

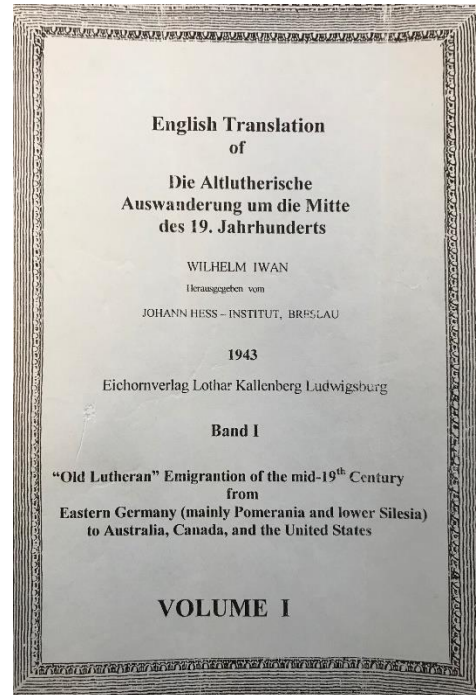
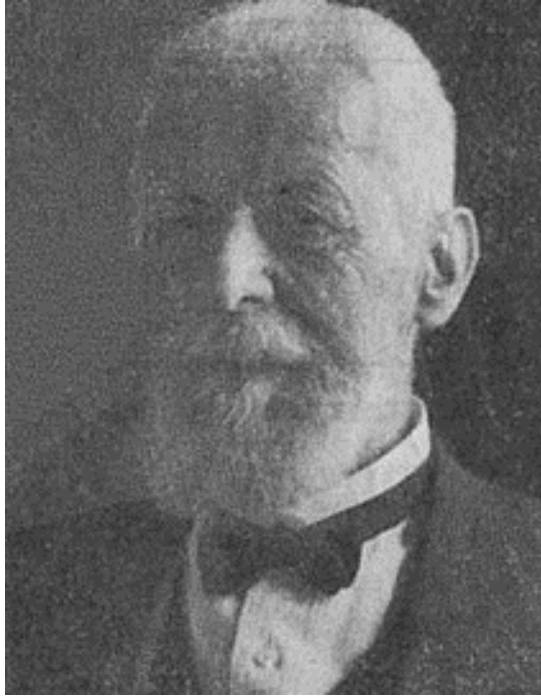
Der Brief

Spring 2022



The Newsletter of the Historical Society of North German Settlements in Western New York and Das Haus, Ein Haus und Der Stall German Heritage Museum. 2549 Niagara Road - Vergholz, Niagara Falls, NY 14304. www.dashauseum.org, dashauseum@gmail.com





Wilhelm Iwan, author, historian, and Lutheran theologian lived from 1871 until 1958. As a historian, he documented the 19th century exodus from Prussia to America and Australia by a group who sought religious freedom. In 1945 he fled from his homeland and lived the remainder of his life as a refugee in West Germany. **The English translation was published by the Trinity Freistadt Historical Society, Mequon, WI. in 2002. The full set, \$60, is available for purchase through Terry Schoessow, c/o Trinity Lutheran Church, 10729 W. Freistadt Rd, Mequon, WI 53097. The separate name index can be purchased for \$20. The documents may also be purchased through the pommerscher.org website.**

A summary of Wilhelm Iwan's *Die Altlutherische Auswanderung um die Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts*

Why did our forefathers leave their beloved homeland to venture across the sea to a foreign land where they hadn't any idea of if they would be successful or if they would end up penniless, begging on the street? We believe it was a mixture of many things that had been coming together for years that caused this dramatic decision to be made by so many families.

One of the best sources we can find is the book "old Lutheran Emigration of the mid-19th century from Eastern Germany" by Wilhelm Iwan. The following pages are the third of 4 installments that will appear in consecutive issues of Der Brief.-Ed

The immigrations of 1841 – 1842 were not as large as either 1839 or 1843, but did introduce many Lutherans into America. Even our old friend Pastor Krause decided to return with about 60 people in his group. He went to Buffalo and assumed the leadership of the congregation in Buffalo under Grabau. This lasted two months and he accepted a call from his original congregation in Wisconsin. He traveled there and in September of 1841 was installed as pastor of St Paul's congregation in Milwaukee. He served both Wisconsin parishes until June of 1842 when he and his new family of a wife and 2 daughters moved into a cabin in Freistadt. Krause walked the 30-mile round trip on Sundays to perform his pastoral duties. The first annual report gives us some insights: 37 baptisms, 27 confirmations, 15 marriages, 6 funerals, 602 received Holy Communion. In 1843 a new church was planned for the Freistadt congregation. It looks like Krause had finally found what he was looking for and settled in to the church in Freistadt for the long haul.

1843 was the peak year of the immigration and the primary year that "our" ancestors decided to come to America. The geographic areas involved many villages on both sides of the Oder River. The pastors Ehrenstrom and Kindermann were the main clergymen involved and they were staunchly for immigration. On November 1, 1842 both pastors wrote to the local authorities stating their views. From Wallmow, Ehrenstrom wrote, "The resolutions of the Synod (Breslau) contained the most blatant indifference, an ungodly submissiveness to the secular powers, an inclination toward the Union and even

acceptance of it, only a little more subtle than it is in the agenda and in the royal orders. Thus, I am in agreement with my congregation and resolved to immigrate.”

Just as a large group of his followers were leaving Prussia, Pastor Ehrenstrom was imprisoned “for arousing displeasure and dissatisfaction with the government and for insulting the Evangelical United Church”. According to witnesses Ehrenstrom was to have preached that “these priests of Baal (meaning those of the United Church) have received their calling not from God, but the king of Prussia”. Ehrenstrom seems to be the most fanatical of the Old Lutheran leaders as was born out in his later behavior in America.

The congregations for their part stated, “The reason for migration is religion alone, because the Lutheran doctrine is no longer proclaimed clearly. Because the schools and churches which formerly belonged to us are not returned to us. God has commanded us to immigrate, and God’s commands are higher than man’s. God wants it.”

Ehrenstrom was arrested on April 28, 1843 and sentenced to one year in prison for incitement and agitation of the people. This also left the people without a pastor to accompany them to America, but Kinderman stepped up and volunteered himself to travel with them.

Herr Stulpnagle was the local official in charge of talking down the immigration and working against it. He tried many tactics to obfuscate or delay the immigration including “slow walking” the permits and implementing other paperwork and rules to delay the travelers as had happened in the 1839 immigration. After one heated exchange, the people sent Krull and William to Berlin with the following message:

“Your Highness... The undersigned deputies most humbly request in the name of the Lutheran immigrants of Wallmow, Bergholz, Plowen, Angermunde, Settin, Hakenwalde, Nipperwiese, Fiddichow, and Grabow that your majesty most graciously order the following:

That those who intend to immigrate, and those who have already requested passports, be issued these passports as soon as possible.

That the minors among the immigrants also be issued their passports and paid the property due them by the courts

That the following soldiers be discharged from military service, so that they can immigrate with their parents, David Haseley stationed in Guben, August Heppner, second regiment in Settin, Glode in Garz, Friedrich Kant artillery man in Settin, Franz Pritzel in Schwedt.

The immigrants live scattered throughout the districts of Prenzlau, Angermunde, Griefenhagen, Randow, Naugard, Stargard, Konigsburg, and Kammin. Since most of them have sold or are in the process of selling their property, any further delay would bring great hardships upon them. This cannot be your majesty’s intention. We wish to leave our homeland in peace, so that we may also bless it in wistful recollection in the new homeland. Would your majesty most graciously deign to answer us personally?

Your majesty’s most humble and obedient subjects Krull and William, residing at Krausenstrasse 57 in the guest house “zum grünen Baum”.

Additionally, Stulpnagle brought up the question of money. He suggested that the true cost of the journey to America would be around 100 talers each, more if you he went on to Wisconsin. Therefore, many of the immigrant’s paperwork would be rejected due to lack of funds. However, the farmers William, Salinger, Walk and Haseley pledged sums totaling over 20,000 talers to guarantee the poorer immigrants passage. Stulpnagle had little choice but to declare the issue of money resolved. However, he did try some last-minute delaying issues that the Bergolz group had to clear up before they could leave.

The question of mandatory military service for some young men also complicated the issue. So, Herr Wenger, Kohn, Walk, Heuer, Grobengiesser and Heinrich DeVantier wrote to the secretary of war to clear up any issues. They were granted exemptions from the department of war, but Stulpnagle still felt compelled to delay the procedure by refusing to allow the young men permission to leave. It took several months, until permission was granted.

The tally of immigrants from the province of Pomerania, district of Randow is as follows:

Wallmow	105
Bergholz	61
Fharenwalde	26
Brussow	30
Falkenwalde	22
Grimm	22
Menkin	15
Schwaneberg	10
Caselow	10

Ploewen (amount unclear), Prenzlau, Zerrenthin, Tornow, Grunow, Rollberg, Woddow, and Wetzenow less than 10 each.

So, from this district there were 325 persons or more that immigrated. From the district of Kammin there were almost 400, from the district of Greifenhagen 127 (mostly from Nipperweise and Fiddichow), Regenwalde 63, Wollin 84, Settin 12 plus other smaller districts

An interesting note from the district of Greifenhagen, members of the villages of Nipperweise and several others had a particularly strong desire to immigrate as the local government has seized property from the old Lutherans there to pay for the Union pastor's pension.

In total, documents specify 1017 immigrants from Pomerania were granted permits. Adding all other travelers, 1,600 Lutherans started the journey to America in 1843.

Leaving for America

Around Pentecost in 1843 the Old Lutherans began leaving their village homes for Hamburg and then to America. Some left using a northern sea route departing from Swinemunde, some journeyed via land to Hamburg, but the majority left via the Oder river, Finow canal, and the Elbe River to Hamburg.

Around June 4th the first of the groups started to arrive in Hamburg. One of the groups negotiated passage with a ship broker for 27 taler each including food. 150 passengers departed on June 20 aboard the "Marianna". It is believed that these immigrants ended up traveling to Wisconsin.

Seeing as we are not sure exactly how many ships were required for all; we can estimate that at least 9 ships were needed for all the immigrants in this summer of 1843. A six-week voyage was considered a good voyage. The most common complaints were of seasickness and lack of fresh water. Williams tells us of his voyage, "the food was good, and there were as many biscuits as they wanted. And more meat and butter than they could eat. Three children died on the ship, two were born. On another ship which carried a few from Bergholz, five children died, including Heuer's daughter, who had been a maid for the DeVantiers".

Once they landed in New York, they made arrangements to get to Albany via the Hudson River on a steamboat. After that, they could get to Buffalo via the railroad or on the Erie Canal depending on how much money you had left at this point.

Upon arrival in Buffalo, Grabau, von Rohr and other Lutheran brethren greeted them warmly. When they told von Rohr that the canal boat captain had overcharged them, he immediately called a judge and had the captain arrested until he repaid what was owed.

They stayed in Buffalo 4 weeks. During this time there were several meetings to decide what they wanted and where to settle. Two main groups formed, one under Ehrenstrom's (Grabau would take care of them until Ehrenstrom arrived) leadership decided to stay in the Buffalo area and the other under Kinderman decided to move on to Wisconsin and found a new settlement near Freistadt. It turned out that the New York group was much larger and immediately started searching for an appropriate location. William and von Rohr were put in charge of the task. Five regions were visited:

Cattaraugus County on the southern shore of Lake Erie. Farms going at \$7-\$15 per acre.

In the so-called Indian bush, 5-7 miles north of Buffalo stood native forest available for \$10 per acre.

About 20 miles south of Buffalo in the Town of Eden. The land costing about the same.

Likewise, north of Buffalo in the so-called north bush \$10 per acre.

Town of Wheatfield in Niagara County. A plot of land with good wheat soil, like in the homeland costs \$9 per acre.

At a meeting to finalize the purchase it was decided to choose the land near Lockport for its excellent location even though the price was higher. Before the final vote was taken it was decided to postpone the meeting until the morning. When reassembled it was decided to select the Wheatfield property. Von Rohr warned that the land was low and wet, but vigorous cultivation and skillful drainage made the choice a good one.

The immigrants purchased 2000 acres from Washington Hunt under von Rohr's leadership. The land was divided into large and small farm lots and sold to members of the group at \$9 per acre in an order determined by lottery. In the middle of the settlement 100 1-acre plots were set aside for the residents. There were extra lots available but not for long. As early as 1846 the settlement numbered more than 100 families.



Circa 1857

The following page is included here as it is written in Iwan's volume I. The readers of Der Brief will no doubt be interested in all of this material as it covers our primary settlements here in WNY. (More pages will be included in the next and final issue)

and small farms and sold to the members of the congregation at \$9 per acre in an order determined by lottery. In the middle of the settlement, a plot of land 100 acres in size was set aside for the establishment of a village. These 100 acres were then divided into 100 lots, equal in size, of which each settler received one. A number of lots were left open for any new settlers. But room was tight even with the large number of lots set aside for the village. This soon became evident, when as early as 1846 the village numbered more than 100 families (15). Each lot cost \$9 to \$15. The poorer settlers received the land on credit for ten years. In this manner, everyone at first had a place to build and to settle. But the congregation did even more to ensure the poorer settlers an opportunity to settle inexpensively later as well, before the price of land rose. They bought an additional 600 acres at \$8 to \$9 per acre along the so-called Ward Road and issued each of the poorer settlers a share by lottery, again on credit for ten years. This later led to the settlement of Johannsburg.

The entire settlement was organized in the following manner. The small farmers and workers lived together around the church and school. Church services were held in a barn constructed for that purpose until 1846, while the schoolhouse was erected at the same time as the first log houses in the village. Nearby land was then issued to small landowners, and the perimeter was left for the large farmers. If the day laborers did not have enough work on the farms, they could work on their own land. They could cultivate it, i.e. "clear" it, as tree-felling was called in technical terms. They could then sell the wood gained by this as lumber or firewood in the city of Buffalo, thus earning a little money in the process. Once the land was cleared, they could sell their property in the village for \$80 to \$100 and plant crops on their small farm. In this way even the poor settlers could pay their travel costs and their property and at the same time make themselves self-sufficient.

William particularly emphasized the importance of wood in his letter (192). He said it could easily be transported down the canal to Buffalo. The land was still thickly wooded with oaks, beeches, walnut trees and species he was not familiar with. The cartwright Hofmeister was just ecstatic about how beautiful the wood on his land was for making wheels. He told his stepson Fritz Kant, who had been forced to stay in Germany to serve actively in the military, in a letter that he could use him in his shop and told him to come over after completing his service. Elsewhere it is written of the land there, that the soil is black on top and clay underneath--first-class farmland. Johann William writes that he bought 130 acres at \$9 a piece, and his brother bought 150, and both still had money left to buy more land, which they did not do for three reasons. Clearing the land took a great deal of work, and the helpers received very high wages. And finally, the money they were able to lend brought interest rates of 7 percent.

That was the newly established colony of *Neu-Bergholz*, which lay four miles north of Buffalo and not far from the canal. Unfortunately, William does not

A Different Topic -

The Mystery of the St. Mark's bell !

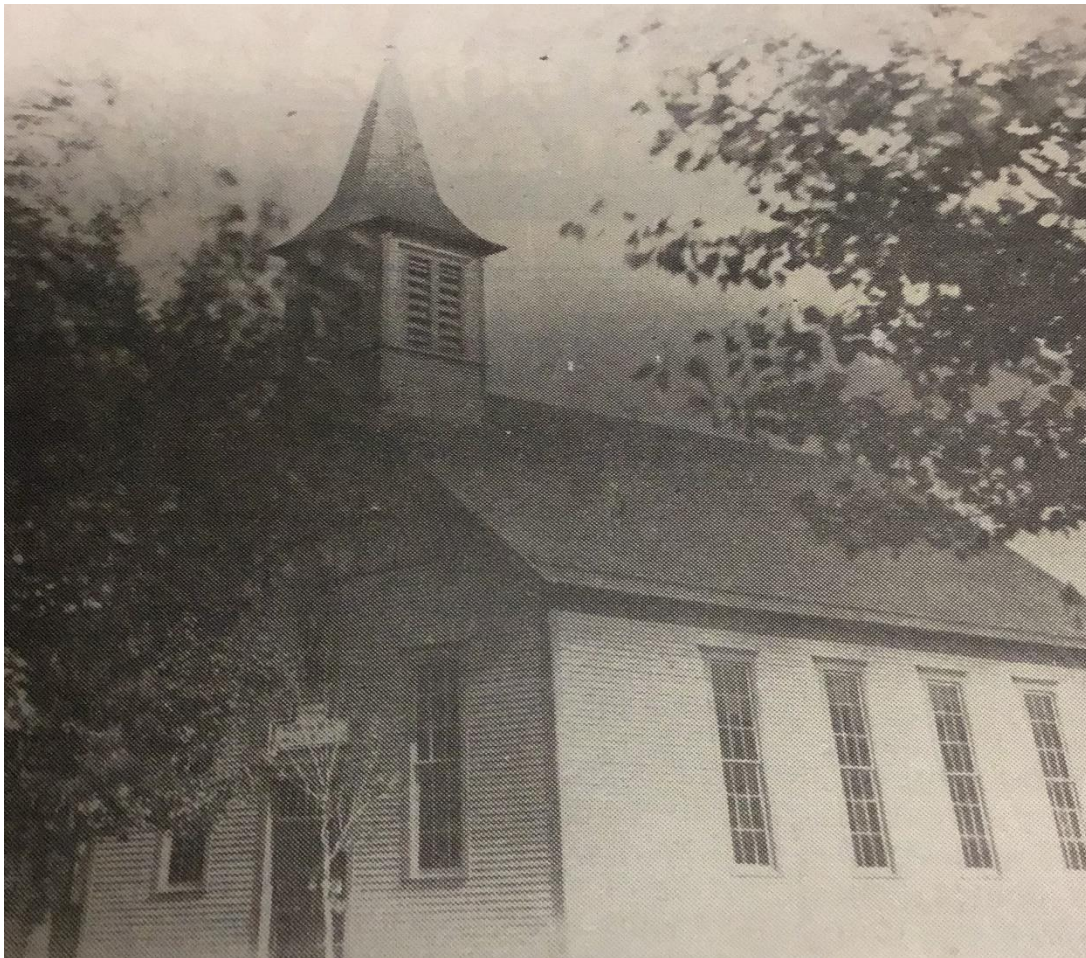
(A note from St. Mark's files)

1898 - "THE CHURCH BELL WAS PURCHASED
FROM HOLY CRIST, BERGMOLZ". THE INSCRIPTION
ON THE BELL, IN GERMAN READS:
"O EARTH, HEAR THE WORD OF THE LORD"

(THIS COULD BE THE BELL FROM TRINITY
BERGMOLZ, WHICH DISSOLVED IN 1889)

MAYBE THEIR OLD RECORDS ON ST MARK
READ, BELL PURCHASED FROM BERGMOLZ AND THEY
ASSUMED IT WAS HOLY CRIST.

(CONTINUED
ON NEXT PAGE)



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The old 1891 St. Marcus church on Washington St., N. Tonawanda

I received the hand written document above from Ruth Camann Voelker a while back and have tried to research it off and on for almost 2 years now. It was from her father's (Eugene Camann) files and it presents a little puzzle from the past. As indicated in the notes above and in other St. Mark's documents, the church bell for the original St. Mark's on Washington St. (not the current St. Marks on Oliver St.) was purchased from another church in Bergholz. The question is, which Lutheran church? The note above says Holy Ghost, but in 1891 there were three Lutheran churches in Bergholz, Holy Ghost, Trinity and St. Jacobi.

A relative of this editor, Paul Kolbe, a lifetime member of St. Marks, and the church historian, Jerry Waldkoetter have been helping to shed more light on this issue, but at this point, we are all unsure of what might have taken place.

Here is a partial timeline.

1847 – The first Holy Ghost church is built. 100 X 50', it is the largest church in Niagara Co. at the time.

1856 – A steeple is added.

1867 - Holy Ghost congregation splits into Holy Ghost and Trinity.

1871 – Trinity (The brick church) is built in Bergholz on Cayuga St. It has a brick steeple and a 600-pound bell is installed.

1876 – St. Jacobi church is built on Rohr St.

1889 – Trinity is disbanded and merged with St. Jacobi

1891 – St Marcus is built

1906 – Plans are started for a new Holy Ghost church.

1907 – In February the last service in the old Holy Ghost and the first service in the new Holy Ghost are held.

Footnote: The Trinity "Brick Church" according to a newspaper article that was found was still up for sale in 1891.

The current St. Mark Church on Oliver Street was opened in 1942. The Washington Street (old church) location was torn down in 1943 and there is a photo of the workers removing the bell from the old church bell tower. That would indicate that the bell would not be the same as the one in the new church. It would be hard to believe that the new church did not have a new bell installed in the tower when they were building it.

Paul has the specifications of the current St. Mark's Church building that were proposed from the architectural firm that had been used which contain the instructions for the construction materials and references to the structure's features. There are no references to the bell. So, no help there.

Paul and Jerry are not 100% positive that the bell pictured below (current bell) is original to the Oliver St. building or if it came from the first Church building that was on Washington St., but it seems very likely that there was a new bell with the new church. The Church bell is inscribed with "St. Marcus" on it, and it looks like North Tonawanda as well. Jerry Waldkoetter informs us that in 1943 the Trustees of St. Mark legally changed the name of St. Mark from St. Marcus to St. Mark. I believe due to the War going on to remove the German name to English. Of course, it takes time to cast a bell so I am sure that they started that process in 1941 to have it ready for the 1942 installation.

The current St. Mark's bell !



Having little other information, it seems the answer to the mystery might go along these lines. The original bell in the first St. Marcus church was probably from Trinity church, not Holy Ghost. The Trinity bell was unused at the exact time that St. Marcus was being erected and the timing would seem to be a perfect fit as Holy Ghost was still 15 years away from planning for a new church and probably would not be interested in removing their bell. The additional St. Marcus first church tear down information would indicate that the Trinity bell, or other bell, was installed at St. Marcus and served for many years until it was removed in 1943 when the congregation moved to the current church on Oliver. What happened to it remains for others to investigate and complete the rest of the story.

Upcomming Events –

April General Meeting - 4/21/22, Wheatfield Community Center, **7:00 PM.** Easter Traditions and memories.

Das Haus Opens for season – May 1, 2022, 2-4PM

May General Meeting - 5/19/22, Wheatfield Community Center, **7:00 PM** Overview of the publications available through the historical society by Ruth Voelker.

June General Meeting - 6/16/22, Wheatfield Community Center, **7:00 PM** Topic TBD.

PLEASE REMEMBER YOUR MEMBERSHIP DONATION OF \$20 OR MORE WAS DUE ON APRIL 1, 2022

Der Brief is published quarterly by the Historical Society of North German Settlements in Western New York, Das Haus und Der Stall German Heritage Museum, 2549 Niagara Road, Niagara Falls, New York 14304. (716) 795-2890. We are a 501 c 3 organization. Email address: dashauseum@gmail.com, web address: www.dashauseum.org. © All Rights Reserved. The editor and President of the Historical Society is John Schultz. John Milleville is Vice President, George Camann is Treasurer, Martha Haseley is the Secretary. Other board members are June Stenzel, Dianne Retzlaff, Dorthy Kew, Ruth Camann, Don Schroeder, Cindy Sileo, Richard Williams, Justin Higner, Ruth Voelker, Lois Wiseman, and Elaine Timm.

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The Historical Society welcomes new members! If you find our newsletter and our mission interesting we hope that you will make a membership contribution and join us. Our mission is to educate adults and children concerning the heritage of the nineteenth century settlements of North Germans in western New York, and thus to preserve that heritage. We do this by preserving the history, artifacts, documents, manuscripts, publications, photographs, Plattdeutsch anecdotes, crafts and customs of these hearty immigrants, their descendants and the communities in which they lived.

We maintain Das Haus und Der Stall German Heritage Museum, sponsor an annual dinner, hold informative monthly meetings with special speakers, offer for sale books and other items published by the Society, and distribute Der Brief, our quarterly publication to 29 States and 3 foreign countries.

If you would like to become a member of our society, please fill out this form and send it to the address indicated.

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