



*American/Schleswig-Holstein  
Heritage Society*

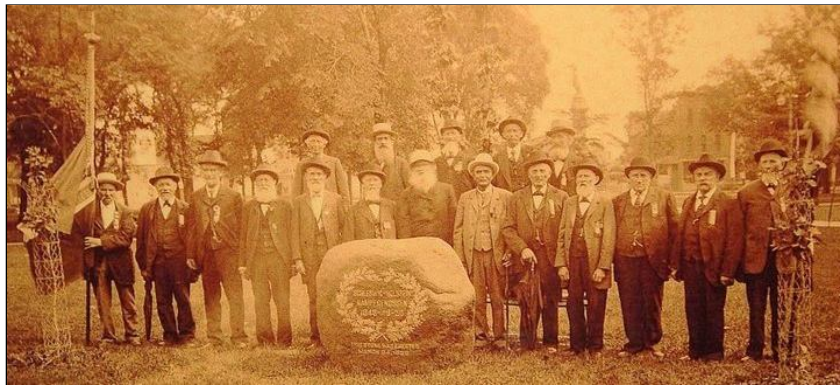


Davenport  
Schuetzenpark Gilde

The American/Schleswig-Holstein Heritage Society and the  
Davenport Schuetzenpark Gilde  
proudly welcome you to the rededication  
of a stone commemorating

*Der Davenport Verein der Kampfgenossen der Schleswig-Holsteinischen  
Freiheitskriege von 1848, 1849 und 1850*

(The Davenport Society of Veterans of the Schleswig-  
Holstein Wars of Independence of 1848, 1849 and 1850)



*"Remember, remember always, that all of us, you and I especially,  
are descended from immigrants and revolutionaries.*

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

## Schleswig-Holstein freedom fighters arrive in Scott County

From 1848 to 1850, a group of Germanic patriots from Schleswig-Holstein fought for liberty, democracy, and national unity in a war with Denmark. Unsuccessful in their struggle, many of these Schleswig-Holsteiners emigrated to the United States where they hoped to find the freedom they had fought for in vain in their homeland.

These freedom fighters were part of what is considered by many to be America's most remarkable and unique group of immigrants: the "Forty-eighters." The Forty-eighters provided an intellectual transfusion which not only affected their fellow countrymen but which also had a pronounced effect on the political and social history of America during one of its most critical periods. Remarkably, a great many of the Forty-eighters hailing from Schleswig-Holstein emigrated to a single area of the Midwest, choosing Scott County, Iowa, as their adopted home.

### A veterans society is formed

In the 1850's, several members of this newly arrived group made an unsuccessful effort to organize a veterans association. By 1872, almost a quarter of a century after the Schleswig-Holstein War of 1848-50 had begun, another effort was made, and this time it proved successful.

The first official meeting of *Der Davenport Verein der Kampfgenossen der Schleswig-Holsteinischen Freiheitskriege von 1848, 1849 und 1850* (The Davenport Society of Veterans of the Schleswig-Holstein Wars of Independence of 1848, 1849 and 1850) was held in the Turner Hall at the corner of Second and Scott streets on September 15, 1872. The organization's first slate of officers included Jürgen Peter Ankerson, president; Julius Langheim, vice president; Emil Geisler, recording secretary; Ernst Claussen (who would subsequently serve as Davenport's mayor for a record seven consecutive terms), corresponding secretary; and Hans Heinrich Andresen, treasurer. In addition, Hans Reimer Claussen, the famous Schleswig-Holstein patriot who had so diligently worked for the cause of freedom, was made the group's first honorary member.

### The fiftieth anniversary celebration

On a glorious sunny day on March 24, 1898, the fiftieth anniversary celebration of the fall of the Danish fortress at Rendsburg — the beginning of the Schleswig-Holstein War of 1848-50 — was held. A grand parade wound its way through the streets of Davenport to the park at Washington Square, the site of the present YM/YWCA. Some twelve hundred people jammed the square to hear the speeches, witness the dedication of a stone monument, and see three oak trees planted. Two of these trees were donated by the former chancellor of the German Empire, Otto von Bismarck, while the third, a twin oak, symbolized the inseparability of the former duchies of Schleswig and Holstein.

The stone selected by the Schleswig-Holstein veterans was a huge, red granite boulder that reportedly came from the banks of Rockingham Township (now part of Davenport). The following inscription was carved into the stone by the Schricker and Rodler, a Davenport firm founded by the sons of German immigrants:

**SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN  
KAMPFGENOSSEN  
1848-49-50**

**THIS STONE WAS ERECTED  
MARCH 24, 1898**

The first three lines of the inscription were surrounded by two crossed oak branches which symbolized the eternal linkage between Schleswig and Holstein.

Bleik Peters, the *Kampfgenossen* president, dedicated the stone, at the base of which a box containing the association's membership list, some daily newspapers, and other documents of interest was cemented. Following the dedication, Emil Geisler, the society's long-time *Schriftführer*, or recording secretary, made a speech about the higher meaning of the celebration, some portions of which are set forth below:

*"Just as this granite block was lifted from its primeval setting in the far north by mighty forces hundreds of years ago, and just as the oaks were transplanted here from their home soil in the Saxon forest, the heart of Germany, the original home of the old Anglo-Saxons, so have we, the Schleswig-Holsteiners of 1848, been transplanted by great political forces to this side of the Atlantic Ocean. It is just fifty years that our beautiful homeland rose with weapons in hand to break the hated yoke of Denmark in the storm of freedom sweeping through almost all the countries of Europe at the middle of the century. The object was to escape the Danes' despotic domination. We old warriors, who are gathered here today, were powerful youths and young men as we hurried to the colors to defend the honor and freedom of our beloved country with blood and life. For three years we stood up to the superior forces of the enemy in bloody conflict. That was longer than any other people at that time; several times we drove the enemy back to their native fortresses. Finally, however, their superiority allied with the armies of princes who had suppressed the aspirations of their people, disarmed us. It was no longer possible to remain in our beloved home, and so we left for the new Canaan, the land of freedom, the United States of North America.*

*When we, Germany's sons, had to give way,  
Columbia stretched out to us a welcome hand.  
She helped us to attain man's purpose here:  
One's hearth, one's home within a nation free.  
After long years we stand united here,  
Unbowed though gray the locks our heads adorn.*

*We landed here on the bank of that mighty stream, the Mississippi, in the youthful state of Iowa, which was just opening to civilization. Here we exchanged the weapons of war with those of peace and culture: the plow, the hammer, and the saw. The virgin earth was broken and the flourishing farms of this county, the factories and businesses of the city, which German hands created, gave proof of their diligence and energy.*

*When groups hostile to freedom threatened the free institutions of this country and scorned its laws, many of our comrades again took up arms to defend freedom and our union; they helped to suppress the bloody rebellion."*

*"May Germania and Columbia like a pair of sisters, distinguished among the civilized nations of the world, always be united in their efforts for the welfare of their children and the distribution of the blessings of the civilization among all nations. And may the United States of America, now our blessed home, ever enjoy the blessings of peace and prosperity; and may it forever be the land of the free and the home of the brave, and its glorious banner forever wave!"*

At the conclusion of Geisler's speech, President A. W. Vander Veer (the first secretary of Davenport's Board of Park Commissioners and namesake of Vander Veer Park in Davenport) accepted the monument for the park commission with words of thanks, and then the *Star Spangled Banner* was played.

#### A sad chapter in Scott County's history

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Davenport had been called "the most Germany city, not only in the state, but in all the Middle West, the center of all German activities in the state." Less than two decades later, however, the view of all things German had changed dramatically. America's entry into World War I ushered in an era of uberpatriotism which often manifested itself in displays of anti-German sentiment.

- In 1917, Davenport's Board of Education discontinued the study of German in all Davenport schools.
- The statue of the goddess Germania that since 1876 had stood thirty-five feet above the fountain in Washington Square, an historically German cultural center and the site of fiftieth anniversary celebration of the *Schleswig-Holstein Kampfgenossen Verein von 1848-50*, was removed and sold as scrap iron.
- When the Davenport Public Library removed three "decidedly pro-German" books from its shelves, the *Davenport Democrat and Leader* trumpeted this as an act in the "crusade to extract Kaiser Wilhelm's poisonous 'kultur venom' from Iowa libraries.
- On May 8, 1918, in an event endorsed by school faculties, students of several local schools assembled on school grounds and proceeded to burn five hundred German textbooks while singing patriotic songs.
- A nationwide attempt was made to drive all things German from America's vocabulary. Children no longer contracted German measles; instead, they were sick with the "liberty measles." Sauerkraut changed into "liberty cabbage," hamburgers were rechristened "liberty steaks," and Dachshunds morphed into "Liberty dogs."
- Businesses were renamed to show their patriotism and to allow them to remain in business. Names like Davenport's "German Savings Bank" were simply no longer viable. Davenport's *Schützenpark* was rechristened Forest Park, and patriotic gatherings were held within its confines to drive home the idea that it was not a gathering place for German sympathizers.
- On September 7, 1918, one of the oldest and most respected German-language newspapers in the state, Davenport's *Der Demokrat*, ceased publication when advertisers deserted in droves.
- On May 23, 1918, Iowa Governor Harding issued what became known as the Babel Proclamation. According to this proclamation, only English was legal in public or private schools, in public conversations, on trains, over the telephone, at all meetings, and in all religious services. In effect, German was made illegal in the state of Iowa. These overzealous language restrictions made Governor Harding the laughing stock of the nation when five Scott County farm wives were arrested for speaking German during a party line telephone conversation.
- Perhaps the saddest result of all the things that were done in the name of patriotism, however, was the fact that many Germans themselves began rejecting their Germanic culture. Names were changed. Membership in German cultural and political organizations plummeted. Family bibles were discarded and German heritage was hidden thus depriving their future generations of songs, family stories, photos, and oral histories.
- Sadly, the stone dedicated on March 24, 1898, was painted yellow (a popular way of scornfully identifying and defacing something having German ties) and tipped over. At some point, the stone disappeared from Washington Square never to be seen again.

A town remembers an important part of its roots  
and sets things right

In 2006, after an effort spearheaded by the German American Heritage Center, a new "Lady of Germania" statue was positioned with arms upraised reaching toward the levee as it had been 130 years earlier when it welcomed immigrant travelers ashore. In March of 2008, after much hard work by the American/Schleswig-Holstein Heritage Society (ASHHS) and the *Schützenpark Gilde*, a stone commemorating the *Schleswig-Holstein Kampfgenossen Verein von 1848-50* was rededicated. Davenport had come full circle in honoring an important part of its roots.

*Der Davenport Verein der Kampfgenossen der Schleswig-Holsteinischen Freiheitskriege von 1848, 1849 und 1850* was the only organization in the United States dedicated to the participants of the Schleswig-Holstein War of 1848-50. Many of Davenport's citizens today can trace their roots to the freedom fighters that belonged to this unique organization, and all Davenporters can take pride in the fact that these extraordinary individuals chose Davenport as their adopted homeland.

***"Remember, remember always, that all of us, you and I especially,  
are descended from immigrants and revolutionaries.***

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Scott Christiansen, Iowa City, IA

[Note: Jürgen Peter Ankerson, Scott's great-great grandfather, was the first president of *Der Davenport Verein der Kampfgenossen der Schleswig-Holsteinischen Freiheitskriege von 1848, 1849 und 1850.*]