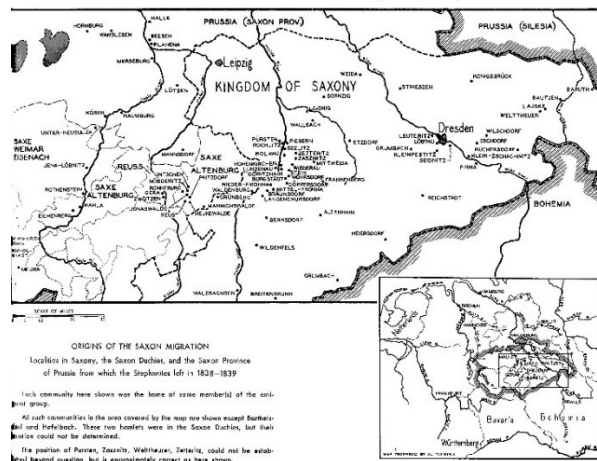


“The Conditions in Germany Leading to the Emigration”

When we think of the Saxon Immigration to Missouri, much of the focus is, naturally, placed on the person of Martin Stephan. However, there were several other factors that also led these people to emigrate from Germany to North America. This presentation will look at how Rationalism and Pietism, the Prussian Union, the Napoleonic Wars, and the Industrial Revolution came together to create a climate that made this group of Lutherans decide that leaving their homeland and following Martin Stephan to the New World was a good idea. Rationalism and Pietism changed the face of Lutheranism away from its historic roots. Each, in their own way, watered down the pure proclamation of the Gospel. With Rationalism taking over the official church structures in Saxony and elsewhere, the authority of the Bible. Pietism offered a more biblical, but legalistic alternative that often crushed the spirits of devout Christians. Then the Prussian Union of 1817 also played a huge role in pushing these Lutherans to fear that their faith would be forcibly changed. Finally, there were a couple of non-religious factors that made life in Germany harder for these people, including the Napoleonic Wars and the restructuring of Germany in their aftermath. Finally, we will also see that the Industrial Revolution put many of these individuals out of work and ready to seek their fortunes elsewhere.

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“Saxon Voyage to Perry County, 1839”

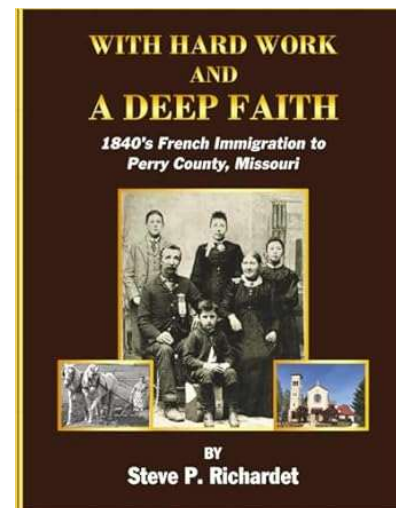
Perry County was largely settled by English, Irish, German, and French immigrants. The French and German immigration are similar in that both groups came primarily seeking religious freedom and a better life. The Germans from Saxony arrived in 1839, followed by the French from the Doubs region during the 1840's. The story of the Saxon voyage is filled with intrigue, dramatic tales of seemingly insurmountable challenges and personal fortitude. Their story is a living testament to tenacity and determination to establish a settlement and survive. The Saxon's presence greatly influenced Perry County's cultural development regarding religion, agriculture and local politics.

Steve P. Richardet retired after a thirty-four-year public school teaching career. Richardet taught American History, Government, and Civics. He received a Bachelor of Science in Education, a Master of Arts in Educational Administration, and a Master of Arts in History from Southeast Missouri State University. Born and raised in Perryville, Missouri, Steve Richardet has spent his entire life in Southeast Missouri devoted to education and history. His roots were heavily influenced by the rich traditions of the French and German social, religious, and historical culture across Southeast Missouri.

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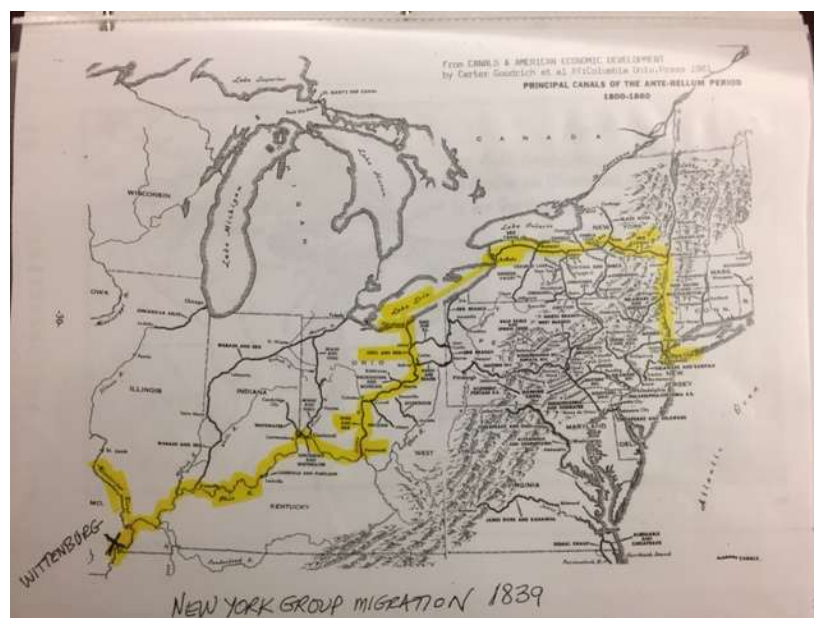


“German Trans-Migration: The Journey of the New York Group”

The “New York Group” of around 100 people traveled from New York City to join the Saxon Immigrants in Perry County in May of 1839. Their amazingly quick trip of 26 days by railroads, canals, and rivers utilized the latest technologies available at that time. This presentation is an update on this topic that was given at the Immigration History Conference in 2012.

Ken Craft is a retired Director of Coca-Cola, USA, from the Atlanta, Georgia area. He has been doing genealogical research for over 35 years and has traced family back seven generations in five U.S. state plus ten generations of German roots including three on-site research trips to Germany. He has authored and co-authored numerous volumes of indexes for Ohio County and Brooke County in West Virginia. He is also the author of several in-depth group migration studies from various areas of the old German Empire. Ken is also the founder of the Zion Roots research center at the Lutheran Heritage Center and Museum in Altenburg, Missouri.

Ken’s wife’s Noennig ancestors were members of the original Stephan immigration to Perry County which came from Germany to the USA by traveling on the sailing ship *Copernicus*, departing from Bremerhaven Germany on 3 Nov 1838 and arriving in New Orleans LA on 31 Dec 1838, the trip taking 59 days. They then traveled on the steamboat *Rienzi* from New Orleans LA to St Louis MO, arriving in St Louis on 19 Jan 1839. After staying in St Louis from January to April 1839, this family moved to East Perry County MO in May 1839.



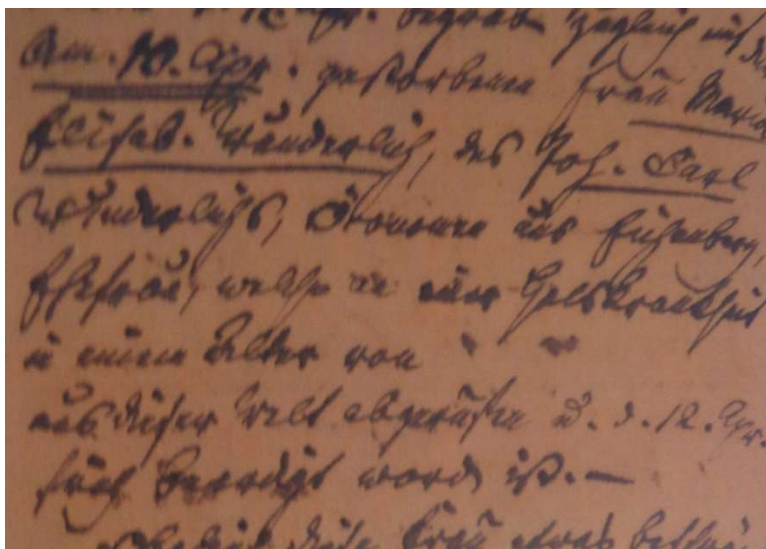
“Using Artificial Intelligence Tools to Aid in Translating Old German Handwriting”

Many of us who are interested in the early history of this area are eager to read documents written by early settlers. Whether these are official church records, personal correspondence, diaries, etc., a stumbling block has been that the documents were written in a now-obsolete Gothic script. Recent advances in the rapidly growing field of artificial intelligence make machine translation of historical documents conceivable. Hand-written text recognition software has improved significantly. A document written by Pastor G.H. Löber in 1844 - "Nachrichten an unsere Nachkommen" or "Messages to our descendants", and previously translated by others, is used as a test case to illustrate the process of using AI tools for translation.

Kathy Palisch Berkbigler retired as a software team leader at Los Alamos National Laboratory, Los Alamos, New Mexico. Her long-standing interest in AI stems from this time in her career. Her entire career was in that field as she and her husband Dean were among the pioneers in Artificial Intelligence. She started her career as a software developer at Sandia National Laboratory, Livermore, California.

She has a B.A. in Mathematics from the University of Missouri – Columbia and an M.S. in Computer Science from the University of Missouri – Rolla.

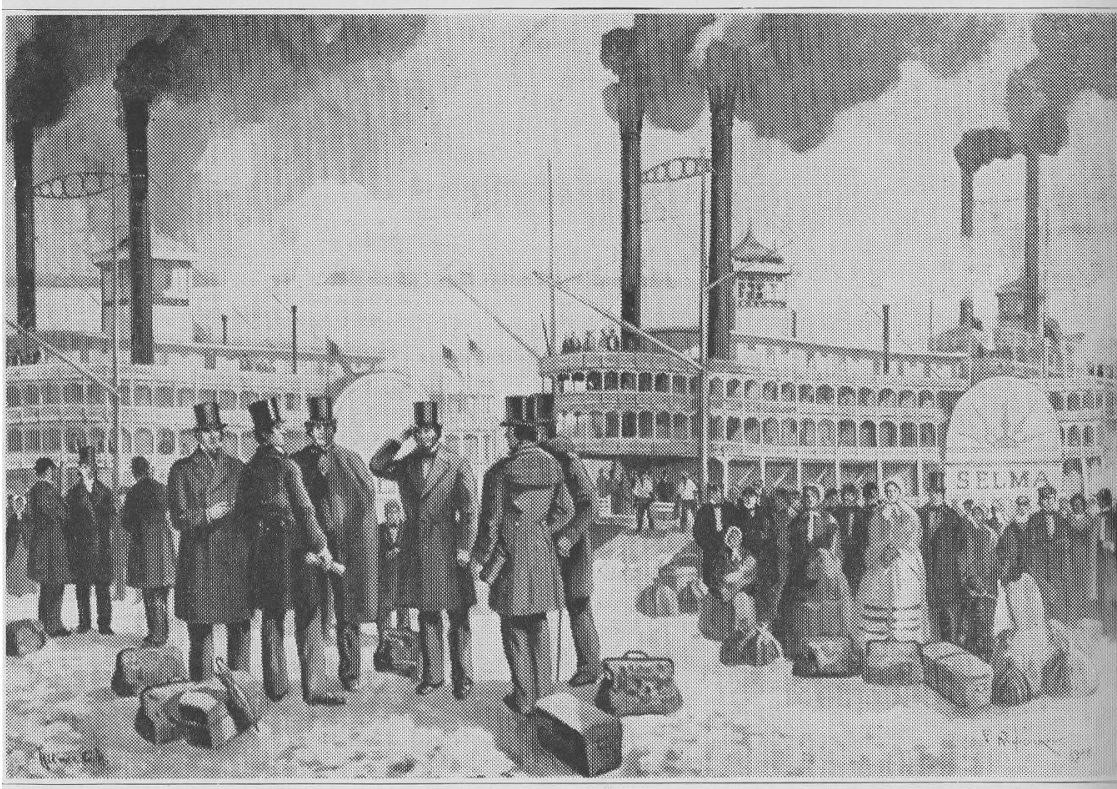
Kathy is a descendant of 18 members of the 1839 immigrations with family names: Palisch, Fiehler, Grother, Haecker, Bock, Engert, Weber, and Kaempfe. Later immigrant family names include: Stueve, Meyr, Wichern, Doberenz, and Herchert.



“The Saxons in Saint Louis in 1839”

The Saxons arrived in St. Louis in the winter of 1839 as a temporary stop on their way to Perry County, but their experience there was not what they expected. Conditions were harsh and very challenging for them. We will look at what St. Louis was like at that point in the history of the city.

Carl S. Eisman is a retired Lutheran educator. He has a Master of Arts in Education from Concordia Chicago and a Master of Science in Educational Administration from Concordia Wisconsin. He worked as a Missionary Teacher in Nigeria and as a Lutheran High School Teacher and Administrator in New York City, Baltimore, and Milwaukee. He also served on various District and Synodical Committees. He now serves as a docent at the Lutheran Heritage Center and Museum.



“The Land of Milk and Honey? - Perry County, Missouri in 1839”

Many of us know the story of the Saxon Immigration to this area in 1839 and the other groups of German emigrants that settled in the area, but what do we know about the earlier history of this county and what were the conditions here when the Saxons arrived. This presentation will look at multiple histories and documents that will give us some insight into what the Saxons found when they settled here.

Fred M. Eggers is a retired accountant and a member of the Research Staff at the Lutheran Heritage Center and Museum. He also holds several voluntary positions with several community organizations. He has Business Administration Degrees with an Accounting Major from St. John's Lutheran College and Southeast Missouri State University and has done Graduate Studies in Management at Southeast Missouri State University. He worked in accounting positions in public accounting and the aircraft industry, and as Controller and Chief Financial Officer in three hospitals over a twenty-five-year period before his retirement. In retirement he does genealogical and other historical research, an interest he inherited from his father who served as the Probate Judge of Perry County for twenty-eight years.

His Great Grandmother Hopper immigrated in 1853 to join her other family members that were part of the Gruber Group that arrived in 1839. The Eggers family arrived in Altenburg in 1842 and were one of the first families from the Kingdom of Hanover to settle in the area. His Versemann, Holmann, Mangels, and Soehl ancestors were all part of the later chain immigration (1866-1868) from the Lamstedt and Scheeßel areas.

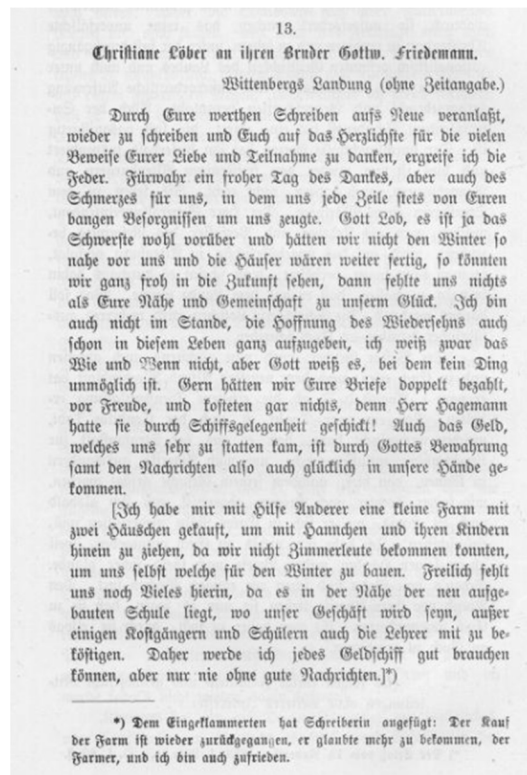


“Life for the Immigrants in a New Land – Perry County, Missouri”

We will see what life was like based on the stories of the ancestors as written in various books, papers, histories, and personal lore.

Patricia E. Borgman is a retired Registered Nurse. Pat serves as Secretary of the LaBelle Cemetery Association in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin and is a Member of the Board of Church Properties for St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. She has a Diploma from the Deaconess Hospital School of Nursing in St. Louis, a BSN from St. Louis University, and an MSN from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. She has worked as a Registered Nurse at Deaconess Hospital, St. Louis; St. Mary's Hospital and Home, Winsted, Minnesota; Gaylord Community Hospital, Gaylord, Minnesota; and Memorial Hospital at Oconomowoc, Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. Then as a Geriatric Clinical Nurse Specialist and Occupational Health Nurse at Lutheran Homes of Oconomowoc, Oconomowoc, Wisconsin.

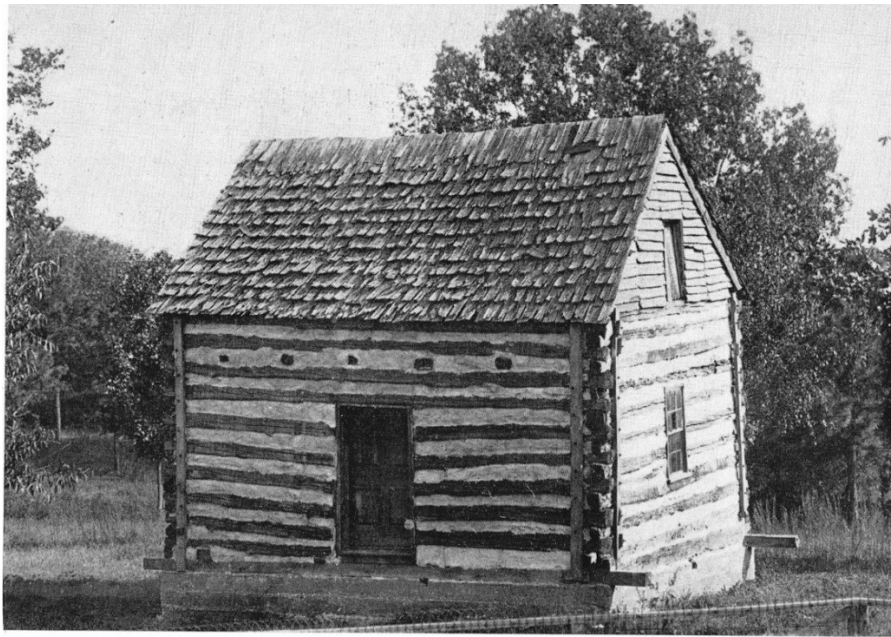
Pat's mother, Edna Meyr, was born and raised in Altenburg. Her maternal line families were from Altenburg, Germany and Austria. They are Meyr, Schliemadinger, Ebner, Steiglerin, Fischer, Hoffmann, Bode, Haecker, Pleyl, Haergert, Ottstadts, Palisch, Petzoldt, Kaempfe, Boehme, Schultzen, Weineck, Schlimpert, and Poppitz.



“The Altenburg Debate”

Immigrating to a new country, especially trying to eke out a living in an undeveloped area, is a challenge for all who have done it. However, the Saxon immigrants to Perry County had a challenge above and beyond survival such as the Pilgrims had. For this group of Lutheran immigrants there was also the looming question of legitimacy and wondering if they had been placed under God’s wrath. This made every hardship, every illness, every death much harder to process. In order for them to transition from just surviving to settling and ultimately thriving, key theological questions needed to be answered. Were they still Christians? Did they sin in leaving Germany? Did repentance require returning to Germany? Could they be legitimately considered a church and therefore able to move forward as God’s people in a new land? At the Altenburg debate, C. F. W. Walther addressed the concerns with a series of theses. This presentation will look at the reasons for the debate, events that led up to it, and the key answers that Walther provided.

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“Perry County Agriculture, 1840 - 1860 “

The Saxons arrived in Perry County in 1839. Many of them took to a life of subsistence farming. Their initial efforts at farming lasted into the 1860's, pushing the industry from the subsistent level into market economies. Today Perry County's agricultural economy is a \$350 million industry employing upward of 6,000 people.

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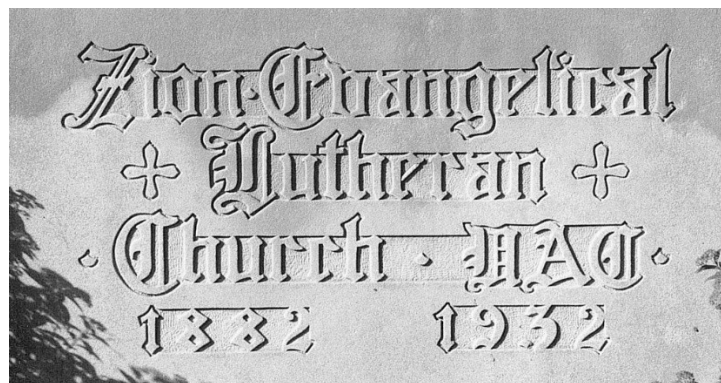


“The Lutheran Churches of the U.A.C.: How our Buildings Confess the Faith”

How closely do you look at the different churches you visit, especially old ones? A lot of times you might be looking at tall Gothic windows, tall, beautiful steeples, or stunning, intricate designs of stained-glass windows. Or you might notice cornerstones or transom windows and what they say: the language, the official name of the church, and the year the building was constructed. Sometimes when I have looked at these cornerstones and windows, I’ve noticed some of them contain the letters “U.A.C.” What does “U.A.C.” stand for? Why was it important to our forefathers to give them a distinctive display on their houses of worship? How often was this practice used in the LCMS? What lessons can the church of today learn from this example? Join me as I try to answer these and some other questions.

Faron Bartens is a Records Analyst for the Records Management Program of the Missouri Secretary of State’s office in Jefferson City, Missouri. He has a B.S. in Historic Preservation (2020) and an M.A. in Public History: Historic (2022), both from Southeast Missouri State University; Received certification as a Certified Archivist from the Academy of Certified Archivists (2024). He has worked as a Field Archivist for the Local Records Program of the Missouri State Archives, Missouri Secretary of State from June 2022 until May 2025. Brief stint as a Legal Assistant on the Bankruptcy Unit in the Missouri Department of Revenue’s General Counsel’s Office from July 2025 through August 2025.

Faron’s connection to the Saxon Immigration, “I first heard of the Saxon Immigration in high school, but I became very involved in its history when I became a student at Southeast Missouri State University. I spent many hours volunteering at the Saxon Lutheran Memorial and Lutheran Heritage Center & Museum, completed internships at both sites, and briefly served on the advisory board at the Saxon Lutheran Memorial. I also did other research projects concerning the Saxon Immigration and presented at the 2021 Immigration Conference.”



“The ABC’s of German Genealogy”

There’s a whole wide world of German Genealogy resources beyond Ancestry and FamilySearch. Let’s explore some of them from A-Z as we ‘phone a friend’ (so to speak) and explore German internet websites to help tackle some of our brick wall issues.

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“Q and A on the Saxon Immigration Holdings of Concordia Historical Institute”

Concordia Historical Institute, as the Department of Archives and History of the LCMS, holds and maintains the Saxon Immigration Collection, 1811-2012. The collection contains records of pre-emigration, emigration, post-emigration, centennial, correspondence and financial records. It should also not be forgotten that there are others who emigrated from Saxony to the United States.

Mark J. Bliese is the Reference and Research Supervisor/IT Manager at the Concordia Historical Institute on the campus of Concordia Seminary in Saint Louis. He studied at the North Central Technical Institute, Wausau, Wisconsin (1977-1978); the University of Wisconsin Marathon Campus, Wausau, Wisconsin (1978-1980); Concordia College, St. Paul, Minnesota (BA 1984); and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri (1983-1986). He has worked at Concordia Seminary Library, St. Louis, Missouri (1986-2011); Help Desk Manager, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri (2011-2012); and the Concordia Historical Institute from 2012 to the present.

