**Far West:**

**The Writings of Friedrich Muench**

**By Don Heinrich Tolzmann**

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**Introduction**

Well known as the author behind the pen name “Far West,” Friedrich Muench (1799-1881) enjoys almost legendary status not only because of the role he played in the history of German immigration, but also because of the tremendous amount of publications that flowed from his pen. An obituary in the *Westliche Post* referred to him as “the German-American nestor and the pride of his countrymen in Missouri.” (1) The term “nestor” comes from Greek mythology and refers to an elder statesman, who is widely venerated by the general public. There can be no doubt that Muench was widely viewed as such by German-Americans of his time.

Gustav Koerner wrote of him: “He had an enormously positive influence on the German element, as well as on other settlers. His life was an open book, as a result of the various articles about him that appeared in Germany and in the United States, the service he rendered as a legislator, and especially his numerous and widely-distributed publications dealing with religion, ethics, politics, agriculture, and viticulture. And his life story was a plainly written one, a book that no reader can lay aside without having been entertained, edified, and encouraged.” (2) And Siegmar Muehl described him as a ”significant figure in German-American and Missouri history,” and that “he wrote prolifically and published widely in leading German-American newspapers and periodicals.” (3) The *Deutsch-Amerikanisches Conversations-Lexikon*, described Muench as one of the German pioneers of the state of Missouri, who contributed not only to the intellectual development of the German element, but moreover made a lasting contribution by means of his “most zealous promotion of German immigration” to the state. (4) Ralph Gregory, however, notes that many of Muench’s publications “are yet to be fully listed.” (5) What follows is an attempt to provide as up to date a checklist as possible of the writings of Muench.

Since Muench had been a friend for many years of Heinrich A. Rattermann, the editor of the historical journal, *Der Deutsche* Pionier, I turned to Rattermann’s collected works, which contains a selection of his articles from his journal. Not surprisingly, I found that in 1912, Rattermann had included a lengthy article on Muench in volume 11 of his works. (6) It basically consisted of Muench’s autobiography with commentary, and had been published earlier as a series of articles in 1882 in the *Pionier*. (7) Earlier, he had also published an article on his 1874 visit with Muench in the same journal, as they had long been in correspondence with one another, and Muench had also published in the *Pionier*. (8) In his 1912 article Rattermann makes reference to something he did not for some reason include in his article included in his collected works, but which had appeared in the last of his 1882 articles: a list of publications by Muench. (9) It can likely be construed that he compiled this list in concert with Muench during his 1874 visit with him, and then added to it in later years, completing the list after the death of Muench in 1881, and the publishing it in 1882.

Although it contains gaps and does not provide complete bibliographical information, it does provide a convenient point of departure for trying to construct a checklist of Muench’s publications that provides a more complete picture of his publication activity. Rattermann’s list was arranged numerically and, for the most part, in chronological order. The following is a revised and expanded version of his list, with my corrections, additions, and annotations. I have annotated the list with explanatory notes, and whenever possible, provided additional information as to place of publication of and publisher, when this could be found. In some cases, no further information could be found, and this is so noted. Also, other works and editions, unknown to Rattermann were added, whenever these could be located. Hopefully, this new listing will engender further information about Muench’s writings and will result in further information being located.

**Rattermann’s List, Revised and Expanded**

Abbreviations:

MA = Frederick Muench, *The Autobiography of Frederick Muench*. Translated from the German language by Ralph Gregory. (Marthasville, Missouri: Three Pines Publishing Co., 2001; reprint of 1964 edition).

MGS = Friedrich Muench, *Gesammelte Schriften*. (St. Louis: C. Witter, 1902).

WC = World Cat bibliographical database

1. Songs and Poems that appeared in journals in Germany, 1819-1832.

At first glance, these items might appear to be lost and, or, at the very least, inaccessible, but they are not. Fortunately, most of them were collected and included in: *MGS*, pp. 1-36. Muench dated his poems, so that his early poems published in Germany can readily be identified and distinguished from those published later in America by means of the date attached to them.

2. Paul Follenius and Friedrich Muench, *Aufforderung und Erklärung in Betreff einer Auswanderung im Grossen aus Deutschland in die nordamerikanischen Freistaaten*. (Giessen, 1832; 2nd edition, Giessen: Gedruckt bei G.D. Brűhl, 1833).

The first edition of this work explains the goals and objectives of the Giessen Emigration Society, and was received with great interest, thus causing a second edition to be prepared that contained the statutes of the Society. According to Muench, it quickly went through two editions and “was read in all parts of Germany” and that “thousands” wanted to support the plan. See: *MGS*, p. 99. This work, therefore, had great resonance in Germany, thereby no doubt increasing the interest in immigration to America.

3. *Der Staat Missouri, geschildert mit besonderer Rűcksicht auf teutsche Einwanderung. Mit zwei Karten*. (New York: L. Hauser, 1859; Bremen, 1859).

This is Muench’s description of the state of Missouri, written especially for prospective German immigrants. Importantly enough for the German immigration, it was published simultaneously in New York and Bremen, the two major port cities for departure from Germany and arrival in America. Targeting the work specifically for these two port cities, demonstrates its particular goal of attracting German immigrants to Missouri. This work experienced several more editions (items no. 7 and 13), and can be considered as one of Muench’s most important and influential works.

*4. Die Zukunft von Nordamerika und Blicke aus der neuen Welt in die alte*. (Bremen, 1860).

A work dealing on the future of North America as viewed from the old and new worlds. Coming right after his 1859 work on Missouri, this no doubt dealt with the topic of immigration to America. This may also have appeared with the same publisher as noted with item no. 3, as it was also published in Bremen, but no further information could be found about it.

5. *Ueber Religion und Christenthum, eine Aufforderung zu besonnener Prűfung an die Deutschen in Nord-Amerika*. (St. Louis, 1863).

A work dealing with religion and Christianity, directed at a German-American readership, this appears to be a later edition of a work published earlier under the same title at Hermann, Missouri by Műhl & Strehly, 1843-47. The multiple years of publication indicate that this was probably printed as a series of individual fascicles and then later bound together in one volume. It also appears to be Muench’s first extensive discussion of his religious views and outlook. For the English edition, see item no. 6.

6. *A Treatise on Religion and Christianity, Orthodoxy and Rationalism*. (Boston, 1864).

According to WC, there is an earlier edition with the same title published in Boston by B.H. Greene, 1847. This appears to be an English translation of the work published in German at Hermann, Missouri, 1843-47, and later in 1863 in St. Louis (item no. 5).

7. *Der Staat Missouri. Ein Handbuch fűr deutsche Auswanderer*. Zweite neue veränderte Ausgabe. (Bremen: C.E. Műller, 1866).

This is the 2nd revised edition of item no. 3, which was published in 1859. Rattermann notes that this edition contains one map, whereas the earlier edition contained two. See item no. 13 for the 3rd edition of this work. Not noted by Rattermann, but according to WC, there also was an Italian edition of this work: *Lo Stato Missouri: Manuale per l’Emigrazione Tedesca*. (Emilia: Stevano Calderini & Co., 1868). Further research might reveal the rationale for bringing out an Italian edition of Muench’s work. It is doubtful that it was published for interest in the topic alone. Was it perhaps also issued in Italy to attract immigrants, such as the ethnic Germans from the Tyrol? Whatever the case, it demonstrates that Muench’s work did also circulate in Italy.

8. *Amerikanische Weinbauschule. Anleitung zur Anlegung des Weinberges*. (St. Louis: C. Witter, 1859; 2nd edition, 1867).

According to WC, there also was a 3rd edition from the same publisher, published in 1877. This was no doubt one of Muench’s most popular works. This work also appeared in English translation as: *School for American Grape Culture: Brief but Thorough and Practical Guide to the Laying Out of Vineyards*. (St. Louis, C. Witter, 1865).

An additional work by Muench, not listed by Rattermann, that deals with grape culture is: *Illustrirtes Verzeichnis und Beschreibung der werthvollsten Amerikanischen Wein-Reben und Klein-Obst-Arten*. (St. Louis: Gedruckt bei R. Stubley, 1869). This was an illustrated guide to and description of American grapes and fruits.

9. *Die sinnliche und geistige Lebensansicht, oder Materialismus und Dualismus, beleuchtet vom Standpunkt der heutigen Wissenschaft. Ein Buch fűr denkende Leser*. (Philadelphia: F.W. Thomas & Sőhne, 1871).

A work written for German-American free-thinkers that explores Muench’s philosophical views of life, and published by one of the major German-American publishing houses in the east.

10. *Geisteslehre fűr die heranwachsende Jugend, zum Gebrauch fűr Lehrer und Schűler und alle Freunde des freien Denkens*. (St. Louis: C. Witter, 1873).

A free-thought work for young readers, designed for use by teachers and students. This work was reprinted in: *FMGS*, pp. 217-68. According to WC, there is also an earlier 1872 edition from the same publisher. For a concise explanation of free thought by Muench, see his essay “Wer ist ein Freidenker?” (Who is a free thinker?) in: *MGS*, pp. 129-134.

11. *Erinnerungen aus Deutschlands trűbster Zeit. Dargestellt in den Lebensbildern von Karl Follen, Paul Follen und Friedr. Műnch*. (St. Louis: C. Witter and Neustadt a. d. Haardt: Witter, 1873).

One of the most valuable of Muench’s historical writings, this work contains his biographies of the Follen brothers, followed by his own autobiography. Fortunately, this was also republished in: *MGS*, pp. 37-125. Moreover, it was also translated by Ralph Gregory. See: MA.

12. *Fűnf Reden űber Religion, Aberglauben und vernűnftiges Menschenthum. An die Deutschen in Nordamerika*. (Bremen: K. Tannen, 1875).

This consists of five addresses by Muench dealing with the topics of religion, superstition, and free thought. They were later republished in: *MGS*, pp. 135-218. A comparison of this work with his earlier works on religion (no. 5-6, 9-10) would yield interesting results as to a systematic review of his views on the topics addressed and discussed.

13. *Der Staat Missouri…*3. ganz umgearbeitete und ansehl. vermehrte Auflage mit einem Anhange. Mit Karte und Holzschnitten. (Bremen, 1875).

This is the third and final edition of Muench’s work on Missouri for prospective German immigrants. See items no. 3 and 7 for the earlier editions. A comparison of all editions would be useful to ascertain what information was added and, or updated from earlier editions. Of particular interest would be an examination of the map and the woodcuts in this final edition. Also, this might be a good candidate to appear in English translation to further illuminate the kinds of information that was being transmitted about Missouri.

14. Literary Works

Rattermann identifies songs and poetry as Muench’s earliest writings, but lists others literary works as well. This includes reference to five novellas. However, only one is listed by title: *Der Flűchtling in Missouri: Novelle von Fr. Műnch*. (1853). According to the title, it dealt with a refugee in Missouri, so that it might be of historical interest, but no information as to place of publication was indicated. Konrad Nies, notes in the introduction to Muench’s writings that his novellas appeared in various German-American journals, but that he had been unable to locate any of them for inclusion in Muench’s collected works. See: *MGS*, p. xiv. A search of the German-American press, especially publications that carried literary works, might lead to the discovery of Muench’s novellas and short stores. (10)

Finally, Rattermann also lists Muench’s translation of Boernstein’s novel, *Die Geheimnisse von St. Louis*. (Cassel: Verlag und Druck von H. Hotop, 1851), which has appeared recently as: *The Mysteries of St. Louis: A Novel*. Translated by Friedrich Muench and edited by Steven Rowan and Elizabeth Sims. (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1990).

15. Contributions to German-American Press

Muench contributed a substantial number of essays, articles, reviews and letters to various German-American journals, and Rattermann provides a list, too numerous to list here, that were published in the following publications: *Der Deutsche Pionier* carried his historical and biographical articles; in *Atlantis* he covered philosophical topics; philosophical and historical subjects in *Deutsch-Amerikanische Monatshefte*, and matters relating to education and German instruction were dealt with in *Erziehungsblätter*. For a full listing of these contributions, see Rattermann’s list in the *Pionier*.

In addition to his contributions to German-American journals, Muench wrote extensively for German-American newspapers, especially for the *Anzeiger des Westens* and the *Westliche Post* in St. Louis, as well as for the *Belletristisches Journal* in New York. A search of these papers for the time period that Muench was actively writing would most likely yield positive results in finding some of his writings, especially perhaps his novellas that appear to be lost.

Finally, it should be noted that according to his autobiography, Muench served as editor of the *Farmer-Zeitung*. See: *MA*, n.p.

16. Selected Works in German and English

A selection of Muench’s writings appeared as: *Gesammelte Schriften*. (St. Louis: C. Witter, 1902). This work itself has an interesting history. Muench’s three sons ( Julius, Ferdinand, and Hugo) commissioned Konrad Nies, the well known German-American poet, to edit this collection, but due to reasons of health, Nies was not able to complete the task, although he did provide an introduction to the volume, with the work finally completed by Carl G. Rathmann. (11) Although entitled “collected writings,” this work represents only a selection of Muench’s writings, and would have actually been more appropriately entitled “selected works.” Indeed, the foreword of the three sons notes that this work represents only a fragment of their father’s writings. A complete edition of Muench’s collected writings would no doubt comprise a multi-volume work of at least a half dozen volumes. Fortunately, there is a more recent selection of Muench’s works in translation available as: *Friedrich Muench: Man of Letters on the Missouri Frontier: A Reader and Source Book*, translated and edited by Siegmar Muehl. (Iowa City, Iowa, 1994). Both of these works taken together provide the basic primary sources for further work on Muench, but as noted, they are selections, not complete collections, by any means.

**Index to Muench’s Works**

To gain an overview of Muench’s works it is best to group them into several categories so extensive was his publishing activity. The following areas emerge as those that reflect his major areas of interest:

Contributions to German-American journals and newspapers: items no. 15-16

German immigration to Missouri: items no. 2-4, 7, 13, 16

Grape Culture: item no. 8

Historical works, including biographical, autobiographical topics: items no. 11, 15-16

Literary works: items no. 1, 14, 16

Philosophical works, including free thought and theological topics: items no. 5-6, 9-10, 12, 16

Of his numerous works, there is no question that his “bestselling” works were those on grape culture and Missouri for prospective German immigrants. The former went through several editions in German and was also translated into English, while the latter also experienced several editions as well, and was also translated into Italian.

**Conclusion**

The breadth and depth of Muench’s publication activity is more than impressive, especially in view of the fact that he did his work a century before the advent of word processors. His voluminous output as well as the quality of his work no doubt contributed to his reputation as “the German-American nestor,” but so too did his determination and ability to get his message out in print. No wonder that H.J. Ruetenik described him as a man with “a strong sense of duty” and “an iron-like will.” (12) Hopefully, this updated list of his publications will lead to further study of his works, as well as his impact on the German heritage of the state of Missouri.

**Notes**

1. See: Friedrich Muench, *Gesammelte Schriften*. (St. Louis: C. Witter, 1902), p. 521. The obituary was published as an appendix to the volume, and provides biographical information on Muench.
2. Don Heinrich Tolzmann, ed., *Missouri’s German Heritage*. 2nd edition. (Little Miami Publishing Co., 2006), p. 10.
3. Ibid, p. 97.
4. Alexander Schem, ed., *Deutsch-Amerkanisches Conversations-Lexikon*. (New York: E. Steiger, 1872), vol. 7, p. 598.
5. Frederick Muench, *The Autobiography of Frederick Muench*. Translated from the German language by Ralph Gregory. (Marthasville, Missouri: Three Pines Publishing Co., 2001; reprint of 1964 edition), n.p.
6. Heinrich Armin Rattermann, *Gesammelte ausgewählte Werke*. (Cincinnati: Selbstverlag des Verfassers, 1912), vol. 11, pp. 147-90.
7. These appeared throughout volume 14 of the *Pionier*.
8. For a translation of this article, see: Siegmar Muehl, “A Visit with Friedrich Muench,” in: Tolzmann, ed., *Missouri’s German Heritage*, pp. 97-108.
9. See: *Der Deutsche Pionier*, 14 (1882): 462-464.
10. For example, in paging through a German-American yearbook from New York, *Jahrbuch der Deutschen in Amerika fűr das Jahr 1873*. (New York: E. Steiger, 1873), I perchance found that it contained a story by Muench entitled “Die Rettung” (Deliverance), pp. 1-17. Muench notes that it was written in 1849 and that all characters were drawn from real life, but that the story is of his making. It revolves around a free-thought minister, a graduate of the University of G. (most likely Giessen), who is discontented with the political conditions in Germany, but nonetheless takes up a position as minister of a church, and teaches school there as well. Later on, however, he immigrates to America, landing at New Orleans, and then travels up the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers, finally landing in Cincinnati. Settling down in Ohio, he is called upon to preach to a group of Germans, and forms a congregation that includes freethinkers, as well as Mennonites. The story obviously has autobiographical undertones to it. If this story is representative of the kinds of stories and novellas that Muench wrote, then it would seem to indicate that he wrote historical fiction drawn from the pages of his own life.
11. For information about Nies, see: Robert E. Ward, “Konrad Nies, German-American Literary Knight,” in: Don Heinrich Tolzmann, ed., *German-American Literature*. (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1977), pp. 245-251.
12. H.J. Ruetenik, *Berűhmte deutsche Vorkämpfer fűr Freiheit, Friede und Fortschritt in Nord-Amerika, von 1626 bis 1898. Einhundert und fűnfzig Biographien, mit sechzehn Portraits*. (Cleveland, Ohio: Forest City Bookbinding Co., 1899), p. 219.