

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

*Minnesota's German
Forty-eighter*

**Albert Wolff:
Brilliant Career, Tragic Death**

LaVern J. Rippley
—Page 12

Spring 2016

Volume 51, Number 1

“Brighter and Better for Every Person”:
**Building the New Salvation Army Rescue Home
of St. Paul, 1913**

Kim Heikkila, page 3



“Children of the Home.” This large portrait of twelve children is from the Salvation Army Rescue Home and Maternity Hospital annual report for the year ending September 30, 1916. The home, located on Como Avenue in St. Paul, cared for 207 children that year, 109 of whom had been born in the home. The inset photo is Adjutant True Earle, superintendent of the Home from 1913 to 1918. Photo courtesy of The Salvation Army USA Central Territory Historical Museum.

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Preserving our past, informing our present, inspiring our future

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A Message from the Editorial Board

Buildings often tell stories. Historian Kim Heikkila shares the story behind the drive to build the Salvation Army Rescue Home on Como Avenue, which was led by Adjutant True Earle and businessmen Joseph and William Elsinger. Designed by Clarence Johnston, the Home served many young women and their newborn children as part of the Salvation Army’s outreach programs. Not far away from Como Avenue, near Hamline University, sit eleven houses constructed by a Swedish contractor, Carl Florin, or his brothers, John and Gustav, all of whom lived in St. Paul in the early 1900s. Authors Barbro Sollbe and Ann Thorson Walton give us a rare look into the family who constructed middle-class homes of that era in the popular bungalow style. Records from the St. Paul Building Permits Collection, available in the RCHS Research Center, helped with this article. This issue also contains a biographical profile of Albert Wolff, a journalist with training in theology who came to St. Paul to escape the strife of 1848 in Germany and elsewhere in Europe. According to author LaVern Rippley, Wolff founded German-language newspapers in New Ulm, Chaska, and St. Paul, encouraged emigrants to move to Minnesota for new lives in our invigorating climate, and supported Abraham Lincoln’s Union.

Anne Cowie
Chair, Editorial Board

Minnesota's German Forty-eighter

Albert Wolff: Brilliant Career, Tragic Death

LaVern J. Rippley

Albert Wolff, an immigrant Forty-eighter and the founder and editor of various German-language newspapers in and around St. Paul, had a surprising career. Born in Braunschweig, Germany on September 26, 1825, Wolff died in St. Paul on Saturday November 25, 1893 of his own volition.

What's a Forty-eighter?

There are a few salient features that make up the definition of a Forty-eighter.¹ Refugees from revolution, the 1848ers include liberals, radicals, and congenial strategists for democracy. From our long historical perspective, they proved to be the cultural leaven—the yeast that literally raised the entire German element in the United States from a peasant-type citizenry to a group of distinguished, vitalizing champions for equality in a racially troubled nation. Coincidentally, they arrived during America's zenith of Nativism, the name given to the anti-immigrant temperament that dominated our pre-Civil War nation.²

Tempered by the March 1848 revolutions that began in France as the so-called pre-March uprisings, the revolutions of 1848 swept not only Germany but also much of Europe. Mostly, these were university-trained men of high social standing—physicians, inventors, jurists, and especially journalists who were romantic and popular, if at times, impractical reformers. They numbered no doubt less than 10,000 in all, and necessarily included plain folk, workers, farmers, clerks, and small businessmen whose names were never recorded anywhere.³

In German-speaking Europe, the 1848 revolution engrossed three main regions: Prussia with Berlin, Austria with Vienna, and southwest Germany notably the Grand Duchy of Baden, which lay close to France where liberalism and radical ideas drifted easily across the German-French border. Parallel movements erupted in Hungary,

Italy, among the Czechs, and athwart the southern Slavs where the spirit of nationalism worked centrifugally rather than formatively.⁴ Having tried but miscarried in making Germany democratic, the Forty-eighters emigrated—often to avoid the consequences of what was legally treasonous under their autocratic forms of government—just as often because their sentences were commuted from prison to emigration. More frequently they found the atmosphere in the German states too oppressive and the economic conditions too uncertain, resolving instead to dedicate their lives to a republic across the sea.

Few Forty-eighters arrived in the United States in 1848.⁵ Rather, they tarried in France, Switzerland, England, Belgium, and neighboring nations, some in the belief that democracy would yet win out in Germany, others that they could go home and further the liberal cause. A. E. Zucker in his book offers biographies of some 272 prominent Forty-eighters, among them Albert Wolff. Most were very young. Over 60 percent were born in or after 1820, 1827 being the birth-year of the largest number with only nine born before 1820. Nothing in America at the time presaged their coming. No seedbed in the United States awaited their “fertilization.” However, America did offer hope in 1848 inasmuch as she was the only nation to send greetings and constitutional textual models for the delegates pondering a constitution in the Frankfurt Paulskirche.

In Zucker's analysis there is a breakdown of the professions for the 300 indi-

viduals he studied. The highest count were journalists 74; followed by soldier 67; physician 37; teacher 25; turner 25; lawyer 22; businessman 21; author 16; farmer 12; diplomat 11; and musician 11. Among them there was only one woman, Mathilda Giesler-Anneke in Milwaukee, who considered herself a suffragist. One third of the 300 took part in the Civil War, at least 50 percent would eventually publish verse, and nine identified themselves as pastors, a figure that would jump substantially if speakers for the *freie Gemeinden* had been included. A number eventually achieved positions as university professors among them Karl Bayrthoffer at Marburg who later was a farmer in Wisconsin, Karl Follen at Harvard, and others. A large number did prison time, many boasting of their escape, which could mean they were resourceful and daring or perhaps that the general populace was sympathetic to the revolution, as well might have been the prison guards.

Docking in America after 1852 with the strength annually of over 150,000 co-immigrants from Germany, the Forty-eighters entered a turbulent American society beefed up by some four million new immigrants, roughly 30% of the total non-slave population in 1840. It was an influx of immigrants that on a percentage basis would never again be reached in the nation's history. Of this influx, fully three-quarters of all arrivals were from either Ireland or Germany, giving rise to the xenophobia that “darkened” the 1850s. This general dislike of foreigners was fortified by a turgid holdover from the past, the institution of slavery in the South. Because the Germans typically settled in the industrial heartland of the United States, cities like Chicago, St. Louis, Milwaukee, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Detroit, and Buffalo became roughly half-German. Farmers and small-

town dwellers too were disproportionately German. Into this social milieu, the struggle over slavery resulted in the demise of the Whigs, a raw split in the Democrats, and the birth of the Republican Party, to a weighty degree the outcome of politically active Forty-eighters.

No one today can track precisely which political results the Forty-eighters influenced for the United States. Names like Franz Sigel, Friedrich Hecker, Friedrich Kapp, Adolf Douai, Reinhold Solger, Eduard Pelz, Karl Heinzen, Albert Wolff, Leopold Biesele, Hans Reimer Claussen and especially Carl Schurz pop up often. Engineering fellow Germans to vote for Abraham Lincoln, Schurz deserves the greatest credit. His early ability distinguished him for a long career in journalism and American politics, serving not only as ambassador to Spain, but also as a general in the Civil War, senator from Missouri, and Secretary of the Interior. In the latter position he became noted for his sensible policy toward the Indian, the forests, and the eventual development of a national park system. Nor should Kapp's effort as New York Commissioner of Immigration be ignored.

In particular, by joining forces with earlier influential immigrants from the Fatherland, the Forty-eighters in the post-Civil War period strongly influenced American scruples evidenced by the flourishing ideology of Puritanism. Often with such persons as Fritz Anneke and Hans Reimer Claussen, legislation favorable to equal rights for women was advanced, alongside such more mundane efforts as keeping the Sabbath for pleasure as well as for church. Of equal importance were the Forty-eighter efforts on behalf of organized labor. Perhaps most importantly for immigrants from Germany after the Civil War, the Forty-eighters could identify their nationality group with the Great Emancipator. Forever, they could see themselves as having formed a bulwark against the immorality of slavery, against the illegality of secession, and not least, against the xenophobia of Nativism. Indeed they had fought hard if not always with distinction for the Union, and as immigrants had earned the right to participate in the tumultuous years of America's industrial growth and economic boom



Carl Schurz (1829–1906) was one of the most prominent Forty-eighters who came to the United States from Germany (1852).

that typified the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Albert Wolff in St. Paul

Journalist first and foremost, Albert Wolff was also a politician. Editor and publisher of many newspapers and journals, Wolff broadly depicts his Forty-eighter self in the small book *Literarischer Nachlaß* (Literary Legacy) published just a year after his death.⁶ Unpretentious, the book includes speeches, poems, and a novel by the first 1848er in Minnesota. Educated in theology at Göttingen University, Wolff was captured for participating in revolutionary street fighting in 1849 in Dresden, sentenced to death (some say to ten years in prison) but like many other Forty-eighters had his punishment commuted on the condition of going into exile.⁷ Sailing for the United States in 1852, Wolff arrived in St. Paul in November of the same year taking employment with a confectionery run by Franz Anton Renz (born April 23, 1825 in Malsch, Baden) and Karcher and soon took a farm claim in Carver County.

Not suited for nor satisfied with farming, Wolff on November 19, 1855 with Friedrich Orthwein initiated the first German-language newspaper in Minnesota, probably at Carver, the *Minnesota Deutsche Zeitung*, (1855/6–

May 22? 1858).⁸ Though no issues of this paper have survived, the two principals in 1856 joined in publishing the *Minnesota Thalbote* at Chaska and the *National Demokrat* in St. Paul (June 6, 1857?–1859). Wolff then moved to New Ulm where he became editor of the *New Ulm Post* published by Wolff and Hofer from February 5, 1864–May 1865, when Wolff moved to St. Paul to become editor of the prestigious *Minnesota Staatszeitung* which, according to most sources, succeeded the *Minnesota Deutsche Zeitung* from Carver/Chaska. He served as editor from July 28, 1860–February/March 1864 when he mysteriously departed for New Ulm but returned as publisher (at times with Theodor Sander) and editor until at least November 1869 and again after 1870–1871 until September 4, 1877.⁹

In each newspaper but especially in the latter appeared poems and bits of doggerel concerning local political affairs. Sections in the *Nachlaß* (Literary Legacy) embrace such headings as “Freedom and Fatherland” which feature primarily the Civil War and Minnesota’s role in the struggle, other more mundane pieces that treat “Love and Marriage” the joys and sorrows, “Ballads” as well as “Varied Poems” “Travel Pictures” “Epigrams” and translations from the Low German of short works by Klaus Groth. From Ditmarschen in Schleswig Holstein, Groth became a teacher in a girl’s school in Heide where he had been born then studied in Kiel but soon retired to the Island of Fehmarn where he wrote most of his poems. Why Wolff found these poems worthy of translation from the *Plattdüütsch* is unclear.

On November 2, 1861 Wolff published his Civil War poem, “Marching Song of the Minnesota German Squadron,” prescribed for singing to the melody of “Zu Mantua in Banden.” The melody was known in Napoleonic times as the Andreas Hofer Lied, Hofer being an innkeeper by trade who became the military leader of the Tyrolean rebellion against the Napoleonic occupation of Tyrol in 1809. Captured after a losing battle, Hofer was executed at Mantua in Italy on February 20, 1810 by the French military on the personal order of Napoleon. Today the song is the official

anthem of the Austrian State of Tyrol. It became very popular in 1848 as a rallying cry of the Austrians for inclusion in the German parliamentary movement at Frankfurt, aimed especially against Italian irredentism. Today the song remains popular with the German-speaking majority in South Tyrol, an Italian province since World War I, though rejected as an official anthem by the provincial *Landtag* (parliament) in 2004.¹⁰

Wolff was much in demand as a lecturer at ceremonies and celebrations in the German community, five of his orations being reprinted in *Nachlaß*.¹¹ He addressed an audience on May 26, 1860 dedicating the flag for the St. Paul Turnverein, at the laying of the foundation for the statue of Hermann in New Ulm June 24, 1888 and for the dedication of the St. Paul German theater, the Athenaeum, on November 11, 1859, which was the centennial of Schiller's birth. The *Nachlaß* includes his short history of Minnesota Territory from 1859, a small book of *Vermischte Gedichte* (Assorted Poems) and an article from July 10, 1870 about the Bremen stock exchange where Wolf served as Minnesota Commissioner of Immigration.

Wolff Promotes Emigration

Early in 1869 the State of Minnesota made the state board of immigration continuous and permanent with a scheme that in addition to furnishing information about Minnesota, this group would devise advertising stratagems that encouraged newcomers to settle in the state. Intending to target farmers from Germany, in March of that year Albert Wolff was made the Minnesota State Commissioner for Germany, a position he held for two years, writing interesting commentary back to the governor.¹²

Problems to be overcome by "advertising" swarmed. Eugene Burnard, the first Minnesota Commissioner of Emigration in his annual report of 1856 penned "Our high northern latitude particularly, has, and in many instances, been made a bugbear to the emigrant and frightened him from risking his life among the alleged *mountains of ice* in this Territory." Plenty of other commentators confirmed

the Burnard warning. Hans Mattson, appointed by Governor William Rainey Marshall in August 1866 as Minnesota special agent for immigration, was also the immigration agent for various railroads writing that "a prominent newspaper writer in Kansas accused me of selling my country men to a life not much better than slavery in a land of ice, snow and perpetual winter, where, if the poor emigrant did not soon starve to death, he would surely perish with cold."¹³ In their defense, Minnesotans flung sharp barbs at southern Midwest states, "the malarious exhalations from the undrained soil of Indiana, Illinois, and other states of the Southern Mississippi Valley, yield an annual harvest of fevers" whereas Minnesota "enjoys an almost entire immunity." The best way to cure consumption counter pundits argued was to come to Minnesota.

Wolff's reports from Bremen to Governor Horace Austin provided the governor with much detail. Writing on September 7, 1870, Wolff stated, "Before the close of my first official term I was informed that the probability of a reappointment was great. Relying thereon I was enabled to continue my labors. . . ." Expanding on this point, Wolf went on: "Replying to letters of information seekers from all parts of Germany; writing letters of advice to the local agents, with ship freighters in all the principal cities of Germany, informing them of my presence here and requesting them to divert those who effected with them contracts for sea passage, to me for information as to the best place of settlement in America."

In his correspondence Wolff also complains that he has to write everything long hand because there is not enough money for printed material. He writes editors of periodicals and newspapers to "concentrate emigration to Minnesota where Germans were the most likely to find healthy and congenial climate, the greatest supply of unoccupied lands and the best chances for investments in enterprises of industry." Wolff likewise boasts of his ability to disabuse prospective emigrants of property speculators with swindling land offers, gaining their faith as a state agent. In addition to his work in the Bremen office, Wolff made forays into the Prussian provinces of

Westphalia, where he found emigrants destined for relatives in Michigan and Illinois, a decision Wolff claimed he could have averted in such regions if he had but a small newspaper-advertising budget. Having spent some of his own salary to publish material in several key newspapers, he vouched for the efficacy of newspaper advertising.

Wolf reports to Governor Austin in 1870 that sailing and steamer vessels departing in March or early April left port with meager consignments of emigrants and cargo but toward the end of April and in May shippers were departing over-loaded but still losing money because they were unable to dispatch all the waiting emigrants. They lost money because the boarding houses, according to contract, demanded full payment for room and board when emigrants were delayed. Wolff laments on the one hand that emigrants arriving in Bremen often know exactly where they were headed in the United States; still "whole groups of them, belonging sometimes to the best class too, were perfectly free yet to go where they pleased, having no relatives or friends in America but having been induced to emigrate," in fear of the coming war (the anticipated Franco-Prussian battle at Sedan, 1870). "These groups amounted to thousands of well-to-do peaceful people of all ages, sexes and social classes from pleasant and happy homes." Never before had Wolff beheld such crowds of emigrants whose wealth shone forth in their dress and baggage, good education, and fine bearing. These people were being lodged with board in the emigrant houses for about 40 cents a day while hotels cost between two and three Thalers a day.

An enterprising Wolff had cartoons printed for advertising in the boarding houses and shipper offices. Of considerable effect were officers of the Bremen Bureau of Information who were obliged to warn emigrants against agents and runners for American corporations, sending them to the Minnesota office, which was called a harbor of honest advice. A negative side of this practice was the frequently mistaken assumption that Wolff would pay for the emigrants' transportation to the state he represented. By the converse,

many times emigrants offered to pay him for his civic amenities, which he always declined. Routinely, Wolff visited the 57 Bremen emigrant houses scattered throughout the city and the 23 emigrant shipper offices located on the main street. In mid-1870, 13,000 Prussian Landwehr soldiers were quartered in Bremen on a temporary basis. These were men between the ages of 24 and 29, who were mostly unmarried. Wolf supplied them with pamphlets by the thousands to take home to Brandenburg once the war would end.¹⁴

Perhaps the most extensive piece in the *Nachlaß* is his "Otakte, der Vieltödter" (Otakte the Killer of Many) a novel about the Dakota War with the United States in and around New Ulm in 1862. Typical of all Forty-eighters, Wolff portrays his German passion for the slave and the Native American. A mulatto who was harshly treated by slave owners in New Orleans vows vengeance and flees north to join the Dakota tribe in Minnesota, marrying the daughter of a chief. Furnished money and arms by an English agent and a Confederate spy, he both instigates and then leads the 1862 uprising. Ranging from New Orleans to the Red River Valley in Canada, the story incorporates important figures like General Henry Sibley, Chief Little Crow (Taoyateduta), John Otherday (Ampututokacha), and places like Fort Ridgley, the International House in St. Paul, and the Dakota House in New Ulm. His Forty-eighter biases in view throughout, Wolff portrays Indian customs, lore, and traditions with his text references and abundant notes. The novel appeared originally in the *Literaturblätter* of Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

The Death of Wolff

The role that Albert Wolff played at the Minnesota *Tägliche Volkszeitung* (People's Daily) is unclear. Published in St. Paul, this German daily stretched from October 7, 1866 when volume 5 announces on page one that "we are here for the first time as a daily German-language paper." The paper's irregular issuance is because the paper began as a weekly in November 1861. Then instead of continuing the sequencing, in the following October 1867 issue, the paper re-numbers itself as Volume 2 and con-



The top portion of page one of the January 6, 1877 edition of the Minnesota Staats-Zeitung, which Wolff edited for a time. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

tinues until September 2, 1941. During that three-quarters of a century, the paper necessarily went through many editors. Obituaries in 1893 state that Wolff had been employed by the paper for twenty years and that he had retired from this position on September 3 of the same year. Wittke writes that Wolf was on the staff of the Minnesota *Staatszeitung* during four decades even though the latter paper lasted only from 1858–1877.¹⁵

Albert Wolff came to an unfortunate demise as reported by both his own *Tägliche Volkszeitung* on November 25, 1893 and the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* on November 26, 1893. In its headline, the *Pioneer Press* reads, "One of the leading German-Americans of St. Paul, for many years editor of the *Volkszeitung* is driven by business troubles to take his own life—the body of the suicide is terribly mangled—sketch of the long and useful career of a Journalist." The newspaper then gave this profile of Wolff:

Yesterday (Saturday) forenoon at 10:30 Albert Wolff sixty-eight years of age, a prominent German-American resident of St. Paul, and for more than eighteen years editor in chief of the *Volkszeitung*, sought a fearful death beneath the wheels of a locomotive in the Union Depot yards. . . . The railroad men at work about the yards noticed Wolff . . . when he was seen to step in front of a moving train, the *Omaha Transfer*, which connects the East St. Paul tracks with the western division . . . the engineer stopped. . .

It was just 10:30 Engineer Brunson says, when a Chicago-Great Western locomotive, pulling two cabooses, puffed across the railroad bridge which spans the Mississippi river at the foot of Jackson street and pulled into the union depot yards. . . . When the engine was about twenty feet distant Wolff stepped from the platform to the side of the track, and when the locomotive was within two feet of Wolff the suicide threw himself face downwards. . . . The engine which killed Wolff is No.106 of the Great Western line, and was running about five miles an hour when it struck the unfortunate man. . . .

Deputy Coroner Xanten found that Wolff's legs were crushed and his body had been horribly mangled. The body was removed to Willwerscheid's undertaking rooms on 461 St. Peter street. . . . Mr. Wolff leaves behind a wife, who was Miss Sommers before her marriage. Their married life was an unusually happy one. . . . Mr. Wolff's tragic death was paramount yesterday in the minds of everyone connected with the *Volkszeitung* office and many silent tears fell on copy, case and ledger. . . . He had been in the employ of that paper for twenty years, and all had learned to love and revere the quiet old man. In speaking of the deceased, Mr. C. H. Lienau, proprietor of the *Volkszeitung*, who was acquainted with him long before Mr. Wolff entered his employ, said: "After being connected with several papers in this state, Mr. Wolff became editor of the *Volkszeitung* in 1877, and when in 1878 I took charge of the paper he remained as its editor. He

remained with the paper until September 23 when he decided he needed a vacation, and accordingly resigned, and I took charge of the editorial column. He had been away from the paper but a short time when he concluded that it was better for him to be engaged in some work . . . and through friends applied for a department position in Washington, which he failed to obtain. He became more despondent than ever though . . . he had no cause to be for he has a nice home worth about \$7,500 [the first house he built was at 318 Goodhue Street, just off West 7th Street in St. Paul, built by Wolff in 1887 in Queen Anne-style; at the time of his death, Wolff owned a house at 220 Prescott Street]. . . . About a week ago he went to the office of the German Life Insurance Company with which he carried a life policy, and asked of the company's representative whether if he should die in some unnatural manner the money would be paid to his heirs. Receiving an affirmative reply, he appeared to feel relieved. He was a very intelligent man and a very faithful worker, never missing a day from the office. He was a forcible and ready writer and an excellent all-round newspaper man. During the summer when so many banks were failing [in the financial crisis known as the Panic of 1893] Mr. Wolff became fearful that he would lose his money and accordingly withdrew it from a bank where it had been for some time and in one week successively deposited and withdrew it from four banks.

One of Wolff's closest friends and early employer, F.A. Renz whose confectionary was on Third Street (now Kellogg Boulevard) but who lived at 1034 Summit Avenue, spoke about the fallen editor: "In the year 1853 while in Galena Illinois, I was requested by several gentlemen of that city who had become interested in Wolff then a young man and a recent arrival from Germany, to take him with me to St. Paul. He came with me and for two years was in my employ. He then went to Carver County and took a claim. He remained there for about two years when he returned to St. Paul and became editor of the *Minnesota Zeitung* which position he occupied for a little over a year, when he returned to Carver County this time to publish a paper, the *Minnesota Thalbote*. Returning to St. Paul he became editor

of the *Minnesota Democrat*. He next went to New Ulm, where he published a German paper. About this time he became emigration agent for Germany with headquarters at Bremen. He held this office for two years. Before this he was for a time part owner of the *Minnesota Staats Zeitung*, published in St. Paul. When the *Staats Zeitung* and *Democrat* were consolidated as the *Volkszeitung*, he became its editor.

"Mr. Wolff often told me about his early life in Germany and it was, to say the least, very interesting to listen to him. He first studied theology. Before his theological studies were hardly completed he became involved in the revolution of 1848 in Dresden. He became a political prisoner and the death sentence was passed upon him. This sentence was commuted and for three years he was a prisoner, finally obtaining his release on a promise to leave the country. He was a very intelligent man and a forcible speaker, and, although of a retiring nature, was considered by his friends very companionable. He was, however, at all times subject to fits of melancholy."¹⁶

Albert Scheffer (1844–1905), a St. Paul banker and businessman with ties to *Die Volkszeitung*, and a Union veteran of the Civil War who had been born in Prussia and would later suffer great financial losses in the ongoing economic depression, remembered his old friend: "After leaving the college of theology, Wolff joined with the forces of Siegel, Schurz, Hecker, Anneke and other patriots in the revolutions of 1848. He soon found himself behind prison bars and was condemned to die, but from this fate he was spared, coming to this country as an exile. . . . He was sent to the legislature by Carver county [and] . . . had a thorough education and . . . was especially well versed in German classic literature. He was also a Greek and Latin student . . . and was copied by German papers throughout the world. . . . twenty-six years ago he married a Miss Sommers but their union was never blessed with children. Socially, although he was somewhat diffident, he was of a very pleasant disposition, and, while he shunned society, he was very warm in his intercourse with his old friends. In

AN ABLE JOURNALIST.
ALBERT WOLFF, THE WELL-KNOWN GERMAN EDITOR,
RETIRES FROM THE SANCTUARY.

A Long and Eventful Career—Once Sentenced to Death as a Revolutionary—His Prominent Editorial Career in Minnesota—An Eloquent Speaker as Well as Writer—Sketch of a Busy Life.

Albert Wolff, the oldest German-American journalist in Minnesota, retired last week from an editorial position on the *Daily Volkszeitung*, of this city.

Mr. Wolff has for the past fifteen years been connected with that paper, and for a much longer period engaged in editorial work. He was for many years prior to his connection with the *Volkszeitung* editor in chief and one of the proprietors of the *Staats Zeitung*, which was absorbed by the paper upon which his last work has been performed.

ALBERT WOLFF.

On October 1, 1893 the headline "An Able Journalist" announced the Wolff's retirement on page 7 of the St. Paul Daily Globe. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

the newspaper world he took the highest rank, and, although he received many flattering offers from papers in St. Louis, Chicago, Toledo, Baltimore, Milwaukee, Cincinnati and other cities, he refused them all and remained loyal to St. Paul. He was very popular with the Germans of St. Paul and the state."¹⁷

Maurice Auerbach (1835–1915), another prominent St. Paul businessman, who was a founder of the Merchants National Bank and an officer of the

Union Bank, said of Wolff: "I have known Mr. Wolff since 1857 and have entertained the highest regard for him. He was very popular with the Germans of all classes. . . . I saw him a day or two ago. He was low-spirited then, but I never dreamed of his committing this act. He had an idea that if he lived any length of time, he would come to want."

Louis Stern, associated with Wolff some nine years at the *Volkszeitung* and who was on the eve of his departure to serve a consul in Germany, could not speak without tears: "We all held Mr. Wolff in the highest esteem and his death has caused profound sorrow to us all. I believe now however, that he has been contemplating this rash act for some time for when I last saw him a day or two ago, he talked as if he must soon part, and there was a very noticeable current of sadness in his conversation. I cannot imagine what induced him to do what he has done."¹⁸

The *Volkszeitung* headlined: "Albert Wolff nicht mehr. Er sucht den Tod und findet ihn unter den Rädern eines Eisenbahnzuges. —Ein braver Deutscher weniger! Allgemeine Trauer." ("Albert Wolff no longer. He sought his own death and found it under the wheels of a locomotive. One fewer of our great Germans. Wide-spread sorrow everywhere.")

Niemand ahnte, daß er, dessen Geist selbst die Gefängnißmauer 1848 umgaben, die Beschwerden des Pionier-Lebens im Urwald nicht zu brechen vermochten, wirklich selbst Hand an sich legen würde. . . . Das gnaze Deuschtum Minnesotas für welches er in den 40 Jahren seines journalistischen Tätigkeit so manche Lanze gebrochen, wird mit uns bedauern daß ein Mann von so glänzenden Geistesgabe, so voll hoher und edler Gedanken, so enden sollte. (No one had a clue that a man whose spirit the very prison walls of 1848 engrossed, and which the trials of pioneer life in the virgin forest were unable to breach, would ever lay a hand on his own self. . . . The entire German community of the state of Minnesota, for whom he fractured many a spear during his 40 years of journalistic endeavor, will mourn with us that a man of such titanic mind full of high and noble ideas should finish this way.)

Nevertheless, Minnesota's distinguished Forty-eighter belongs in their imaginary hall of fame.

German Forty-eighters included men and women of many political persuasions from diverse economic and social groups. During the two years following 1848, 978 out of 1,000 came from

Germany west of the Elbe River.¹⁹ Some were extreme reformers like Weitling, Sorge, Weydemeyer and others who advocated social revolution according to the gospel of Karl Marx. In America, the Forty-eighters met anew the "despotism of the plantation," not unlike the Junker Gutshäuser against which many of them had struggled in the Old Country. Enthusiastically, the Forty-eighters supported the cause of the North, joining Lincoln's army in the Civil War to fight against the monopoly of land and privilege they had encountered in the Fatherland. Others belonged to the forgotten thousands whose lives blended with the American stream. Some just disappeared completely from sight after a struggle to make a livelihood in a new land. Somewhere between the known and the forgotten stands Albert Wolff.

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Endnotes

1. See LaVern J. Rippley, "The 1848ers: Germany's Gift to America," *German Life* (February-March 1998): 64. Editorial.
2. Peter Schrag, *Not Fit for Our Society: Nativism and Immigration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 210); Bruce Levine, "Conservatism, Nativism, and Slavery: Thomas R. Whitney and the Origins of the Know-Nothing Party," *Journal of American History*, 88:2 (September 2001): 455-488 and others.
3. See in general, Ernest Bruncken, "German Political Refugees in the United States during the Period from 1815-1860," *Deutsch-Amerikanische Geschichtsblätter*, Vols. 3 and 4 (1903-1904), 33-48, 59.
4. See in general, Justine Davis Randers-Pehrson, *Germans and the Revolution of 1848-1849* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999).
5. A. E. Zucker, ed., *The Forty-eighters: Political Refugees of the German Revolution of 1848* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950).
6. Lynwood G. Downs, "The Writings of Albert Wolff," *Minnesota History*, 27:4 (December 1946): 327-29.
7. Carl Wittke, *Refugees of Revolution. The German Forty-eighters in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania

Press, 1952; reprint edition Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1970), p.118.

8. Karl J. R. Arndt and May E. Olson, *German-American Newspapers and Periodicals 1732-1955, History and Bibliography* (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1961), 220 ff. for a rather complete listing of Minnesota German newspapers. For early details see John Massmann, "Friedrich Orthwein: Minnesota's First German Editor," *American-German Review* (April-May, 1960), 16-17, 38. See also Edward D. Neill, *History of the Minnesota Valley: Including the Explorers and Pioneers of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: North Star Publishing, 1882), 504.

9. Serving as editor of the *Staatszeitung* from 1858-1860 was the Radical Republican Samuel Ludvig, famous for his diatribes against American slavery and other social ills of the times. See for example, *Reden und Vorlesungen und prosaische Aufsätze, im Gebiete der Religion, Philosophie und Geschichte* (Baltimore: self-published, 1854).

10. The words in English translation are: (1) At Mantua captivated, the loyal Hofer was. At Mantua into death, his enemies him led. With bleeding hearts his brother were, all of Germany dishonored and in pain, :: And with its land Tyrol, and with its land Tyrol.

(2) His hands on his back, the innkeeper Hofer strode, with calm and firm steps, death meant little to him. Death which he had himself sent sometimes, from Iselberg into the valley :: In the holy land Tyrol, in the holy land Tyrol [major cities in South Tyrol, Brixen, Meran, Bozen].

11. Downs, 328.

12. Harold F. Peterson, "Early Minnesota Railroads and the Quest for Settlers," *Minnesota History*, 13:1 (March 1932), 25-44, p. 28. Theodore C. Blegen, "Minnesota's Campaign for Immigrants: Illustrative Documents," *Yearbook of the Swedish Historical Society of America*, 11 (1936), 29-83.

13. *Reminiscences, the Story of an Emigrant* (St. Paul, 1892), p. 101 quoted in Blegen, 6.

14. Here and above, the Reports printed in the files of Governor Austin and published in Blegen, 55-64.

15. Wittke, 269.

16. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, November 26, 1893.

17. *Ibid.*

18. *Ibid.*

19. Marcus L. Hansen, "The Revolutions of 1848 and German Emigration," *Journal of Economic and Business History*, 2 (August 1930): 630-658, here 633.

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