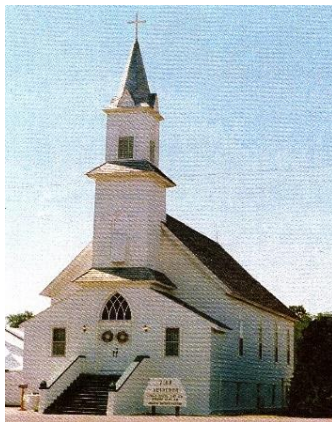


### #33 Germans Immigrate to Kansas

My next few posts will look at some newspaper articles which reference German-Americans in Edwards County during the war years. Many Germans immigrated to the United States during the second half of the nineteenth century. By 1900 German-Americans were the largest ethnic group making up about 8 million of the 76 million total population. At the turn of the century, one-third of the foreign born population in Kansas had been born in Germany. Some Germans had come to America fleeing religious persecution, some were avoiding being conscripted into the German army, and some, including the Volga Germans, were seeking better economic opportunities for their families. According to Erik Kirchbaum in his book **Burning Beethoven**, "German influence in the United States was more dominant than Hispanic influence is now."

In 1900, Edwards County had many German-Americans living within the county including 176 persons who were born in Germany. Offerle, Belpre and Kinsley all had citizens of German origin. A thriving German community south of Offerle was centered around Zion Lutheran Church (founded in 1878). Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church (1893), Salem German Methodist Church (1891) Church and Peace Lutheran Church (1906) were all founded by German immigrants and located northwest of Kinsley within two miles of each other.



Zion Lutheran Church



Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church



Peace Lutheran Church

The German immigrants were very proud of their German 'kulture' and language. They spoke German in their homes, churches and communities. This pride is detailed in Kirchbaum's **Burning Beethoven** which is the title chosen for February in the High Plains Radio Reader's Book Club and our Kansas Humanities Council Book TALK series here at the library. It is an interesting book and encourage you to read it.

When President Wilson declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917, many German immigrants had not been naturalized. Wilson warned aliens living in the United States that they must keep peace and "*refrain from crime against the public safety...and from actual hostility or giving information, aid or comfort to the enemies of the United States. All who fail to conduct themselves properly are liable to restraint and other penalties...*" Wilson outlined that aliens could not have a firearm, weapons, or implements of war, aircraft, wireless, signaling devices or codes. Among other things, "*An alien enemy shall not write, print or publish any attack or threat against the government.*"



The Herrmann family is one German family that found themselves labeled “enemy aliens”. They had begun coming to Edwards County in 1879 and settled in the Sts. Peter and Paul parish area.

Henry Herrmann (seated left) was born in Germany in 1889 and immigrated to the United States in 1911 after his Uncle Nick Oster had visited in Germany and encouraged him to do so.

Henry was not a naturalized citizen by the time war was declared. In February, 1918, he was required to register as an enemy alien.

Pictured here are Elizabeth Lobmeyer and Henry Herrmann on their wedding day on June 6, 1922. The bride’s brother and sister, George Lobmeyer and Anna Lobmeyer Weiss, stand behind them. George Lobmeyer served in the 353<sup>rd</sup> All-Kansas Regiment 89<sup>th</sup> Division in World War I and fought for 99 days in France and Germany.

The treatment of Germans-Americans will be continued in my next post.