

# LINCOLN LORE

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## THE GERMAN ABRAHAM LINCOLN COMMUNITY

There has been organized recently at Bremen, Germany, a group called The German Abraham Lincoln Community. Two circulars setting forth the purpose of the organization have been received by the Lincoln National Life Foundation. Emphasis is placed on the fact that the word "Community" instead of the title "Society" has been chosen as it defines more specifically the anticipated relationship of the members of the group. The presence of the new organization was first called to the attention of the Foundation by L. Fritz Gruber, a photographer with a studio at Minden, Germany.

The moving spirit of the organization is George Henry Distler of Bremen. He is attempting to bring together admirers of Lincoln in this loosely knitted organization that the memory of this great personality may be cultivated. The group hopes to find a nucleus for the organization in the old Carl Schurz Society. The appeal for membership in circular number one is introduced by this tribute to the Emancipator:

"You surely know the personality of Abraham Lincoln as one of the most respectable and humanly touching among all the American presidents.

"From a very humble descent, from a very small beginning, he became the symbol of the greatest president of the United States of America, who loyally, imperturbably, and immutably pursued his goal and his task, becoming immortal by his martyrdom.

"His humbleness, his struggle against slavery, his never failing humor—in spite of all the ill-fate and personal hardships—his restless working made him the never fading example of all statesmen."

The program of the Community calls for the publication of monographs, arrangement for lectures, references to literary contributions and instructions in the schools all centered about the life of Abraham Lincoln. The ultimate end of the enterprise is put in these words by Mr. Distler, "I especially want to bring the German youth close to Abraham Lincoln, 'Old Abe.' It is regrettable how very little they know about him. He should especially be an example for youth who—let's be honest—have no longer an example . . . Especially nowadays in Germany it is asked—if one can ask this question—'who will be Germany's president? . . . how must, how shall the man be, who is elected?' If what the Lincoln Community plans, comes true, the answer must be: 'A Man Like Abraham Lincoln.'"

Mr Distler closes his appeal in circular number one with this further statement of purpose, "The goal of this Community is to bring the personality of the greatest and most humanly admirable of all the American presidents, the example of a real Democrat, close to the German youth."

Circular number two was a follow-up mailing which gave the reaction of some of those to whom circular number one had been forwarded. While Mr. Distler states that there was a "joyful agreement of the majority" he cites one case where a prospective joiner asks the ques-

tion, "If I should give my signature and the Russians should find it on a search of the house . . . ?"

One of the replies was from Dr. Herman Luedke, the author of a play entitled, "Abraham Lincoln" and which was published in Berlin in 1928. Comment is also made about a bust of Abraham Lincoln which is being created by Rudolph Ganghoft of Bremen. Mr. Distler appeals in his second circular for items for the files of the Community including "anything that has been published about Abraham Lincoln."

More books have been written in the German language about Abraham Lincoln than in any tongue except English. The Lincoln Foundation Library has 71 volumes, books and pamphlets, which are written in German. The next in number is the French language with 28, and those in Japanese are third, with 15 items.

Possibly the first book issued about Abraham Lincoln in any foreign tongue was a paper bound campaign biography of 106 pages in the German language written by D. W. Bartlett and Ruben Vose and published about the middle of July, 1860, in New York. As many as ten other Lincoln titles in German were distributed during the political campaign of 1860. It was the assassination of Lincoln which brought out the first large installment of Lincoln publications in the German language, 21 different books and pamphlets coming from the press that year.

The earliest of the full size Lincoln books to be printed in German was Frank Crosby's 496 page story of Lincoln published in 1865. It was a translation of his very commendable volume which attempted to develop the story of Lincoln by the use of Lincoln's own writings and speeches—the earliest anthology of any considerable number of Lincoln's works with transition paragraphs. Crosby's German translation went into at least four printings, the last one as late as 1885.

Two standard full length biographies by American authors seem to have had the widest circulation among books printed in German. Joseph H. Barrett's 786 page book printed in 1866 was published in both cloth and ¾ leather. The same year Holland's 588 page biography in four different bindings was distributed. Another book by an American author translated into German which had a wide circulation was McClure's *Anecdotes of Abraham Lincoln*. First published in 1880, it went into other issues in 1885, 1886, 1887, 1888 and 1890, all in cloth except the 1886 edition which is in paper covers.

The earliest German book by a native author and published in Germany was a history featuring Lincoln and placing some emphasis on Civil War episodes. It was written by Max Lange and published at Leipzig in 1866. One edition in the Foundation Library states "Viertes Tausend." The last Lincoln biography published in German was by Emil Ludwig. Thirty thousand copies were printed in 1930 but it was ordered to be suppressed by Hitler.

It would be helpful indeed if some of the Lincoln publications in German could be put in the hands of the German Abraham Lincoln community.