echoes of the German Experience
Objects from the Jindera Pioneer Museum

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A large number of residents in the Southern Riverina trace their ancestry to one of the German settlers who arrived from South Australia by wagon trek. In the 1840s and 1850s, large numbers of Germans and Wends had left the Kingdom of Prussia in the hope of finding better fortunes in South Australia. By the time the New South Wales government opened up lands for selection in the mid 1860s, South Australian farmland was already in short supply. Many German families were attracted to the cheaper fertile lands of the Riverina. There they formed communities clustered around the Protestant Churches they erected through communal effort: Gerogery, Jindera, and Walla Walla.

The aim of this catalogue is to illustrate the German presence in the Southern Riverina through a small number of objects held by the Jindera Pioneer Museum. These artefacts, ranging from books and porcelain to an entire wagon, allow us to trace the experience and presence of the German settlers in south-eastern Australia. The objects cover the period from their voyage out to Australia and their initial settlement in South Australia to the famous wagon treks of 1867 and 1868 and their final establishment on farms in southern New South Wales.
Figure 1. Kitchen building of the former Andreas Klemke homestead, Edgehill, near Henty (NSW).
The first major immigration of Germans to Australia occurred in 1839, when a group of German Protestant Lutherans left the Kingdom of Prussia to escape religious persecution. Settling in South Australia, the early communities attracted subsequent immigrants who came for solely economic reasons. Bound by a common faith, they formed clustered settlements such as Klemzig, Lobethal and Hahndorf. By the early 1860s land agents and speculators had driven up land prices in South Australia, forcing many families to look elsewhere to support their growing extended families. Around the same time New South Wales opened much of the Riverina for small farm settlement. Farmers could select up to 320 acres of fertile land at a price ten times lower than the South Australian rate. Soon, forty families left South Australia in a wagon trek, ultimately selecting land and settling in Jindera. Over time, many more families came, either in treks or individually.

Frugal and hardworking, driven by the proverbial Protestant work ethic, the German farmers were generally well respected at the time. Their strong sense of community carried over into farming, with neighbours frequently helping each other in labour-intensive tasks. It was a common practice that farmers would try to buy up land in their own vicinity for their siblings and children, in order to be able to farm together for several generations. As each generation took up new land, and a chain migration continuously brought new settlers from South Australia, the German settlements spread to places like Edgehill (near Henty), Burrumbuttock, Pleasant Hills and Walbundrie (fig. 2). While many of these settlements still exist, others, such as Alma Park or Bethel, have disappeared. There only the churches and the grave markers stand silent witness to the German past.

The German farms were characterised by diversified subsistence agriculture, encompassing wheat and other grain crops, root crops and frequently a small vineyard. Most farms kept horses for work and transport, as well as cattle and pigs for milk and meat, but only rarely ran sheep. Changes in agricultural practices, in particular the extensive mechanisation of the industry after World War II, brought about changes to land use. Many of the German farms, which frequently only comprised a small acreage, were amalgamated, thereby obliterating the earlier field patterns.
German properties were usually comprised of a residence and a separate kitchen building, commonly with a large external bake oven (fig. 3). In addition, there were outbuildings such as a seed and grain shed, a stable and wagon shed.

Early German building techniques relied heavily on the use of timber and earth. Colloquially, but incorrectly, called ‘wattle and daub’, most buildings used the ‘pug and pine’ technique: a strong wooden frame was erected to bear the roof; the walls were made up of saplings of Murray pine (White Cypress) which were set vertically as close together as possible. The spaces in between were then filled with ‘pug’, a mixture of locally sourced clay and chaff; a final, thick layer of pug was used to render the pine sapling walls.

The early houses had a bark roof, which was later replaced by corrugated iron. Although sometimes belittled as ‘houses of the poor’ by townsfolk, these buildings were well suited to the German community and the environment. The building materials could be sourced without cost from the property itself. The thick earth walls required less heating in winter and were cooler in summer.

An added benefit was that termites avoided the timber of the Murray pine, which grew abundantly on the sandier rises. If maintained through the occasional application of mud render, these buildings were very long-lived, provided that the roof remained water tight.

Even though eminently suited to the times, these buildings had a tendency to exhibit cracking of the walls in response to seasonally changing moisture conditions. While this
was not a concern from a structural point of view, such cracks were unsightly. In addition, as was typical for all rural farmhouses at that time, the buildings were small and quite dark. Changed expectations of living standards have resulted in many of these buildings being abandoned and left to decay. Although once abundant, now only a few are left. As time goes by, most of these will merge with the soil from which they were once created.

Today, much of the former German presence can only be traced in the memories of the residents, and through the objects that are kept by the families’ descendants and in museums such as the Jindera Pioneer Museum. These objects fall into three broad categories: items that were brought from Germany, items that were acquired or made while living in South Australia, and items that were acquired when living in Jindera.

Looking at the objects which can be identified as being of German origin one is struck by the wide range: from treasured family heirlooms, such as the bibles (nº 1), to the quirky, such as the homeopathic instrument (nº 13); from the celebratory, such as the cup and saucer (nº 10), to the utterly mundane, such as the draining board for washing up brushes (nº12).

While the objects showcased here are only a selection, they are representative of the German experience in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Many of these objects tell something about their owners’ lives. The two different sides of the cabin chest (nº 3), for example, show the change from the voyage out, where the chest served in the cabin or steerage, to the first home, where the chest, now painted, served as the first piece of furniture.

Likewise, the book on the homeopathic Baunscheidt method (nº 13) tells us something about its former owner. Small irregular pieces of paper, all torn off the same sheet and inserted as book marks, allow us to deduce that the ailment the (last) user of the item suffered from was some kind of eye ailment which would have clouded his or her vision.

In their own way, the artefacts are like keyholes that allow us to glimpse into the private lives of their owners over a hundred years ago.
Figure 3. German bake oven at the rear of the kitchen building of the Lieschke homestead “Wattle Grove”, Edgehill, near Henty (NSW).
German Heirlooms

While immigrants brought a range of items with them to the new land, room on the emigrant ships was limited and freight costs were high.

A range of guidebooks, published between 1840 and 1860, advised prospective immigrants on what to bring. With the exception of the earliest publications, the consensus expressed was to bring as little as possible and to acquire the items at their destination and only once their real needs became apparent. Stated exceptions were the family bible and, if required by the emigrant, tools of his specialist trade.

As the Lutheran immigrants strongly identified with their faith it is not surprising that Bibles feature high in the list of heirlooms brought out to Australia. Most are still held in family hands. The ages of some of these items are astonishing: one held in the Jindera Museum is almost 440 years old. As these books were held by the eldest son in a family, they indicate that it was not just the younger siblings who emigrated, but that economic consideration also drove the heads of families to leave their homeland.

Other heirlooms that would have been brought out were the family jewellery. For obvious reasons, these items remain in family hands and have not been donated to the regional museums.
FAMILY BIBLE, PUBLISHED IN 1699 BY GLEDITSCH IN LEIPZIG.

The family bible was an important item that was brought to Australia on emigration. Significant is the fact that this Bible would have been about 170 years old by the time it arrived in the Riverina. It demonstrates the importance and longevity of such religious texts. This Bible is well used, with underlining and annotations in ink throughout.

BIBLIA Das ist Die gantze Heilige Schrift Alten und Neuen Testaments ver-deutscht durch D. Martin Luthern (The Bible. The complete old and new testament as translated by Martin Luther).

Six-compartment binding in paste board with leather spine and green cloth, 221 x 145 mm, 37 mm thick.
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Religious Text “The Prophets”, published in 1579 by Berwald heirs in Leipzig. The item was brought to Australia on emigration. This book would have been around 290 years old by the time it arrived in the Riverina.

Die Propheten. Allen frommen und einfeltigen Christen und Hausvätern zum unterricht und tröst in diesen sorglichen letzten Zeiten (‘The prophets. For all pious and plain living Christians and heads of families for education and solace in these recent, worrisome times’).

Six compartment binding, tooled leather drawn on wooden oak boards, with two bronze clasps, front corners strengthened by brass bands, 330 x 208 mm, 134 mm thick.
The early German emigrants travelled by ship, sailing via the Cape of Good Hope, with a voyage taking some three and a half months. Even though the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 dramatically cut travel times, the immigrant ships took the cheaper but longer route. Travelling for three to four months required very different preparations than we have to make today when we can step onto an airplane which will deliver us to Europe in under 27 hours. Choices had to be made regarding which items were to be placed in the hold, and thus were inaccessible for the duration of the journey, and which items were required in the cabins or the steerage decks. The latter were kept in specially marked cabin chests.

In addition to reading and religious edification, entertainment on the long voyage comprised of harmonic singing and folk dances, accompanied by amateur music. Due to the fact that they were easily transportable, concertinas were a popular instrument.
Trunks such as these were loaded into the cabin or steerage room of immigrant ships. As one side clearly states, it was owned by George Krautz and his family who emigrated in 1865 from Preilack in Prussia. The then 32-year old shoemaker arrived with his wife and four children in Adelaide aboard the immigrant ship Iserbook. The other side of the trunk is decorated with two ‘Bauernmalerei’ (peasant art) panels in blue, showing floral motifs, set against a maroon background. Red and blue are typical German Protestant colours. After arrival in South Australia the chest would have been reversed and served the family in their new home as a trunk for the family linen.

Wooden cabin trunk with flat lid, rope handles, painted inscription on back “No III. George Krautz | über Hamburg | Port Adelaide” left: “Raum” The sides and rear are painted in ‘Bauernmalerei.’ 955 x 425 x 375 mm.
Concertinas were small and compact, yet very versatile instruments and enjoyed great popularity in rural communities. They were used to accompany both religious and secular music.

Red bellows with gilt embossed printing. Light brown wood with keys covered with mother of pearl. Numbers for keys punched into the wood. The corners of the bellows have been repaired repeatedly, indicating that the instrument has seen extensive use. Pushed together 200mm. End pieces 160x160mm.
RELIGIOUS SONG BOOK,
EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

Songbook produced for the Christian missionaries. Deemed a suitable songbook for emigrants.
Although the volume is undated, its general appearance indicates a probable date of the first part of the nineteenth century and thus it is likely to have been brought out to Australia by the first immigrants.

Third edition, quarter leather, 109 x 173 mm.
The Trek

By the early 1860s, land in South Australia had become very expensive as land speculators controlled the majority of the market, asking up to £10 per acre. In May 1866 Johann Gottfried Scholz and Johann Gottlieb Diebert travelled from Mount Gambier (SA) to the Riverina to investigate the options of acquiring land. In 1861 the New South Wales government had changed the Land Act, permitting naturalised citizens to select up to 320 acres without survey, provided they paid a deposit of 5/- per acre upon selection and the balance of 15/- within three years.

Scholz and Diebert found the area around Jindera to their liking and selected land. In their subsequent move from South Australia they were accompanied by forty other families, who all travelled together in a wagon trek. This proved to be the first of many large wagon treks. A typical trek followed the Murray River and took about six weeks. On the trek the wagon carried not only the family’s belongings, but it also served as the family’s home on the road, with the children sleeping in the wagon and the parents underneath. Upon arrival, the wagon served as residence until the first house had been built.
WAGON, SOUTH AUSTRALIA
PRE 1867

Owned by the Funk family and used for their trek from South Australia in 1867. High-boarded wagons were typical of German settlers throughout southeastern Australia. They show four upright standards set in the ends of cross-timbers above the axle heads. To these the distinctive ladder-like sides are attached. The colours of red and blue are typical Protestant colours.

Leiterwagen (‘Ladder wagon’) with lattice structure and high sideboards. Traces of original paint still in evidence; sideboards painted blue, vertical ribs and wheels painted red. 3960 x 1950 mm.
Figure 4. Grave marker with German inscription, St. Peter’s Cemetery, Gerogery West (NSW).
The Protestant Lutheran faith that had bound communities together in South Australia remained the binding force in the new communities of the Southern Riverina. People identified strongly with their faith, which permeated all aspects of community and private life. The congregations formed a close-knit network that was strengthened by inter-marriage and by serving as each other’s Godparents.

As all religious materials were written in the German language, they had to be sourced from German booksellers specialising in Bibles, hymnbooks and paraphernalia such as Christening certificates.

While the editions of the Bible were a matter of personal preference, with many families electing to purchase ostentatious, large-sized editions with highly ornate bindings as issued by US bible publishers, the hymnbooks were standardised. They only varied in terms of their binding.

Of common concern was maintaining the German language which was spoken at home and taught at school. Rather than using German government schoolbooks, the communities sourced their readers and grammars from Protestant German-language publishers in the USA as the religious content of their readers was preferable to the secular reading matter provided in the government text.
The ‘Breslauer Gesangbuch’ (the hymnbook issued by the congregation of Wroclaw, then Germany, now Poland) was adopted by the Lutheran Congregations in Australia as the standard hymn text. Upon confirmation many German children were presented with their own hymnbook, symbolising their full membership of the church. These books were obtained from the German bookseller Oskar Müller of Hochkirch (now Tarrington), Victoria, who specialised in importing religious texts from Silesia in Germany.

Hymnbooks, bound in black, blind-stamped cloth with gilt titling and gilt edged sides. 115 x 180 mm.
Christenings were significant events in Lutheran communities. Godparents commemorated these by gifting certificates sourced from Germany. The envelopes which accompany these certificates are highly ornamented and often come with their own protective boxes. The envelopes carry German inscriptions.

The German language played a significant role in maintaining cultural identity. The German bookseller Oskar Müller of Hochkirch (now Tarrington), Victoria, imported these educational texts from Protestant publishing houses in the USA.

First exercise book for third and fourth grade, published by Concordia Publishing, St. Louis, Missouri, USA. Brown cloth with black titling. Name inscription both in children’s and adult’s handwriting.

115 x 186 mm.
Figure 5. Verandah of the former Drew homestead, Edgehill, near Henty (NSW).
The Domestic Scene

Many domestic utensils in German households, such as crockery, cutlery, pots, and pans, and the like, were acquired after arrival in the Riverina and thus are indistinguishable from those owned by English settlers. Everybody sourced such items from the local shops or catalogues from mail order houses such as Hordern House in Sydney. Only those items that German families could not obtain through these channels were bought from importers of German goods. They sold items such as porcelain with German inscriptions, ceramic tobacco pipes with German motifs and kitchen utensils that were peculiarly German or had German-language labels.

Given the pivotal role that Lutheran Protestantism played in the German community, it is not surprising that religion also manifested itself in the household sphere. Porcelain used for special occasions was frequently ornamented with religious proverbs or verses from the bible. House blessing plaques with scripture were often placed above doors to ensure the physical and spiritual well-being of the family.
COMMEMORATIVE CUP AND SAUCER
LATE NINETEENTH/EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

Sets of cups and saucers were popular gifts for special occasions, such as weddings and wedding anniversaries. They commemorative inscription relates to the occasion or the recipient.

The cup and saucer set was made from a good quality, but not prestigious, porcelain manufacturer, indicating a modest budget.

Commemorative Cup and Saucer, Krister Porzellanmanufaktur in Waldenburg (Silesia), early twentieth century. Porcelain, light blue glaze with gilt inscription surrounded by floral design.

Cup: Gilt inscription “Ich gratuliere.” (“I congratulate”) Gilt rim. On bottom, Stamp of sword and ‘KPM’ blue under glaze; black circular mark above glaze ‘Made in Germany.’ Handwritten painters mark in gilt ‘7371.’ Diameter 93mm, height 75 mm.

Saucer: Stamp on bottom, sword and ‘KPM’ blue under glaze. Diameter 160 mm, Height 18 mm.
Ornamental plates served mainly as display items, but were also used as tableware or serving platters on special occasions. The German text on the plate’s rim is a line from the Holy Prayer “Give us this day our daily bread”.

It is highly probable that the plate was sourced from German merchants either in Albury or in Melbourne.
Wall mounted enamelled draining boards were common in German households at the turn of the twentieth century.

While most contemporary draining boards were decorated they were devoid of text. This draining board, with its highly structured appearance is illustrative of the fastidiousness of nineteenth century Protestant households, who followed the adage that cleanliness was next to Godliness.

Most nineteenth century German recipe books carried a section on the proper running and organisation of a kitchen. They strongly advocated that different tea towels be used for the drying of glasses, plates, pots and so forth. This draining board for washing up brushes pushes this concept even further.

Wall-mounted draining board for six washing up brushes. White enamel with German text in blue-black Fraktur type face. The text reads: “Spül-Bürsten | Tassen, Tüllen, Gläser, Kannen, Braten, Teller.” (“Washing up brushes | cups, soup bowls, glasses, jugs, frying pots, plates.”) 425 x 270 x 40 mm.
HOMEOPATHIC MEDICINE KIT FOR THE BAUNScheidT METHOD, 1870s

The Baunscheidt Method was a homeopathic remedy in which the skin was punctured and rubbed with an irritant oil in order to treat a wide variety of ailments.

The Lebenswecker and associated Baunscheidt products, originally created in Germany, represent a technique imported by German migrants to Australia. They document the continued use of this technique for ailments as they dispersed into other regions of the country. Scientifically this is of significance as it is indicative of the early introduction and use of homeopathic treatments within Australia.

Lebenswecker, steel needles set in metal head, encased in faux Ebony handle. Spring mechanism made of brass. 1860s-1870s (285mm long, 30mm diameter).

Bottle of Baunscheidt Oil with original cork. Bottle still contains a sample of the oil (74mm, 33mm diameter).

Book on Baunscheidt Method, tenth edition, Bonn 1869. Half leather, original paper wrappers bound in (135 x 212 mm).
HOUSE BLESSING (HAUSSEGEN),
ABOUT 1905-1910

German homes had house blessings mounted atop the main doors as well as frequently atop the family bed(s). These blessings, citing religious proverbs or verses of the Bible, were meant to ensure that the family was free from physical or spiritual harm.

This Haussegen with its Art Nouveau lettering was made in Germany and probably imported by one of the German merchants in Melbourne.

Inscription in Art Nouveau lettering.
Wording reads 'Jesu, geh voran | auf der Lebensbahn.' ('Jesus, lead the path of life').
670 x 280 x 10 mm
German Nationalism

Even though the settlers had made Australia their permanent home, not all Germans of the first immigrant generation had become naturalised citizens of New South Wales. For some settlers the ties to the Fatherland remained. After 1871 the previously independent German states had been unified to become the German Empire with the Kings of Prussian becoming German Emperors.

Emperor Wilhelm II ascended the throne on 15 June 1888 following the death of his father Emperor Frederick III. Unlike his father, who had reigned for only 99 days, Wilhelm II followed a militarist-nationalist agenda that ultimately set Germany on an a collision course with the United Kingdom.

The economic boom, as well as rise of Germany as a colonial power during the 1890s saw an upsurge of German nationalism, with Germany actively seeking the support of expatriate German communities in Australia, South America and the United States.

As a result, the loyalty of many Germans to their new homeland in Australia came under suspicion during World War I with many families placed under surveillance. Five community members in Walla Walla were detained and the use of the German language in schools and church services was terminated. This transition can be seen on many grave markers, where the first inscription is in German, with inscription(s) added after World War I executed in English.
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PORTRAITS OF THE GERMAN IMPERIAL COUPLE, ABOUT 1888/89

Chromolithographic prints in wood frame. Each 565 x 435 mm.

Emperor Wilhelm II (1859–1941)

Empress Augusta Viktoria of Schleswig-Holstein (1858-1921)
Recruiting Spouses

Throughout the world it is a common practice that children of the first locally-born immigrant generation marry within the immigrant community, while children of the second generation ‘marry out.’ In the case of the Lutheran Germans, the strong identification with their faith limited the choices of marriage outside the community.

After the third generation, most Germans in the Southern Riverina were related to some extent and opportunities for finding spouses within the community became increasingly limited. In search of marriage partners many settlers went to South Australia or to the German communities in western Victoria.

Additional ‘sources’ of spouses were the German communities in Melbourne as well as overseas Germans who came to settle in Australia. Following Word War I and the well-publicised failure of the soldier settlement schemes it became harder to source marriage partners. At least one spouse came from the former German Pacific colony of New Guinea.

This ongoing inter-marriages strengthened the German community but also isolated its members from a full integration into the wider Australian population. After World War II intermarriage with non-German descendants became more common.
Imperial Germany had compulsory military service for all young men over 17 years of age. Service in the German Army lasted two years, during which much emphasis was placed on discipline, punctuality and order. The esprit d’corps was fostered and manifested itself in formal social events such as the Bierabend (beer drinking event) for which special beer mugs were used.

Irdware, hand painted, with customised inscriptions under glaze, 1905.


At base: ‘Es lebe hoch das Regiment das sich mit Stolz “Prinz Leopold” nennt.’ (‘Long live the Regiment that calls itself with pride “Prince Leopold” [of Bavaria]’).

280 x 120 mm.
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Front Cover: Rear door, Protestant Schoolhouse, St. Peter’s Protestant Church, Gerogery West, NSW.
A large number of residents in the Southern Riverina trace their ancestry to German settlers. Attracted to the fertile lands of the Riverina, they travelled from South Australia on arduous wagon treks. From 1867 onwards they formed communities clustered around communally-built Protestant Churches in Gerogery, Jindera, Walla Walla, Edgehill, Burrumbuttock, Pleasant Hills and Walbundrie.

Frugal and hardworking, driven by the proverbial Protestant work ethic, the German farmers were generally well respected at the time. Their strong Protestant Lutheran faith governed both public and private lives.

Through a series of objects from the Jindera Pioneer Museum, this catalogue illustrates the experience of the German community during the nineteenth and early twentieth century.