2 The Frontiers of Youth
Kaiserreich, Part One

Germany and the East to 1871

Goths, Slavs, Teutons, Poles, and Prussians: Migrations, Colonizations, Empires

The "colonial" history of the *Wartheland* stretches back as far as one is willing to expand the notion of colonialism. Scholars tend to initially describe specific groups as "migrating" before deciding at some later chronological point that those same groups are now "colonizing," a fascinating rhetorical shift I shall return to later in this section. Peoples migrated into and through this region for thousands of years, cultures vaguely referred to as Celtic, or Baltic, depending on archeological finds. From 1000 BCE, Germanic tribes moved south from Scandinavia, migrating as far west as the Rhine by 100 BCE. Specific to our story of "Germans" and "Poles" in the *Wartheland*, the first group to settle were "German." Germanic forest peoples settled along the coast, where they mixed with elements of Celtic culture and achieved, around 50 CE, "ethnogenesis" as the Goths.[1] By 150 CE, the Goths had spread south toward Ukraine and Romania. What complicates the perennial story of whose "native" land this is, who are the "autochthonous" people of this region, is that the Goths then, simply, left. Around 420 CE, the Huns arrived. This new Turkic pressure from the East, alongside what seemed to be a more secure life inside the Roman Empire, led to renewed Germanic migrations. By 500 CE, archeological evidence indicates both a reforestation of the land east of the Oder and a discontinued use of Germanic cemeteries.[2] Only then, between the fifth and eighth centuries, did the Slavs arrive into this seeming *terra nullius*. Unlike the Germanic

[1] Andrew Bell-Fialkoff, ed., *The Role of Migration in the History of the European Steppe: Sedentary Civilization vs. "Barbarian" and Nomad* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 122.
[2] Paul M. Barford, *The Early Slavs: Culture and Society in Early Medieval Eastern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 25.

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peoples who are easily traced to Scandinavia, the origin of the Slavs is much more difficult to pinpoint beyond a region vaguely north of the Black Sea. Despite this migration past the Oder and up to the Elbe, the area was so depopulated that for centuries there was little more than a no man's land between Saxons to the west and Slavs to the East.

The peace was not to last and the opening of the long conflict over these borderlands began in the 780s when Charlemagne, having recently conquered the Saxons and the Bavarians, crossed the Elbe and began raiding the Slavs to the East. From 928, Polabia, the area between the Elbe and the Oder, went back and forth between German and Slavic control before finally falling firmly under Saxon rule in 1147. It is noteworthy that, upon achieving ultimate control, there was an attempt to expel all Slavs and replace them with Saxon and Flemish settlers. A Slavic revolt in 1164 ended such extreme plans, however, and by the fourteenth century the Slavic population of Polabia (i.e., west of the Oder) was largely assimilated, with the notable exception of the Sorbs. During this same period, east of the Oder in the *Wartheland*, the Polish state was birthed. By 940, the Polane tribe was gaining power around Gniezno and, in 968, Mieszko I converted to Christianity and established a bishopric at Poznan. By the time of his death in 992, Poland stretched from the Oder to Krakow.[3] Thus, in the endless debate over "indigeneity" and connection to the land, the "Germans" were first to the *Wartheland* and lived there for at least 400 years – before leaving. "Poles" arrived in this relatively "empty" land from 500 and became the main settlers in this region, retaining the mantle of majority population ever since.[4]

By the 1100s, there was an eastern settlement (*Ostbesiedlung*) scheme underway in which German-speaking agents, called *Lokator*, sought "Germans" from the West and sent them to the East with the promise of land to farm.[5] Among the main groups that arrived in the East were the Cistercian Monks, specialists in agriculture.[6] This migration was every bit as large as the modern settler project that will be our focus. To cite William Hagen, this was "a massive colonization movement which, at its twelfth- and thirteenth-century peak, planted hundreds of thousands of western German peasants on the soil of the Baltic plains eastward to, and

[3] Barford, *The Early Slavs*, 210–263. Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, *The German Myth of the East: 1800 to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), chapter 2.

[4] This creates the strange nomenclature of the original indigenous inhabitants (Germans) later framed as colonizers of this region, a situation eerily similar to the framing of Jews as modern-day colonizers in Israel.

[5] As will be shown later in this chapter, certain German facilitators were doing something similar in the 1870s, only this time sending candidates to the North American West.

[6] Liulevicius, *Myth of the East*, 25–26.

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beyond, the Oder."[7] Additionally, and juxtaposed to the nineteenth-century "problem" of too many Poles in the German space, many Germans were invited to settle further east within the Slavic orbit, and over the next two centuries would linguistically and culturally assimilate into the Polish population, that is, were, in some pre-ethnonationalist manner, "polonized."[8]

Although nineteenth- and twentieth-century German historians would constantly invoke the initial conquest and settlement of this land as the foundational myth justifying their modern colonial fantasies, these medieval migrations had little of the recognizable trappings of nationalism, or "Germanization." The Slavic peoples of this area were by 1100 already converted to Christianity, but their non-Slavic neighbours to the north-east, the Baltic peoples (including the original "Prussians"), were still "heathens." In a move similar in fascinating ways to the story presented in this book, the newly arrived Cistercian monks attempted to both convert pagans and to drain and improve land for agricultural purposes. From this period through to the 1880s, one sees the slow shift from defining peoples almost exclusively by religion, to language, to finally ethnicity and blood, although we need only to invoke the word *Kulturkampf*[9] to remind ourselves that religion in no way ever disappeared from definitions of colonial difference. This is especially true of a specific story that is central to the history of East Central Europe, from 1100 to 1945, that of the arrival of Jews escaping crusades and plague-related violence in Western Europe. The Black Death of 1348 would end this west–east migration.

In 1386, the Polish–Lithuanian kingdom was formed. It remained in power until the events that sparked our modern colonial story, the Polish partitions of 1772–1795. Polish nationalists would of course never forget what was once one of the most powerful kingdoms on Earth and, likewise, later German nationalists would never forget the Slavic–Baltic enemy that defeated the mighty Teutonic knights in 1410 at the Battle of Tannenberg, a catastrophe that led to the vassalage of the knights under Polish kings. Indeed, outside of the more powerful cities of West Prussia, such as Danzig, much of the German nobility was completely polonized within 200 years. Although the Teutonic Knights would be suborned into a Germanic nationalist myth, they were soldiers of God, not Germany. With the Reformation, however, the Teutons became Lutherans, privatizing their land and becoming the foundational members of a large landed

[7] William W. Hagen, *Germans, Poles, and Jews: The Nationality Conflict in the Prussian East, 1772–1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 2.
[8] Hagen, *Germans, Poles, and Jews*, 2.
[9] "Culture struggle." This was Bismarck's anti-Catholic campaign of the 1870s and 1880s.

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elite, the *Junker*, who will be central to our story.[10] In the same period, the first stirrings of a proto-nationalist understanding of "the Germans"[11] began to appear, and, by 1660, the Kingdom of Prussia, as a political entity free from Polish rule, appeared. To strengthen their new kingdom, once again *Lokator* were called upon to find and bring settlers. Many Germans continued to move from the West right through Brandenburg to settle in the *Wartheland*, so-called Great Poland (Wielkopolska), which in the tenth century had been the heart of the Polish Piast Dynasty, the earliest Polish state. There these Germans became "free" farmers alongside Polish serfs.[12] The Polish nobility in the 1600s acquired larger plots at the expense of small farmers, which William Hagen argues resulted in a lower Polish population that necessitated German (and Jewish) "seasonal workers" (*Wanderarbeiter*).[13] This relationship would flip by the nineteenth century, with thinly populated large German estates importing Polish labour, and thus Max Sering would point to both situations as evidence for his claim that more small-sized farms would result in a higher number of farmer families and thus more children.

In a book about colonization, it is important to note that only at this point in the history of early modern Europe do we enter the 500-year phase that is the main focus of "colonial studies." As alluded to in Chapter 1, for many decades the history of colonialism involved rather clear-cut binaries: (1) Europe was the Metropole, the Colony was a distant place separated by salt water and (2) the colonizers were white Europeans, the colonized were non-white, non-Europeans. Ruptures and weaknesses in this construction began to appear once the structures of colonial regimes were recognized: (1) in the adjacent settler colonization of "others," such as Indigenous peoples on the North American, or Russian Central Asian, frontiers[14] and (2) in the racially nuanced colonial relationships of, say, the English in Ireland or the Japanese in Taiwan.[15]

[10] The term evolved out the words for "young lord," "jung" and "Herr."
[11] Liulevicius, *Myth of the East*, 32. Tacitus' *Germania* was only discovered in the 1450s.
[12] Hagen, *Germans, Poles, and Jews*, 5.
[13] The result, "was peasant poverty and backwardness, a threadbare and numerically weak bourgeoisie, and a nobility which, despite declassing in its lower ranks, lived in homespun abundance if not aristocratic opulence." Further, Polish landed nobility (*szlachta*), in a manner similar to nineteenth-century *Junker*, had had enormous political power as a result of royal erosion and fragmentation that had left them largely to run things on their own. Hagen, *Germans, Poles, and Jews*, 9.
[14] Willard Sunderland, "The 'Colonization Question': Visions of Colonization in Late Imperial Russia," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 48 (2000): 210–232.
[15] Leo T. S. Ching, *Becoming "Japanese": Colonial Taiwan and the Politics of Identity Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). Regarding nineteenth-century British race theorists' framing of the Irish, "what stands out about their work

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In the preceding pages, a close reader may have noticed constant flux between the terms "migration" and "colonization." What exactly is the difference? For some reason the convention for the history of the *Wartheland* is to call the Goths migrants and the Saxons colonizers. Patrick Geary describes the initial "migration" of Slavs into Poland this way: "[t]heir spread was slow but violent, followed by the absorption of indigenous populations into their linguistic and social structures."[16] How is that not a version of "settler colonization?" There appears to be an incredibly logocentric hierarchy of terms when it comes to the language of colonial studies: cultures with writing colonize, cultures without a written record migrate. Read a modern historical account of the Rhine 2000 years ago and you will find that the Romans colonized the left bank and the Germanic tribes migrated up to the right bank. Early Slavs migrate, but the Germans only migrate until the Franks take on elements of Roman civilization, then Charlemagne colonizes. Yet, two centuries after Charlemagne, the highly literate Muslim/Arab conquest and settlement of North Africa took place and yet continues to resist the label "colonial." A common attempt to distinguish the two terms hinges on a distant connection to an imperial centre (metropole) or a lack thereof: the Romans in the Rhineland had governors reporting back to Rome, whereas the Goths in the Rhineland were not so formally tied to their brethren in, say, the *Wartheland*. The latter are thus depicted as "migrants" and not "colonists." But again, the Umayyad caliphate was unified as it stretched west to Iberia; it was one empire with solid lines of communication and trade. "Adjacency" is clearly a stumbling block in these discussions, as virtually all empires expand into adjacent territory and "erase" peoples via assimilation or removal. The appeal of "saltwater" is obvious; the clear intervention of unoccupied space between Britain and North America, or Athens and Sicily, makes the designation of "colonization" much easier. But if we insist on saltwater separation, then the citizens of the independent United States in 1840, no longer politically controlled by the distant metropole of London, merely "migrated" into the Midwest and onto the Great Plains.

One of the most famous works written about the US/Mexican border is Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. The opening pages explain that the author's Aztec ancestors were living in

is the preoccupation with race as a national or multinational character rather than with race as color." Bruce Nelson, *Irish Nationalists and the Making of the Irish Race* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 7.

[16] Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2002), 144.

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the area of the American Southwest before they "migrated" to the area of today's Mexico City. There is no discussion of the people they encountered already living there, instead, it is classic *terra nullius*. In the next paragraph, the Spanish "invade" and "conquer" the very same space.[17] One could argue that what the Aztecs did, and Germans in the nineteenth-century East undertook, was simply "migration and settlement," while the Spanish, and Germans later in southwest Africa, set up a system of "territorial rule under conditions of racial difference."[18] I do not see any easy bifurcation of these movements and, similar to the thinkers portrayed in this book, I see a long continuum of nuanced ways in which one group takes over territory and attempts to eliminate "difference." This book is very much a part of the discussion that seeks a more sophisticated history of colonization than the post-1492 binaries. The Oder and the Warta contain only "fresh" water, and the main colonial subjects of the German empire in the East shared the same skin tone as their colonizers.

Moving toward the Modern: Frederick and the First Prussian Colonization of the Poles, 1772–1795

The more recent, arguably modern, colonial history of Prussian Poland began with Frederick the Great's move into western Prussia in 1772. The great Polish–Lithuanian kingdom finally came to an ignominious end with the Polish partitions at the end of the eighteenth century: Prussia, Russia, and the Habsburgs each took a chunk of the kingdom, first in 1772, again in 1792, and then the final scraps were gobbled up in 1795, thus extinguishing an independent Polish state for the next 124 years. This expansion increased the size of Prussia by 50 percent and 3 million of the now 8 million Prussians were former members of the Polish Commonwealth.[19] Three million people did not, however, prevent Frederick's colonizing gaze from seeing "empty space" in his newly conquered colonial territory, going so far as to declare: "The Polish provinces may be compared to no state in Europe, they may only be likened to Canada. As a result we need time and work to allow them to regain what bad administration has left in neglect for so many

[17] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987), 4–5.

[18] These useful descriptions were provided by one of the two Cambridge University Press reviewers, both of whose critiques were incisive and helpful.

[19] Piotr S. Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland, 1795–1918* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), 14.

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Figure 2.1 The German and Russian empires in 1871
(drawn by graphic company – original created for the author)

centuries."[20] As we shall see, this would not be the first time a German understood Canada as the ultimate descriptor of emptiness fit for colonization. Frederick undertook a massive program of "*Peuplierung*" that saw 300,000 Germans brought into western Prussia.[21] Indeed, for our story of "inner colonization," his demographic plans are important. As Hagen explains, at the end of the 1770s, Frederick used state money to first buy up Polish estates and then sell (or lease) them to incoming German settlers. He did this, he claimed, "so that gradually we will get rid of all the Poles."[22] Here we have the first instance of government funds being committed in order to subsidize and entice "colonists" (here, 3,200 German families from the southwest) to replace Poles. Importantly, this was not yet a nationalist program; Frederick wanted to replace Polish nobility because he found them untrustworthy, but he had little to say

[20] Liulevicius, *Myth of the East*, 273. One wonders if Frederick had in mind his friend Voltaire's passage in the *Candide* describing Canada as "quelques arpents de neige." In 1775, Frederick made yet another North American analogy with regard to Poles, "The Austrians and Russians find like confusion, in their districts: nor can these Iroquois be civilized, but by length of time and education." Róisín Healy, "From Commonwealth to Colony? Poland under Prussia," in *The Shadow of Colonialism on Europe's Modern Past*, ed. Róisín Healy and Enrico Dal Lago (London: Palgrave, 2014), 113.

[21] Liulevicius, *Myth of the East*, 37–38. This number of settlers is significantly higher than the entire Program of Inner Colonization, from 1886 to 1914, settled in Posen and West Prussia.

[22] Hagen, *Germans, Poles, and Jews*, 41.

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about Polish peasants. In fact, he allowed Polish to be taught at the elementary level in school. There was, however, a hint of a much more radical future when Frederick first insisted that every Jew in West Prussia be expelled, before agreeing to a mere 7,000 being forced to leave.[23]

The First Model? Buying up Bankrupt Estates and the Flottwell Regime, 1795–1871

With the birth of modern German nationalism during the fight against Napoleon, we see the first signs of a modern, ethnolinguistic understanding of Germans versus Poles. In the wake of the 1806/1807 uprising in the *Wartheland*, when Poles joined forces with the French in the hopes of throwing off Prussian control, Prussian officials reacted with ideas that strongly foreshadowed what would unfold over the course of the next century: they now wanted to have local Poles learn German and embrace German cultural and social values, all the while physically replacing Polish gentry with Germans, through such "legal" methods as raising the rent on Polish estates by 50 percent more than German landowners paid. These officials thus saw the situation in a similar manner to Frederick, deeming Polish nobles the problem and not peasants per se. But the peasants were no longer to be left alone completely. Linguistic Germanization, through school and church, would be a tool to erase Polishness. While these ideas were mooted, real change was happening on the ground with the help of an institution that would be crucial by the 1880s. From 1821, the Prussian *Landschaft*, a land credit bank in Posen, successfully helped Germans buy up bankrupt Polish estates.[24] But with another uprising in 1830/1831 (this time mainly in Russian Poland), the next incremental step would be taken.

In 1830, Eduard Flottwell arrived to take up his new position as *Oberpräsident* (high commissioner) in Posen. Flottwell believed that the Poles could only be brought under control through "an inner fusion of the two nationalities" (with German culture predominant of course), and he set out on a program to strengthen both the use of German in the educational system and an updated version of Frederickian-style colonization. In a move echoing what would happen on a much larger scale in 1886, "with special state funds, Flottwell purchased bankrupted Polish estates and sold them to Germans. He also sold, to Germans only, estate-sized parcels of royal domain land."[25] Further, Flottwell ensured that any royal

[23] Hagen, *Germans, Poles, and Jews*, 41–47. See also Wandycz, *Lands of Partitioned Poland*; Martin Broszat, *Zweihundert Jahre deutsche Polenpolitik* (Munich: Ehrenwirth, 1963).
[24] Hagen, *Germans, Poles, and Jews*, 76–79. [25] Hagen, *Germans, Poles, and Jews*, 89–90.

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estates were only sold to Germans. While this did result in a shift in land ownership,[26] the in-migration of more Germans was not central to the program. In this way, it was still the case in the 1830s that those overseeing "colonization" in Prussian Poland were more concerned with the political control of land and people than with the strongly nationalistic, ethnolinguistic hallmarks of the later, "new" imperialism. In 1840, circumstances swung back somewhat in favour of Poles when several important Polish figures from the 1830/1831 uprising were given amnesty and re-entered the "fight," while Flottwell decamped. All of this contributed to what a later German historian of Posen called the "zig zag course" of the history of this province.[27]

Flottwell left Posen in 1841, and government funds for purchasing property came to an end four years later. The 1840s also saw the peak, then end, of a moment of philo-polonism among German liberals, the so-called *Polenbegeisterung*. German liberals saw Russia as the greatest demon and, therefore, supported the nationalist struggle of Poles under the Czar's yoke. But when, during the 1848 revolution, it became clear that Poles under Prussian control wanted a similar national independence to what Germans were striving to achieve, well, that was the end of German excitement for Poland. The German liberal belief that freedom was good for everyone except those under the German boot will linger for the rest of our story, indeed until there were no national minorities left on rump German soil in the late 1940s. By the 1850s the word *Germanisierung* began to appear more and more often, now meaning not just the assimilation of the Polish nobles, but the peasantry as well. At the same time, the Flottwellian program was revived in a purely market form as German land credit banks were no longer allowed to lend to Poles, which led to many Polish estates going bankrupt and resulted in 100,000 hectares (hereafter "ha") of Polish land ending up in German hands between 1848 and 1861. A rebounding economy in the 1860s led to the continued purchase of land by Germans in the province of Posen, without the need of government assistance, which enervated any discussion at the time for a formal return to a Flottwellian colonization program.[28]

[26] Wandycz cites the following figures: in 1832, 1,000 landed estates were in Polish hands, 288 in German possession. By 1842, these numbers had shifted somewhat, to 950 Polish, 400 German. Interestingly, Wandycz pays very little attention to Flottwell, implying that he sees this as a rather unimportant episode in the history of Prussian Poland. Wandycz, *Lands of Partitioned Poland*, 129.

[27] Manfred Laubert, "Die nationale Zusammensetzung des Posener Großgrundbesitzertums in Flottwellscher Zeit," *Jahrbücher für Nationalökonomie und Statistik* 119 (1922): 316–320.

[28] Hagen, *Germans, Poles, and Jews*, 91–101, 120–123.

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Around this time, one of our major players enters the scene, and his attitude toward Poles would prove crucial. Growing up on his family's *Junker* estate in Saxony, Otto von Bismarck learned enough Polish as a youth to speak with the seasonal workers and seems to have had no issue with Poles of such a station. As a student, however, he could not stand what he deemed the flamboyant demeanor of the Polish nobility. Hence, Bismarck had the typical nineteenth-century attitude that the Polish elite were the problem, and not the peasants. During the revolution of 1848 he was already making quite clear that he "knew" Poles and that their political independence had to be avoided at all costs. During the January Uprising of 1863 he declared that Polish independence would be "fatal" to Prussia.[29] Thus, at the head of Germany, a nation that would formally come into existence in 1871, was a man destined to do all in his power to keep the German East German.

Poland as Colonial Space

Although this book will make the argument that settler colonialism begins with an understanding of land and space in the countryside just outside of the Metropole, it is nevertheless the case that at some point settler colonialism expands beyond the "familiar" and into space that is deemed "Other," land and people that are "primitive" or "oriental." Our "Orient," our "East," will be Poland and, as Larry Wolff has so dramatically illustrated, Eastern Europe as "Oriental" or "Other" was discursively well-established by the nineteenth century.[30] With the Enlightenment in Western Europe, and ultimately the growth of nationalism and its idolatry of one language, one people, one land, the "mess" of "backward" Eastern Europe became a powerful trope against which the West could define itself. While Paris saw itself as the peak from which culture sloped downward in all directions, by 1800 Berlin/Potsdam had managed to see itself as existing on a similar ridge, from which culture sloped dramatically downward on the way to Warsaw and, ultimately, Asia.[31]

[29] Richard Blanke, *Prussian Poland in the German Empire (1870–1900)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 6–10.

[30] Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

[31] In a brilliant reversal of this west to east flow of modernity, Philipp Ther argues that it was in fact the growing nationalist yearning of Poles in the eastern German Empire which, via reaction, accelerated the evolution of modern German national identity. Philipp Ther, "Deutsche Geschichte als imperiale Geschichte. Polen, slawophone Minderheiten und das Kaiserreich als kontinentale Empire," in *Das Kaiserreich transnational. Deutschland in der Welt 1871–1914,* ed. Sebastian Conrad and Jürgen Osterhammel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 129–148. See also the

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Hatred toward Polish independence after 1848, as well as the idea that Slavs were culturally inferior, found wide support in Germany, and thus the concept of the eastern borderlands as a site of colonialism was in no way limited to some radically conservative fringe. Recently, historians have been arguing for the centrality of expansionist colonial thinking as fundamental to the liberal nationalist intellectual tradition of nineteenth-century Germany. Matthew Fitzpatrick, Jens-Uwe Guettel, and Erik Grimmer-Solem have elaborated upon the argument that the "safety valve" provided by colonies, the dilution via emigration of the dangers of overpopulation and out of work peasants and labourers, was a crucial element of a global system.[32] What exactly such a colonial empire would look like was in no way limited to a classic, "saltwater," that is, overseas, system. In his earlier, seminal work, Woodruff Smith argued that there were two German colonialist ideologies by the 1880s, one a settlerist idea, the other an economic, indirect understanding of colonial goals.[33] This allowed him and other historians to delink their heroes, such as Max Weber, from an imperial past of racism and settlerism in Eastern Europe that culminates with the Nazi *Generalplan Ost*. If the "correct thinking" Germans of the past had triumphed, so the argument goes, the extreme settlerism of the Third Reich would never have happened. Alas, so goes the argument, the race-based colonizers won out on the crooked path to 1933. Fitzpatrick, Guettel, Grimmer-Solem and others have convincingly shown that there is, however, no easy bifurcation. Liberal nationalists supported the economic exploitation of, and settlement in, German Southwest Africa, and very much pursued colonialism wherever an exploitable "lesser culture" existed, be that in South America, along the Danube, or in European Turkey.[34] Guettel extensively documents the specific place of the American West in the imagination of these thinkers, long before Max Sering journeyed there in the 1880s. Indeed, long before Germany was a united nation capable of running its own

excellent collection of essays on colonialism *within* Europe in Róisín Healy and Enrico Dal Lago, eds., *The Shadow of Colonialism on Europe's Modern Past* (London: Palgrave, 2014).

[32] Matthew P. Fitzpatrick, *Liberal Imperialism in Germany: Expansionism and Nationalism, 1848–1884* (New York: Berghahn, 2008); Jens-Uwe Guettel, *German Expansionism, Imperial Liberalism, and the United States, 1776–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Erik Grimmer-Solem, *Learning Empire: Globalization and the German Quest for World Status, 1875–1919* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

[33] Woodruff D. Smith, *The Ideological Origins of Nazi Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

[34] Matthew P. Fitzpatrick, *Purging the Empire: Mass Expulsions in Germany, 1871–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 58–59.

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colonial system, there was a desire for spaces to which Germans could go and be safe from assimilation themselves. As early as 1817, Hans von Gagern cited the American West as a place where German colonies could be founded. By the 1840s, Friedrich List, heavily influenced by what he had seen in North America, imagined his own version of a settler frontier right beside the German-speaking peoples, when he pushed a *Mitteleuropa* idea of an economic (indirect colonial) space integrated with railroads: "We have our backwoods as well as the Americans, the lands of the Lower Danube and the Black Sea, all of Turkey, the entire Southeast beyond Hungary in our hinterland."[35] And the next great spatial thinker, whose name would be forever tied to his geopolitical term *Lebensraum*, Friedrich Ratzel, saw settler colonialism as the engine of modernity.[36] As this study will show, in Max Sering we have a powerful example of the strong link between such liberal nationalist ideas and the very settlerism, inspired by America, that did in fact culminate in *Generalplan Ost*.

Max Sering

Birth and Youth, 1857–1871

Into this world, our main character, Max Sering, was born, on January 18, 1857. Home was a small village quite literally on the very border of the West and the East: Barby on the Elbe. His father, Wilhelm Sering, was a music professor and composer. His mother was Elisabeth Friedländer, whose father, Abraham Salomo Friedländer, was Jewish.[37] At an early age Sering learned to play the cello and he would have a lifelong love of music.[38] As a child he saw peasant homes being broken up as the landless and unemployed left for the big city of Magdeburg. In other words, the idyll that would forever inform Sering's utopian understanding of the world, his small Saxon village, was being destroyed by the forces of modernity and industrialization before his very eyes. From the age of ten until he left Saxony at fifteen, he attended the

[35] Guettel, *German Expansionism*, 53–99. The degree to which Max Sering would ape these words by the late 1930s will be seen in Chapter 7.

[36] No agrarian romantic, Ratzel's book about America was all about the great cities that had arisen. Others, such as Weber and Friedrich Naumann, also saw colonization in similar, modern terms, while conservatives, like Johannes Miquel and Friedrich Meinecke, emphasized the "safety valve" element.

[37] HUB UA Personalakten 84.

[38] This is one of the rare details of Sering's personal life I was so pleased to occasionally learn. Benjamin H. Hibbard, H. C. M. Case, William I. Myers, and Henry C. Taylor. "Max Sering," *Journal of Farm Economics* 22 (1940): 409.

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"Gymnasium Unser Lieben Frauen"[39] in that nearby big city, and observed what became of many of those same famers, watching them suffer through their new lives in dirty, overcrowded tenement buildings. This experience ignited the agrarian flame that would forever burn in Max Sering's heart. If the adult is ultimately formed in youth, it requires no leap of the imagination to understand why Sering fought his entire life to ameliorate the processes he witnessed as a child.

The Empire Is Born: Max Sering in Alsace, 1872–1883

Max Sering often claimed that January 18, 1871, was the greatest moment of his life.[40] It was his fourteenth birthday, and it was the day that William the First was crowned Emperor of Germany in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles. Sering's favourite day was the culmination of the unification of Germany and the defeat of France and was an early illustration of his lifelong liberal-nationalist impulse that combined national unity with aggressive imperialism. These were values cherished by the German elite from the Kaiser's Empire to the Third Reich. While assuredly an exciting moment for the young man, Sering could not have foreseen that Germany's triumph over France set in motion events that would dictate his future career. The new Germany's greatest prize from the war was the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine. With this new territory came the ancient city of Strasbourg and its renowned university. In 1872, the university was renamed Reichsuniversität Straßburg, and soon Sering's relatively successful composer/teacher father received the call to bring his family to the new *Reichsland*, the new Germany's first "colony." There they settled in among the Germans living near the university where his father taught music. After a youth already shaped by watching the detrimental effects of Germany's industrialization upon the idyllic farmlands of Saxony, the fifteen-year-old Sering moved to a life in the borderlands, where he was surrounded by foreign, "backward" peasants, Alsatians in need of German civilization. In a certain way,

[39] I put this in quotes, as this is what Gerhard Heitz wrote in 1972, and because Magdeburg had both the Dom-Gymnasium (Martin Luther's alma mater, when still a Catholic "Domschule") as well as the Pädagogium Unser Lieben Frauen. The buildings are next to each other, and in 1928 amalgamated, but we must assume Sering attended the latter, due to Heitz's specific naming of it. See Gerhard Heitz, "Max Sering oder die Apologetik der 'Inneren Kolonisation'," *Jahrbuch für Regionalgeschichte* 4 (1972): 55.

[40] Constantin von Dietze, "Gedenkrede auf Max Sering anläßlich der 100. Wiederkehr seines Geburtstages. Gehalten auf der Tagung der Forschungsgesellschaft für Agrargeschichte und Agrarsoziologie in München am 21. Juni 1957," *Zeitschrift für Agrargeschichte und Agrarsoziologie* 6 (1958): 1–19.

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already as a teenager, Sering experienced the newly unified Germany's very first program of "inner colonization."

Reichsland Elsaß-Lothringian

Alsace-Lorraine had many similarities to the eastern borderlands of Germany that will be the focus of our story, connections that were underway well before Sering arrived. In the wake of the failed uprising in Russian Poland in 1830/1831 some 400 Polish nationalist refugees fled to Strasbourg, arriving between December 1831 and March 1832.[41] These Polish nationalists escaped from an area just east of what would become the German Empire, from a situation of Russian imperial "nationalization," to the territory just west of that future German Empire, a land and population then dealing with French imperial "nationalization." The uprising had repercussions in Prussian Poland as well, as many Prussian Poles had enlisted in Posen to then join the fight further to the East against Russia. This evidence of Polish nationalist fervor also existing in German territory led to the replacement of the Pole Antoni Radziwill, the Governor of the Grand Duchy of Posen, by the German Flottwell, who then began the colonization program of the 1830s. There were in fact many similarities between the eastern and western borderlands before Germany officially annexed Alsace-Lorraine in 1871. Alsace was more liberal than Lorraine, with its industrial powerhouses of Strasbourg and Mulhouse.[42] One observer, in 1911, noted that "Lorraine has not profited from Nature to the same extent as Alsace, … with large estates and a petty bourgeoisie struggling for its existence, it is a land that, on the Lotharingian plateau, is reminiscent of the situation east of the Elbe."[43] In 1871, Bismarck did not in fact want Lorraine. Unlike the "German" speakers of the Alsatian province, he feared that this Polish-like landscape was in fact a little too like his quarrelsome Polish provinces. The Lotharingian population was too "French," but in the end the military value of Metz was deemed

[41] For the interesting story of how the Polish radicals were welcomed in Alsace and then worked with radical elements there, see Félix Ponteil, *L'Opposition Politique a Strasbourg sous la monarchie de juillet (1830–1848)* (Paris: Paul Hartmann, 1932), ch. 6, "Les émigrés polonaise a Strasbourg." See also Dan P. Silverman, *Reluctant Union: Alsace-Lorraine and Imperial Germany, 1871–1918* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1974), 12.

[42] Silverman, *Reluctant Union*, 10.

[43] Friedrich König, "Der Elsass-Lothingische Partikularismus," *Elsässische Kulturfragen* 2, no. 3, (1911), 111–112.

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necessary and thus what most understood to be two distinct historical regions were meshed into Alsace-Lorraine.[44]

Not only did the young Sering move to a borderland of fraught nationality, he and his family settled in a *Reichsland*, a political unit much more akin to a colony than an equal federal state (or *Land*) of the Empire. On the one hand, due to the anti-Berlin jealousies of nearby Baden and Bavaria, Bismarck could not simply make Alsace-Lorraine Prussian territory (as were the Polish lands in Eastern Germany). On the other hand, granting a statehood equal to normal German provinces, with its attendant sovereignty, would place too much power in the hands of the "untrustworthy" natives. The upper and lower Rhine districts of Alsace, along with Lorraine, became the three *Bezirke* (districts) making up the combined Reichsland Elsaß-Lothringien, an imperial state directly governed from Berlin, answerable to the Emperor and not the *Reichstag*. An *Oberpräsident* (from 1879, a *Statthalter*) was appointed to rule largely through emergency powers. Beginning in 1874, a *Landesausschuß* was elected through indirect voting from members of a rather limited franchise set up in order to provide some cloak of autonomy. Nonetheless, any orders coming out of this body could be overruled by the Emperor. The farce of some local autonomy was only furthered by a system that mixed some old French laws with new German ones; a chaos easily exploited by the German colonizers.[45]

Furthering the anti-democratic flavor of this imperial space, in 1879 the very man who had participated in the crushing victory over France, who had led the military occupation until 1873, General Field Marshal Erwin von Manteuffel, was appointed *Statthalter* of the *Reichsland*. Serving as Manteuffel's adjutant was the Polish Prussian Count Bogdan Hutten-Czapski. He only served from 1884 until Manteuffel's untimely death a year later, but this was enough for him to see firsthand the daily negotiations between occupiers and occupied that he had earlier witnessed in his homeland.[46] As befits any good colony, the Alsatian natives were conscripted into the army but, due to fears of their lack of loyalty, the recruits were in fact sent for their garrison duty to the Polish provinces in the East.[47] While these young Alsatians were only temporarily out of the territory, some 460,000 Alsatians emigrated to France by 1910, resulting in a demographic problem quite

[44] Silverman, *Reluctant Union*, 32.
[45] David Allen Harvey, *Constructing Class and Nationality in Alsace, 1830–1945* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001), 68–69.
[46] Bogdan Hutten-Czapski, *Sechszig Jahre Politik & Gesellschaft*, vol 1 (Berlin: E. S. Mittler und Sohn, 1936), ch. 6.
[47] Silverman, *Reluctant Union*, 71.

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unlike the Prussian Polish situation. Despite depopulation, the rural areas remained "Alsatian" as German in-migration was mainly to the cities, with the number one destination being Strasbourg.[48] The main German *quartier* in that city sprung up around the new *Reichsuniversität*.

The academic institution in Strasbourg had in fact always been a foreign element in a sea of hostility. It was founded in 1621 as a Protestant university. Throughout the eighteenth century it was a major centre of learning, especially of medicine and law, the latter subject studied there by none other than Goethe in 1770. The century following the French Revolution was difficult for the university as its Protestantism became a major obstacle to its flourishing within France. By 1870 it had become a Lutheran training academy as it continued to exist in a world apart from its Catholic surroundings. Hence, its quick transformation into an imperial university, a beacon of German *Kultur*, in a land seemingly in need of a "civilizing mission," was an easy adjustment. After the destruction of the library during the war in 1870, a call for new books was made across the Empire. The enthusiasm for this frontier university was such that by 1881, with half a million volumes, the university possessed the largest library in the world.[49] Indeed, the university received more funding from Berlin than any other in Germany, was able to attract top talent as well as hold more seminars (as opposed to lectures), and thus became more attractive to students.[50] This was to be an "*Arbeitsuniversität*,"[51] a hard-working university. The new faculty were to be young and energetic, although it was hoped that they would not be too nationalistic, so as not to enflame Alsatian nationalist yearning. For this reason, both Alsatian history and literature were taught, as well as the Alsatian dialect. Additionally, twelve Alsatian faculty from the previous administration were kept on.[52] Finally, certain "problematic" older, well-known German professors, such as the firebrand Treitschke, were not invited to Strasbourg.[53] In their place, men like Gustav Schmoller and Friedrich Knapp were sent, both of whom arrived in 1874. Each man's predilection for a "scientific" approach was presumed to mean that they

[48] Silverman, *Reluctant Union*, 69.
[49] It was succeeded by Harvard only on the eve of the First World War. John E. Craig, *Scholarship and Nation Building: The Universities of Strasbourg and Alsatian Society, 1870–1939* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 60.
[50] Thomas Höpel, "The French–German Borderlands: Borderlands and Nation-Building in the 19th and 20th Centuries," *European History Online* (2012): 36. Accessed at http://ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/crossroads/border-regions/thomas-hoepel-the-french-german-borderlands.
[51] Craig, *Scholarship and Nation Building*, 75
[52] Höpel, "French–German Borderlands," 36.
[53] Craig, *Scholarship and Nation Building*, 57–58.

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would not be overt nationalists. In Schmoller's words, this was all intended:

> to promote both the assimilation of the territory into the state as a whole and to raise the academic spirit, to provide better education for teachers, doctors and officials in the newly won provinces through the founding of new universities or the better care of existing universities.[54]

But from the start, all signs indicated that, despite the attempt by the first (Alsatian) Rector, Roggenbach, to appease Alsatian feeling, German nationalism would become the overarching mission. The opening ceremony was little more than an exercise in "*Hurrapatriotismus*," and shortly thereafter it was decided that all classes would be taught in German. As for the supposedly "non-nationalistic" faculty, they immediately saw the purpose of the university as nothing less than a vehicle for the Germanization of Alsace.[55] The university's young faculty (average age thirty-five) produced scholarship at a frenzied pace, with the idea that simply by working hard they would impress the "lazy" Alsatians. Their students were young men often sent by patriotic German fathers wanting their sons "to serve" in the borderlands. They managed to overcome a hostile native population, as well as a lack of cheap housing, with a good deal of arrogant, nationalist ardour: "living conditions at this colonial outpost may have been worse than in other German university towns, but the patriotic idealism and enthusiasm were greater."[56] The recently arrived Germans tended to live close to each other, near the university. German concerts, beer gardens, and the Cologne carnival were imported to evoke national heritage as well as to display to the "natives" the many benefits of German hegemony. The *Strassburger Post* was founded and proved to be very popular. It was in such a hothouse of German imperialism and zeal, among a sea of natives to be assimilated, that the teenage Sering came of age. The memoirs of fellow Germans (and Alsatians) in this period tell us the atmosphere was nothing less than a "colonial" situation. As a historian of the *Reichsuniversität* writes,

> Members of Strasbourg's German community often described their situation as comparable to that in a colony, and it is easy to see why. Living alongside an inhospitable native population differentiated by language or dialect and by culture, they naturally felt like outsiders and banded together, much as they would have if they had been in Paris or Constantinople or Dar es Salaam. Thirty-five years after the annexation a prominent member of the immigrant community could still describe life in Strasbourg as "interesting, but not

[54] Cited in Höpel, "French–German Borderlands," fn. 54.
[55] Craig, *Scholarship and Nation Building*, 61–62.
[56] Craig, *Scholarship and Nation Building*, 80

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pleasant. One does not feel at home here; one always feels like part of a German colony in a foreign city. Whenever I return to Strasbourg from a trip, I never have the feeling: 'this is my city, my home,' but the same cool sensation as when I get to Paris: 'Here is a city in which I know my way around extremely well!'"[57]

Unsurprisingly, such attitudes and behavior did not go over well with the Alsatians:

the immigrants … arrive in Alsace like the conquerors in a conquered country. Arrogant, haughty, they relentlessly extoll German virtues and Germanic grandeur, and display their contempt for the Alsatian, for his social habits, for his stubborn loyalty. The native inhabitant quickly realized that he had nothing in common with these people. From now on the two societies would live isolated, sharing only strictly indispensable relations.[58]

This theme of two solitudes runs throughout the memoir literature, despite the desire of at least some of the German professors to engage on friendlier terms with the locals. The historian Friedrich Meinecke, who fell in love with Strasbourg during his 1901–1906 tenure there, rued the fact that the one time his Alsatian neighbour invited him to dinner, it was at the local restaurant and not in the neighbour's house: "We live here in a colony, as we professors say amongst ourselves."[59] As a student in the late 1870s, Sering would have experienced this segregated culture, frequenting German student hangouts that were often next door to Alsatian haunts. Whether or not Sering ever hurled an insult or a punch, it is safe to say he would have witnessed many a donnybrook in the streets outside these establishments.

[57] Craig, *Scholarship and Nation Building*, 78. Alfred Hoche, a student in Strasbourg in the 1890s, found the idea that it was in fact a "colony" to be a stretch, yet "Das erwähnte, in gewissem Umfange als vorhanden anzuerkennende **Koloniebewußtsein** war wohl auch die Grundlage, auf der ein Maß von Zusammenhalten der akademischen Männer erwuchs, wie es an manchen anderen, von Stimmungen und Strömungen zerflederten Universitäten nicht zu finden ist; in dem großen Restaurant Germania am Üniversitätsplatz fand sich zu meiner Zeit regelmäßig ein großer Abendschoppentisch zusammen, an dem es lebhaft zuging. Der Umsatz war vorwiegend geistiger Art, und eine zum Beobachten ebenso wie zu klassischen Formulierungen befähigte Kellnerin kennzeichnete das vom Standpunkt des Wirtes aus wenig befriedigende Ergebnis der Diskussion am Professorentische mit den Worten: 'Sie schreien mehr als sie verzehren'." Alfred Erich Hoche, *Straßburg und seine Universität. Ein Buch der Erinnerung* (Munich: Lehmann, 1939), 60–61.

[58] Marie-Noele Denis, "L'université impériale de Strasbourg et le pangermanisme," *Revue des Sciences Sociales de la France de l'Est* 20 (1993), 10.

[59] Friedrich Meinecke, *Strassburg/Freiburg/Berlin* (Stuttgart: Koehler, 1949), 20. See also Francois Igersheim, "Strasbourg Capitale du Reichsland," in Georges Livet and Francis Rapp, eds., *Histoire de Strasbourg des origines à nos jours* (Strasbourg: Imprimerie des Dernieres Nouvelles d'Alsace, 1982), 195–285; Denis, "L'université impériale."

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It is not surprising that Alsatians were adept at frustrating German attempts to assimilate them. After all, the French had been trying to make these speakers of a largely German dialect speak French for more than sixty years with little success. Along the lines of what was occurring in Prussian Poland, the German administration tried to force locals to learn and speak High German, but there were many exceptions for students at both the elementary and secondary levels, and by 1919 very little headway had been made. In fact, almost all the evidence for a shift from French to German can be accounted for by French emigration and German immigration. Further, the teenage Sering's high school curriculum would have devoted as many hours to French language lessons as German, a fundamental difference between the experience of German colonists in the West versus the East, as teenage Germans in Posen spent no time learning Polish.[60] Yet, akin to the situation in Prussian Poland, Alsatian natives were subject to Germany's official state campaign against Catholicism, the *Kulturkampf*. Even after Bismarck's campaign officially ended in 1879, the conflation of Catholicism with the "backward natives" of Alsace continued. The professors at the imperial university were in fact among the harshest propagandists, arguing that one simply could not be both a serious scholar and a Catholic.[61] Finally, in addition to heavy-handedness with regard to education and religion, in the 1870s the German government did little to help the Alsatian economy flourish. The owners of textile factories in Mulhouse, the region's main industry, fought throughout the 1870s for protective tariffs, which they, along with the rest of Germany, finally received in 1879. And it was on the topic of tariffs that Max Sering wrote his doctoral dissertation, which he would finish in 1881.

Upon completing *Gymnasium*, Sering initially joined the Royal Prussian Infantry Regiment King Ludwig III of Bavaria (Niederschlesisches) No. 47 in Strasbourg on April 1, 1876. In another

[60] Silverman, *Reluctant Union*, 76–81. On Polish language training, see Matthew G. Bias, "The Bamberger Myth: The Poznanian Bambergers, the Construction of Nationalism, and the Mythologization of History in Poznania, 1871–1918" (PhD dissertation, George Washington University, 2020). Detmar Klein makes the important argument that, unlike Prussian Poles, ultimately Alsatians were "Germans" who needed their "Frenchness" removed. Detmar Klein, "German-Annexed Alsace and Imperial Germany: A Process of Colonisation?" in Healy and Dal Lago, *The Shadow of Colonialism*, 92–108.

[61] Silverman, *Reluctant Union*, ch. 5, "Permanent *Kulturkampf* in Alsace-Lorraine 1871–1918." Silverman makes the interesting point that just as Bismarck's official Kulturkampf was winding down in 1879, the French version was just beginning with the banning of the Jesuits that year and the Ferry Laws in 1882 banning religious teaching.

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example of comparative borderlands, this unit had been garrisoned in Posen until 1870, and it would again be stationed there, after Sering's service, in 1887.[62] After only one year, however, Sering developed a nasty case of gout and was forced to join the *Ersatz* Regiment, presumably to take on less physical duties. During this period, he also began attending classes at the university. In June 1879 he entered the Civil Service, being sworn in as a *Referendar*, a legal trainee. He took up a position in Colmar, but continued to pursue his doctoral studies in Strasbourg, perhaps riding the rail link between the two cities that had opened in 1841. For the final doctoral stage of Sering's Strasbourg studies, he was under the supervision of both the rising star Georg Friedrich Knapp and the already legendary Gustav Schmoller. Sering was thus indoctrinated in the "Historical School of Economics," the traces of which would dominate everything he published throughout his long life.

The Historical School

Beginning in the 1840s, what in hindsight we call the "Older Historical School of Economics" was mostly focused on arguing against British laissez-faire ideas. The movement was led by Friedrich List, along with Wilhelm Roscher, Bruno Hildebrand, and Karl Knies. They claimed that every nation was at a different level of development, and that each population should be protected by tariffs until they had developed to a level fit for "free trade." Academic practitioners of this school of economics were "[d]eeply influenced by the teachings of Savigny, the foremost spokesman of the historical school of jurisprudence," in that "they argued that all economic theories and assumptions should be tested by a careful analysis of concrete developments." They saw economics in many ways as a "political science." In their view everything affected economics – laws, the state, culture – and ultimately the discipline required historical study of each, "for all of those forces were largely the product of an evolutionary process."[63] From the 1860s, the "Younger Historical School" (Lujo Brentano, Adolf Held, Hermann Rösler, Albert Schäffle, Hans von Scheel, Adolph Wagner, as well as Sering's doctoral supervisor Schmoller, and his later *Habilitation*

[62] Günther Voigt, *Deutschlands Heere bis 1918. Ursprung und Entwicklung der einzelnen Formationen*. Vol. 2 *Die Infanterie- bzw. Füsilier-Regimenter 13–60 der preussischen Armee* (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1981), 515.

[63] Abraham Ascher, "Professors as Propagandists: The Politics of the Kathedersozialisten," *Journal of Central European Affairs* 23 (1963): 284–285.

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supervisor Erwin Nasse) extended this thinking, developed new empirical and statistical methods, and emphasized the gathering of facts. Schmoller "urged his colleagues to gather data concerning the development of specific institutions, enterprises, trades and guilds, the economic policies of states and the method of their administration, the class structure of societies" with the expectation that such "data were then to be examined in their historical, political and psychological setting."[64] Schmoller was certain that this would prove that there was no sole source of economic activity (thus debunking the laissez-faire school of thought), and that instead there was "a variety of ethical considerations which often counteracted the self-seeking impulse of individuals."[65] As opposed to simply criticizing "free trade," much more important to this generation was to address the class tensions being fuelled by rapid industrialization and urbanization. Coming up with policies to alleviate this situation was their raison d'etre, and as such we can refer to them as "social liberals" in some sense. This new generation of historical economists occupied virtually every important university chair in economics, and, with the founding of the Association for Social Politics (*Verein für Sozialpolitik*, hereafter VfS), had a significant effect on policy makers as well as the larger interested public.[66] Because their ultimate goal was to eliminate class tensions and bring about social harmony, they were dubbed the *Kathedersozialisten*, the "Socialists of the Chair."[67] Interestingly, the one member of this troupe whose admiration for British-style capitalism was

[64] Ascher, "Professors as Propagandists," 285–286. Seminal here: Erik Grimmer-Solem, *The Rise of Historical Economics and Social Reform in Germany 1864–1894* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003). See also, David F. Lindenfeld, *The Practical Imagination: The German Sciences of State in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997).

[65] Ascher, "Professors as Propagandists," 285–286. "Indeed, if one were to identify a specifically German trait in economic writing in mid-century, it would not be the provenance of a historical method in economic writing, but rather this universally accepted conception that the point of departure for the consideration of economic life was the human being and its needs. The existence of such human needs and wants generated a realm of economic activity in which these needs were satisfied. The exchanges that occurred in this realm were summarised in the all-embracing *topos* of *Verkehr* – communication, commerce, social intercourse, traffic, exchange." Keith Tribe, *Strategies of Economic Order: German Economic Discourse, 1750–1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 72–73. This speaks directly to the economics of inner colonization: certain agrarian "economic" policies were sometimes more "political" or "cultural" than they were economic.

[66] Wagner gave weekly public lectures during the Winter Semester that brought crowds of over 1,000, and he "harangued them as would a demagogue." Ascher, "Professors as Propagandists," 283–284.

[67] Indeed, the "state socialism" preached by Wagner was often far too close to the Social Democratic Party for many of his colleagues on the Right. Wagner believed in government control, or the *Verstaatlichung*, of water, electricity, and insurance.

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enough to have him branded the Judas of the movement, Lujo Brentano, arrived at Strasbourg in the Fall of 1882, to replace the departing Schmoller. Sering would leave the city a few months later.

Schmoller and company's ideas may well have looked like socialism, but this was a highly conservative variety. The context for the rise of the new school mirrored what the young Sering saw happening around his Saxon home in Barby, the flight of the traditional farmer from field to city. Although there was a 60 percent increase in the German population from 1810 to 1870, during the last twenty years of that period some two million Germans emigrated, and fully half of those departed from Sering's Northeastern Germany. While many went overseas, millions more wandered into the quickly overrun cities of the East, such as Magdeburg, the locale of Sering's first *Gymnasium*. There, Sering would have witnessed the very conditions that drove fear into the hearts of the Historical School: poverty, prostitution, and an overcrowding problem that led to the *Mietskaserne* (tenement blocks) becoming the norm in both Berlin and other eastern cities such as Magdeburg. Thus, industrialization and "too much" democracy and freedom was quickly shattering the traditional norms of German civilization, and further destroying whatever middle class (*Mittelstand*) that had existed. This quickly disappearing medieval world, as well as the very real fear that urban despair would inspire revolution, were catalysts for a radical new approach to economic theory.[68]

The *Kathedersozialisten* founded their very own institutional home in 1873 at Eisenach with the VfS. This association would become one of the most important and well known of the *Kaiserreich*, and its co-founder and long-serving chairman was Schmoller. The early years of the VfS were absorbed by the question of those very same landless, desperate agrarian labourers (the so-called *Landarbeiterfrage*). Central to this question was a fundamental tension: How can the state tie peasants to the land without simply returning to feudalism? Sering would have become aware of this academic argument in the lecture halls of the late 1870s, and he was still arguing about it with the Nazi Darré near the end of his life in the 1930s. This is indeed one of the most profound problems with agrarian and nationalist settler colonial projects: how does the state entice colonists with the promise of owning their own plot of land, to become productive, indeed heroic, yeomen farmers, while ensuring that the same farmers do

He believed in the importance of the maintenance of social classes but wanted less of a difference between them. Ascher, "Professors as Propagandists," 300.

[68] Grimmer-Solem, *Rise of Historical Economics*, ch. 3, "The Social Question and the Challenge to Economic Orthodoxy."

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not become speculators, flipping the very land just given to them? The VfS pushed for government intervention to reverse the flight from the land and to protect the peasant middle class. As has been stated, such action in opposition to laissez-faire economics branded members of the VfS as socialists. But one must always keep in mind that it was a socialism that, while often praising elements of Marx, was ultimately counterrevolutionary.[69]

These "younger" Historical School academics claimed that it was too early for theories or abstractions, and thus their focus was on data collection and fact-finding trips. Schmoller himself spent much of the 1860s in France and Germany doing just that and it is rather unsurprising that the young Max Sering would soon be asked to do the same, on an even grander scale. Initially, however, Sering would undertake a smaller fact-finding mission, one that would result in his doctoral dissertation on the iron tariffs of 1818, a topic which focused on research that brought together many of the themes that the Historical School economists were discussing. Sering's dissertation involved the two groups that would be central to his life-long research: a "large propertyless class of day laborers," and their landowning overlords, the *Junker*. As a response to Napoleon's Continental Blockade, the Prussians had expanded cultivation of rye and indeed, after 1815, high duties remained in effect to protect the rye-growing *Junker*. Ultimately, this led to a surplus and the agricultural depression of the 1820s.[70] In the same period, peasants were freed from feudal duties, which resulted in landless (but free) labour. The *Junker* then diversified their investments with the addition of sheep and sugar, and lo and behold they became free traders. New technologies, along with the *Zollverein* (Customs Union) and the advent of railroads, led to a golden age for the *Junker* from the 1830s to 1870s.[71] While it had been expected that speculation would result in some rise in the value of land, prices skyrocketed. Simultaneously, during the last decade of this period, as the newly unified Germany's population began itself to explode, the new Empire had to massively increase its importation of foreign wheat.[72] With the global reduction in transport costs the grain

[69] Angela Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, The German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 69–77.

[70] In other words, the tariffs the *Junker* would ask for in the 1870s had earlier led to a depression.

[71] Kenneth D. Barkin, *The Controversy over German Industrialization, 1890–1902* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 24–26.

[72] Because the population was growing with unprecedented speed, Germany's dependence on foreign grain increased enormously in the years following the empire's founding. Barkin, *Controversy over German Industrialization*, 28. See also, Grimmer-Solem, *Rise of Historical Economics*, 224–229.

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market was flooded with imports from Argentina, Australia, and India, but mainly North America. By the late 1870s the price of grain and rye had fallen back to the levels of the 1830s:

> The years of speculation had forced land prices so high that German producers did not have the requisite capital to compete with the low production costs of the New World. It was not uncommon for eastern estates to be indebted for more than half of their estimated value. Those Junkers depending on further price rises to liquidate their debts were caught shorthanded. Capital investment in machinery and new techniques came to a halt as all spare money was needed for discharging mortgages. After doubling in forty years, the yield per acre remained stable at 13.5 *Doppelzentner* per hectare for the entirety of Bismarck's reign as chancellor.[73]

At the same time, there was no population gain on *Junker* estates. The combination of the American Homestead Act (1862), the allowance of freedom of movement out of Prussia (1861), and the replacement of sailing ships by steam led to massive emigration. Yet, unlike in Ireland, this emigration was not "pushed" through poverty, as real wages on the estates rose throughout this period. This was a point Sering often made.[74] The "pull" was initially into even higher wages in industrializing German cities, but eventually it was the promise of the ownership of land in North America that was most enticing. In 1871, Industry, the *Junker*, and Chancellor Bismarck were all free traders. Indeed, Germany would have been completely tariff-free by 1873. But the price of iron dropped, leading to a clamouring among German industrialists for increased tariffs. When the agricultural crisis followed in the late 1870s, the *Junker* realized that they had similar anti-free trade needs, and thus Bismarck was able to bring both sides together, hence a "Marriage of Rye and Iron."[75]

Sering began university studies in this period, and immediately had access to the most important professors. For example, in Schmoller's 1877/1878 winter semester seminar on national economics, Sering was one of only ten students.[76] Sering's dissertation on the iron tariffs of

[73] Barkin, *Controversy over German Industrialization*, 28.
[74] Barkin, *Controversy over German Industrialization*, 28–30.
[75] Barkin, *Controversy over German Industrialization*, 32–36. See also Cornelius Torp, "The 'Coalition of "Rye and Iron"' under the Pressure of Globalization: A Reinterpretation of Germany's Political Economy before 1914," *Central European History* 43 (2010): 401–427, and Oliver Grant, *Migration and Inequality in Germany 1870–1933* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).
[76] In addition to Sering, this class, National Economic Exercises, also had two other later-famous economists, Karl Rathgen and Karl Eheberg. Grimmer-Solem, *Rise of Historical Economics*, 57. As Erik Grimmer-Solem details, one could achieve a doctorate in a mere six semesters. The students would then pursue their Habilitation

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1818 was an analysis in the classic Historical School fashion, under the guidance of Schmoller and Knapp. The dissertation, *Geschichte der preussisch-deutschen Eisenzölle von 1818 bis zur Gegenwart* (*History of the Prussian-German Iron Tariffs from 1818 to the Present*) was completed in 1881 and published in 1882 in Schmoller's book series "Staats- und socialwissenschaftliche Forschungen" (State- and Social Science Research).[77] In the preface Sering claimed the best way to understand what to do about iron tariffs was simply to write a good, objective history of iron tariffs. Citing Dunoyer, Sering wrote, "Je n'impose rien, je ne propose meme rien: j'expose" ("I do not impose anything. I propose nothing: I expose").[78] The work is chock full of historical descriptions, detailed explanations of trade and laws, and exhibits a deep interest in the science of materials, methods, and technologies. Right from his first publication, we see the style and interests that would shape virtually all Sering's writings throughout his career. Although he was not yet focusing on agriculture, one of Sering's lifelong themes was fully on display: international trade and its legal framework, all couched in his philosophy that exhaustive study and statistics would reveal how a nation functions best. In his review, or *Rückblick*, at the end of the work, the precocious twenty-four-year-old framed his history of the industrialization of Germany in terms of the life stages of a man. The Thirty Years' War to 1800 was its infancy. Then, over the last century, Germany enjoyed its youth. But now, "we" (wrote Sering, meaning the Germans) were old enough, man enough, not to need the state (our parents) any longer. Yes, Sering readily admitted, from 1818 through the 1840s, tariffs protected the iron industry from outside forces, allowing it to grow and strengthen. By the late 1850s, however, the quality of product was such that tariffs only inflated the price of iron in Germany and thus retarded growth. Since then there had been difficult times, but Sering decided that the re-imposition of exceptionally high duties in 1879 was rash and, with the arrival of manhood in the German industry, the time had come for it to stand on its own. On the one hand, this was an argument against protecting industry and simultaneously against protecting the agrarian

in order to have a tenured chair and, during this "postdoctoral" phase, they would be completely reliant on their supervisors for teaching, as a "Privatdozent," and made virtually no money. Grimmer-Solem remarks that, due to this precarious situation, junior academics were very conservative in their university-based work, and the more cutting-edge methodologies were reserved for institutions like the VfS. Grimmer-Solem, *Rise of Historical Economics*, ch. 2, "The Mode of Production."

[77] Max Sering, *Geschichte der preussisch-deutschen Eisenzölle von 1818 bis zur Gegenwart* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1882).

[78] Sering, *Eisenzölle*, x.

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sector. On the other hand, Sering possessed an independent streak his entire life and never shied away from arguing what he thought "the facts" showed him. Although he always wore ideological goggles, it is important to note that, from time to time, he did change his mind.[79]

By 1882, the Prussian Ministry of Agriculture had become very concerned about both the emigration of Germans from the Prussian East, as well as the global competitive pressure being placed on the crops produced there. In that year, Sering was officially asked by the Ministry to investigate the agricultural situation in North America, and how Germany could learn from what was happening there.[80] It was a rather lucky break to be offered this "fact-finding mission" for a Historical School study, assigned at the moment in 1882 when Sering needed to find a topic for his *Habilitation*,[81] especially as it would be paid for by the Prussian government. Co-founder, and current Chair, of the VfS, Erwin Nasse at Bonn, who also happened to be a specialist on English agriculture, was an obvious choice for *Habilitation* supervisor.[82] Sering spent his last winter in Strasbourg devouring anything and everything written on agriculture in North America, and just before his February 1883 departure, he provided Nasse with a draft of his *Habilitation*.[83]

The Journey of a Lifetime: Max Sering in North America, 1883

On 11 February 1883, Sering boarded the *Werra* in Bremen. He disembarked in New York City twelve days later, on the twenty-

[79] Beyond the famous free-trader Brentano, neither Knapp nor to a certain extent even Schmoller, were "protectionists." See Grimmer-Solem, *Rise of Historical Economics*, 172–173.

[80] Grimmer-Solem, *Learning Empire*, 44.

[81] The *Habilitation*, often a second book, is the requirement in Germany for a Chair in academia.

[82] See for instance, Erwin Nasse, *Ueber die mittelalterliche Feldgemeinschaft und die Einhegungen des sechszehnten Jahrhunderts in England* (Bonn: Carl Georgi, 1869). At some point in the Fall of 1882 Sering made a trip to Bonn where he was warmly received by Nasse. Sering to Schmoller, December 16, 1882.

[83] Although Sering defined himself to a *Regina Leader* reporter in July 1883 as a "professor at Bonn," the fact that in a letter to Schmoller written immediately thereafter he is hoping his mentor can help him arrange teaching at Bonn upon his return, leads me to assume Sering only moved to Bonn in time for his *Habilitationsrede* in November 1883. His first official teaching at Bonn appears to be during the Summer of 1884 (see Chapter 3). In any case, an obvious journey in February 1883 from Strasbourg to Bremen would have been on or along the Rhine to Bonn, to personally drop off the Habilitation, then straight on to Bremen. And these two letters, both written in Strasbourg, make it appear he was trying to, and did acquire, January teaching in Bonn. Sering to Althoff, September 23, 1882 and December 31, 1882.

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third. Because the Werra-class ships usually made the Atlantic crossing in eight to nine days, and ordinarily called at Southampton after first embarking from Germany, it is very likely that Sering's first visit to an English-speaking country was in fact England. His *Habilitation* supervisor, Nasse, was an expert on England, and German "national economists" had been fascinated with this country for decades. Sering may well have made the easy trip by train from Southampton to London and spent a day or two walking around the world financial capital, but he made no mention of such in his account of this great adventure.

For the most part, what follows is a highly detailed description of who Sering met and what he saw as he criss-crossed the North American continent from February to September 1883. As opposed to extended analysis, in this section I will merely at times point out the future significance for Sering of certain moments on this journey. A more detailed investigation of agricultural settlement in the United States and Canada will appear in Chapter 3, when I trace the first phase of Sering's professorial career back in Germany. Once he was settled in Bonn, and after a few years of rumination, Sering finally recorded his thoughts on this journey in detail, with the publication of his great study of North America, which appeared in 1887.[84] But in February 1883, he was merely a 26 year-old with a 31,823 km trip ahead of him. The description of that trip that follows is patched together for the most part from that 1887 book. The book is not a travelogue, but instead a "scientific" work that sought to describe the overall conditions of settlement in North America. Thus, using the list of dates and places indicated in the opening pages, and then cross-referencing from observations made throughout the text, as well as in footnotes, and a few surviving letters, I have been able, for the most part, to reconstruct this important journey.

February 23 to March 18: Experts on the East Coast

Upon arrival, Sering spent most of the final weeks of the North American winter indoors, meeting agricultural experts as well as politicians. The young academic initially debunked for the more familiar terrain of the university town of New Haven. There he had two important consultations. The first was with Henry Walcott Farnam, son of the seventy-nine year-old railroad president Henry Farnam. The younger Farnam had studied under Schmoller, gaining his PhD at Strasbourg in 1878.

[84] Max Sering, *Die landwirthschaftliche Konkurrenz Nordamerikas in Gegenwart und Zukunft. Landwirthschaft, Kolonisation und Verkehrswesen in den Vereinigten Staaten und in Britisch-Nordamerika* (Leipzig: Duncker and Humblot, 1887).

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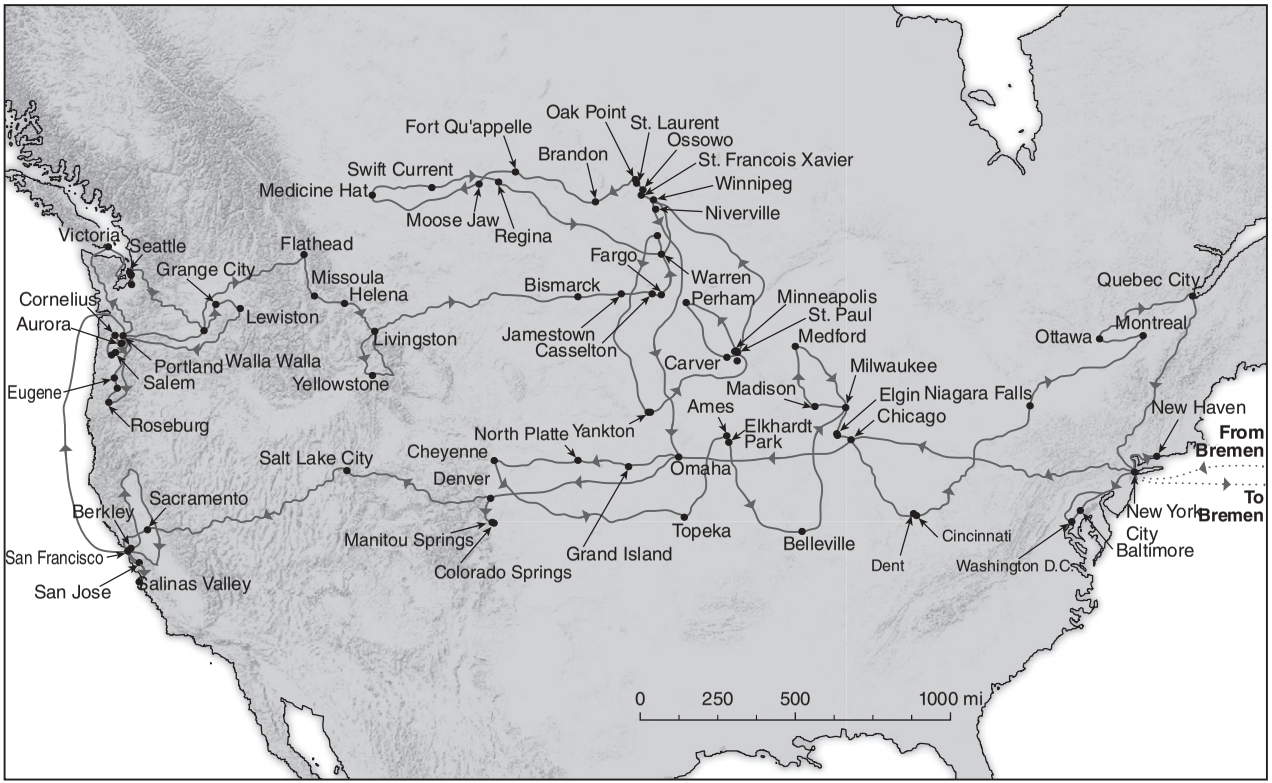

Figure 2.2 Max Sering's journey through the United States and Canada, February 23–September 26, 1883
(Erik Grimmer-Solem, Learning Empire: Globalization and the German Quest for World Status, 1875–1919 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019], p. 48)

Farnam Sr. was also present in New Haven and, given that he had been intimately involved in both the construction of the Erie Canal, first as a cook then later as a surveyor, he would have had much to tell Sering. In the 1850s and 1860s, Farnam Sr. experienced the transition of transportation from canals to railways when, as president of the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad, he oversaw the extension of rail to the Midwest. Later, Sering would tie the extensive nature of the North American railway network to the success of that continent's "inner colonization." Schmoller had written ahead asking that the younger Farnam look after Sering, and later Farnam responded that they had had a nice time, though Sering had spent far too much time writing in his journal.[85] The next person Sering sought out was William Henry Brewer, then chair of the Sheffield Scientific School at Yale. There would have been no end to what these two could discuss, from soil chemistry to Brewer's extensive knowledge of California which he had helped survey in the 1860s, to his recent participation in the 1880 Census of Agriculture. Brewer was an expert in the where, when, and why of growing wheat in the United States.

From New Haven, Sering was soon off to Washington DC, where his letters of introduction got him a series of meetings, including one with the Commissioner of Agriculture, George B. Loring, as well as two men whose jobs would have very much interested the detail-oriented Sering: Chief Statistician for the United States Department of Agriculture, Jacob Richards Dodge, and Chief of the Bureau of Statistics, Joseph Nimmo, Jr. Sering was brought up to date on the current state of settlement in the West by none other than the Commissioner of the General Land Office, N. C. McFarland. Finally, he met the German Ambassador Karl von Eisendecher, who was a close confidante of Bismarck's.[86] Sering returned to New York and then embarked on his great journey westward.

March 19 to April 2: From Coast to Coast

Upon leaving the East Coast, Sering had a quick, initial view of the vast expanse of the North American continent. In a mere thirteen days he

[85] Grimmer-Solem, *Learning Empire*, 44–45. I thank Erik Grimmer-Solem for providing access to these letters.

[86] Also while in DC, Sering was excited to meet, and receive extensive travel advice from, the renowned historian George Bancroft. Further, he was invited on a four-week tour of the American South but, due to time and financial restrictions, reluctantly declined. Two months into his trip, Sering reckoned that his travel was costing about $250 per month. Sering to Schmoller, April 15, 1883. During this period, Sering received some 10,000 marks from Geheimrat Thiel, and one can assume that a significant amount of that was to cover the trip. Sering to Schmoller, March 26, 1884.

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travelled first to Chicago, then southwest to Omaha, then west to Northern California. While he would be returning to the Great Plains in August, this would be his only excursion to the far West. An early spring visit to the Rockies must have been rather cold. Nonetheless, from Denver he visited Colorado Springs and rode on horseback to Manitou Springs, and the foot of Pike's Peak.[87] He then proceeded through the Rocky Mountains and down to Salt Lake City. While he seems to have been quite taken with the massive irrigation systems of Utah,[88] he had very little to say about the Mormons. This is especially notable when compared to his attention to the Mennonites of Manitoba and their ability to maintain a unique identity within North American culture. This suggests that it was not the religious element of Mennonite identity that so fascinated Sering, but the fact that they were Germans, holding on to their Germanness. He then trained straight through northern Nevada to Sacramento, before finally reaching the Pacific Ocean at San Francisco.

April 2–18: California

Sering based himself in San Francisco for sixteen days and made a series of trips throughout Northern California. He visited Sacramento, San Jose, and Monterey, before conferring with the German American Eugene Hilgard at Berkeley. Having already discussed North American soil chemistry with Brewer at Yale, Sering was well prepared to go into much more detail with one of the greatest minds in the world on the subject. Hilgard was born in the Rhineland in 1833 but was taken to the United States by his family at age two. He had returned to Germany for advanced study at the age of fifteen, receiving his PhD under Bunsen at Heidelberg in 1853.[89] Now Professor of Agricultural Chemistry and Director of the State Agricultural Experimental Station at Berkeley, the fifty-year old Hilgard surely saw elements of himself in the precocious Sering. Having spoken to Hilgard, especially as this would have been in German, Sering was well prepared for his next excursions into the richly soiled valleys of California. In the Sacramento Valley, he visited farms at

[87] The place name is of course similar to the already famous Karl May character Winnetou. One wonders if Max read some May before his departure. In his first letter to Schmoller, Sering wrote that it was incredible to now see what had only been "fantasies based on books and maps." Sering to Schmoller, April 15, 1883.

[88] Sering, *Die landwirthschaftliche Konkurrenz*, 216.

[89] Frederick Slate, "Biographical Memoir of Eugene Woldemar Hilgard 1833–1916," in National Academy of Sciences, ed., *Biographical Memoirs*, IX, (Washington DC: National Academy of Sciences, 1919).

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Red Bluff, then strolled through the largest vineyard in the world with former Governor Stanford, at his Great Vina Ranch. Sering continued on to the giant Chico ranch of John Bidwell, one of the earliest American immigrants to California, and a future Prohibition candidate for President of the United States. Sering did not indicate whether he spent any time at the famous Bidwell Mansion, a house that saw guests ranging from President Rutherford Hayes to Susan B. Anthony.[90]

Sering continued his tour of Californian settlement and agriculture into the San Joaquin Valley, visiting the farm of Mr. Henry Huffmann at Merced. Huffmann, also born in Germany, had arrived for the Gold Rush in 1850. He stayed and became a successful wheat farmer. This "father of Merced" also had a hand in railways, wheat hauling and storage, as well as working as a "town site agent," choosing spots along proposed railways for towns, including Merced.[91] Again, having a German explain all of this in detail to Sering was surely exceptionally helpful, as these were all themes of great interest to him and his research. After completing his California tour in the Santa Clara Valley around San Jose, Sering's overall impression of California was one of enormous, yet unclear, potential. There was a lot of land available for agriculture, but the dependence upon future systems of irrigation left him wondering whether or not Californian agriculture would be worth the cost.[92] After returning to San Francisco, he embarked on a two-day boat trip up, first, the Oregon Coast, then the Columbia River, to Portland, from April 18 to 20.

April 20 to May 24: The Pacific Northwest: Oregon, Washington, British Columbia

After establishing his new home base in the growing city of Portland, Sering immediately set off on a six-day-long journey with the indefatigable Henry Villard. Born in Speyer, Germany, Villard slipped off to the United States while still a teenager after clashing with his conservative father. Working as a journalist Villard covered first the American Civil War, then the Austro-Prussian War of 1866. Between these two conflicts he saw enough to become a lifelong pacifist. Although the monarchist Sering would have had some trouble with Villard's arch-Republicanism, Sering was surely very much open to Villard's strong affiliations with the

[90] Michael J. Gillis and Michael F. Magliari, *John Bidwell and California: The Life and Writings of a Pioneer, 1841–1900* (Spokane: A. H. Clark, 2003).

[91] Colleen Stanley Bare, *Pioneer Genius: Charles Henry Huffmann* (Merced: Merced County Historical Society, 2003).

[92] His description, in a letter to Schmoller, of what kind of products a future California could produce, was shockingly prescient. Sering to Schmoller, April 15, 1883.

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Free Soil Movement, especially Villard's attempt in 1856 to establish a colony of Germans in Kansas.[93] Free Soilers were early homesteaders, often Abolitionists, who possessed the settler drive Sering would later highly praise. The time of Sering's visit, April 1883, was an extraordinarily busy period for Villard. As president of the Northern Pacific Railway he was pushing to complete the line and connect Portland to Montana by September. Sering joined Villard's bustling entourage on the tracks as it first went south for two days along the Oregon and California Railway to the end of track at Roseburg, visiting the University of Oregon in Eugene along the way.[94] They then travelled two days east from Portland through the Columbia River Valley along the Oregon Railroad and Navigation Company tracks to The Dalles and Pendleton. From this point, Sering and company boarded wagons and went through Umatilla to Blue Mountain.

There was an Indian reservation at Umatilla, named for the tribe, and passing through was a horrific experience for Sering that burned itself into his memory. After being forced to settle on the newly formed reservation in 1855, the Umatilla had occasionally fought white settlers as late as 1879, usually because of their restricted access to food.[95] What Sering witnessed that April from his wagon must have been shocking, for he would later criticize what he saw as the "American" treatment of Indigenous peoples: to attack them or simply herd them onto unproductive land, presumably, to die out.[96] His experiences here were in sharp contrast to what he would see a few months hence, a program of assimilation in Manitoba. Thus, to put this in its most blunt form: from an early age, Sering opposed the kind of systems that would later be put in place in occupied Poland at the time of his death in November 1939. Although every bit the ethnic chauvinist, Sering believed in assimilation, not eradication.

From Blue Mountain, the party entrained for Walla Walla, then north to Grange City on the Snake River. After two days on a steamer up the Snake, Sering arrived at Lewiston, Idaho. At some point Sering and Villard parted ways.[97] Villard returned to Portland and then eventually

[93] Henry Villard, *Memoirs of Henry Villard. Journalist and Financier, 1835–1900*. 2 Vols. (Westminster: Archibald Constable and Co., 1904).
[94] Villard had bailed out the struggling institution in 1881. Villard, *Memoirs*, Vol. 2, 304.
[95] Carl Waldman, *Encyclopedia of American Tribes*, revised edition (New York: Checkmark Books, 1999), 255–256.
[96] Sering, *Die landwirthschaftliche Konkurrenz*, 58–59, 308.
[97] It is unclear at what point Villard cut out from the trip, but he gave a speech in Portland on April 27, so I would assume he did not accompany Sering onto the Umatilla Reservation, having turned back at Pendleton.

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left for New York City where he would meet a large delegation from Germany in late August, including Max Weber, Sr. In late September this group, along with a huge entourage of American officials, would travel west, right across the continent by rail along the, by then completed, Northern Pacific Railway.[98] It is interesting to note, as evidence for Sering of the boom and bust nature of both rail building and land speculation, that the Northern Pacific went bankrupt soon after its completion, and Villard was back in Germany by 1884.

Sering made several day trips during the remainder of his time in Portland. Surely one of the more fascinating would have been to the "primitive Christian," communist commune of Germans at Aurora. In addition to his interest in the idea of German colonists' ability to maintain their "Germanness," there is no question that economists of the "Historical School" flirted openly with elements of socialism. Sering also managed to visit the farms of the well-known pioneer William Barlow, and stay with Thomas Cornelius, in the town named after this politician and former Indian Fighter.[99] Sering visited the capitol, at Salem, and was able to sit down for discussions with the State Secretary.

One significant excursion Sering made during this period was a week-long trip north to Seattle and Victoria. Sering later wrote the following about the entire region, from Portland to British Columbia: "A few words are more than enough to describe the cultural possibilities of this region." Sering summed up the landscape that he saw, with its tall tree-covered mountains plunging straight into the sea, vistas that today elicit gasps of envy from most visitors, as being incompatible with proper colonization, containing little flat land for cultivation.[100] In response to what he had seen in Nebraska and California, Sering was becoming an agrarian settler colonizer, seeing future strength for countries that could get their people onto the land as yeoman farmers. British Columbia, and its rugged coastline, might be suitable for paintings but it was not land upon which to build a nation. At most, he considered this area useful for its timber. On his way back south from Seattle, Sering strolled through the White River Valley and was flabbergasted at the sight of hemlocks standing ninety metres tall. He left Portland for good on 22 May, heading east to Walla Walla again, where he spent two days. He would later claim that the view out his train window as he snaked along the

[98] "Mr. Villard's German Guests; Programme of the Excursion to Open the Northern Pacific," *New York Times*, 26 August 1883.

[99] Indeed, having been involved in the war against the Yakima, Cornelius may well have informed Sering of the history that led to the "vanishing race" on the Umatilla reservation.

[100] Sering, *Die landwirthschaftliche Konkurrenz*, 300–306.

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Columbia, with the river, the cliffs, and the mountains, was one of the most beautiful sights in North America.[101]

May 24 to June 6: Through the Rockies

From Walla Walla, Sering rode the Northern Pacific to end of track on the Flathead Indian Reservation, in the Territory of Montana. He then travelled the final untracked section of that continental link by wagon with Villard's Chief Engineer General Adna Anderson. Anderson may well have first met Villard when they were both affiliated with the Army of the Potomac, he as a General, Villard as a journalist. Anderson had made the initial arduous journey west from Bismarck to Portland in 1881, plotting out the route of the future railway. Now with Sering, they spent five days going east through Missoula, and Deer Lodge, before meeting up again with the westward moving track at Helena.[102] Along the way they visited several farms, all of which had significant herds of cattle. From Deer Lodge they made a side trip to visit yet another German American, Conrad Kohrs, who grazed his 50,000 head of cattle over 40,000 square kilometres. After speaking to officials in Helena, Sering took the train to Livingston, then spent a couple of days visiting Yellowstone by wagon, before entraining again at Livingston and moving on to Bismarck, arriving on June 6.

June 6 to July 28: The Prairies

The months of June and July 1883 were arguably the defining period in Sering's life. The Prairies, a flat, seemingly "empty," high modernist grid of perfectly laid out farms, each with its yeomen family, tilling the soil and strengthening the nation, on each side of the international boundary, seems to have provided the Platonic ideal of what Sering spent the rest of his life dreaming of and desiring for his Fatherland. He claimed, "The Prairie is the actual location (*Sitz*) of American competition."[103] Without a forest to clear, the region had been settled and was productive quite quickly, a major wheat competitor by the 1870s.

Bismarck, capital of the Dakota Territory, was surely a pleasing name for Sering. It was his initial Prairie stop and the first true boomtown that he visited. This is where he initially saw the downside to completely

[101] Sering, *Die landwirthschaftliche Konkurrenz*, 277.
[102] Sering wrote that he had a nine-day wagon trip in Montana, but the dates do not add up. Sering, *Die landwirthschaftliche Konkurrenz*, 219.
[103] Sering, *Die landwirthschaftliche Konkurrenz*, 418.

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"free" ownership of land: rampant speculation. Bismarck had had some ups and downs in the 1870s, including locust swarms that destroyed everything in their path, but when Sering arrived in early June 1883, he found a town of overflowing hotels, a place that seemed to be having a permanent "party" (*Festtage*). East Coasters and European immigrants were flowing into town in the hopes of buying a (what had until quite recently been free) parcel of land. Sering was introduced to a former railway employee who had sold his free homestead (now within the city limits of Bismarck) for $75,000. Sering watched two men betting town lots in a card game. Here, and soon after in Jamestown and Fargo, Sering sensed the calm before the storm, and indeed it was not long after he left that the whole Dakotan real estate boom went bust.[104] Sering was powerfully affected by the rampant speculation that he witnessed both here and later in Manitoba, and it led to his lifelong struggle with the question: should yeomen farmers be free to sell the land they have been given? Historical School economists were not feudalists, but they were not exactly capitalists either.

On his journey from Bismarck to Fargo, Sering visited the gigantic Dalrymple Farm. At perhaps 75,000 acres, this "bonanza farm" had overtaken many smaller neighbouring plots and employed farmers as wage workers.[105] After Fargo, Sering proceeded to St. Paul, where he stayed for a week. There he met both government and railway officials. He also met Charles Pillsbury, a man who had worked for firms in Montreal and had noticed that the majority of western wheat was being processed far from its source, in eastern cities. He set out to alter this system. Sering was taken to visit the recently opened Pillsbury A Mill, which was now processing 5,000 barrels of flour a day. Sering also met William Folwell, a math professor who had spent some time in 1860 studying philology in Berlin and who was now president of the University of Minnesota.

It was in fact the idea of "Germanness" that most affected Sering during his stay in Minnesota. He referred to St. Paul as being "overwhelmingly German." On the journey south from Fargo he had stopped and visited the German settlement at Perham, and then, from St. Paul, he journeyed out to the German town of Carver. Referring to what he saw in these two towns, Sering claimed that the German farms of Minnesota were among the most beautiful in North America. While in the household of a German farming family in Carver, Sering witnessed

[104] Sering, *Die landwirthschaftliche Konkurrenz*, 419–420.
[105] These giant farms are discussed in the following section, where Sering visits Bell Farm in Canada.

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the father consult a copy of Albrecht Thaer's *Principles of Rational Agriculture* (*Grundsätze der rationellen Landwirthschaft*). Sering was also very pleased to see the sons of this and other German farmsteads staying on to keep the farm going. He claimed that "American" sons often left the farm for "less stressful" jobs as businessmen. Witnessing these German farms, Sering was so impressed that he made a remark that expressed both his absolute patriotism and an opinion to the effect that if America had been settled only by Germans, the country would be much more successful.[106] From St. Paul, Sering travelled north, this time over the border and up to Winnipeg, where he would be based from June 17 to July 13.

Canada

An important German arriving in the boomtown of Canada's West was not an uncommon event by 1883. The German Professor Otto Hahn had recently been through town with a group of German observers, and Rudolf Meyer's description of his visit in 1881 was just hitting the bookstores in Germany. William Hespeler had become a chief organizer of German settlement on the Prairies in recognition of his success in luring German Mennonites from Russia in 1874.[107] Provincial leaders were eager for new immigrants, especially those they deemed ethnically (or racially) superior, and thus Germans were welcome. During Sering's first few days in Winnipeg, he had meetings with Lieutenant Governor James Cox Aikens, Minister of Agriculture C. Acton Brown, as well as the Minister of Public Works Corydon Brown, whose experience in draining wetlands was of great interest to Sering as he would later become an eager land-reclaimer. He also met the powerful mill owner W. W. Ogilvie before being introduced to, and put into the care of, William (Wilhelm) Wagner, who promptly took Sering out to his farm northwest of Winnipeg.[108]

[106] Sering, *Die landwirthschaftliche Konkurrenz*, 416-7. Sering would return to these farms outside Fargo in 1930, and by that time the German language had indeed been largely erased.

[107] Heinz Lehmann, The *German Canadians, 1750-1937: Immigration, Settlement & Culture*, trans. Gerhard P. Bassler (St. John's: Jeperson, 1986), 128.

[108] These details and the following section are laid out in Sering, *Die landwirthschaftliche Konkurrenz*. This was not the first time Wagner had been asked to host visiting dignitaries on his sprawling farm at Ossowo. In 1881, the German journalist and author Rudolf Meyer and accompanying Hungarian Count Imre Széchényi arrived in Winnipeg after a grand tour of the United States. Meyer was deeply impressed by what he saw: "the administration, Justice and educational system in Canada are 'solid English' and rather better than what is found in the Union." Indeed, the following

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Born in 1820 at the extreme eastern edge of Prussian Poland, in Grabowo, William Wagner had found himself caught up in the revolution of 1848. He was captured south of the city of Posen, escaped, and ultimately fled to Canada in 1850. Posen, along with West Prussia, was ground zero of the German demographic struggles in the East, and it was also where Wagner had studied, and indeed met his future wife. After several years in Montreal, Wagner briefly returned to Germany in 1859 to marry Adelheid Fenner, who came from the small village of Ossowo southeast of the city of Posen, not far from Wagner's own birthplace of Grabowo. He returned with her to Montreal where he was a prominent member of the German Society.[109]

Wagner was consistently engaged in encouraging the overseas migration of Germans, publishing both *A Guide for Those who Want to Settle in Canada, especially on the Ottawa River (Canada-West)*, and *Canada, a Land for German Immigrants*.[110] Further, he actively pushed for "inner" migration, or indeed "inner colonization," in his work on the scheme of the remigration of Germans from Montreal to the new frontier in Manitoba.[111] The Montreal-based German Society sent him to Manitoba in 1871 to find a suitable location to found a German-Canadian colony, and it was on this journey that he "saw" Prussian Poland:

About a mile beyond the church of White Horse Plains [today, St. Francois Xavier] we saw a large homestead lying before us. Within a fenced area were a house and shed; next to that were the stables and the long and ample barn …

passage seems to indicate that Meyer likely had a few nerve-wracking moments in the American West: "the security of life and possessions [in the Canadian West] is not only greater than in the far West of the Union, but almost absolute: murders are rare, and I have seen many farms in Manitoba where you cannot even lock the doors." Rudolf Meyer, *Ursachen der Amerikanischen Concurrenz: Ergebnisse einer Studienreise* (Berlin: Bahr, 1883). However much Meyer's experiences might have differed on either side of the border, comparative borderlands work, such as the path-breaking study of Royden Loewen, indicates that communities on both sides could well have been described as "solid English." See Royden Loewen, *Family, Church, and Market: A Mennonite Community in the Old and New Worlds, 1850–1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993). See also, W. L. Morton, "The Significance of Site in the Settlement of the American and Canadian Wests," *Agricultural History* 25 (1951): 97–104.

[109] Karin R. Gürttler, "Das Manitoba-Siedlungsprojekt der Deutschen Gesellschaft zu Montreal," *German-Canadian Yearbook* 10 (1988): 33–71.

[110] William Wagner, *Anleitung für Diejenigen, welche sich in Canada und besonders am Ottawa-Flusse (Canada-West) niederlassen wollen* (Berlin: L. Burkhardt, 1861; repr. 1862) and William Wagner, *Canada, ein Land für deutsche Auswanderung* (Berlin: Kühn, 1861).

[111] On Wagner as an agent of the Canadian government, see Jonathan Wagner, *A History of Migration from Germany to Canada, 1850–1939* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006), 44–45. See also Gürttler, "Das Manitoba-Siedlungsprojekt."

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everything made out of wood and covered with straw. I, and who else would it be but me … forgot that I was in Manitoba, and it was as if I had been switched back to my old homeland on the Warta river, so much did everything have the appearance of a farmstead from there.[112]

About thirty kilometers further down this track, just north of Poplar Point, Wagner staked his claim. Although his hopes of founding a German-Canadian colony did not pan out, by the time Sering visited in 1883, Wagner had turned his initial plot into the thousand-acre "Ossowo," named for his wife's hometown and in tribute to the area's similarity to that Prussian Polish landscape.

In Wagner, Sering found a man who represented both Germany's problem and its solution. An incredibly capable German, Wagner left the stifling East of Germany where landed aristocrats (*Junker*) possessed most of the property and almost all political power. He had then debunked from the "overfull" Canadian East of Montreal and settled as a "free" man in Canada's West. Free in that he owned the plot of land that he lived on and farmed, and free in that he had political power. It must have impressed Sering that the German immigrant Wagner had become a Member of the Provincial Parliament for his local riding of Woodlands, in January of 1883. Here on Wagner's farm, Sering saw a fully realized form of "inner colonization": a nation enticing its people to leave the "full" East to settle on "empty" land where through yeomen farming they would increase the bounty and security of the nation. There would be no better icon of the fruit of inner colonization for Sering than the example of William Wagner.

After a couple of days at Ossowo, Wagner and Sering took a two-day trip by wagon to the "Halfbreed" settlement at St. Laurent and the Hudson's Bay Company Fort at Oak Point, both on the shores of Lake Manitoba. What Sering saw at these two places very much informed his understanding of the role of racial assimilation versus exclusion and would directly mirror his later understanding of Poles and other Eastern Europeans, people many in the German establishment considered "half-civilized." Sering despised the "incorrect" form of indirect, non-settler colonialism represented by Oak Point. As a fur-trading post, Oak Point symbolized the "temporary" arrival of Whites conducting the basest form of economic activity: the trade of trinkets and alcohol for pelts. Under such a system, no one settles the land, builds a solid home, tills the fields, and strengthens the nation.[113] Sering was therefore glad to see the fort at Oak Point, and the colonialism it represented, falling into

[112] Gürttler, "Das Manitoba-Siedlungsprojekt," 62.
[113] Sering, *Die landwirthschaftliche Konkurrenz*, 308.

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disrepair and being replaced by what he considered to be thriving agricultural colonies, such as what he saw at the nearby Métis settlement at St. Laurent.

Wagner would have been especially proud to "show off" St. Laurent as he had in fact been the surveyor of the site in the Spring of 1872 and subsequently watched the "civilizing" transformation that farming was having on many Métis. At the time of the survey, the St. Laurent Métis population were quite different from the stereotypical Red River bison hunters. These Lake Manitobans would hunt and fish while wintering on the northern shore at Duck Bay, and only keep a summer *pied-a-terre* on the southeastern shore at St. Laurent where Wagner measured out plots in April and May of 1872, in his role as a Dominion Lands Surveyor. Wagner was disappointed to find those with at least some European "blood" allowing this fertile soil to lie fallow: "With the exception of a few potato patches nothing showed to signs of agriculture although the ground is well adapted for the culture of all cereals … I allude to it only for the purpose of showing the Dept what use of land is made here, and yet every one of these people expecting to have four miles back from the Lake."[114] Wagner was not in favour of 'giving' land to people who showed no inclination to farm. But by 1883 much had changed. Throughout the late 1870s there had been a steady trickle of Red River Métis into the St. Laurent area. Many of these families combined agriculture, dairy farming, and fishing and had become relatively prosperous. These were the "Halfbreeds" Sering saw. This idea, that "half-civilized" peoples could be raised to near-German levels of civilization if one surrounded them with modern farming and showed them how to plough "straight furrows," would become Sering's approach to Poles in Eastern Germany, and indeed this set him apart from the biological racists who later claimed that no Pole (and, surely no Métis) could ever assimilate. What Sering failed to see here in Manitoba, and later in Posen, was a system in which race-based restrictions on participation in the larger farming market made it very difficult for Métis, and almost impossible for fully Indigenous people, to succeed in this experiment. Both here, and later in Eastern Europe, Sering's utopian goggles blinded him to the realities and injustices on the ground.[115]

[114] Wagner's imperfect English is cited in Nicole J. M. St-Onge, *Saint-Laurent, Manitoba: Evolving Métis Identities, 1850–1914* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2004), 32.

[115] Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990). Fascinatingly, Wagner also alludes, in his 1872 report, to the attempt by St. Laurent Métis to exclude "Indians"

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What is significant about both of Sering's Indigenous encounters however, the Métis here and the Umatilla earlier, is the manner in which they highlight Patrick Wolfe's "logic of elimination," which states that "[s]ettler colonialism is inherently eliminatory but not necessarily genocidal."[116] In both Washington Territory and southern Manitoba, the colonizer desired the land (territoriality) and therefore wished the Indigenous to be erased: the Umatilla were to physically disappear (die off) while the Métis, as *Indigenous* hunters and fishers, were to become farmers in the European style. Intriguingly, and directly to Wolfe's point about the structural link between the desire for territory and elimination, the very existence of the Métis spoke to the earlier, "Oak Point style" of non-settler colonial engagement in which French traders wanted furs, not property, therefore, as opposed to seeking the elimination of Indigenous peoples, they instead married into Indigenous families and produced Métis children.

Upon returning to Winnipeg, Wagner delivered his guest into the capable hands of yet another Manitoban German, Julius Eberhard.[117] Sering and Eberhard boarded the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) and headed west on a twelve-day journey. Brandon was the first stop, and

from the area, claiming that they did not believe such people should have the right to own land in or near "white" settlements. Wagner was somewhat amused that the Métis referred to themselves as "white": "It appears to me as where all Halfbreeds up here are of the opinion that a full-bred Indian had no right to hold any property amongst whites, if I may call the settlers at Oak Point by that name … I fear that their neighbours have impressed on these poor men the idea that they could not hold property. I should not have dwelt upon their subject to such an extent had I not seen during the last winter that Indians settled outside the reserves were told to leave and build upon the reserve." St-Onge, *Saint-Laurent*, p. 31.

[116] Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8 (2006): 387–409. See also, Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event* (New York: Cassell, 1999).

[117] In the Fall of 1881, Eberhard, along with three other touring Germans, had been the travelling guests of the German "emigrationist colonialist" Otto Hahn. That year alone, 200,000 Germans left the Fatherland for better opportunities abroad, and Hahn's mission was to find and promote the best destination in North America so that those German migrants could settle together and preserve their *Deutschtum*, or "Germanness." Although Hahn continued to live in Germany for a few more years, promoting emigration to the "safe" Canadian West, he eventually settled with his family in Toronto in 1888. Julius Eberhard, however, seems to have immediately been taken by Manitoba and was living in Brandon by the summer of 1883. See Otto Hahn, *Canada. Die Berichte der vier Deutschen Delegirten über ihre Reise nach Canada im Herbst 1881* (Reutlingen: Schauwecker, 1883), and Angelika Sauer, "The Unbounded German Nation: Dr. Otto Hahn and German Emigration to Canada in the 1870s and 1880s," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 39 (2007): 129–144. As we will see in Chapter 8, emigration for Germans would once again become acceptable in German academic circles, in the 1950s.

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both there and throughout the trip, Sering was constantly confronted with the problem of land speculation that seemed endemic to colonizing endeavours. Grand Valley, on the opposite side of the Assiniboine River from Brandon, was originally to be the CPR-chosen town site, but when this caused the land cost to spiral, the CPR engineer Rosser simply chose the shanty town of Brandon two miles further west.[118] Such inefficiencies annoyed Sering, but this example paled in comparison to what Sering would see two weeks later in "Niagara."

Back on the CPR, the pair's next stop, due west, was Indian Head, where they disembarked from the train and then travelled along a beautiful tree-lined alley directly to the truly impressive Bell Farm, at the time claimed to be the largest farm in the world. At 64,000 acres and continuing for nine miles along the CPR, with two-and-half-mile-long furrows running perpendicular to the rails, Sering was in awe of its magnitude. Although there were twenty-seven cottages on the property, each inhabited by a farming family with an acre of their own to cultivate, this operation was ultimately more a "factory," with managers overseeing unskilled labourers who received a thirty-five dollar wage punctually on the twentieth of each month.[119] Sering was already forming his opinion that such massive holdings, akin to the giant *Junker* estates in the German East, curtailed settlement as they failed to provide land to individual, small farmers. In Sering's mind, a landless proletariat could only work seasonally, had no ties to the land, and, as in Germany, had no loyalty to place or even country.[120]

Sering and Eberhard then took a two-day detour to the idyllic Qu'Appelle Valley and marvelled at the excellent soil and scenery, and especially the successful "Indian" farms they saw there. In his contribution to Otto Hahn's 1882 book, Eberhard had shown some interest in the status of "Halfbreeds" and Indigenous people. He had commented on how "Indians" stayed away from Europeans, lived on reserves, but were nevertheless "peaceable and good-natured."[121] In his report of July 1883 to the Department of Agriculture, Eberhard described how he and Sering had come across "Indian" farms in this Valley and that "these were

[118] Sering would encounter the same stories with regard to the choice of Regina over Qu'Appelle.

[119] *Winnipeg Free Press*, 25 June 1883.

[120] Sering, who would note that Canadians treated Indigenous peoples better than their American counterparts, failed to notice the large number of Assiniboine living near Indian Head at this time, who were dying of malnutrition after having been forced out of the Cypress Hills. Sarah Carter, *Aboriginal People and Colonizers of Western Canada to 1900* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1999), 148–149.

[121] "Bericht von Julius Eberhard," in Hahn, *Canada*, 55.

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arranged very proper in-deed."[122] For Sering, this would have been another example of settlement agriculture that was so successful as to be seemingly turning "Indians" into good, Canadian farmers. Evidence as well of the opposite (and bad) form of colonialism was again present: the nearby Hudson's Bay Company fort, the palisaded structure at Qu'Appelle, represented pure extraction economics and no settlement. Back at Indian Head the two continued by train to Moose Jaw and land considered "poor country" in terms of soil. Locals informed Sering that green and splendid country did in fact exist not far away, at Old Wives Lake, but being pressed for time the two continued west, on to Medicine Hat.[123]

Among the hundred odd tents of this new town seemingly in the middle of nowhere, Sering found himself amid a landscape in the act of being reinvented as ideal settler territory. In the early 1860s, this area had been deemed by the geographer and explorer John Palliser to be an arid wasteland, unfit for settlement. The CPR – and thus settlement – was supposed to run well north of this inhospitable land that had been dubbed Palliser's Triangle. Then, in 1874, a group of scientists led by John Macoun began to recategorize the area as no longer arid but teeming with possibilities and ready to be filled with settlers. In fact, the Canadian government feared that unless Canadian settlement occurred just north of the border, Americans would wander too far north and ultimately claim Canadian territory. By 1879, the infamous rubric "Palliser's Triangle" was removed from the map as settlement spread across this land. The area was directly juxtaposed to the aridity of the supposed American Desert, just the other side of the border. In fact, at this point Canadian officials were telling settlers that southern Saskatchewan was much like Central Europe, and the United States a bit too much like the Gobi; dry, empty, and deeply foreign. In an effort to lure immigrants north to the Canadian West, one West was deemed full of potential, the other empty of promise.[124] Thus, the CPR, with its accompanying Canadian settlement, was now set to run through the

[122] Julius Eberhard, "Report of Trip with Dr. Sering of Germany," July 12, 1883, Department of Agriculture, page 3, File 40449, Vol. 376, Series I-1, *National Archives* 17, Ottawa.

[123] Eberhard, "Report of Trip." On this side trip, Sering would have passed through a settlement soon to be named Lebret, where the following year one of Canada's first "residential schools" was to be opened. This system would be Canada's most blatant form of forced assimilation of Indigenous peoples. See John Sheridan Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 to 1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999).

[124] Douglas Owram, *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856–1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980). There is much

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southern section, creating a belt of Canadian colonists strengthening and thus defending the border. Sering was aware of the importance of using settlers in borderland areas, along with an armed force (here, the Northwest Mounted Police), for nationalistic and strategic purposes. But this German scientist, forever taking soil samples, was not fooled by Macoun's new report. It was the land well north of the track, along the North Saskatchewan and Peace Rivers, that Sering speculated might prove ideal for agrarian settlers.[125] Yet for Sering to have visited those areas would have taken an extra month and he still had American mid-western states to visit. Sering and Eberhard briefly travelled out to the "end of track," just west of Medicine Hat, and there watched 200 men lay four miles of track a day. There is a photo of this working camp, taken within a day or two of Sering's visit, which depicts a teepee nearby. Further, in a letter to Schmoller, Sering wrote that during his journey he had often slept for days "in tents among Indians."[126] Despite the fantasy of emptiness that Sering would always associate with the North American West, there is no doubt that he was constantly made aware that there had indeed been people in these spaces before the arrival of the Europeans.

Sering and Eberhard then began their return journey. After a stop in Swift Current,[127] the two spent some time checking out the farmland near Regina, saw a steam plough in action, and obviously asked enough questions of those they met to catch the attention of a reporter for the *Regina Leader*: "Mr. Max Sering, Professor of Political Economy in the University of Bonn, and Mr. D.[sic] Eberhard, both Germans, have been spying out the land with the view to seeing what amount of wheat this

interesting work on the ways in which the two frontiers were compared and contrasted. The most famous transnational figure in the Prairies Region was the Métis leader, Louis Riel. See Jeremy Ravi Mumford, "Why Was Louis Riel, a United States Citizen, Hanged as a Canadian Traitor in 1885?" *Canadian Historical Review* 88 (2007): 237–262.

[125] Sering wrote that, although there were sections of good soil along the CPR, good farmland did not exist "to the extent that was trumpeted in the pamphlets of the Canadian government." Sering to Schmoller, July 16, 1883.

[126] Sering to Schmoller, July 16, 1883. Unless otherwise noted, letters are found in the Nachlaß of the addressee.

[127] Throughout this train journey, Sering would have been constantly made aware that this land had not been "empty" prior to the arrival of white settlers. "Some Swift Current History," by Z. M. Hamilton of the Saskatchewan Historical Society (1943), quotes a Mr H. M. Starkey, a veteran Surveyor regarding Swift Current in the Summer of 1883: "It consisted of four tents with side walls of boards and rough boards for counters. As I remember, there were two groceries, a restaurant and variety store, and the Post Office. They all seemed to be doing a satisfactory business, as it was a busy place. There were surveyors, Mounted Police, and south of the track, was a large Indian encampment." *Saskatchewan Archives*, Regina, SHS 212.

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country was likely to send to Europe. They were astonished at the fertility of the soil around Regina."[128]

Back in Winnipeg, Sering continued to be treated well under the false assumption that he, like earlier German "observers" before him, was in Manitoba in order to entice new German immigrants to head for the Canadian West. His mission was exactly the opposite. His goal was to stop Germans from leaving Germany; however, this was either not understood by his hosts or it was overlooked and ignored. Sering guessed that they hoped that his report would spark more immigration, regardless of its intent. He was surprised (and annoyed) to be asked at the last minute to address the Legislative Assembly (in English). For all that, Sering was ultimately very pleased with the incredibly high opinion Manitobans seemed to have had of German settlers. He boasted that they were the "most sought after immigrant," and were considered "real farmers and settlers, not speculators."[129] Sering spent one more day with yet another successful German who had become a member of the Legislative Assembly, Edward Gigot. He had been born in the German city of Mainz, not terribly far from the French border, and took Sering on a tour of his riding, which included the town of St. Francois Xavier. It was on this daytrip that Sering received his biggest shock in terms of the dangers of speculation. Some twenty-four miles northwest of Winnipeg they travelled down the "Avenue" of an entirely staked out "city," to be called Niagara. Sering was told that the lots had all been sold for a fortune to people in England, and then left completely undeveloped.[130] Such speculation, Sering would later write, could only be curtailed by heavy government involvement in the parcelling out of land with the regulated participation of private companies. In addition to seeing the "ghost" city of Niagara, Gigot pointed out many empty farms that had been abandoned in the wake of the "crash" that followed the boom in land prices in 1882.[131]

Sering made no note of a program taking place in nearby French settlements in Manitoba, which is startling in its similarity to what would soon be happening in Prussian Poland. At the very moment that Sering

[128] July 12, 1883. [129] Sering to Schmoller, July 16, 1883.

[130] Sering to Schmoller, July 16, 1883. See also Sering, *Die landwirthschaftliche Konkurrenz*, 372–373.

[131] Sering, *Die landwirthschaftliche Konkurrenz*, 372. Gigot likely learned French growing up in Mainz, which was surely handy amongst his French-speaking Métis voters in St. Francois Xavier. This would have been another area where Sering saw farming, and therefore "civilized," Métis.

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was in Winnipeg, "La société de colonization de Manitoba," based in Montreal, was directing French-speaking colonists from Quebec to the West in order to (1) prevent them leaving the country completely, as many had already left for the factories of New England; and (2) reverse the demographic imbalance in Manitoba, where the old French Red River settlement was being engulfed by an Anglophone Flood.[132] Sering's last stop was the Mennonite colony of Niverville as he journeyed south toward the American frontier. For Sering, finding these hardworking, successful peasants, still "German" despite many years away from the homeland, proved that Germans could be set up in a sea of natives, in this case, non-German settlers, and yet not "go native."[133]

Back in the United States

After crossing the international boundary, Sering spent some time in northwestern Minnesota, penning a brief to Schmoller on July 16, from a certain "Ramsey's Farm."[134] This farm, near Warren, as well as another owned by Ramsey near Stephen, and a third, that of a Mr. Kelso near Hallock, were all again giant farms in the Dalrymple/Bell mode. In contrast to these megafarms, Sering claimed that almost every "small" farmer he met in the northwest wanted to sell, as they were all so heavily in debt. One of the crucial issues both here and in Manitoba was that farmers could only break ground and trade in the summer months. The brutal prairie winter resulted in rather idle hands for the remaining six months of the year. Sering seems to have spent a well-deserved leisurely two weeks on these farms before once again moving south, stopping at the Dakota capitol at Yankton, and then on into the Heartland.

July 30 to August 27: On the American Farming Frontier

It is difficult to piece together Sering's exact peregrinations over these four weeks. It appears that from Yankton he headed south, through Sioux

[132] A. I. Silver, *The French-Canadian Idea of Confederation, 1864–1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 133–147.

[133] Intriguingly, during the later rise of biological racism in Germany, the idea that these German Mennonites were indeed made of "special stock" would take hold. In *Deutschtum in Westkanada* (1939), Heinz Lehmann repeatedly referred to the hardy Germans of the Russian Steppe as being ideally suited for Manitoba. See Lehmann, *German Canadians, 1750–1937*, 108–129. Even more surprising is the reception of racial ideology among the Canadian Mennonites. See the fascinating article by James Urry, "A *Mennostaat* for the *Mennovolk*? Mennonite Immigrant Fantasies in Canada in the 1930s," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 14 (1996): 65–80.

[134] Sering to Schmoller, July 16, 1883. See Grimmer-Solem, *Learning Empire*, 49–52.

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City, to Omaha, then West, on the Union Pacific, riding it all the way to Cheyenne in Wyoming. There he visited the Swan Brothers operation, with more than 33,000 head of cattle. He then trained straight east again, through Omaha to Lincoln. He visited farms and ranches in North Platte as well as Grand Island, the latter founded by German immigrants. From Nebraska he then travelled south to Topeka and Kansas City, east to St. Louis, then finally northeast, through Springfield, to Chicago.

Sering spent some time amid the deep and rich soil of southern Iowa. After visiting Des Moines, he went out to Ames and spent several days with Adonijah Strong Welch, the president of the Agricultural School there. Welch was more an administrator than an agricultural specialist, but this experience would have provided Sering with much to draw upon later when setting up the agricultural school at Dahlem (Berlin). While in Iowa, Sering also visited the German community of Belleville that he had heard about several times on the trip. Although the town had been founded by refugees of the 1848 Revolution (like Wagner), Sering was deeply troubled by the advanced state of assimilation he encountered there. German kids spoke English in the streets and, later, when visiting a German American, Mr. Frentz, in Monmouth, Illinois, he noted that Frentz no longer even understood German. This was in stark contrast to the German Mennonite community Sering had just visited in southern Manitoba, and was crucial to what he would surmise when it came to local political conditions and the ability of Germans to maintain their *Deutschtum*.[135] Frentz nevertheless encouraged Sering's growing disdain for American farmers, for he claimed that here in the Midwest Germans outperformed Americans, and that the farms that Frentz had visited in England, France, and Holland were also much better than what one saw on "miserable," "full of weeds" American farms.[136] At this point, in a letter to Schmoller, Sering indicated that this experience had swayed him strongly in favour of German colonies, situations in which German culture and language could be protected from assimilation. He indicated that he very much wanted to visit and analyze the situation of Germans living in South America. Erik Grimmer-Solem believes, in Sering's talk of "safe" colonies, he was "undoubtedly … thinking of Brazil and Venezuela."[137] In the same letter Sering spelled out the most basic tenets of what his life's work would be, that settler colonialism could heal the "damage" wrought upon a nation by modernity, and that

[135] Sering, *Die landwirthschaftliche Konkurrenz*, 485–487.
[136] Interestingly, in his first letter to Schmoller, from California, Sering was rather positive in his descriptions of the American farmers he met. Sering to Schmoller, April 15, 1883.
[137] Grimmer-Solem, *Learning Empire*, 51.

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one could not therefore ignore the "great economic and psychological processes which a wide and untapped territory offers a nation."[138]

Sering never failed to register his astonishment at the speed and scope of the settlement of the West. In describing the landscape from Omaha to Chicago, he could not believe that these 800 km had been settled in a mere one and a half generations. The towns all seemed to have the same logical grid pattern, possessed clean and well-painted buildings, and had commercial areas separated from residential ones. He was less enamoured by the large western cities that appeared to have been built too quickly, with ramshackle buildings for the initial settlers that were now occupied by factory workers, "Negroes," and other poor people. He nevertheless understood the necessity of these large centres to process the incredible volume of grain and livestock coming off the land and noted the rather positive development of slaughterhouses opening in Des Moines and Omaha, set up in order to take pressure off the overwhelmed industry of Chicago. While at these centres and out among the wheat, corn, and cattle of this region, Sering knew he stood in the very heart of one of the largest agricultural export economies the world had ever seen.

August 28 to September 26: Wisconsin, Ohio, Canada again, then home.

Sering visited Milwaukee and Madison, before joining a local German immigration booster, Mr. Ludloff, for a two-day journey by foot through the Wisconsin forests to visit remote settlements.[139] A final two-day stop in Chicago, which included a visit to the Kilbourne and Co. butter and cheese factory in nearby Dundey, was followed by one more visit to an interesting German-American, this time in Ohio. While based in Cincinnati from September 9 to 12, Sering twice visited the farm of Charles Rümelin, near Dent. Rümelin had been in the area for fifty years, from before the railroad, through the boom in settlement, to the strange post-boom moment when Sering arrived. Due to speculation, as well as an overzealous land tax regime in Ohio (at least according to these two Germans), the original settlers had sold their land and moved on to the newest western frontier. Due to rampant deforestation, the Miami Valley was now a system of rolling hills cut by sharp new valleys created by runoff. Everywhere were empty farmsteads covered in weeds. Indeed, on a wagon ride from Cincinnati to Dent, a local farmer explained to

[138] Grimmer-Solem, *Learning Empire*, 51.
[139] Ludloff described these forests as similar to ones he knew in Germany, in K. Ludloff, *Amerikanische Reisebilder: Skizzen über den Staat Wisconsin* (Milwaukee: Herold, 1881).

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Sering that it was no wonder that everyone left for greener, western pastures.[140] Here again Sering was struck by the need to find a formula that would, yes, put a farmstead into the hands of an independent, yeoman farmer, but would then both protect him from certain larger economic forces and disallow him from speculating and moving on.

From Ohio, Sering again travelled north to Canada, this time crossing near and admiring the Niagara Falls.[141] While stopping over in Montreal, he noted the bustling port, yet he failed to comment on the political situation there that in some very interesting ways mirrored his youth in Alsace. As the business elite of Montreal at the time were Anglophones, one wonders if he even got to use his boyhood French. He then moved on to the national capitol, Ottawa, where he was received by none other than the Prime Minister himself, John A. MacDonald. After additional meetings with the Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Mr. A. M. Burgess, and, in Quebec City, the Governor-General, the Marquis of Lorne, Sering returned to New York. During the final days of his great journey, from the 22nd until his departure on the 26th, Sering made his farewells. Finally, he boarded the *Elbe*, and by early October was once again in the Fatherland.

[140] Sering, *Die landwirthschaftliche Konkurrenz*, 482–484.
[141] Sering later wrote of the German-Canadian wineries of southern Ontario, so perhaps he stepped off for a visit.

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