The larger question is, of course, do these casual articles merit a book? While there is an engaging reminiscence about the trials and tribulations of editing the Lewis and Clark letters, followed by fifty pages on Lewis and Clark place-names in Montana, little else other than Jackson’s reputation warrants this volume.

Richard A. Van Orman is professor of history, Purdue University Calumet, Hammond, Indiana. He is currently working on a book on crime in nineteenth century America.


A seemingly endless flow of Germans migrated to America in the nineteenth century and up to World War I. Historian Walter D. Kamphoefner examines the emigration from Westfalia to St. Charles and Warren counties, Missouri, before the Civil War. Although Westfalia appears in the title of this work, the districts of neighboring provinces (Oldenburg and Hannover) are included, as they shared the same socioeconomic conditions favorable for emigration and also shared the Low German language.

Through the extensive use of emigration records; census, agricultural, and industrial statistics; and manuscript collections, Kamphoefner draws a convincing portrait of the German emigrant. The landless rural lower class used emigration as a means to re-root its traditional life while gaining respectability and security through land ownership.

During the 1830s the foundations of rural life in Germany were shaking loose. Prior to the industrial revolution the German rural lower class made its living by farming and eked out its existence by cottage industry. Kamphoefner states that “a feature common to all these areas of heavy emigration was a well-developed cottage linen industry carried on by the rural lower class on a part-time basis . . .” (p. 16). This part-time weaving was the domain of the Heuerling class, which owned no real estate but rented a cottage and a small plot of land from a Kolon, or landed peasant. The Heuerling was also obligated to provide the Kolon a fixed number of days of service. The competition of Britain’s industrialized cotton textile mills began to affect the Heuerling’s livelihood, and the result was “misery and massive emigration” (p. 20).

Although the Heuerling and the rural independent artisans (mostly shoemakers and tailors not part of the structured guild system) were impoverished, they were not destitute, for they were able to secure funds for their emigration passage. If families did not have the funds to leave as a unit, one or more members would emigrate and send for family members at a later date, arranging
for their passage and employment. This system of chain migration made it possible for extended families and entire villages of landless to relocate in new settlements in America and elsewhere, thus creating Low German colonies as news trickled back.

Not all German emigrants of the early nineteenth century were from the landless rural class, but this group came to the United States in such great numbers that they shaped the character of the migration. The goal of these emigrants was to own land. Few of the part-time weavers and artisans continued their old crafts commercially after establishing themselves as farmers in Missouri. Cheap agricultural land in America enabled the land-hungry emigrants to fulfill their dreams of owning property, establishing an independent economic existence, and gaining respectability (pp. 168-69).

Kamphoefner provides convincing statistical evidence in the numerous tables based on his German sources. United States population and agricultural censuses, as well as county histories, church histories, and Missouri German-language newspapers, were used to track the emigrants after their settlement in Missouri. Kamphoefner’s work also challenges earlier ideas of the nature and results of emigration. The author refutes the myth of the importance of emigration agents and their propaganda as a major “influence on the volume or direction of migration” (p. 58). He challenges Mack Walker’s characterization of the pre-1865 emigrant as a middle-class landed peasant or master craftsman (pp. 41, 45). Oscar Handlin’s image of the uprooted immigrant as disconnected and disoriented does not apply to Kamphoefner’s north Germans in Missouri (pp. 5, 199).

The Westfalians is of great value to those interested in Indiana’s immigration, ethnic, local, and family history. The reasons cited for emigration apply equally well to the many north Germans who chose Indiana rather than Missouri and rerooted their way of life in such places as Oldenburg, Huntersville, the White Creek area of Jackson and Bartholomew counties, and other rural Indiana communities.

WILLIAM L. SELM is historian for the Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission and vice-president of the Indiana German Heritage Society. His ancestors (half from Westfalia and Oldenburg) came before the Civil War and settled as artisans and farmers in Franklin County, Indiana.


In this finely crafted narrative Merrill D. Peterson presents a compelling and informing collective biography of the Great Triumvirate of nineteenth century American politics, Daniel Webster,