



# **The letter of Jakob Hessel: a German farmer in Manitowoc County writes home, 1849.**

## **Monograph 75 1997**

Rommelfanger, Karyl Enstad

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# The Letter of Jakob Hessel: A German Farmer In Manitowoc County Writes Home, 1849

Monograph 75  
1997

Translated and Edited by:  
Karyl Enstad Rommelfanger

**MCHS Editor's Note:** In 1987 an old ledger came to light which had been kept by German immigrant farmer Wendel Wallau, who lived just south of the present village of Francis Creek, in the Town of Kossuth, Manitowoc County, Wisconsin.

In the process of researching the Wallau manuscripts, an old letter was also found. The 1849 letter, postmarked from Manitowoc Rapids, was written by Wallau's neighbor and fellow-countryman Jakob Hessel to relatives in the home village of Gau-Algesheim, a small town west of Mainz in what was then called Hesse-Darmstadt. Today, this is the present-day state of Rheinland-Pfalz, Germany.

Both the letter and the ledger have provided significant, new information about early German settlement in Manitowoc County. The original letter remains in an archives in Gau-Al-

gesheim, Germany.

The translator and editor of the monograph is Karyl Enstad Rommelfanger, a German language teacher at Washington Jr. High School in Manitowoc. I want to thank Karyl for her diligent and exhaustive research, and for sharing the results of her ongoing study of the German heritage of Manitowoc County.

Karyl's careful translation of the Jakob Hessel letter is indicated by quotation marks. Information which Karyl has gathered to help explain people and events mentioned in the letter appears in sections marked "Commentary". Additional information is recorded in the "Endnotes".

Special thanks are extended to Jack Holzhueter, Editorial Division at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, for permission to reprint the map of Germany from Richard Zeitlin's *Germans in Wisconsin*, published by the

SHSW in 1977. This monograph commemorates the 150th anniversary of the Gau-Algesheimers' emigration to America and their 1847 arrival in the Town of Kossuth, Manitowoc County, Wisconsin.

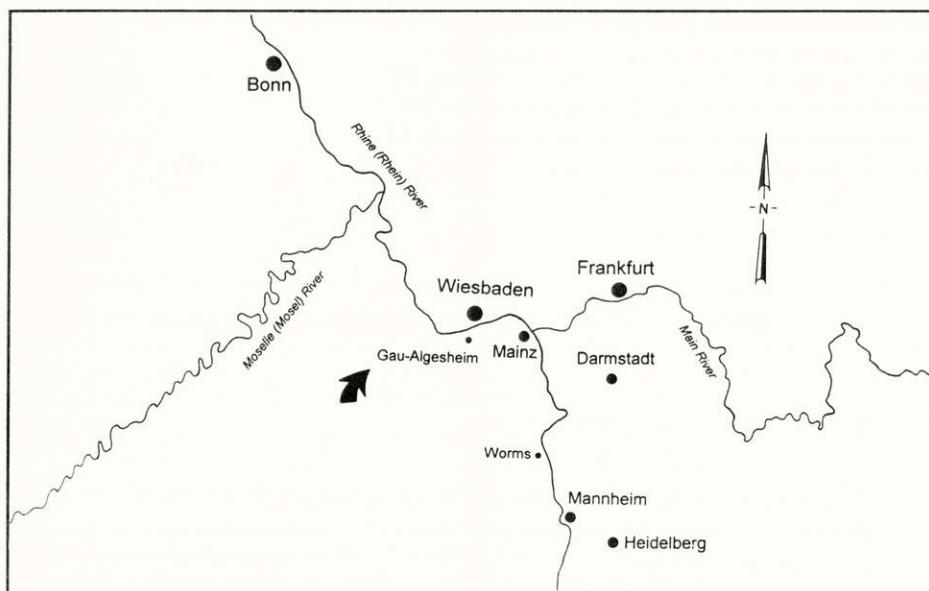
Robert P. Fay

## INTRODUCTION

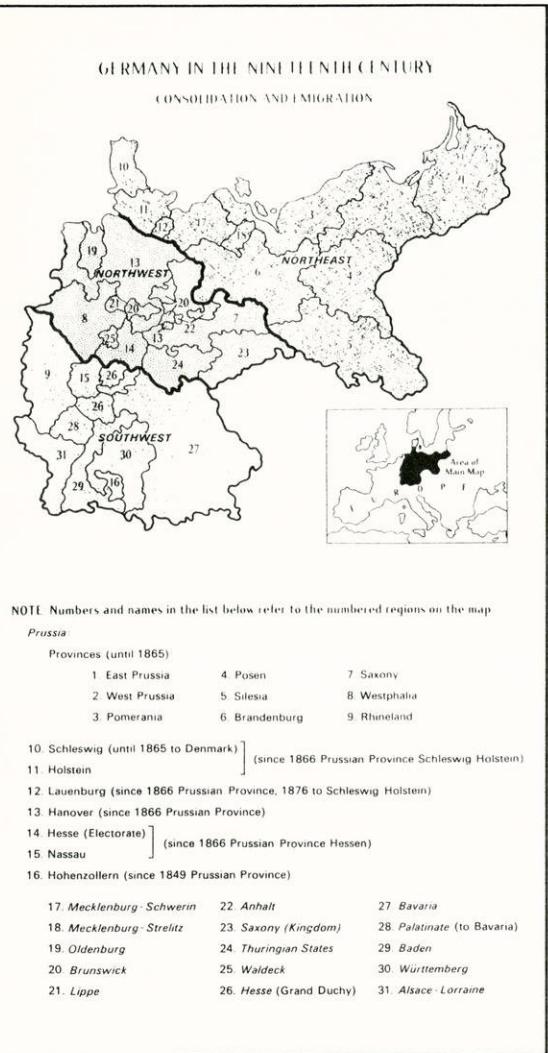
When the first German-speaking immigrants arrived in Wisconsin, there was no country officially called Germany. There was, rather, a loose confederation of thirty-five monarchial states and four city republics in which the German language was spoken.<sup>1</sup> A failed attempt in 1848 to write a constitution and form a unified country became the impetus for the large migration of German-speaking people to the United States in the 1850s.

One of the earliest contingents of Germans to come to Manitowoc County was a group of families from the community of Gau-Algesheim in the former state of Hesse-Darmstadt.<sup>2</sup> They arrived in the fall of 1847 and settled in northern Manitowoc County in the area we know today as Francis Creek.

Physically located in the middle of the revolutionary turmoil, Gau-Algesheim was not a stranger to the political ferment of the 1840s. Many Algesheimers were out-spoken critics of princely rule and repressive customs. A home guard had been established, political rallies were held regularly, revolutionary songs were sung and men and boys dressed openly in the telltale uniform of the revolution - white pants, blue shirts and large slouch hats. And openly displayed on rooftops was the black-red-gold freedom flag which one-hundred years



Gau-Algesheim and surrounding villages and cities in southwest Germany.



Germany in the nineteenth century (reprinted by permission of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin).

later would finally mark the arrival of democracy to Gau-Algesheim and western Germany.

In the midst of these political uncertainties and coupled with a drought that had ravaged the potato crop, some Algesheimers made the decision to emigrate. Some left in the early and mid 1840s and settled in the Town of Ottawa in Waukesha County.<sup>3</sup>

Others emigrated in 1847, one year before political unrest broke out into full-fledged violence. These Algesheimers chose Manitowoc County as their new home. Before America fever was over, more than 200 men, women, and children would leave the small community of Gau-Algesheim and emigrate to North America.

On March 25, 1847 the ship COTTON PLANTER set sail from Antwerp, Belgium carrying the following future residents of Manitowoc County, Wisconsin: Anna Hessel- 68 years old

Kaspar Ewen - 37  
 Margarete Ewen - 34  
 Mathias Ewen - 7  
 Quiren Ewen - 2  
 Jakob Hessel - 28  
 Anna Hessel - 21  
 Jakob Hessel - 2  
 Katherine Hessel - 1  
 Johann Hessel - 36  
 Anna Hessel - 30<sup>4</sup>  
 Anna Hessel - 2  
 Blasius Biegel - 21  
 Wendel Wallau - 37  
 Barbara Wallau - 28  
 Jakob Wallau - 12  
 Anna Wallau - 9  
 Margarete Wallau - 1  
 Matheus Müller - 28  
 L. Kullmann - 28<sup>5</sup>

On May 15, 1847, fifty-four days after departure, the COTTON PLANTER arrived at the port of New York. From there the new immigrants travelled to Buffalo on Lake Erie where they boarded a Great Lakes vessel and continued their journey to Milwaukee. Once in Wisconsin, the women and children are said to have found shelter with friends and relatives in Waukesha County, while the men trudged north along the old Milwaukee-Green Bay Indian Trail.

Land records verify that Johann Hessel arrived in Manitowoc County in early June and made an initial purchase of 160 acres of government land in Section 23 of what would later become the Town of Kosuth. Kaspar and Margarete Ewen, Jakob Hessel, and Kaspar Hessel all made land purchases on September 28, 1847<sup>6</sup>. Johann Hessel bought additional land on that same day and sold some of his original purchase to Wendel Wallau. Spread out on both sides of the Green Bay - Milwaukee Indian Trail in Sections 14, 22, and 23 of Township 20 North, Range 23 East (present day Town of Kosuth), the Algesheimers' land acquisitions totalled 680 acres, slightly over one full section of land.<sup>7</sup>

We learn nothing more about the new immigrants until February of 1849 when Jakob Hessel, at the request of family matriarch Anna Maria (Voos) Hessel, writes home to family and friends in Gau-Algesheim. The letter is straight-forward and reveals the joys, frustrations and heartaches of the new Americans. It begins with the reassurances that all are enjoying good health and are satisfied with

their new homeland. And Jakob speaks of a trip to see his brother Quiren in Waukesha County.

The following translation of this letter is an important reminder of the mass exodus from the small German-speaking village of Gau-Algesheim.

K.E.R.

## THE LETTER HOME

"Manitowoc Rapids

February 24, 1849

Dear Brothers and Sisters and Friends Wilhelm and Johann Hessel!<sup>8</sup>

Thanks be to God that, as in the last letter, I can report our health and happiness and hope that this happiness will also be imparted to you now and into the future. Sister! I received your lovely letter on May 20. I'm referring to the one which you gave to J. Grub<sup>9</sup> on March 1st of last year. I received cousin Johann Hessel's letter, dated July 2, when I visited our brother Quiren and our fellow countrymen last spring and last Christmas. I went there to buy an ox. All in all, they are also enjoying good health and prosperity. It only managed to distress them, when I announced my short visit, because each one of them wanted me to spend some time with them. A warm feeling fills my heart when I think about how easily they can put up a friend for days and weeks at a time without worrying about where the food is coming from or that it will be all used up before the guest leaves. Not like in Germany, where people are only too glad to have the guest leave after a couple meals! And it wasn't enough that I visited them; they also offered to send meat home with me if I needed it. And Mundschau wasn't satisfied until I also took along a sack of wheat. He said he had a surplus of it and it wouldn't be a bad idea to take some along, since I hadn't gotten all my wheat in this year. He and Johann Schmitt<sup>10</sup> from Elsheim put a sleigh together, Quiren gave me some hay for the trip, and I departed."

## COMMENTARY

Having established their health and happiness with the readers back home, Jakob Hessel now expresses his great displeasure at the lack of news from Gau-Algesheim. Although he tries very hard to be understanding, a sense of despair and a bit of anger is evident. In fact, it is this frustration with the mail which precludes Jakob from sharing with us a picture of Manitowoc County in its

pristine, unspoiled state.

“Elisa!<sup>11</sup> In the letter that J. Grub brought along, you wrote that you ‘again burden us with a letter.’ But we have not received any letters except for one that Wallau and I got from Stroebel. And I have written twice and Matheus<sup>12</sup> has written three times already. You wanted to know what a letter costs. We usually pay ten cents, the equivalent of fifteen Kreuzer. If it’s heavy, then a letter costs twenty cents or thirty Kreuzer. The burden of a letter for us is minimal. If that were the case with you, we would receive news from you more frequently. Although our money reserve is small,<sup>13</sup> it is easier for us to pay two Gulden than for you to pay six Kreuzer.<sup>14</sup> I would like to have a short answer to my first letter of September 1847.

Biegel is waiting for a letter. Blasius says he still hasn’t had an answer to his first letter, so why should he write a second letter! I don’t know if he is going to write soon or not, but he seems only half-eager.

I would appreciate if Martin’s brother Matheus, or you J. Diehl, or whoever, would be so kind and do us the favor of going to Langenlonsheim near Bingen and inquiring about Jakob Hoffman. Find out what piece of land he has and by what name he is known in his town.<sup>15</sup>

Ewen wanted me to describe the land in this letter. That would be more interesting to you than everything else. Kaiser’s<sup>16</sup> son has especially requested to know what it is like here. But because I already mentioned a few things in the first letter, and have not received any answer as to what kind of things you want to know, I find it rather unnecessary at this point. And since I am writing this letter at the request of Mother, I have to deal with some other things. Mother is concerned about the unrest in Germany and her loved-ones who have stayed behind. She wishes they were here.”

#### COMMENTARY

Two other references are made later to the mail problem and in so doing Hessel reveals some possible reasons for the lack of news. In one case he reminds the relatives and friends of the necessity for including both the township, range number and post office in the address.

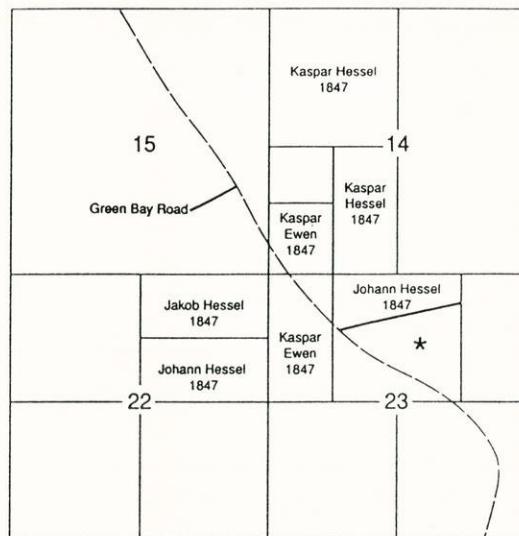
And he also alludes to a family letter which lay unclaimed for a period of time in the Milwaukee Post Office. Unclaimed mail was a problem in Manitowoc as well. The German newspaper *Wisconsin's Demokrat* regularly printed a list of unclaimed “Deutsche Briefe,” German letters, during the 1850s. By 1860, however, a decision was made to return any mail which carried a return address.

As Jakob Hessel continues, he offers the reader a rare look at the adjustment problems the new immigrants faced. In so doing, the reader captures the sense of despair and impoverishment that must have driven many Germans to the American shores. Notice that Jakob does not refer to his fellow-countrymen as “immigrants”, but rather as “refugees”.

“I apologize for having to mention right here at the beginning of this letter those people who in their bestial blindness curse America and make offensive remarks about overindulgence in food and drink, of fattening the ox, and speak in terms of “Sundays” and “workdays”. And yet that’s the lifestyle those same refugees enjoy, although wanting the opposite.

It is perfectly clear that we have a better life here than in Germany. But not without hard work or a lot of money! Even in the latter instance anyone can eat and drink plentifully if that’s important to them. If those individuals I mentioned had been able to eat and drink as well in Germany, what forced them to come to America? And now, if they are diligent and can have all this, it becomes a burden to them.

As far as public church services are concerned, they are rare. But because of that, one can keep the Lord’s day if one wishes. There were better Christians during the time when there were no organized churches.<sup>17</sup> It is even sadder when young people



Government land in the present-day Town of Kossuth was purchased by Algesheimers in the late 1840s. Johann and Marie Hessel purchased 160 acres of government land in Section 23 on June 7, 1847. They sold 58<sup>1/2</sup> acres of land to Wendel Wallau on September 28, 1847. This land is indicated by the star.

curse ever having thought of America. I wonder if it will continue like that. I’ve heard people curse America and even curse the discoverer of America, that tall, fine man who discovered land on which millions of people could live. One has to ask why they talk in such a way. There are good people who have helped the poverty-stricken to escape, so that they could one day also finally eat their share of bread. These good people have helped in any way they could. But when the refugees arrive in America and should be looking for work, they think back to the best days of their departure, when their beer and their food was furnished for them,<sup>18</sup> and think now that this is the way it would have continued in Germany! As one example, our fellow countrymen wanted to give potatoes to a needy lady, but she said they were a little bit too small, that she couldn’t peel them, and that would be work for peasants!

I could give many more examples, but it’s really unnecessary and there’s no room. As for myself, I believe that eating and drinking is a part of life. It’s better when a person has it than when hard-working people hear their children crying, ‘I’m hungry, I’m hungry’ and, despite all their diligence, can give them nothing, as is so frequently the case in Germany.”

## COMMENTARY

The thoughts expressed in the above paragraphs are very complex. On the one hand Hessel mentions with shame the woman for whom the potatoes are too small and life in America is seemingly just not good enough. And the reader senses her homesickness and longing for things familiar.

On the other hand are the Germans for whom life is too good and who seem to feel an immense guilt about adequate food and drink. The twentieth century term "culture shock" may be what Jakob is describing in both instances. This term describes the inability of an individual to adjust to a new society which is very different from one's own.

But the latter Germans, perhaps raised in a more staid tradition, or perhaps simply wanting to assimilate and blend in, also echo the prevalent attitude of the Yankees. These Easterners with Puritan roots had little time for the fun-loving, beer-drinking Germans who enjoyed their Sunday social functions. Indeed, Wisconsin's first drinking laws came as a reaction to the immigrant Germans and their customs.

Before moving on to some sharp political commentary, Jakob Hessel again seeks to reassure the family back home that all is well with the relatives and friends in America.

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 "Dear Sister, you're completely right, when you wish that the dear Lord will preserve our health. But as far as everything else is concerned, you need not worry. As long as we stay healthy and don't have any accidents, we needn't worry about our sustenance, for we have that, and it's better than it would ever have been in Germany."

## COMMENTARY

Demands for basic human rights broke into violence throughout Europe in 1848. A demonstration in Berlin against King Friedrich Wilhelm IV turned bloody. Lajos Kossuth<sup>19</sup> led an unsuccessful uprising in Hungary and then fled to America. King Louis Phillip was overthrown in France. Austrian Prince Metternich resigned. King Ludwig I of Bavaria was forced to abdicate. And in Gau-Algesheim, a failed attempt to blow up a munitions boat in the Rhine River caused participants to flee in panic.<sup>20</sup> In the next seven years one million German-speaking people would flee their homelands.

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 "We all continue to rejoice having left that earthly vale of tears in which so many hollow-eyed robbers, who possess too much power and money, slowly bring poverty and hunger upon you and force you to do whatever they

wish. That's the kind of love these tyrants show to the Fatherland! They resort to murder and burning and torturing unarmed people when their debauchery knows no other way.

It's almost inconceivable that even in our time children take the advice of certain people and spy against their parents, and murder them under the pretext that one has to have regents and subservience of all kinds, although these same regents<sup>21</sup> do not have any responsibility to you the people. Ultimately we pray God's grace on those whose lives are clouded by fornication and all kinds of vices.

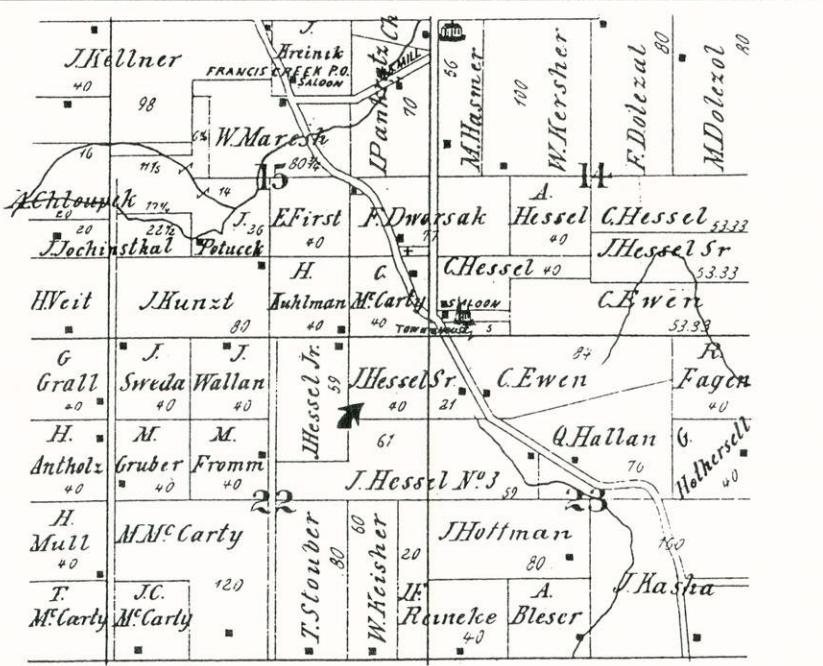
Lola is a public example of that, as well as that northern Friedrich who wastes millions and brutally extorts it from his subjects. The counterfeiters of Saxony are also among them.<sup>22</sup> And so it goes. The citizen is not allowed to speak a word of truth nor is the press allowed to print it. Otherwise the miserable blood hounds appear and for the sake of a few pennies intimate where those individuals live.

But I shouldn't curse and insult. I'm far away from all that as I write. But since my cousin J. Hessel wrote me and asked what we knew about the uprising in Germany and the revolution in France, I'll let him know that we hear about it just as quickly and perhaps more accurately than he.

But I also have to say that you should do your part when the hour of freedom comes. Why can't those assassins promise you your human rights when they see that's the issue? Why must the blood of their subjects flow first? Why can't this all be settled in a peaceful and just manner? God created the fish, the birds and all the animals for himself and when those were done, he made man and gave man dominion over everything. Because there are so many people, there has to be a government to keep order. But not thirty-seven or thirty-eight of them like in Germany!"<sup>23</sup>

## COMMENTARY

Following the initial violence in Berlin, King Friedrich Wilhelm IV ordered the military troops out of Berlin and promised a National Assembly, trial by jury, freedom of the press and religion, and human rights equality for all Germans. On May 18, 1848 the National Assembly convened in St. Paul's Church in Frankfurt am Main. The Assembly consisted of 830 dele-



The Jakob Hessel property, indicated by the arrow, is shown on this 1878 map of the area. The farm was located along the Green Bay Road, just south of the present-day village of Francis Creek.

gates representing some of the most intelligent and well-educated citizens of the German states. After meeting for a full year, the Assembly passed a Constitution which set up a bicameral legislative body, established a Supreme Court, and defined the basic rights of citizens. In a very close vote the Assembly elected King Friedrich Wilhelm IV emperor on March 28, 1849. One month later he declined the title, saying it reeked of a revolution. With this the National Assembly fell apart. And exactly as Jakob Hessel predicted in the following paragraph, things returned "to the same old trap".

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 "What sort of regents are there among them? Heirs to the throne who can't even manage themselves, who are idiotic, and however else they can be described! They are only there to squander by force and debauchery the blood money of their faithful citizens and subjects. Don't allow yourselves to be deluded any longer! Watch! Through bad politics they are returning to the same old trap and things will be bad again for you. Demand the human rights that the loving God as a benevolent Father has given you! Otherwise you disdain his goodness and he will punish you. If it's not possible to do it in good ways, then use force just as it is used on you. Please don't take offense that I mention this so often in this letter, as if the whole thing depended on you. The time may come, and perhaps it has already, that you can contribute much to the whole effort."

#### COMMENTARY

As Jakob Hessel continues he offers the reader some insights into his family. Not to let a controversy go unmentioned, however, he brings up yet one more interesting insight into the contemporary feelings of his fellow countrymen back home.

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 "Ewen has asked me to greet his mother and his brothers and sisters, and to say that he wishes they were all with him. He is wondering if they are still healthy.

My letter is not intended to be an enticement [to come to America] for one person or another, because otherwise, as I mentioned before, it could result in cursing. But people should not believe, as some say, that 'Well, if I were in America I wouldn't write negatively about it, even if bad things

Deutsche Briefe, welche in der Post-Office zu Manitowoc bis zum 7. Januar d. J. nicht abgeholt wurden sind.	
Böhm. Andre	Leibig J.
Belle. Emil	Meissner E.
Breder. M.	Waldes R.
Buse. A.	Neidels R.
Baumann. A.	Reichel Wagner
Bänslemer. M.	Mate B.
Bleck. Ch.	Wulffsky
Biederitz. C.	Neckar R.
Bolt. W.	Schmidts O.
Clowes. A.	Siedinger E.
Heber. P.	Schelbe Ch.
Jahr. P.	Schneider O.
Kosten. M.	Welschreit Ch.
Krämer. P.	Bergild J.
Leibnitz. F.	Wierd P.
Leisring. Ch.	Weberlein O.
Uhle. A.	Schröder P.
Weier.	Wolff Ch.
Gretchen.	Wolfe C.
Konrad. Job.	Wittenhoff G.
Werner. B.	Weyer Ch.

Unclaimed German letters at the Manitowoc Post Office were a problem as this German newspaper ad indicates.

happened'. [But since] the letters are mostly to brothers and sisters and closest friends what would ultimately be the sense, even if I or we were in dire straits, of creating unhappiness for others? I know from those closest to me that it is considered a disgrace to go to America. They say, 'I would rather give up'. Those people had better stay in Germany, because giving up is not the fashion here and they would probably do just that!

We haven't heard anything from our cousin Wilhelm Hessel. Please send our greetings to our old landlord Johann Dengler and his family. We are wondering how his children are doing, especially little Lori. And my wife wants me to tell you a little about our children.

Our Jakob is a tender and gentle child, an image of your little Karl except for his whitish hair. He is a special favorite of his grandmother. Katy is a wild and mischievous type, a rascal just like her mother was when she was a child. But in speech and cleverness she is more like her brother.

Our sister had a baby girl last July. She is a healthy and perfect baby. And Marie had a baby boy just a few weeks after that."<sup>24</sup>

#### COMMENTARY

The Algesheimers were some of the first Germans to settle in the countryside, away from the growing communities of Manitowoc, Manitowoc Rapids, and Two Rivers. Consequently, they also enjoyed the pick of the best

land. And they chose wisely.

The location of their properties on both the east and west sides of the Green Bay-Milwaukee Indian Trail not only allowed them access to communities both north and south, but provided social contacts they might not have enjoyed otherwise. The two great nemeses of the forested wilderness, isolation and loneliness, did not seem to be a problem for the Algesheimers.

Jakob concludes the letter by mentioning the jobs the men have procured, and then sends his and his mother's personal greetings.

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 "Sister Elisa! Our mother wants you to know that she wishes you were here with your family. She feels sorry for you and your husband and the children, especially because of the danger of war and the fact that things don't look very bright. She said just yesterday that she would rather be at my side in the woods than to be on the streets of Algesheim.

And Greth<sup>25</sup> reflects back to what you said: 'How would it be, being so alone in the forest and not being used to it'. But now she thinks it's no different than when we lived on Lang Street. No day or hour goes by, that we don't have people going past our place, either on foot or with their wagons. In addition we have frequent visits from our neighbors, especially on Sundays when it's as busy here as in a casino back home.

Kaspar Ewen and Hannes<sup>26</sup> drive logs to the saw mill using two yoke which is four oxen. They earn eight to ten dollars per day, the equivalent of 20-25 Gulden. Some days they earn more and some days less, and also get a free meal with that.

Dear little Sister! Please don't be angry if I fail to mention everyone in your family and send greetings to each individually. But you can see that I'm running out of room to write. But we want to especially greet Dr. Menniger who gave us his help so unselfishly and never hesitated taking precious time to cheer us up and give us the best advice he knew how. And in like manner Mr. Gassner, the notary, and Quiren Ewen, the mayor, of whom we have fond memories and who carry out their official responsibilities faithfully and, may they [continue to] do so, with the best interest of the community at heart.

Cousin Johann Hessel, you have asked that I send you our address

again. I think I wrote it in the first letter. It's now possible that we could be getting a post office right here near us, and that one of us could run it if we could read and write English. You have to include the town and the range in the address. The last letter written to Quiren lay for a long time in Milwaukee, probably because it didn't have the name of the post office on it. We knew the letter was there before he did.

We send our heartiest greetings to all our friends and acquaintances, especially those of mother's who have so kindly asked about her. I also received a letter from Heinrich Lebeis who is living in New York. Your dear Jakob requests a speedy answer to this letter.

Cousin J. Hessel you know the kind of things I would like to hear about. I'd especially like to know something about the free press, [that is] if it has not already been intimidated. I have already read some good pieces, especially if they are true, from Wiesbaden.

I, Anna Hessel, greet my two children, their godfathers and godmothers and my mother.<sup>27</sup>

Our address is: Mstr. Jakob Hessel, Manitowoc-Rapids, Town 20 Range 23, Wisconsin/Nordamerika."

#### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LETTER

These are the last words we hear from Jakob Hessel. No other letters are known to exist. Though Jakob went on to become a successful farmer in Kossuth Township, life did

not remain unscathed for the Hessel family. Of the eleven children born to Jakob and Anna Hessel, only five reached adulthood. Little Katy and Jakob mentioned in the letter were among them. Most of the children died from various diseases. One child, a toddler, was severely burned in an accident and later died.

As Jakob's letter hints, Hessel family matriarch Anna Maria (Voos) Hessel appears to have had considerable influence in their immigrant community. She had been widowed in 1835 and had raised her family by herself.

Anna was a strong-willed woman and well-respected outside her own family. This is made clear in the book *The Kornely Family History*. The author writes that it was Anna Hessel's letters of encouragement that persuaded Georg and Theresia Korneli<sup>28</sup> to emigrate and join the others in Manitowoc County in the early 1850s. Anna Maria (Voos) Hessel died on December 30, 1858 at the age seventy-six years. Her gravestone, along with those of many other Algesheimers', can be found in St. Anne Cemetery at Francis Creek.

Jakob Hessel continued to live on the farm until his wife's death in 1889. He then moved to Manitowoc and resided with his son-in-law Jacob Roemer. Jakob Hessel died on April 18, 1895.

No Manitowoc County Germans have left us as much of a written record as have the Algesheimers. The Hessel letter only came to light after the discovery of the Wallau ledger. A

diary written by Jakob Hessel and quoted in the book *Pioneer Families of Manitowoc County* is yet to be found, as is also a pencil drawing of the Jakob Hessel farmstead.

Another legacy of the Algesheimers is the granaries they built. The granary constructed by Wendel Wallau on his property is matched by one on the Hessel farm. A third structure, matching the other two, was moved off the Kaspar Ewen property and comprises today the main section of the Blacksmith Shop at Pinecrest Historical Village in Manitowoc County.

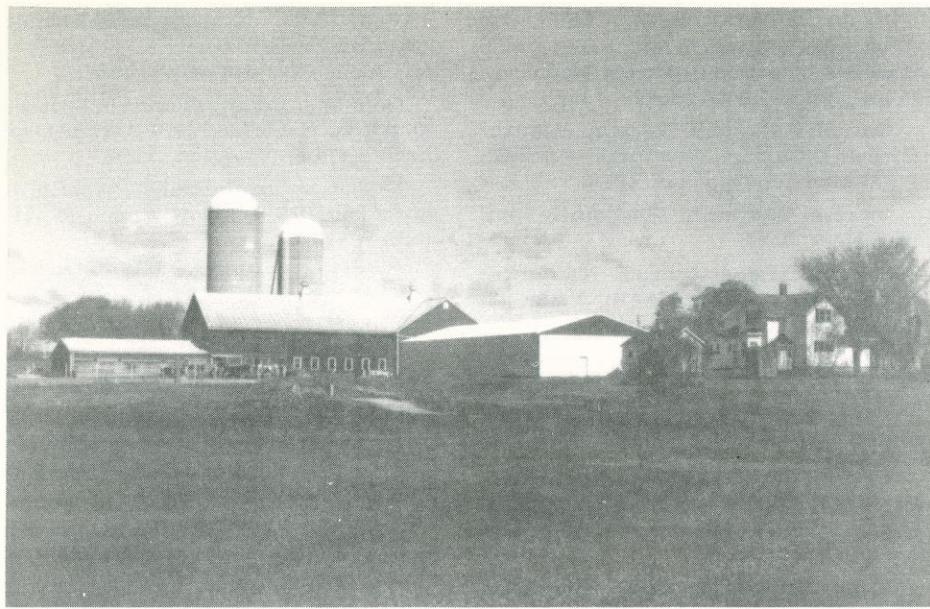
Two of the original houses survive as well. One is the log house of Wendel Wallau which, over a century ago, was incorporated into an expanded newer home. The foot-thick walls give away its location within the newer structure. The original Jakob Hessel home, moved from its original site and also enlarged, is also still a residence in Francis Creek today.

The Algesheimers were a well-organized immigrant group. As is clear in the letter, much planning and aforesight went into their move. Perhaps it is also not coincidental that at least three of the men, -Jakob Hessel, Wendel Wallau, and Blasius Biegel,<sup>29</sup> - were trained carpenters. And it certainly cannot be merely an accident that other Algesheimers would join them in the early 1850s and settle on properties close to the original group. These neighbors would bear the names Hassemer, Dickenscheidt, Fleischer,<sup>30</sup> Kullmann and Korneli. Additional members of Blasius Biegel's family, all carpenters, arrived also.

Remarkably, other Algesheimers by the name of Hessel, who had settled in Potters Mills, Centre County, Pennsylvania during the 1840s, also left a written correspondence.<sup>31</sup> Among these letters is a most intriguing reference by a Wendel Hessel in Gau-Algesheim to some "rich friends" in the West (Algesheimers in America) for whom life is seemingly much better than for the writer. Hessel remarks: "And Martin Hassemer was back home [in Germany] this past summer and took many people back with him [to America]". The letter was written in 1855. Interestingly, a Martin Hassemer is shown living with Michael Dickenscheidt and Jakob Ewen in the 1850 U.S. Census, Manitowoc County, listed between the Johann and Jakob Hessel families.



Matrarch Anna Marie Hessel, who died in 1858 at the age of 76, is buried in St. Anne Cemetery at Francis Creek. Other Hessel family members and fellow countrymen from Gau-Algesheim are buried here not far from their Town of Kossuth farmsteads.



*The Robert Hessel farm on County Highway R, just south of the village of Francis Creek, in 1997. It is one of the oldest family farms in Manitowoc County.*

If indeed there were some kind of purposeful, carefully planned strategy to bring other fellow countrymen here, it may help explain one mystery as well. When the Wendel Wallau farm was being readied for auction many years ago, an old air-tight trunk was found. Inside the trunk were the pages from the old ledger mentioned earlier. And there were also land records from the 1850s belonging to Johann, Theresa, Martin, and Michael Dickenscheidt. In addition there was an 1853 German passport which had been issued to Johann Dickenscheidt, Sr. so that he could visit his son in America. It may be that Wendel Wallau had served as some kind of self-styled accountant or lawyer for the Algesheimer community. Or perhaps he just had a quality trunk which served as an 1850s safe-deposit box where important Algesheimer documents could be kept.

## CONCLUSION

The Algesheimers continued to farm in Kossuth Township well into the twentieth century. The names Hessel, Wallau, Ewen, Hassemer, and Kornely are still familiar names in the Francis Creek area.

And as one enters the village from the south today, one can still see the Hessel name. Since 1847 the land settled by Johann and Jakob Hessel has been passed from one generation to the next. Today, 150 years later, the Robert Hessel farm survives as a reminder of the Gau-Algesheim settlers in the area. It is without a doubt one

of the oldest family farms in Manitowoc County.

## ENDNOTES

1. Although there was no official country known as Germany the term was nonetheless used by Germans themselves. In his letter, Jakob Hessel often uses the term "Deutschland" which translates to "Germany".
2. This is now the state of Rheinland-Pfalz, Germany. Gau-Algesheim is located southwest of the city of Frankfurt am Main.
3. The following Waukesha County names appear on an emigration list from Gau-Algesheim. They all live in Ottawa Township: Nikolaus Mundschau, Quiren Kramer, Quiren Hessel, Valentin Hosmer (Hassemer), John Foos (Johann Voos), Nicholas Hattemer and a family named Weiner.
4. The Hessel and Ewen families were interrelated. Anna Maria (Voos) Hessel (68) was the mother of Jakob Hessel (28), Johann Hessel (36), Kaspar Hessel, Quiren Hessel (in Waukesha County), Margarete (Hessel) Ewen (34), and Elizabeth (Hessel) Diehl. Margarete Hessel was married to Kaspar Ewen. Jakob Hessel's wife was Anna Marie Ewen. Kaspar Hessel arrived in Manitowoc County with the others, but is not listed on the COTTON PLANTER manifest.
5. Margarete Wallau (1) is said to have died enroute to America. L. Kullmann (28) may have been Lorenz Kullmann, an early merchant in the city of Manitowoc.
6. On September 27, 1847 Kaspar Hessel bought 160 acres of government land in Section 14 of Kossuth Township. On the next day he bought an additional 80 acres.
7. Much of this area comprises the present village of Francis Creek, Wisconsin.
8. The German term Jakob uses is "Geschwister". This translates "brothers and sisters". Jakob is likely referring to his sister, Anna and her husband, Johann Diehl, who never emigrated. There do not appear to be any other children left behind in Germany.
9. Unidentified individual.
10. This may be "John Smith" who owned land in Section 21, Ottawa Township, Waukesha County, not far from Nikolaus Mundschau.
11. "Elisa" is Jakob's sister, Elisabeth Hessel Diehl, the wife of Johann Diehl. Jakob addresses her directly several times in the letter.
12. "Matheus" is probably Matheus Müller. "Stroebel" is unidentified.
13. It is unclear here what he means by "our money reserve". He may just be referring to his own personal finances. Or the immigrants may have pooled their money.
14. Gulden and Kreuzer were the names of the currency used in Hesse-Darmstadt, Gulden being the larger unit.
15. A Jakob Hoffman buys a piece of land in Section 23 directly south of the Johann Hessel property in May 1849. This name also appears on the COTTON PLANTER ship manifest. Hessel's statement "by what name he is known" probably refers to the habit of the English-speaking Yankees to anglicize German names, as for example, changing Jakob to Jake, or Jack or even John.
16. Unidentified individual.
17. Church services were infrequent due to the lack of pastors and the inability to reach parishioners spread over a wide area. But Jakob Hessel is also echoing the liberal "freethinkers" philosophy of his time which debunked organized religion.
18. This likely alludes to the practice by ship companies of boarding and feeding their passengers in local hotels before departure, probably in an effort to keep them happy.
19. The Town of Kossuth was set off from the Town of Manitowoc Rapids in 1852. It was named in honor of Hungarian revolutionary General Lajos Kossuth and reflects the respect with which he was held by the early settlers of the area.
20. All of the men involved in this incident were forced to flee or hide. One was caught and executed. Some fled the country. It is interesting that three young Algesheimers appear in the 1850 census, living together in Kossuth township. They are Michael Dickenscheidt, Martin Hassemer and Jakob Ewen.
21. The term "regents" refers to the many leaders in power within the loose German Confederacy.

22. "Lola" was the Spanish consort of King Ludwig of Bavaria. Her influence on the king was very disturbing to the citizenry. "Friedrich" is King Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia. It is somewhat unclear what is meant by "the counterfeiters of Saxony" but it may be a reference to the heavy taxes demanded of the ordinary citizen, or to the printing of worthless money.

23. This is a reference to the multitude of German-speaking regions, which formed the loose confederation.

24. The 1850 U.S. Census confirms that Margarete Ewen had a baby girl, whom they named Mary, at about the time mentioned. It also confirms that a baby boy named Jacob was born to Johann and Anna Maria (Hessel) Ewen at about the same time.

25. Greth is probably Margarete Ewen.

26. Both Hannes and Dr. Menniger, who is mentioned later, remain unidentified.

27. This is probably matriarch Anna Maria (Voos) Hessel addressing daughter Elisabeth and her husband Johann Diehl. That Anna Maria's mother would still be alive is certainly surprising, though not improbable.

28. The name is now spelled "Kornely".

29. Blasius Biegel eventually opened a carpentry business in the city of Manitowoc.

30. Georg Fleischer may have been the father of Fedus (Fleischer) Hassemer, wife of Michael Hassemer.

31. The relationship, if any, between the Wisconsin and Pennsylvania Hesses is unknown at this time. Copies of the letters were graciously furnished to this editor by Marion Lois Huffines, who has written a wonderful article about the Pennsylvania Hesses.

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