



BACK TO SCHOOL *at the* GERMAN AMERICAN HERITAGE CENTER

BY LESLIE KLIPSCH

With Quad-Cities kids back in school this September, I find myself in the mood to sharpen a pencil, open a crisp notebook, and learn something new. That's why, after over a half dozen years of exploring the Quad-Cities, I decided a visit to the German American Heritage Center, a small museum in a beautifully restored riverfront building, was long overdue.

“On first look, the German American Heritage Center may seem like a niche museum where only people with German ancestry will enjoy a visit,” the museum’s assistant director Kelly Lao told me after my inaugural outing. “But the German American Heritage Center explores many topics enjoyed by

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by Mandy
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First, a little about my business, Fashion Unfolded is a style consulting business created to help women and men clean out the clutter from their closets, create stylish outfits from clothing they already own, and shop for new items in order to complete a fashionable wardrobe.

I thought very carefully about where I should spend my advertising dollars before deciding to try out Gold Book. I'd like to share my thoughts about why GB seemed like a good print placement.

- ***Gold Book reaches out to an audience with attractive demographics; an audience I thought offered great potential.***
- ***Gold Book has a distinct style which I appreciate and have for several years now.***
- ***I liked the affordable ad rates.***
- ***Since launching my business earlier this year, I'm pleased to report I have attracted several clients through my Gold Book advertising.***
- ***Great Gold Book staff!***

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all segments of our community. We share German American contributions to science, industry, and the arts as well as speak to the immigrant experience in the 1850 to 1920 period, allowing all generations to understand how America was populated during this period of history and understand the heritage of Davenport and the Midwest.”

The current exhibit featuring Gustav Stickley, the German-American furniture icon, immediately drew me in. The Stickley exhibit (at the museum until Nov. 1) displays original antique and current Stickley furniture and gives a rich history of the Arts and Crafts movement. Anyone with an interest in this period of American design will enjoy learning about Stickley’s formative years and his influential (and tumultuous) tenure in the business.

I found the rest of the museum to be thought provoking, and not simply because my great-great-grandparents emigrated from Germany and traveled through Davenport before heading further west, though this

perhaps heightened my experience. Having just read Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s novel “Americanah,” which is set in the present and told through the perspective of a female Nigerian immigrant, I was struck by how the hardships and adventure of abandoning the familiar with great hope for opportunity and a more peaceful, prosperous life once again unfolded in front of my eyes as I wandered through the permanent exhibit on the third floor of the museum.

This impression is perhaps what makes the German American Heritage Center a worthwhile destination. Museum staff has done a wonderful job of prompting viewers to observe through sight, sound, and story the perennial plight of a newcomer in an unfamiliar land. Anytime we learn about struggle and bravery, and honor the human experience with our attention and presence, our perspective widens and our compassion grows.

Ms. Lao’s favorites

“I love the Step Into My Shoes



Win a Stickley rocking chair!

Arts and Crafts enthusiasts can enter to win a beautiful Harvey Ellis Rocker with Cordoba black leather from Stickley Furniture. Raffle tickets are for sale at the

museum (one for \$10 or three for \$20). The chair was donated by exhibit sponsor Knilians’ Furniture and Interiors and is valued at over \$2,000. All proceeds from the fundraiser go to the German American Heritage Center.

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Upcoming events at the German American Heritage Center

Sept. 6: Exhibit opening: You’re a Good Man, Charles Schulz!

Sept. 9: Stickley historian Mike Danial presents the history of Stickley Furniture

Sept. 13: Local illustrator/artist Jason Platt presents the life and work of Charles Schulz



Photos by Leslie Klipsch

All of the items in the German American Heritage Center gift shop are from Germany.

interactive in our permanent exhibit, The German Immigrant Experience. You can step on the footprint of a man, woman, or child then an immigrant pops up on the video screen explaining their journey to America and both the hardships and excitement they experienced upon arrival,” said Ms. Lao. Each short vignette gives visitors a very real perspective of the immigrant experience through letters home, diary entries, and other firsthand materials. Museum-goers young and old will enjoy this portion of the exhibit.

My favorite

My visit took place on a Saturday morning and I was happy to stumble upon the Davenport Zither Club’s weekly rehearsal. The zither is an instrument that has strings stretched across a shallow box and is plucked by the musician’s fingers while placed across the player’s knees or on a table. I had never seen or heard a zither before and was delighted to hear the 12-person ensemble

play a short, lively selection. This weekly club gathering comes with a long and rich history itself — hanging on the wall of the museum is a picture of the Davenport Zither Club, dated 1885.

The details

You can’t miss the German American Heritage Center at the foot of the Centennial Bridge at 712 W. 2nd St., Davenport. The museum is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays and noon to 4 p.m. Sundays. Their detailed website, gahc.org, includes updated events, exhibits, history, and mission.

Each month in The Gold Standard, Leslie Klipsch, a freelance writer and editor based in Davenport, shines a spotlight on the gems of the Quad-Cities area — for Gold Book readers. She enjoys reading, cooking, spending time with her husband and three young children and exploring all that the Quad-Cities has to offer. Read more of Leslie at leslieklipsch.com.

