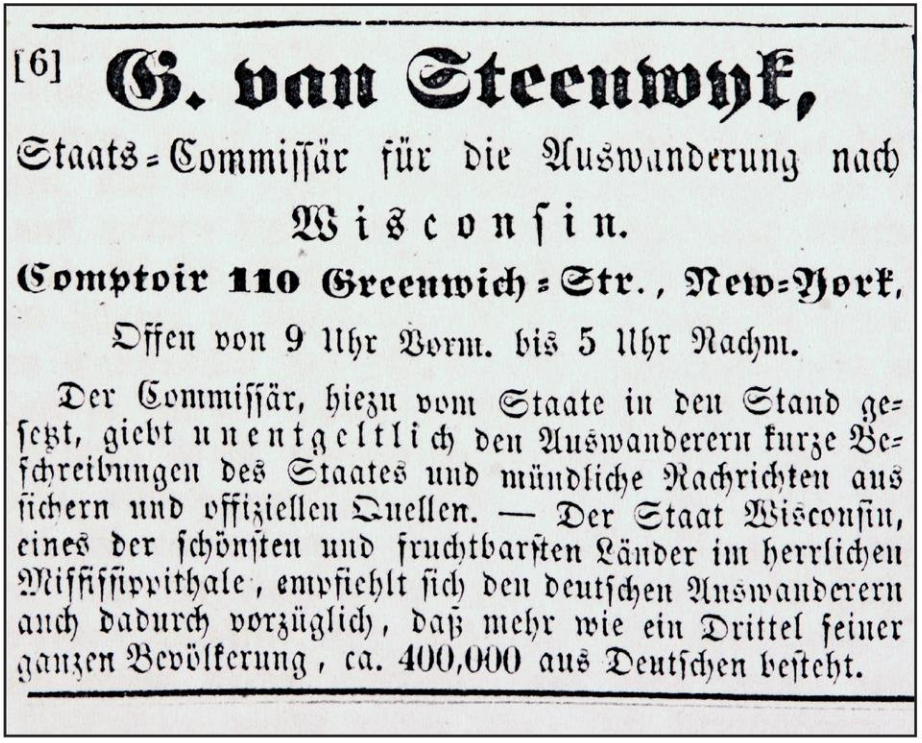
[1853.?]

To His Excellency, Leonard J. Farwell,
Governor of the State of Wisconsin.
Madison.

Sir — I consider it as one of my most pleasant duties, although not prescribed by law, to submit to your Excellency, from time to time, a condensed report in relation to my present official activity. Fully convinced of the warm interest you take in the future prosperity of our young State, not only as her chief Executive but also in the capacity of an individual citizen, I beg leave to direct your attention to the following report, short as it is and must be, considering the small space of time elapsed since the day on which I commenced the discharge of the duties assigned to me by the State Legislature.

I left Milwaukee on the 25th of April last, having provided myself with numerous recommendations to influential persons in New York from some of our most distinguished citizens, and reached Buffalo on the 27th, where I made a stay of two days, in order to become acquainted with the agents of the different railroad companies, and to inquire more particularly into the manner in which emigrants are treated on their way to the western States. My attention was principally attracted by the transportation of emigrants round the lakes in steamboats & propellers. I had repeated conferences with the owners of the vessels, forming the daily line of steamers between Buffalo & Chicago, on this subject, whereby I understood that this mode of conveyance would be preferable to all emigrants going to the northern parts of Wisconsin, on account of cheapness as well as of comfort. I visited several vessels

Frontispiece of First Annual Report of the Commissioner of Emigration for the State of Wisconsin by Commissioner Van Steenwijk, 1853. (WHS: WHi-32640)



[6] **G. van Steenwyk,**

Staats-Commissär für die Auswanderung nach

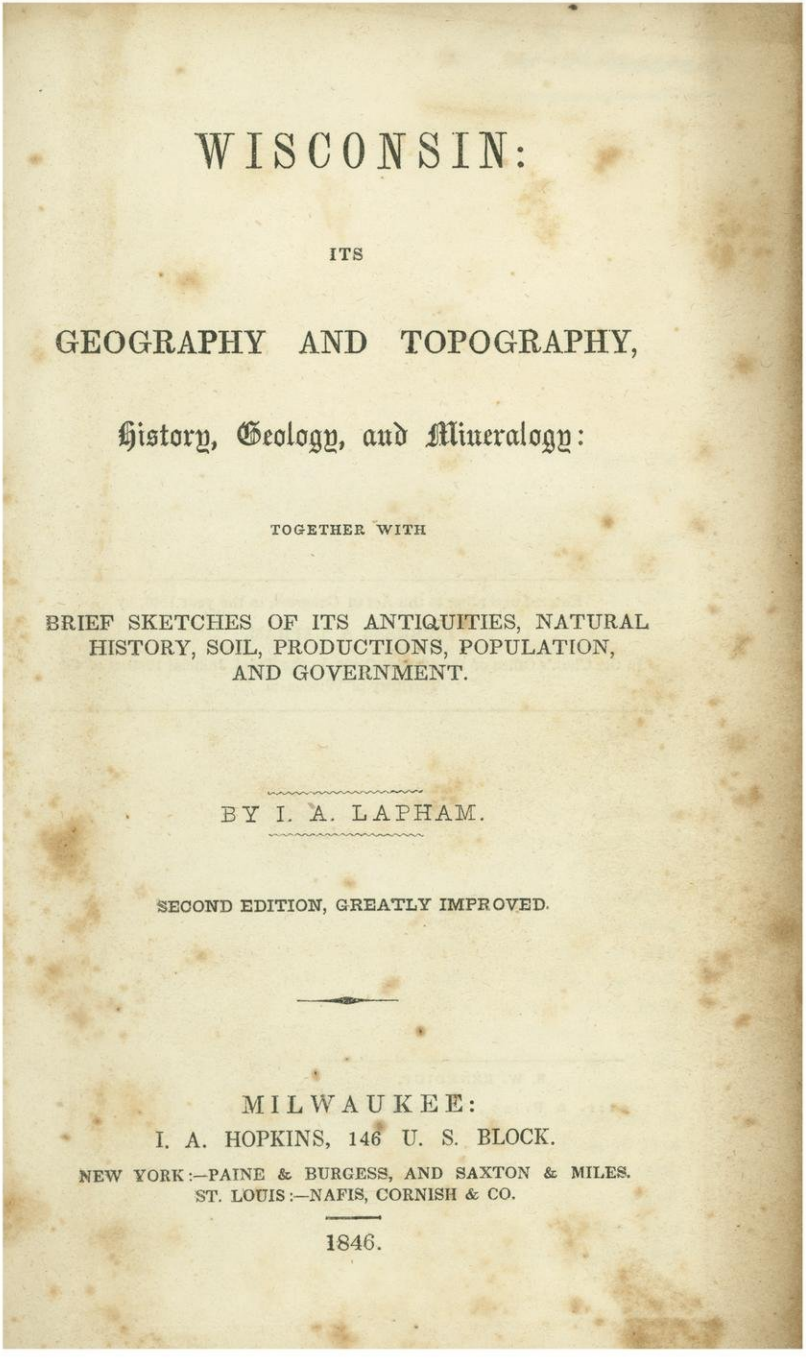
Wisconsin.

Comptoir 110 Greenwich-Str., New-York,

Offen von 9 Uhr Vorm. bis 5 Uhr Nachm.

Der Commissär, hiezu vom Staate in den Stand gesetzt, giebt unentgeltlich den Auswanderern kurze Beschreibungen des Staates und mündliche Nachrichten aus sichern und offiziellen Quellen. — Der Staat Wisconsin, eines der schönsten und fruchtbarsten Länder im herrlichen Mississippithale, empfiehlt sich den deutschen Auswanderern auch dadurch vorzüglich, daß mehr wie ein Drittel seiner ganzen Bevölkerung, ca. 400,000 aus Deutschen besteht.

Van Steenwijk's advertisement in *Der deutsche Auswanderer*.
(Archiv der Handelskammer Hamburg)



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History, Geology, and Mineralogy:

TOGETHER WITH

BRIEF SKETCHES OF ITS ANTIQUITIES, NATURAL HISTORY, SOIL, PRODUCTIONS, POPULATION, AND GOVERNMENT.

BY I. A. LAPHAM.

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1846.

Frontispiece of *Wisconsin. Its Geography and Topography* by Increase A. Lapham, 1846. (WHS: WHi-32639)

Hunderttausende von Deutschen verlassen jetzt jährlich ihr Vaterland, das sie und ihre Angehörigen nicht mehr zu ernähren vermag oder ihren sonstigen Anforderungen nicht genügt, um nach den Ver. Staaten auszuwandern und sich da eine bessere Zukunft zu gründen. Viele derselben, die hier Verwandte oder Bekannte haben, bestimmen schon drüben ihren zukünftigen Aufenthaltsort; Andere suchen sich aus den zahllosen Wegweisern eine Kenntniß der hiesigen Zustände zu verschaffen, und treffen darnach ihre Wahl in diesem oder jenem Staate oder Gegend.

Es ist stets ein großer Vortheil für den neuen Ankömmling, wenn er schon in der alten Heimath sich für einen Platz entschied, denn die Osthäfen Amerika's sind am wenigsten geeignet, dem Einwanderer das zu bieten, was er sucht: Ein gutes Fortkommen und eine bleibende sichere Existenz; erfolgt die Wahl erst daselbst, so ist sie leider selten das Ergebniß einer reiflichen Ueberlegung, sondern mehr das Resultat der Ueberredungskunst gewissenloser Menschen, die unter der Maske eines „lieben Landsmannes und uneigennützigen Rathgebers", den Unerfahrenen um einen Theil, ja oft um seine ganze Habe betrügen. Von der Wahl des Niederlassungsortes hängt oft das Meiste ab, denn die verschiedenen Staaten von Nordamerika bieten trotz ihrer Einheit und Gleichheit in vieler Beziehung einen so mannigfachen Unterschied hinsichtlich des Bodens, des Klimas, der Arbeits- und Geldverhältnisse, der Gesetze, und namentlich der Stellung der Eingebornen zu den Eingewanderten dar, daß es dem deutschen Auswanderer durchaus nicht gleichgültig sein kann, ob er sein gutes Fortkommen in Massachusetts, Texas, Indiana oder Wisconsin findet.

Die Frage nach der Möglichkeit eines guten Fortkommens ist allerdings die Erste, aber nicht die Einzige, auf die er eine befriedigende Antwort erhalten muß, bevor er sich für irgend einen Staat entscheidet. — Sollte ihm auch der Mangel des täglichen Brodes aus der Heimath vertrieben haben, so weiß er doch, daß der Mensch nicht allein von Brod lebt; er verlangt mehr vom Leben als die nackte Existenz, und wenn er, wie dieß in mehreren Staaten des Ostens der Fall ist, wegen eines Trunkes Bier oder Wein vor Gericht gestellt oder wegen eines Sonntagsvergnügens als Gotteslästerer mit Geldstrafen belegt wird, u. s. w., so wird er sich bei dem besten Fortkommen nicht wohl fühlen und seines Lebens freuen können.

Die wichtigsten Gründe, welche bei der Wahl einer neuen Heimath zu berücksichtigen sind, bestehen sicherlich in folgenden:

1) Die Erhaltung der Gesundheit, als das höchste und wichtigste Gut jedes Menschen, und namentlich des Arbeiters, was am leichtesten geschieht, wenn man ein dem deutschen möglichst ähnliches Klima wählt.

2) Güte und Billigkeit des Bodens, Leichtigkeit des Absatzweges für Erzeugnisse, Höhe des Arbeitslohns und Preis der Lebensbedürfnisse.

3) Politische Gleichstellung mit den Eingebornen, und eine so liberale Gesetzgebung, daß der Einwanderer so lange und so oft er will, seine alte Nationalität bewahren und äußern kann. Die Wichtigkeit dieses Unterschiedes, welcher in dieser Beziehung in den verschiedenen Staaten herrscht, kann nicht dringend genug jeden Auswanderer an's Herz gelegt werden.

Darf sich irgend ein Staat der Union auf ein fast einstimmiges, günstiges Urtheil berufen, so ist es gewiß

Wisconsin,

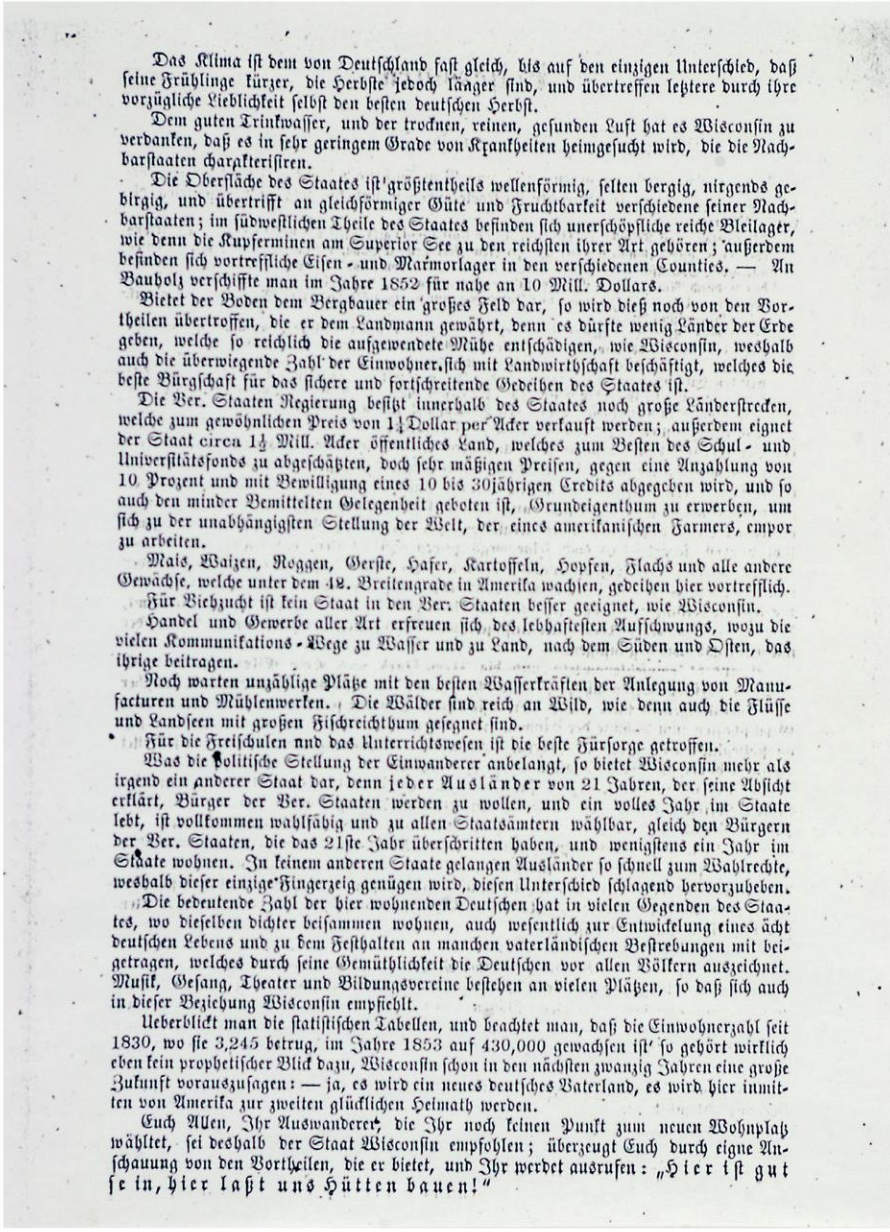
und der immer wachsende Strom von deutschen Einwanderern bestätigt, daß dieses Urtheil ein begründetes ist, denn einzig und allein haben wohl die Briefe der frühern deutschen Ansiedler dazu beigetragen, diesen Strom noch schwellender zu machen.

Was bedarf wohl auch Wisconsin mehr, als die nackte Schilderung seiner Zustände, um für sich einzunehmen?

Der Staat Wisconsin umfaßt das Gebiet, welches vom 42° 30′ nördlicher Breite, zwischen dem Michigan See und dem Mississippi liegt und im Norden vom Superior See begrenzt wird. Er enthält 54,000 engl. Quadratmeilen oder 35 Millionen Acker; also ungefähr zwei Drittel der ganzen preußischen Monarchie, während seine Bevölkerung erst etwas mehr als 400,000 Seelen beträgt, und er im Verhältniß zu Preußen eicht neun bis zehn Millionen Einwohner ernähren könnte.

Das deutsche Element ist mit mehr als einem Dritttheil vertreten.

First page of *Wisconsin*, pamphlet in German distributed by Commissioner Haertel. (Bremer Staatsarchiv)



Das Klima ist dem von Deutschland fast gleich, bis auf den einzigen Unterschied, daß seine Frühlinge kürzer, die Herbste jedoch länger sind, und übertreffen letztere durch ihre vorzügliche Lieblichkeit selbst den besten deutschen Herbst.

Dem guten Trinkwasser, und der trocknen, reinen, gesunden Luft hat es Wisconsin zu verdanken, daß es in sehr geringem Grade von Krankheiten heimgesucht wird, die die Nachbarstaaten charakterisiren.

Die Oberfläche des Staates ist größtentheils wellenförmig, selten bergig, nirgends gebirgig, und übertrifft an gleichförmiger Güte und Fruchtbarkeit verschiedene seiner Nachbarstaaten; im südwestlichen Theile des Staates befinden sich unerschöpfliche reiche Bleilager, wie denn die Kupferminen am Superior See zu den reichsten ihrer Art gehören; außerdem befinden sich vortreffliche Eisen- und Marmorlager in den verschiedenen Counties. — An Bauholz verschiffte man im Jahre 1852 für nahe an 10 Mill. Dollars.

Bietet der Boden dem Bergbauer ein großes Feld dar, so wird dieß noch von den Vortheilen übertroffen, die er dem Landmann gewährt, denn es dürfte wenig Länder der Erde geben, welche so reichlich die aufgewendete Mühe entschädigen, wie Wisconsin, weshalb auch die überwiegende Zahl der Einwohner sich mit Landwirthschaft beschäftigt, welches die beste Bürgschaft für das sichere und fortschreitende Gedeihen des Staates ist.

Die Ver. Staaten Regierung besitzt innerhalb des Staates noch große Länderstrecken, welche zum gewöhnlichen Preis von 1¼ Dollar per Acker verkauft werden; außerdem eignet der Staat circa 1½ Mill. Acker öffentliches Land, welches zum Besten des Schul- und Universitätsfonds zu abgeschätzten, doch sehr mäßigen Preisen, gegen eine Anzahlung von 10 Prozent und mit Bewilligung eines 10 bis 30jährigen Credits abgegeben wird, und so auch den minder Bemittelten Gelegenheit geboten ist, Grundeigenthum zu erwerben, um sich zu der unabhängigsten Stellung der Welt, der eines amerikanischen Farmers, empor zu arbeiten.

Mais, Waizen, Roggen, Gerste, Hafer, Kartoffeln, Hopfen, Flachs und alle andere Gewächse, welche unter dem 42. Breitengrade in Amerika wachsen, gedeihen hier vortrefflich.

Für Viehzucht ist kein Staat in den Ver. Staaten besser geeignet, wie Wisconsin.

Handel und Gewerbe aller Art erfreuen sich des lebhaftesten Aufschwungs, wozu die vielen Kommunikations-Wege zu Wasser und zu Land, nach dem Süden und Osten, das ihrige beitragen.

Noch warten unzählige Plätze mit den besten Wasserkräften der Anlegung von Manufacturen und Mühlenwerken. Die Wälder sind reich an Wild, wie denn auch die Flüsse und Landseen mit großen Fischreichthum gesegnet sind.

Für die Freischulen und das Unterrichtswesen ist die beste Fürsorge getroffen.

Was die politische Stellung der Einwanderer anbelangt, so bietet Wisconsin mehr als irgend ein anderer Staat dar, denn jeder Ausländer von 21 Jahren, der seine Absicht erklärt, Bürger der Ver. Staaten werden zu wollen, und ein volles Jahr im Staate lebt, ist vollkommen wahlfähig und zu allen Staatsämtern wählbar, gleich den Bürgern der Ver. Staaten, die das 21ste Jahr überschritten haben, und wenigstens ein Jahr im Staate wohnen. In keinem anderen Staate gelangen Ausländer so schnell zum Wahlrechte, weshalb dieser einzige Fingerzeig genügen wird, diesen Unterschied schlagend hervorzuheben.

Die bedeutende Zahl der hier wohnenden Deutschen hat in vielen Gegenden des Staates, wo dieselben dichter beisammen wohnen, auch wesentlich zur Entwickelung eines ächt deutschen Lebens und zu dem Festhalten an manchen vaterländischen Bestrebungen mit beigetragen, welches durch seine Gemüthlichkeit die Deutschen vor allen Völkern auszeichnet. Musik, Gesang, Theater und Bildungsvereine bestehen an vielen Plätzen, so daß sich auch in dieser Beziehung Wisconsin empfiehlt.

Ueberblickt man die statistischen Tabellen, und beachtet man, daß die Einwohnerzahl seit 1830, wo sie 3,245 betrug, im Jahre 1853 auf 430,000 gewachsen ist, so gehört wirklich eben kein prophetischer Blick dazu, Wisconsin schon in den nächsten zwanzig Jahren eine große Zukunft vorauszusagen: — ja, es wird ein neues deutsches Vaterland, es wird hier inmitten von Amerika zur zweiten glücklichen Heimath werden.

Euch Allen, Ihr Auswanderer, die Ihr noch keinen Punkt zum neuen Wohnplatz wählte, sei deshalb der Staat Wisconsin empfohlen; überzeugt Euch durch eigne Anschauung von den Vortheilen, die er bietet, und Ihr werdet ausrufen: „Hier ist gut sein, hier laßt uns Hütten bauen!“

Second page of *Wisconsin*, pamphlet in German distributed by Commissioner Haertel. (Bremer Staatsarchiv)

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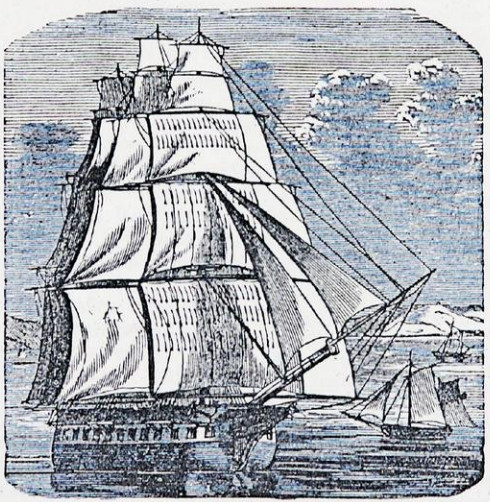

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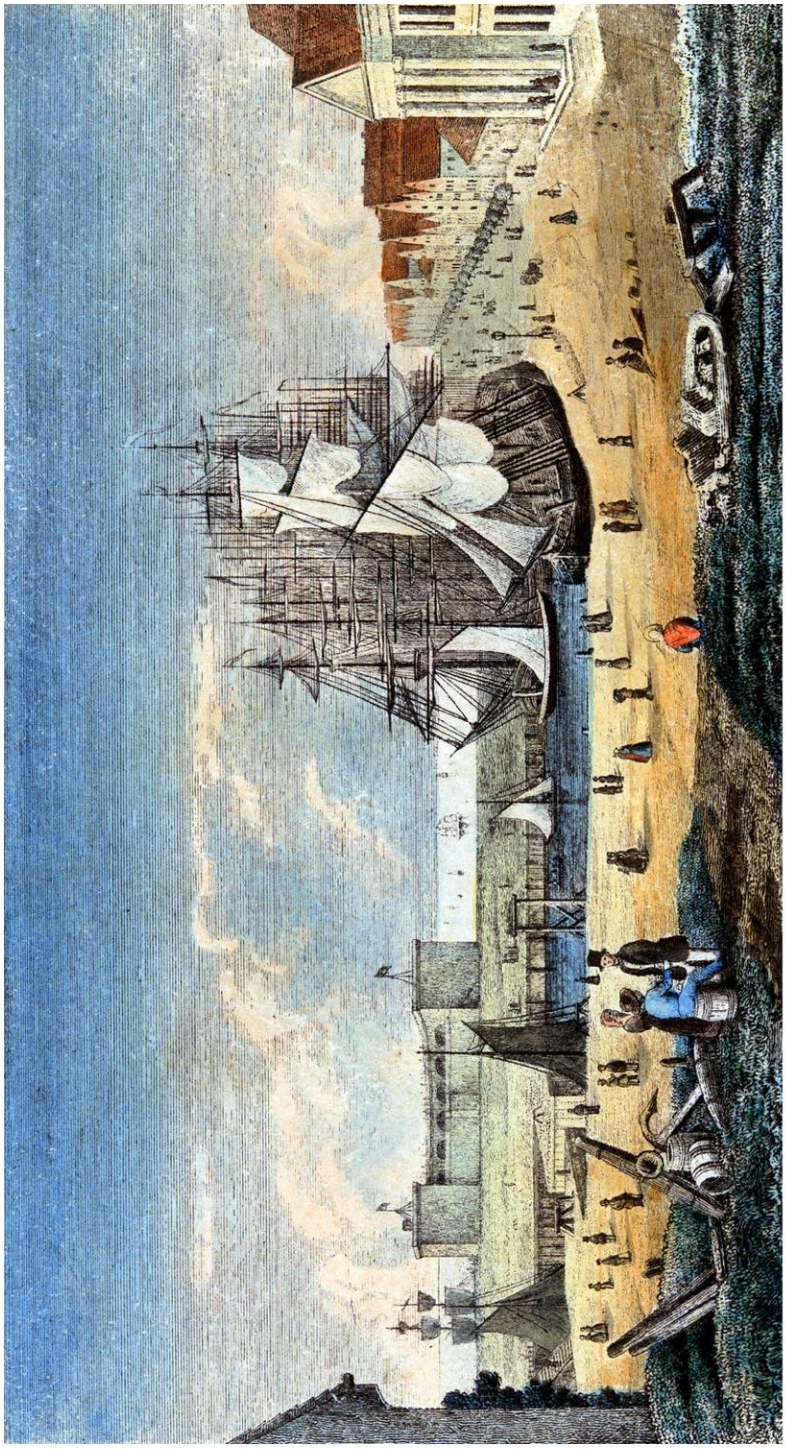
1853. **№ 31.**

Inhalt. Minerleben in Californien. Ein Beitrag zur Heilung des Goldfiebers. — Aus und über Wisconsin. Offene Schifffahrt. Eisenbahnen. Auslagen ungeachtet — noch ein ungeheures Geld. Nur zu häufig aber wird dabei Alles

Masthead of *Der deutsche Auswanderer,* March 12, 1853. (Archiv der Handelskammer Hamburg)

View of Hamburg around 1850. (From: Rolf Müller [ed.], *Romantische Reise durch das alte Deutschland. Städte und Landschaften in zeitgenössischen Stichen und Lithographien*. Hamburg: Rolf Müller, 1969, p. 17.)



View of Bremerhaven around 1850. (Historisches Museum Bremerhaven)

Each of the commissioners approached the duty of ensuring and supervising the emigrants' safe passage from the seaboard to the shores of Lake Michigan with zest. Van Steenwijk reported to Governor Farwell that he consulted with forwarding agents in New York in order to determine which of them he could recommend as best suited for providing the "safest, quickest and cheapest [means of] conveyances."[121] This assessment took into account the choice of routes, treatment of passengers and luggage, and cost.

In his letter to Farwell of June, 1853, Haertel gives a detailed account of his efforts to guide the emigrants on their journey from the Atlantic seaboard to Wisconsin. He notes that immediately upon assuming the duties of the office, he spent five days in Buffalo, New York, to acquaint himself with the agents of the railroad companies "and to inquire more particularly into the manner in which the emigrants are headed on this way to the western states." He was greatly interested in the use of "propellers[122] and steamboats" on the Great Lakes and even went so far as to examine the cabins and other accommodations on the ships plying the lakes. After his examination Haertel apparently felt comfortable enough to recommend certain transportation lines in his letter to the governor:

> These recommendable lines are the New York & Erie R.R. and the Hudson River R.R., carrying now immigrants to Wisconsin at the following rates:
>
> A) On the railroad to Buffalo or Dunkirk,[123] thence on steamboats to Toledo or Detroit, and thence on railroads[124] or steamboats to Milwaukee or Sheboygan; at $7.00, freight for baggage $2.00 & cost, 50 pounds free.

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121. VSAR 5.

122. Small lake steamers driven by an underwater rear propeller (a novelty in those days), rather than by side or stern paddle wheels as was customary with most non-seagoing ships powered by steam.

123. A port on Lake Erie southwest of Buffalo in New York State.

124. As of 1855, the New York Central Railroad had completed its line from New York City via Albany to Buffalo, Erie, Cleveland, and Toledo en route to Chicago. There was at this time no rail line linking Chicago with Milwaukee (cf. James E. Vance, *The North American Railroad*, 127). [It would also be 1855 when the Green Bay, Milwaukee & Chicago Railroad was able to complete its line as the first link between the two cities.] As for a rail connection between Detroit and Wisconsin, the Michigan Central was completed to St. Joseph, a port on the eastern shoreline of Lake Michigan, in 1855, from which port steamships offered service to Wisconsin (cf. Current 34).

> I tried to get the through line ticket system on this line extended to Manitowoc or Two Rivers, at the same price but up to the present without success.
>
> B) To Buffalo, as above, thence per propeller round the lakes to all ports of Wisconsin, except Green Bay, at $6.00, freight or baggage $1.70 & cost, 50 pounds free, children between 2 and 12 years of age to pay half of the rate only.
>
> The railroad transportation lines make a greater profit by ticketing through passengers to Chicago only, getting the same price from those which is paid by passengers to Milwaukee and Sheboygan, for whom they must pay a certain sum to the steamboat owners/45¢ a head as understood.

He also observed that arrangements had been made through agents in Europe to ticket emigrants straight through to Wisconsin, noting that the house of Loescher & Rischmüller had, in a matter of weeks, sold 700 through tickets from Europe, 300 of which were to Wisconsin.[125] Haertel saw advantages in this and commented that he was both submitting articles to and advertisements in German newspapers, "recommending therein the purchase of tickets to Wisconsin directly and not only to New York, or any other seaport."[126]

Horn, in his report of August 1854, refrains from providing the same detail as his predecessor but does state the following:

> Every emigrant that has relied upon this office for advice and assistance as to his passage, has been promptly shown to the railroad offices without delivering him over to the tender mercies of the forwarders of Greenwich Street but all papers sent directly to the offices of the resp. companies. Most of the emigrants went over Albany, Buffalo and Detroit, one half by boat across Lake Erie then other half by railroad through Canada.[127]

A review of existing correspondence and reports from the three commissioners to the governor thus confirms that each took seriously his statutory

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125. For more on Rischmueller, see note 151.

126. HHL (n.d.).

127. FHQR. Horn refers to the Grand Trunk Railway between Montreal, Toronto, and Detroit and its partner, the Grand Trunk Western between Detroit and Chicago.

responsibilities of advising the emigrant on how best to reach Wisconsin. Each appears to have educated himself about the available resources and to have developed an understanding about who, among the many agents, and which firms, among all of those that mushroomed along the path of emigrants, were trustworthy, reliable and reasonably priced. Each of them undertook significant efforts to pass along this information to the emigrants, in order to secure their arrival in Wisconsin under the best circumstances possible.

Protecting the Emigrant Against Fraud and Deception

The third and last principal duty of the commissioner was to protect the Wisconsin-bound emigrant to the extent possible against the rampant mistreatment suffered at the hands of unscrupulous or overly aggressive businessmen and hucksters, thieves, and con artists. By all accounts from this time period, this alone could have been a full-time occupation for the commissioner as the emigrants were preyed on at every step of the way to their new homes. The luckiest of them merely lost time, others lost some money or goods, while still others were defrauded of all their belongings or were subjected to indentured servitude or to lives spent in abject poverty, all because of their gullibility, naiveté and insecurity among strangers, away from home.

Rudolph Puchner, who in his history of New Holstein, Wisconsin, wrote about the first settlers of that community who journeyed in the spring of 1848 from Hamburg to New York, remarked that it often was one's fellow countrymen who tried to take advantage of emigrants newly arrived in the ports:

> German country folk stood on the other side [of the gang plank at the wharf]. They were country folks of different skills, though: country folk who intended to prey upon the gullibility and innocence of our friends like the hawk upon the dove, all in the struggle for the almighty dollar.[128]

Germans preyed upon Germans, Irish upon Irish, and so it was with each ethnic group that set foot on the island of Manhattan during this time.[129] But then, New

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128. Puchner 13.

129. It was, however, not just in New York that the emigrant was confronted with the shady sides of business. As soon as the emigrant stepped outside his old home, danger would lurk at every turn. For a chilling account of the crimes against helpless Irish emigrants of the period, on both sides of the Atlantic, committed by literally thousands of individuals, from small time crooks to internationally organized gangs competing with each other, evoking the heydays of the mafia, see Terry Coleman, *Going to America*, especially chs. 5, 6, 10, and 11.

York in the 1850s was ridden with crime and squalor. This is not surprising if one considers the enormous growing pains of a city whose population increased sixfold between 1820 and 1860—from roughly 125,000 to 800,000, ending with a 47% share of foreigners, a third of whom were Germans—and that the bulk of this growth was due to the influx of emigrants. Housing space was bursting at the seams, creating slums with a disproportionate number of makeshift basement tenements. Trash removal was sporadic at best; much waste was left to the ubiquitous pigs. Fire and police protection were rife with corruption and violent competition. Only the rich could afford clean drinking water piped down the Hudson Valley from the Croton Reservoir, the others had to contend with often contaminated city well water, with the constant danger of contracting diseases and becoming one more among the countless victims of regularly occurring epidemics.[130]

What government regulations had been implemented were ineffective, nor was there, to any degree, federal or state oversight of the immigration process. It was not until 1855 before there would be a central processing point, Castle Garden, for immigrants entering the United States through New York City.[131] Until then, there was no system of dealing with the influx of immigrants other than cursory, shipboard customs and health inspections. In the absence of a central point where the immigrants could obtain useful information, they were truly on their own, for better or worse, unless they had wise counsel, followed a leader who knew the ropes, or sought out the assistance of legitimate "travelers aid" societies, diplomatic consuls, or charitable organizations. Perhaps this is why Rudolph Puchner observed that the settlers of New Holstein gladly took up the offer of their captain to stay aboard ship as long as it lay at the dock during the time they needed to transact business in the city.[132]

The sheer numbers of foreigners descending upon New York City, pouring out of steerage and the cabins of the emigrant ships, are difficult to imagine, let alone visualize. In the early 1840s an average of 40 emigrant ships would anchor off Manhattan Island, disgorging their human cargo onto the wharves and into the streets of the city.[133] Between 1840 and 1859 an average of 157,000 immigrants per year came ashore in New York. In 1854 alone—the year before emigration to the United States dropped sharply—New York received 428,000

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130. Much of the information in this paragraph stems from Bretting (8–16).

131. See note 147.

132. Puchner 12.

133. Cf. Edwin Burrows/Wallace, *Gotham. A History of New York City to 1898*, 737. In 1851 alone, 1,712 emigrant ships anchored in the harbor of New York City (cf. Coleman 171).

immigrants.[134] By comparison, it may be interesting to note that in 1855 the entire population of Wisconsin stood at 522,109.[135] Generally speaking, more than three out of every five immigrants left New York City immediately or after a brief stay.[136]

One can say without exaggeration that many of the emigrants of this time were treated no better than cattle. Some witnesses professed that even aboard slave ships life was preferable simply because their captains had a material interest in the survival of their charges.[137] The emigrants were crowded into fetid holds called steerage and consigned to wooden berths two to three at a time while their trunks and crates took up much of the remaining floor space. There was little to no ventilation, and sanitary facilities were almost nonexistent. It is nothing short of amazing that after spending 30 to 60 days cooped up in such a degrading environment, left to seasickness and diseases, often hungry and dehydrated, the emigrants were still able to look eagerly to the splendid metropolis of New York and be awed by its bustle and prosperity.

During the era in which the Wisconsin commissioner of emigration held his office in New York, most emigrant ships landed on the Hudson River side of Manhattan. Their captains were to register the names of all the emigrants aboard together with their birthplace, last legal settlement, age, and occupation. Fees were imposed to defray the cost of hospitalization of ill emigrants and housing for those too destitute to continue their journeys.[138]

Before the days of Castle Garden,[139] many ships, before reaching the docks, would first anchor offshore with the express purpose of keeping their passengers captive to the interests of dubious characters. No sooner had the vessel come to rest than a mob of "agents," better known as runners, arriving in small boats, would climb on board and swarm the deck like pirates, representing the interests of forwarding agents, transportation companies, and the owners of boarding houses, restaurants, and taverns in the city. Naturally, they competed against each other for the business of emigrants. Much as Puchner warned, it was one's fellow countryman who, in the capacity of a runner, could not be trusted.[140] Germans would accost Germans, insisting that they buy tickets at

134 . Cf. *Annual Reports of the Commissioners of New York State*, 1847–1860 (New York, 1861). Of those, Germans averaged some 37% (see Daniels 146).

135. Cf. Current 76.

136. Cf. Burrows/Wallace 736.

137. Cf. Coleman 86.

138. Cf. op. cit. 174. See also pp. 79 and 90 below.

139. See note 147.

140. Cf. pp. 70–71 above.

inflated prices or selling them counterfeit tickets or luring them with false or exaggerated promises. Runners would drum up business for hotels and boarding houses by assisting emigrants "at no charge" in carrying their luggage. Only later would the victim find out that the establishment to which he was led charged exorbitant prices.

Often, unscrupulous captains would invite the runners into their staterooms and negotiate the terms before delivering their helpless passengers into the "care" of the agent who offered the highest provision. The other runners then left, only to try their luck on the next arriving emigrant ship. This practice is explained in a letter of Herman Haertel to Governor Farwell:

> The captains of the emigrant ships, instead of landing their passengers at a public wharf, go at anchor in the middle of the river and then sell permission of boarding the vessel to the highest bidding agent and his army of runners. The emigrants and their luggage then are brought to board a river steamer, hired expressly for that purpose by the agent and on their passage to shore are induced, by all tricks imaginable, to buy "through tickets" to the place of their destination, before they tread American soil. [...] The more obstinate emigrants are led to a tavern keeper, who gets regular pay from the agent and finally are prevailed upon by him to take passage on the same line.[141]

As Haertel pointed out to the governor, emigrants would be sold tickets that allegedly were for through travel but when their bearers would arrive at a transfer point, such as Albany, the tickets would no longer be honored. Often they were told that there were charges that had not been paid, especially for luggage, and that before they could go on they would have to pay additional sums toward their tickets. Scales were rigged to inflate the weight of baggage. Some agents, both in Europe and New York, would sell completely worthless tickets to unsuspecting emigrants.[142]

Van Steenwijk's vivid illustration of the typical emigrant ship arrival in New York Harbor once again recounts the shady practices visited upon the hapless Europeans:

> As soon as the vessel reaches the Hudson River, the Telegraph wires bring the news to the city. Lots of runners stationed on purpose at

141. HHL (n.d.). Cf. also Bretting, ch. II.1.

142. Cf. Coleman 178–188, and Robert Ernst, *Immigrant Life in New York City 1825–1863*, 27–29.

> Staten Island and at the Battery, take immediately to the row boats and board the ship, to make some contract or agreement with the captain or some other officer acting for him about the permit, which in all probability is sold to the highest bidder, without any consideration of the interest of the passengers. The buyer and his companion then take hold of all the passengers, who wish to go into the country; shortly after a propeller comes alongside the vessel, riding at anchor in the middle of the stream; men, women and children, trunks, boxes and luggage of all sizes, kinds and descriptions are stowed away in the propeller, and within a couple of hours they are landed on some dock, where they are kept prisoners til the hour of departure for a part of the country, it may be, of which some of them never heard before or where they never intended to go. Often said permit is given or sold by the shipping house to some agency before or during the trip of the vessel across the Atlantic Ocean. [...] As matters now stand, I believe it to be the most pernicious of all for the poor people; an army of a hundred or more, composed of runners, tavern keepers, and peddlers who come on board and every one of them takes hold of as many as he can get in his grasp, squeezing out of them all the money or profit he is able to.
>
> Each one of the emigrant tavern keepers is, there may be some exceptions, ally and agent of some forwarding agent and gets regular pay for each passenger he brings on. If such passengers who wish or are seduced to stay in the city for some days, or if any vessel comes late in town to carry them off that same night, they are brought in large flocks to the favored taverns, where they are immediately compelled to buy their passage tickets for the place of destination; from that moment they are carefully watched, for they might possibly find out, that they had been cheated, and bring their complaints before the New York Commissioners of Emigration, the Agent for the German Protective Society, myself, or some other officer or society.[143]

The above account is most compelling as a testimony to the fact that ship owners or their captains or mates would literally sell off their emigrant passengers to runners who in turn would take advantage of their captive and naive charges to sell them goods or services that they either did not need or did not want or the purpose of which they did not understand. In some cases,

143. VSAR 7–9.

this "transaction" took place in Europe or while the ship was at sea, in others it occurred at the time that runners rowed their boats or took their propellers out to meet the ship in the harbor. In any event, the emigrant was set upon by persons of his or her own ethnic background, who spoke the same language or even dialect, and who they believed could be trusted. They were sold goods or were taken to taverns or boarding houses of questionable quality and repute. Often they were rounded up and, en masse, taken to some tavern or business place where they were all required to purchase tickets to destinations in the interior at inflated prices. Some groups were simply consigned to take a certain railway or steamboat to a given location, without being offered the choice of deciding where to go or when.[144]

Another means of defrauding the emigrant of his money consisted in detaining the emigrant as long as possible at a boarding house or hotel (to which the owner's runner had spirited him) in order to charge excessive boarding fees. This was done by giving the emigrant false information about supposedly delayed departing times of river steamers or trains. If the emigrant tried to get advice on travel inland or jobs in New York City from reputable agencies he would be dissuaded, in extreme cases to the point of physical restraint, effectively being taken hostage.[145] The most effective way, however, for the innkeeper to prevent the departure of his boarders consisted simply in refusing to release their luggage that he had locked away "for safekeeping" (cheaper houses had strangers share the same room or even bed).[146]

Even after the state of New York and the United States governments took a more active role in protecting the immigrant,[147] fraud in the described manner persisted. In his 1867 pamphlet, Lapham warned the emigrant:

> During the journey [from New York or Québec to Wisconsin] the immigrant should pay attention to the following rules.

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144. Cf. Coleman, ch. 11.

145. See Coleman, ibid.

146. Cf. Bretting 43.

147. Still, there was little or no coordination between city and state of New York, nor between New York and the most important immigration states. Although the establishment of a New York Commissioner of Immigration in 1847 led to some regulation of the agents' practices, it was not until 1855 that the purchase of a former circus and entertainment hall, Castle Garden, located directly off Manhattan's southern tip and accessible by a land bridge, concentrated the emigrants in one point and kept them away from the runners, at least before they reached Manhattan. There they were still subjected to fraud and theft, until Ellis Island was opened in 1892. Cf. also Bretting, ch. II. 3.

> One should stay in New York or Québec longer than the journey takes to go from there to Wisconsin: this is the best and least expensive way—this is a falsehood presented as if it were fact. In the main landing places speculators and swindlers swarm at the wharves and as strangers you should be on the highest alert against this danger. With respect to the tickets which one gets for luggage, whether of metal or in the form of paper stamps, one must keep them to himself. Also, if you lose the ticket you will have great difficulty. Often travelers will transfer between railways or railways and boat lines by themselves and they should transfer their luggage themselves. The tremendous amounts of effects which are found in transfer stations creates problems for the immigrant which should be avoided if possible. Legal process against the railway companies for lost luggage is expensive and hardly affordable for the poor immigrant. At the landing in Milwaukee where the immigrant can find an immigration agent, information can be obtained.[148]

In his annual report for 1852, Commissioner Van Steenwijk described at length the troubles besetting the emigrant landing in the port of New York. He first complained about the difficulty of getting emigrants to come to his office since forwarding agents, tavern keepers, and runners—who held a monopoly over the first, and often decisive, contact with emigrants aboard the landed ship—would not refer them to his office.[149] This was not surprising, since a thief will not send his victim to the police. What motivated them was not so much a reluctance to direct the emigrants to Wisconsin, but more a fear of having their considerable profit margins reduced by well-informed customers.

Haertel, in his letter to the governor, complained about the practice of the transportation companies to hire exclusive agents to sell their tickets to emigrants, resulting in tremendous competition for the emigrant business.[150]

> The railroad companies & other transportation lines appoint regular agents to whom they give the exclusive privilege of selling their tickets to the emigrants. The profit allowed to these principal agents on each

148. See note 96.

149. VSAR 6–7.

150. The competition for customers who, once sequestered, are deprived of comparing prices, must not be confounded with the competition that allows customers comparison shopping. The latter is considered a sign of a healthy economy, the former destroys the system of balanced and fair price/service ratios.

> ticket sold is so high that this business may be called an extremely lucrative one. Owing to the brisk competition of the said lines, these agents always keep in their pay a host of subagents, runners & tavern keepers who receive, besides a fixed salary proportionate to their skill & experience in business, a certain percentage for each and every ticket sold by them. It will easily be imagined that these persons use all means to get passengers for their line, that is, to pocket the percentage, without caring the least for the honesty or dishonesty of the agent or the merits of the line in whose service they are. To the eyes of this class of businessmen the emigrant is but an article of trade which they try to buy as cheap and to ask as high as they possibly can do—The best lines and most honest companies are obliged to resort to the same means for obtaining emigrant passengers; they differ, however, from those swindling agencies in one respect, viz: they never charge more than their advantageous rates and do not as the others do extort all the money that they can from the poor emigrant.[151]

Like Van Steenwijk before him, Haertel describes the practice of the ship owners or captains or mates to "sell the permission of boarding the vessel to the highest bidding agent and his army of runners." The objective of these agents and their runners, he noted, was to sell the emigrant a through ticket to a place of destination even before he set foot on American soil. For those who were reluctant or recalcitrant, the runners would, upon transporting them to Manhattan, take them to a tavern keeper in the employ of the agent (or transportation line) who would offer further inducements to get the emigrant to "book" his passage with the runner. In particular, Haertel observed, as Puchner did,[152] that it was one's countrymen who preyed upon the poor emigrants taking advantage of their gullibility:

> The greatest number of the emigrants are simple farmers and mechanics who, forgetting but too soon all the cautions voiced in the old country,

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151. HHL (n. d.). Haertel's last point regarding the "best lines and most honest companies" was evidently well taken, since it was precisely the agency of Rischmueller, recommended by Haertel himself (see p. 42 above), this time, however associated with a certain Wolf, who, in September 1854, had a run-in with the law. The agency was required to reimburse a number of emigrants who had been grossly overcharged for their luggage. Here, contemporary witnesses maintain that the company itself was honorable, but that it had little control over its runners who were licensed by the city, not by the agency. This, on the other hand, allowed Rischmueller & Co. to claim innocence before the law. See Bretting 44.

152. See pp. 70–71 above.

> fall victims to the imposition of those agents and their coagents who always know, in one way or another, to get the confidence of their ignorant & guileless countrymen. It is no wonder, therefore, that so many cases occur every day, in which emigrants are forced to pay twice the passage price or to take new tickets at Buffalo or some other intermediate station, and, besides that, must be satisfied with the worst mode of transportation.

The total sum of money extracted from the pockets of the emigrants through overcharging and other fraudulent ploys must have been staggering. In his book, *Immigrant Life in New York City 1825–1863*, Robert Ernst, in reporting the horrors visited upon the emigrants by the runners from a contemporary source, alludes to the material losses incurred by the emigrants:

> The tricks resorted to, in order to forestall a competitor and secure the emigrant, would be amusing, if they were not at the cost of the inexperienced and unsuspecting stranger, and it is but too true that an enormous sum of money is annually lost to the emigrants by the wiles and false statements of the emigrant runners. (27)

In fact, in 1849 the "enormous sum" lost by emigrants due to fraud was estimated to be "one fifth of the money spent by immigrants for inland transportation,[153] a sum that, in the estimate of Commissioner Haertel, amounts to $500,000.[154]

Of the three commissioners, at least Haertel was astutely aware of the fact that every dollar lost during the emigrant's passage would, in the end, reduce Wisconsin's influx of much needed capital. Regarding the immigration tax levied by the city of New York—which he found exorbitant—he reminded the governor that this financial drain "reduces [the emigrant's] capital by so much, and therefore is lost to the place of his future residence."[155] The same rationale prompted Haertel occasionally to help defrauded emigrants in seeking legal recourse.[156]

In his annual report, Haertel also reminded the governor of the utter helplessness of the emigrant whose protests over such mistreatment went largely unheard and that the laws to protect him were not daily but hourly violated with impunity. He even concluded that the undignified treatment of emigrants at the hands of rogues in this country was beginning to have a negative effect on this

153. Ernst 231, note 14.

154. HHL (June 21, 1853).

155. HHAR 11. See also pp. 71–72 above and 90 below.

156. See p. 84 below.

country's reputation as a haven for immigrants. In his opinion, news of the swindling of the defenseless emigrants was being circulated back to Europe, causing emigrants who would have chosen to come to the United States (and, presumably, Wisconsin) to go to other countries.[157]

Protecting the unwary emigrant from the vagaries of passage through New York clearly was not just considered a humanitarian act but also intended to benefit the state of Wisconsin by securing additional settlers to fill its contours. Working in the trenches, as it were, from their office on Greenwich Street—in the heart of the emigrant district, the principal "hunting ground" of the emigrant chasers—the commissioners understandably were unwilling to tolerate the unbridled capitalism rampant in New York that flourished on the back of the emigrants. But what must have frustrated them even more was the lack of attention to this problem paid by municipal, state, and federal authorities. To some extent, this disregard was understandable if one considers what the citizens of a port city saw themselves confronted with, whether their perception was justified or not: they saw a flood of foreign visitors who mostly were here only to pass through, did not speak their language, were unfamiliar with their customs, brought no capital to speak of but rather diseases and social needs. Under these circumstances, the first instinct would naturally have been to preserve the safety and well-being of the citizens by isolating the foreigners as much as possible from the local population and by levying charges from the foreigners that would pay for their care should they end up sick or destitute. Only later would it occur to locals that protecting the foreigners from fraud and deception would go a long way toward keeping them out of trouble in the first place. Meanwhile, it fell to the various emigrant protection societies and the commissioners of emigration to prevent at least some of the most egregious abuses.[158]

157. HHAR 11. See also pp. 89–90 below.

158. The German cities and states followed a similar pattern in regulating emigration by first attempting to protect themselves against the burden of caring for emigrants in need before addressing the fraud and crime that often led to such need. (Cf. Bretting in Bretting/Bickelmann, 56–63). However, the incentive for helping the emigrant obviously was greater in the United States once it became clear that the entire country stood to benefit from healthy and prosperous immigrants. This is also the tenor of an article that first appeared on May 10, 1854, in the Milwaukee daily, *Volksfreund*, then was reprinted in the German *Allgemeine Auswanderungs-Zeitung* (see p. 79 below) of June 20, 1854. Its writer bemoans the lack of public attention to the travails of German (or all) emigrants, especially on their arrival in Milwaukee. It is not enough, he claims, to have a commissioner in New York to watch over the emigrants' safety there; rather, an emigrant protective society was needed right here in Milwaukee where more often than not emigrants find part or all of their luggage missing, due to the negligence of the steamship lines.

Means Used by the Commissioners to Fulfill Their Responsibilities

From those portions of their writings that still exist—some materials among the letters and reports are missing—the commissioners expended a great deal of effort and diverse resources to accomplish the goals established for the office by the legislature. Each of the three commissioners appears to have taken his duties to heart. Based on the available sources, they specifically engaged in the following means to reach their objectives.

Upon being appointed to office, each commissioner first sought to acquaint himself with the resources offered by the state of Wisconsin that would both be of assistance to him in advising emigrants as well as of benefit to the emigrants directly once they arrived in the state. We mentioned above how the commissioners made contacts with persons, companies and institutions, in New York and in Europe, that could help him in his job.[159] Moreover, one must remember that each commissioner brought into the office his personal experience with the political, social, commercial, and legal systems in Wisconsin, not to mention his familiarity with the size of its constituent population, its resources, communities, their need for capital and manpower and, as to the latter, what kinds of workers were needed and where.

During their first trip east to assume their duties in the New York office, the commissioners would familiarize themselves with the various routes and modes of transportation utilized by the emigrants, the way they were treated, and the costs charged to them. In doing so, they would introduce themselves to the owners, operators, and agents of the railroad and steamboat lines, negotiating favorable rates for passage and developing strategies for easing the difficulties experienced by the emigrants, especially when transferring between lines and for obtaining through tickets from New York to Wisconsin.

Once in New York, the commissioners acquainted themselves with the neighborhood that surrounded their office, including taverns, hotels, boarding houses, and ticket agencies whose runners were constantly combing the streets and wharves to entice and entrap new emigrants. They also would take time to meet the various European consuls as well as the representatives of emigrant aid societies, such as the German Society, and their own counterpart at the Office of the New York State Commissioner of Emigration, always with the aim of sharing and gathering information and of opening up lines of communication by which word about Wisconsin as a desirable state for settlement could be spread. In New York, they could also cultivate contacts with the headquarters of

159. See pp. 33–35 above.

railroad and steamboat lines together with the agents of transatlantic shipping lines and American representatives of European ticket agents.

The commissioners also developed a rapport with major daily newspapers in New York, published in English and other languages (especially German[160]), while maintaining correspondence with Wisconsin newspapers, other East Coast papers, and European newspapers, whether of general circulation or aimed specifically at emigrants. Through advertising, and also through feature articles inserted by the editors, all of these publications served as vehicles for getting out the message to the emigrants that Wisconsin should be their destination of choice.

It becomes clear that the large variety and number of businesses and organizations involved in resettling Europeans in the New World must have been daunting to the newly arrived Midwestern official who no doubt came to appreciate the sheer size and power of the emigrant trade. Realizing that one person alone could not possibly succeed in confronting this flourishing industry, let alone its masses of customers, each of the commissioners hired at least one sub-agent. In addition, he employed a number of other assistants who, like the runners, circulated among the wharves, taverns, and boarding houses, trying to acquaint the emigrants with the services of the Wisconsin commissioner's office. Immediately after his first arrival in New York, Haertel hired five sub-agents whose duty it was to visit all the emigrants on their arrival and to go to most hotels and taverns frequented by them, addressing them directly in their own languages while handing them descriptions of Wisconsin and Haertel's business card with the advertisements of his office.[161]

However, considering their overwhelming competition from an army of unscrupulous runners, to be fended off by irritated emigrants—both naive and savvy—like a swarm of flies, it must have been extremely difficult for the commissioners' helpers to gain the foreigners' attention, let alone trust, no matter how they tried to set themselves apart from the mob of runners by demeanor, dress, or official communications, because whatever their approach, it could be immediately copied by runners. For example, what could have prevented those runners from purloining business cards and Wisconsin advertisements—or from impersonating interested emigrants themselves—

160. See, e.g., note 65.

161. HHL (n.d.). Van Steenwijk availed himself of a Norwegian, two German, and an English assistant, "the German emigration to the West and especially to Wisconsin being the most considerable" (VSAR 5). When he closed the office for good, Commissioner Horn mentions his "former assistant Mr. Schotte who has been in the office three years" (FHL [May 1855]).

only to pass information on to their victims, of course not before whisking them to the tavern or hotel of their employer?[162]

The commissioners must have soon recognized that the battle against their smoothly organized competitors could not be won this way. They were left with no choice but to join the mob by attempting to enlist its services. They had to convince runners and agents to direct emigrants to their office on Greenwich Street—whether they had already expressed an interest in Wisconsin or could now be persuaded to settle in this state. It was understood, of course, that the agents and runners, in turn, would not lose their clients for further exploitation by selling them passage to Wisconsin at a higher price, because Wisconsin's great distance offered a more lucrative business at the time than the other states. It must have occurred to the commissioners that such an arrangement compromised the office's ethical standards but, like so many city and government officials after them who were faced with the mob, there seemed to be no alternative. However, scruples or not, this "sharing of resources" turned out to be largely unsuccessful. Ironically, it now was the agent or runner who would not trust the commissioner, for which agent would voluntarily share his prey at the risk of losing it altogether?

In describing his failed efforts to have runners and agents direct emigrants to his office, Commissioner Van Steenwijk clearly recognized the apparent dilemma:

> The question with this sort of people is never, whether Wisconsin or any other state has advantages not to be found in the same degree elsewhere; nor whether the prospects for immigrants are more favorable in one part of the Union or in some other, but merely how much more they can make out of a passage to Wisconsin, than to Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, &c.[163]

Moreover, it was discovered by the commissioners that some transportation interests would not even allow the emigrants to set foot on the streets of New York for fear their business would be lost, and that they were spirited immediately from aboard ship to train or steamboat, thus keeping them effectively out of reach from both commissioners and competing runners.[164]

162. This is confirmed by the annual report of the German Society of New York for the year 1849, cited by Bretting (42), according to which runners would pose as officials representing protective emigrant societies, would discredit legitimate officials, or would bribe official agents into relinquishing the emigrants' luggage into their hands.

163. VSAR 6.

164. VSAR 7.

For those emigrants who did receive a pamphlet, card, or other information about Wisconsin's commissioner of emigration, be it from a sub-agent or from a collaborating runner, agent, or tavern or hotel keeper, the office was easy enough to find on Greenwich Street, emblazoned with a sign in English and German and announcing its hours of operation (for example 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily under Van Steenwijk's tenure[165]). Once they had walked through the door they would be greeted by the commissioner personally. Van Steenwijk noted that his foreign visitors came from all walks of life:

> In relation to business, they were scientific and ordinary farmers in large proportion; mechanics of all sorts, to-wit: carpenters, masons, shipbuilders, millwrights, gasfactorymen, miners, stonecutters, watchmakers, machinists, blacksmiths, tailors, shoemakers, gardiners, bakers and butchers; further merchants, schoolmasters, musicteachers, musicdirectors, surveyors, engineers, lawyers, physicians and ministers.[166]

Haertel indicated that he made it a priority to meet with and "interview" those who had not already made a choice as to their place of residence in America. In doing so he sought both to acquaint the emigrants with the advantages of Wisconsin and to encourage them to act as intermediaries for their fellow travelers who could not hear the commissioner personally.[167] Once the commissioners had convinced emigrants to continue their journey to Wisconsin, they offered to make arrangements for the most cost-effective and trouble-free means of traveling to the state. They also gave advice and information on persons and agencies to contact in Wisconsin as well as on resources, available land, and places.

Haertel's office also offered assistance to children, the elderly, and to those who were traveling alone (presumably female emigrants), "that on their arrival they might be protected against impositions, which humane requests I always willingly and cheerfully complied with."[168] Given the emigrants' general

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165. VSAR 9.

166. VSAR 12. What Van Steenwijk meant by "scientific farmers" is unclear. Possibly he was referring to German academics who had romantic notions of starting a farm in the wilderness, heeding Rousseau's call "back to nature." While some of them succeeded, most had to find out that they were not endowed with the robust physical nature required for the job and moved back to the city. Their more rurally inclined fellow immigrants called them "Latin farmers." See also Alexander Ziegler's classification of emigrants, cited on pp. 119-120 below.

167. HHAR 6–7.

168. HHAR 6.

helplessness and the predatory nature of many of those on whom they depended during their long voyage it appears only natural that the commissioner's services would exceed the official mandate of the legislature, making his agency resemble more a travelers aid society than a promotional bureau.

Especially when it came to money, the commissioners often acted as financial intermediaries between family members and friends, helping to pay the way west for those who followed or who were known or suspected to lack the necessary funds. Commissioner Horn observed that he had received about $500, mostly in sums of $5 to $20 to be paid for the passage of friends or relatives to Wisconsin and remitted to him from those already in the state. In the same breath he adds how glad he was to be of assistance to those emigrants and how it was to his joy and satisfaction that he was able to provide this service, even though it often meant searching "the most filthy streets of a filthy city" in order to find the beneficiaries of this type of largesse. [169]

It is also apparent that, at least occasionally, the commissioner attempted to assist defrauded emigrants by appealing to the legal system for redress from fraud or other wrongs. In his letter of June 21, 1853, Commissioner Haertel advised Governor Farwell that he then had "two suits pending" on behalf of emigrants for fraud. He appears to have justified this gambit on the basis that although first and foremost it was the emigrant whose money and goods were at stake, it was the state of Wisconsin that, too, would suffer in the end, for the defrauded emigrant, although willing to settle in this state, certainly would not have the means to make it there unless he recouped his losses.

Generally, however, the commissioners were disappointed that so few emigrants found their way to the office on Greenwich Street. Commissioner Van Steenwijk noted visits from 436 persons "asking for information and intending to leave for the State immediately, of whom the majority represented also their friends and families, many of them companies of 20, 30 or even more persons."[170] Up through June 1853, or after the first month of his term of office, Herman Haertel reported being visited by "300 emigrants, mostly Germans." He did assert, optimistically, that these numbers should increase.[171] A month later he reported that nearly 600 had been through his office.[172] When he issued

169. FHQR. When one considers the cost of passage for an individual to Wisconsin from New York at this time, $5 to $20 would, for all but large families, cover the cost of travel to this state.

170. VSAR 10.

171. HHL (n.d.). In the letter, Haertel makes reference to the month of June.

his annual report at the end of 1853, Haertel observed that he had received 317 letters of inquiry from Europe and America as well as "daily increasing numbers of inquiries at my office," the actual figure of which he reported as being in excess of 3,000 of which 2,000 were emigrants just arrived from Europe.[173] While these numbers may appear sizable, when one considers the masses of emigrants passing through New York City at the time, they become almost negligible.[174] Without the ability to attract greater numbers of emigrants to their office, the Commissioners felt ill prepared to wrest the emigrants from the clasp of the runners and get them into their office.

During the last year of the office a sub-agency was established in Québec to perform the same function for the emigrants landing in that port as did the main office in New York City. Led by a Mr. Elias Stangeland during the six months of its existence, the office apparently saw 2,000 Norwegians[175] headed for Wisconsin. Considering its short period of operation it is hard to tell whether or not it was successful.[176]

Despite the lack of positive feedback, the commissioners did hold out hope that they were providing a valuable service although it seemed to be difficult to measure its impact. In his annual report, Van Steenwijk mused:

> It is hardly possible to make a true estimate of the influence exerted by the agency in New York; information has emanated from there in every direction and is now spread over a large and for our object, the most valuable part of Europe. [...] The pamphlets, editorial articles, advertisements, written and verbal information, given by myself and assistants, are working their way and probably the effect will be felt more and stronger in the course of 1853 than it was during the last season.[177]

Like Van Steenwijk, Haertel speculated that his efforts to promote Wisconsin were successful; however, it would have to wait until next season to confirm the assumption. He lamented that even though his sub-agents

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172. HHL (June 20, 1853).

173. HHAR 5.

174. See pp. 71–72 above.

175. Not 20,000, as claimed by Rippley (187).

176. Cf. Blegen 9. The short life of the sub-agency in Québec would appear to have been a casualty of the continued politicization of the commissioner's efforts. Referring to comments of Frederick Horn, Blegen describes the office as having been successful but that due to lack of funding it had to be closed. See also ch. 1.

177. VSAR 11.

distributed numerous advertisements and pamphlets among the emigrants, he was afraid that they were read only after the emigrants had started their journey west.[178]

It must have been frustrating for the commissioners not to know whether they were reaching their intended audience or not. Understandably, they all waxed optimistic in their reports but obviously could not fool the discriminating reader. Considering this and the relatively low numbers of emigrants that did have contact with the office in New York City, one cannot be too surprised if questions were raised by the legislature in Madison as to the effectiveness of the office, especially in an anti-immigrant political climate.[179]

Recommendations for Improving the Effectiveness of the Office

The commissioners did not merely report on their activities in office. They offered constructive criticism and advised the governor and legislature on improvements in serving the needs of the emigrants while also attracting people to settle in Wisconsin. Obviously they must have believed not only that their office could indeed make a difference in the quantity of emigrants heading for Wisconsin and in the quality of their emigration experience but also that the legislature would be kindly disposed toward the role of the office in building the new state.

Van Steenwijk offered a number of recommendations in his annual report for 1852. Among other things, they specified that:

1) A delegate from the state should be assigned to the principal ports and cities in England, Scotland, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Sweden, Norway, and even Switzerland to distribute information on Wisconsin. Also, the then circulating pamphlet should be translated into French.

2) A new edition of the pamphlet should be produced, endorsed by the legislature and the governor, describing the services available through the commissioner's office in New York. Along these lines it was recommended, as well, that Increase Lapham be retained to produce a new edition of his book on the resources of Wisconsin

178. Cf. HHL (n.d.). See also pp. 136–137 below.

179. Cf. also Schöberl 213 on the pressure to succeed when confronted by reluctant lawmakers.

3) The U.S. Government should be acquainted with the conditions of the emigrants and appoint commissioners whose duties would include protection of the emigrants and who would alert the governments of New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Louisiana to the abuses visited on the emigrants, unacquainted as they are "with the language of the country and with the price of transportation of passengers and luggage to the place of destination ..."

To protect the emigrants from the mob, Van Steenwijk recommended that the following measures be adopted:

A) A large dock should be built in each of the ports where immigrants arrive and where they and their luggage are landed.

B) No agents or runners be allowed to come aboard any ships carrying emigrants but should only be allowed on the docks on which they are landed.

C) The captains of ships should be compelled to unload their passengers and goods at the specially designated dock(s).

D) At each dock the schedules and rates of each railroad and steamboat company should be posted in the languages most likely to be spoken by the emigrants.

E) Each such posting should describe to the emigrant the manner of travel to be anticipated—railroad, steamboat, propeller, or canal boat.

F) The fare of each line and the cost per 100 pounds of luggage should be clearly stated.

G) No forwarding agent should be allowed to sell tickets unless he showed his adherence to a printed fare list and if he went beyond that, he would be punished under the law.[180]

180. VSAR 13–16.

Most of these recommendations were to be realized some two years later, not by Wisconsin but by the State of New York, whose Office of Commissioner of Emigration adopted Castle Garden as the principal entry point for emigrants arriving in New York Harbor.

By implication, Haertel recommended in his Annual Report that those laws that were already on the books should be enforced to protect the emigrants. It would be wise for the legislature of Wisconsin, he continued, in collaboration with other legislatures, to remove obstacles to emigration. In his opinion, the effectiveness of his own office to assist emigrants was severely compromised because the responsible official was subject to annual reappointment.[181] In general, a more concerted effort was necessary, in his opinion, to promote immigration into the state more forcefully.[182]

As mentioned earlier, Commissioners Van Steenwijk and Haertel had to contend not only with the ruthless exponents of the emigration trade but also with other states competing with Wisconsin.[183] Concerning the race for settlers among the new states of the Union at the time, Haertel suggested in his annual report that there were still millions of acres of available land beckoning between New York City and Wisconsin.[184] The perception that other states in the "Northwest" would also aggressively market themselves to emigrants prompted Van Steenwijk to sound a mild warning to the governor and, by extension, to the Wisconsin legislature:

> The example set by our State Government has excited already the emulation of other States and the Governor of Iowa recommends, in his late message, the establishment of an agency like ours in the City of New York. We have no right to complain about such a plan, but we must be stimulated by it, and exert our best powers not to loose [*sic*] ground in the coming contest; we have the advantage of our better situation for market, of our extensive internal improvements, all in an excellent state of progress, of our healthy and invigorating climate, and we are inferior in no respect whatever, besides we have in our favor one season's experience in New York; by prosecuting in the right direction what was commenced by the action of the last legislature, no harm can accrue to us; even the competition may show our great

181. See pp. 90–91 below.

182. HHAR 13–14.

183. See p. 58 above.

184. HHAR 8.

> advantages and materially contribute towards the advancement of our object.[185]

However, despite the vacuum created by the dissolution of the Wisconsin office in 1855, no other state in the Midwest would step in to take advantage of the situation, at least not for the time being. Iowa first opened its New York office to promote immigration in 1860 but it lasted only two years. (This is not surprising considering that the outbreak of the Civil War effectively halted immigration from Europe.) It was reopened in 1870. Minnesota established its own office in 1864.[186]

Haertel harbored an additional concern. Europe's political and economic difficulties prompting so many of its citizens to seek a better life in the American West might not last forever. As much as the emigrants were welcome in Wisconsin and other young states of the Union, nobody would go so far as to wish ill for Europe's destiny. Indeed, at the same time as he was questioning the unabated flow of emigrants to American shores, European countries were looking at ways of reducing the flight of their people. While earlier, in the face of misharvests, diseases, and political instability, the relief of a reduced population sharing limited resources was widely felt, it now appeared that the increased demands for labor, spurred on by the burgeoning industrialization, could not be met unless the population drain was reduced. This proved difficult, however, as long as the working and living conditions for factory laborers remained dismal. (The workers' plight in Germany, for example, would not improve until the 1880s, when new workers' benefits were introduced, along with a cap on work hours.) Still, with advancements in agriculture and medicine, the most immediate dangers affecting nourishment and health could be mitigated.

Moreover, Haertel noticed that European countries were diverting emigrants to countries "whose governments sympathize with their own," for instance Brazil. While at first sight this may appear somewhat farfetched, since Brazil's appeal for German emigrants began to be strongly felt only later in the century, Haertel did have reasons to fear competition from Latin America. He had learned that the Brazilian legislature had just passed specific laws to encourage immigration from Europe, guaranteeing free land, apportioning $400,000 for the promotion of immigration, and subsidizing the difference in travel cost between the United States and Brazil.[187] What Haertel apparently

185. VSAR 11.

186. Cf. Blegen 11.

187. HHAR 12. See also pp. 78–79 above.

did not know, as pointed out by a German-American reader of the *Allgemeine Auswanderungs-Zeitung*, was that these laws were on the books but not put into effect.[188] In any event, his remarks probably did not fail to raise an eyebrow or two among the Wisconsin legislators who were beleaguered, if not persuaded, by nativist propaganda.

Generally, Haertel felt that laws needed to be written and policies developed that would better protect the emigrants and induce them to come here rather than to other countries. Among the problems he addressed in this area were the per capita fees on the emigrants arriving in New York harbor, imposed by both the state and city of New York. The proceeds ostensibly were to support the sick, the aged, and the infirm among the arriving emigrants and those who had become a burden to society.[189] Haertel lamented that the fees collected—from $1.50 to $2.00 per emigrant—were not only supporting the cost of care for indigent emigrants but also yielded a substantial profit to the state and city governments, at the expense of the emigrants, thus reducing their financial ability to travel inland to places like Wisconsin.[190]

Haertel finally pointed out the inadequacy of appointing new commissioners annually. Such a policy undercut, in his eyes, the efficacy of the office. First of all, a commissioner, he felt, must have been a highly qualified person who had

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188. March 16, 1854. (More on this publication on pp. 126–127 below.) The remarks were occasioned by the reprinting (in German) of Haertel's complete report to the governor. The author, Eduard Pelz, was a Forty-eighter who had embarked on a somewhat controversial career as promoter for the Pennsylvania Railroad Company. In this capacity, he collaborated with the German Society of New York, exposing it to charges of corruption (see Bickelmann in Just et al. 156). He also was known for criticizing Castle Garden (see Schöberl 79, note 42), possibly for reasons of diverting business from the company he represented. A more thorough treatment of Brazil as destination for German emigrants (without, however, mention of any formal legislative action by the Brazilian government) can be found in Schmahl 72–77.

189. The New York State Passenger Act of 1824 required the captain of each emigrant ship to post a bond against any of those persons who became paupers and required public assistance (cf. Ernst 25–26). This sytem worked poorly, was subject to vast corruption, and when the number of emigrants greatly increased, was overwhelmed. A hospital was also established on Staten Island to take care of those emigrants who were quarantined. It was supported by a head tax levied on the passengers and crews of ships entering the port. The amount varied but as of 1845 was $2.00 per cabin passenger and $.50 for those in steerage. (Coleman [174] speaks of $1.50 for 1847.) This money went not only to hospitalization of emigrants but was diverted, by act of the state legislature, to other charities as well (cf. Ernst 26–27). See also Bretting 35.

190. HHAR 11. In this respect it should be noted that in terms of real dollar amounts, $2.00 was a substantial sum of money. As Haertel reported elsewhere, the cost of passage from New York to Wisconsin, exclusive of luggage, was between $6.00 and $7.00 per person (HHL [n. d.]). In this light, a per capita tax of $2.00 represented up to one-third of the cost of traveling from the ocean port to one's new home in Wisconsin.

resided in Wisconsin long enough to know firsthand what life in this state was like, who was intimately familiar with the state's resources and needs, who was bound to the state by ties of family or business, and who should be induced by a salary commensurate with his experience and expertise—implying that his own salary did not meet these criteria. Furthermore, as a qualification for the attainment of the office, a nominee for the position should not only assume that he was to provide services directly to the emigrant appearing at his office but also publicize the presence and the functions of the office in the United States as well as in Europe. Thus, the best candidate for the office was one acquainted with "the state of affairs in Europe," one with connections there and one who knew its principal languages. (It is obvious that this job description matched Haertel's credentials to a tee.) To employ all these faculties to the greatest advantage, to develop a smoothly functioning office, with well established connections domestic and abroad, and to effect improvements and changes as well as evaluate their success, a one-year term of service simply was not long enough, nor would it suffice to give the post credibility, on the part of both its clients and the legislature. Haertel concluded his critical observations with the remark that Wisconsin should procure a "permanent" set of offices in New York City, rather than forcing each new commissioner, on his initial arrival in the city, to relet the office.[191]

Commissioner Horn's letters—as far as they still exist—do not contain any suggestions for improvement of the office or its services. Perhaps after three years of incessant legislative battles over the destiny of the office, Horn had no illusions about its tenuous existence and merely undertook to fulfill his duties as prescribed by law.

Both Commissioner Van Steenwijk's and Haertel's observations evince a true concern for the office itself and for the emigrants whose welfare it was to protect and promote. In fact, they may betray a shift from the career politician back home to the social worker in the trenches of New York who was overwhelmed by the genuine needs of those he was sent out to attract to Wisconsin. Nevertheless, their suggestions were constructive and delivered in a tone that might persuade the legislators of the impact the commissioner's office could have on building the state's population and wealth with the help of emigrants from Europe. However, notwithstanding the urgency of their pleas,

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191. HHAR 14. Van Steenwijk's office was located on 110 Greenwich Street (VSAR 5). When Haertel, his successor, visited Van Steenwijk in May 1853, in order to discuss the takeover of the same premises he learned that they had already been "rented for other purposes." He then reopened the office on 89 Greenwich Street (see HHAR 3–4).

as far as they could be met by Wisconsin, Van Steenwijk and Haertel failed to attract the necessary support in the chambers of the Wisconsin legislature. As to those proposed improvements that would fall under the purview of the state of New York or the federal government, they would not be heard until after the Civil War when immigration to the United States reached such levels that it could no longer be handled by an individual state or city authority.[1]

192. For an overview of federal legislation regulating immigration to the U.S. before World War I, see Bretting, I. 4.

3

The German Emigrant Literature Compared with the Information of the Wisconsin Office of the Commissioner of Emigration

As mentioned before, the largest number of emigrants who headed in the direction of Wisconsin during the early 1850s were of German ethnic origin.[193] Thus it is fitting for our purposes now to narrow our focus to the German emigrants who may have benefited from the services of the Wisconsin Office of Commissioner of Emigration, especially those who arrived through the port of New York, whether they knew to which state they were going or not.

Let us first be reminded of the measures the commissioners took in order to reach as many emigrants as possible. Of the 30,000 pamphlets that were sent out under Van Steenwijk's tenure, 20,000 were in German. In mentioning this, Van Steenwijk noted that, in view of the majority of Germans among the emigrants landing in New York, he had enlisted the services of a "well educated German."[194] Of course, there were editorial pieces, advertisements, and articles submitted for publication in German-language newspapers, both in the United States and Europe.[195] In addition, Van Steenwijk had the legislative act which created the office translated into German, which he then sent to newspaper editors abroad, and opened up a line of communication with the German Protective Society in New York, which "displayed some activity in sending people for information to my office, most of them belonging to the more intelligent class of society."[196]

In his annual report, Commissioner Haertel indicated that two-thirds of the visitors to his office were Germans.[197] Horn similarly reported to Governor Barstow on August 20, 1854, that emigration, especially from Germany, had greatly increased and that many of the German emigrants appeared to be from

193. See especiallly pp. 40–41 above.
194. VSAR 5, also 11. See also p. 34 above.
195. VSAR 12–13. See also note 65.
196. VSAR 9.
197. HHAR 5.

the middle class, who in their homelands had to bear the burden of taxes and wars alike. He estimated that during his first four months in office, 16,000 Germans passed through New York en route to Wisconsin.

Although the proportionate numbers of German immigrants who took advantage of the Wisconsin commissioner's services were dwarfed by the overall German immigration figures, it can be said that the commissioners applied their extremely limited resources as efficiently as possible in order to promote Wisconsin's attractiveness. In other words, once a German emigrant did actively respond to the office's advertisements by contacting it in person or by mail, the likelihood that this person would actually settle in Wisconsin was great. It may therefore be concluded that the office's shortcomings consisted not in its interactions with the emigrants but in its severely limited reach into a vast audience.

Private Publications

For the period under observation, a plethora of contemporaneous sources was available to the emigrant, apart from the commissioner's pamphlet. These can loosely be divided into books, on the one hand, and magazines, journals, and newspaper articles, on the other. Both appeared in prolific numbers. In fact, for the reasons suggested in the introduction,[198] the mid-1800s saw a greater number of published writings for the emigrant than later years. In the first part of this chapter, we introduce several books that are typical of the emigrant literature of the time. They consist primarily of travelogs describing the experiences of apparently successful emigrants or visitors to the United States, often concentrating on a single state such as, in our case, Wisconsin. (A few works are German translations of geographical descriptions by American authors.) We do not claim that our selection of examples is representative, but we trust that the reader will be given a fair sample of the literature that was available. For instance, besides de Haas and Wettstein, other authors, such as Quentin and von Baumbach, contributed significantly to the popularity of Wisconsin and Milwaukee among their compatriots.[199]

We cannot tell how many people actually read these books, but their popularity among their intended audience of emigrants or would-be emigrants was without a question enormous. We offer three reasons for this claim: 1) The sheer number of titles. For the years 1847 to 1855 we have found 24

198. See p. 3 above.

199. Cf. Hense-Jensen 122–123.

titles that focus entirely or partly on Wisconsin.[200] In 1849 alone, at least six titles appeared, in 1852 four. Considering the specialized subject and the fact that the German book market with the middle and lower classes as target audience was still in its infancy in those years, these figures are remarkable. 2) Although individual editions rarely surpassed 1,000 copies,[201] we can assume that these books—a relatively expensive purchase for the common person—were rarely read by one individual alone but rather passed around. This may have happened not only in the hometown prior to departure; we also must assume that, once en route, the emigrants shared their literature among each other in order to broaden their information base. 3) The books were widely advertised, especially in the pages of weekly magazines catering exclusively to the emigrant.[202] Moreover, as many modern books, the books of the period included in the back announcements for related titles, published by the same house. Judging by the number of titles, the most important publisher of German emigrant literature around 1850 must have been Julius Baedeker (also spelled "Bädeker;" a distant cousin of the well-known German travel publisher) of Elberfeld and Iserlohn, in the Rhine/Ruhr region.[203]

Again, the books introduced below are only few of many. A more complete list is included in the bibliography. As indicated in the beginning,[204] it is the intent of the authors, for the purposes of an equitable comparison, to focus primarily on privately *printed* sources of information that were available during the time period under investigation. This is not to detract from the fact that many emigrants drew their information from personal letters, which we recognize as being a valuable vehicle of communication, as well.

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200. See bibliography.

201. See, e.g., the advertisement in Adolf Schults, *Lieder aus Wisconsin* (1848), announcing that the first edition of 1,000 copies of Carl de Haas' *Winke für Auswanderer* had sold out within four weeks. Even if we allow for a margin of exaggeration for publicity purposes, this figure is plausible.

202. For example, through regularly recurring ads in the *Allgemeine Auswanderungs-Zeitung* of these years, also advertising for de Haas' book (see note 208 for an example).

203. Information obtained from Christoph Suin de Boutemard, President of the Heinrich-Oppermann-Gesellschaft (Nienburg) and expert on the history of the Baedeker publishers. The house of an A. Bädeker in Rotterdam, among others, is cited in the masthead of the *Allgemeine Auswanderungs-Zeitung* (e.g., of May 23, 1854) as accepting orders for subscriptions as well as ads for the paper. See also pp. 126–127 below.

204. See pp. 3–4 above.

Nordamerika Wisconsin, Calumet. Winke für Auswanderer by Carl de Haas

It was mentioned earlier that one of the pioneers of New Holstein, Wisconsin, Rudolph Puchner, observed that reading de Haas's book not only induced him to emigrate to the state but, additionally, to relocate in de Haas's community of Calumet.[205] De Haas himself had initially thought of emigrating to America by reading reports on Texas, in particular the Adelsverein initiative in the New Braunfels settlement.[206] Yet, after learning more about the mostly tragic trials and tribulations surrounding that adventure, and after reading an article in the *Barmer Zeitung* describing the surroundings of Milwaukee as well as a letter from a friend in Calumet, the former teacher of mathematics and chemistry, accompanied by family members and friends, departed for Wisconsin.[207]

It may be assumed that the two volumes of de Haas's book were widely distributed and read among the German emigrant community.[208] To do justice to de Haas's full-scale account of his voyage, his new home, and to his ample advice to prospective emigrants, is difficult in a limited space. However, a brief overview of this book provides a perspective on the scope of his endeavor.

The subtitle of de Haas's book implies that it is aimed primarily at the prospective farmer. Indeed, the author offers plenty of useful statistical information for the farmer. However, being more than a farmer's almanac about Wisconsin, the book includes practical information, concerning currency and exchange rates, weights, measures and distances, as well as an autobiographical sketch describing the trip from his hometown in the Rhineland to the seacoast, including a minute description of a ship passage from Rotterdam down the Channel coast to Le Havre, and from there to Cherbourg where they finally boarded the French steamer "Union" to cross the Atlantic (I, 1–30).[209] This account, clearly emphasizing practical information, contains ample advice

205. Ibid.

206. See also note 247.

207. *North America. Wisconsin. Winke für Auswanderer*. 2 vols. 2. vermehrte Auflage. Elberfeld: Julius Bädeker, 1848–1849, 1–2. For the author's account on how he made up his mind where to emigrate, see op. cit, pp. 1–2. For various reasons, de Haas did not stay long in Calumet. Already in 1849, he was known as co-editor of *Der Freie Demokrat* of Buffalo. He later also co-edited *Der Buffalo Demokrat* (1850–1853) and the *Buffalo Journal* (probably 1863–1864).

208. The book was repeatedly advertised in the German weekly for emigrants, *Allgemeine Auswanderungs-Zeitung*, e.g., on June 19, 1848.

209. As to the ocean crossing itself, de Haas limits his remarks to a sobering description of the lodgings aboard ship and some concise points of advice. "Ich will keine ausführliche

on what to expect in terms of provisions and accommodations, what to bring along to make the passage more bearable, what the ships looked like, and what was charged for passage.[210]

Rather than giving his reader a sweeping description of New York, de Haas again concentrates on the essentials. After specific instructions on money changing techniques he gives advice about agents, steamboats on the Hudson River and connections from Albany westward to Wisconsin. Here too, de Haas focuses largely on the practical side of the passage, recommending the train rather than the boat from Albany to Buffalo (the canal water was unfailingly foul-smelling in the summer). When it comes to the available comfort aboard ship, de Haas concedes that it is a function of the fare paid, always recommending the better class provided the traveler can afford it (I, 43). It follows a detailed description of Milwaukee (I, 43–45). For the emigrant who ventures inland from that point, de Haas has a list of supplies and materials to be purchased in that city, including the cost for oxen and wagon with which to haul his belongings (I, 44–48). He describes the lands surrounding Milwaukee and other localities before focusing on his own selected community of Calumet on the shores of Lake Winnebago (I, 49–52). At this point, the reader is given an account of the author's initial land-taking experience (I, 52–58), together with more statistical information (including temperatures from 1847 and 1848) and descriptions of the soil types present in the area (I, 64–72). Toward the end the first volume, de Haas introduces the reader to the three main vegetation patterns in southeast Wisconsin, distinguishing among prairie, oak opening, and forest lands, and describes the labor necessary to put land into production (I, 72–82),[211] before

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Beschreibung unserer Seereise machen; man hat deren genug und die eine ist ungefähr wie die andere." (I, 24 [I am not inclined to give a thorough description of the sea voyage. We have already enough of those, and one is just about like the other.])

210. It is of interest to note that de Haas announces in his book that in the beginning of August (1848?) the first Bremer steamship, the "George Washington," would be in operation. Perhaps, Theodor Wettstein, as well as Freimund Goldmann (pp. 65–69 and 74–75 below, respectively), read this account for they both mention that the ship they took across the Atlantic Ocean was the "Washington" (I, 8, and 3, respectively). It may at least be speculated that books and pamphlets on the emigration experience changed hands at will and were widely distributed for the benefit of their "up to the minute" advice.

211. Schafer, in *The Winnebago-Horicon Basin*, argues that the Germans settling in the southeast of Wisconsin, among them Carl de Haas, were drawn to the woods because open Congress land was no longer available at the time. Moreover, he continues, Germans saw the rewards of their labor in the ready availability of wood and the future high yields of crops planted in the humus-rich soil (145). See also note 93.

concluding with brief remarks on population, public safety (practically no need for it), road system, and the (remaining) Native population (I, 82–87).

The second volume is prefaced by some afterthoughts regarding, among other, the ship voyage and emigration by groups. On the former, de Haas assuages apparent misconceptions about the horrors of steerage, saying that, although disagreeable, one could get used to it.[212] On the latter, he warns that group emigration, while beneficial for mutual support during the actual passage, inevitably leads to disagreements when it comes to the actual settlement process, and that the idea of an isolated German colony in the wilderness is illusory (II, 1–3). He then turns to an even more thorough description of the state of Wisconsin than in volume I (including a translated excerpt of the constitution [II, 8–16]), its land and climate and other information primarily of interest to the prospective farmer (II, 24–40). (He even gives the equivalents of 46 common German words in the Menominee Indian language [II, 40–41]). However, his detailed summary of the geography of the state, as well as his exhaustive portrayal of not just Calumet but a number of counties in the state worthy of settlement, including Milwaukee, must also have appealed to emigrants of all professions. De Haas concludes his narrative with a brief account of the territory of Minnesota along with a history of Wisconsin and immigration to the state (II, 116–140). He appends a list of prices for the year 1849, both of goods, supplies, and materials and of the bids received by farmers for their harvest products and animals (II, 140).

De Haas calculated the cost of emigrating from the city of Leipzig to Wisconsin, buying land, raising a cabin and putting the land into production at $670 (II, 124). He did not forget to list the yields that one might expect to coax from the soil, extolling the prospect of great success for the dedicated farmer (II, 128). For the emigrant without means, de Haas demonstrated the availability of jobs and noted the wages then being paid. In his opinion, compared to Germany, America was a paradise for the poor man (II, 130), especially when one considered that the contributions to the government were limited when compared with the exploitative taxation system in the feudal states of Germany (II, 129).

Simply because of its complexity and breadth of information, de Haas's account stands out among most contemporary publications on the subject. While it was primarily aimed at the farmer, and while it encouraged emigration to Wisconsin exclusively and, within Wisconsin, to the vicinity of his farm in

212. (II, 1). In any event, de Haas, who traveled cabin, relies on accounts from others (see note 208).

Calumet, it is exemplary as a testimony to the benefits of emigration. That it must have been well known among German speaking emigrants is indirectly proven by the fact that the book was widely advertised (and critiqued) in newspapers of the time that catered to the emigrant readership.[213]

Unfortunately, de Haas's account would become quickly dated, its information stale after only a few years. During the time of the Wisconsin Office of the Commissioner of Emigration, its popularity may already have been in decline but, as with other texts, it likely formed a basis on which the emigrant could formulate requests for more detailed information from the commissioner.

In comparison with what was available through the Office of the Commissioner of Emigration, de Haas's text could therefore be termed a thorough introduction to the adventure of emigration, on which the information given by the commissioner could be built. The commissioner could thus confirm or modify what the emigrant had learned from the book and update him on the latest status of available land and jobs in the areas of Wisconsin described by de Haas. Without question, it was only a matter of a few years before all of the "Congress land" in Calumet had been taken and de Haas's readers would have to look farther afield in that part of the state, if not in more distant locations, to find similarly priced land. What the commissioner could do and de Haas's book could not was facilitate a safe sojourn in New York City and either recommend agents through whom passage to Wisconsin could be obtained or make those arrangements himself for the emigrants.

The mission of de Haas's book, then, was both to provide background information to the reader about the emigration experience and to encourage him to gravitate toward an area within the state of Wisconsin that de Haas himself had found to be attractive and economically enticing. There is no doubt that de Haas accomplished these goals. It is altogether likely that significant numbers of German emigrants decided on Wisconsin, in general, and the area surrounding Lake Winnebago, in particular, after reading his book.

Der nordamerikanische Freistaat Wisconsin by Theodor Wettstein

This book appeared in the same Bädeker series devoted to "the latest information on foreign countries with special emphasis on German emigration

213. See note 208. See also the publisher's advertising section at the end of de Haas's vol. II, which alerts the reader to the positive critiques of vol. I in numerous German publications.

and colonization" that featured de Haas.[214] With over 600 pages, it appears to be the most comprehensive compendium the emigrant could buy at the time. Supposedly recommended for its balanced presentation, the volume is reported to have enjoyed the widest readership of all emigrant guides of the 1850s.[215]

The backbone of the work consists of two reports by Wettstein, the first a travelogue following Wettstein's passage from Barmen in the German Ruhr area to Milwaukee, the second a detailed description of Wisconsin. Sandwiched between the two are four extraneous but nevertheless pertinent texts: advice on avoiding being swindled (by C.T. Voß), an annual report by the German Society of New York for the year 1847–1848, a reprint of the laws and regulations for emigration by the Senate of Bremen together with excerpts from the acts of Congress regarding immigration (in German translation), and the conditions for passage from Bremen to the U. S. issued by a ship agent, ending with brief postcript by Wettstein. Wettstein's second report[216] is followed by a separate, thorough portrayal of Milwaukee, through which he aims to address the city dweller who is not in the position to buy land and start a farm. By this he explicitly intended to fill a gap, since most other emigrant guide books address a more rural audience, focusing on land acquisition and agriculture (cf. part II, 157).

Wettstein, who seems to have been highly regarded in his home town,[217] obviously had a gift for coordinating and organizing the trip to America, not only in order to ensure its safe and smooth execution but also to lower the cost for him and his large familiy. Possibly tipped off by de Haas's recommendation, he contacted the reputed booking agent Traub, who invited him to round up the passengers for a chartered passage on the still new steamship "George Washington."[218] Wettstein mananged to enlist 156 persons willing to emigrate from his area and satisfying his requirements of "cleanliness and enterprising spirit" (part I, 7), at a handsome provision that allowed him and his family to travel—cabin, not steerage—virtually for free (I, 9). For the transfer from the

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214. *Der nordamerikanische Freistaat Wisconsin in seiner physischen, sozialen und politischen Gestalt. Zur Belehrung und Warnung für deutsche Auswanderer. Nebst einer ausführlichen Darstellung aller Gewerb-, Fabrik-, Industrie- und Handelszweige (von Th. W. aus Milwaukie).* (The North American Free State of Wisconsin in its physical, social, and political structure. Instructions and warnings for German emigrants. Including a detailed description of all branches of trade, manufacturing, industry, and commerce).

215. Cf. Hense-Jensen I, 122.

216. Repaginated from page 1, as are all other parts of the book.

217. See note 215.

218. See note 210.

hinterland to Bremerhaven, he negotiated the fare with the train companies and had some 50,000 pounds of luggage shipped separately by a freight forwarder, thus avoiding excessive damage by repeated transfers between train lines (I, 9–10).

Wettstein's observations and recommendations regarding the ocean crossing are both sobering and helpful, from the gradual acceptance of rats on board by the resigned passengers (I, 20) to the admonition not to use one's own bedlinen to line the bunks but rather to buy a primitive but inexpensive straw mattress in Bremerhaven that, when later soiled and damaged, could be discarded after passage (I, 24). However, when he notes that the rare and small portions of butter given out by the crew only serve to protect the passengers from seasickness caused by the consumption of fat (I, 23), one wonders whether the reader (and future passenger) might not have been the victim of a conflict of interest pitting Wettstein's better knowledge against his good relations with the captain and the shipping agent.

The most thorough and helpful sections of the book concern the state of Wisconsin and the city of Milwaukee, in Wettstein's opinion the destinations preferred by German emigrants (II, 156). Before describing any specific features, he goes to great lengths to dispel the notion common in Europe at the time that all the thirty-three American states and territories were alike in terms of climate and vegetation (II, 157). He points out that Wisconsin's climate, although not ideal, was healthier than most, which was confirmed by the rapid increase of the state's population (II, 190). At the same time, he is honest enough to cite the two most frequent diseases in Wisconsin—"cold fever" (erroneously ascribed by him to the emissions of decaying plant material after clearing the land) and "summer complaints" (most likely dysentery contracted by contaminated water) —but compares their occurrence favorably with that in southern states (II, 225–227).

Wettstein must have read most other accounts on the subject, especially Lapham and Goldmann (see below), both of whom he refers to explicitly and implicitly. For example, when describing the geographical location of the state and its borders, he almost literally uses Lapham's vocabulary (apart from quoting from the state's constitution) and even apologizes for the "crude" terminology to which the European reader may be unaccustomed (II, 161). He follows Lapham in citing the most important lakes, rivers, and canals. Of the latter he predicts a boom in the near future, enhancing Wisconsin's transportation system to a point where it can compete with the best in the country (II, 172).

In regards to vegetation, crops and soils, Wettstein not only gives expert advice based on his own experience but also relies on de Haas and Goldmann (see below). He explains the Anglo-Saxon system of marking townships using the grid system, again referring to de Haas (II, 185–187). When he lists and briefly describes each county (II, 187–188), he basically provides an abstract of Lapham's exhaustive account. However, in his thoughtful explanation of the factors contributive to the growth of communities on the frontier (II, 194–197)—with the saw and grist mills as the catalysts around which the other institutions crystallize and grow—he offers original insights that cannot be found elsewhere. Wettstein concludes his description of the state with a list of the cities and the existing railroads. In the latter regard he corrects the assumption passed as fact in other German literature that the railroad line between Prairie du Chien on the Mississippi and Milwaukee was already in operation. Rather, it was still in the planning stages, money being the major obstacle. It would be deplorable indeed, Wettstein exclaims, if emigrants were travelling up the Mississippi River planning to board the train in Prairie du Chien to take them to the interior of the state, only to be faced with impenetrable wilderness (II, 198).

In a separate chapter, Wettstein describes the process of settling in Wisconsin, beginning with an explanation of the social forces that build a community—from commerce and transportation to education to religion to entertainment (II, 205) —and a county-by-county list of population growth and another list (probably borrowed from Lapham) of available land and its worth in each county, including land taxes and land office revenue (II, 237). He describes the major routes of transportation, again extolling Wisconsin's great potential for outperforming every other state (II, 211), but also mentions the disadvantage of freezing weather that paralyzes most water routes during an extended period of the year (II, 219).

In excerpting and commenting on the constitution of Wisconsin, Wettstein offers his own view on the granting of suffrage after only one year of residency. In his eyes, the liberal requirement only leads to uninformed decisions on the part of newcomers, who still are more concerned with building an existence in the wilderness than with party politics, and tempts party vote hunters to manipulate the result with votes that had been bought off with a glass of beer or like incentives (II, 247). He lists the three major parties (Whigs, Democrats, Free Soilers) and describes the state's political (II, 258–263) and social institutions, including a free press, something to be noted by subjects of an absolutist monarchy (II, 264). When discussing religion, Wettstein points out

the separation between church and state, which, contrary to expectation, has not resulted in depraved manners and morals but rather the opposite (II, 277). He also describes the state's education system and its funding by property taxes, making sure to stress that although taxes must be paid they are much lower than in the old country (II, 293).Notwithstanding Wettstein's claim that he possesses no specific knowledge in agriculture, he inserts a brief section on farming but mostly refers to others who have written exhaustively on the subject, especially de Haas, Wilhelm Dames (see below), and C. Fleischmann, the United States' consul in Stuttgart.[219] He adds his own cost calculation for raising a farm in the woods and warns the inexperienced settler against claiming land that he may not be able to develop within a year (II, 299–313).

The last part of the book is devoted to the city of Milwaukee. Here, Wettstein recounts the development of the city, ward by ward, offering statistics on production and trade (borrowed from Lathrop?) and pronouncing Milwaukee's great potential to become the foremost city in the west. His individual numbers of and comments on businesses in each profession and trade are particularly helpful for the non-farming immigrant.

Generally, Wettstein's observations, besides those borrowed from other sources, stand out for their frankness and originality. His is clearly a concern for the misled, naive and overly romantic emigrant. In describing the qualities required for a successful settler (well-informed, physically fit, independent, enterprising, modest), he does not mince words. Too common, he believes, is the romantic idea of a blissful, careless life at the bosom of nature:

> Hinter dem Glase daheim, und in heiterer Unterhaltung der angehenden Auswanderer werden mit ungeheurer Leichtigkeit die Bäume des Urwaldes umgehauen und verbrannt, ein Blockhaus steigt auf, das Land wird urbar gemacht, und man zaubert sich in ein idyllisches Schäferleben hinein, wo die Wonne kein Ende nimmt. (II, 319)[220]

It is for this reason that, in his introduction, Wettstein assumes almost personal responsibility for giving it to the reader straight: "Leid, herzlich leid würde

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219. *Der nordamerikanische Landwirt. Ein Handbuch für Ansiedler in den Vereinigten Staaten* [The North American farmer. A handbook for settlers in the United States].

220. In the security of a solid house with glass windows back home, and in light-hearted conversations between would-be emigrants, the trees of the virgin forest are removed and burned with phantastic ease, a log hut almost magically rises from the ground, and the crops are planted without effort. The settler simply waves a wand and transports himself into an idyllic peasant life where the joys find no end.

es mir sein, wenn auch nur Einer durch meine Berichte veranlaßt würde, die Heimath zu verlassen, und es ihm später nicht gut gehen sollte" (I, 2).[221]

In a whimsical aside, out of context, Wettstein chastises European rulers for their reluctance to let emigrants go and protect them appropriately. Almost as soon as he begins this tirade he aborts it, for fear, as he coyly admits, of getting in trouble with the re-established censorship office in the German states (after the failed Revolution of 1848). Interestingly, an inserted editorial note just as gamefully reassures the author not to worry since remarks as sensible as his certainly would not offend any authority in those days (II, 207–210). It is left up to the reader to interpret this exchange as a skillful strategy for averting the censor's eye.

In his treatment of starting a new existence in Wisconsin, especially as a non-farmer, Wettstein provides an invaluable service to his readers. After studying his book (especially also the additional sections not authored by Wettstein, such as the warnings by Voß on the numerous dangers awaiting the traveler, or the excerpts from the Wisconsin Constitution), there is little left that the German settler in Wisconsin might have wanted to know. Still, whatever may be lacking in Wettstein's account (e.g., labor costs and wages, as well as establishing a farm) is furnished by de Haas, making the two books quite complementary. Armed with the works of de Haas and Wettstein, the settler could confidently embark on his voyage and orient himself in the new land. The only component missing would be the latest information on shipping lines, fares, accommodations in New York City, and land available. He also might have welcomed maps of the United States, as developed by mid-century, and of Wisconsin.

Wie sieht es in Wisconsin aus? by Wilhelm Dames

Wilhelm Dames, of whom we know very little otherwise, recounts his voyage in this booklet[222] day by day, from the valley of the Ruhr to Wisconsin. Dames provides his reader with extremely practical advice, including tips on packing one's possessions and on the regulations concerning foodstuffs passengers may carry with them. His graphic account of the ocean crossing reveals both the hardships (foremost among them seasickness) and the monotony of the trip. Dames then describes his stay in New York City, indicating persons to seek out for advice and information. In this respect, Dames seemed to stress

221. I would be sorry, very sorry indeed, if there were only one among the readers who was induced by my accounts to leave his home and who later failed to succeed.

222. *Ein treuer Führer und Rathgeber für Auswanderer.* (What does Wisconsin look like? A faithful guide and counselor for emigrants).

more the importance of seeking out good advisers than giving specific advice to the readers.

Dames's booklet is filled with information: the cost of tickets, routes of travel, and the like. Since it is written in the form of a diary, it is relatively easy for the reader to follow his progress and plan for the length of the journey to Wisconsin. Once arrived in Milwaukee—which he describes in some detail, especially regarding the German cultural life there—he continues with a travelog of his wanderings through southern Wisconsin in search of a home.

Especially when Dames chronicles his trip from Milwaukee to Watertown, Hustisford, Mayville, and back, his effort shines. He paints a picture of the Wisconsin countryside and goes to great lengths to note the value for farming of the lands he passes through, including even the cost of purchase. Dames writes that after his initial journey inland he returned to Milwaukee for supplies and that he immediately set out on another foray, this one taking him to Fox Lake, Fort Winnebago (Portage), and into "Indian lands,"[223] continuing northeast to Green Lake and to the settlement of Dartford. He finally takes out papers for land located in the vicinity of Rush Lake in Winnebago County. He concludes his daily account by acquainting the farmer with the opportunities awaiting him and advises those readers not interested in farming about the trades in which they might find work.

In his factual approach to the subject, Dames serves the reader well in offering detailed information, although it can not be said that he advises them, either as to particular aspects of the journey or where to settle once Wisconsin is reached. Most of all, however, it is his journal style that gives the reader a distinct sense of perspective. In the absence of photography, his scenic tour of south-central Wisconsin offers an almost visual impression of the new land. Unlike de Haas, Dames doesn't advocate a particular area for settlement nor does he give any specifics about the economic, political, or social circumstances to be found in Wisconsin. On the other hand, whereas authentic diary entries frequently tend to get lost in mundane details and observations, Dames, obviously with an eye toward a wider audience, strikes a successful balance between providing essential information and painting a large canvas.

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223. Op. cit. 23–24. The lands to which he refers may have been situated to the east of the Wisconsin River and to the north of the Fox River headwaters, not far from Portage, in what are now Columbia and Marquette Counties. This follows from extending an imaginary travel line beyond the cities mentioned. If the assumption is true, in 1848, the year of Dames' visit, this territory had just ceased to be truly "Indian land," for in this year it had been ceded to the United States government by the Menominee tribe (cf. Current 50–51).

It appears that Dames's booklet enjoyed a wide readership among the Germans considering emigration.[224]

Der nordamerikanische Freistaat Wisconsin by Gustav Richter

Richter's tiny book of 15 pages[225] (which is in no way related to Wettstein's work of the same title, although it does, like Wettstein, include a German translation of the constitution of the State of Wisconsin—but in its entirety) reads like a Fodor pocket guide, only not for the casual tourist but for the person who desires to settle in Wisconsin. A short section also explains how, and at what cost, to get there from New York City, after obtaining advice at the German Union at 95 Greenwich Street (ironically only a few doors down from the Wisconsin Office of Commissioer of Emigration).

A narrative description of the state, Richter's text includes detailed metereological information of the kind that would be of interest to the farmer (e.g., statistics for the coldest and warmest days, number of days of rain, of clear skies, of wind—and their prevailing directions—and when in the year rain is most likely). He speaks of the fruitfulness of the soil in the state, mentioning that wheat from Wisconsin is much in demand in eastern markets. He also identifies plants and crops that may be grown in Wisconsin and lists the types of trees. In this, he follows de Haas's approach, but in a much more condensed fashion. Speaking briefly of the wild animals found in the state he mentions, of importance to many non-aristocratic Germans, that hunting is "free" (13).

Richter goes into considerable detail about the minerals found to that date in Wisconsin, principally lead in the southwest and iron and copper in other districts, with descriptions of where exactly the minerals can be found and the prospects for ongoing mining efforts in the state (5).

Pointing out Wisconsin 's phenomenal population growth since 1830, the author observes that most of the German immigrants to the United States at this time are headed for this state, which is no wonder when one considers Wisconsin's enviable position on the Great Lakes and the concomitant ease of water transportation to and from the state, for passengers, goods, and raw materials.[226] He also submits that the state will soon benefit from internal improvements—highways, canals, railroads—financed through state revenues from the sale of vacant lands. Richter even cites distances between Wisconsin

224. Cf. Hense-Jensen 121.

225. The North American Free State of Wisconsin.

226. Op. cit. 6–7. This is still true in 1855, when Wisconsin ranked second among *all* emigrants after New York (cf. Coleman 302).

and world markets, implying the dominant rank the state will no doubt assume among international trading partners (9).

He continues to describe the leading ports on Lake Michigan and notes that land at the government price of $1.25 per acre is still plentiful in certain counties that he lists by name (10). To acquaint his European reader with the American system of land division he explains the survey system and its principal square mile and acre units. For those concerned, perhaps, that Indians would still reclaim their former land, he dispels such a thought and notes the existence in the eastern part of the state of only two remaining "small" tribal units (11).

Readers who might fear just how isolated they would be in Wisconsin are cheerfully reassured that most cities feature the same entertainment as back in Germany: singing groups, concert halls, bowling, billiards, card games, and beer and coffee houses. Although, as he notes, the principal language is English, in Wisconsin fully one half of the residents speak another tongue, with German being in the majority (12–13).

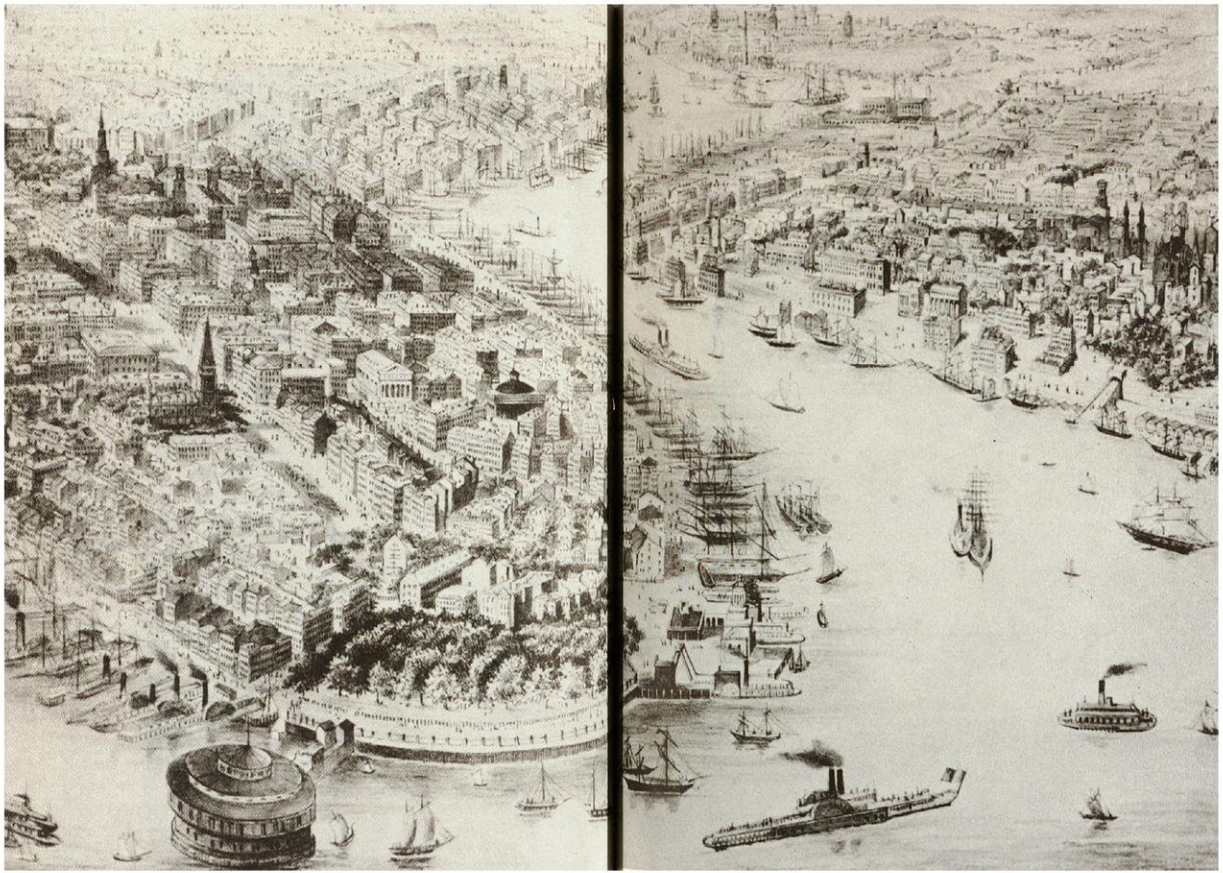
Finally, without further comment, Richter appends the complete state constitution in German, where the reader can find, among other things, the section on voting rights that stipulated that immigrants could vote after but one year's residency in the state, a point of great importance to many emigrants who had witnessed a German republic within reach, only to see their dreams shattered as the Revolution of 1848 was bloodily struck down by the aristocracy, restoring feudal right.

Despite its diminutive size, Richter's book is packed with information of practical interest, primarily for the farmer and the miner. Accompanying the text is a detailed fold-out map of Wisconsin, with a square mile grid of the federally surveyed portions at the time of the book's publication (about one-third of the entire state), and showing areas of prairie, oak openings, forest, and swamp. The map also includes markings for the main steamship line connecting Chicago and Buffalo, with stops in Wisconsin's ports. A German farmer who bought land before arriving or who had a specific destination in mind could easily locate it on the map and gain some appreciation of what he would discover. The text is of little or no assistance to the artisan, the shopkeeper, the professional, or the tradesman except for its statistical information on the weather and brief descriptions of linguistic and cultural life.

There is no question that the broad range of information available through the commissioner of emigration would have been of greater value to the emigrant than Richter's text. One of the real problems with booklets

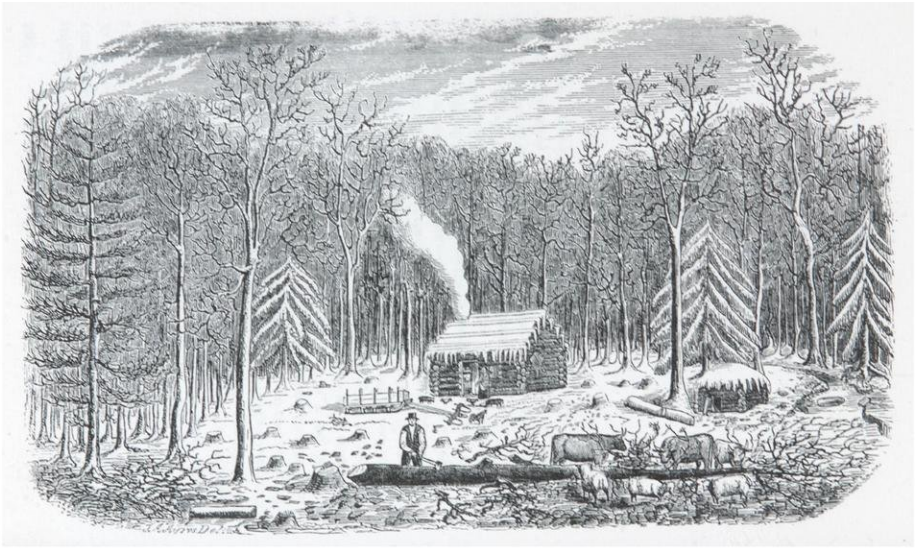
Steerage cabin of an emigrant ship, Etching, anon. (Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Bildarchiv, Berlin, III, 101.)

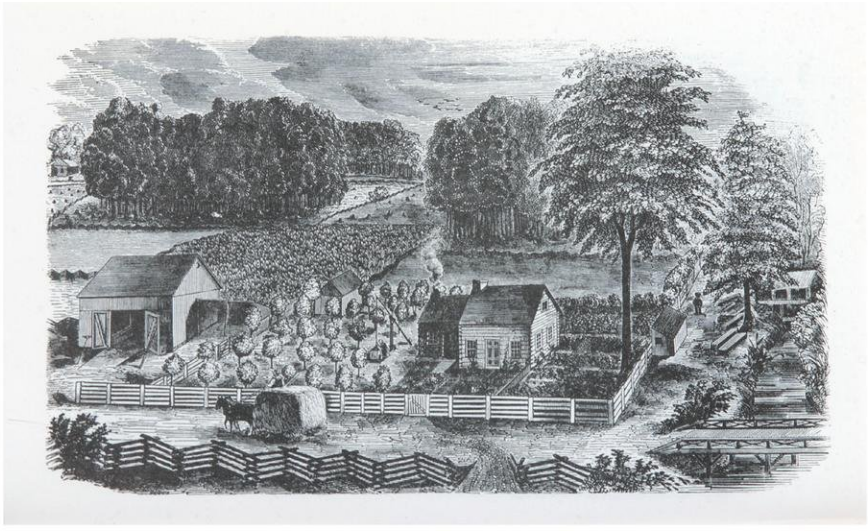
Period illustration of emigrants in New York Harbor, 1851.
(From: *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion*, Vol. I, 1851.)

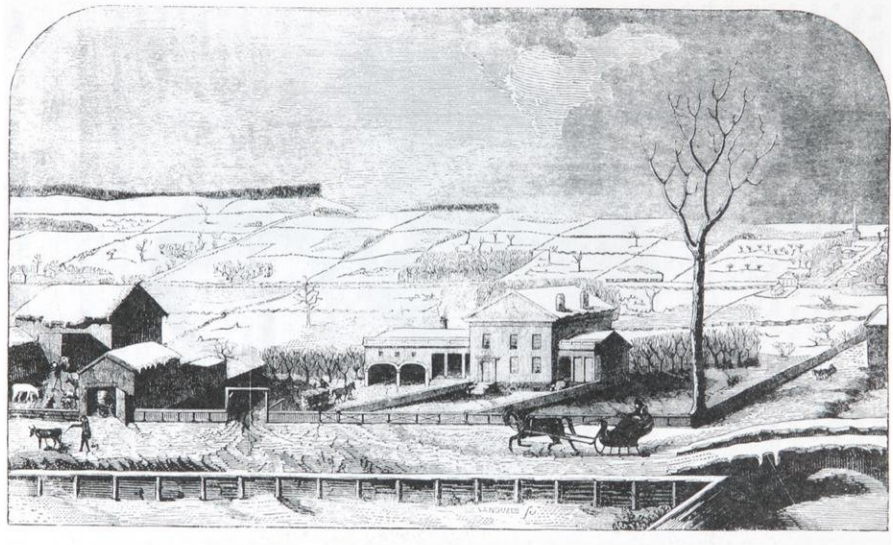


View of New York City, 1851. (From: *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion*, Vol. I, 1851.)

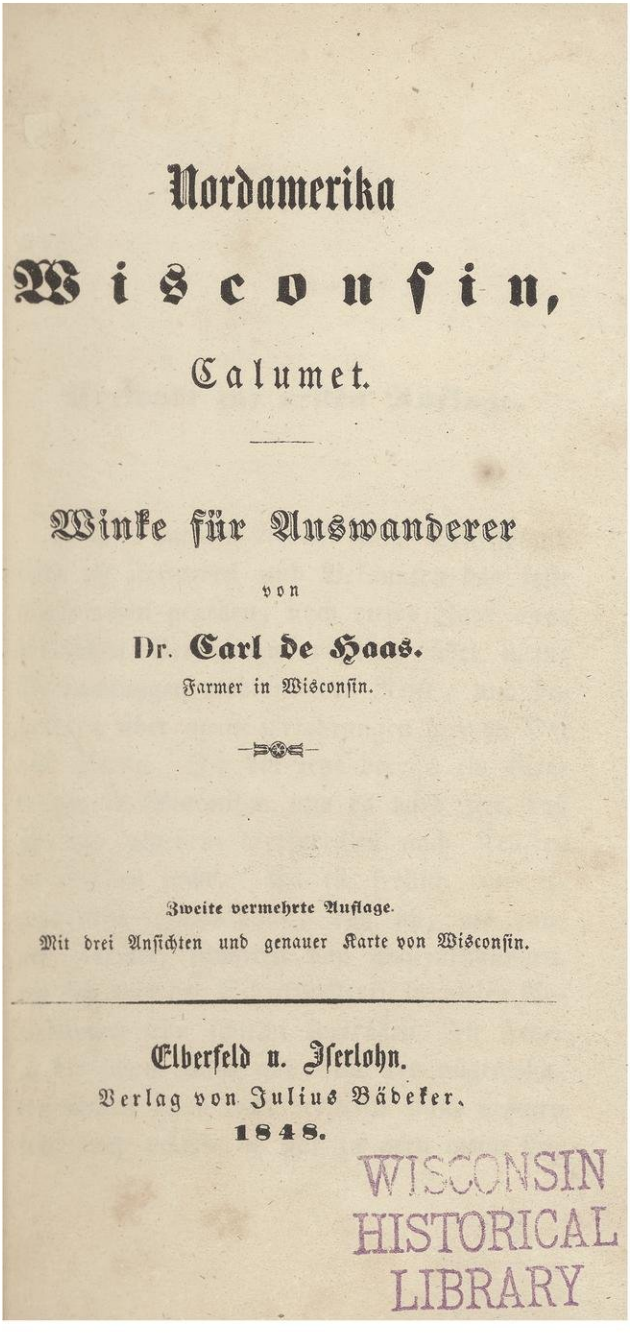
Illustration of the Old North Pier in Milwaukee, drawn from memory by H. W. Bleyer, ca. 1850. (WHS: WHi-32616)







Four-part illustration of farmsteads in the American wilderness, 1849. (From: Orsamus Turner, *A Pioneer History of the Holland Purchase of Western New York*. Buffalo: Jewett Thomas, 1849.)



Nordamerika

Wisconsin,

Calumet.

Winke für Auswanderer

von

Dr. Carl de Haas.

Farmer in Wisconsin.

Zweite vermehrte Auflage.

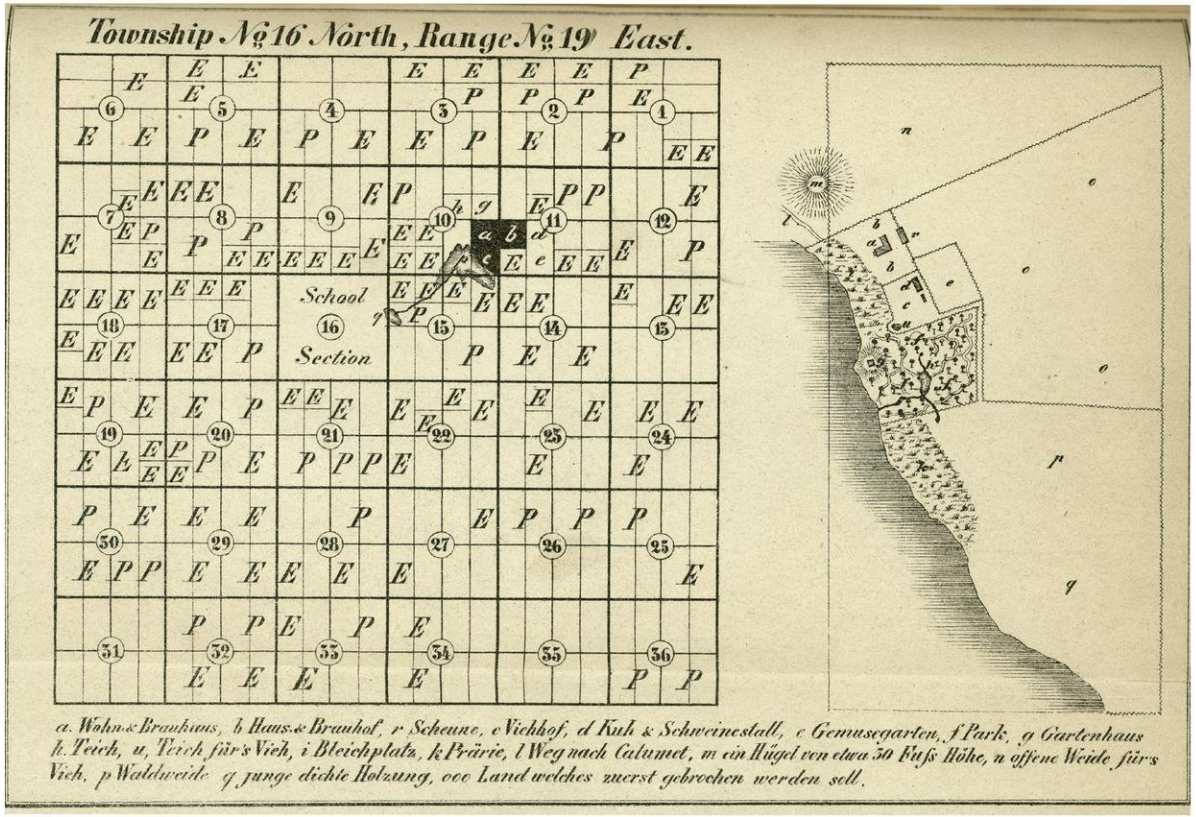
Mit drei Ansichten und genauer Karte von Wisconsin.

Elberfeld u. Iserlohn.

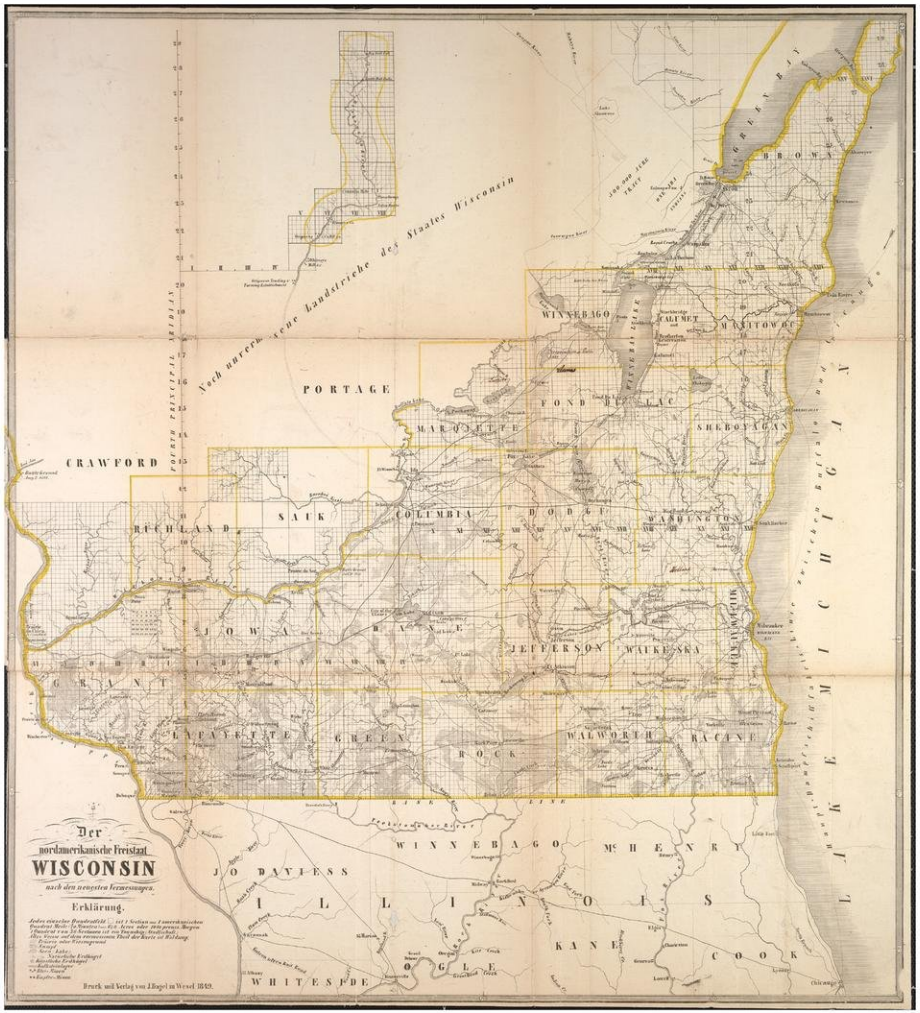
Verlag von Julius Bädeker.

1848.

Frontispiece of *Nordamerika, Wisconsin, Calumet. Winke für Auswanderer* by Carl de Haas, 1848/9.
(WHS Library Rare Book Collection)



Sketch of the towngrid of Calumet, including de Haas's land holdings, from *Nordamerika, Wisconsin, Calumet. Winke für Auswanderer* by Carl de Haas, 1848/9. (WHS Library Rare Book Collection)



Fold-out map of northern Wisconsin from *Der nordamerikanische Freistaat Wisconsin* by Gustav Richter, 1849. (WHS Library Rare Book Collection)

Intelligenzblatt zur Allg. Auswander

Insertions-Gebühren: Jede Einrückung von 1 bis 2 dreispaltigen, ganz oder zum Theil ausgefüllten Zeilen aus Petitschrift kostet 18 Sgr. Bei größerer Zeilenzahl wird jede Zeile reiner Satz mit 3½ Sgr. od. 1 Ngr., jede Abweichung und Hervorhebung besonders berechnet. Für Depeschen Adressen franco zur Post befördert werden, beträgt die Extra-Gebühr (Porto-Vergütung) nur 7 Sgr. oder 2 Ngr. pr. Adresse. — 1/2 Bo

[1]

Hamburg-Amerikanische Packetfahrt

von **HAMBURG** nach **NEW-YORK.**

Von den auf das Rühmlichste sich bewährt habenden, gekupferten, dreimastigen Packetschiffen jener Gesellschaft wird mit **Passagieren und Gütern** expedirt:

am 1. April	**Oder,**	Capitän Peters.
am 15. April	**Nordamerika,**	Capitän Ehlers.
am 1. Mai	**Elbe,**	Capitän Heydtmann.

Nähere Nachricht über Passage und Fracht ertheilt **das Allgem. Ausw.-Bureau** in **Rudolstadt.**

[2] Im Laufe des Monats April

Front page of *Der deutsche Auswanderer*, including advertisements for emigrant ships and de Haas's book, *Nordamerika* (March 12, 1853).

such as Richter's was that the information they contain becomes outdated; for instance, the German Union in New York City soon could have moved from 95 Greenwich Street to another location,[227] land is taken and no longer available, and advice is subject to changing conditions. The inherent flexibility of the commissioner of emigration, whose information was periodically brought up to date, was an advantage that was hard to beat. Neither does Richter alert the emigrant to the attendant problems and dangers during the emigrant's journey (he touches on the routes and expenses of travel but leaves it at that [13–14]), nor, despite his presentation of statistical data and other information on the state, does he provide specific hints where within the state emigrants might consider settling. His is a general text only. Its greatest value lies in its map, its generalized information, and its inclusion of the complete state constitution in the emigrant's native language. Without additional information, especially on the perils of traveling through the port of New York, the reader and emigrant would have been left dangerously exposed to all sorts of exploitation along the way.

Skizzen einer Reise durch Nordamerika und Westindien by Alexander Ziegler

Dr. Ziegler, who spent over a year crisscrossing the United States and the island of Cuba, must have been supplied with considerable means and influence, for not only did he travel first-class where possible but he also had access to most public institutions (courts, state houses, schools, asylums, prisons, water works, factories, etc.) and dignitaries that shaped American public life in 1847, including President Polk.[228] Once arrived in Wisconsin, he underscores the great importance of this state for the German emigrant and reiterates his ardent wish to provide useful information as he embarks on its description (I, 200–201). He begins with a detailed account of the growth and present situation of Milwaukee, a city without equal in the Union when it comes to its rapid growth in the twelve years since its founding (by Germans, as he claims [I, 206]). Among all places away from home, he exclaims, Milwaukee would be the one where he could imagine starting a new life (I, 201–208). Ziegler continues by providing statistical figures on the city's exports and imports, as

227. The same address is also cited by de Haas (II, 5).

228. .., *mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des deutschen Elements der Auswanderung und der landwirtschaftlichen Verhältnisse in dem neuen Staate Wisconsin.* (Sketches of a trip through North America and the West Indies, with special focus on the German emigration and agricultural conditions in the new State of Wisconsin). An English translation of Ziegler's book in manuscript form—without name of translator nor date—is available at the Milwaukee Public Library as well as the archives of the Milwaukee County Historical Society.

well as on its ship traffic (I, 204–205). Later, he speculates which industries in Milwaukee would be most promising, namely beer breweries (of which he witnesses small beginnings), liquor distilleries, oil mills, lead smelters, copper hammers, saw mills, and, generally, processing plants for Wisconsin's wealth in raw materials (I, 304–306).

In providing an overview over the history of the territory, soon to become the thirtieth state of the Union, Ziegler spends some time on the question of the Indians, concluding that most of them have moved or been removed to the west of the Mississippi. In a bittersweet note, repeated elsewhere in his text, he reflects on the fate of the Native Americans who have given up their proud culture in favor of their addiction to whisky, but criticizes them in the same breath as poor custodians of the land who must rightfully yield it to those who know better to exploit it through agriculture, logging, and mining. The author himself admits that this view has replaced his former perspective of the Indian as the noble savage (I, 241–244).

In accounting for just about every geological formation present in Wisconsin, Ziegler betrays profound expertise as a natural scientist who must have gone to considerable length in order to acquaint himself intimately with the different localities in the state. Even if he borrowed from Lapham for this purpose, his German descriptions, including expert translations for even the rarest of minerals, show thorough familiarity with the subject. Likewise, when it comes to the fauna and vegetation of the Midwest, Ziegler appears to be remarkably well informed, all the way to the botanical names of most plants (I, 248–251).

In a comment on his personal impressions of witnessing German families landing in Milwaukee, Ziegler bemoans the fact that most emigrants, rather than fulfilling their dream of buying land and raising a farm immediately after arrival, have been squeezed dry at every turn of their arduous voyage, with nothing left at the port of their destination but their bare hands to build a new life (I, 281). He divides the German emigrants to the United States into four classes: (1) those with capital who are free to speculate with land purchases and let others work for them (however, they should be conversant in English in order to succeed in their transactions) ; (2) those who occupied white-collar positions in the homeland but who now are willing to take to the plow (Ziegler takes particular pity on these, as, in his view, their ignorance about the muscle work required to wrest a farm from the wilderness only leads to miserable failure); (3) those who used to be farmers back home and can apply much of their experience in the new land (these, in Ziegler's eyes, will end up the

happiest settlers of all); and (4) those with no means to begin with, such as laborers, who are forced to seek employment at low pay, eventually saving up enough to lease or buy their own farm or business. He also divides American settlers from the East Coast along similar lines (I, 282–285).

From Milwaukee, Ziegler travels southwest through the counties of Walworth, Rock, Green, and Iowa, to visit the lead mining district. On the way, he observes the farming techniques, both in the woods and in the prairie openings. Again, his expert description of corn planting, including its history, show an agricultural background.[229] Concerning the difficulties involved in cultivating formerly wild land, be it woods or prairie, he leaves no doubt with the reader that only the physically fittest are able to undertake the task, but that the soil, once freed from trees, rewards the farmer with many years of fine crops with no need to fertilize. Here, too, Ziegler seems to weigh the advantages of bringing civilization to the wilderness against the pitiful sight of bare tree stumps and branchless, dying trunks, of smokefilled, brown air from burning brush, of "ugly," zigzagging rail fences (II, 19-20).

Only in describing the surveying practices in the West, Ziegler misleads the reader by assigning 6 instead of 36 square miles to a township, and dividing a square mile, rather than a township, into 36 sections (I, 286). But he accurately presents the procedure of buying land from the federal government at $1.25 per acre (I, 288–289; 295–297).

The following statement aptly summarizes Ziegler's advice to prospective emigrants and underscores, as it were, his noble motives as a writer:

> Es ist unverantwortliches Unrecht, unseren gedrückten, unwissenden Mann dadurch zur Auswanderung zu verleiten, daß man ihm lockende, vielverheißende Versprechungen macht, die nie in Erfüllung gehen können. Er wird, was er zu Hause hatte, Arbeit und Anstrengung vollauf finden, allerdings aber auch etwas, was ihm seine Heimath nicht gewährt, eine freie, selbständige Stellung und den unverkümmerten Genuß dessen, was er erarbeitete und erntete.[230]

At the same time, he criticizes the German state governments for their inadequate support in organizing and regulating emigration from their lands.

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229. In a footnote, Ziegler alludes to other publications of his, regarding his observations in the United States, in German agricultural periodicals (I, 281).

230. I, 289–290. (It is irresponsible fraud to seduce our oppressed, ignorant [German] man into emigrating with tempting promises of wealth and happiness that can never be fulfilled. He will find what he already faced at home: plenty of strenuous work. But he also will enjoy

He hopes that the constitutional congress in Frankfurt, then being demanded by the German people, would address this problem (I, 291–292).

Judging from his exhaustive descriptions of almost every facet of the United States—political, social, economic, and cultural—Ziegler must have been a highly educated man of multiple interests. His elaborate, sometimes flowery, writing style and almost scientific presentation of certain aspects of the country, such as the different codes of behavior imposed in a number of prisons he had visited, the comparative cost of laying railroad track in Germany and the United States, the technical design of New York's water aqueduct, or the minute description of the average American's attire must, however, been daunting to the emigrant of limited education. Only Ziegler's practical advice on land buying or corn planting would have piqued the curiosity of the average emigrant, but not before working his way through hundreds of pages of travel descriptions. This is why we believe that Ziegler's two volumes enjoyed little attention among most would-be emigrants. Still, to more learned emigrants, his detailed presentation of Milwaukee, his insightful description of the federal and state/territorial governments, including pay for government officials, his characterization of the main parties, and the voting system for each level, must have been of great interest.

To both the contemporary and the modern reader, though, Ziegler's most eloquent illustrations of this country's natural and man-made features, including, for instance, the Niagara Falls and the city of New York, must be or have been intriguing, to say the least. His is no doubt one of the most picturesque verbal depictions of the United States, in general, and Wisconsin, in particular.[231]

Briefe aus Wisconsin in Nord-Amerika by Freimund Goldmann

An intrepid adventurer who ended up in Wisconsin's lead mining district, Goldmann wrote letters home to his father that were published for the benefit of emigrants to the United States.[232] His parents reluctantly allowed him to emigrate and, as his father comments in an introduction to the text, "Old Europe has nothing to offer. The New World has everything to give" (1).

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something that his homeland denies him: freedom and independence, and the carefree enjoyment of the fruits of his labor.)

231. For a contemporaneous book review on Ziegler, see pp. 131–132 below.

232. *Als anschauliches Bild einer neuen Ansiedlung für Auswanderer, herausgegeben von G. Goldmann.* Letters from Wisconsin. A vivid illustration of a new settlement for emigrants, edited by G. G.

Goldmann's letters begin with the journey across the Atlantic with precise description of all aspects of the voyage, down to the meals eaten, the cabins offered (to those of sufficient means to avoid steerage), and the cost of the trip. From a reading of these letters, the emigrant would come away with an appreciation for the nature of the ocean voyage. Goldmann next briefly describes his interlude in New York City (where the emigrant would be well advised to "watch out all the time for crooks and shady characters" [7]) and then engages in an account of the trip from the seacoast to Milwaukee. Like his description of the sea voyage, it is presented in great detail, together with alarm at the cost of travel and the danger of being "swindled" (9).

After mentioning Milwaukee he sets out on his journey of discovery, walking westward through southern Wisconsin. Similar to Dames's and Ziegler's descriptions, Goldmann's account reads like a travelog, giving a picture of the scenery and the people he encountered. The author ended up in the vicinity of Mineral Point, southwest of Madison, where he decided to stay. From this point on, his letters provide a narrative of his life on the frontier, including a detailed description of a house being built and of his daily routine. He takes the time to mention his American neighbors, commenting on their characters and mannerisms.

At one point Goldmann provides advice to the prospective emigrant, recommending that he be aware of lurking dangers and that he prepare in advance for both the journey and settling down in the new land. He speaks to the planting of crops and how one copes with life and the expenses incurred, together with the earnings realized by one's farming efforts. In recommending emigration, he goes so far as to advise his followers also to settle in Wisconsin, noting its advantages over other developing areas in the United States (24).

Goldmann's is an engaging account, not professionally edited for a prospective readership but, as is alluded to by his father, straightforward and honest, containing folk wisdom and observations that might assist fellow emigrants in easing the transition from the Old World to the New. A person thinking about emigrating might consider this to be a starting point in his reading, providing food for thought about the nature of the journey and expectations to develop about the place of settlement. It would have been of greatest value to the farmer on the frontier. Even at that, its statistical information would soon have become dated. Once again, the currency of advice and information available through the commissioner's office would have been of greater benefit, not to mention his ability to provide up-to-date information on land purchases.

Friendly Adviser for All Who Would Emigrate to America and Particularly Wisconsin by Christian Traugott Ficker

This book, originally published in Leipzig in 1853, has been translated into English by Joseph Schafer of the Wisconsin State Historical Society. It is a rather involved autobiographical sketch that sets forth in great detail the experience of an emigrant of this time period, including the trials and tribulations of the voyage from Europe to New York City. In contrast to the sources previously described, Ficker does relate advice as to what the emigrant was to expect in New York and from whom to seek advice and counsel there,[233] before he embarks on a thorough description of his passage from New York to Wisconsin where he settled in Mequon (Ozaukee, later Washington County).

Perhaps speaking from experience, Ficker comments on the lines of trade that were in demand in the new home for farmers, laborers, tradesmen, and professionals, alerting the emigrant that, at least in the beginning, he might not be able to practice the trade or profession he had learned. He also reminds the reader, somewhat obliquely, that it would be of value for the emigrant to acquaint himself with American cusstoms.

An account follows of starting up a farm, including the building of a house and barn in Mequon (231–233). Moving from the specific to the general, Ficker provides a geographical sketch of the state, a description of its political structure, the availability of churches, schools, and social organizations and societies, and then concludes with his own appraisal of what kind of person should consider emigrating. In this regard, Ficker recommends that those who are capable of caring for themselves might consider the prospect, together with those who live under political or religious oppression (471–472).

In its combination of detailed description, some information and advice, Ficker's work is more akin to the book written by de Haas than any of the other sources mentioned here, although his implicit recommendations for settling in Wisconsin are more general in nature than de Haas's specific invitation to Calumet County. An emigrant who had read Ficker's advice and, heeding it, had turned to the Wisconsin Office of Emigration in New York City, would have been served rather well indeed, given the complimentary nature of the book and the commissioner's services.

233. In this respect it is of interest that Ficker recommends to those readers interested in Wisconsin to turn to the "responsible agent from Wisconsin (this year he is Mr. H. Haertel)" (225). At a minimum this demonstrates a perception on the part of the author that his book is only a general guide, but the reference also establishes a tie betwen Ficker's reportorial account of the emigration experience and the up-to-date factual advice available through official channels that he felt obviously could be trusted.

Contemporaneous Newspaper Articles

At a time when journalism was not yet imbued with the mantra of separating factual reporting from editorial comment, articles appearing in European and American newspapers of the 1840 and 1850s helped promote emigration. Generally widely read,[234] these might, from a modern standpoint, be regarded as "infomercials." They were usually written and submitted by emigrants themselves who made use of a paper's regional circulation to "spread the word" about emigration. Editors, who did not depend on wire services for obtaining news to print and to reserve space for them, normally welcomed such contributions. Since the articles—sometimes printed serially over a number of subsequent issues—were signed with the contributor's name, the reader was aware of their potentially subjective nature and valued them as such.

The following examples derive from two weekly publications, one aimed at the general public, the other at emigrants. They are typical of literally thousands of contributions on emigration not only to the United States but to Latin America and Australia, as well. Just as immigration became a ubiquitous staple in the public discourse of nineteenth century United States, emigration had become a topic of daily conversation among a majority of Germans who had read the latest news. Indeed, we submit that the widely available and eagerly read press of Europe in the nineteenth century contributed significantly to the groundswell that led to one of the greatest migrations in history.

Wilhelm Ostenfeldt in the *Itzehoer Wochenblatt*

In a series of two articles that appeared in the *Itzehoer Wochenblatt* (of the same town in Holstein) in the autumn of 1847, one Wilhelm Ostenfeldt encouraged readers to join the wave of emigrants departing the old country for the United States. Ostenfeldt was a native of Kiel who had emigrated to the United States a few years earlier and settled in the vicinity of Calumet, de Haas's new home. He became the representative of a wealthy entrepreneur, Benjamin Field of Beloit, Wisconsin, who had purchased forested lands to the east of Calumet and sought to sell them, at a profit, to pioneering farmers. Ostenfeldt returned to the land of his birth in 1847 to drum up interest in the lands owned by his principal. As a result, Ostenfeldt assembled a large group

234. Throughout the nineteenth century—and earlier—daily and weekly newspapers, for general audiences or for specific interest groups, constituted the most important vehicle for disseminating news. Almost every household among the reading public subscribed to one or more papers, not only in Europe but also in the United States (see, e.g., Clarence Brigham, *History and Bibliography of American Newspapers*).

of Holsteiners, individuals and families, who would form the nucleus of the community of New Holstein in Wisconsin.[235]

In his articles, Ostenfeldt attempted to demonstrate the attractiveness of emigration, whether for reasons of political freedom, the availability of land or for other purposes. After setting the stage in this fashion he asks the question of his readers: To which state should the emigrant wishing to purchase land journey? He tells them that he will answer this question for them and proceeds to compare briefly a number of prominent destinations for emigrants of this time period, Texas, Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin, reserving, as is to be expected, his highest praise for the latter. He then offers his reasons for this choice: the low price of available land, the productiveness of the soil, the general state of health of its inhabitants, and its accessibility from the seacoast. He recommends that the reader avail himself of the services of particular booking agents and travel from Hamburg to New York by sail or steamship. Practical advice about costs and routes of travel to the interior of the country is also provided. Ostenfeldt does not specifically mention his intent to sell land but does make himself available to answer questions that might be posed to him by the readers. Clearly, Ostenfeldt's articles are teasers that are none too different from promotional literature mailed to modern households, promising the bliss of vacationing or retiring inexpensively on one's own piece of property in the region of one's dreams. They offer just enough information to whet the reader's appetite and to express the author's personal opinion, presumably based on experience, as to how to undertake the emigration process and where to emigrate. Ostenfeldt is less site-specific than a number of the other comparable sources and seems to raise more questions than he answers. Admittedly, being first and foremost a salesman, that must have been his objective, for it would not have been through the reading of his articles that persons would have simply traveled somewhere to Wisconsin in order to buy land (unlike through de Haas's very detailed description of Calumet). Only through subsequent personal contacts with Ostenfeldt would the reader have been encouraged to join in the settlement of a wilderness territory in far-off Wisconsin, to be purchased in parcels from Ostenfeldt's employer.

The services available through the commissioner's office were obviously more complete and probably more concise than what an agent like Ostenfeldt had to offer. For one thing, his ulterior motive was to sell land, and he certainly was not going to steer potential customers elsewhere, even, arguably, if it had been in their best interest to do so. Secondly, Ostenfeldt exhibits a rather

235. Cf. Thiel.

general, if not superficial, knowledge of the state of Wisconsin, his primary attention being reserved for the specific land area that he was empowered to sell. Thirdly, his major thrust was not selling his product through these articles but dissuading their readers from going elsewhere or buying other land. (In the latter respect, he discourages his readers from purchasing lands already titled in a previous settler's name, for these were times when liens and encumbrances unknown to the unsuspecting purchaser were common.) The commissioner, on the other hand, would have been able to provide detailed, unbiased information on the state of Wisconsin, its resources and available lands, without pressuring the emigrant into making a purchase. Apart from promoting Wisconsin in general as a desirable state for resettlement, his approach would by and large have been neutral relative to the need for advice and the interests of the emigrant.

Luckily for those who took him up on his offer, Ostenfeldt turned out to be an honest broker who went far beyond his commercial interests by accompanying the emigrants on their journey—thus protecting them from countless inconveniences and exploitations—and by helping them find their land and found the settlement of New Holstein.[236]

The Emigrant Press

In the mid-nineteenth century, specialized newspapers were aimed exclusively at the prospective German emigrant. Apart from providing editorial content, they served as a vehicle for advertising booking agencies, passages on particular ships, rail lines, places of lodging, emigrant guidebooks, and more. Topical articles were devoted to places where one could relocate (including other countries and continents besides the United States), travel descriptions, statistical information on the number of emigrants leaving for America or other destinations, and the reprinting of legal regulations, both in German lands and abroad. Van Steenwijk, Haertel, and Horn must have been keenly aware of the importance of these publications, since they repeatedly advertised the services of the Wisconsin commissioner of emigration in their pages. At least in one of these magazines, Haertel's 1853 annual report to the governor was reprinted in its entirety.[237] Furthermore, they often reprinted letters from emigrants and discussed recently published books on emigration, among them de Haas's as we have seen.[238] One of these weekly newspapers was the *Allgemeine Auswanderungs-Zeitung*, published in Rudolstadt,[239] another *Der deutsche*

236. See op. cit.

237. See note 188.

Auswanderer, [240] published in Frankfurt/Main, in the grand duchy of Hesse. (Located east of the Rhine, and straddling the Main River, it was a strategic location for many emigrants from the southern and southwestern German states.) Several letters printed in this newspaper in 1848, one in the form of an extended "letter" from an immigrant to Wisconsin, are representative of the type of information about the state made available through this and similar sources. These periodicals were widely available. For instance, in 1854 the *Allgemeine Auswanderungs-Zeitung* could be ordered through every post office (in Bremen and Hamburg through those mail services run by the widely established Thurn & Taxis franchise) or any bookseller. Outside of the German states, readers were advised to turn to book merchants in Rotterdam, Paris ("11 rue de Lille"), Le Havre, New York, and St. Louis to order subscriptions and to place ads.[241]

What has been said about newspapers of that period in general[242] is at least as true if not more so, for these specialized periodicals. More often than not, it must have been challenging for the reader to separate fact from fiction, that is, objective information from business promotion, even in the editorial sections. Bretting states that there was hardly an editor of such emigrant weeklies who did not in one way or another have connections with shipping agencies or ticket brokers, a fact that seemed to color many ostensibly objective reports. Especially the frequently appearing warnings about supposedly fraudulent agencies, rather than being well-meant advice for the protection of the ignorant emigrant, often served as disguised jabs against competitors.[243] While the emigrant press had become without question an extremely important component of the information network that in the mid-19th century catered to an ever increasing segment of the German population, its proclaimed role of providing selfless assistance through objective reporting was compromised, to say the least. Still, for lack

238. See, e.g., note 208.

239. In the Saxon principality of Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt, today part of Thuringia. (General newspaper for emigration). Subtitle in 1848: *Organ für Kunde aus deutschen Ansiedlungen, für Rath und That zu Gunsten der fortziehenden Brüder, sowie für Öffentlichkeit in Auswanderungssachen überhaupt. Mit Karten, Plänen und Illustrationen, sowie mit einem Intelligenzblatte für Bekanntmachungen von Behörden und Privaten* (periodical for news from German settlements, for advice and help for emigrating brothers, as well as for publicity in matters regarding emigration in general.) Subtitle in 1854: *Ein Bote zwischen der alten und der neuen Welt* (messenger between the old and the new world).

240. The German emigrant.

241. See note 203.

242. See p. 124 above.

243. Bretting/Bickelmann 75–78.

of anything better, the Office of Commissioner of Emigration depended on papers like the *Allgemeine Auswanderungs-Zeitung* for spreading the official word about Wisconsin throughout the German states.

The following four examples illustrate the different degrees of "objectivity" maintained by their authors, wittingly or not. If the editors were faced with a need to be selective, because they may not have been able to accommodate each and every submission in their pages, they would have been hard-put to make informed decisions: Almost none of them, like their business partners, the German agents, had ever been in the United States.[244]

Amerika: Das Gebiet Wisconsin und die deutsche Einwanderung dahin by Carl Tuckermann

In his report,[245] Tuckermann emphasizes that for several years Wisconsin has been the most significant destination for German emigrants in the United States. Known for its fertile soils, healthy climate and abundant resources, Wisconsin has become well known among Germans as a place to settle. He names the counties where much land has already been claimed by settlers (Milwaukee, Washington, Racine, Kenosha, Iowa, and Grant) and generally describes the landscape, dividing it into prairies to the west of Milwaukee, and the deep forest to its north and along Lake Michigan. Not dissimilar from Lathrop's treatise of 1853,[246] Tuckermann's article covers a lot of ground, providing sketchy details on the state's history, climate, geography, agricultural potential, and its location convenient for marketing agricultural products (noting the connection via the Great Lakes to eastern markets, soon to be supplemented, as he—like others of his time—believed, by a canal in Illinois to the Mississippi River, giving Wisconsin farmers access to southern markets, as well). He also praises the virtues of Wisconsin's constitution and the ability of foreigners to vote after one year of residency. Although he promotes the state in general, Tuckermann places special emphasis on Sheboygan County and, to a lesser extent, on its neighbors, Fond du Lac, Calumet, and Manitowoc Counties, each of which was then heavily forested and largely unpopulated. In this context, he observes that ample government land was still available at $1.25 per acre or $800 per square mile. He concludes by dissuading the reader from considering immigration to Texas for the heat is oppressive and the crops are foreign to Germans (as opposed to those that can be raised in Wisconsin).

244. Bretting in Bretting/Bickelmann 78–79.

245. *America: The region of Wisconsin and its German immigration* (Jan. 22, 1848).

246. See pp. 42–45 above.

Moreover, the laborer will find himself competing against cheap slave labor and there are Indian problems, not to mention the fact that the state is filled with murderers, robbers, and outcasts from the rest of the United States.[247]

Tuckermann's article certainly was of the type that would have triggered interest in a reader even casually thinking about heading for Wisconsin. It is short on details and long on promotion, although promotion of a relatively neutral nature, since Tuckermann does not appear to represent the interests of a particular enterprise, nor is he attempting to secure settlers for a particular community. Themes common to many of the books, pamphlets, articles and letters of the time devoted to Wisconsin run through Tuckermann's exposé: Wisconsin is a healthy place, a land not unlike Germany where one may farm in the same manner as back home. Wisconsin has prospects of a great future as an agricultural district and, although a fair amount of land has already been taken in the vicinity of Milwaukee, much remains to be claimed to its north and west at low prices. The reader also may detect the subtle yet obvious attempt to encourage immigration to a state where there already is a sizable German community. Thus, Tuckermann's article would have planted the seed, giving the German emigrant reason to think more seriously about Wisconsin, but no more.

Amerikanische Briefe. Auszüge aus Auswandererbriefen. Empfehlung von Wisconsin

The author, L. W. Ranis, begins his letter to Germany[248] by noting that he was writing it from 7,000 miles away at the edge of civilization. He waxes optimistic about the opportunities for success in Wisconsin, observing that the farmer could even plant crops of wheat or corn in the same spot, year after year, still obtaining great yields. He also expresses amazement at the prairie where the grasses are so tall they conceal the largest of men. The climate, he avers,

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247. This advice was timely, as Texas appeared to have a draw on Germans at the time. (See, e.g., the warning printed in the *Allgemeine Auswanderungs-Zeitung* of June 19, 1848, where a poetic eulogy of the "paradise" of Texas is contrasted with the tragic fate of the Adelsverein in New Braunfels). See also Ziegler I, 211–213.

248. Full title: *Amerikanische Briefe. Auszüge aus Auswandererbriefen. Empfehlung von Wisconsin. Cleveland. Dr. Meyer. Reise nach Watertown. Yankees entfernt. Beschreibung des Landes. Senator Meyer. Mr. Breket. Fieber und Ruhr. Steigen der Preise des Bodens. Deutsche und amerikanische Frauen. Urbarmachung. Das Clima und die Natur. Deutsche in der Gegend von Watertown. Dienstboten.* [American letters. Excerpts from emigrant letters. Recommendation of Wisconsin. Cleveland. Dr. Meyer. Trip to Watertown. Removal of Yankees. Description of the land. Senator Meyer. Mr. Breket. Fever and dysentery. Rise

may be compared to that of Sicily. According to him, there are "alligators," two shoes in length, in the Rock River near Watertown that one must be careful to avoid. (He may have meant snapping turtles.)

Confronted with this type of enthusiasm and sensationalism, the modern, if not contemporary, reader must ponder the question whether Ranis was simply naive about his new home or wanted to gloss over any shortcomings in order to impress. And this is but one example of many letters that were far too short and scattered in their approach to the subject matter to have been of significant value to the emigrant other than the fact that a fellow German citizen had been there before him and found Wisconsin an attractive place to settle in. The frequency and apparent sincerity of this type of communication, however, likely did not fail to have their effect on readers who did not know where to go in the new land but looked with eagerness to reports from people like themselves. Although some stories might more aptly be called tall tales, it can well be imagined that some desperate Germans, for want of better, more objective information, may have clung to such letters, if only to nurse their dream of a new life that would lift them out of their misery back home. There can be no doubt that any reader who relied solely on such form of communication would be easy prey to the dangers and deprivations that lurked in the path.

Reise von New York nach Calumet (Wisconsin)

In this rather lengthy article,[249] published anonymously, a thorough description is given of the trip from New York to Wisconsin. Before embarking on the actual account, the author promotes the state as the main focus of German immigration to the United States and provides a list of more specific sources of information on Wisconsin.

The travel description contains such information as the cost for off-loading luggage in various places and the amount of time needed for respective portions of the trip (e.g., a half day from New York to Albany, two days by train, or twelve days by canal boat, from Albany to Buffalo, and four to six days on the Great Lakes to Wisconsin). The cost of traveling these distances is discussed, as well as the need for steerage passengers to buy supplies for the journey across the Lakes.

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of prices for land. German and American women. Putting land into production. Climate and nature. Germans in the Watertown area. Servants.] Watertown, Wisconsin, July 23, 1847 (published March 18, 1848 in *Der deutsche Auswanderer).*

249. Trip from New York to Calumet (July 1, 1848).

Once in Milwaukee, the author recommends a number of accommodations and the types of provisions, supplies, and material that one should purchase before setting out for the interior where these items would be more expensive. (In this respect, he lists as indispensable, among other things, a yoke of oxen, and a wagon, a hay rake, several barrels, chairs and a table, rice and dried apples, coffee, sugar and salt, and a stove.)

Then the reader may follow the author on a one-day journey by coach from Milwaukee to Fond du Lac followed by a day-long trip on foot to Calumet. He notes in detail the countryside through which he passes, including the native prairies and woods and the crops in the fields of those farms that had already been carved out of the wilderness. He also speaks of the port of Sheboygan and observes that from Milwaukee to Sheboygan it takes but eight hours by boat while by ox and wagon it is an arduous four to five day journey.

This article could only be of benefit to the emigrant who had already decided on Wisconsin as a new home (and, in particular, in the Calumet area, which by then was already known to readers of de Haas, Ostenfeldt, or Tuckermann), because it supplies specific advice on a given route and a given place to settle. Contrary to the simplifications or exaggerations of Ranis or similar letter writers, the reader of this sober account (as those of Tuckermann or Ostenfeldt) likely would have sought more information from sources such as the Wisconsin commissioner of emigration, on the more general features of the state, and on the latest developments in regard to land availability and travel advice.

Das deutsche Element in Milwaukee im Staate Wisconsin

This newspaper review, one in a series of pieces on recently published literature on travel and emigration,[250] may serve as an example of the numerous book reviews that appeared in periodicals like *Der deutsche Auswanderer*. It discusses the book by Alexander Ziegler, summarized earlier, but only the portion pertaining to the city of Milwaukee. In noting the prevalence of the city's German traits, he quotes Ziegler's emphatic assertion, "Deutsche Sprache, deutsche Sitten und Gebräuche, sowie deutscher Einfluss auf die

250. The German Element in Milwaukee in the State of Wisconsin (Dec. 9, 1848). Full title: *Interessante Mittheilungen und Auszüge aus der Literatur der Auswanderung und Reisen—Das deutsche Element in Milwaukee im Staate Wisconsin (Aus Alexander Zieglers Skizzen einer Reise durch Nordamerika und Westindien. Erster Theil*. S. 205) [Interesting news and excerpts from the emigration and travel literature—The German Element in Milwaukee in the State of Wisconsin (from sketches by Alexander Ziegler from a trip through North America and the West Indies. Part one)].

politischen Verhältnisse sind daher hier vorherrschend."[251] After citing Ziegler's list of Milwaukee's German businesses, casinos, singing groups, schools, book publishers, and newspapers, the reviewer reiterates the author's observation that Germans from all walks of life—professionals and day laborers alike—will find work here.[252] The reviewer assigns particular importance to Ziegler's observation that American businessmen in Milwaukee must learn the German language or risk losing the trade of the large German population. The newspaper reviewer recommends this book to the reader as a true travelog, in this case focused on the virtues of resettlement in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

While it is difficult to gather from a review such as this the true value of the information offered in the book itself (except from the biased perspective of the reviewer who, for his part, is speculating on the needs of his emigrant readership), it does show that there was a very active press at this time, printing all sorts of accounts by those who successfully crossed the ocean and one-third of the North American continent, established a new home, and still were left with enough time and energy to write about the experience. It was left up to the reader to separate the wheat from the chaff, to view letters by emigrants as individual vignettes that could not be relied on exclusively. Then again, announcements, book reviews, and even advertisements had their place in the prospective emigrant's arduous education process. In that sense, newspapers could be seen as signposts pointing to where more information could be had.

By summarizing and evaluating a number of privately published guides and travelogs aimed at the prospective emigrant to Wisconsin, we have attempted to give the modern reader a fair impression of the information that was available in the German lands around 1850. While some authors apparently were more interested in favorable sales, at the expense of accuracy and balance, most seemed to have had the reader's interest at heart by providing a thorough, evenhanded, and eloquent account of their personal experiences. A few authors even went further than that by quoting statistics, translating official documents, such as excerpts of the Wisconsin state constitution, inserting maps and conversion tables for currencies and measurements.

Still, from the date of publication, time is working against the author. Months, even years may elapse before the prospective emigrant has the opportunity to read the book. More time will pass before he will actually be able to compare the information given in the book to what he sees with

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251. German language, German traditions and customs as well as German influence on the political life are predominant here. (Ziegler I, 207).

252. Ziegler ibid.

his own eyes. Paradoxically, one is reminded of our modern electronic age, where the novelty of today is obsolete tomorrow. In a way, the settling of the American West presented to the contemporaneous chronicler a constantly moving target, making it very difficult indeed to let the prospective settler benefit from the latest available publication on the area of his choice. Even in the case of personal letters (where and when they played a significant role in contributing to the stream of emigrants), information provided by the writer regarding availability of land and employment or independent jobs was taken at face value at the peril of the reader, depending on how long ago the letter was written.

By their ability to reach the German emigrant at the critical time just before or during their voyage with pamphlets and personal advice, the commissioners of emigration, at least theoretically, had the upper hand. They not only could offer the latest information regarding settlement and passage, they also were the only ones to present a broad picture of the entire state without bias for one or the other locality. To warrant their information as authoritative and accurate, they possessed the state government's legitimacy, a factor that cannot be underestimated in view of the almost overwhelming amount of fraud and charlatanry that besieged the traveler. The emphasis, however, must lie on "theoretically" because, as we have seen, the commissioners' reach was severely limited for logistical reasons when it came to staffing, and political reasons where funding was concerned.

On the other hand, many an emigrant's mind was no doubt strongly impressed and shaped by the emigrant literature discussed in this chapter. Whether he had bought a book new from the bookseller or borrowed it from a lending library or a friend, the images conjured up in his head would accompany him as long as they were not replaced by the reader's own experience, and by that time it may have been tragically late. How many would-be settlers possibly were misled by arriving in the region of their choice only to find that the good and cheap land touted by the author of a coveted travel guide had been sold long ago and that the only recourse would be to go further west cannot be ascertained. In the settler's interest, we may assume that dated information gathered from a travel guide was corrected during his voyage along the way, as he came in contact with other emigrants or even the Wisconsin commissioner of emigration in New York. In brief, no matter how fresh the information at such times of rapid expansion, an element of surprise or disappointment could never be ruled out entirely.

Conclusion

How Effective Was the Wisconsin Office of Commissioner of Emigration?

It has been observed that among all ethnic groups emigrating to Wisconsin, Germans represented the largest contingent, in Haertel's estimate of 1853 four times as numerous as the next largest group, the Irish. We also remember that Van Steenwijk claimed that of 30,000 pamphlets printed during his year in office, 20,000 were in German, and that Haertel chose to send fully half of his 30,000 pamphlets to Europe. Finally, we may recall that Frederick Horn believed one-fourth of all German emigrants arriving in New York to be headed for Wisconsin.[253] In other words, Wisconsin's commissioners of emigration made no mistake about the fact that the overwhelming majority of foreigners pouring into Wisconsin around the middle of the nineteenth century was of German origin. This observation is borne out by the federal census records of both 1850 and 1860. While the number of pamphlets printed and disseminated, in absolute terms, was no match for the masses of people that crossed the Atlantic, the priority given to a German readership confirms the commissioners' understanding of the ethnic proportions within the flood of emigrants.

Under the circumstances it is no surprise that the German version of the pamphlet, deemed by the commissioners to play such an important role in their efforts to reach out to the emigrants, was carefully designed, as we have seen in at least one example. Its twofold purpose was to provide an objective overview of the state and its resources while at the same time promoting it as a place of abundant opportunity. Since Wisconsin had already experienced a large German influx, especially after 1848, and since the current social and political situation in Europe was anything but apt to reduce the exodus of Germans, the importance of the pamphlet, even with its necessarily limited circulation, should not be underestimated.

Likewise, we have seen by the cited examples of private publications and periodical articles that the travel guide industry was flourishing in the mid-nineteenth century. At a time when German emigration to the U. S. had reached its first peak, numerous printed sources of advice and information were directed

253. See pp. 40–41 above.

at those who were considering the adventure of starting a new life overseas. While each private publication may have been valuable in one or several aspects (preparation, sea voyage, arrival in New York, passage across the United States, land taking, farm raising, trades, etc.), its scope was necessarily limited. Where they did excel was in the area of personal travel experience, especially the ship voyage for which the commissioner had to rely on second-hand accounts. However, whereas the authors frequently admonished their readers to beware of criminal elements, only the commissioners had an overview of the vast range of fraudulent behavior vis-à-vis the emigrants. Most of all, though, none of the German authors arguably knew Wisconsin as intimately as Lathrop or Lapham did. (It is telling that at least one of the more thorough writers, Wettstein, must have borrowed extensively from the latter.) By drawing on one or both of these eminent pioneers, the commissioners provided an invaluable service to those who had the opportunity to read the office's pamphlet describing the state or even meet the commissioner in person.

Ideally, of course, the curious German emigrant considering Wisconsin would have consulted both a number of private sources to gain a feel for the actual voyage and the official publications by the commissioner to gain an understanding of the state's natural and economic resources. The available data (concerning popularity and availability of private publications, numbers and places of circulation for the commissioner's pamphlet, as well as references to both kinds of information in German emigration weeklies) suggest that many emigrants did just that. Their curiosity must have been fed by individual accounts acquired already in Europe and by the official publication from the Wisconsin Office of Commissioner of Emigration, possibly obtained as late as on arrival in New York. Thus, by virtue of its pamphlet, printed in several languages, as well as the variety of its other services, the office undoubtedly contributed to the emigrant's success.

Although the commissioners' resources were extremely limited, it is therefore fair to say that they made the very best use of them. When one adds to the attempts to spread written advice about Wisconsin as widely as possible the numerous acts of personal assistance made available to Germans by the commissioner of emigration, both in their homelands and in New York City, the picture that emerges shows an active, concerned, and generous public agency that undertook great efforts to make a considerable difference, despite its underfunding and understaffing, and in face of a largely hostile political climate. One is even tempted to think that at least one commissioner himself may have underestimated the efficacy of his office when Haertel writes that

those who received the pamphlet in New York City often did not read it until they were enroute elsewhere in the United States, by which time it was too late.[254] How could he have known, and could not an emigrant eagerly awaiting some train or steamship inland but held back by an unscrupulous agent or innkeeper have found ten minutes to peruse the pamphlet's four pages?

Having considered all available sources on the Wisconsin Office of Commissioner of Emigration, and after studying a number of representative examples of literature that may have reached the German emigrant, directly or by word-of-mouth, at some point during his passage, let us now ponder the question raised at the beginning of this study: Did the Wisconsin Office of Commissioner of Emigration indeed offer much-needed assistance to emigrants, and if so, did the office, during the years of its existence, play a significant role in contributing to the rising tide of immigration to Wisconsin, especially from Germany?

To frame this question within its appropriate context, we briefly revisit the larger issues that surrounded Wisconsin's initiative for guiding emigrants to its shores. The legislative creation of the Office of the Commissioner of Emigration was born out of political expediency in recognition of an economic reality: In order for Wisconsin to grow—to realize its expected place in the vanguard among the existing and future states of the Union—it needed a population base large enough to exploit its many natural resources and locational advantages. Whether based on short-term business considerations[255] or on a long-term vision of prosperity for all, the result of this legislative act would be the same: As the population grew so would its economy, which would fuel needed internal improvements such as canals, highways, railroads, and schools, leading, in turn, to further growth and greater prosperity. A sizable increase in population would not only create an internal demand for the production of goods and services but generate farm products and manufactured goods for export to other states and countries. Seen in this light, Lathrop's vision that by 1872 Wisconsin would be among the leaders of the United States seemed not out of reach.

In the early 1850s, however, despite phenomenal growth during the first fifteen years of territory and then state, Wisconsin was still composed of two-thirds wilderness and one-third frontier. The nucleus of the early development of the state was for many years concentrated on the lead mining district in the southwest and the newly created farmlands that produced considerable yields

254. Cf. pp. 85–86 above.

255. See p. 11 above.

of wheat in the oak openings and prairies of the southeast. But settlements were still small and the pioneers thinly scattered across the countryside. In addition, there had already occurred a considerable drain on Wisconsin's population due to California's gold rush of 1849.[256] The state's population simply had not reached the critical size to sustain an economy and to support a system of government that would be strong enough to propel it into the future envisioned by Governor Dewey in his inaugural address of 1848.[257]

Both the public and private sectors realized this problem. They realized, too, that Yankees, New Englanders, and pioneers from other states in the northwest alone were not sufficient in numbers to buy platted townsite lots, develop water power sites, clear land for the cultivation of wheat, erect manufacturing plants, and build a transportation network. Moreover, they realized that the nascent state of Wisconsin happened to find itself literally "in the right place at the right time:" Europe's troubles (revolutions, war, economic reversals, crop failures, overpopulation, industrialization, religious dissent) sent hordes of fortune seekers to the American shores, and Wisconsin's unique situation as well as location, *once detected*, attracted great numbers, especially Germans, to its Lake Michigan shores. It was an almost ideal case of push and pull in tandem action. The amenities that had either grown scarce in the Old World or never existed—land, work, self-determination—almost miraculously offered themselves in abundance in the New. Finally, they realized it was not the "poor and huddled masses" that Wisconsin attracted but middle-class farmers, craftsmen, and professionals with property and money, ready to infuse the state with sorely needed labor and capital.

In all this, however, the key word remained, "once detected." It was therefore the primary task of the Office of Commissioner of Emigration to disseminate the information on Wisconsin's propitious situation in such a way that push and pull could share the same momentum, and link up to direct the flow of people and capital to where it was needed most. In this regard, the office's focus must indeed have been the emigrant, not so much the immigrant, because once a

256. The gold rush's lure also affected numerous Germans whose departure for the West Coast did not go unnoticed by the German press. The *Tägliches Wisconsin-Banner* reported on March 25, 1852, that twelve Germans had left Green Bay for California the previous Monday and that, likewise, several German "Goldschwärmer" had departed from Milwaukee, surely to be followed by more. For a more thorough discussion of how the California gold rush affected Wisconsin's population growth, see Current 71–73. "[B]y June 1850, when Wisconsin's population stood at a little over 300,000, nearly 50,000 had bypassed or left the state for the gold fields" (72). See also pp. 43–44 above.

257. See p. 1 above.

settler had become an immigrant there was little one could do to re-orient him. Hence, in its efforts to build the necessary system of dams, dikes, and chutes, as it were, in order to divert part of the emigrant stream to Wisconsin, before it would spill randomly over a continent only to end in trickles, the office had to be proactive. These dams, dikes, and chutes consisted of the commissioners' pamphlets and other printed information, their network of staff, agents, and contacts throughout Europe, and, as a last bastion before one lost sight of the emigrants for good, the commissioner's office in New York City.

Finally, before attempting to assess the office's cumulative impact, we might parenthetically ask which of the three commissioners was the most effective. Here, judging by the written evidence alone, the laurels would go to Herman Haertel. It was he who appears to have had the best contacts both in Europe and in New York. Through his previous professional activities, he also was intimately familiar with the city of Milwaukee, the main port of entry for the emigrants. Haertel seems to have been more concerned about the emigrants' safety and well-being than either his predecessor or successor. Moreover, most suggestions for improving the office's efficiency originated from Haertel.

All this, providing the written record is not misleading, should not be too surprising when we consider that Haertel had the advantage of building on Van Steenwijk's previous "rookie" experience, while still enjoying the *relative* safety of the office's existence. The various recommendations authored by the governor's select committee in 1853 were by far the strongest during the office's three-year lifespan. Building on favorable reports about the office's first sucessful year under Van Steenwijk, they not only reiterated the office's initial mission but also went further, demanding contacts, assistants, and branch offices.[258] One year later, the office's survival was hanging by a thread, and in only a few months, it became a casualty of changing political tides. Although the written record is scanty for 1854, Frederick Horn must without a doubt have felt that the days of the Wisconsin Office of Emigration were numbered. Did low morale, the growing suspicion of being a sitting duck, affect Horn's performance?

At the same time, we must remember that Haertel's tenure as commissioner of emigration coincided with a historic peak in German emigration to America. By 1855, in only one year, emigration from Europe to America fell by a whopping two-thirds. In the United States, a combination of growing nativist agitation resulting in stricter immigration regulations, an economic downturn marked by unemployment and rising food prices, as well as a violent cholera

258. See pp. 11–12 above.

outbreak in New York City in the winter of 1854, was felt first and foremost by the hapless emigrant. In the German states, a mix of discouraging news from America, conflicting treatment of emigrants by, among others, the Prussian administration and the German Hanseatic port cities involving false promises, and forced returns severely dampened the enthusiasm of many would-be emigrants.[259]

Considering these collateral effects on German emigration, including to Wisconsin, the question whether or not the office was successful in its mission may not be fully answered. Too many unknowns will probably never be brought to light: How many emigrants exactly had read the official literature distributed by the commissioner? How many of those had in fact heeded the advice to settle in Wisconsin? How many were induced by others who had read the office's literature? How many came to Wisconsin because they had read other literature, not the one put out by the commissioner of emigration? How many had contact with the agency already in Europe, how many only in New York? How many relied solely on the written word, compared to those who sought out the office in person? How many of those who did seek advice from the commissioner had already decided on Wisconsin but simply needed clarifications or updates; in other words, was part of the audience addressed by the commissioner the proverbial choir?

What we do have, however, is a historical decision by a governing body to influence a migratory movement for its own interests; another historical decision by the same—albeit politically realigned—governing body to stop the same manipulation only three years later; some numbers; a limited body of documentation; some secondary evidence pointing to the office's wide renown during its time; and the fact that Wisconsin still today boasts one in two citizens of German descent. We also can safely say that, among all institutions, agencies and people willing to guide the emigrant from Europe to Wisconsin—for whatever purpose—the Wisconsin Office of Commissioner of Emigration was singularly well situated, in terms of available information, competent staff, and strategic location in the harbor district of New York City.

Still, with its admittedly limited impact—ironically brought upon it by the same tightfisted legislature that would criticize its apparent ineffectiveness—the office was left exposed to attacks from its political detractors. Their cause, mainly nativism and linguistic intolerance, was greatly helped, of course, by the obvious: Why expend state monies to accomplish what was already in evidence,

259. Information in this paragraph drawn from Walker, who lucidly discusses the sharp decline in emigration figures around 1855 in ch. VI, esp. 171–174.

namely a veritable rush of European emigrants in the direction of Wisconsin? If these people were already thronging toward this state without any apparent assistance from the public hand, why was it necessary to employ an agent to encourage them to do so? And if it really was the German immigrant who was most desirable for Wisconsin because he was perceived as being among the most responsible and industrious in all of Europe and, not to forget, the best-heeled, one needed to look only to all the new farms and towns in the southwest of the state or at the city of Milwaukee to note the overwhelming presence of Germans among their populations.

In order to appreciate the office's activities, together with their beneficial results, Wisconsin's legislators would have had to familiarize themselves with its everyday operation. They would have learned that the commissioner of emigration, among all other persons and entities of the time, was in the best position to provide services to Germans and other Europeans alike concerning the two major functions assigned to his office: Advising the emigrant about the attractiveness of settling in Wisconsin and offering assistance for a safe passage. Through their reports, the office's incumbents evinced an unflinching sense of purpose. It is unlikely that the Wisconsin legislature had any conception of what perils confronted the average emigrant on arriving in New York City, just having endured a grueling sea voyage, and how many of prospective Wisconsinites may never have reached the state because of being robbed, swindled, or (mis)directed to another location for settlement. In fact, on close scrutiny of the commissioners' reports, legislators might have seen an opportunity to criticize the office for tending more to the protection and well-being of the emigrant than to influencing his choice of state. After all, was Wisconsin's tax money going toward welfare services for strangers or toward the promotion of the state?

Then again, the fear about direct competition with other states for emigrants, while real, was not justified in the sense that other western states, with the exception of Michigan, actively began their own efforts to promote immigration only a decade or so later. In addition, contemporaneously with the disbanding of the office, the federal government established Castle Garden in New York City as a processing point for emigrants, and the state and city of New York began to take a more active role in limiting the flood of emigrants, protecting them and seeing to it that they made their way safely through this American gateway en route to the interior rather than ending up on the city's welfare rolls.

Internally, ambivalence to the European immigrant was increasing in Wisconsin in the mid 1850s, as it did elsewhere in the country. A substantial minority of the population was already of foreign birth and these people, primarily Germans, brought with them customs that proved antithetical to the rebirth of a Yankee- or New England-style society on the northwestern frontier. Exemplary of this was the tremendous political fight in the 1850s over the prohibition of alcohol. This calamity, coupled with the specific anti-immigrant animus that manifested itself among the adherents of the Know-Nothing party, provided sufficient cause in the minds of the legislative majority to abolish the office, whether it was successful or not, whether it was needed or not, whether it was in the best interests of Wisconsin's developing economy or not.

Leaving aside, then, the question of quantifiable success (not necessarily the best measure of historic justification), the record shows that the Wisconsin Office of Commissioner of Emigration did at least make a small difference. It had a short life of but three years during which three commissioners served the state and the emigrants it sought to attract. From the remaining written record produced by those commissioners it is evident that each sought to fulfill the mandate of the legislature to the greatest degree possible when considering the limited resources, especially the paltry sums of money that they were afforded. In fact, we have seen that in some cases the commissioners went beyond the call of duty, for example, when helping a defrauded emigrant to obtain legal satisfaction, or when acting as personal messenger between family members, relatives, or friends.

Thus, each commissioner was like the proverbial hunter attempting to bring down an elephant with a fly swatter. Thirty thousand pamphlets distributed in New York City, in New England, and in Europe hardly touched the vast numbers of Germans, Dutch, Norwegians, English, Irish, and other European people who looked to America for a new life. A single, obscure office on Greenwich Street in the heart of the emigrant ghetto, among the countless taverns, hotels, boarding houses, ticket offices, and other similar establishments, would not reach a substantial number of emigrants, despite the fact that its window advertised its services in both German and English. The entreaties of the commissioner or his agents when meeting emigrants at the wharves were likely outshouted by the runners seeking to secure their booty for their employers. Nevertheless, the written record left behind by the commissioners, scanty as it is, leads to the inevitable conclusion that some of the emigrants were affected favorably by the commissioners' services and, presumably, some emigrants who otherwise may have gone elsewhere came to

Wisconsin because of the efforts of the office, and some who otherwise may have fallen prey to the thousands of businessmen out only for their own gain may have been guided by the commissioners and placed in contact with those who would safely, promptly, and economically bring them to Wisconsin.

Having weighed carefully the various facets of its impact upon the flow of German immigration to Wisconsin, we maintain that the Office of Commissioner of Emigration remains a highly remarkable historical phenomenon. Its creation and operation reflect a state's determination to influence one of the greatest migrations in history, with the objective of catapulting the local economy to the top of the United States. This, combined with the decision to give preference to emigrants of German ethnic background, constitutes an example of what we might today call an experiment in social and economic engineering, comparable to similar efforts in history (for example the Ottoman Turks' preference for Greek administrators, or the Prussian King Frederic William I's invitation to French Huguenots to help build Berlin as a new capital, or the Russian Tsarina Catharine I's incentives for Germans farmers to develop the Volga region). It is no wonder that other states of the Union soon were to follow Wisconsin's lead. (In the meantime, after the closing of Wisconsin's Office of Commissioner of Emigration in New York, private initiatives resulted in the founding of a German Society of Wisconsin, with the aim of continuing the commissioners' work, both in New York and in Milwaukee. This effort lasted no more than two years.[260])

For the United States, Wisconsin was the first to conceive, implement, and carry out such an experiment in a sustained institutional form. Michigan, it is true, preceded is western neighbor by seven years, but abandoned its presence in New York after all of two months, only to rekindle it in 1849, then for a total of six months. It took another ten years before Michigan reopened an office of emigration in New York.[261] While political forces in Wisconsin intent on preserving the state's, and the nation's, Anglo-Saxon predominance temporarily gained enough support to abolish the Office of Commissioner of Emigration in 1855, the continued, albeit varying, flow of German emigrants to this and other states throughout the remainder of the century, and up to World War I, has justified the process of guiding and protecting those who are at risk. The re-establishment of a Wisconsin immigration office in 1868, as well as the creation of similar agencies by other states, serve as cases in point. An evolving nation that continues to build its unique economic and political strength on a rich

260. For a summary, see Just et al. 159–160.

261. Cf. Schöberl 19–25.

ethnic diversity of industrious and dedicated immigrants serves as the ultimate vindication for Wisconsin's first attempt in taking the emigration process out of private interests in order to promote the public good.

Key to Abbreviations

In citing works in the notes, short titles have generally been used. Works frequently cited have been identified by the following abbreviations:

VSAR	Van Steenwijk, Gysbert. "First Annual Report of the Commissioner of Emigration for the State of Wisconsin" (December 23, 1852).
HHAR	Haertel, Herman. Report. *To His Excellency William A. Barstow, Governor of the State of Wisconsin* (December 1853).
HHL (n. d.)	Haertel, Herman. Letter to Governor Farwell (undated, probably early June 1853).
HHL (June 20, 1853)	Haertel, Herman. Letter to Governor Farwell of June 20, 1853.
HHL (June 21, 1853)	Haertel, Herman. Letter to Governor Farwell of June 21, 1853.
FHQR	Horn, Frederick W. *Extracts from Quarterly Report. Office of the Commissioner of Emigration, Frederick Horn, Aug. 20, 1854, to His Excellency, William A. Barstow.* Unpublished.
FHL (May 1855)	Horn, Frederick. Letter to Governor Barstow of May 1855 (day not given).

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THE WISCONSIN OFFICE OF EMIGRATION 1852-1855

& ITS IMPACT ON GERMAN IMMIGRATION TO THE STATE

Johannes Strohschänk
& William G. Thiel

A fascinating story of a unique institution in Wisconsin history

In 1852 Wisconsin established the Office of Emigration to attract European—mainly German-speaking—settlers to the state. Drawing on contemporary newspaper articles and privately published emigrant guides, as well as official publications of the emigration office, the authors document the office's influence on the settlement history of early Wisconsin and assess that influence against the backdrop of state politics in the mid-nineteenth century. Complementing the text are rare and interesting photographs illustrating the work of the office and the people it served. This book is invaluable for genealogists interested in learning more about emigration, as well as for anyone interested in Wisconsin history and German-American studies.

Johannes Strohschänk, a professor of German at the University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire, is a native of Germany. He received his master's degree in German language and literature from the University of South Carolina and his doctorate from the University of California, Davis. Since 1988, he has been teaching at the UW–Eau Claire, where he currently chairs that university's Department of Foreign Languages. Dr. Strohschänk and William Thiel are working on a critical history of German immigration to Wisconsin between 1848 and 1914 and teach an honors course on the topic at the UW–Eau Claire.

William G. Thiel, whose ancestors emigrated from Germany in the mid-1800s, grew up in Milwaukee. A graduate of Marquette University Law School, he is currently practicing law in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. His interest in German immigration to Wisconsin—and history in general—grew out of his probings into his family history, linked to the German settlement of the town of New Holstein in eastern Wisconsin. Mr. Thiel has written a number of works on the history of New Holstein, including a translation with commentary of Rudolph Puchner's New Holstein memoirs.

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