

#9 - Many Would Be Naturalized

Like today, immigrants and naturalization were in the news 100 years ago. The following appeared in the *Kinsley Mercury*, April 5, 1917:

“There have been many applications filed at the courthouse for naturalization papers, most of them being taken out by former German citizens. The present outlook for war with Germany has probably some bearing on this, as no citizen of another country can take out papers for naturalization if this country is at war with the country from which he came. He may file a declaration of his intentions, which is the first step toward becoming a citizen of the United States, but can go no farther until peace is declared.”

The article goes on to tell that Albert Stach had been granted his final papers in March, less than one month before war was declared. Others mentioned in the article would have to wait until after the war, which was declared one day after this article was published. They included Otto Tuchtenhagen, Joseph Wolf, Anton Goldhammer and Henry Herrmann who filed their petitions for final papers in March and had been scheduled to be heard in November. Also to be put off were several who filed Declarations of intentions including: Mike Kozokan, John Mekach, August Ploger, William Ploger, Henry Ploger, and Henry Salm. Most of these men had immigrated with their parents to the United States in the 1880s. Descendant relatives of some of these men still reside in Edwards County.

When President Wilson declared war on Germany on April 5, 1917, these men and many German and Italian immigrants would go from being on the path to citizenship to having to register as Alien Enemies.