

George Ernest: A Hanover Graduate

Claire Wojtowicz

George Ernest was born in Holstein, Germany, on September 19, 1845.¹ He immigrated to the United States of America in 1867 presumably for an education.² There is little information on the years directly after his arrival in the states, but according to the 1870 United States Census, Ernest was living in Hanover, Indiana, and attending Hanover College.³ The information from the census pages shows how immigration affected his time in America, based on those in his household and those living near him. Additionally, other census records show his movement around the United States, his chosen occupation, and the growth of his family. The topic of Ernest's understanding and acceptance of other immigrant groups as well as the acceptance of his own ethnicity is an important step in learning about German Americans in the Midwest, but even more specifically, German Americans in southern Indiana. George Ernest, a German American immigrant in the late nineteenth century, was exposed to multiple immigrant groups during his time in southern Indiana, all of whom helped him adapt to his new life in southern Indiana. Moreover, he learned how well his own ethnicity was accepted and how previous German Americans had responded to social issues in America, all of which started with his time at Hanover College and continued throughout his movement around the Midwest and western America as he pursued ordination.

¹ "Alumni Record," *Bulletin of Hanover College*, vol. 5, no. 11 (1913): 47.

² 1900 United States Census, Otoe, South Branch Township, Nebraska, digital image, s.v. "George Ernest" (1845-1921), *Ancestry.com*.

https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/search/collections/7602/records/32812914?tid=&pid=&queryId=5f020fc7-646c-477b-b3b0-d5e73cf81869&_phsrc=WNG116&_phstart=successSource.

³ 1870 United States Census, Hanover, Jefferson County, Indiana, digital image, s.v. "George Ernest" (1845-1921), *Ancestry.com*.

https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/search/collections/7163/records/19296686?tid=&pid=&queryId=05fe45e9-0a29-4a7f-a1b3-2d2aebc4e66c&_phsrc=WNG118&_phstart=successSource.

As found in the 1870 United States Census, George Ernest resided with seven other individuals during his time in Hanover. The head of the household was James Arbuckle who, along with his wife, daughter, and three other individuals, was native to the United States and either born in Indiana or Kentucky. George Ernest, however, was not the only immigrant living in the dwelling. John Lyons, a twenty-seven-year-old male, had immigrated to the United States from Scotland and was also attending Hanover College.⁴ Ernest and Lyons were both in the college's preparatory program at the same time, which functioned similar to a modern high school. In 1870, George Ernest was a senior and John Lyons was a junior.⁵ Considering the other members Ernest lived with gives insight into who he interacted with the most and which ethnicities he was around most often. In the house directly next to theirs were two elder women who had immigrated to America from England. Also living adjacent to Ernest was an African-American family.⁶ Living in such close proximity to other immigrants would have made Ernest's transfer to America easier. Not only was he close with Lyons, who was similar in age and living in the same house, but he had two other immigrants from Europe living next to him that could have helped him acclimate to America by sharing their personal immigration stories and experiences. This shared aspect of their lives undoubtedly helped Ernest find a sense of community in an unknown area. Additionally, living next to an African-American family would have exposed Ernest to Black culture and deepened his understanding of American politics during the 1870s, regardless of prior knowledge.

⁴ 1870 Census, *Ancestry.com*.

⁵ *Annual Catalogue of Hanover College, Indiana, June 1870* (Madison, Indiana: Courier Steam Printing Establishment, 1870), 8-9.

⁶ 1870 Census, *Ancestry.com*.

The strong presence and impact of German Americans in Ohio cannot be overlooked, especially with George Ernest's relative proximity to the "Queen City of the West," Cincinnati.⁷ With increasing numbers of German and European immigrants, Cincinnati became a center for immigrants to share their crafts and blend cultures. Inhabitants of Cincinnati were forced to take a stand on the pressing issues of racism and abolition. Most German immigrants in the Midwest joined the Republican party and strongly advocated for the eradication of slavery in America.⁸ Ernest likely would have taken a similar viewpoint and been open to social integration and the elimination of racism in American societies. Even though George Ernest did not arrive to America until 1867, the beliefs held by previous German immigrants would not have disappeared before his arrival. Ernest spent the years following his graduation from Hanover moving around Indiana and Iowa; thus he would have encountered similar beliefs from other German immigrants who shared the viewpoints of the German abolitionists of the 1860s.

George Ernest's movement across the United States also influenced him by bringing him into contact with other German Americans who likely all shared the same faith and social beliefs. Ernest graduated from Hanover College in 1874 and soon after moved to Dubuque, Iowa, and studied as a German theology scholar, working toward becoming a licensed Presbyterian pastor, which he achieved in 1876. He was soon after ordained in New Albany, Indiana, in 1877.⁹ Ernest met and married Mary Metzger in 1876.¹⁰ The 1880 United States Census shows that George

⁷ Mischa Honeck, *We Are the Revolutionists: German-Speaking Immigrants & American Abolitionists after 1848* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2011): 74.

⁸ Honeck, *We Are the Revolutionists*; Kristen L. Anderson, "German Americans, African Americans, and the Republican Party in St. Louis, 1865-1872," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, vol. 28, no. 1 (2008): 34–51.

⁹ "Alumni Record," *Bulletin of Hanover College*, vol. 5, no. 11 (1913): 47.

¹⁰ "Indiana, Marriages, 1810-2001," digital image, s.v. "Mary K. Metzger" (1858-1914), *Ancestry.com*, https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/search/collections/60282/records/3078586?tid=&pid=&queryId=726fad2-56d0-45a6-8adf-7c8389d37553&_phsrc=WNG127&_phstart=successSource.

Ernest was working as a pastor and living with Mary and their one-year-old son Edward, who passed away three years later in Brownstown, Indiana.¹¹ Additionally, Ernest's time as pastor of the Brownstown German Presbyterian Church included leading the funeral service of a Mrs. Elizabeth Stunkel, as recorded in a newspaper and entitled, "Death of a German Lady."¹² Twenty years later, Ernest was living in Otoe, Nebraska, with Mary and their three children—George, Maud, and Nannie—and still working as a pastor.¹³ By the 1920 United States Census, retired and widower Ernest was seventy-four years old and living in Lane, Oregon, with his daughter Maud, then twenty-one years old.¹⁴ There is little information on the late years of his life, but he passed away in 1921 at age seventy-six in Yakima, Washington.¹⁵

Immigrating to America opened George Ernest's eyes to vast social issues and gave him the opportunity to interact with other German Americans. Ernest was educated at Hanover Preparatory School and then Dubuque Theological Seminary to become a Presbyterian pastor.

¹¹ "U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current," digital image, s.v. "Edward Josiah Ernest" (1879-1883), *Ancestry.com*; 1880 United States Census, Brownstown, Jackson County, Indiana, digital image, s.v. "George Ernest" (1845-1921), *Ancestry.com*, https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/search/collections/60525/records/60527377?tid=&pid=&queryId=3ba19bce-21be-487a-a31e-33cbd95287be&_phsrc=WNG122&_phstart=successSource.

¹² "Death of a German Lady," *Jackson County Banner*, October 25, 1877, *Newspapers.com*, <https://www.newspapers.com/article/jackson-county-banner-obituary-for-eliza/167356843/>.

¹³ 1900 United States Census, Otoe, South Branch Township, Nebraska, digital image, s.v. "George Ernest" (1845-1921), *Ancestry.com*, https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/search/collections/7602/records/32812914?tid=&pid=&queryId=5f020fc7-646c-477b-b3b0-d5e73cf81869&_phsrc=WNG116&_phstart=successSource.

¹⁴ 1920 United States Census, Lane, Eugene Ward 2 Township, Oregon, digital image, s.v. "George Ernest" (1845-1921), *Ancestry.com*, https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/search/collections/6061/records/105355647?tid=&pid=&queryId=77c09ef3-704f-4eab-83a5-3704510d6ac7&_phsrc=WNG114&_phstart=successSource.

¹⁵ "Washington, U.S., Select Death Index, 1907-1960," digital image, s.v. "George Ernest" (1845-1921) *Ancestry.com*, https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/search/collections/6716/records/4185320?tid=&pid=&queryId=285a69bb-7ff0-4e3d-af71-191fa5afce27&_phsrc=WNG120&_phstart=successSource.

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After his education, Ernest and Mary began a family and moved to other German American hubs throughout America. He likely would have opposed racism not only due to the precedent set by German Americans in Cincinnati and the Midwest in the mid-1800s, but also because of his life experiences. George Ernest was greatly impacted by his own immigration to America, the immigrants who surrounded him during his first years in America, and the German Americans who came before and set the political standard for many German immigrants, including Ernest, to follow.

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