

# Languages of Ethnicity: Teaching German in Waterloo County's Schools, 1850–1915

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*The German-language classroom in the public schools of Waterloo County, Ontario, thrust the local ethnicity of the region into the public eye and provoked public conversations on the meaning of the German language and its importance to cultural identity. Ethnic leaders vocally sought to preserve their mother tongue in its ancestral “purity” and to boost enrolment in German-language programmes in the schools. Yet the languages of ethnicity in Waterloo County were not bound by the standard German that ethnic leaders sought to perpetuate as the only legitimate expression of the mother tongue. Rather, a local language that infused German with English phrases, syntax, words, and idiom remained a medium of communication well into the twentieth century. This fluid new medium — “pidgin” German, as ethnic leaders derisively called it — reflected the cultural hybrid that was Waterloo County.*

*La classe d'allemand des écoles publiques du comté de Waterloo, en Ontario, a braqué le feu des projecteurs sur l'ethnicité locale de la région et suscité des débats publics sur le sens à donner à la langue allemande et sur l'importance de celle-ci comme vecteur d'identité culturelle. Les leaders ethniques cherchaient ardemment à préserver la « pureté » ancestrale de leur langue maternelle et à stimuler l'inscription aux programmes d'enseignement de l'allemand. Or, les langues de l'ethnicité dans le comté de Waterloo n'étaient pas assujetties à la norme allemande dont les leaders ethniques cherchaient à faire la seule expression légitime de la langue maternelle. Plutôt, une langue allemande locale émaillée de phases, d'une syntaxe, de mots et d'expressions idiomatiques de langue anglaise est demeurée un moyen de communication pendant une bonne partie du vingtième siècle. Ce nouveau parler fluide – le « pidgin » allemand, comme l'appelaient à la blague les chefs de file ethniques – reflétait l'hybride culturel qu'était le comté de Waterloo.*

TO ARGUE that language held special meaning for ethnic leaders in North America who regarded their ethnic mother tongue as a signifier

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of cultural identity is hardly a surprising notion for scholars of migration. Historian April Schultz has movingly written of the “poignant struggle between children and immigrant parents” who regarded language as the very essence of their cultural identity and keenly felt the gap that separated them from their English-speaking children. The bitterness that infused private and public conversations over language, Schultz holds, stemmed from the conviction that “endemic in language was an immutable national personality” without which both ethnic and familial bonds would dissolve.<sup>1</sup> It was a conviction that ethnic leaders of Swedish, Spanish, Irish, Polish, Bohemian, Jewish, and German communities shared across the continent as they bemoaned the indifference of their fellow migrants to preserving their mother tongues — in strikingly similar terms and with equally dismal results.<sup>2</sup> As the literary scholar Orm Øverland has found, no matter how loud the gatekeepers of the ethnic language sounded their warning, they seemed to speak “to ears that were so attuned to the more enticing tunes of Anglo-America that they could hardly hear those who admonished them to stay away from the very culture they had come to be part of.”<sup>3</sup>

The inherently conservative tone that permeated the intellectual conversations of ethnic leaders is echoed in the historical scholarship on language and ethnicity that has offered a two-pronged storyline of foreign-language instruction in public schools.<sup>4</sup> Threats from without, historians have contended, eroded foreign-language programmes in North America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; such programmes were ill-equipped to withstand the cumulative pressures of coercive assimilation, restrictive language laws, and the impact of the First World War.<sup>5</sup> In a local

1 April Schultz, *Ethnicity on Parade: Inventing the Norwegian American through Celebration* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), pp. 28–30.

2 Jonathan Zimmerman, “Ethnics against Ethnicity: European Immigrants and Foreign-Language Instruction, 1890–1940,” *Journal of American History*, vol. 88, no. 4 (March 2002), pp. 1383–1404; Dag Blanck, “The Role of the Swedish Language in Shaping a Swedish-American Culture,” in Orm Øverland ed., *Not English Only: Redefining “American” in American Studies* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 2001), pp. 34–47; Doris Meyer, *Speaking for Themselves: Neomexicano Cultural Identity and the Spanish-Language Press, 1880–1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), pp. 111–127.

3 Orm Øverland, *Immigrant Minds, American Identities: Making the United States Home, 1870–1930* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), p. 39.

4 Zimmerman, “Ethnics against Ethnicity,” pp. 1384–1386.

5 It is important to note that, in the past two decades, scholars of German-American studies have called into question the alleged “devastating” impact of the First World War on German immigrant communities, pointing instead to long-term processes of voluntary assimilation. See, for instance, Bettina Goldberg’s assertion that the First World War served “as a catalyst, not as a cause for abandoning German” in “The German-English Academy, the National German-American Teachers’ Seminary, and the Public School System in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1851–1919,” in Henry Geitz *et al.*, eds., *German Influences on Education in the United States to 1917* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 179; Brent O. Peterson, *Popular Narratives and Ethnic Identity: Literature and Community in Die Abendschule* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University

variant of such external threats, historians of Waterloo County — this heartland of German settlement in nineteenth-century Ontario — have found in the county's school inspector, Thomas Pearce, a formidable adversary who “deliberately discouraged” the teaching of German ever since he was first appointed in 1871. The story of a government bureaucrat who, single-handedly, strangled German-language instruction in Waterloo County's public schools lent dramatic flair to the waxing and waning fortunes of German-language schooling and seemed to promise an answer to the vexing question as to why instruction in the mother tongue failed to thrive even in such a homeland of German culture.<sup>6</sup> Threats from within, as well, have been held responsible for processes of language loss, most prominently the failure of immigrant families to cultivate German as the language of the home, the readiness with which immigrants assimilated into mainstream society, and the striking indifference of immigrants to enrolling their children in German-language programmes.<sup>7</sup>

In his innovative rebuttal of these earlier interpretations, historian Jonathan Zimmerman has rejected the rigidity of notions of language that made no room for the many tongues in which immigrants expressed their ethnic identity. “The same immigrants,” Zimmerman holds, “who proudly embraced ethnic heroes, holidays, foods, and dances

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Press, 1991), pp. 9, 246–247. By contrast, note the more conservative tone of German-Canadian scholarship, as reflected in Arthur Grenke, *The German Community in Winnipeg: 1872–1919* (New York: AMS Press, 1991); Heinz Lehmann, *The German Canadians, 1750–1937: Immigration, Settlement & Culture*, trans. and ed. by Gerhard Bassler (St. John's, NL: Jespersen Press, 1986).

6 Patricia McKegney, “The German Schools of Waterloo County, 1851–1913,” *Waterloo Historical Society*, vol. 58 (1970), pp. 61, 67, 58, 64. McKegney's interpretation was advanced in a prize-winning graduate essay that has been accepted uncritically in the historical literature on Waterloo County — perhaps because of the dearth of studies on German-language schooling in the county. See, for example, John English and Kenneth McLaughlin, *Kitchener: An Illustrated History* (Scarborough, ON: Robin Brass Studio, 1996 [1983]), pp. 50, 90; Elizabeth Bloomfield, *Waterloo Township Through Two Centuries* (Waterloo: St. Jacobs Printery, 1995), p. 243.

7 Studies framed around the rhetorical trope of “language decline,” in which dismay over the cultural loss of America's and Canada's rich German linguistic heritage is palpable, include Heinz Kloss, “German-American Language Maintenance,” in Joshua Fishman ed., *Language Loyalty in the United States: The Maintenance and Perpetuation of Non-English Mother Tongues by American Ethnic and Religious Groups* (London: Moutin & Co., 1966), p. 249; Jürgen Eichhoff, “The German Language in America,” in Frank Trommler and Joseph McVeigh, eds., *America and the Germans: An Assessment of a Three-Hundred Year History, Vol. I: Immigration, Language, Ethnicity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), pp. 223–240; Manfred Prokop, *The German Language in Alberta* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1990). By contrast, more recent historical scholarship has pointed to the pragmatic choices immigrant parents and their children made in their use of language, which were rarely affected by “the abstract notion of identification with ancestry, ethnic symbols, or cultural habits.” See Hermann Kurthen, “Gone with the Wind: German Language Retention in North Carolina and the United States in Comparative Perspective,” *Yearbook of German-American Studies*, vol. 33 (1998), p. 59; Clinton O. White, “Pre-World War I Saskatchewan German Catholic Thought Concerning the Perpetuation of their Language and Religion,” *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, vol. 26, no. 2 (1994), pp. 15–45.

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eschewed a single ethnic tongue, preferring to communicate in ‘a Babel of dialects’ — as one caustic observer complained — or in English.”<sup>8</sup> Language, in other words, did not necessarily act as a marker of ethnic identity, nor did the sound and texture of ethnic languages need to conform to the aspirations of cultural leaders who championed a “pure” ancestral tongue.<sup>9</sup> In their daily speech patterns, nineteenth-century migrants in North America infused their German dialects with English phonology and syntax, just as Polish and Norwegian migrants incorporated English vocabulary into their spoken and written language.<sup>10</sup> In a similar vein, historian David Gerber has found tantalizing evidence of the “extraordinary word-play by which some German immigrants sought to combine English and German in the daily use of written and spoken language,” thereby expressing their symbolic mastery of the two cultures they called home.<sup>11</sup>

Then as now, ethnicity spoke in many languages. Just as Mennonites in Western Canada celebrated their ethnic consciousness in both English and Low German in the decades following the Second World War, so, too, did the speech patterns of German-speaking migrants in mid-twentieth-century Waterloo County reveal traces of the same cultural and linguistic interactions that had shaped the lives of their predecessors in an earlier century. Instances of code switching abounded, as did deviations from standard German.<sup>12</sup> These migrants, much like Waterloo County’s residents between 1850 and 1915, defined their ethnicity on their own terms

8 Zimmerman, “Ethnics against Ethnicity,” p. 1386.

9 In this context, see also Carol Eastman, “Language, Ethnic Identity, and Change,” in John Edwards, ed., *Linguistic Minorities, Policies, and Pluralism* (London: Academic Press, 1984), pp. 239, 261.

10 Jürgen Eichhoff, “German in Wisconsin,” in Glenn G. Gilbert, ed., *The German Language in America: A Symposium* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), p. 53; Anthony W. Stanforth, *Deutsche Einflüsse auf den englischen Wortschatz in Geschichte und Gegenwart, mit einem Beitrag zum Amerikanischen Englisch von Jürgen Eichhoff* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1996); Prokop, *The German Language in Alberta*, p. 104; Zimmerman, “Ethnics against Ethnicity,” p. 1397.

11 David Gerber, “‘You See I Speak Wery Well English’: Literacy and the Transformed Self as Reflected in Immigrant Personal Correspondence,” *Journal of American Ethnic History*, vol. 12, no. 2 (Winter 1993), p. 60. As literary scholars have argued, these linguistic and cultural transactions often resulted in a new language such as “Germerican.” See Marc Shell, “Hyphens: Between Deutsch and American,” in Werner Sollors, ed., *Multilingual America: Transnationalism, Ethnicity, and the Languages of American Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), pp. 258–260.

12 Royden Loewen, “‘Hold Your Heads High in Your Usual Unassuming Manner’: Making a Mennonite Middle Class Ethnicity in Steinbach, Manitoba and Meade, Kansas, 1945–1975” (paper presented to the conference *Assimilation – Integration – Acculturation? The German-Canadian Case*, University of Winnipeg, August 2004); Klaus Bongert, “Deutsch in Ontario: Deutsche Sprache und Kultur in Kitchener-Waterloo,” in Leopold Auburger et al., eds., *Deutsch als Muttersprache in Kanada: Berichte zur Gegenwartslage* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1977), p. 28; Grit Liebscher and Mathias Schulze, “Language Use and Identity: Analysing Language Behaviour of German-Speaking Immigrants in Kitchener-Waterloo” (paper presented to the conference *Assimilation – Integration – Acculturation? The German-Canadian Case*, University of Winnipeg, August 2004).

and in a multitude of tongues, whether High German, Pennsylvania Dutch, a local German-English hybrid, or English itself.

This study examines the fluid meaning of languages of ethnicity by turning to a public site that brought together — though not necessarily on equal terms — children, parents, ethnic leaders, and government officials. Located at the intersection of the national and the local, the German-language classroom in the public schools of Waterloo County thrust the local ethnicity into the public eye and provoked public conversations on the meanings of the German language. Ethnic leaders vocally sought to preserve the German mother tongue in its ancestral “purity” and boost enrolment in German-language programmes. In pursuing this inherently conservative goal, however, they demonstrated much creativity in lobbying government officials and developing methods of modern language instruction that would render the German-language classroom into an effective and attractive learning environment. Waterloo County’s families, in turn, participated in the public debates over language and ethnicity mostly through their telling silence. Although they continued to use their mother tongue in the home, they refused to elevate it to an emblem of ethnic identity to be cultivated in the formal setting of the school. To them, the German language was a medium of common parlance, not a symbol of ethnicity; if their children resented the additional school hours spent in the German-language classroom, they would not force them to enrol.

More softly still, the public conversations over language and ethnicity resonate with the sounds of the spoken word that blended German and English into a new local idiom. The history of spoken language easily eludes the keen eye (and ear) of the historian, and yet it proves an important corrective to the language jeremiad that could be heard echoing in ethnic newspapers across North America. As this study posits, languages of ethnicity in Waterloo County were not bound by the standard German that ethnic leaders sought to propagate as the only legitimate expression of German identity. Rather, a “local German” that infused the German language with English phrases, syntax, words, and idiom remained a medium of communication well into the twentieth century — much to the chagrin of the self-declared guardians of the German language who were loath to recognize the German-English hybrid as equal to the “authentic” mother tongue they envisioned. In its local incarnation, the German language remained a medium of communication long after the immigrant leadership — journalists, clergy, professionals, manufacturers, merchants, and small businessmen — had declared its demise. At the heart of this study, then, lies a tale not of language decline and loss — two storylines that have hitherto dominated much of the literature on foreign-language instruction — but of migrants who straddled two cultural worlds and, in so doing, carved out the contours of an ethnic identity that was most certainly not “pure,” but was infinitely more interesting because of it. The fluidity of the new idiom — pidgin German, as

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ethnic leaders derisively called it — reflected the cultural hybrid that was Waterloo County.

### **State, Community, and the Classroom**

Located in the gently rolling hills of Southern Ontario, the German settlements of Waterloo County shared many characteristics of the surrounding predominantly British counties in the later decades of the nineteenth century; theirs was a rural world whose residents pursued agricultural activities or worked in the modest-sized factories of the county seat, Berlin, or in the emerging factory villages and towns of Hespeler and Preston. But the rhythms of everyday life had a distinctly German twist. Settled by Pennsylvania Mennonites in the early nineteenth century, the area later attracted Catholics from Germany and Alsace, who worked as day labourers on Mennonite farms until they could afford their own parcels of land.<sup>13</sup> Drawn to this centre of German language and culture and swayed by the availability of land of a better quality than that in the American mid-west, migrants from central and northern Germany arrived in the 1850s. As land became scarce, German migration spilled over into the neighbouring counties: into Perth and Huron towards the east, into Grey and Bruce towards the North, and into Renfrew County in the Ottawa Valley. Waterloo County, however, remained synonymous with “German” in the public mind.<sup>14</sup> Here, marvelled a young Scottish Presbyterian minister who wandered the streets of Berlin in 1871, “you heard scarcely anything spoken in the streets but German. It was necessary for anyone living here to speak both languages.”<sup>15</sup> In 1871, 55 per cent of Waterloo County’s 40,252 residents were of German cultural origin. This figure climbed to 73 per cent in the county seat, Berlin.<sup>16</sup>

13 As Kenneth McLaughlin has suggested, the relationship between Pennsylvania Germans in Waterloo County and immigrants from the German states was one of mutual interaction rather than cultural separation. McLaughlin, “Waterloo County: A Pennsylvania-German Homeland,” in Susan M. Burke and Matthew H. Hill, eds., *From Pennsylvania to Waterloo: Pennsylvania-German Folk Culture in Transition* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1991), pp. 35–45.

14 This label admittedly obscures the local diversity of Pennsylvania Mennonites, Catholics from Southern Germany, North German Protestants, Amish, Swiss, and Alsations. See Lehmann, *The German Canadians*, pp. 66–79; Elizabeth Bloomfield, “City-Building Processes in Berlin/Kitchener and Waterloo, 1870–1930” (PhD thesis, University of Guelph, 1981), pp. 42–50. See also the rich local historiography on the history of German immigrants in Waterloo County, namely the studies by Geoffrey Hayes, *Waterloo County: An Illustrated History* (Kitchener: Waterloo Historical Society, 1997); Ulrich Frisse, *Berlin, Ontario (1800–1916): Historische Identitäten von “Kanadas Deutscher Hauptstadt” – Ein Beitrag zur Deutsch-Kanadischen Migrations-, Akkulturations- und Perzeptionsgeschichte des 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts* (New Dundee, ON: TransAtlanticPublishing, 2003).

15 Quoted in W. V. Uttley, *A History of Kitchener* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1985, first edition 1937), pp. 119–120.

16 *Census of Canada*, 1871.

As the local charter group, German settlers established German schools. “A large proportion of the inhabitants of Wilmot are Germans, and more than half of the schools are so exclusively,” reported local superintendent John Finlayson in 1851. “These schools are very inferior in every respect. The books used are the German New Testament, a Roman Catholic catechism, and a Bible history.”<sup>17</sup> Other superintendents, as well, pointed to the peculiar burden under which teachers in Waterloo County laboured. “An English teacher who is not acquainted with the German language,” Superintendent Martin Rudolph wrote in 1854, “will meet here with a great many difficulties; as most of our children speak the German language in their families, and he is not able to make familiar explanations to them.”<sup>18</sup> In a subversion of the widespread notion that acculturation meant Anglicization, in Waterloo County English-speaking newcomers were the ones who had to adapt to the local German mainstream. “[T]he talking or explaining . . . was all done in German, so we were kept Pennsylvania [*sic*] Dutch,” Isaac Moyer recalled of his early schooldays. “If an English family moved in, there [*sic*] children soon learn [*sic*] to speak our language.”<sup>19</sup>

Even in this Germanized local world, however, settlers held the English language in high esteem. Young Isaac was painfully aware that he had never acquired facility in English since his labour was needed on the family farm and his school attendance only sporadic. Unlike his younger brothers who became school teachers, Isaac “was trained to Farm [*sic*].” As he added somewhat defiantly, “I made a success of it, so that I came out at the end About [*sic*] as well as the rest. But I do miss very much good common English language.”<sup>20</sup> By all accounts, Isaac Moyer’s feelings were shared by many German-origin settlers who desired their children “to be instructed in both languages.”<sup>21</sup> Convinced of the necessity of “obtaining knowledge of the language of the country,” they embraced English as both the language of instruction and a school subject as early as the mid-1850s, much to the satisfaction of local superintendent John Finlayson: “The Germans in the township of Waterloo, Wilmot and Wellesley, are becoming alive to the uselessness of teaching German only, in their schools; — so much so, that in some school sections among them, the German is excluded, and all the ordinary branches of a common English education are taught.”<sup>22</sup>

17 *Annual Report of the Normal, Model, and Common Schools, in Upper Canada for the Year 1851 by the Chief Superintendent of Schools* (Ottawa: Hunter, Rose & Co., 1852), p. 102. As the title of the annual reports varied from year to year, each will hereafter be referred to as *Annual Report*.

18 *Upper Canada Annual Report for 1854*, p. 118.

19 Kitchener Public Library [hereafter KPL], Waterloo Historical Society [hereafter WHS], Manuscript Collection 71, “Isaac Moyer, Biography and Reminiscence, January 1st, 1915,” p. 12.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

21 *Upper Canada Annual Report for 1852*, p. 111.

22 *Upper Canada Annual Report for 1854*, p. 118.

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The skill with which migrants conversed in two languages is reflected in the story of Otto Klotz, who left his hometown Kiel in Germany at the age of 20 in 1837, drawn to the New World by a sense of adventure. The young man dabbled in agriculture and the brewing business before building a hotel in Preston, Waterloo County.<sup>23</sup> Without delay, he immersed himself in local affairs. In 1838 he was elected trustee of the Preston School Board, an office he held for 54 years. In 1853 he was appointed local superintendent and as such was entitled to a seat on the Board of Examiners for the County of Waterloo. During his tenure as County Examiner, which spanned almost two decades, Otto Klotz dispelled any notions that mass schooling was a process imposed solely from above. Professing “great love and enthusiasm for the cause of education,” he frequently deplored the incompetence of fellow superintendents who “were not capable of answering one half of the questions required to be answered by Candidates applying only for a third class certificate.” When the *School Act* of 1871 rendered the office of local superintendents superfluous, Klotz welcomed the innovation.<sup>24</sup> This local school supporter, for one, was averse to neither regulation nor professionalization, if only they helped to raise the quality of instruction. At the same time, however, Klotz did not hesitate to tailor provincial regulations to local needs.

Since the early 1840s, the status of German-born teachers had been somewhat ambiguous. The *School Acts* of 1841 and 1843 had stipulated that teachers had to be British subjects by either birth or naturalization, but to enforce this rule rigidly would be to deprive the townships of Waterloo, Wilmot, Wellesley, and Woolwich of many instructors. In heeding local concerns, Egerton Ryerson, the Chief Superintendent of Education, exempted European-born teachers from the regulation, provided they applied for a special teaching licence.<sup>25</sup> In 1851 the Council of Public Instruction further sought to clarify language requirements for aspirant teachers by ruling that “[i]n regard to teachers of French or German . . . a knowledge of French or German Grammar can be substituted for a knowledge of English grammar, and that certificates to the teacher be expressly limited accordingly.”<sup>26</sup> In the eyes of Otto Klotz, this concession was not far-reaching enough. In demonstrating a

23 Jesse Edgar Middleton and Fred Landon, *Province of Ontario: A History, 1615–1927*, vol. III (Toronto: Dominion, 1927), p. 171.

24 Library and Archives of Canada [hereafter LAC], MG 30, B13, vol. 9, “Statistics and history of the Preston School compiled and written by Otto Klotz for the use of his family,” pp. 54, 58, 68, 92–94 [hereafter Klotz, “School History”].

25 Alan William Junker, “Otto Klotz and the Implementation of Education Policy in Waterloo County, 1846–1871” (MA thesis, Wilfrid Laurier University, 1987), pp. 67–70.

26 *Regulations and Correspondence relating to French and German schools in the Province of Ontario* (Toronto: Warwick & Sons, 1889), p. 1.



confidence and creativity with which historians D. A. Lawr and R. D. Gidney have credited many local leaders, he devised German examination papers for all branches of instruction, rather than for grammar alone, when he sat on the Board of Examiners for the County of Waterloo.<sup>27</sup> This liberal interpretation of provincial law, Klotz held, would allow for a gradual transition from German to English, for it “was only a matter of time and of short duration when the people would come to the conviction that the teaching of English to their children is of paramount importance and that instead of teaching German exclusively, it should be taught as an auxiliary.”<sup>28</sup> With only one dissenting voice, the Waterloo County Board of Examiners consented to Klotz’s decision to skirt the letter of the law.<sup>29</sup> Even the English-speaking chairman, who vocally opposed the German certificates, had to bow to the authority that Klotz quietly wielded among board and community members.<sup>30</sup>

Notwithstanding his personal attachment to the German mother tongue, Klotz embraced English as “the language of this country.” He encouraged German-born applicants “to study English, so as to qualify them to obtain a certificate to teach English.” Similarly, he advised Canadian-born candidates to obtain additional German certificates to “be able to command higher salary.” “A number of them followed my advise [*sic*],” the aging Klotz wrote in his school chronicle, “and it was pleasant to note that after a lapse of some years there was quite a number of Germans who had obtained certificates in English and could teach both languages.”<sup>31</sup> The cultural duality that Klotz envisaged for the county as a whole had long become embedded in the structures of schooling in his local Preston.

Schools where only German was taught “belonged to the past,” declared Klotz. As early as 1852, the Preston public school had made English the language of instruction.<sup>32</sup> This, however, did not prevent the trustees from lavishing time, care, and energy on German as a special branch of education. The minute books of the Preston Public School Board reveal how many a meeting was devoted to finding competent candidates, expanding the hours of German-language instruction, selecting appropriate German readers, and making German lessons mandatory for all

27 D. A. Lawr and R. D. Gidney, “Who Ran the Schools? Local Influence on Education Policy in Nineteenth-century Ontario,” *Ontario History*, vol. 72, no. 3 (September 1980), p. 132.

28 Klotz, “School History,” p. 94.

29 This tacit approval is reflected by the fact that, year after year, the Board asked Otto Klotz “to prepare questions in the German Language for Examination.” KPL, WHS, WAT C-87, “Records of the Board of Examiners for Waterloo County. Berlin: s.n., 1853-1908,” June 27, 1865.

30 *Upper Canada Annual Report for 1861*, p. 186.

31 Klotz, “School History,” p. 96.

32 *Ibid.* See also City of Cambridge Archives, “Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the Preston School, January 3, 1852 to January 5, 1853.”

pupils.<sup>33</sup> As a special branch of instruction, the German-language department was to ensure the purity and preservation of the mother tongue, while English-language instruction in all other school subjects would allow Preston's Germans to navigate Ontario's cultural mainstream. Long before the *School Act* of 1871 came into force, the status of German had thus changed from a medium of communication to a subject of instruction. Preston's residents, quite evidently, did not seek to remain an ethnic world apart.

Indeed, if the rare children's diaries that have survived from the mid-nineteenth century are any indication, the lives of children, women, and men alike easily moved back and forth between the two languages in which Waterloo County's residents lived their lives. The letters on the page are fading but still convey a boyish exuberance. "Today," Louis Breithaupt scribbled into his diary on March 21, 1867, "I received a beautiful picture from Mr. Wittig [the German teacher at school] because I read from page 120 to 215 in the German reader. I'm good."<sup>34</sup> In deciphering the Gothic print of his German reader, the 12-year-old boy enjoyed a distinct advantage. His family cultivated German as the language of the home, corresponded with friends in the old homeland, and treasured family heirlooms from Germany.<sup>35</sup> To the classroom, Louis brought not only a ready command of oral and written German, but also a familiarity with German culture and lore that helped him unravel the cultural connotations of the lessons. For the young boy who penned his childhood diaries in German — even if his style was at times uneven and the grammar faulty — the school lessons in German must have presented little challenge.<sup>36</sup> Regularly, Louis and his younger siblings headed the honour roll of the German Department of Berlin's public school.<sup>37</sup>

Theirs was a world of class privilege: an affluent home with a servant girl; a close and caring family environment; a social world that

33 City of Cambridge Archives, "Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the Preston School, August 6, 1858 to August 5, 1863," February 1, 1860 and January 6, 1861. See also "Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the Preston School, October 7, 1863 to July 27, 1869," March 16, 1864; May 4, 1864; November 2 and 30, 1864; December 9, 1864; February 1, 1865; March 3, 1865; December 19, 1865; October 9 and 21, 1867; August 5, 1868; September 3, 1868.

34 University of Waterloo, Doris Lewis Rare Book Room, Breithaupt Hewetson Clark Collection, "Diaries of Louis Jacob Breithaupt," March 21, 1867. In my quotations, I follow the transcriptions and translations prepared by the Doris Lewis Rare Book Room Archives.

35 *Ibid.*, February 3, 1868; December 24, 1867.

36 *Ibid.*, January 8, 1868 ("Bruder Wilhelm bekam heute Schläge in der Schule und er und Johan bekamen auch zu Hause"); April 1, 1868 ("Es gehen bei 400 Schüler hinn in Berlin").

37 See *Berliner Journal* for William Breithaupt (July 6, 1871), Melvina Breithaupt (July 19, 1877; January 3, 1878; May 2, 1878; November 7, 1878), Ezra Breithaupt (May 2, 1878; November 7, 1878; December 24, 1874), Albert Breithaupt (January 4, 1883; January 3, 1884; March 20, 1884), and Katie Louisa Breithaupt (January 3, 1884; June 12, 1884; February 12, 1885).

encompassed prayer meetings, Sunday school, singing, and piano lessons. Yet, although the Breithaupt family was among the leading families of the county, set apart by the family's influence in the realms of economy, politics, and culture, their outlook was essentially middle class. Family routines evolved around domestic life, with child-rearing practices seeking to inculcate character, instill ambition, and nurture habits of thrift, hard work, and piety.<sup>38</sup> Louis's parents expected their children to excel at school and to internalize proper notions of conscience and responsibility. In eschewing corporal punishment, they relied on the power of emotional rewards, financial incentives, and mild reprimands.<sup>39</sup> When Louis and William arrived late at home one evening, their mother's agitation was punishment enough.<sup>40</sup> Frequently ill, Katharina Breithaupt encouraged her children to keep extensive journals, attend church, and read the Bible. Louis followed her example, and soon the pages of his diary echoed his efforts of character refinement. While he attended prayer meetings of the Evangelical Congregation and visited the Sunday school of the English Methodist Church, his religion was bounded by neither denomination nor language but by the number of verses memorized, the Bible chapters read, and the money he donated to charity from his own pocket-money.<sup>41</sup>

Like the boy's diary, Louis's world encompassed both German and English. In January 1872 the 17-year-old began to write in his diary in English, only to switch back to his mother tongue between August 1875 and August 1876. Henceforth, he alternated between German and English. The latter language, however, seemed strangely inadequate in times of despair. When his father died prematurely in the summer of 1880, Louis expressed his anguish in German, not English. He wrote the remainder of the diary for the year in his mother tongue, as if to preserve a tangible bond with his late father.<sup>42</sup> If the German language had hitherto signified a world of childhood, it now transformed into an emotional

38 The school desk that Louis received for his twelfth birthday suggests that the boy's family took education seriously. A year later, Louis's mother transformed the loft into work space "so we could study in the evenings" and, in the winter of 1869, equipped the room of her two eldest sons with a table and a small heater.

39 Only once did Louis mention physical punishment: "Brother William got a beating at school today and then he and John got one at home, too" ("Diaries of Louis Jacob Breithaupt," January 8, 1868). As Mary P. Ryan has observed in her analysis of Victorian child-rearing practices, the "sly manipulations of maternal socialization" were intended to implant "the usual array of petit bourgeois traits — honesty, industry, frugality, temperance, and, pre-eminently, self-control." See Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790–1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 161.

40 "Diaries of Louis Jacob Breithaupt," August 12, 1867.

41 *Ibid.*, March 24, 1867; April 7 and 14, 1867; August 18 and 25, 1867; October 13, 1867 (verses); April 21 and 28, 1867; May 19 and 26, 1867; January 28, 1868 (Bible); October 11, 1868 (donation).

42 *Ibid.*, July 3, 1880. Only on January 3, 1884 did Louis Breithaupt resume keeping a diary.

bridge to the past. Two decades later, Louis Breithaupt would imbue the German language with yet another meaning as he spearheaded a successful renaissance of German-language teaching at Berlin's public schools, in the process upholding his mother tongue as a symbol of ethnic and cultural values.

The meanings of language that resonate in Louis's diary point to the intricate ways in which a sense of cultural identity was embedded, and expressed, in practices of language use. They remind us of the ease with which Waterloo County's residents switched from one local idiom to the other, the richness of emotions invested in the mother tongue, and the creativity with which German Canadians embraced "their" language — be it the High German that the grown Louis Breithaupt would champion or the "local German" spoken by many of Waterloo County's residents. To the historian of education, Louis's diary also provides a cautionary reminder not to overestimate the impact of formal school lessons on children's language and literacy skills. As historian Neil Sutherland has wryly noted, "schooling is more a matter of learning than it is of teaching," and learning depends more on a child's personality, family, ethnicity, and class than it does on textbooks, teachers, and curricula.<sup>43</sup> For the Breithaupt children, who daily spoke German in the world beyond the classroom and whose mother gently honed their literacy skills by encouraging them to read the Bible and keep a journal, it was comparatively easy to retain language skills taught at school.<sup>44</sup>

Louis himself certainly did not let school interfere too much with the pursuits of his boyhood. When he remarked upon his schoolwork, his comments were brief and perfunctory: "Lessons good," "Lessons not so good," "Lessons fairly good," "Lessons good today," "Lessons not good."<sup>45</sup> By contrast, he meticulously chronicled his father's business trips, negotiations, and investments, thus growing into a world of work that gradually began to overshadow his life as a student. "We had exams at school today," the 12-year-old heir of one of Berlin's premier families wrote on July 12, 1867. "August Werner and I were the best pupils in German class. After the exams, Father and I went to Mannheim and Williamsburg to buy building timber."<sup>46</sup> Readily, Liborious and

43 Neil Sutherland, "The Urban Child," *History of Education Quarterly*, vol. 9, no. 3 (Fall 1969), p. 305.

See also Barbara Beatty, "Children in Different and Difficult Times: The History of American Childhood, Part I," *History of Education Quarterly*, vol. 40, no. 1 (Spring 2000), p. 74.

44 As the historian Stephen Harp has pointed out, the challenge of foreign-language instruction at elementary schools "was not what was taught in the schools but what was forgotten afterward. . . . It was retention of skills, and not initial learning, that depended on social context." See Harp, *Learning to be Loyal: Primary Schooling as Nation Building in Alsace and Lorraine, 1850–1914* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1998), p. 154.

45 "Diaries of Louis Jacob Breithaupt," March 5, 6, and 19, 1867; April 1, 1867; May 13, 1867.

46 *Ibid.*, July 12, 1867.

Katharina Breithaupt pulled their eldest sons out of school to work at the store, run errands, buy staples, help on the farm, and tend to pigs, cows, and horses, thereby tempering the demands of school with the requirements of a family economy that valued children's labour over regular school attendance.<sup>47</sup> In the fabric of Louis's childhood, schooling represented but one thread that was tightly interwoven with many others in a pattern shaped more by the rhythms of family life than by government policies or local language politics, no matter how far-reaching the latter's scope.<sup>48</sup>

The *School Act* of 1871 enacted sweeping changes. It made common schools, now renamed public schools, free and school attendance mandatory for all Ontario children between the ages of seven and twelve. Teaching was recognized as a profession, with teachers' examinations becoming standardized and centralized. Where formerly each county school board had prepared its own examination papers and awarded certificates according to its own discretion, the new Board of Examiners under the direction of County School Inspectors administered centrally prepared questions simultaneously across the province. Although examination papers for Third- and Second-Class Certificates continued to be evaluated locally, the Education Department in Toronto reserved the right to decide on the merits of candidates for First-Class Certificates. The *School Act* also established a new agency to enforce these regulations. Professional county school inspectors, appointed by the county council yet responsible to the Department of Public Instruction, replaced the more locally controlled lay superintendents. Unlike their local predecessors, the new corps of school inspectors had to hold a First-Class Provincial Certificate and furnish proof of five years of teaching experience.<sup>49</sup>

When the Waterloo County Council prepared to appoint a school inspector in June 1871, the *Berliner Journal* became the platform upon which a vocal campaign for a German-speaking inspector was waged.

47 *Ibid.*, October 17, 1867; June 22, 1868; September 4, 1868; October 7, 1868; November 13, 1868.

48 Although government policies left no traces in Louis's childhood recollections, schooling did nurture a new conception of time. Almost imperceptibly, the boy's life became structured by the demands of the classroom, which, alone among his many duties and diversions, demanded strict punctuality. "To be late" was an experience intimately tied to the realm of schooling. See "Diaries of Louis Jacob Breithaupt": "We were late to school today" (April 4, 1867); "We were late for school yesterday" (October 24, 1867); "We were late for school this morning" (November 30, 1868); "We were late for school again today" (December 2, 1868).

49 "Circular from the Chief Superintendent to the Inspectors of Public Schools in Ontario, 1871," in J. George Hodgins, ed., *Documentary History of Education in Upper Canada, vol. III: 1836-40* (Toronto: Warwick Bros. & Rutter, 1895), pp. 135-140; "Qualifications of Public School Inspectors and County Examiners" and "Programme for the Examination and Classification of Teachers of the Public Schools in the Province of Ontario," *Journal of Education, Province of Ontario*, vol. 24, no. 2 (February 1871), pp. 22 and 22-23.

In a letter to the editor, one reader stated emphatically that Waterloo County, with its German settlements and German schools, needed the services of a school inspector who understood “our language.” In appealing to the “German members of the esteemed council,” the writer lobbied for the appointment of a qualified candidate who possessed an intimate knowledge of both languages.<sup>50</sup> This plea was to the liking of the *Berliner Journal*, which endorsed the candidacy of John Moran, a man it considered sufficiently qualified to examine students in German-language classes, since his knowledge of the language was “quite good.”<sup>51</sup> Despite the *Journal’s* efforts, the council appointed Thomas Pearce, whose command of German was perfunctory at best. Slightly outnumbered by their anglophone colleagues, the German members of the council might have been frustrated in their effort to elect a German-speaking school inspector. More likely, however, they viewed the choice of county inspector through the prism of professional credentials, not ethnicity. Rather than selecting a German-speaking candidate of unproven abilities, they were willing to entrust the office of school inspector to the Irish principal of Berlin’s Central School, a man of experience and prestige who also possessed the necessary qualifications.<sup>52</sup>

In both Canada and the United States, a particular class of men was recruited for the business of school promotion.<sup>53</sup> Middle-aged, middle-class, native-born, white, Protestant, and Anglo-Saxon married men came to oversee a teaching force that was increasingly comprised of young and single women teachers.<sup>54</sup> Thomas Pearce fit this profile. Having migrated from Ireland in 1857 at the age of 22, he attended the Normal School in Toronto upon the suggestion of his old teacher “who knew something of his former pupil’s ability and scholarship,” as Pearce proudly recalled.<sup>55</sup> As for many superintendents in the United States, encouragement and sponsorship by older male administrators and professors played an important role in his career. After a Normal School instructor had recommended the young man to the Central School in

50 *Berliner Journal*, June 8, 1871.

51 *Ibid.*, June 15, 1871.

52 Regional Municipality of Waterloo (Kitchener), *Journal of the Proceedings and By-Laws of the Municipal Council of the County of Waterloo*, 1870 and 1872. For praise of Pearce, see *Berliner Journal*, February 2, 1865 and July 13, 1865.

53 David Tyack, “Pilgrim’s Progress: Toward a Social History of the School Superintendency, 1860–1960,” *History of Education Quarterly*, vol. 16, no. 3 (Fall 1976), p. 258; Bruce Curtis, “Class Culture and Administration: Educational Inspection in Canada West,” in Allan Greer and Ian Radforth, eds., *Colonial Leviathan: State Formation in Mid-Nineteenth Century Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), p. 118.

54 Tyack, “Pilgrim’s Progress,” p. 258; Bruce Curtis, *True Government by Choice Men? Inspection, Education, and State Formation in Canada West* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), p. 7.

55 Thomas Pearce, “School History, Waterloo County and Berlin,” *Waterloo Historical Society*, vol. 2 (1914), p. 49. Biographical data on Pearce has been gleaned from the manuscript census of 1901.

Berlin, Pearce became “the first Normal trained teacher, not only in Berlin, but for several miles around.”<sup>56</sup> In this overwhelmingly German community his “occupational socialization” began.<sup>57</sup> First as a teacher, whom colleague Elizabeth Shoemaker remembered as “a very nice, young man much more sociable than Mr. Strong,” and then as principal (1864–1871), Thomas Pearce internalized role prescriptions for good teaching that he would later spell out to novice teachers.<sup>58</sup> A familiar figure in the educational landscape of Waterloo County, he was watched “in awe” by schoolchildren like M. G. Sherk when they saw him “arriving and tying his horse near the gate . . . for he was very dignified looking. We found, however, unless we deserved it, we had nothing to fear, for he was a very kindly disposed man. I think perhaps the teacher feared him as much as we did.”<sup>59</sup> Teachers might, indeed, have noted Pearce’s arrival with great apprehension, as the school inspector was not one to mince words. Generous in his praise where he perceived “splendid ability” and acutely aware of intolerable overcrowding that often made it impossible for him to offer a fair assessment of a teacher’s merits, he refused to issue teaching permits to instructors he deemed unfit.<sup>60</sup> The trustees, in turn, were publicly admonished for employing “cheap incompetent teachers,” seating the children on “miserable desks,” tolerating “very dirty” rooms, and “throwing obstacles” in the way of earnest, diligent teachers.<sup>61</sup>

Thomas Pearce was keenly aware of the fact that 50 to 75 per cent of all children in Waterloo County — “yes, in some sections, even 100 percent” — made their first attempts to speak English when they entered school. For the freshly minted school inspector, however, rudimentary language skills were just one among many educational challenges. His was a crusade to boost rates of school attendance, build solid schoolhouses, raise standards of scholarship, and attract highly qualified teachers. As long as German-language instruction did not interfere with these goals, it presented but a curious feature of the local fabric of schooling which Pearce faithfully

56 Pearce, “School History,” p. 49.

57 Tyack, “Pilgrim’s Progress,” p. 268.

58 KPL, WHS, MC 14.5.a.b.c., Shoemaker Family Collection, “Draft letter, undated, by Elizabeth Shoemaker to her sister ‘Han’”; *Twentieth Annual Report of the Inspector of Public Schools of the County of Waterloo, For the Year ending 31st December, 1891*, p. 15.

59 M. G. Sherk, “Reminiscences of Freeport – Waterloo County from 1867 to 1873,” *Waterloo Historical Society*, vol. 12 (1924), p. 102.

60 Pearce, “School History,” p. 46; City of Cambridge Archives, “Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the Preston School, June 13, 1905 to February 6, 1917,” November 29, 1907; April 7, 1907; December 10, 1908; Waterloo County Board of Education, “Wilmot Township S.S. 2, New Hamburg, School Board Minutes, 1875–1895,” December 27, 1879.

61 KPL, WHS, WAT C–87, *Report on the Public Schools of the County of Waterloo by the County Inspector Thomas Pearce* (Waterloo: “Chronicle Office,” 1875). The schools in question were Waterloo Township S.S. 25 (Beringer’s); Wellesley Township, S.S. 7 (Jansis); Wellesley Township, S.S. 5 (Gless’s); Woolwich Township, S.S. 1 (Conestogo).

sought to convey in his annual reports.<sup>62</sup> Throughout Waterloo County, he wrote, teachers faced a peculiar challenge: “Until the pupils become tolerably familiar with the English language, a very great part of the teacher’s explanation and instruction is entirely lost.”<sup>63</sup> As many schools devoted “a considerable portion of each day” to the study of German, they could not reasonably be expected to have as “high a standing in the classes of the programme, as in schools where instruction is given exclusively in English and the whole school-time devoted to the prescribed subjects.”<sup>64</sup> The inspector, however, did not seem particularly unsettled by his findings. Given his familiarity with local conditions, it might rather have come as a pleasant surprise that “there are at present very few pupils in the County studying German exclusively,” the sole exception being New Hamburg where 120 to 150 pupils received German instruction only.<sup>65</sup>

The annual reports of Thomas Pearce provide glimpses into practices of language use at Waterloo County public schools. Finding “reading and spelling . . . very much neglected” in the county’s rural township schools when he began his annual rounds in 1872, he soon noted improvements “beyond my expectations.”<sup>66</sup> Yet the County School Inspector encountered a source of constant frustration in the children’s English that, although competent, was heavily accented. With more than a note of exasperation, Pearce remarked upon a visit to St. Jacobs in March 1880 that the “pupils did fairly in the subjects in which I examined them, except in reading, which is, apparently, very difficult to teach in this place.” When visiting the county’s Roman Catholic Separate School in 1876, he found “room for improvement, perhaps, in the subjects of reading and arithmetic” in an otherwise glowing report. Two years later, having paid a courtesy visit to the school once again, he declared “Reading on the whole good — making allowance of course for the strong German accent of many of the pupils.” In 1894 he reported rather regretfully still that “distinct articulation, good inflection and naturalness of expression are heard in few schools.”<sup>67</sup> The repeated references to children’s German-accented English reveal Inspector Pearce’s

62 Although Pearce listed several educational obstacles in New Hamburg and Wilmot Centre, he did not dwell on the fact that both communities offered German-language instruction. KPL, WHS, WAT C-87, *Report on the Public Schools of the County of Waterloo, for the Year 1875, by the County Inspector Thomas Pearce* (Berlin: “Telegraph” Office, 1876), p. 6.

63 Ontario Archives, RG 2-109-130, Misc. School Records, Box 2, *Report on the Public Schools of the County of Waterloo by the County Inspector Thomas Pearce, Esq. (for 1872)* (Galt: Hutchinson, 1873), pp. 5-6, 8.

64 *Ibid.*

65 *Ibid.*

66 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

67 Waterloo County Board of Education, Woolwich Township, S.S. 8 (St. Jacobs), “Visitors’ Book, 1861-1912,” March 26, 1880 (see also earlier entries on reading on April 29, 1875 and August 31, 1875); KPL, WHS, KIT 6, “Visitors’ Book: Roman Catholic Separate School,” June 2, 1876 and



deep-seated reservations against enrolling “very young children” in German language classes. This practice, he charged, led “to such confusion of sounds of letters and pronunciation of words in the minds of the little ones as greatly to retard their progress in both languages.” In attributing the low standing of several rural schools to the attempt “to lead children to this bewildering maze,” Pearce recommended reserving German-language instruction exclusively for the higher grades.<sup>68</sup> Seemingly unaware of the success of bilingual school programmes in the United States that enrolled elementary schoolchildren as young as five years, Pearce reasoned that children could not simultaneously assimilate the sounds and structures of two different languages.<sup>69</sup> His was not a criticism of German-language instruction *per se*, but of bilingual instruction in the children’s early years. When his suggestions went unheeded, he did not press the matter further.

In fact, Thomas Pearce advised Egerton Ryerson to tread carefully on issues of language. “The Germans in this county,” he wrote, “are a brave and highly intelligent people, but exceedingly sensitive on the question whether their language is to be continued in the schools.”<sup>70</sup> Pearce’s letter revealed an apparent fondness for the people in his inspectorate who supported the project of mass schooling by constructing decent schoolhouses and hiring qualified teachers.<sup>71</sup> As early as 1872, he praised the school trustees of Waterloo Village, Preston, and Hespeler, who had met all his suggestions “with the heartiest response.”<sup>72</sup> Five years later, he detected “general improvement in almost every department of school work” and commended trustees and ratepayers for “taking a more lively interest in school matters.”<sup>73</sup> Surely, in a county whose people embraced public education and English-language instruction in such a manner, educational authorities could indulge a local desire for German-language lessons.

It is perhaps not surprising that neither Thomas Pearce nor Egerton Ryerson perceived German-language instruction as a threat to the

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February 6, 1878; KPL, WHS, WAT C-67, *Twenty-Third Annual Report of the Inspector of Public Schools of the County of Waterloo, for the Year ending 31st December, 1894*.

68 *Report on the Public Schools of the County of Waterloo, for the Year 1875*, p. 7.

69 See Steven L. Schlossman, “‘Is There an American Tradition of Bilingual Education’: German in the Public Elementary Schools, 1840–1919,” *American Journal of Education*, vol. 91, no. 2 (February 1983), pp. 139–186; L. Viereck, *Zwei Jahrhunderte Deutschen Unterrichts in den Vereinigten Staaten* (Braunschweig: Friedrich Viereck und Sohn, 1903).

70 “Letter sent by Thomas Pearce to Egerton Ryerson, November 9, 1871,” in *Regulations and Correspondence*, p. 8.

71 Pearce, “School History,” p. 33.

72 *Report on the Public Schools of the County of Waterloo by the County Inspector Thomas Pearce, Esq. (for 1872)*, p. 1.

73 KPL, WHS, WAT C-87, *Report on the Public Schools of the County of Waterloo, for the Year 1877*, by the County Inspector Thomas Pearce (Berlin: “Telegraph” Office, 1878), p. 1.

## 18 Histoire sociale / Social History

Table 1: Enrolment in German-language Classes by Ethnic Origin, Waterloo County, 1889

	“German” pupils N	“German” pupils studying German %	“English” pupils N	“English” pupils studying German %
Berlin	745	9	202	6
Preston	173	29	76	22
New Hamburg	201	17	37	14
Waterloo Village	371	9	76	9

Source: *Regulations and Correspondence relating to French and German schools in the Province of Ontario* (Toronto: Warwick & Sons, 1889), p. 114.

project of mass schooling. Between 1874 and 1880, the percentage of school children studying German in Waterloo County fell almost by half, from 16 per cent to 9 per cent. During the same decade, the county’s German-origin population slightly increased, from 55 per cent in 1871 to 57 per cent in 1881. The data that Thomas Pearce so painstakingly compiled reveal that the strongholds of German-language instruction were located not in rural areas, but in towns and incorporated villages — Berlin, Preston, New Hamburg, and Waterloo Village — which enrolled roughly equal percentages of “German” and “English” children by the late 1880s (see Table 1).<sup>74</sup>

By 1889 only six schools in the townships of Waterloo, Wilmot, Woolwich, and Wellesley continued to offer German-language classes that, taken together, enrolled a quarter of the local school population.<sup>75</sup> Teachers at Waterloo County’s rural schools seemed content to instruct their flock in reading and writing only, with many limiting their lessons to reading exercises. Public schools in urban areas offered a more comprehensive German-language curriculum that included ten to twelve hours of weekly instruction in reading, writing, and grammar.<sup>76</sup> Here the transformation of German from the language of the classroom to a special subject of instruction had been completed. Failing to win the unequivocal

74 In assigning the labels “German” and “English,” the Commission of 1889 collapsed the county’s many German groups into one, just as it subsumed Scottish, English, and Irish residents under “English”(-speaking). Lost in between were the 7% of the county’s residents who belonged to neither cultural group. See *Regulations and Correspondence*, p. 110.

75 These schools served almost exclusively German areas. Only three schools were even attended by “English” students. On teaching methods. see *Report on the Public Schools of the County of Waterloo, for the year 1877, by the County Inspector Thomas Pearce*, p. 1.

76 *Regulations and Correspondence*, pp. 111–114.

support of German-origin settlers, German instruction had become an elective subject for the general school population.

This finding was greeted with delight by the Commission of 1889 that had been charged with inquiring into the conditions of minority-language schooling in the province of Ontario. Authorized “to consider and report in what way the study of English may be most successfully promoted among those accustomed to the use of the German language as their mother tongue,” the commissioners approvingly noted that German-language instruction did not impede the children’s overall progress: “The German pupils who were learning German were quite as well advanced in their studies as those who were not learning German.”<sup>77</sup> Indeed, the German language itself seemed to be in retreat. As the commissioners stated, the sustained interaction between German and English settlements had resulted in English schools attended by German children: “the German language is no longer used as the medium of instruction in any of them, except so far as may be necessary to give explanation to those pupils who, on coming to school, know but little English.”<sup>78</sup> While preserving “their attachment to their mother tongue,” German parents had recognized “the necessity of an English education in this country.” This reasonable attitude, the commissioners held, accounted for the smooth, if gradual, “transition from German to English.”<sup>79</sup>

The report pointed to a marked drop in enrolments in the county’s German Departments. Except for fluctuating enrolment figures in Berlin — which, in any case, had always been substantially lower than in either Preston or New Hamburg — the percentage of children studying German had been cut in half between 1874 and 1889 (see Figure 1). Even in the province’s German heartland, English now represented the language of instruction, German was confined to special language lessons, and enrolment figures were rapidly declining.

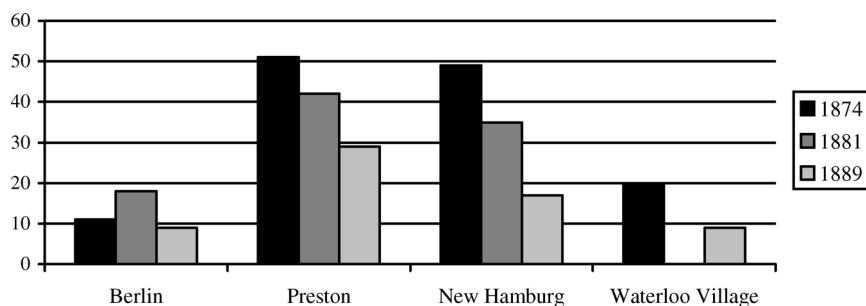
### **Lament for Language Loss**

What educational authorities praised as voluntary assimilation, the county’s leaders lamented as ethnic decline. Their lament for the loss of the language reaches us through the pages of the county’s main German-language newspaper, the *Berliner Journal* (1859–1918), which, for almost six

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112. Similar levels of bilingualism existed in the French-Canadian settlements of southwestern Ontario, where francophones and anglophones regularly interacted in the spheres of economy, transportation, religion, and education. See David Welsh, “Early Franco-Ontarian Schooling as a Reflection and Creator of Community Identity,” *Ontario History*, vol. 85, no. 4 (December 1993), pp. 312–347; Jack Cecillon, “Turbulent Times in the Diocese of London: Bishop Fallon and the French-Language Controversy, 1910–18,” *Ontario History*, vol. 87, no. 4 (December 1995), pp. 369–395.

<sup>79</sup> *Regulations and Correspondence*, p. 113.



Source: *Regulations and Correspondence relating to French and German schools in the Province of Ontario* (Toronto: Warwick & Sons, 1889), p. 114; KPL, WHS, WAT C-87, Manuscript Annual School Reports for 1874 and 1881.

**Figure 1:** Schoolchildren Enrolled in German-language Classes at Public Schools, Waterloo County, 1874–1889 (in percentages).

decades, raised the battle cry to preserve, protect, and maintain the German language in Canada. A cultural institution in its own right, the paper regularly commented on practices of language use and provided incisive, if scathing, observations on the linguistic interactions that seemed to threaten the very integrity of the mother tongue.<sup>80</sup>

With keen attention, the *Berliner Journal* had followed the heated debates in the Provincial Legislature, where the issue of French-language schooling erupted in March 1889, propelling German schools, too, into the spotlight.<sup>81</sup> The editors need not have worried. Providing a convenient rhetorical counterfoil to French Canadians, the German settlers of Waterloo County were lauded for learning English, just as Franco-Ontarians were berated for stubbornly clinging to their mother tongue.<sup>82</sup> In an interesting twist, the *Berliner Journal* heartily sympathized

<sup>80</sup> The first issue of the *Berliner Journal* appeared on December 29, 1859. Its weekly fare found ready takers; the paper's circulation rose from a modest 1,000 in 1863 to 2,200 in 1893. Hereafter, the editors blithely claimed to have the largest number of readers of any German newspaper in Canada. In the early twentieth century, the *Berliner Journal* incorporated the *Ontario Glocke* of Walkerton (1904) and then, in quick succession, the *Canadischer Kolonist* of Stratford (1906), the *Canadische Volksblatt* of New Hamburg (1909), and the *Canadischer Bauernfreund* (1909), in the process becoming one of the most important German-language newspaper in southwestern Ontario. See *Berliner Journal*, December 29, 1859; January 1, 1863; February 2, 1899; July 13, 1904; Herbert Karl Kalbfleisch, *The History of the Pioneer German Language Press of Ontario, 1835–1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), pp. 87, 103–104.

<sup>81</sup> *Berliner Journal*, March 14, 1889; April 25, 1889; May 2, 1889; June 20, 1889; July 18, 1889; July 24, 1890. For a concise summary of these debates, see Chad Gaffield, *Language, Schooling, and Cultural Conflict: The Origins of the French-language Controversy in Ontario* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), pp. 5–30.

<sup>82</sup> *Toronto Globe*, March 9 and 12, 1889; *Toronto Empire*, March 9, 1889; *Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1887* (Toronto: Warwick & Sons, 1888), p. lix.

with Franco-Ontarians' right to conduct schools according to "the language and customs of their forefathers." Did not French Canadians resemble the early German pioneers who had eked out a living with meagre resources and channelled their energy into working the land? Forty years ago, in Waterloo County, the *Journal* wrote, there had been "many sections where both children and teachers understood little English, or none at all; and it would have been foolish to suggest the appointment of English teachers or the introduction of English school readers."<sup>83</sup> The *Journal's* editors professed little patience for the "linguistic fanatics" who saw their country's salvation in "Anglicization" and who betrayed an "ignorant arrogance" (*dummen Dünkel*) by treating all non-English with contempt.<sup>84</sup>

The colourful rhetoric notwithstanding, ethnic leaders in Waterloo County blamed the waning fortune of the German-language classroom not on "linguistic fanatics," but on the seeming indifference of the county's German residents. "I am afraid," mused the chairman of the Berlin School Board, L. Janzen, "that parents let children have their own way in this important matter far too often" by failing to take advantage of the town's fine German Department. "Once those children will have grown into men and women, they will realize their great mistake and rebuke their parents for having been so indulgent."<sup>85</sup> Old as they are, the pages of the *Berliner Journal* still exude a righteous indignation that comparatively few German families took advantage of the Central School's German Department or showed an interest in its semi-annual examinations.<sup>86</sup> In 1874 the audience at the public examination was comprised of a single observer who praised the children's progress and commended the English children who "diligently applied themselves to the study of the German language."<sup>87</sup>

Anxious to shore up institutional support for the German language, Otto Klotz convened like-minded activists in January 1877 to discuss prospects of German-language schooling and urge the newly appointed Minister of Education, Adam Crooks, to institute a "German School Inspector for the German Schools of the Province." Confronted with the fact that over 90 per cent of the county's teachers had been born in Canada, the petitioners also deemed it necessary "to grant

83 *Berliner Journal*, December 23, 1886.

84 *Ibid.*, June 20, 1889. When the *Toronto Mail* railed against the publication of council resolutions in French, the *Journal* responded with biting irony: "Here, such resolutions are printed in both German and English, and German is sometimes spoken at the municipal council. Yet it is utter nonsense to assume that the British Empire will forfeit the Province of Ontario and the Dominion of Canada for this reason." *Berliner Journal*, December 23, 1886.

85 *Ibid.*, September 5 and 12, 1889.

86 *Ibid.*, July 16, 1874.

87 *Ibid.*, December 23, 1873.

German-Canadian teachers the opportunity to learn proper German” by hiring a professor of German at the Toronto Normal School.<sup>88</sup> The passing reference to “proper German” indicates an important shift in the thinking of language advocates. To preserve German as the language of home and hearth no longer sufficed, for the mother tongue seemed hardly recognizable in the idiom spoken in Waterloo County’s homes. Language purity was the new battle cry.

Crooks refused to hire a German professor at the Toronto Normal School and also rejected the demand for a provincial German school inspector. He did, however, assure the petitioners that German could be taught at public schools wherever parents and trustees so desired. Crooks’s simple formula that combined provincial protection with local initiative accorded well with the world view of community leaders and was reiterated at public meetings on language matters throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>89</sup>

In the years to come, the county’s German-language newspapers would increasingly deride the “gibberish” (*Kauderwelsch*) spoken on streets and in homes. German syntax, they alleged, had fallen victim to literal translations from English, as children complained “Es ist kein mehr Brod da” (“There is no more bread here”) rather than using the grammatically correct “Es ist kein Brod mehr da.” English fillers such as “well,” “yes,” “no,” and “certainly” peppered the talk of German settlers. In the patterns of everyday speech, German and English words and phrases readily intermingled, as doctors “fixt” the medication, and Johann earned praise for being a “schmärtler” (smart) boy. In the eyes of ethnic leaders, the local German-English hybrid foreshadowed language loss and ethnic decline since only a “pure, cultivated language” could act as a bulwark of “the German way of life, the German song, and even the German *Gemütlichkeit*” (for which cosiness is but a poor translation).<sup>90</sup> As early as 1876, Reverend Ludwig mused in the pages of the *Berliner Journal* that “an oral acquaintance of the mother tongue may outlast, for over a century, a true knowledge thereof,” only to add, “such a way of speaking will gradually become so hideous as to defy description.” While his fellow migrants still spoke their German mother tongue, Ludwig no longer felt they knew it.<sup>91</sup> To preserve the German language in Waterloo County, Ludwig and others reasoned, the casual use of the

88 *Ibid.*, December 14, 1876; January 4, 1877. Between July 1872 and July 1880, the Waterloo County Board of Examiners compiled biographical profiles of candidates at the annual teachers’ examinations that included information on birthplace. See KPL, WHS, WAT C-87, “Record of Board of Examiners for Waterloo County.”

89 *Berliner Journal*, January 24, 1877; February 12, 1903; December 20, 1905.

90 *Ibid.*, September 17, 1885; December 7, 1876. See also October 1 and 29, 1885; December 10 and 24, 1885; January 10, 1889.

91 *Ibid.*, December 7, 1876.

local German idiom needed to be complemented with formal school lessons that would nurture reading and writing skills and provide instruction in proper grammatical speech, as only a high level of language proficiency would grant access to the rich heritage of German literature and culture.<sup>92</sup>

In 1881 the German teacher at Berlin's public school was so exasperated over the general levels of apathy that he resorted to an unusual step. In a letter to the editors of the *Berliner Journal*, Louis von Neubronn publicly reprimanded the "many Germans in Berlin" who "care little, or none at all, whether or not we have a good German school in our midst; otherwise they would behave differently and let their children enjoy the privilege of which even many English-speaking pupils take advantage . . . those people show no interest in their beautiful and noble mother tongue."<sup>93</sup> Neubronn distinguished between two classes of parents: those who completely deprived their children of German-language instruction — "which is shameful enough for a German family" — and those who sent their child into the German Department for less than a year, falsely assuming that a term or two in the German classroom would suffice to acquire fluency in German reading, writing, and grammar. The latter group, Neubronn wrote, seemed unaware that progress only occurred after months of study. "Yet instead of obliging and encouraging such a child to attend the German classroom regularly, it suddenly occurs to those people that 'My son or my daughter has to learn too much in the English subjects; thus, away with the German.'"<sup>94</sup> Robbed of the fruits of his labour, Neubronn saw the German classroom becoming the poor cousin of Berlin's public school system. Sternly, he told the residents of Berlin to "send your children to the German classroom regularly and for an extended period of time; and do not act as if you were ashamed of the German language."<sup>95</sup> His heartfelt plea went unheard, however. Enrolment figures in the German Department continued to decline over the next two decades.

Unlike ethnic leaders, few parents publicly commented upon German-language schooling. Their attitudes have to be read through their behaviour, namely their willingness — or lack thereof — to enrol their children in the German-language classroom. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that, by the late 1880s, German-language classes reflected the desire of some, but not the need of many. By all accounts, German parents and children did not consider it necessary to cultivate a medium of common parlance in the formal setting of the classroom. Their reluctance to

92 *Ibid.*, January 4, 1877. See also April 5, 1888; April 20, 1899.

93 *Ibid.*, October 6, 1881.

94 *Ibid.*

95 *Ibid.*

provide their children with formal instruction in the mother tongue, however, did not prevent them from identifying with the German language or speaking it at home. In the 1890s a sizeable proportion of Berlin's schoolchildren still spoke a German-accented English modelled after the linguistic structures of their mother tongue, thus prompting Berlin's teachers to develop grassroots programmes of English-language immersion.

At a meeting of the Berlin Teachers' Association in May 1895, Miss Scully presented a step-by-step manual on how to teach composition to "Junior Pupils, especially German Children." Rather than relying on the rehearsal of grammatical rules, she regarded oral lessons — the hearing and speaking of English — as the key to learning. She granted her pupils the time to assimilate the structures of the English language inductively before moving on to written exercises. Gentle coercion, as well, played an important role in Miss Scully's teaching arsenal. She confined the use of German to the German-language classroom and insisted that children speak English even on the playground. In having the children practise writing skills, she favoured the writing of simple stories ("Going to School" or "What I would do if I had \$10") over having them copy English-language lessons at their desks.<sup>96</sup> Intuitively — by drawing on her experiences in the classroom — Miss Scully had arrived at much the same pedagogical principles that the National German-American Teachers' Association was advocating in the nation south of the border.<sup>97</sup> In her classroom, the textbook constituted just one teaching tool among many, while active language skills were nurtured in conversational exercises.

Indeed, as the Canadian Census of 1901 reveals, English was a foreign language only for the very young and the elderly in Berlin, Ontario. Only 9 per cent of Berlin's five-to-six-year-old children of German origin did not speak English at the turn of the twentieth century. Yet even children like Walter Hauser, Neillie Decker, and Olivia Koebel, whose parents upheld German as the language of the home, would soon learn English in the classroom, much as their older siblings Emma, Norman, Matilda, and Edgar had done. Familiarity with English represented the rule among Berlin's school-aged children and youth; a negligible 0.3 per cent of the town's 7-to-19-year-olds were unable to speak English.<sup>98</sup> For German migrants more advanced in years, social mobility

96 Waterloo County Board of Education, "Minute Book of Berlin Teachers' Association, October 1891 to November 8, 1912," May 10, 1895.

97 See, for example, Bettina Goldberg, "Die Achtundvierziger und das Schulwesen in Amerika: Zur Theorie und Praxis ihrer Reformbestrebungen," *Amerikastudien/American Studies*, vol. 32, no. 4 (1987), pp. 481–491.

98 This discussion draws upon a computer file which I created from the Manuscript Census of 1901. In keeping with the methodology developed by the *Canadian Families Project*, households, not



provided a powerful impetus for learning English. This, in fact, was the experience of Karl Müller. Upon migrating to Canada in 1872, the 24-year-old heeded his brother's advice and attended the local high school. After his language immersion, which lasted six months and included tutorial lessons by brother Adolf in the evening, Karl Müller began an apprenticeship as a telegraph operator for the railway. Later, he operated a successful painting business in which he comfortably interacted with both German- and English-speaking patrons.<sup>99</sup> Like earlier migrants to Waterloo County, Karl Müller relished the county's German culture and character, but embraced the occupational mobility that mastery of the English language promised.

The census also illustrates the remarkable persistence of the German language in Waterloo County. In 1901 close to 90 per cent of Berlin's German-origin residents identified German as their mother tongue.<sup>100</sup> As census enumerators were explicitly instructed not to inquire into language proficiency, we are left to wonder to what extent English syntax, idiom, and vocabulary carried over into German. As the socio-linguist Joshua Fishman has pointed out, census data on language practices are notoriously "suspect not only because they are based upon claims rather than upon actual proof of language use, but also because they related to mother tongues rather than to current facilities."<sup>101</sup> Yet, although German might have been spoken with varying degrees of ease and fluency, its mere mention reflected an emotional attachment to the mother tongue that was significant in itself.<sup>102</sup> The census returns also suggested, albeit tentatively, that ethnic leaders may have exaggerated

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individuals, constituted the unit of analysis. This approach proved to be invaluable as it allowed me to examine the language dynamics within families and between generations. The database consisted of a 50% random sample of Berlin's population in 1901, encompassing a total of 4,747 individual cases.

Note that the English-language skills of Berlin's German-origin residents far exceeded those of francophones in Eastern Ontario. See Gaffield, *Language, Schooling, and Cultural Conflict*, p. 181.

99 Karl-Müller Grote, "Onkel Karl: Deutschkanadische Lebensbilder," *German-Canadian Yearbook*, vol. 15 (1998), pp. 116–120.

100 *Manuscript Census of 1901*.

101 Joshua Fishman, "Language Maintenance," in Stephen Thernstrom, ed., *Harvard Encyclopaedia of American Ethnic Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1980), p. 629.

102 I should note that the term mother tongue denoted an ambiguous — and frankly confusing — concept in the 1901 Census of Canada. As the census-makers declared, "Mother tongue is one's native language, the language of his race, but not necessarily the language in which he thinks, or which he speaks most fluently, or uses chiefly in conversation." Mother tongue, in other words, signified an ethnically and racially defined community, rather than the home language of a given household or the dominant spoken language. At the same time, however, the census stipulated that mother tongue "should be entered by name in column 33 if the person speaks the language, but not otherwise." See *Fourth Census of Canada, Vol. XIII* (Ottawa: S. E. Dawson), p. xx; Chad Gaffield, "Linearity, Nonlinearity, and the Competing Constructions of Social Hierarchy in Early Twentieth-Century Canada: The Question of Language in 1901," *Historical Methods*, vol. 33, no. 2 (Fall 2000), pp. 255–260.

the spectre of “language loss” in Canada’s German capital at the turn of the century since they were prone to measuring language skills in terms of linguistic purity and enrolment figures in the German classroom. By contrast, most of Berlin’s residents seemed content to use their mother tongue as a conversational tool, just as they seemed unperturbed by the prominence of the “local German” in which the German and English languages mingled in syntax, vocabulary, and idiomatic speech.

### **Language Renaissance**

By the turn of the twentieth century, the cult of the empire enveloped Waterloo County (albeit with a peculiar German twist) and impressed upon the county’s leading circles the grandeur of German culture and language. In 1897 Berlin hosted the most overtly nationalist singers’ festival in the county’s history. The festival of German folk song culminated in the ceremonious unveiling of a bust of Emperor Wilhelm I in Victoria Park, where orators delivered their speeches in German, with nary a concession to unilingual English speakers. To local dignitaries, the celebration amounted to a “truly German festival” that celebrated both “the land of our birth” and the unwavering loyalty of the celebrants to Canada and “Her Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria.” Yet, only a year later, the organizing committee of the 1898 singers’ festival decided to print the programme in English and advertised exclusively in the local English-language press, to the great indignation of the *Berliner Journal*. Even at this most “German” of festivals, where German remained enshrined on the concert stage, celebrants began to converse with each other in English or alternated between English and German with such ease as to make superfluous the task of cultural translation that the *Berliner Journal* had assumed in earlier decades.<sup>103</sup>

Given the merry indifference of most German Canadians to questions of language purity and preservation, it would take a moment of crisis to publicize the “plight” of the German language in the public mind. The trigger of the Berlin school crisis was innocuous enough. In February 1900 School Inspector Seath had criticized the reading at the local high school “rather adversely.”<sup>104</sup> Always striving for excellence in schooling, the Berlin Public School Board instructed Inspector Pearce to submit a report on the situation, which the latter promptly delivered. “I was more than surprised to find children of British parentage reading and speaking fully as ‘broken’ English as those of German parentage,” Pearce wrote in his submission to the school board. By allowing young children to study two languages simultaneously, the school was letting their minds become “confused with

103 Barbara Lorenzkowski, “Border Crossings: The Making of German Identities in the New World, 1850–1914” (PhD thesis, University of Ottawa, 2002), pp. 132–176.

104 *Berlin News Record*, April 27, 1900.

the sounds of letters and the pronunciation of words of two languages in many respects so very different . . . the result is they read and speak English with a German accent and pronunciation and vice versa.”<sup>105</sup> What troubled Pierce was the phonetic interaction of the German and English languages. The sound of German ethnicity, he charged, had inflected the English tongue and led to the deplorable emergence of a mixed German-English language. His thinking might also have been informed by academic studies of his time which held that “bilingualism created failure and mental confusion and damaged the psychological well-being of immigrant children.”<sup>106</sup> Was it not a matter of common sense, Pierce asked, to limit German-language instruction to the upper grades, where pupils were not quite as easily confused by the “bewildering maze” of two languages?<sup>107</sup>

Little was Inspector Pearce aware that he had stirred up a hornets’ nest. The outcry in the community was almost immediate. Painter Karl Müller called upon Berlin’s “Germandom” (*Deutschthum*) to fight for “our language” and professed himself incensed that “a school inspector who has held office in this German County for forty years and has yet not mastered the German tongue . . . is incapable of judging either the strengths or weaknesses of German-language instruction.”<sup>108</sup> On a more moderate note, Reverend Teufel refuted the inspector’s claim that bilingual instruction impeded the progress of young children: “We have always found that pupils who learn more than one language are superior to those who deal only with one.”<sup>109</sup> The craftsmen of the singing society Concordia, supported by the *Berliner Journal*, organized an indignation meeting on June 22, 1900 to discuss “the better development of German instruction in our public schools.”<sup>110</sup> In attendance were prominent local citizens, including “some of our English fellow-citizens who recognize the use and desirability of a broader education for our children.”<sup>111</sup>

Unanimously, the assembly rejected the assumption that German-language schooling accounted for low reading standards. Instead, it held that “the thorough study of German, as both a written language and a colloquial one, will benefit the pupils most highly.”<sup>112</sup> The passage of time had

105 *Ibid.*, July 4, 1900.

106 Alejandro Portes and Richard Schauffler, “Language and the Second Generation: Bilingualism Yesterday and Today,” *International Migration Review*, vol. 28, no. 4 (1994), p. 642.

107 *Report on the Public Schools of the County of Waterloo, for the Year 1875, by the County Inspector Thomas Pearce.*

108 See Müller’s letter to the editors of the *Berliner Journal*, May 17, 1900 and A. Gläser’s comments in the edition of June 28, 1900.

109 *Berliner Journal*, May 17, 1900.

110 *Ibid.*, October 18, 1905.

111 See the announcement published in the *Berlin News Record*, June 21, 1900.

112 *Berliner Journal*, June 28, 1900. In the ensuing debate, this point was elaborated by, among others, Reverend Tafel, Reverend Tuerk, Reverend Boese, Sheriff John Motz, and high school teacher J. W. Connor.

woven changes into the rhetoric of language advocates. No longer did ethnic spokespersons seek to transform the family into a bastion of the German language. Instead, they presented German-language schooling as a political entitlement and eloquently evoked the “twin souls” that imbued their lives, namely the German and the English languages. Entrepreneur Louis Jacob Breithaupt portrayed German as a language of “modernity and progress” that children should learn for their own benefit.<sup>113</sup> In Breithaupt’s sweeping redefinition, the social setting of the family that had hitherto provided a metaphorical home for the German language was supplanted by political principles, cultural abstractions, and material advantages.

The birth of the German School Association (*Deutscher Schulverein*), formally founded in August 1900, allows us to probe the social profile of the groups that rose to the defence of German language and culture between 1900 and 1914.<sup>114</sup> Men of the middle and upper classes, distinguished by either their education or their wealth, led the campaign of language renaissance. Lawyers, physicians, newspaper editors, and, most prominently, clergymen accounted for 25 per cent of the association’s members, thus emerging as “custodians of culture.” Their education and professional training singled them out as men of value and virtue who sought to translate their “cultural capital” into political leverage.<sup>115</sup> They were joined by Berlin’s leading property owners — manufacturers, merchants, hotel-keepers, and landowners — who represented 20 per cent of the membership and whose economic power enhanced the prestige of the young association. The remaining members who could be identified were tradesmen (21 per cent), shopkeepers (11 per cent), and white-collar workers, among them two store clerks, the town clerk and treasurer, and the manager of an insurance company (8 per cent).<sup>116</sup>

113 *Berliner Journal*, June 28, 1900.

114 Data on the association’s membership has been compiled from the following sources: Manuscript Census of 1901; *Ontario Gazetteer and Directory, 1901–02*; *Vernon’s Berlin, Waterloo and Bridgeport Directory for the Years 1903 to 1905*; *Ontario Gazetteer and Directory, 1905–06*; Province of Ontario, *Gazetteer and Directory, 1910–11*; *Vernon’s City of Berlin and Town of Waterloo and Bridgeport Directory for the Years 1912–13*; Jesse Edgar Middleton and Fred Landon, *Province of Ontario: A History, 1615–1927* (Toronto: Dominion, 1927–1928), vols. 3, 4; Alexander Fraser, *History of Ontario: Its Resources and Development* (Toronto: The Canadian History Company, 1927), vol. 2; KPL, WHS, MC 6.21, Elias Weber Bingeman Snider Collection, “Annual Report of the Board of Trade of the Town of Berlin, 1905”; W. V. Uttley, *A History of Kitchener, Ontario* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1975 [1937]); Elizabeth Bloomfield, “City-Building Processes in Berlin/Kitchener and Waterloo, 1870–1930” (PhD thesis, University of Guelph, 1981); *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 14, 1911–1920 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

115 For a point of comparison, see Roger Chickering, “*We Men Who Feel Most German*”: *A Cultural Study of the Pan-German League, 1886–1914* (Boston: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), p. 111.

116 Fifteen per cent of the members could not be identified.

To appreciate the extent to which Berlin's elites rallied behind the cause of German-language schooling, we have only to turn to the local assessment rolls of 1897.<sup>117</sup> Among Berlin's top 46 property owners, we find no fewer than 11 members of the German School Association.<sup>118</sup> The ranks of the German School Association also included eight past and two future mayors, seven members of the county council, ten members of the municipal council, and twelve members of the Board of Trade.<sup>119</sup> The founding meeting of the association was graced by the presence of Hugo Kranz, who, as a member of the Conservatives, had represented North Waterloo in the House of Commons between 1878 and 1887. In attendance as well were two members of the Provincial Legislature, Dr. G. H. Lackner (South Waterloo) for the Conservatives and Louis J. Breithaupt (North Waterloo) for the Liberals. The *Schulverein's* ranks were further bolstered by seven school trustees whose long-standing or present service on the Berlin School Board helped to ensure that the association's suggestions would be granted a hearing at future board meetings. Notwithstanding the repeated praise for the class-transcending power of language, the leadership structure of the German School Association was strictly hierarchical, with clergymen, manufacturers, journalists, physicians, and lawyers occupying the positions of president, vice-president, German school inspector, and treasurer respectively.<sup>120</sup> Although tradesmen rarely spoke up during meetings and only once joined a delegation to the Berlin Public School Board, their presence illustrated that the association could draw upon the support of many classes, encompassing artisans and entrepreneurs, labourers and professionals.<sup>121</sup> It was Karl Müller, in particular, whose quiet work behind the scenes would keep the association afloat during the coming decade.<sup>122</sup>

The *Schulverein's* public face was constituted by its eleven clergymen who performed the time-consuming task of visiting the town's German-language programmes and submitting detailed reports to the Berlin Public School Board. Their close cooperation symbolized the common meeting ground that language could provide. Clergy from six

117 As compiled by Bloomfield, "City-Building Processes in Berlin/Kitchener and Waterloo," p. 502.

118 *Ibid.*, p. 502.

119 The mayors in question were Hugo Kranz (1874–1878), John Motz (1880–1881), H. G. Lackner (1886–1887), L. J. Breithaupt (1888–1889), Conrad Bitzer (1892), Daniel Hibner (1894–1895), J. C. Breithaupt (1896–1897), George Rumpel (1898), William H. E. Schmalz (1911–1912), and John E. Hett (1915–1916).

120 *Berliner Journal*, June 28, 1900.

121 The evidence of associational meetings is fragmentary at best, preserved only in the columns of the *Berliner Journal*. But the fact that the paper rarely quoted speeches by working-class members seems to indicate that the latter belonged to the lower ranks of the German School Association.

122 *Berliner Journal*, October 18, 1905. See also Grote, "Onkel Karl," pp. 107–255.

denominations joined forces in the association.<sup>123</sup> To the men of the cloth who had witnessed the gradual shift from German to English as a language of worship, the German School Association might have appeared as a bulwark against language change.<sup>124</sup> That linguistic loyalties reached across denominational boundaries is also suggested by the religious profile of the German School Association. The 43 members whose religious affiliation could be traced belonged to eight denominations, most prominently the Lutheran Church (46 per cent) and the Evangelical Association (15 per cent). For both denominations, the use of German as a language of worship was an “article of faith,” with ethnic and religious identities complementing and reinforcing each other.<sup>125</sup>

Confronted with the determined campaign for German-language schooling that united Berlin’s political, economic, religious, and intellectual elites, School Inspector Thomas Pearce made one feeble attempt to clear up the matter, and then fell silent.<sup>126</sup> In future years, he seemed determined to avoid any further controversies by describing the reading ability of Berlin’s pupils as “generally speaking, good.”<sup>127</sup> For a man used to having his suggestions followed to the letter, the “agitation in town to resume German in the schools” — as he would indignantly describe it in his local school history many years later — must have been injurious to his professional pride.<sup>128</sup> Pearce also felt woefully misunderstood. Had he not enrolled his very own daughter Harriet in the German Department of Berlin’s Central School?<sup>129</sup> It did not help that the *Berliner Journal* gloated in its victory.<sup>130</sup>

It took a good deal of creativity to provide German-language teachers with a room of their own. In March 1903 the school board redrew the school boundaries and approved schoolhouse additions, thereby providing for a German-language classroom in each of Berlin’s four elementary schools. One-and-a-half years later, the *Schulverein* could credit itself

123 The following denominations were represented among the 11 clergymen in the German School Association: Lutheran (3), Evangelical Association (2), Baptist (2), Roman Catholic (1), Presbyterian (1), New Jerusalem (1), unknown (1).

124 As Louis Breithaupt noted in his diary, this shift had begun as early as in 1888: “By a vote of 54 to 20, it was to-day decided by our congregation to have English services every 2d. Sabbath evening.” See “Diaries of Louis Jacob Breithaupt,” March 18, 1888. In Berlin’s St. Petri Church, as well, parishioners asked Pastor von Pirch to hold an English sermon in May 1884. See *Berliner Journal*, May 8, 1884.

125 English and McLaughlin, *Kitchener: An Illustrated History*, pp. 87–88; Gottlieb Leibbrandt, *Little Paradise: Aus Geschichte und Leben der Deutschkanadier in der County Waterloo, Ontario, 1800–1975* (Kitchener: Allprint Company Limited, 1977), pp. 158–159.

126 Quoted in the *Berlin News Record*, July 4, 1900.

127 *Berliner Journal*, June 27, 1901.

128 Pearce, “School History,” p. 41.

129 *Manuscript Census of Canada, 1901*; *Berliner Journal*, May 6, 1880; June 3, 1884.

130 *Berliner Journal*, June 27, 1901.

with yet another major success. After four years of lobbying, German-language lessons were integrated into the regular curriculum and taught by two full-time German teachers who divided their time among Berlin's four public schools.<sup>131</sup> The official recognition for German-language instruction was also reflected in the marks that pupils now received for their efforts. From a special branch of education, German had transformed into a regular, if optional, subject of instruction, taught in regular classrooms at regular times and equal to all other subjects.<sup>132</sup>

In establishing the German-language classroom as a prominent feature of Berlin's schools, the members of the German School Association emulated the methods of educational authorities. The first step was to institute the appointment of honorary German School Inspectors who would help develop a curriculum of German-language schooling, group pupils according to their abilities, assess the children's progress, examine the language and teaching abilities of German-language teachers, alert school trustees to weaknesses in the present system of instruction, and submit biannual reports to the Berlin Public School Board.<sup>133</sup> In January 1901 the School Board officially appointed Reverends R. von Pirch (Lutheran), W. Friedrich (Baptist), and M. Boese (Lutheran) as "Inspectors for the German Classes for 1901."<sup>134</sup> In later years, this team of inspectors would be succeeded by Reverends Henry Wagner (Evangelical), E. Hoffman (Lutheran), and A. Mihm (Baptist).<sup>135</sup>

The Department of Education in Toronto was contacted only when the trustees requested exemptions from the general school law on behalf of the German School Association. In June 1903 the Department declared that the German language could be added to the entrance exam for the local high school, provided that all other subjects would be retained.<sup>136</sup> The *Schulverein's* suggestion to substitute the provincially authorized German readers for a new series of textbooks also met with success, despite some initial difficulties.<sup>137</sup> In January 1904 children in Berlin's German-language classrooms opened their new German readers, sanctioned by the *Schulverein*, the trustees, and provincial authorities alike.<sup>138</sup>

131 *Ibid.*, August 24, 1904.

132 *Ibid.* See also *Berliner Journal*, May 15, 1902; Waterloo County Board of Education, "Berlin Board Minutes, 1898–1908," May 13, 1902.

133 The work of the local German School Inspectors is described in their biannual reports published in the *Berliner Journal*. See, in particular, *Berliner Journal*, December 27, 1900; January 4, 1905; December 5, 1906; April 8, 1908; January 6, 1909; June 28, 1911.

134 Waterloo County Board of Education, "Berlin Board Minutes, 1898–1908," January 16, 1901.

135 *Ibid.*, March 27, 1906; May 29, 1906; December 28, 1909; September 20, 1912.

136 *Berliner Journal*, June 25, 1903.

137 *Ibid.*, June 25 and August 27, 1903. See also Waterloo County Board of Education, "Berlin Board Minutes, 1898–1908," September 1, 1903.

138 *Berliner Journal*, December 31, 1903.

Having decided what was taught in the town's German classrooms, the members of the German School Association now sought to determine who would teach the German mother tongue. At the turn of the century, it had become increasingly difficult to secure qualified teachers for the German-language classroom. With Louis von Neubronn heading for retirement in 1893 and William Euler leaving the profession after a six-year engagement in 1899, an era of revolving doors began during which inexperienced teachers followed each other in quick succession.<sup>139</sup> In August 1900 John C. Buchhaupt, chairman of the Berlin Public School Board, offered to top up the salary of Miss Bornhold of Waterloo out of his own pocket.<sup>140</sup> Following his lead, the board decided to offer an annual stipend of \$100 to teachers in the German-language classroom. The extra money allowed female teachers to break through the local salary ceiling. Between 1901 and 1905, the only years for which such data are available, Berlin's German-language instructors were among the highest paid women teachers in Waterloo County.<sup>141</sup> Given the added prestige and value of German teaching positions, it is hardly surprising that the number of applicants soared. In June 1906 alone, teachers from Goderich, Kingston, Penetang, Greenzolle, Sargenoon, Branchton, and Berlin applied for a vacant position.<sup>142</sup>

Preceding this hiring process, a heated controversy had erupted regarding the competence of Simon Reid, a Canadian-born German instructor. While conceding that Reid might be an excellent English teacher, the *Schulverein* questioned his German-language abilities: "Our Mr. Teacher may well have mastered our local German. But between our local German and written and high German there is a difference so vast that a teacher can not possibly bridge. Mr. Reid does not live in the German language. He is thinking in English."<sup>143</sup> The Berlin Public School Board did not take kindly to this pointed criticism. Insisting on its prerogative to hire teachers, it faulted the association for not having voiced its objections sooner.<sup>144</sup> Simon Reid then rose to his own defence. In a

139 Waterloo County Board of Education, "Berlin Board Minutes, 1898–1908," October 26, 1893; January 17, 1894; April 6, 1899; July 10, 1899; December 7 and 18, 1899; August 30, 1900.

140 *Ibid.*, August 31, 1900.

141 Compared with their male colleagues, Berlin's women teachers remained poorly paid. In 1901 Berlin's two male principals received an annual salary of \$875; the town's two male teachers commanded an annual salary of \$536; Berlin's lone female principal earned \$400 a year; and the two female German-language teachers were paid an annual salary of \$388. At the bottom rank of the salary scale were five kindergarten teachers with an annual income of \$315 and 14 additional female teachers, whose income averaged \$271 per year. See also *Berliner Journal*, September 2, 1908.

142 Waterloo County Board of Education, "Berlin Board Minutes, 1898–1908," June 26, 1906.

143 *Berliner Journal*, April 4, 1906.

144 Waterloo County Board of Education, "Berlin Board Minutes, 1898–1908," March 27, 1906; *Berliner Journal*, March 28, 1906.



letter submitted to the editors of the *Berliner Journal*, he insisted that Canadian-born teachers were as capable of teaching their young wards as German-born instructors.<sup>145</sup> Reid's letter helped resolve the issue, albeit hardly in the way he had envisioned. His shaky construction of German sentences, compounded by no less than 50 mistakes in 55 newspaper lines, swayed the opinion of the trustees.<sup>146</sup> On June 26, 1906 a "joint committee composed of three members of the School Board and three members of the German School Association" was appointed to recommend "no less than two applicants whom they consider capable of filling the vacancy on our staff of German language teachers."<sup>147</sup> When teacher Theo Schultz of Berlin received his job offer two weeks later, the German School Association had not only rectified a "scandalous" situation, but also asserted its right to shape the German-language classroom.<sup>148</sup> As a language of modernity and culture, German had won the acclaim of local elites, while becoming ever further removed from the local idiom of Waterloo County's German residents. The number of school-children enrolled in the programme increased from 12 per cent in 1900 to 67 per cent in 1912, among them many British-origin children who garnered praise from the German school inspectors.<sup>149</sup> The German School Association subsidized the children's school readers, organized school picnics, awarded prizes to outstanding students, and continued to lobby the school board.<sup>150</sup> Once the infrastructure of German-language schooling had been established, the association turned to Berlin's parents, appealing to their sense of duty to preserve "our dear mother tongue" and urging them to send their children to the German classroom.<sup>151</sup> With enrolment figures still rising in 1908, the membership of the *Schulverein* began to decline.<sup>152</sup> The sense of urgency that had led to its birth was fading.

The search for ever better methods of German-language instruction continued, now spearheaded by the Berlin Public School Board itself. Given the scarcity of qualified German-language teachers, the school board arranged for the granting of "special permits" by the Education Department that allowed uncertified teachers to work in the German classroom.<sup>153</sup> Abandoning the hitherto strictly voluntary nature of

145 *Berliner Journal*, February 14, 1906.

146 *Ibid.* See also *Berliner Journal*, April 4, 1906.

147 Waterloo County Board of Education, "Berlin Board Minutes, 1898–1908," June 26, 1906.

148 *Berliner Journal*, February 14, 1906; Waterloo County Board of Education, "Berlin Board Minutes, 1898–1908," July 10, 1906.

149 *Berliner Journal*, June 21, 1905; December 5, 1906.

150 *Ibid.*, February 12, 1903; June 25, 1903; July 23, 1903.

151 *Ibid.*, August 24, 1904; September 7, 1904.

152 *Ibid.*, March 11, 1908.

153 Waterloo County Board of Education, "Berlin Board Minutes, 1898–1908," November 26, 1907; January 28, 1908; June 23, 1908.

German-language instruction, it resolved “That the pupils who commence taking German be requested to continue until the end of the term unless the Parents furnish to this Board satisfactory reasons for wanting their child to drop that subject.”<sup>154</sup> The board also introduced German lessons into all kindergartens and lower grades.<sup>155</sup> Tacitly acknowledging the fact that German had become a foreign language to many, if not most, school-children, who were likely to use either English or the “local German” at home, the Berlin School Board instructed the teachers in its employ “to make more use of conversational exercises and not lay so much stress as heretofore on reading and writing.”<sup>156</sup> The German-language classroom that emerged from these measures was an innovative, flexible teaching space that County School Inspector F. W. Sheppard described to the Superintendent of Education in 1913 as follows:

In Berlin an average of 1/2 hours per lesson is given twice and three times per week respectively to lower and higher classes, beginning with the Kindergarten and ending with Junior Third classes . . . Teachers are well educated Germans and speak the language fluently, but none of them at present engaged has any professional standing as teacher in Ontario . . . The teachers of German pass from room to room and from school to school . . . The regular teacher in charge of the room remains in the room during the German lessons and is responsible for discipline . . . The lessons consist of Reading, Writing, Spelling, and Translation; but most of the time is given to oral composition of conversation.<sup>157</sup>

While German-language instruction had become embedded in local structures of schooling, it never quite lost its transitory character. It was a part within the system, but not of the system. Teachers were special instructors who did not possess provincial teaching certificates; German-language classrooms had been abolished in favour of a system of itinerant teachers; German-language instruction was optional, not mandatory.

In a local world, whose German current intermingled comfortably with the Canadian mainstream, the ripples of the First World War were felt keenly. To counteract any allegations of German-Canadian disloyalty, the city’s political and economic elites rushed to found the Berlin branch of the Canadian Patriotic Fund Association — headed, among others, by two members of the German School Association, W. H. Schmalz

154 *Ibid.*, February 27, 1908.

155 *Berliner Journal*, September 14, 1904; June 21, 1905; July 5 and 19, 1905; Waterloo County Board of Education, “Berlin Public School Board, Minutes, 1908–1915,” August 18, 1911; April 19, 1912.

156 Waterloo County Board of Education, “Berlin Public School Board, Minutes, 1908–1915,” November 17, 1911.

157 Ontario Archives, Sir James P. Whitney Papers, F5, MU 3132, “Memo regarding teaching of German in bilingual schools.”

and Louis Jacob Breithaupt — that collected \$95,000 in support of the families of Canadian soldiers. Meanwhile, local business was able to secure government orders for the production of war-related goods. By the fall of 1914, Berlin's shoe factories churned out 20,000 military boots, while local textile factories produced 10,000 military shirts and Berlin's button factories manufactured 420,000 dozen buttons for uniforms.<sup>158</sup> Nonetheless, in 1915 the city's innovative German-language programme was dismantled, and a year later the city was renamed from "Berlin" to "Kitchener" after a long and divisive debate.<sup>159</sup>

The school trustees who voted for disbanding German-language classes in March 1915 advanced a pedagogical rationale for their decision. Unsettled by the fact that two-thirds of the city's schoolchildren did not complete the highest grade of the elementary school course before reaching the legal school-leaving age of 14 years, the trustees searched for ways of condensing the curriculum in the earlier grades. By abolishing the teaching of German, they proposed, time would be made available to teach the core subjects of "the highest grade, the senior fourth, in which a pupil acquires the greatest knowledge of the practical affairs of the world in which he is to spend the rest of his natural life."<sup>160</sup> The earnest arguments that supporters and critics of this measure exchanged at a meeting of the school board, which welcomed 40 members of the association to its deliberations, belie the assumption that the First World War demolished a thriving, confident German-Canadian identity in Waterloo County.<sup>161</sup> Rather, in the uneasy mood of the war, different strands of criticism against German-language instruction were bundled together into an argument that swayed the board of trustees whose election the *Berliner Journal* had welcomed only a year earlier as an endorsement of the "friends of German-language teaching."<sup>162</sup> Trustee Louis Sattler, one of the three dissenting voices on the board, stated, "there is no school in Ontario that has the standing that our schools have, even if they do not take up the study of German."<sup>163</sup> Indeed, as the local *Daily Telegraph* admitted, "the one weak feature in the school

158 This discussion follows Frisse, *Berlin, Ontario (1800–1916)*, pp. 364–365.

159 The controversy is outlined in Patricia P. McKegney's *The Kaiser's Bust: A Study of War-Time Propaganda in Berlin, Ontario, 1914–1918* (Wellesley, ON: Bamberg Heritage Series, 1991).

160 The committee's report was included verbatim in the *Berlin News Record*, March 3, 1915.

161 Indeed, the local culture of Waterloo County was not fundamentally affected by the war years. For the creative ways in which Waterloo County's German-origin residents reinvented their ethnicity in the post-war period by seizing upon the county's Mennonite heritage and downplaying its "Germanic" culture, see Geoffrey Hayes, "From Berlin to the Trek of the Conestoga: A Revisionist Approach to Waterloo County's German Identity," *Ontario History*, vol. 91, no. 2 (Autumn 1999), pp. 131–149.

162 *Berliner Journal*, January 6, 1915.

163 *Berlin News Record*, March 17, 1915.

board's case" was its inability to prove that the teaching of German constituted "a detriment to the progress of the pupil."<sup>164</sup> Yet neither the admirable record of Berlin's public schools nor Mayor Hett's impassioned statement that bilingualism represented a "decided advantage" persuaded the majority of the trustees, who, for various reasons, had arrived at the conclusion that "We are not pledged to look after the teaching of one single subject but rather to see to the welfare and the highest education of the masses of children in our care," as the board's chairman, Arthur Pequegnat, put it.<sup>165</sup>

In his comments, Chairman Pequegnat — a long-time supporter of German-language instruction — recalled how he had kept alive his own mother tongue, French, by speaking "nothing else at home but French — the result is that today none of my children will attempt to address me in another language excepting in the presence of company."<sup>166</sup> To learn German, Pequegnat had attended services in Berlin's many German-speaking congregations. Later, he offered a "helping hand" in introducing German lessons into the local school curriculum:

My main expectations were that by giving the children German lessons, they would learn to love the language and that at least those who attend German churches would help to preserve the language there, but what do we see today? The scheme is a failure; it has been killed — not at school — please don't blame the school — but in most of the German homes and in the churches.<sup>167</sup>

The thrust of Pequegnat's argument was taken up by other board members and the English-language press, reasoning, in unison, that English had supplanted German as the medium of local communication. "While ten or fifteen years ago the ability to speak German was looked upon as one of the necessary qualifications of salesmen in Berlin stores, this is no longer the case," the *Daily Telegraph* wrote. "English . . . has become the language of business even in places like Berlin."<sup>168</sup> Trustee E. D. Lang contended that "only the older folks and those of more recent arrival from Germany are taking German books" from Berlin's Public Library, whereas the "young people who have in the past 10 or 15 years had German instruction in our schools are not reading German books."<sup>169</sup> Such anecdotal evidence seemed to lend further credence to

164 *Daily Telegraph*, March 20, 1915.

165 *Berlin News Record*, March 19, 1915.

166 *Ibid.*

167 *Ibid.*

168 *Daily Telegraph*, March 20, 1915.

169 *Berlin News Record*, March 19, 1915.

the claim that school instruction in German had failed to imbue Berlin's youth with a love for the German language. The town's schoolchildren would therefore spend their time more fruitfully learning about "the practical affairs of the world" than attending German-language classes, the trustees held.<sup>170</sup> Other trustees still voiced misgivings over the presence of a language other than English in the public school system, which, after all, served the goal of "a thorough English education."<sup>171</sup> They stated that bilingual instruction represented "a hindrance in the lower grade" where it led to confusion in the pupils' minds, questioned the merely conversational character of German-language teaching, and concluded that the "cultural study" of modern languages was best served by high schools and universities, where "those students of German who have not studied the language in the Public Schools make just as much progress as those that have."<sup>172</sup>

In earlier decades, the *Berliner Journal* had been quick to refute these objections against bilingual school instruction (which, in any case, enjoyed far greater currency in the United States than in Waterloo County), and again the *Journal* interjected that the ability to speak the German language was sadly ignored in high schools and universities.<sup>173</sup> Its objections were to no avail. In the fall of 1915, German-language instruction was removed from the public school curriculum in Berlin. The creative classroom experiment in Waterloo County's public schools that emphasized conversation and oral mastery of the language over grammar and literature thus ended a year into the First World War. By then, English had supplanted standard German as the medium of everyday communication, although a local German-English hybrid proved remarkably persistent well into the twentieth century, much to the irritation of ethnic leaders who had publicly ridiculed teacher Simon Reid for his "local German" and declared him unfit to teach in Berlin's German-language classroom.

The charged climate of the war years undoubtedly served as a catalyst for eliminating Berlin's extensive German-language programme. Yet to understand the demise of this innovative classroom experiment, we have to pay close attention to the local rules of the language game — rules devised by German community leaders who continued to remain in control of the county's economy and its civic institution. To them, it had become less pressing to express their ethnic heritage in the German mother tongue. The elderly Louis Breithaupt, who acted as the president

170 *Daily Telegraph*, March 20, 1915; *Berlin News Record*, March 3, 1915.

171 Trustee Albrecht, quoted in the *Daily Telegraph*, March 19, 1915.

172 Trustee Charles Ruby, quoted in the *Berlin News Record*, March 3 and 19, 1915; Trustee Lang, quoted in the *Daily Telegraph*, March 19, 1915.

173 *Berliner Journal*, March 31, 1915.

of the German School Association for many years, serves as a case in point. Although German was still his language — and one whose value and importance he eloquently defended in 1915 — it no longer was the language he used in his family correspondence. When writing to his daughter Catherine in September 1913, only the heartfelt “God Bless” with which he opened his letter was written in German: “Ich wünsche Dir den Segen Gottes zum Gruß.”<sup>174</sup> Even in this most German of families, language had become disassociated from ethnicity. Yet the German mother tongue continued to resonate with emotions, just as it continued to serve as a signifier of an ethnic heritage. That the latter was, by now, mostly symbolic in nature did not make it any less real.

### Conclusion

At a time when enrolment in the county’s German departments was steadily declining, ethnic leaders in Waterloo County identified the German language as a badge of ethnicity that had to be sheltered, nurtured, and protected.<sup>175</sup> Yet such grand ambitions rarely resonated in the lives of migrants, whose transcultural experiences defied neatly drawn national or linguistic boundaries.<sup>176</sup> They regarded language as a conversational tool and saw no need to study the mother tongue at school: was it not spoken daily at home? The telling refusal of many families to enrol their children in the German-language classroom suggests that they were eager for their youngsters to move comfortably in Waterloo County’s German-English world. To do so, the children needed to learn English at school in addition to the German they already spoke, albeit not in the “purity” desired by ethnic leaders. Instead, the county’s German settlers expressed their ethnic consciousness in many languages — in a “local” German that captured the dual sensibilities of their lives; in the popular Pennsylvania-Dutch dialect that was regularly (if gently) ridiculed in the county’s German-language press, although it remained strangely inaudible in the public debates surrounding German-language schooling;<sup>177</sup> in High German; and, increasingly so, in English.

These casual attitudes toward the German language clearly exasperated cultural leaders, who began to complain of the misuse of their mother tongue in the mid-1870s. They advocated the German-language classroom

174 *Berlin News Record*, March 17, 1915; University of Waterloo, Doris Lewis Rare Book Room, Breithaupt Hewetson Clark Collection, Box #8, “Catherine Olive, née Breithaupt (1896–1977), Letter by Louis Breithaupt, September 3, 1913.”

175 For the “cult of heritage” that elevated a mother tongue to a symbol of ethnicity, see also Jeffrey Shandler, “Beyond the Mother Tongue: Learning the Meaning of Yiddish in America,” *Jewish Social Studies*, vol. 6, no. 3 (2000), p. 98.

176 For a point of comparison, see Dirk Hoerder’s *Cultures in Contact: World Migrations in the Second Millennium* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), particularly pp. xx–xxi.

177 Kalbfleisch, *The History of the Pioneer German Language Press*, p. 71.

as a means to instil proper norms of language use, respect for grammatical rules, and facility in reading and writing standard German.<sup>178</sup> Their efforts culminated in an elaborate ethnic revival at the turn of the century that was prompted by a perceived external threat and resulted in a fairly comprehensive German-language programme. Indeed, what gives this tale of languages of ethnicity an intriguing local twist is the flowering of German-language instruction at the turn of the twentieth century that saw enrolment figures in Berlin's German-language programmes increase from 9 per cent in 1889 to over two-thirds of the local school population in 1912. While conservative in their belief in language purity, these language advocates exhibited much ingenuity in their attempts to teach the German mother tongue to local schoolchildren. In close cooperation, the German School Association and the Berlin School Board devised a modern-language curriculum — taught by recent German immigrants — that focused on spoken language and conversational skills and offered instruction in theory and grammar only as a means to further the oral command of (standard) German. Devised at the grassroots level and informed by local knowledge and expertise, this curriculum represented a radical departure from German-language instruction at Canadian high schools and universities, which were preoccupied with the study of grammar and literature. It also testified to a cultural creativity that differed only in intent, not in kind, from that of their fellow Germans; both made language suit their notion of ethnicity.

Ethnic leaders failed to make language the clay out of which to mould a public group identity, for their rigid notion of language did not allow for the many languages of ethnicity spoken in Waterloo County. Ironically, their very exasperation over such “ugly” practices of language use as the local German-English hybrid was, in fact, what rescued the history of the spoken word from the silence that so often surrounds it. In refusing to make High German the cornerstone of their ethnic consciousness, the Germans of Waterloo County embraced the more fluid currents of language practices that moved easily back and forth between the German and English streams of their lives or blended the two in a local undercurrent that fittingly expressed the cultural duality of their world.

178 For selected works on linguistic nationalism in the late nineteenth century, see Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1977), particularly pp. 303–318; John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987); Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programmes, Myths, Reality* (Cambridge: Canto, 1991).