

The Stoltenberg Institute for German-American 1848er Studies

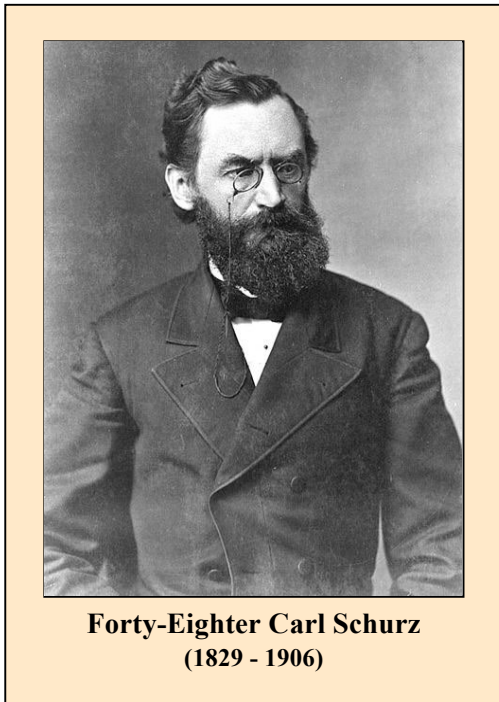


Dr. Joachim "Yogi" Reppmann

ABSTRACT

What was America's most unique and influential immigrant group? Many historians feel it was a few thousand democratic revolutionary refugees from Europe who arrived in the United States between 1847 and 1856. Although unsuccessful in their struggle for freedom in their homeland, these "Forty-Eighters" provided an intellectual, cultural, and political transfusion that had a profound impact on the history of America during one of its most critical periods. More than a century and a half after their arrival, many of the Forty-Eighters' convictions about political liberty and human brotherhood seem more relevant than ever and continue to inspire those who study this remarkable group of immigrants.

Although the Forty-Eighters settled throughout the United States, many of those hailing from Schleswig-Holstein in northern Germany chose Iowa as their adopted home. Many of the best and brightest of these "refugees from revolution" began using their finely honed journalistic skills and uncompromising intensity to argue on behalf of principles dear to them, such as those found in our Declaration of Independence and Constitution. Although only recently removed from military strife in their homeland, they didn't shy away from taking up arms in their new home if it were required to correct an injustice such as slavery. Accordingly, at the outbreak of the Civil War, they supported the Union and human dignity with both pen and sword.



Forty-Eighter Carl Schurz
(1829 - 1906)

Many Forty-Eighters left lasting marks in the fields of politics, education, business, journalism, the arts, and the military. Carl Schurz, perhaps the most well-known of the German Forty-Eighters who settled in America, achieved great success in no less than four of these areas. During his long and illustrious career, he was an ambassador to Spain for President Lincoln, a general during the Civil War, a United States senator, and the Secretary of the Interior under President Rutherford B. Hayes. During his long and illustrious journalistic career, he served as chief editor of the *Detroit Post*, editor and joint proprietor of the *Westliche Post* in St. Louis, editor-in-chief and one of the proprietors of the *New York Evening Post*, and as an editorial writer for *Harper's Weekly*. Noted for his high principles, avoidance of political partisanship, and moral conscience, Schurz, like many of his fellow Forty-Eighters, can teach us much of value in dealing with the problems that confront us all today.

Sadly, the legacy of the extraordinary immigrant group known as the Forty-Eighters, although extensive and extremely significant, is little understood today by most Europeans and Americans. The overarching purpose of the Stoltenberg Institute is to rectify this failing through teaching, research, and the erection of informative and educational memorials throughout the United States. In so doing, the Institute will highlight the continued relevance of the democratic and moral values the Forty-Eighters brought to the United States.

AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

50% German Studies

50% Research, Conferences, Events, and Projects

COORDINATOR

Joachim “Yogi” Reppmann was born in Flensburg, Schleswig-Holstein, in 1957. He attended the *Altes Gymnasium*, a school founded by Danish King Frederick II in 1566. He matriculated at the University of Kiel, where he studied History, American Literature, and Philosophy. In 1984, he completed his master’s thesis entitled *Transplanted Ideas: The Concept of Freedom and Democracy of the Schleswig-Holstein Forty-Eighters — Origins and Effects 1846-1856*. He has written several books on notable Schleswig-Holstein emigrants and their mass migration to the United States; served as a professor of German at St. Olaf and Carleton Colleges in Northfield, Minnesota; and chaired several conferences on topics ranging from the Low German language to the Forty-Eighter Hans Reimer Claussen.



Dr. Joachim Reppmann
(www.moin-moin.us)

Flensburg native Dr. Joachim “Yogi” Reppmann has authored a number of books about Forty-Eighters who hailed from his home state of Schleswig-

Since 1983, Yogi has organized both individualized language study-abroad programs as well as educational exchanges between the United States and Germany for groups as diverse as farmers from Holstein, Iowa; American teachers of German; college football players; and representatives of the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota.

Always looking to strengthen ties between the two areas he calls home — the Baltic Sea region in northern Germany and America’s Midwest.

THE STOLTENBERG INSTITUTE IN A NUTSHELL

Mission

To preserve the history of European 1848er immigrants by actively collecting, preserving, interpreting, and presenting documents, artifacts and scholarly research and by promoting public involvement in and appreciation of this heritage through educational programming and community outreach.

Vision

To be a transatlantic heritage center espousing the Forty-Eighters' conviction that we all embody moral values that should be publicly expressed, thereby making a meaningful contribution towards solving the myriad of challenges confronting the Western world.

Values

Education: To share and advance European-American history by providing visitors and students with exhibits and programs that enlighten, inspire, challenge, and teach.

Research: To increase our collective knowledge of the Forty-Eighters and their many contributions to all facets of life in America.

Preservation: To preserve our collections of artifacts, archival papers, and research for the enjoyment and education of future generations.

Integrity: To present historically accurate information and encourage the articulation of multiple viewpoints.

Cooperation: To cooperate with other organizations with similar goals such as the German Heritage Museum in Cincinnati, Ohio; the German-American Heritage Center in Davenport, Iowa, and the German-American Heritage Museum in Washington, DC.

Fiscal Discipline: To operate as a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that develops, budgets, and spends public contributions with maximum effectiveness within the parameters of our mission and vision.

APPENDIX

Recent Forty-Eighter projects



March 24, 1898, Washington Square Park, Davenport, Iowa: The fifty-year reunion of *Der Davenport Verein der Kampfgenossen der Schleswig-Holsteinischen Freiheitskriege von 1848, 1849 und 1850*.

March 30, 2008: On March 24, 1898, a memorial stone was erected in Davenport, Iowa, to honor the Forty-Eighter members of a local society of combat comrades. The stone symbolized their eternal connection with Schleswig-Holstein. Sadly, rampant anti-German hysteria following America's entry into World War I resulted in the loss of this important monument.

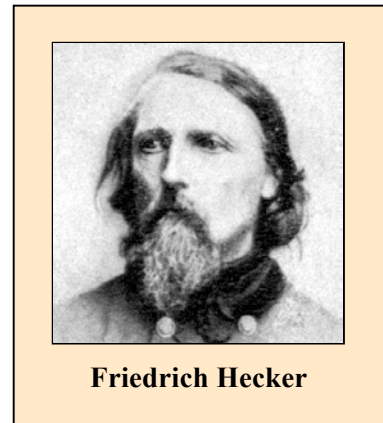
On March 30, 2008, a second memorial stone was placed near to where the original one had resided. 110 years after the dedication of the original monument, the Forty-Eighters from Schleswig-Holstein were honored once again and a new chapter of public remembrance begun.



March 30, 2008, Davenport, Iowa: A second memorial stone honoring the Forty-Eighters is dedicated.

November 21, 2008 marked the 160th anniversary of the Cincinnati *Turnverein*. The organization was founded by Forty-Eighter Friedrich Hecker, one of the leaders of the 1848 Revolution in Germany. A strong opponent of slavery, Hecker commanded an infantry regiment as a colonel during the Civil War.

When he visited Germany in 1873, Hecker was criticized for expressing negative opinions about the lack of individual rights and the size of government. The Forty-Eighter's strong political convictions had obviously not diminished following his immigration to America.



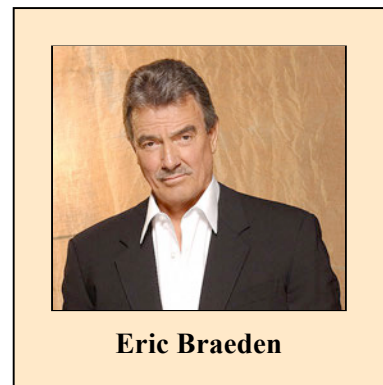
June 5, 2009: A Forty-Eighter memorial at the University of Kiel helped rescue the Olshausen brothers from historical oblivion.

Theodor and Justus Olshausen were among the early democratic advocates in their homeland in northern Germany. Justus, who was a professor at the University of Kiel from 1830 until 1852, was removed from his position by the Danish government after his countrymen were defeated in the Schleswig-Holstein War of 1848-50. Brother Theodor, who had been exiled by the Danish king, immigrated to America, publishing newspapers in St. Louis (where his family gave Joseph Pulitzer his start in the newspaper business) and Davenport, Iowa.



October 30 - November 1, 2009: The *Legacy of 1848* conference in Denison, Iowa, paid homage to those Forty-Eighters who'd unsuccessfully fought for liberty, social equality, and national unity before immigrating to America in the middle of the nineteenth century. A memorable keynote address was given by Hollywood star Eric Braeden, a native of Schleswig-Holstein.

November 5, 2012: Yogi Reppmann presented "Democratic Revolutionaries from Europe: 1848ers in Iowa" at the Kleinfeld Lecture Series at Wartburg College.



Call to Action:



The Folly of Freedom without Social Responsibility

Several recent books have fanned the flames of an ongoing German debate about immigration and integration policies. One of the central themes in these publications is the loss of moral values afflicting not only Europe, but the entire western world.

In democracies, freedom is often viewed as a license for the carte blanche pursuit of egoistic interests. Nowhere was this demonstrated more forcefully than in the financial arena where unscrupulous employees of banks, investment houses, and insurance companies engaged in egregiously self-serving and shortsighted behavior that precipitated a worldwide financial crisis. Through naked corruption and irresponsible speculation, a small group of individuals amassed huge profits at the expense of clients that had placed their trust in them. In essence, free market capitalism benefitting society as a whole was replaced by a rigged market enriching only a few.

At the root of the resulting financial crisis was a widespread cancer of moral responsibility. This cancer will continue to grow until there is a radical awakening of the world's conscience and a collective understanding that freedom is unsustainable if we are only responsible to ourselves. Conscientious, civic-minded people should consider the prevailing aversion to constructive politics and the resulting apathy as a call to arms to search for lasting solutions that benefit all.

Enduring solutions do not require the individual to relinquish his cultural identity. They do require an acknowledgement that the concept of freedom is meaningless without social responsibility. These two basic tenets are the yin and yang of any civilized society. One without the other is meaningless and unsustainable. Laws must reflect the democratic values of human dignity, free speech, help to those in need, respectful and civil dialog among peoples of diverse backgrounds, gender equality, and a government that is neutral in religious and philosophical matters as long as these do not undermine its very existence.

With the foregoing in mind, a common European constitution with a global vision would be an important and constructive first step. The guiding principles on which to base this constitution are not new. They can be found in the ideas of the European Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, concepts that form the bedrock of both America's Constitution and the Basic Law of the German Republic.

The thirst for political freedom was a powerful motive for many of the almost 500,000 men and women who left Germany and other parts of Europe between 1848 and 1850 to immigrate to America. Following the failed democratic revolutions in their home country, these "Forty-Eighters" took a stand in their new country for freedom from unjustified and unwarranted governmental intrusion and state-sanctioned discrimination. These courageous individuals can serve as role models as we seek a new path. In our search for new answers, we can draw inspiration from their conviction that each of us is imbued with inherent moral values that we must exemplify in both our public and private lives.