

H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences



Klaus Dehne. *Deutsche Einwanderer im lÖndlichen SÖ¼d-Indiana (USA): Eine historisch-geographische Analyse.* Passau: Selbstverlag des Faches Geographie der UniversitÖat Passau, 2003. 108 pp. EUR 19.90 (paper), ISBN 978-3-9807866-1-4.

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Klaus Dehne has provided thorough and useful research in the German immigration to two areas in Southern Indiana, Widmer Township in Knox County and Ferdinand Township in Dubois County, both heavily settled by German immigrants in the mid-nineteenth century. As he suggests, the results of his research provide a model for the study of other ethnic groups and other geographic areas.

While the two areas in question were both settled by German immigrants and their descendants, there are distinctive and telling differences. Widmer was settled by Germans from the Lippe area in northwestern Germany quite exclusively by direct chain migration. The people were thus all from one area of Germany and also were all of the protestant Evangelical Church. When people left the area they had Widmer as the destination. Their settlements were primarily in the eastern area of the county, the western part having been earlier settled primarily by Anglo-Americans. Ferdinand, on the other hand, was one of the towns established by the Catholic missionary-priest Father Kundek who bought land from the United States government in the only sparsely settled Dubois County. He placed ads in German-language publications, particularly *Der Wahrheitsfreund* in Cincinnati with its very wide circulation among German-speaking Catholics. He thus attracted primarily people who had already immigrated and were possibly looking for land to purchase. The people originated from many parts of German-speaking Europe and had in common that they were Catholic, and for the most part had already lived a

while in America. The area was also much more isolated than Widmer, which was located closer to the waterways of early Indiana.

Dehne's comparative study of these two groups reveals that they both adopted quickly American farming practices, planting corn rather than traditional European crops such as rye. Thus they tried to assure themselves of some success in the new area, which they did not know well. They both tended to avoid monoculture, however, and tended to be very stable, staying on the same land over generations. Later there was some cultural rebound resulting in plantings of German traditional grains, especially in Ferdinand where beer brewing required more barley. German cultural maintenance including language was more easily achieved in the more isolated Ferdinand Township, in fact into the present generation.

Based on the results of his study Dehne describes a more complete typology for immigrant classification. This includes recruited inland migration and inland chain migration as well as direct chain migration. The typology includes motivating factors as well as type of movement. The differentiation is a very useful one. His analysis of land types and resulting settlement and usage patterns bespeaks the cultural geographic orientation of the work.

Dehne verifies the very central role of the church for social and cultural life. Dehne's study verifies much of the research already undertaken, but does add new elements. The very good writing style and lack of factual and typographical errors are added pluses.

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