



The Manning Exchange

Where Past & Present Meet

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History and current events are shared and preserved.

Book Burning - AGAIN?

In 2017, historic statues in the U.S. "South" are being removed from their public pedestals, with the thinking that denying history and removing any record of it is justifiable and necessary.

Individuals and groups who continue to protest what they perceive as injustices against them, are actually guilty of their own injustices against the very people they accuse.

Ignorance of our history breeds contempt for one another. Not all that long ago the world was torn apart with such thinking on universities --- during the 1930s, the National Socialist German Students' League conducted Nazi book burning campaigns. The books targeted for burning were those viewed as being subversive or representing ideologies opposed to Nazism. These included books written by Jewish, pacifist, religious, classical liberal, anarchist, socialist, and communist authors, and many others.

What inspired me to write this article, and show some of our local history as related to the German ancestry of the Manning area and how these citizens were mistreated during WWI & WWII, was an e-mail from Daniel Starck...more about the Starck story later.

While thinking about this subject it reminded me about the *Walton's Mountain* TV series from the 1970s. The title of one specific episode was the *Firestorm* shown on October 21, 1976, that I vividly remember.

After watching a newsreel about Hitler's conquests in Europe, John Boy decides to print excerpts from *Mein Kampf* in his paper, *The Blue Ridge Chronicle*.

Many of the citizens including Rev Fordwick object to John publishing parts of *Mein Kampf*.

Mrs. Brimmer tells John that her husband was born in Germany and during World War I they were victimized wherever they went because of it, and eventually they settled at Walton's Mountain where nobody knew the truth about their German heritage. So she didn't want John to stir up people and hatred of Germans.

Hatred and fear followed, with many people taking their ads out of John Boy's newspaper and not buying it. The Waltons even had a rock thrown through the window of their home.

The show ends with a "book burning" thought up by Rev Fordwick. He said that if the Nazis are burning American books then we should burn a copy of "Mein Kampf." Buck Vernon found a copy and then went on to gather other German books he could find and suggested they be burned too.

John Boy becomes very angry and says that if books are burned then you will never know what's in them, and your freedom is taken away.

John gasps as he picks up one of the books. He recognizes it...He asks the crowd who can read German. Mrs. Brimmer comes forward and reads the first sentence in the book. *Im Anfang schuf Gott den Himmel und die Erde.* John asks her to translate this sentence. *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*

Gasps came from everyone in the crowd, followed by complete silence - realizing they were going to burn the Holy Bible.



John Boy confronts the "book burning mob" with the Bible that was written in German



Put yourself in the WWI or WWII time-frame - war with Germany, fear of the unknown at that time, and maybe not able to read German writing.

You may be able to tell this is German but probably can't read it. While it isn't a book it is a parchment and would have been something controversial if you had it and would be another item for book burning mobs to destroy.

Here is the translation:

Vater unser im Himmel,
Our father, who art in heaven,
Geheiligt werde dein Name.
Hallowed be Thy name.
Dein Reich komme.
Let Thy kingdom come.
Dein Wille geschehe,
Let Thy will be done,
wie im Himmel so auf Erden.
As in heaven, so on earth.
Unser tägliches Brot gib uns heute,
Give us today today's bread,

Und vergib uns unsere Schuld,
And forgive us our debts (sins)

Wie auch wir vergeben unsern Schuldigern.
In the same way as we let go of our debtors.

Und führe uns nicht in Versuchung,
And don't let us fall into temptation,

Sondern erlöse uns von dem Bösen.
And deliver us from evil.

Denn dein ist das Reich und die Kraft und die Herrlichkeit in Ewigkeit.

For Thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory forever.

This ornate parchment of the Lord's Prayer came from the Bruhn family southeast of Manning. They were one of hundreds of families who supported and attended the Trinity Lutheran Church in Lincoln Township, Audubon County.

It is a fitting piece of history to lead into the next story. John Boy Walton's experience occurred during WWII, the following event occurred during WWI.

Reverend Ernest J. W. Starck - lynching

Information about Pastor Starck was provided by his great-grandson, Daniel Starck, in April of this year.

I was able to provide Dan with some pictures and information and Dan provided Starck family insight, pictures, and also found various articles about the event. I am combining his information with my research for this WWI event.



Ernest and Elizabeth (Wolf) Starck and four children circa 1903

1915 "History of Audubon County" biography of Rev. Ernest J.W. Starck:

One of the well-known and popular ministers now holding a pastorate in Audubon County, Iowa, is Rev. Ernest J.W. Starck, pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Trinity Church, and also pastor of St. John's Church of Audubon. Born on September 18, 1862, in West Prussia, Germany, the son of E.G. and Johanna Charlotte (Wendt) Starck, he was brought to this country by his parents two years after his birth, in 1864.

Educated in parochial, public and private schools, and a graduate of the theological seminary at Springfield, Illinois, with the class of 1887, Ernest has been engaged in the ministry during practically his entire life. He is a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and other states, also of the district of Iowa.

Ernest Starck was married on August 14, 1895, at St. Paul, Minnesota, to Elizabeth Wolf, the daughter of George and Susanna (Sapp) Wolf.

Starcks are the parents of nine children, E.G.F., Adolph H., Walter R.G., Arthur Marc F., Herbert Bernhardt I., Frederick William H.A., Else Elizabeth, Edward, and Frieda Susanna Johanna.

During his pastorate of Trinity Church of Lincoln Township and St. John's Church at Audubon, Rev. Starck has had very much to do with the growth of these congregations and the prosperity of the two churches. He is known to be an eloquent and persuasive pulpit orator, a sympathetic and efficient pastor and is naturally popular, not only with his congregation, but with all the people of the community to which he ministers. A very worthy citizen, he is entitled to representation in this volume as one of the leading ministers of Audubon County.



1915 Confirmation - Back: Hugo D. Hansen, ??, Ted Borkowski, Carl Borkowski, Alma Hansen, Walt Ullerich, ??; Front: ??, Arthur Starck, ??, Reverend Starck, ??, Alfred David, ??
The other members not identified: Louise Meyer, Ella Juergensen, Esther Bald, Erna Polzin, Maria Bald, Anne Beckmann

On April 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson petitioned the Congress to declare war on Germany. April 6, 1917, the U.S. Congress declared war on the German Empire. Leading up to this point, the country had been deeply divided about entering the war. President Wilson had been narrowly re-elected the previous November, partly due to the slogan, "he kept us out of war." But there was a great deal of pressure to enter the war from many of his political supporters, East Coast elitists, and industrialists like J.P. Morgan who had loaned vast sums of money to the Allies. Several provocative acts by the Germans against the U.S., including the sinking of seven U.S. merchant

ships, sealed the deal. President Wilson knew he would have to enter the war but needed to be sure the public would be behind him. On April 14, less than two weeks after the declaration of war, he created the Committee on Public Information by executive order. It was established to influence public opinion on the war; firing up U.S. patriotism and demonizing the "Huns." Several tactics were initiated to this end, including propaganda, misinformation, and intimidation.

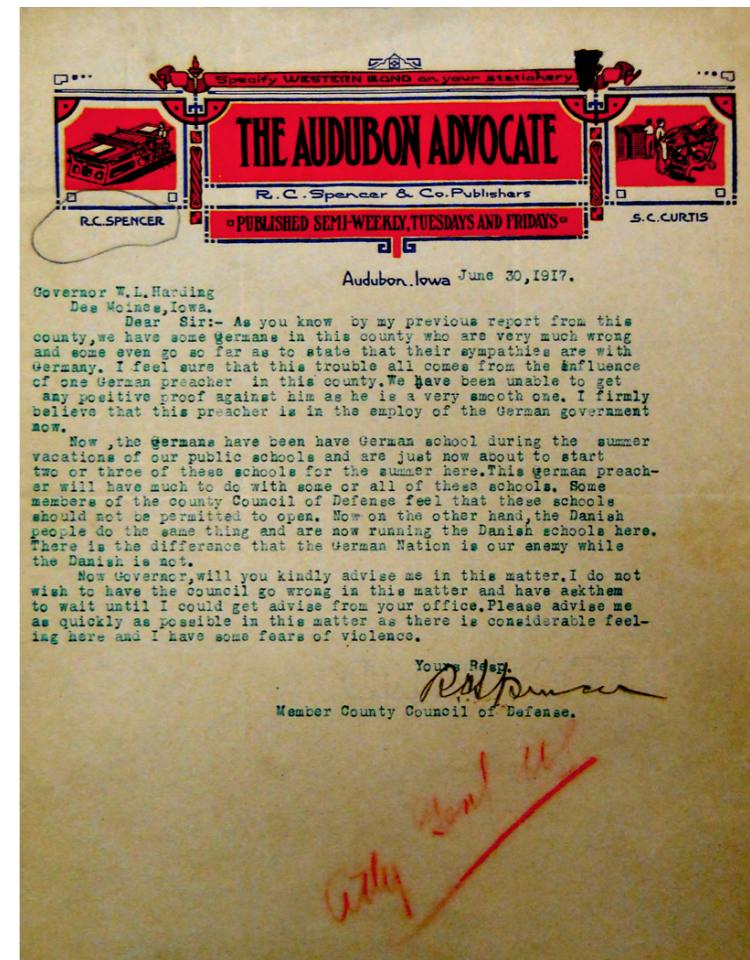
Councils of Defense were established at the state level. At first these committees were to help with the selective service, or "draft," but in some states they became very aggressive. The Iowa State Council for Defense was created by Governor William L. Harding the first week of May. While some states gave official standing to their versions of this council, Iowa's Governor Harding declined to grant any official powers or money. That certainly didn't stop the Councils from acting as if it did.

The Chairman of the Council was Lafayette Young, editor and publisher of the *Des Moines Capital*. Young was known to have urged that "disloyal persons should be impoverished and imprisoned," arguing that "any man who has lived under the protection of our laws and has accumulated wealth and is now disloyal should be deprived of every dollar he possesses and he should be interned in a stockade until the end of the war and at that time his fate considered carefully." He also proposed banning the teaching of any foreign language in any public school, and creating English literacy tests for voting.

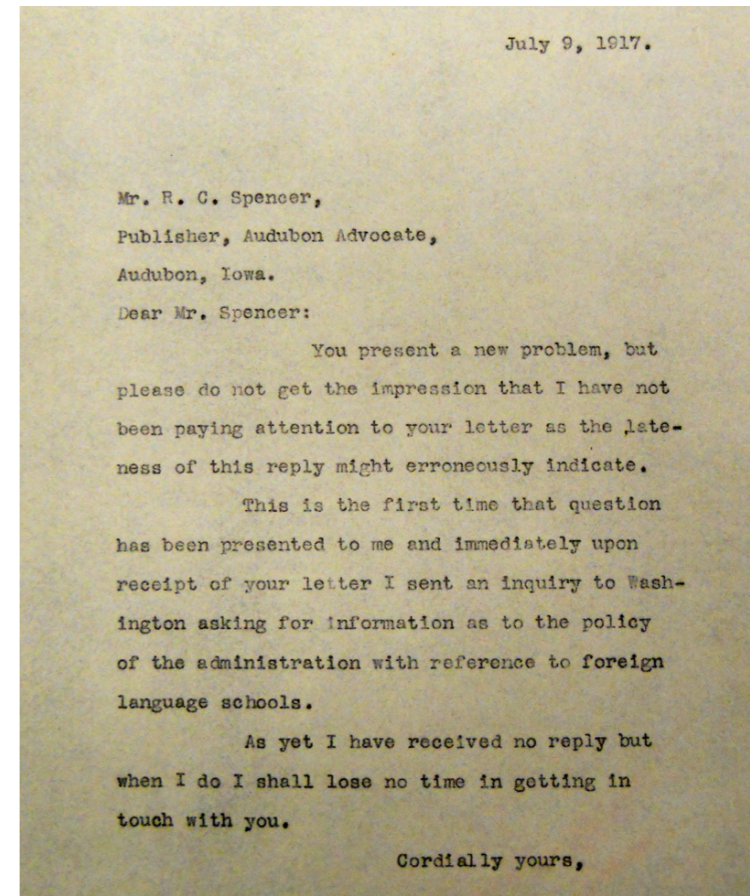
Iowa Homestead editor, James M. Pierce accused the Council of conducting a "reign of terror." Despite the feelings of the Chairman, and some members, the official stand of the State Council as to German language bans was milder. It stressed maintaining personal rights.

County Councils were set up to do the work at a local level. The Audubon County Council for Defense was headed by Robert C. Spencer, the publisher of the *Audubon Advocate*. He was, apparently, a hard-nosed nationalist. In a letter to Governor Harding on June 30, 1917 (by-passing the State Council), he complained about German speaking in schools and the influence of one especially subversive man. "As you know by my previous report from this county, we have some Germans in this county who are very much wrong and some even go so far as to state that their sympathies are with Germany. I feel sure that this trouble all comes from the influence of one German preacher in this county. We have been unable to get any positive proof against him as he is a very smooth one. I firmly believe that this preacher is in the employ of the German government now." He ends the letter: "Please advise me as quickly as possible in this matter as there is considerable feeling here and I have some fears of violence."

This is an obvious reference to Rev. Ernest J.W. Starck. Mr. Spencer seemed to have an almost irrational obsession with Rev. Starck. The fact is that, as hard as he had tried, he had been unable to find any evidence of Rev. Starck's disloyalty. Even so, he still insisted that he was a German spy. This indicates the beginning of a vendetta.



Letter from Spencer to Harding June 30, 1917
Response to Spencer from Harding July 9, 1917



On July 9, Governor Harding replied to Mr. Spencer's letter. While not addressing the Starck accusations, he indicated that he was consulting the Federal government on the issue of German speaking schools.

The response from the Assistant U.S. Attorney General, Department of Justice, July 19, 1917, was more subdued with

Starck continued on page 2