

German-Language Press in South Dakota, 1874-1954

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The foreign-language press in the 19th century was of great significance to immigrant populations arriving in the U.S., introducing them to the customs of their new country, while maintaining connections to their homelands by publishing news from both in languages with which they were familiar. Recent research on heritage languages in the American Midwest applies Warren's (1978) theory of 'verticalization' in community structure to language shift, arguing shift transpired when community-controlled institutions shifted to extra-community organizations, e.g., state education boards or local newspapers merging with regional or national publications (Johnson 2018; Bousquette 2020; and others in Brown forthcoming). This project builds on that research by focusing on one factor of language shift, namely the language of the press. Further, it shows how changes in publication names and locations, regional and national publication mergers, and German vs. English language use in the South Dakota press were complicated and often lengthy processes.

The German-language press in South Dakota follows the increase in German-speaking (im)migrants to the region (with the first German settlement in 1873) and remains steady through around the beginning of WWI (Olson 2005: 135). While this is considerably later than other states of the Midwest where German immigration was already commonplace and well established for decades, the German-language press in South Dakota, consisting of 37 publications, obtained for eighty years. Just as Salmons (2002) shows number of publications and new publications alone do not give a full picture of the strength and importance of the German-language press in Wisconsin, I show how mergers and name changes can obscure the duration of a publication's existence in South Dakota. Using data from the Library of Congress' *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers* I compare German and English as a print language, giving special attention to changes in editorial practices and advertisements. The influence of German as a publication language can be seen in the increase of papers published in German during WWI. At a time when there were only six majority German-language papers in press, four previously English-only papers began publishing German-language segments, indicating the importance of the German-language in South Dakota even during war time.

Analysis draws primarily on two publications, the *Süd Dakota Nachrichten* and the *Eureka Post*. The *Süd Dakota Nachrichten* spans the period 1890 through WWI, and undergoes several changes of publication location, rebranding under different names, and eventually the print language. The *Eureka Post* was published in both German and English, allowing for a comprehensive comparison of how both languages were used in prose and advertisements.

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