

9. Profiles of notable members of Alberta's German-speaking communities: 1914-1945 [selections]

Abele, Paul

Paul Abele was born in 1877 in Schloss Zeil in southern Germany. He attended the universities of Munich and Erlangen, and was a pharmacist in Germany and Switzerland for several years. He immigrated to Canada in 1911 and took over a homestead near Dapp in northern Alberta. But he soon went back to the pharmacy, working in Leader and Regina, Saskatchewan. He returned to Alberta and received a diploma from the University of Alberta. Not long after—in October 1929—Abele opened his own pharmacy (*Deutsche Apotheke*) at 10224–101 Street in Edmonton. In 1938 he moved his pharmacy to the McDougall Court. He retired in 1955 and died two years later.

Paul Abele was very active in Edmonton's German-speaking community and was one of the most strident defenders of the New Germany and National Socialism in Alberta. After Hitler's rise to power in 1933 Abele—then the president of the Edmonton chapter of the *Deutsch-Canadischer Nationalverband* (which really only barely existed in that city)—Abele gave numerous speeches at many German events and celebrations, exhorting the Germans to stand up for their rights and to reject the New Germany's defamation by the media.¹ After the founding of the Nazi-leaning *Deutscher Bund*, Abele was appointed as *Stützpunktführer* in 1934,² rising to *Kreisleiter* of the local *Ortsgruppe* in 1936.³ In 1936 he became president of the committee that organized Edmonton's German Days where flying the swastika caused a major controversy.⁴ On the occasion of Austria's *anschluss* in 1938, he praised Hitler's work and called on the German-Canadians to stand together and to reject the defamers "whose voices will be silent soon."⁵ In the same year the *Deutscher Bund, Ortsgruppe Edmonton* opened a lending library in Edmonton at Abele's pharmacy which held numerous pro-Nazi books and other publications from Germany.⁶

Drab, Max

Max Drab came to Canada in 1908. After having homesteaded and having been a representative for the immigration authorities in Wilkie, Saskatchewan, he came to Edmonton in 1924. There he was a merchant until 1925 and subsequently became a representative of various German and American shipping lines, such as the Norddeutscher Lloyd, White Star Line, etc. He was also a special immigration agent for the Canadian National Railroad. In early 1928 he was the manager of the National Immigration and Colonization Company at 10275–101 Street in Edmonton where he assisted immigrant German house maids and farm labourers to find positions,⁷ but soon opened his own office on the premises of the Norddeutscher Lloyd at 10061–101 Street. His speciality was settlement assistance for German immigrants.⁸

Drab was active in the local German community; for instance, he was president of the Edelweiss Club and a member of the board for five years where he served with distinction⁹ and was on the board of the *Deutsch-Canadischer Nationalverband* in 1928.¹⁰ In 1938, however, the *Nationalverband*, which had come under the influence of the *Deutscher Bund*, rejected his application for admission "... because he has caused much damage to the German presence in Alberta in the last few years; because he is a Jew."¹¹ After having been ridiculed in the Nazi-leaning *Alberta Herald* for the quality of his German ("his daitsche Sprache; he should have his writing proof-read by someone who knows German") Drab was said not even to be a German although he had claimed to be after the first world war, probably for advertising reasons, according to the Executive of the *Nationalverband*.

Herzer, Rev. Traugott

Traugott Otto Francis Herzer (1887–1958) was born in Plymouth, Wisconsin. He graduated from Concordia Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri in 1910. Herzer served as an interim Lutheran

pastor in Winnipeg in 1908 and then was a pastor at Bittern Lake, Alberta. He was ordained in 1910 and from 1910 to 1913 was superintendent of missions for the Missouri Synod in Alberta and British Columbia, based in Calgary. In 1913 he served as the first minister of Mount Calvary Lutheran Church in Calgary. He resigned from the ministry in 1914 and joined the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) Department of Immigration and Colonization. From 1925 until his death he was the general manager of the Canada Colonization Association, a CPR subsidiary, and was based in Winnipeg. Beginning in 1946 he was treasurer of the Canadian Lutheran World Relief, and in 1947 he became Chair of the Canadian Christian Council for Resettlement of Refugees. The refugees which his work assisted were mainly German-speaking Lutherans and Mennonites.¹²

Masuhr, Rev. J.

Pastor Masuhr was pastor at St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Ellerslie from 1910 to 1916 and at St. John's Lutheran Church in Heimthal near Edmonton from 1916 to 1920. Pastor Masuhr was very active in the organization of the German Days celebrations in Edmonton. In speeches he appealed to German-Canadians to maintain their language and culture, but he did not share the extreme, strident political views of some of the other members of the organizational group. At the last German Days, Pastor Masuhr commented that German Days in Alberta had probably come to an end and he criticized those who tried to force themselves as leaders on the Germans in Alberta.¹³

Miller's Grocery and Meat Market

Miller's Grocery and Meat Market at 9917-82 Avenue in Edmonton came once again under German management in 1939.¹⁴

Nordegg, Martin

Probably the most successful German businessman at the time was Martin Nordegg. Nordegg (1868-1948), a native of Silesia, was an investment syndicate representative and manager at Nordegg, Alberta and Ottawa, Ontario. He became highly successful as a coal mining developer ("German Development Company") between 1906, the year of his arrival in Canada, and 1914. He traveled widely in Alberta, prospected for coal and established and exploited coal fields in the Bighorn and South Brazeau Rivers and Kananaskis regions in southwestern Alberta. He founded the town bearing his name. Nordegg traveled in the circles of high finance and politics in Canada, England and Germany prior to the First World War, but with the outbreak of the war German assets in Canada were frozen. He did advise the Canadian government on coal policy, but his plans to develop Nordegg as a model community were cut short by the wartime anti-"enemy alien" hysteria.¹⁵ In 1915 Martin Nordegg was asked to leave Canada and he departed for New York. Although he was allowed to return in 1921 he had lost his position with the mine. He divested himself of his western Canadian interests upon his return, but he was disappointed and resentful by the turn of events. In 1918, the \$4,000,000 Brazeau coal field owned by Martin Nordegg and his "Deutsches Canada Syndikat" had been taken over by the Ministry of Finance.¹⁶

Nordegg Crescent in Calgary is named after him.¹⁷

Rummel, Lizzie

Lizzie Rummel was a German-born baroness who fell in love with the Rocky Mountains as a child while vacationing here with her mother. For more than 30 years she ran lodges in the backcountry of the Rockies, became an authority on local flora and fauna, and was a friend to hundreds of hikers.

Elisabeth von Rummel had been born in Munich in 1897. She came to Canada in 1911 when her wealthy, travel-loving mother bought some ranch property in the Alberta foothills, sight unseen, some 20 miles southwest of Priddis. Because of the War, the family had to stay in Canada, and they made the vacation ranch a working ranch. Elisabeth decided to stay in Canada after the war. She and her sister did all the hard work on the ranch. She raised chickens and won many awards. Later she was ready for a change. She worked in the hotel business, took up mountain climbing and managed a ski lodge. In 1950, she bought

her own mountain lodge on the shores of Sunburst Lake at Mount Assiniboine and spent her summers there until 1970 when she retired and sold the camp. But she continued to work as a hostess, made a trip to the Arctic at age 76, and at age 80 she flew into the mountains in a helicopter. Lizzie Rummel received the Order of Canada in 1980, but died in the same year.¹⁸

Rupp, Fritz

Fritz Rupp owned a rooming house at 10623–101 Street in Edmonton in 1928.¹⁹

Widmer, Walter

Walter Widmer was the president of the *Verband deutschsprechender Arbeiter* in 1930.²⁰ Standing up for the rights of the worker he and the Association argued for the introduction of unemployment insurance, placed workers in jobs who were without connections at the time of their arrival, offered English language courses. His views were social-democratic in nature, but he was accused of being a communist. He lost a power struggle with the decidedly communist Winnipeg branch of the *Verband*, and the Association's paper, the *Deutsche Arbeiter-Zeitung*, moved to Winnipeg.

Wiebe, W. R.

W. R. Wiebe was the owner of a mill in Vermilion in 1928.²¹

¹ *DC&DH*, Nov. 1, 1933, 4.

² *DC&DH*, Feb. 14, 1934, 4.

³ *DZC*, Apr. 8, 1936, 4.

⁴ *DC&DH*, June 3, 1936, 4.

⁵ *AH*, Apr. 27, 1938, 1; *DC&DH*, Apr. 29, 1931, 5.

⁶ *AH*, Jan 5, 1938, 3.

⁷ *DH*, Feb. 2, 1928, 7.

⁸ *DH*, Apr. 5, 1928, 2.

⁹ *DH*, Jan. 10, 1929, 8.

¹⁰ *DH*, Feb. 2, 1928, 3.

¹¹ *AH*, Jan. 19, 1938, 2.

¹² Glenbow Archives, T.O.F. Herzer fonds, archival description.

¹³ *DC&DH*, Aug. 25, 1939, 4.

¹⁴ *AH*, March 1939 (No. 15), 2, ad.

¹⁵ Howard Palmer and Tamara Palmer, *Alberta, a new history* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1990), pp. 171-172.

¹⁶ *CH*, July 8, 1918, 12

¹⁷ Donna Mae Humber, ed., *What's in a name?* Vol. 1. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1995, 122.

¹⁸ Brian Brennan, ed., *Alberta originals. Stories of Albertans who made a difference*. Calgary: Fifth House Ltd., 2001, 79-82.

¹⁹ *DH*, Sept. 13, 1928, 5, ad.

²⁰ *DH*, Feb. 20, 1930, 3.

²¹ *DH*, May 10, 1928, 5, ad.