

Pana in World War I: Loyalty, Patriotism, and the Perils of Prussianism

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Historian Stephen J. Gross has noted that scholars recognize World War I as a time of crisis for German-Americans. “The government’s campaign against the “hyphen” and for 100 percent Americanism threatened all ethnic Americans,” he argues, “but especially those of German descent.”¹ When the war broke out in 1914, the United States successfully maintained a policy of non-intervention, staying out of the battle while trying to negotiate a peace with the combatants.² This policy began to change on May 7, 1915, when a German U-boat sank the British passenger ship, *Lusitania*, killing 128 American citizens along with the rest of the passengers and crew. President Woodrow Wilson warned Germany that attacks on passenger ships would not be tolerated. Germany complied at first, however, in January of 1917, they resumed unrestricted submarine warfare. When rumors surfaced that Germany was conspiring with Mexico against the United States, the Americans saw it as a legitimate cause for war. Wilson asked for, and on April 6, 1917 was granted, a declaration of war against Germany.

The army of the United States was small, but after Congress passed the Selective Service Act, nearly 3 million men were drafted as soldiers. “By autumn,” states Brose, “the better part of 1.7 million draftees and volunteers had assembled in thirty-six newly constructed army cantonments.”³ Within a year, the United States was sending thousands of soldiers to France on a daily basis. “In 1918,” notes Jennifer Keene, “more than two million ‘doughboys’ journeyed to France, and almost half of these men experienced combat during their stint ‘over there.’”⁴

As America entered the war, communities debated questions of loyalty and dissent and the demands of patriotism. German-Americans residents found their allegiance to their homeland, Germany, and their new home, America, tested as they struggled to maintain this “dual sense of allegiance.”⁵ As the shadow cast by World War I slowly crept towards the rural town of Pana, Illinois, the people living there showed themselves to be a fiercely loyal and patriotic community.

Pana before World War I

Pana, Illinois, is located in Christian County, near the geographical center of the state. Pana’s origin dates back to 1853 and is attributed to the construction of the Illinois Central Railroad. According to Tom (T.J.) Phillips, the territory was surveyed in 1821, before the coming of the railroad, and was uninhabited except for hunters and the occasional Native-American.⁶ At that time, the territory was known as the “Black Hawk Hunting ground,” and

¹ Gross, Stephen J. ““Perils of Prussianism”: Main Street German America, Local Autonomy, and the Great War.” *Agricultural History*, Vol. 78, No. 1 (Winter, 2004), p. 78.

² There are many surveys of World War I currently available. For a good recent look, see Eric Dorn Brose, *A History of the Great War: World War One and the International Crisis of the Early Twentieth Century*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2010.

³ Brose, p. 336.

⁴ Keene, Jennifer D. “Americans as Warriors: “Doughboys” in Battle during the First World War. *OAH Magazine of History*, Vol. 17, No. 1, World War I (Oct., 2002), p. 15.

⁵ Gross, 81.

⁶ Phillips, Tom. *Pana, Illinois, City of Roses, Centennial, 1856-1956, July 1-4.*, p. 1. The foreword gives credit to Tom (T.J.) Phillips, a native of Pana who came to the News-Palladium staff after his stint in the Navy, for most of the historical research and writing the bulk of the copy for the booklet. As no one else is mentioned in this manner, I will assume that Phillips wrote the entire booklet, and attribute the facts of my paper to him. For convenience, as I

was a part of Shelby County until Christian County was organized in 1839. In 1853 the township was surveyed and platted, along with the Illinois Central Railroad. The city was laid out at the intersection of the Indianapolis & St. Louis Railroad and the Illinois Central tracks.⁷ Finally, on September 2, 1856, the name of the township was officially changed to Pana.⁸ Once the railroads were completed and the town was laid out, a steady stream of immigrants flowed into the area.

As the new century dawned, the wheels of progress rolled through Pana, and many improvements were made to the city. Pana's telephone exchange began operation around the year 1900, with Warren Pennwell as one of the original incorporators.⁹ On July 9, 1900, an ordinance providing for the building of sidewalks was passed by the City Council.¹⁰ On May 12, 1902, the City Council authorized a volunteer fire department. Pana's sewer system was started in 1908 with the laying of the Locust street pipe.¹¹ On July 15, 1908, Capt. and Mrs. John W. Kitchell donated a 40 acre plot of land to the city, the resulting Kitchell Park being added to Pana. The Deaconess Hospital, Pana's first "refuge for the sick," opened to the public that same year on West Orange Street.¹² In 1910, through the efforts of Congressman Ben F. Caldwell and Ex-Congressman James M. Graham, along with a group of interested citizens, construction of a new post office began. The building was finished and opened to the public on September 14, 1912, with W. H. Alexander as postmaster. CIPS began to furnish electric light and power for the city in 1912, and later, in 1917, gas.¹³ Pana's Carnegie-Schuyler Library was completed in late 1912 and opened in January of 1913. On May 12, 1913, construction began on a new, modern hospital. Huber Memorial Hospital opened the following year.¹⁴ Also in 1914, Pana was known as "one of the most beautiful and enterprising cities in Central Illinois," this according to a "publication of the times."¹⁵

Pana during World War I

The shadow cast by World War I slowly crept towards Pana, ultimately reaching it in April 1917, Pana showed itself to be a fiercely loyal, patriotic community. As the war effort brought the town together to support their "boys" through various fund-raising drives and volunteer relief efforts, the extreme patriotism shown by some threatened the peace of others.

used Phillip's early history of Pana exclusively in my background research on Pana, I will make notes sparingly, and use them only to steer the reader to the correct page in Phillip's work. All facts should be assumed to have come from Phillips unless otherwise noted.

⁷ Ibid, 5. The plat was recorded in January of 1855 and was executed by C. A. Manners, surveyor, for David Neal, then president of the Illinois Central.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid, 22. The above information was obtained from the records of the Illinois Consolidated Telephone Co. presently serving Pana. However, in an unofficial history of the city written by a retired local journalist the following was reported: "The first telephone exchange installed in Pana was about 1895, when Dr. J. H. Miller and Robert Johns formed a company, obtained a city franchise and established a system for the city. Previously a private phone line was maintained from the office of the Pana Coal Company to the Union Station and to the North Mine of the company." In the year 1915 Pana served less than 900 phones.

¹⁰ Ibid, 13. Up to this time in the business district had been constructed of wood and slightly elevated. Paving of the city streets began prior to 1907.

¹¹ Ibid, 17. Pana's sewer system continued to be built at intervals beginning from one year later, 1909, when the southwest portion was laid; to 1912, the Kitchell addition; and 1913, Kitchell avenue.

¹² Ibid, 47. The hospital was established by the churches of Pana and social clubs.

¹³ Ibid, 52. The original CIPS office was located on the site of the present sub-station on Oak street.

¹⁴ Ibid, 47. Named after Dr. Jacob Huber, a physician who practiced in the city of Pana for a period of 50 years, also during that time serving as a surgeon in the Civil War. Upon his death Dr. Huber's will provided \$20,000 for the construction of a modern hospital for the city of Pana.

¹⁵ Ibid, 13.

With anti-German propaganda seeping into all aspects of American life, Pana's large German immigrant population soon found themselves under increasing suspicion. Often their loyalty was called into question and tested, sometimes violently. Indeed, "our efficiency in the first year of war has been impaired," one anti-German writer argued, "by...a romantic humanitarianism."¹⁶ The author of this article believed that our "ginger tenderness" in dealing with alien spies and domestic traitors was leading us down a dangerous path. He railed against the fact that, long after the declaration of war, "enemy aliens were as free to go and come, to see and to hear, as were our own most loyal citizens. Even after the adult males of the tribe were subjected to some slight degree of surveillance and restraint, "the female of the species" remained as free as ever."¹⁷

That the majority of Pana's German-American citizens proclaimed their allegiance to the United States is not surprising considering the history of the area. As more and more Germans began to settle in the area, a missionary from Germany was sent to Pana. Rev. Matthias Galster organized the first German Evangelical congregation just northeast of Pana in 1865. Soon after, the German Evangelical Lutheran congregation established itself within the city limits.¹⁸ In 1915, the church was renovated and the congregation celebrated its 50th anniversary in Pana on November 14.¹⁹ With America entering the war a little over two years later, in 1917, the German-American citizens of Pana, celebrating their new life in their new home, found themselves looked at with intense suspicion. "Ultimately," as Gross points out, despite 50 years of peaceful, happy life in the community, "the maintenance of alternative customs and institutions could be used . . . to expose residents to outside scrutiny."²⁰

On April 1, 1918, the following article appeared in the *Pana Daily Palladium*, the town's main newspaper service:

GERMAN ALIENS MUST NOT MOVE

United States Marshal Vincent Y. Dallman, has notified Pana police that changes of residence by German aliens from one judicial district to another or from one place to another in the same judicial district makes them subject to arrest and internment during the war unless they first secure permission from Federal authorities to make the change.

"A German alien enemy who desires to change his place of residence to a place of residence within another registration district must first obtain a permit. He must present himself to the registration officer of the district in which he then resides and make application for the permit on a form, supplied by the registration officer, and his registration card to the registration officer for the purpose of having the permit of change of residence, if granted, indorsed on the registration card.

"A change of residence in violation of the regulation subjects an alien enemy among other penalties to arrest and detention for the duration of the war."

The article concludes with this note: "*As there were many German aliens registered in this territory, the warning issued is of particular interest.*"²¹

¹⁶ *Anonymous*. "Victory: Peace: Justice: Our First Year in the Great War." *The North American Review*, Vol. 207, No. 749 (Apr., 1918), p. 485.

¹⁷ *Ibid*.

¹⁸ Phillips, 27.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 29.

²⁰ Gross, 89.

²¹ *Pana (Illinois) Daily Palladium*, April 1, 1918.

After nearly a year of war, the German-Americans in the city of Pana were now forbidden to move freely.

Over the next several months, anti-German sentiment was expressed in a variety of ways throughout the community of Pana. The German-American citizens found their allegiance called into question, sometimes by members of their own families. They were subjected to being spied on. They were told to get out of the country, watched their language be eliminated from the schools, and saw their religion mocked. Finally, the German-American women were subjected to the same scrutiny as the men. The following newspaper articles highlight these stories:

ASK LEGISLATION AGAINST SPIES

More drastic legislation dealing with German spies was demanded this afternoon by Governors or their representatives of nearly every state in the union at a conference with members of the Council of National Defense.

It was of the general opinion vigorously expressed by all of the speakers that the government has been too lenient in dealing with the army of German spies believed to have invaded the United States and with "persons giving aid and comfort to the enemy."²²

GERMAN ALIENS IN ILLIOIS

There are a total of 2,103 German alien enemies in the southern Federal district of Illinois, according to a report compiled by United States Marshal Vincent Y. Dallman.²³

'SEND KAISER'S SUBJECTS BACK'

Robert A. Smith, the Pana manufacturing pharmacist, is anxious that Uncle Sam deport every German of Germans [sic] birth back to the land from whence he came.

Smith is up in arms about the recent Collinsville lynching of Robert T. Praege and claims that it was due to the failure of the United States Government to properly prosecute or interne or deport the Kaiser's subjects in this country.

The article quotes Smith as saying:

Shut off these Kaiserites so that they cannot boost for the Kaiser –the brute that is doing his damndest to cut our throats, and the Collinsville affair will not be repeated.

"Send them back to Germany. This is our country. Traitors beware!"²⁴

²² *Pana (Illinois) Daily Palladium*, April 4, 1918.

²³ *Pana (Illinois) Daily Palladium*, April 5, 1918. Pana is listed as having 16 German alien enemies in its population at this time.

²⁴ *Pana (Illinois) Daily Palladium*, April 8, 1918.

MAY TEACH FRENCH HERE

This year may be the last year that German will be taught in the Pana Township High School, according to a member of the school board. It is thought that next year French may be substituted in place of the "schonste langgevitich."

Action is being taken by many school boards throughout the state in eliminating German from the schools. At present there are about thirty-five students in the Pana Township High School studying German. German has been taught in the local high school for the past five years.²⁵

ZUM TEUFEL MIT DEUTSCH

As a study in the Pana Township High School, German has ended. That is the decision that the Pana Township High School Board has reached. The action is in common with measures taken by school boards throughout the country.²⁶

SAYS HUSBAND IS PRO-GERMAN

Because he is unpatriotic and made pro-German statements and would not allow her to buy a Liberty Bond, Mrs. Florence Wiegler of this city has filed suit in the city court for a divorce from her husband, Emil Wiegler.

"During the present war," her bill reads, "he has made numerous unpatriotic statements concerning the government of the United States and in favor of its enemies; that he refused to buy Liberty Bonds, and when she urged him to do so, he struck and beat her and used vile and opprobrious epithets, both as to herself and the government of the United States."

Wiegler is an Austrian by birth and is a miner at Springside. Mr. and Mrs. Wiegler were married February 13, 1911.²⁷

ALIEN ENEMY FEMALES REGISTER JUNE 17-26

All German alien enemy females, fourteen years old or older, must register between 6 a.m., June 17th and 8 p.m. June 26th, Sunday excepted.

All alien enemy females in Pana must register with the Chief of Police on the above dates. Those residing outside of the co-operate limits of the city of Pana Must register with the Postmaster in this city.

Persons eligible to this registration should be sufficiently forewarned, for failure on your part to register is punishable by severe penalties including interment for the duration of the war. Austrian females do Not have to register.²⁸

Poems and songs like this one appeared regularly:

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ *Pana (Illinois) Daily Palladium*, May 6, 1918.

²⁷ *Pana (Illinois) Daily Palladium*, May 21, 1918.

²⁸ *Pana (Illinois) Daily Palladium*, June 12, 1918. This notice was first made on April 28, and again on June 10, prior to this article.

GOD AND GOTT

By Wilbur D. Nesbit

Who soothes the sighs of sorrow
And heals the hurts of pain?
Who gives us for the morrow
The songs we sing again?
Who taught us love for others?
Who guards us as we roam?
Who links our hands as brothers
And sanctifies the home?

Who girds our souls with sureness
That we may cast out fear?
Who blesses woman's pureness
And bids us hold it dear?
Oh, whispered in our praying
From cradle to the sod
Our name our faith displaying
The hallowed name of God!

Who teaches torture's terror
And laughs at lies and loot?
Who holds no faith is fairer
Than one to shame a brute?
To whom are women shrieking
And sobs of children maimed
As sweet as some one speaking
Of those both loved and tamed?

Who spurns the ill and lowly
That falter at his gate?
Who holds supremely holy
The hoarsest curse of hate?
Oh, bestial, hellish being
On God's great name a blot!
Unthinking and unseeing
The Prussians call it Gott! ²⁹

In an article that called for all Americans to fight against German Propaganda, German-Americans were presented with this profile of themselves:

The German, generally speaking, is a sort of cut-and-dried fellow. He is a man of precedents, and not big on taking the initiative. He is a most thorough developer of somebody else's ideas; but, save for subterfuges, excuses, "diplomatic" trickery, and

²⁹ *Pana (Illinois) Daily Palladium*, June 24, 1918.

underhand and shameless methods of waging war, he is not much of an inventor....³⁰

The article goes on to discuss Germany's vast "secret army," an army of propagandists and spies, and its plans to use this army to conquer America. It calls on the readers, the citizens of Pana, to do their part to fight this menace. It asks that they report "anything that looks like German work" immediately to the authorities.

The plea for vigilance became a formal request nearly two months later, when Warren Penwell and J. W. Preihs of Pana, were appointed as Chief and Assistant Chief of the Christian County Division of the American Protective League. The League is described as a volunteer, patriotic association, organized under the supervision of the Department of Justice. The League enlisted local representatives to be on the lookout for subversives and to listen for evidence of sedition. As Gross points out, "Patriots sold liberty bonds, put together Red Cross drives, and organized parades and demonstrations. They also looked out for violations of the commission's liquor laws and sniffed out hoarders, slackers, and draft evaders."³¹ Its members are said to be men of "unquestionable loyalty" who are required to take an oath of allegiance. The League is reported to have proved itself effective at detecting and preventing acts of sedition and disloyalty. Its work is described as covering all violations of Federal Laws, but being principally devoted to investigations under the Espionage and Alien Enemy Proclamations, the Selective Service Act, the National Red Cross Act, as well as investigations under the Food and Fuel Administration Regulations, desecration of the Flag and other, "general" matters of National Protection and Defense. They were, in short, "the state government's eyes and ears."³² The article ends with the formal request to the citizens of Pana, asking that all "loyal citizens . . . if they know of any violation of the above laws, to report same to the above named parties for investigation."³³

Some of the citizens of Pana drawn to the League demanded total loyalty and 100 percent Americanism. This helped to promote, as Gross points out, "a spirit of vigilantism."³⁴ This spirit of vigilantism reached its peak in Pana in July, 1918, when the Knobs German Evangelical Church was vandalized. The article appeared as follows:

KNOBS GERMAN EVANGELICAL CHURCH IS VANDALIZED

Unknown vandals desecrated the Knobs German Evangelical church building and property sometime Sunday night in a most shameful manner. The party or parties, evidently inflamed with a false idea of patriotism and instilled with pure and malignant enmity towards the good German people of the Knobs German settlement, wrought despoliation to the house of God with unstinted hand.

The entire church building was given a coat of yellow paint from the ground up to the height of a man's head, and as high up as the vandals could reach, while on each door of the beautiful church building was labled the skull and cross bones with the words "Warning, use no more German lingo."

The sidewalks of the church were labeled with the skull and cross bones and similar lettering, and other very shameful damage was wrought.

Why any one should thus desecrate the Knobs church building is beyond the conception of any of the membership of the citizenship of that and this vicinity. The

³⁰ "Secret Army Is Greatest Menace." *Pana (Illinois) Daily Palladium*, April 12, 1918.

³¹ Gross, 90.

³² *Ibid*, 91.

³³ "Two Pana Men Head League." *Pana (Illinois) Daily Palladium*, June 6, 1918.

³⁴ Gross, 90.

good German people of that congregation, of which Rev. Carl Mueller is the faithful and loyal partner, is more than any one acquainted with all the conditions and sentiments of the people of Knobs settlement.³⁵

This article shows that not all residents of Pana were swept up in the anti-German sentiment. Indeed, many residents continued their relationships with their German-American neighbors, no doubt owing to the half-century of living – and intermarrying – side by side. Adding to this was the fact that many German-American residents had willingly signed up for the draft, and some had already gone off to Europe to fight against their former homeland in support of American ideas of freedom. Some did patriotic work back home in Pana as well, sometimes putting themselves at odds with their fellow immigrants.

The following article discusses one German-American minister's contribution:
KANZLER DOES THE GOOD WORK

Rev. W. A. Kanzler, until two months ago, pastor of the German Lutheran church here, was in Pana Tuesday visiting his family and on his way to Paxton, in Ford County, where he is to do loyalty work during the latter part of this week. Rev. Kanzler is working under the neighborhood committee of the State Council of Defense.

Mr. Kanzler secured his present position through the efforts of friends, after he had resigned his pastorate here because of attacks made by members of his congregation because he was solidly behind the president and the war. His entire time is devoted to organizing the Germans in Illinois into loyalty forces. He has been traveling thru the state addressing gatherings in the German language and preparing meetings for Karl Mathis, secretary of the Friends of German Democracy, who is assisting Mr. Kanzler in the work.

In the past Rev. Kanzler has been making addresses at public buildings, but from now on he will address German congregations the majority of the time. After his work the latter part of this week in Paxton, he will go to Chicago, where he is scheduled to make several addresses at German churches. Next week he will go to Bensenville to do organization work.

The article concludes with a clipping from the Chicago Journal of March 15, explaining:

Dissatisfaction is greatest among German Americans where they are physically isolated. This is the case with farmers and dwellers in German communities in small towns. They will not attend English meetings, but are easily won over to the American cause when addressed by fellow German Americans. The draft law is reported as being most effective in converting German sympathizers, especially where they have relatives and friends who have been taken into the army.³⁶

Pana after World War I

The German-American population in Pana, showed themselves to be, at least to the majority of the other citizens, loyal Americans. They lived out the remainder of the war relatively

³⁵ *Pana (Illinois) Daily Palladium*, July 22, 1918.

³⁶ *Pana (Illinois) Daily Palladium*, April 3, 1918.

peacefully. A little over a month after the war ended, the government lifted the restrictions on German-Americans. The Pana newspaper related the story in this manner:

BAN AGAINST ENEMY ALIENS IS LIFTED

All the restrictions against enemy aliens entering the barred zones throughout the country and regulating their presence in certain prohibited districts were today lifted, effective on Christmas Day, it was announced at the Department of Justice today.

The order was issued at the recommendation of the Attorney General and was approved by President Wilson by wireless.

The restrictions against the enemy aliens were promulgated to safeguard the war resources of the country from sabotage and barred enemy aliens in the District of Columbia, all water front areas, munition zones and other places.³⁷

With the end of the war, the citizens of Pana, German and non-German alike, went back to daily life much as was experienced before the war. The German-Americans settled back fully into the community that they had for so long called home. In all, 426 young men of Pana answered the call of duty. Ten of these brave men never returned, giving the ultimate sacrifice to their country. In honor of those who served, a monument was erected in Kitchell Park. A fund drive for this was put on, sponsored by the Ladies of the Grand Army of the Republic. Phillips notes that Mrs. J. W. Kitchell and Mrs. Lindsay Reese collected the funds.³⁸ The inscription on the monument erected in Kitchell Park for the men who served during World War I reads: "In honor of those who gave much more and in memory of those who gave all in the Great World War conflict." Those killed from Pana in the Great War were: Forrest Goffinet, Homer Mize (first Pana overseas fatality), Herman Bruns, Michael Serockey, John McDonald, Bernard T. Beyers, Arthur O. Turner, Joseph Kowlowsky, John Meri Kerr (first Pana man killed Stateside), and Edward Virden.³⁹

Pana, Illinois displayed the problems that many towns throughout America were forced to deal with as German-Americans were faced with the challenges of dual allegiances for their mother country and their home now in America. German-Americans were placed under large amounts of scrutiny as many Anglo-American citizens worried and wondered where loyalties laid. Limitations on citizenship rights of these German-Americans were put into place as well as measures of conformity to create a more American identity rather than a "hyphen" identity. Scare tactics were even used in order to push American loyalties and conformity. Pana, Illinois is one such study of German-American relations, during World War One, as many citizens throughout the country questioned the loyalties of its "alien" neighbors. It can be seen through the actions of this town that a war of sorts was brought over to the home front as citizens rallied against citizens of the enemy in America.

³⁷ *Pana (Illinois) Daily Palladium*, December 23, 1918.

³⁸ Phillips, 15.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 50.