

Jumps through the window; Is fired at. Starck saw the men coming. He jumped through a window, breaking the glass and frame to pieces. Three shots were fired in the direction of the fleeing preacher and he stopped. One of his sons, a young man at this juncture undertook to defend his father's actions and was knocked down and badly beaten.

Rope about Starck's neck A rope was quickly placed about Starck's neck and he was dragged to a tree. His wife, screaming, came out of the house and while running to overtake her husband and his captors, fell in faint in the road.

Starck's nerve, which has excited the admiration if not the approval of the people of the community, never left him. Men in the crowd declare he exhibited a degree of nerve never before witnessed or heard of.

"Men, you are doing your duty," Starck declared to his captors as they led him to the tree with the rope about his neck. A single moment's feeling of remorse for his treasonable actions appeared to have overcome him. Still he was defiant and unwilling to make amends for his many disloyal and treasonable acts.

Rev. Van Dran Addresses the crowd. The condition of Rev. Starck's wife saved his life. She was found to be in a really pitiable state due to the exciting incidents of the afternoon and evening and fainted several times.

While looking after Mrs. Starck there was a pause in the proceedings and the crowd halted in the vicinity of the tree where it was proposed to hang the German preacher.

Here Rev. Van Dran addressed the crowd. He did not attempt to apologize for Starck for none have been more emphatic in their condemnation of Starck's conduct. Moderation, however, was pleaded and Rev. Van Dran agreed to see to that Starck and his family left the place at once. This was accepted by the crowd in a very little time after the crowd had left there, Starck and his family were on their way. Where they went is not known.

Another man escapes. It was full intention of the citizens to visit another man in this section whose actions incensed the loyal people of the community but in the excitement he was forgotten and escaped.

An Audubon merchant is also scheduled for a visit from the people who have determined that Audubon County is to be rid of its undesirable and treasonable persons, and other raids are expected to be made late today or tonight.

Not a person in the community has expressed regret over the occurrences of yesterday and last night although many say they are glad that no lives were taken, but declare that the action of the people should be a warning to all disloyal persons.

The next time there will be no mock lynchings. The next time the offenders will be summarily dealt with.

Officers save Tenekheig's life Sheriff Wilson and Marshal Peterson Hang to the Rope

By a staff reporter
Audubon, Iowa, December 27 - Talks with a number of people who witnessed the attempted lynching of Rev. W.A. Starck and Fred Tenekheig here Wednesday night indicate that Tenekheig owes his life in all probability to Sheriff Wilson and Marshall Dan Peterson. When Tenekheig came out of the bank with the sheriff he did so after a warning from the sheriff that it might not be safe. He had asked the sheriff if he would be given protection. The sheriff told him that he would be protected to the best of his ability. Tenekheig asked if the sheriff had a gun and the latter said he had one for himself, but none for him. No sooner had they emerged from the bank than a young man sprang at the prisoner. When the rope was placed around his neck the mob started to make a run thinking to take up the slack with such violence as to strangle the prisoner. Marshall Peterson and the sheriff took most of the force of the pull and thus saved Tenekheig's life.

It was discovered this morning that there were not sufficient funds in the bank account of Tenekheig to pay the \$1000 check at the time it was given, but a \$10,000 loan came from Colorado this morning and that is being held.

It is said that of the three men who were leaders in the attempt against the life of Tenekheig, one has a son in France, another has a brother there, while the third is subject to the draft and likely to be called soon. Tenekheig went to Hamlin from here and thence to Atlantic, but whether he left Atlantic is not known.

Posted guards on the road. The mob evidently had made careful preparations to guard against surprise at the home of Preacher Starck. They not only went armed, but had posted details of armed men on the roads leading to the home, fearing that members of Starck's congregation might make an armed demonstration on his behalf.

State Agent Yackey says that the reason these men were not taken to the federal authorities at Council Bluffs was that the evidence was not sufficient to hold them, in his opinion.

Starck has a family of nine or ten children.

The council had been called to investigate "murmurings" against several citizens "known to have German sympathies," as one specific-shy reporter summed up the situation. The presiding judge—for lack of a better term—was Robert C. Spencer, editor of the Audubon Advocate, former mayor of the town, an active Democrat and devout Presbyterian, and the grandson of a Civil War veteran. Except, perhaps, for his politics, he epitomized the stalwart American.

In contrast, the loyalty to America of the two men against whom he was asked to lead the inquest would have been questioned even if they had walked around every day wrapped in Old Glory herself. Reverend Ernest J. W. Starck was the pastor of the

Evangelical Lutheran Church, a German parish located in the Lincoln Township community of Gray, just across the county line from Carroll. He was born in West Prussia in 1862 before immigrating with his parents at the age of two. He graduated from seminary in Springfield, Illinois, a couple of years after he wed another

German native, Elizabeth, whose two sisters were still residents in the land of what was now America's staunchest enemy. Starck was "on trial" alongside a farmer named Fred Tennigkeit. A wealthy bachelor, Tennigkeit was born in Germany but found success in America as a farmer, buying 160 acres of land just a few miles east of Audubon.

The crowd of spectators that afternoon was large and near connotation. The stirring memory of sixty-five young men leaving to go fight just a few days before was still all too present in their minds.

If they didn't enter that extrajudicial tribunal aware they wanted blood, then they certainly did with thirst for a very warped form of justice.

One by one, members of the community, presumably respectable, presumably with bios like Spencer's, recounted alleged instances of disloyalty by the two defendants. Starck, already seen as a traitor by many for simply preaching in German, something he had done prior to the war without raising any objection, was further accused of "inciting insurrection and sedition" for selling German thrift stamps. Throughout the whole proceeding Starck adamantly denied every charge, defending himself eloquently while "looking into the faces of the determined men before him, refusing to do their bidding." Tennigkeit was accused of the crime known as "slackerism"—the failure to fully join in the common sacrifice war required.

He had never been married and had no children and he was just thirty years old. The Council of Defense estimated his net worth at somewhere between \$40,000 and \$50,000, yet could find no record of him contributing more than a measly three dollars to the war effort: one dollar to the YMCA and two to the Red Cross. He apparently had yet to purchase a single Liberty Bond.

He was further accused of making what were universally termed "pro-German utterances"—either an unspecified critique of a recent Red Cross fundraising drive or a statement to the effect that the United States was fighting on the wrong side, or possibly both.

No one seemed quite sure. After hearing the charges, the members of the council went into a private session to deliberate over what punishment to give Starck and Tennigkeit. It had to be severe, they knew that much. They'd seen the state of the crowd that had come out to see the trial and felt the oppressive tension during the meeting. Theirs wasn't an enviable job. They knew that whatever they meted out would seem soft to the county's most red-blooded patriots who, they worried, might take action of their own.

When they left their private session, their fears were proven founded. They announced that Starck would be forced to leave Audubon County within three days and could never return. Tennigkeit, meanwhile, was threatened with arrest unless he immediately purchased, depending on the accounts, either \$1,000 or \$5,000 worth of Liberty Bonds—an amount, regardless of the figure, that he claimed was more than he could afford.

The first confirmation that the crowd of onlookers intended more than mere intimidation occurred as Tennigkeit was being led out of the Commercial Club by one of the council's associates.

Instead of continuing to assault him with jeers and accusations, one man decided to make a physical declaration of hate: he leaped forward from the crowd and punched Tennigkeit under the chin, laying him out flat. The blow was powerful enough to shatter Tennigkeit's defiance, and when he recovered he told the mob, which now numbered at least one hundred, that he would head straight to the First National Bank on Main Street. To ensure he could fulfill his promise, someone went to fetch the cashier to reopen the bank, which had already closed for the day. Meanwhile, Reverend Starck took advantage of the distraction and hurried home. He would come to regret not fleeing further.

While Tennigkeit was in the bank, he decided he'd buy \$1,000 worth of treasury bonds. As he was doing so, word spread through the shops up and down Audubon's short, steep main street that a German sympathizer, a man believed to be supporting the country slaughtering young American boys, was in the bank receiving his coupance. As the mob swelled—it was estimated to have reached between two hundred and six hundred people by then—indignation rose along with it. What fueled their ire was the realization that this "pro-German," a man reputedly worse than thankless for everything America had given him, was about to get away for a mere \$1,000. These men and women, wrought sleepless over worry for their sons, grandsons, and nephews sent off to a war they took every chance to support, were likely wondering how Tennigkeit's reluctant and paltry pledge was in any way comparable to their and their families' sacrifices. Their actions next supplied the answer: it wasn't.

At some point members of the mob realized that with Tennigkeit inside the bank, a few hundred men out front, and a contingent of about a hundred sent around back, they had the slacker surrounded. The door to the bank was locked and they weren't about to destroy any patriotic citizen's property, but they could wait. And wait they did. For two hours Tennigkeit paced through the bank lobby, hoping the mob would go away. He would later say he passed the time socializing with the cashier trapped inside with him; the cashier remembered it differently: "I'd just as soon entertain the Kaiser as him," he later retorted. Finally Tennigkeit decided the horde outside had no intention of dispersing, so he called the sheriff—future Prohibition agent Benjamin Franklin Wilson—for help. Wilson arrived quickly and was let inside the bank lobby.

By then it was six or seven at night. The weather was mild, the winter sun had set, and a tiny sliver of moon cast down its light through gaps in the clouded sky. Tennigkeit implored Wilson to protect him against the mob outside and even to deputize a handful of citizens to safely escort him home. But given the numbers, "excited" to "hatred and animosity" against him, as Tennigkeit would later describe them, Wilson claimed that was impossible.

"Give me a gun, then, and I will protect myself," Tennigkeit demanded. But Wilson refused. Instead he told Tennigkeit his only option was to make some gesture that would mollify the crowd.

Wilson said he thought that if Tennigkeit agreed to make an additional contribution to the Red Cross the mob would let him leave freely. "I have already done something," Tennigkeit protested. "I just bought a Liberty Bond." As Wilson and Tennigkeit debated about what to do, the bank's cashier began to fret that the mob would try to break in if Tennigkeit didn't soon leave. Eventually Wilson told Tennigkeit he had to go and began escorting the farmer to the door.

As soon as Tennigkeit crossed the threshold, the mob pushed forward. "Come here, you German son of a bitch," a man in the crowd called out. In most accounts, Tennigkeit was reported to have been torn from Wilson's grip, but in the version Tennigkeit would later tell the court, Wilson willingly turned him over. Tennigkeit even claimed Wilson declared "Here is the man you want" as he did so.

Regardless, Tennigkeit, no matter how much he struggled, couldn't possibly escape. He was the mob's prisoner, and they were ready to mete out punishment. First the men in the mob looped a rope around his neck, then they started dragging him up the steep hill of Broadway toward the tree-filled city park about a block away. Some in the crowd thought they should just toss the open end of the rope over a branch and be done with it. Such a hanging, they argued, would surely put a stop to any more disloyalty.

But they were dissuaded from such an extreme measure by calmer voices. After the block-long dragging, however, Tennigkeit had fallen unconscious and looked to many as though he might die anyway.

For an hour a doctor worked to revive him. Finally he started to wake, recovering enough to speak. He turned to the crowd, his spirit as beaten as his body. "All right," he said. "I'll give you the money." He found his checkbook and wrote out a check for \$1,000 payable to the Red Cross. He was so weak, or so shaken, that his signature was barely legible; a man in the crowd was sent to call the bank and assure it would be accepted. When the reply came back that it would be, the crowd decided to let Tennigkeit go.

Tennigkeit realized, if it wasn't made explicit to him, that this \$1,000 donation and the \$1,000 bond would merely buy his freedom from the lynch mob and would in no way restore his right to remain in Audubon County and take care of his farm. He was considered a traitor. As the blood returned to his head and the fog of unconsciousness cleared, he vowed to leave Audubon immediately.

Wilson accompanied him home. But before the sheriff would let Tennigkeit enter his own house, he insisted on searching it. As he did, he confiscated a shotgun and two loaded revolvers. Tennigkeit protested little, and as soon as he was free, he set out for Omaha, from which he would take a train that would bring him to Colorado and a new life, one where he wasn't surrounded by neighbors eager to lynch him.

But the mob wasn't finished. Emboldened by their victory breaking Tennigkeit's obstinacy, they decided to find out if the noose would be as persuasive to the Reverend Starck—a man who, in an anthology of the county's prominent men published just two years earlier, had been described as "a very worthy citizen," and "one of the leading ministers of Audubon County."

Not long after Wilson headed back with Tennigkeit, somewhere between 40 and 150 men packed into cars and horse-drawn wagons and set out in a convoy toward Starck's home, next to his church. They had rope. They had guns. And, as no newspaper writer failed to mention, they were determined to show the county's German loyalists, whoever they may be, just what they planned to do to the enemy.

Why Starck hadn't fled farther than the fringes of Audubon County was unclear. Perhaps he was worried that his wife, frail and prone to fainting under stress, would be unable to handle such a hurried exit. Perhaps he was still committed to defending his actions, as he had done earlier that day in front of Spencer's tribunal and earlier that year when he sought an injunction from the Carroll County court against the Audubon County Council of Defense's order that he cease preaching in German. Whatever his reasons, he had taken shelter only as far as his cellar when the mob enveloped his house. First they formed a barricade around the perimeter of his property, then, sending forth a few emissaries to knock on his door, demanded that he show himself.

The answer that came was that he was gone. But the scouts thought otherwise. They pushed past the preacher's family and began searching through his rooms. Starck, hearing the men tearing through his house, worried that he would not only be found, but that once he was he would further be trapped in his cellar with no escape route. So he decided to make a run for it. He broke out a cellar window and climbed through, taking off for the cornfields that surrounded his house. Little snow had yet fallen that winter to impede his progress, but the ground, clear of tall cornstalks, also offered little cover. He made it a few hundred feet at least before he was spotted by the vigilantes, who then fired three shotgun rounds into the air, warning him to halt. According to one account it was those three shots that broke Starck's resolve, as the blow under Tennigkeit's chin earlier had broken his. In this version, Starck began to try to negotiate with his pursuers, promising to hoist an American flag above both his house and his church and to forever be "a true, loyal citizen to the United States" if they would leave him alone. Others in the crowd, however, insisted that Starck remained steely to the end.

In either case, a lynch mob began to dose in on him. A few in the crowd called out for the others to stop, to let the reverend speak while they figured out whether they really wanted to go as far as they seemed ready to go. But those calls for temperance were quickly drowned out by shouts to do to Starck what they had just failed to do to Tennigkeit: kill him.

Again a rope came out and members of the mob fashioned a noose. They tightened it around Starck's neck as they led him to a nearby tree. Realizing the men's seriousness, Elizabeth, Starck's wife, came screaming from inside their house. She ran toward her husband, but before she could reach him, she collapsed. Elizabeth's anguish sobered the men in the crowd, who released Starck to let him check on her. As he was doing so, those in the mob who had called earlier for moderation again protested against going so far as to actually lynch the reverend. This time they prevailed and a fellow preacher promised to make sure Starck and his family left immediately. Finally the crowd dispersed and Starck and his family were herded north to Carroll, forced to abandon their home and their parish.

If the true test of a belief's rootedness lies in whether it is still able to swell to passion after the initial outburst it engenders has died down, then the hatred of Tennigkeit and Starck by various members of Audubon's lynch mob ran deep. Neither the attempted murder of the two German-Americans nor a night's rest allayed the outrage of many in the county. Almost as quickly as the mob dispersed that Wednesday night, calls for more severe punishment of Starck began to rise again. This time, however, Starck's whereabouts were unknown. When the word reached Audubon that he was hiding out in a house in Manning, a posse of forty men rushed across the county line and, as they had done at the reverend's home several days before, encircled it with guards before breaking in and searching for him. This time they turned up no one—Starck had managed to escape shortly before by boarding a Chicago Great Western train headed east. But he was still a hunted man.

By February 1918 information had reached Sheriff Wilson from a former Audubon resident that Starck was hiding out in Chicago, prompting Wilson to forward Starck's photo to the police there, requesting their help in arresting the preacher. Apparently unhappy that Starck had been run out of town after all, Wilson told newspaper reporters that he was seeking Starck's extradition back to Audubon, or at least to Iowa if the preacher feared too much for his well-being to again set foot on the ground where he was nearly murdered. He said he planned to have him charged with treason.

Though Starck was arrested in Chicago about two months after Wilson sent his mug shot to the authorities there, court proceedings against him were apparently never brought. The reverend lived in Chicago at least until his wife's death at the beginning of October 1919.

Seeming to be speaking for so many who'd participated in the Audubon lynch mob that day was a paragraph that appeared as a coda to the article about Tennigkeit's and Starck's near-lynchings in the Audubon Advocate—the paper Robert Spencer edited when he wasn't serving as chairman of the defense council.

The Advocate does not believe in violence. We sincerely hope that in future cases of this kind that the best of judgment will be used in enforcement of loyalty. We believe that the public has stood for about all the shooting in the back that it should be expected to stand for. Our boys are facing the Germans in the trenches. Let us see that none of those in this country goes to shooting them in the back. If there be others besides those of German extraction who attempt to do this, they should be treated in the same way, but let us do it by law, if possible. But let us crush disloyalty in some manner. Let us not just be satisfied with no Kaiser talk, but let us insist upon whooping it up for Our Country!

"If possible..."—it was a thin place, more a puncture in the cool veneer of legality that the writer claimed he was advocating.

Even his dimmest-witted readers could see through to the threat behind the passage: the vow that such violence was used against Tennigkeit and Starck wouldn't just be reserved for German-Americans and those who actively worked to aid the Kaiser's army but could be directed at anyone who failed to be patriotic enough.

It was an assumption of judgment that led one prominent newspaper editor to declare that Iowa, in the state of such fervid patriotism, was really under a "reign of terror."

End of article

Sadly we ignore our history and repeat many of the bad aspects over and over again.

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If you noted the names of the accusers, none of them had German ancestral names, although I would guess that some of them probably had German background but hid that fact so as to not be one of the accused.

Below is another account that was taken from the Audubon Advocate. There is a lot to read and you can see more of the biases documented by the reporter.

On the afternoon of Wednesday, December 26, 1917, members of the Audubon County Council of Defense gathered in the offices of what was known as the Commercial Club. The space was chosen because, though the proceedings there that day resembled a court case, their legal basis was slight—hardly official enough to merit a spot in the courthouse, or even the police station.