

# The Election of 1860 and the Germans in Minnesota

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"DID THE GERMANS vote for Lincoln?" This question, which had been answered in the affirmative by historians and which for some time seemed to be settled, has recently been revived.<sup>1</sup>

Of all the Middle Western states, Minnesota had the most liberal law for the enfranchisement of immigrants—the foreign-born resident was allowed to vote four months after applying for citizenship. In 1858 the Republicans had been defeated by a slight margin and, in view of the growing dissatisfaction over such issues as the railroad policy and the Homestead Bill, with its attendant land sales, the Republican party had good reason to hope for a decisive victory in 1859. The campaign of 1860 was, therefore, much less lively than that of the previous year; a Republican victory in Minnesota was taken for granted.

The German population of the state, comprising both German-born persons and their children, amounted to 23,309, or 15.8 per cent of the total population.<sup>2</sup> In 1860 probably more than one Minnesotan in five—the proportion usually estimated—was a voter, since the entire white population of that year numbered 169,395, and the aggregate of all male persons above the age of twenty was 38,183. Among the Germans the percentage of voters was certainly higher, for 5,610 family heads were counted among them in the Minnesota census of 1860; that is, about forty-two in a hundred

<sup>1</sup> Three articles on the subject, all published in a single year, are Joseph Schafer, "Who Elected Lincoln?" in the *American Historical Review*, 47:51-63 (October, 1941); Jay Monaghan, "Did Abraham Lincoln Receive the Illinois German Vote?" in the *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 35:133-139 (June, 1942); and Andreas Dorpalen, "The German Element and the Issues of the Civil War," in the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 29:55-76 (June, 1942). The present study of the Minnesota vote and its background was made possible by a grant-in-aid from the Social Science Research Council.

<sup>2</sup> Hildegard Binder Johnson, "The Distribution of the German Pioneer Population in Minnesota," in *Rural Sociology*, 6:31 (March, 1941).

Germans were voters. The figure does not include single male persons of more than twenty-one years, a group numerous enough to neutralize the possible inclusion of German family heads who had not yet reached voting age or who were not enfranchised. Thus 5,610 of 38,183 Minnesota voters — or every seventh potential voter — were German in 1860. Naturally, the Republicans of Minnesota — as of other Middle Western states — were as anxious to secure this powerful vote as the Democrats were to hold it. German and Irish settlers were known to be faithful Democrats until the late 1850's.

Political issues in the two parties both repulsed and attracted foreign-born voters. Know-nothingism, which was directed against the immigrant, kept Germans out of the Republican party, but the failure to enact a homestead bill antagonized them toward the Democratic administration in Washington. An amendment to the Massachusetts constitution, passed in 1859, requiring foreigners to remain in the state for two years after naturalization before they could vote, aroused sharp protest among the Germans of the entire country against Republicanism in New England.<sup>8</sup> Again, a letter written by Lewis Cass, secretary of state, denying protection to a naturalized American citizen traveling in Germany and subject to Prussian draft regulations in Danzig, made German politicians cry out against the denial of their rights as citizens. The threat of land sales in Minnesota made a homestead bill a special concern of the German farmers in the state. As the Germans began to recognize the value of their votes to both parties, their resentment of nativistic policies became more outspoken, their demand for protection as naturalized citizens was accentuated, and their cry for German candidates became louder. Much concern for their wishes was exhibited in non-German newspapers, speeches, and public letters. In view of their experience, many of the readers of the *Minnesota Staatszeitung* must have agreed with its editor, Albert Wolff, who remarked bitterly, in the issue for May 26, 1860, on the unusual politeness of the English-language press toward the Germans.

On the whole, Minnesota, due both to its youth and its geographic situation, had not received as large a share of well-educated

<sup>8</sup> Kirk H. Porter, *A History of Suffrage in the United States*, 118 (Chicago, 1918).

German liberals, like the political exiles of 1830 and 1848, as other Middle Western states. In Ohio, Illinois, Missouri, and Iowa, there were many German writers, lecturers, publishers, journalists, and teachers who corresponded with and visited each other frequently. Among those of similar caliber in Minnesota were Samuel Ludvigh and Wolff, both of whom were connected with the *Staatszeitung*. Ludvigh, a radical freethinker, was an extravagant personality who became nationally known through his quarterly literary magazine, *Die Fackel*, which he established in New York and published later in Baltimore without interruption for twenty years.<sup>4</sup> In 1857 he went to Minnesota in search of new subscribers for his aggressive magazine, engaged in a speaking tour through the towns with large German populations along the Minnesota River, and settled in St. Paul in 1858. He took over the *Minnesota Deutsche Zeitung*, changing its name to *Minnesota Staatszeitung*, in conscious imitation of other leading German papers, such as the *New York Staatszeitung* and the *Illinois Staatszeitung*. During his residence in Minnesota *Die Fackel* was published and printed in St. Paul.

Ludvigh wrote in the *Minnesota Staatszeitung* on September 24, 1859: "We have done our full duty during the period of nineteen years, to the Democratic Party till its absolute degeneration under Pierce, and we have worked conscientiously since that time for the Republican Party — pausing a while after the proscribing measures of Massachusetts and reassuring our political Stand as Editor since the Massachusetts crime has been expiated."<sup>5</sup> The Republicans recognized the significance of Ludvigh's newspaper, for when he announced, on July 23, 1859, that it would be discontinued after three months because of lack of money, they came to his aid, ordering pamphlets and translations for which he was paid \$150.00. About the same time new subscriptions brought in \$163.50. Ludvigh himself published these figures after Friedrich Orthwein, his Democratic rival of the *Minnesota National Demokrat* in St. Paul, accused

<sup>4</sup> Albert Post, *Popular Freethought in America, 1825-1850*, 73 (New York, 1943); Alexander Schem, *Deutsch-Amerikanisches Conversationslexikon*, 6:656 (New York, 1872).

<sup>5</sup> *Minnesota Staatszeitung*, September 24, 1859. The article appeared in English under the title "The Republicans of New Ulm and Their Resolutions."

the Republican candidate for state treasurer, Albert Scheffer, of having handed \$500.00 to Ludvigh.<sup>6</sup> Although Ludvigh left on a tour of the East on October 12, 1859, immediately after the state election, the *Staatszeitung* bore his name as editor until December 1, 1860. Charles Reuther and Christian Exel appear as owners of the paper after February 11, 1860, and Albert Wolff's name as editor appears for the first time in the issue of February 25, 1860.<sup>7</sup>

Although Wolff was not as radical as Ludvigh, like the latter he took pride in announcing that he was "free of any party yoke or party pay."<sup>8</sup> He recommended both Republican and Democratic candidates in the St. Paul city election of 1860; with one exception they were Germans. He worded his recommendation: "Show the Knownothings of both parties what the damned Dutchman can do."<sup>9</sup> In the issue of his paper for May 26, Wolff described the national Republican platform as "national and just," recommending at the same time a direct disavowal of the Massachusetts amendment, the revision of the Fugitive Slave Act, and a liberal homestead law. While he waited until after the second Democratic convention in Baltimore before he would openly come out as a Republican, he favored the Republican party from the time of its Chicago convention because thirteen German delegates participated in it; he had found that Germans were entirely absent from the first Democratic convention in Charleston. Wolff did not follow the usual practice of the English language papers, which for months preceding an election published in each issue the ticket of the party they supported. The Republican ticket was not printed in the *Minnesota Staatszeitung* until October 27, 1860.

A second German paper in Minnesota was the *New Ulm Pionier*. Its motto, "Free soil, free men, free labor, free press," designated

<sup>6</sup> *Staatszeitung*, September 24, 1859; *Minnesota National Demokrat*, September 11, 1859.

<sup>7</sup> Wolff settled in Minnesota in 1853. He was associated with several German newspapers in the state before he became editor of the *St. Paul Volkszeitung* in 1877. See files of the *Staatszeitung* for 1860; Wolff's obituary in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, November 26, 1893; and Lynwood G. Downs, "The Writings of Albert Wolff," *ante*, 27:327.

<sup>8</sup> *Staatszeitung*, February 25, 1860. Translated from an article titled: "Die freie deutsche Presse von Minnesota an das gesamte Deutschum."

<sup>9</sup> *Staatszeitung*, March 31, 1860.

it as Republican in 1859 and 1860, but its enthusiastic support of Seward made it reluctant to endorse Lincoln. It recommended Lincoln and Hamlin "only under protest," a stand that drew Wolff's criticism.<sup>10</sup>

A third newspaper, the *Minnesota National Demokrat*, was owned and edited by Orthwein, who earlier had published the *Minnesota Thalbote* in Carver and the *Minnesota Deutsche Zeitung* in St. Paul. His political leanings were apt to change with the support he obtained from either party; his unreliability appears to be established.<sup>11</sup> On the whole the situation with respect to the German press in the state favored the Republican party.

The English-language press varied in its attention to the German-born voter. Easily available files of county newspapers are not complete for the period in question; thus it is difficult to form a general opinion. In general, however, Republican newspapers showed greater solicitude for the Germans than the Democratic newspapers. The *Daily Minnesotian* and the *St. Paul Daily Times* were among those carrying frequent notes or articles of interest to German readers. They published notices of speeches by Carl Schurz, and expressed satisfaction over Germans leaving the Democratic party in other states or in certain districts of Minnesota. The *Times* voiced its admiration for the thriftiness of German women in the fields, advising American women to "learn a lesson of the hard working German women of the fatherland." German festivals had often been obnoxious to American Puritan tastes, but a festival in St. Paul in August, 1860, drew the approval of the editor of the *Times*, who "saw no drunkenness and no disposition to disturb the pleasure of others." The *Minnesotian* ran a series of long articles by Ignatius Donnelly entitled "Letters to the Foreign-Born Citizens of Minnesota"; one of its headlines read "Naturalized Citizens Placed on Par with Runaway Slaves"; and it made much of William Windom's answer to a letter signed by thirty-five German citizens of Winona.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *New Ulm Pionier*, June 2, 1860; *Staatszeitung*, June 16, 1860.

<sup>11</sup> Daniel S. B. Johnston, "Minnesota Journalism in the Territorial Period," in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 10:286-288, 317.

<sup>12</sup> *St. Paul Times*, June 26, July 3, August 3, 14, October 3, 6, 19, 1860; *Daily Minnesotian*, July 19, August 4, 1859; July 26, 1860.

The letter, dated September 14, 1859, illustrates the main grievances of the politically minded German voter — grievances that were no less acute in neighboring states.<sup>13</sup> The signers submitted four questions to Windom, the Republican candidate for Congress from the Winona district. Was he in favor of naturalization laws as they stood, and particularly against every extension of probation? Was he against every discrimination between native-born and naturalized citizens as to the right of suffrage? Did he specifically condemn the Massachusetts amendment which withheld the franchise for two years after naturalization? Was he in favor of a liberal homestead law? All questions were answered in the affirmative by Windom, who furthermore opposed the unjust discrimination against citizens of foreign birth attempted by the Democratic administration. This was a special addition to the answer required by the second question, and it showed how well Windom understood the German cause.<sup>14</sup>

Democratic papers were eager to assure foreign-born citizens that they actually were protected by American consuls in Europe, and they cited the cases of a former Hanoverian and a former Dane who were released in the countries of their birth after the intervention of American consuls. Notices appearing under such headings as "What the Germans Think," "Read This, Germans," "What Democracy Thinks of the Germans," and "To the Germans, Norwegians and Swedes of Carver County" illustrate varying attitudes of Democratic papers.<sup>15</sup>

Slavery and abolition were not neglected. William Seward's great speech of September 22 in St. Paul — perhaps the most important event of the campaign of 1860 in Minnesota — dwelt on these issues. Morton S. Wilkinson, the Republican nominee for senator, dedicated

<sup>13</sup> Similar letters are enumerated by George M. Stephenson in his *Political History of the Public Lands*, 228 (Boston, 1917). See also F. I. Herriott, "The Germans in Iowa and the 'Two Year' Amendment of Massachusetts," in *Deutsch-Amerikanische Geschichtsblätter*, 13:202-308 (Chicago, 1913).

<sup>14</sup> The letter and Windom's answer may be found in the *Winona Republican*, September 28, 1859, and in the *Minnesotian*, October 1, 1859.

<sup>15</sup> *Henderson Weekly Democrat*, September 28, 1859; *Scott County Democrat*, July 30, 1859; *Pioneer and Democrat* (St. Paul), August 12, 1859; *Central Republican* (Faribault), October 11, 1859; *Scott County Democrat*, October 27, 1859; *St. Paul Times*, July 3, 1860; *St. Cloud Democrat*, September 15, 1859; *Carver County Democrat*, August 1, 1859.

a long speech in Mankato on August 27 exclusively to the discussion of slavery and the Dred Scott decision. But whenever the English-language press put the slavery issue before the foreign-born voter for his decision, the competition between white and Negro slave labor was emphasized, as it was by Donnelly in one of his letters to foreign-born citizens.<sup>16</sup> Appeals to the Germans to decide the question on the basis of principles, of freedom, of right and wrong were made by Germans like Ludvig, Wolff, and Schurz.

There is evidence that pamphlet literature supplemented the newspapers during the campaign. The *National Demokrat* published a sheet called *Demokratisches Heer-Banner*, and the same paper complained that the Republicans distributed thousands of German and Swedish pamphlets in which the Massachusetts amendment was falsely represented. C. C. Andrews reprinted excerpts from articles against Know-nothingism which he had published in Eastern papers in 1855 and distributed them with German translations in Stearns County.<sup>17</sup>

The party platforms tried to appeal to the Germans. A resolution in the Republican state platform of August 27, 1859, declared that "we proscribe no man on account of his religion or place of nativity; we oppose any abridgement whatever of the right of naturalization now secured by law to emigrants, and all discrimination between native and naturalized citizens, whether by amendment of a state constitution, as in Massachusetts, or by Legislative or Congressional action; and we resist with indignation, as our fathers did in 1812, the monstrous doctrine of impressment of American citizens by foreign despotisms as recently proclaimed by the present Administration."<sup>18</sup>

The Democratic platform of August 19, 1859, declared that "American citizenship embraces persons of all creeds and nationalities, who under the laws, acknowledge and render allegiance to the American government, and that the Democratic party recognizes no

<sup>16</sup> *Minnesotian*, July 19, 1859.

<sup>17</sup> One copy of the *Demokratisches Heer-Banner* is bound with the *Minnesota National Demokrat* of May 3, 1859, in the Minnesota Historical Society's file. See also C. C. Andrews, *Extracts from Letters and Articles against "Know-nothingism"* (St. Paul, 1859).

<sup>18</sup> *Minnesotian*, September 5, 1859.

distinctions between such citizens, whether native born or naturalized, but guarantees to all, alike, the same political rights at home, and the same governmental protection abroad. And we further declare that the amendments to the Constitution of Massachusetts placing additional restrictions upon the admission of the foreign-born adopted citizens to the right of suffrage, is an act of the Republican party, and that we hold them responsible for it, as an open avowal of principles which are secretly and covertly held by that party in Minnesota, and wherever that sectional organization exists, which is manifested by the fact that they have placed in nomination for the suffrages of the native and adopted citizens of Minnesota, James H. Baker, for Secretary of State, Gordon E. Cole, for Attorney General, and William Windom, for Representative in Congress, three open and avowed Know Nothings." It was further declared in the platform that homestead principles were of Democratic origin, that land sales in Minnesota were contrary to the desire of the Democrats, and that the president should be urged to postpone the sales.<sup>19</sup> The Republican platform, on the other hand, held the Democratic administration responsible for the defeat of the homestead law. For a German in the backwoods who had little knowledge of the political history of the issues involved, both platforms might have had equal appeal.

There was, however, a widespread distrust of both parties among the Germans, many of whom thought both corrupt and given to nativistic tendencies. Thus the bid for the German vote expressed itself in the nomination of many a German candidate on state and local tickets. In Minnesota each party had a German candidate on the state ticket in 1859. Francis Baasen of New Ulm had been elected secretary of state on a Democratic ticket in 1857. In 1859 he was re-nominated, and the Republicans named another German, Scheffer of St. Paul, as candidate for state treasurer.

It is significant that neither party derided the German candidate of its opponent for being a foreigner. There was little said against Baasen, who was in office at the time. The twenty-three-year-old Scheffer, a freethinking liberal who recently had moved to Minne-

<sup>19</sup> *Pioneer and Democrat*, August 20, 1859.



sota from Wisconsin, was reproached for his youth and for being an infidel. His name is printed in different forms in the contemporary press, and a Democratic paper said that he was so unknown that nobody knew how to spell his name.<sup>20</sup> In 1860 each party named a German as one of the four presidential electors on its ticket—William Pfaender of New Ulm on the Republican, Joseph Weinmann of Benton on the Democratic.

The German candidates contributed speeches in their native tongue to the campaigns of 1859 and 1860. In 1860 A. H. Wagner of New Ulm, who had been one of the German delegates to the Chicago convention of 1860, joined Pfaender frequently on his speaking tours.<sup>21</sup> Their speeches were rarely printed. The Germans lacked reporters and newspapers, and though the English-language papers often mention the speeches, they do not give the contents. That public discussions provided a favorite entertainment for the Germans is indicated by the relieved "At last" with which Wolff announced a long-awaited debate between Pfaender and Weinmann in St. Anthony and St. Paul in October, 1860. It was reported in the Republican *Staatszeitung* of November 3. Weinmann's grammar, logic, and knowledge of statistics and history were found faulty, and he was said to have "made a laughing stock of himself, his party and Germanity" by his appearance, which was described as "a cruelty to animals." Praise of a speaker by a paper representing his own party or derision by the opposition press indicates little. The scales of public German oratory in Minnesota, however, tipped in favor of the Republicans without the weight of Carl Schurz.

Schurz has been called "the most ubiquitous as well as the ablest speaker in the German language if not the ablest Republican campaigner" of his time. He was glorified in German-American history and praised by Minnesota papers as the "illustrious German patriot and exile," as "one of the really great minds and men of the coun-

<sup>20</sup> *Henderson Democrat*, October 12, 1859.

<sup>21</sup> Speeches are reported for Baasen in the *Scott County Democrat*, August 27, October 1, 1859; for Scheffer, in the *St. Cloud Democrat*, September 22, 1859, and the *Minnesotian*, November 3, 1860, Pfaender's and Wagner's schedule included Mankato, Henderson, Carver, Shakopee, St. Paul, and St. Peter between October 20 and 30, 1860. See the *Independent* (Mankato), October 25, 1860.

try," and as "a man of talent and education." Occasionally he was attacked, for instance in Hastings, where he was described as a "refugee who made his own land too hot to hold him." Quickly the *Faribault Republican* grasped the chance to ask "German citizens how they liked such specimens of democratic toleration and regard for foreigners."<sup>22</sup> It was evidently not advisable for either side to attack Schurz.

Schurz arrived in St. Paul on September 19, 1859, and he spoke in Shakopee, Chaska, Lexington, Henderson, Stillwater, St. Anthony, St. Paul, and St. Cloud, and perhaps in other communities. On October 1, when the German reading club of St. Paul opened the Athenaeum, Schurz was conducted to the clubhouse in a torchlight procession. There he delivered a German speech of ninety minutes, followed by another in English. The contents were not printed; the *Staatszeitung* found the German speech good and the English one a work of art. Short notices appeared in the English-language papers, the reporters noting the "good impression" that Schurz made on the German audience.<sup>23</sup>

The highlight of Schurz's appearance in Minnesota was his debate with Emil Rothe of Wisconsin in St. Anthony and St. Paul. The fact that the Democratic party sent its best German orator from Wisconsin to Minnesota when Schurz was campaigning in the latter state illustrates the importance credited to him. In Germany, Schurz and Rothe had been comrades in a student fight for freedom; in America they became residents of the same town in Wisconsin; now they opposed each other publicly in Minnesota. Their debate in Stansfield Hall in St. Anthony was a success for Schurz, according to the Republican papers and the *Pioneer*. The latter newspaper declared that Rothe was at a disadvantage because Schurz was the first and the last to speak and also because he could speak English, a language in which Rothe could not reply. Schurz exposed the differences between slave and free labor, and when Rothe defended

<sup>22</sup> Schafer, in *American Historical Review*, 47:52; *Falls Evening News* (St. Anthony), September 24, 1859; *Minnesotian*, October 3, 1859; *Stillwater Democrat*, September 24, 1859; *Faribault Republican*, November 21, 1859.

<sup>23</sup> *Intimate Letters of Carl Schurz*, 192-208 (Madison, 1928); *St. Paul Times*, September 23, 1859; *Minnesota State News* (Minneapolis), September 17, 1859; *Staatszeitung*, October 8, 1859.

slavery as traditional, Schurz asked poignantly if a historical wrong ever could become a historical right. Rothe remarked that the Homestead Bill was unjust to those who did not need or want land—an unfortunate statement in a young agricultural state like Minnesota. He reproached Schurz for adhering to the Republican party after it failed to nominate him for governor of Wisconsin, giving Schurz a chance to declare his faith in essential convictions which “the Democrats obviously could not understand.” It was characteristic of Schurz to extoll principles rather than views on the issues of the day, leading his opponents to think “that his acquirements appear to be more of a philosophic cast than those of a statesman trained to grapple with the realities of life.” This tendency accounts for the only praise the *Pioneer* could give its fellow partisan Rothe, who is described as a “practical talker, not a visionary essayist such as Schurz.”<sup>24</sup>

English-speaking Republicans often found great merit in Schurz’s political stand. The *Winona Republican* devoted three columns in each of two issues to a full report of his speech in St. Louis on August 1, 1860, because of its “profound political analysis of American politics.” The speech was recommended to the “candid and careful perusal of every reader . . . whether of European or American origin.” Further reports of speeches by Schurz appear in the *St. Peter Tribune* and in the weekly *New Ulm Pionier*, which needed five issues to give a full account of a speech in Massachusetts on January 4, 1860.<sup>25</sup>

A circumstance that favored the Republican cause in Minnesota in the eyes of the Germans was the friendly attitude toward them exhibited by the new Republican governor, Alexander Ramsey, and Lieutenant Governor Donnelly. As early as 1857 Ramsey was mentioned as a friend of the German-speaking people after he attended a lecture given by Ludvigh in St. Paul.<sup>26</sup> When Donnelly founded Nininger he wanted to attract Germans from the East, and his

<sup>24</sup> *Staatszeitung*, October 1, 1859; *Stillwater Democrat*, October 1, 1859; *Pioneer and Democrat*, October 6, 1859.

<sup>25</sup> *Winona Republican*, August 15, 1860; *St. Peter Tribune*, February 29, March 28, May 23, 31, 1860; *New Ulm Pionier*, July 28, August 4, 11, 18, 25, 1860.

<sup>26</sup> *Minnesota Deutsche Zeitung*, September 19, 1857.

*Immigrant Aid Journal* issued to advertise the townsite contained two pages of English and two of German material in each number. On one occasion, Donnelly addressed the Germans of Minnesota in a letter to the *Staatszeitung*: "Germans, who have left your fatherland because you did not want to have your rights trampled on . . . if you desire to act as free citizens and to prove yourself worthy of the character which the Germans of Europe acquired as philosophers and thinkers, then you have to ask for an explanation and reason for your faith and you must not obey orders from small demagogues." He referred to the loyalty that the Germans—and the Irish as well—had shown for the Democratic party, for "Democracy."<sup>27</sup> The uprooting of the traditional partisanship of the German voters represents one of the most interesting aspects of the election of 1860 in the Northwest.

The foregoing description of the attitude of the Minnesota press, the situation with respect to German-language papers, the political issues, and the campaign gives a background for German participation in the election of 1860 in Minnesota. It remains to ascertain, as far as possible, how the German-born immigrants voted.

The present study is concerned with the ten counties where the density of the German population was greatest, either throughout the county or in certain townships. They are Blue Earth, Brown, Carver, Hennepin, Le Sueur, Nicollet, Ramsey, Scott, Sibley, and Stearns. With the exception of Hennepin, all had heavy Democratic majorities in 1857. Carver, Le Sueur, Nicollet, Ramsey, Scott, Sibley, and Stearns showed Democratic majorities in 1859. In 1860 only Scott and Stearns retained them. Sibley could have had a Democratic majority if the vote had not been split over the two Democratic candidates for the presidency.<sup>28</sup>

In 1860 the votes returned throughout Minnesota amounted to 20.5 per cent of the total population. This would mean that every

<sup>27</sup> Translated from an article entitled "An die Deutschen von Minnesota," in the *Staatszeitung*, October 9, 1858.

<sup>28</sup> Sibley County returned 397 votes for Lincoln, 384 for Douglas, and 18 for Breckenridge. Election returns for counties have been obtained from the *Tribune Almanac*, 60 (New York, 1868).

potential voter went to the polls, for every fifth person in the population is supposedly a voter. Obviously, this was not the case in Minnesota in 1860 or in 1859, when an even larger percentage voted despite frequent contemporary complaints that many voters did not go to the polls. Certainly all Minnesota's eligible voters did not participate in the election. A computation of the number of male persons above the age of twenty, in comparison with the number of votes returned in each county, results in the following percentages for participation: 78 for Blue Earth, 68 for Brown, 58 for Carver, 68 for Hennepin, 77 for Le Sueur, 68 for Nicollet, 70 for Ramsey, 81 for Scott, 79 for Sibley, 69 for Stearns, and 72 for the whole state. In reality, these percentages were probably larger, since it cannot be assumed that every male person above the age of twenty had the right to vote.

The figures show deviations that are hard to explain. Was the numerous foreign-born element in Carver County responsible for the low proportion? If so, why should Stearns with a German population of approximately 60 per cent show a participation close to the average for the state? In Otter Tail County on the frontier the participation was as low as 15 per cent. But Brown County, also directly on the frontier, shows a participation of 68 per cent. The participation of 76 per cent in Fillmore County, where only 2 per cent of the people were Germans, might be attributed to the presence of a large native American element and a politically eager Norwegian group. Olmsted County, however, with very few Germans and an even larger native element, showed a participation of only 71 per cent; and Scott County, with a German population of 34.4 per cent and Sibley County with one of 35 per cent, participated in the voting to the extent of 81 and 79 per cent. For the counties no general tendency in the participation can be established with respect to national composition, urban or rural districts, Democratic or Republican majorities, or location.

Perhaps the township figures would be more revealing. The only sources for data on township returns, however, are local newspapers, since no detailed results for 1860 are preserved in the office of the secretary of state. For the present purpose, it is particularly unfor-

tunate that no township results are available for Carver County.<sup>29</sup> Data for the composition of the population in townships can be derived only from the manuscript census. Such a count was undertaken, but the manuscript census of 1860 enumerates the population of Stearns County according to post offices, not townships. Thus no detailed comparison of the German population and election results is possible for that county.

By enumerating German-born persons and their children for each township and estimating the percentage of the German stock in the total population of the ten counties under consideration, the writer was able to list townships or city wards where German stock amounted to more than thirty per cent of the population.<sup>30</sup> Only six townships in other Minnesota counties had German populations of more than thirty per cent in 1860: Hampton in Dakota County, Wheeling in Rice, Hay Creek in Goodhue, and Jefferson, Mount Vernon, and Wilson in Winona.

Detailed data were not available for Carver, but scattered references were found to respective majorities in different townships.<sup>31</sup> The return of 504 votes for Lincoln and 324 for Douglas can leave no doubt that a substantial number of Germans must have voted for Lincoln, since more than half the population was German and there is no reason to suspect that the Germans were more indifferent than others toward the election. Chaska Township—the only one for which the number of votes was found—with a German proportion of 78.8, showed a considerably larger participation than the average for the county. A Republican newspaper commented with justifiable joy that “Carver County was redeemed” in 1860. In 1859, it had returned 473 votes for Ramsey to 524 for George L. Becker, the Democratic nominee for governor.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> No local newspaper was published in Carver County late in 1860, and no paper in the neighboring counties published detailed results for Carver County.

<sup>30</sup> The writer has the tabulated statistical information upon which she based the conclusions presented in the pages that follow, and she will be glad to make it available to research workers who wish to use it. The Minnesota Historical Society has a copy of her table showing “Voting Participation and Election Results” in certain Minnesota townships in 1860.

<sup>31</sup> *State News*, November 10, 1860; *Falls Evening News*, November 10, 1860; *Staatszeitung*, November 10, 1860.

<sup>32</sup> *Falls Evening News*, November 10, 1860.

The data for Scott County are misleading. The percentage for participation is exceptionally high—81 per cent on the basis of the male population above twenty years of age, and 26.2 per cent on the basis of the total population. There probably were some irregularities in the election, for the participation on the latter basis was 88 per cent in Helena Township and 45 per cent in Cedar Lake Township. Even if every potential voter went to the polls, it is impossible to believe that 88 out of 100 residents of Helena had the right to vote. The startling percentages increase the average figure for participation in Scott County to such an extent that most townships lag behind the average for the whole county.

While Stearns County returned a Democratic majority, the Republicans gained there considerably. There were 255 Republican and 552 Democratic votes returned for the county in 1857; 375 Republican and 660 Democratic votes in 1859; and 438 Republican and 494 Democratic votes in 1860. The Democratic majority, which had amounted to 297 three years earlier, was reduced to 44 in 1860. It can hardly be assumed that the vote of 482 for Douglas and 12 for Breckenridge was exclusively a German vote, which it would have had to be if the 438 votes for Lincoln were attributed to the non-German population in a county where 59 per cent of the population was German. The population of Stearns County was largely Catholic, and it included a considerable number of Irish who voted as usual for the Democratic party in 1860.<sup>33</sup>

Certain conclusions can be reached, although the incompleteness of the data for Stearns and Carver counties must be kept in mind. Of the 29 townships or wards where a comparison with participation in the county is possible, 12 showed a participation above and 17 a participation below the average. Of the latter, 4 in Scott County are doubtful. In 10 out of 29 townships with a German population of more than 50 per cent, 6 had a participation above and 4 a participation below the average for the county. Of the 10 counties studied, only Hennepin and Carver lagged noticeably behind the participation in the state; Ramsey with 20.2 per cent was almost identical

<sup>33</sup> This can be checked in other townships, such as Cedar Lake and Credit River in Scott County, or Erin and Shieldsville in Rice County.

with the state's 20.5 per cent, and all others showed a higher participation. It may thus be concluded that the participation of the Minnesota Germans as voters in the election of Lincoln was at least as lively as that of the state's total population — a good indication of German interest in the issues of the election of 1860.

It would be impossible to determine exactly the number of Germans who voted for or against Lincoln unless the electoral units were made up of Germans only. A comparative study, however, of the majorities in the townships is revealing. Of townships where Germans amounted to more than half the population, 12 returned a Republican and 2 a Democratic majority. Even if it were possible to check the results in Stearns County with the German percentage in the various townships, the balance would remain in favor of the Republican vote, because of 12 townships in Stearns which reported in 1860, there were 7 with Republican and 5 with Democratic majorities. Of the townships where the German population amounted to 30 and 50 per cent, it is known that 10 returned Republican and 8 Democratic majorities.

How large were these majorities? In the first group of townships, 8 Republican majorities amounted to more than double the number of votes for Douglas. For 5 townships in Carver falling into this group, the check could not be made. There were 2 townships with Democratic majorities in the group where Germans amounted to more than half the population; only one returned more than double the number of votes for Lincoln. In the group of townships with a German population of between 30 and 50 per cent, 6 out of 10 Republican majorities amounted to more than twice the combined Democratic vote, and 4 were large enough to defeat a combined Democratic vote. Only 2 of the Democratic majorities in this group of townships amounted to double the number of votes for Lincoln. A summation of the number of votes returned in townships with more than 50 per cent of Germans results in 808 votes for Lincoln and 345 for Douglas. If the votes for Carver and Stearns counties are added, the vote for Lincoln is 1,673 and that for Douglas 1,096.

It is impossible to dissect the vote where it would seem to be



most significant, that is, where the returns were highest in absolute numbers, such as all St. Paul, the fourth ward of Winona, with 40.8 per cent Germans in a population of 1,200, or in the most densely populated counties. Either the German percentage was not high enough to warrant definite conclusions or the data are unobtainable.<sup>84</sup> It has been necessary to restrict the present investigation to the districts where German settlers were most numerous. Democratic majorities were found where Catholics prevailed, as in Belle Plaine and Louisville in Scott County, in and about Mankato, and in Stearns County. In centers of Lutheran settlement, where the Germans were mainly from Prussia and Hanover, Republican majorities were returned. Among such settlements were Arlington and Dryden townships in Sibley County, Courtland Township in Nicollet County, and Hamburg in Carver County. New Ulm offers proof of the frequently mentioned support for Lincoln by German freethinkers and liberals. There, according to a check of the manuscript census, every man who had a right to vote must have done so, with the result that 155 votes were returned for Lincoln and 31 for Douglas, the latter probably by the group that supported Baasen. Wherever Turners and freethinkers were active, as in Henderson, Carver, and Shakopee, testimony of their Republican partisanship can be found in newspaper notices, and election results support the traditional impression.

It cannot be claimed that the Germans in Minnesota contributed a very significant absolute number of votes for Lincoln. Minnesota returned 4 electoral votes for Lincoln, as did Iowa. Wisconsin returned 5. Minnesota's electoral vote represented 22,069 single votes for Lincoln and 11,920 for Douglas. In regions where a test was possible, and where the Germans amounted to more than half the population, 808 votes were returned for Lincoln and 345 for Douglas—proof that the Germans contributed their share to the Republican victory of 1860.

<sup>84</sup>No results are reported for the city wards of Winona in which the German proportion varied from 7 to 40.8 per cent.



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