



# THE URBANA FREE LIBRARY

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Reverend Melvin C. Blobaum  
Collection, 1858-2022

Collection #357

## Champaign County Historical Archives

**Compiled by:** Sara Bennett, August 2023

**Creator/Corporate Name:** Melvin C. Blobaum

**Inclusive Dates:** 1858-2022, bulk 1950s-2000s

**Physical Description:** 4 boxes, (3.5 linear ft.)

**Language:** English, German, Plattdeutsch

### Provenance:

The Rev. Melvin C. Blobaum collection was donated to the Champaign County Historical Archives in January 2023 by Paul Blobaum, Melvin's son.

### Access:

These records are accessible to the public within applicable copyright restrictions and limited to use at the Champaign County Historical Archives of The Urbana Free Library.

### Biographical/Historical Note:

Rev. Melvin C. Blobaum (1930 to 2014) was a Lutheran pastor who served at several churches in Champaign County. He served at St. Paul, Gifford from 1967-1982, and in retirement, served as Interim pastor at Immanuel Lutheran, Flatville. He served as Visitation Pastor at St. John Lutheran Royal from 1998-2013. While he grew up in Michigan and Illinois, he had family ties to the area. He was a descendent of German immigrants to Champaign County in the 1870s. His mother grew up near Stanton Center. He spent many summers with his grandparents John and Ida Cornelius Duden at their farm near Stanton Center, Champaign County. His Duden grandparents taught him to speak the Low German, or Plattdeutsch, language.

In 1997, Blobaum helped form the Ostfriesian Heritage Society of East Central Illinois. As of 2024, the association continues to meet at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Flatville on the 3rd Sunday of the month, in Diers Hall from 1-3 pm. The purpose of the society is to preserve the Platt dialects spoken locally, share cultural traditions, and to host visitors from Germany and share information.

The Society held special services in Plattdeutsch, especially for Christmas beginning shortly after its founding, to help preserve the Plattdeutsch dialect spoken in the area and Lutheran heritage. The Christmas service location rotated between St. Paul's Lutheran Church (Gifford, Il.), Immanuel Lutheran Church (Flatville, Il.), and St. John's Lutheran Church (Royal, Il.). Following the service, traditional cookies and tea were served. Pastors who could speak some Platt were invited to conduct the services, using hymn translations or parts of services borrowed from contemporary sources in Ostfriesland. When Blobaum preached, he wrote his sermon in English, and Society members assisted him in translating into Plattdeutsch. Though High German was the language of the Church in this



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community prior to World War II, Plattdeutsch continues in many homes. The Society published "Oma and Opa's Kitchen: Ostfriesian German Immigrant and German American Recipes" which includes family stories, photos, and traditional recipes of this community.

Ella Emkes Buenting (1903-2001) was a distant relative and family friend of Melvin C. Blobaum. She was also a member of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Gifford, where Blobaum was a pastor. She served as treasurer of the congregation for decades and was the first woman on the board. Ella and her cousin, Hilka Schluter (1909-1979) inherited the original Schluter family Plattdeutsch letters and Hilka translated them into English. The Schluter family letters originally belonged to Johann (John) Herman Schluter (1835-1919) of Applington, Iowa, then went to his daughter, Minnie Schluter Voxx (1888-1969), then to her sister, Carrie Schluter Poppingo (1882-1980). In 1969, Carrie gave them to Ella. Melvin Blobaum's wife, Mary Lou (Mixdorf) Blobaum (1929-1996), typed the translations and made mimeograph copies of them.

## **Scope and Content Note:**

This collection contains bulletins, newsletters, directories, event materials, and ephemera from Lutheran churches in Champaign County, compiled by Rev. Melvin C. Blobaum. It also contains materials from the Ostfriesian Heritage Society of East Central Illinois, which Rev. Blobaum helped form. It includes some correspondence, sermon manuscripts, planning documents, audio and video tape recordings, and newsletters from the society.

This collection also contains original Ostfriesian letters. The letters were written by the family of Johann H. Schluter (1835-1919) after he immigrated from Holtrop, Ostfriesland, Germany, to the United States in 1857. The letters were written to him by his step-father, Johann Christian Ries, and his siblings. The letters weren't mailed; they were sent with others who were immigrating. The letters were ultimately translated by Hilka Schluter, a cousin of Ella Emkes Buenting.

The collection also contains genealogical materials from the Schluter and Buenting families.

## **Arrangement:**

This collection is arranged into series according to material type and source. The first five series are organized by the church Rev. Blobaum was involved with and collected from. Series 1: St. Paul's Lutheran Church (Gifford, Ill.); Series 2: Immanuel Lutheran Church (Flatville, Ill.); Series 3: American Lutheran Churches (Gibson City and Rantoul, Ill.); Series 4: St. John's Lutheran Church (Royal, Ill.); Series 5: Other Churches; Series 6: Ostfriesian Heritage Society of East Central Illinois; Series 7: Ella Emkes Buenting Materials; Series 8: Directories and Plat Books; Series 9: Audiovisual Materials

## **Separated Material:**

Cookbooks: The following cookbooks were removed and placed in our cookbook collection. They can be found in our catalog, Local History Online.

Our Favorite Recipes: County Health Inc. Nursing Care Center



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Oma and Opa's Kitchen: Ostfriesian German Immigrant and German American Recipes  
A Taste of Tradition, Country Health, Inc., 2008  
Hands of Time: Country Health Cookbook, 2022  
Real Country Cookin': Country Health nursing Care Center, 1977  
That The World May Know, Sharing our Heritage, 125 Years, Immanuel Lutheran, Flatville, 1999  
Sharing our Best, 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Gifford, 2006 Buenting Family  
Treasures, 1988 (Includes family history and photographs).

Books and Maps: The Following Books and Map were removed and placed in our print and map collection. They can be found in our catalog, Local History Online.

Plat Book of Champaign County, undated, b/w1896-1928  
Champaign County Road Map (2)  
75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, American Lutheran Church Directory  
Land Atlas and Plat Book: Ford County, IL, 1981  
25 Years of Grace and Growth, American Lutheran Church, Rantoul, Ill. 1930-1955  
The First Ten Years of Grace and Growth, American Lutheran Church, Rantoul, Ill. 1930-1940  
Immanuel Lutheran Church Directory, Flatvill, Ill. 1874-1999

Audiovisual material removed: The following materials have been removed and placed in our record collection and photograph collection.

50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year American Lutheran Church Choirs, Rantoul, Illinois, 12-inch LP record  
Schluter Family Photographs Folder

## **Related Material:**

Schluter Family Letters, A 929.2 Schluter  
"Ostfriesian Heritage Society of East Central Illinois" Vertical File

## **Subject Terms:**

American Lutheran Church (Gibson City, Ill.)  
American Lutheran Church (Rantoul, Ill.)  
German Americans, Genealogy  
Immanuel Lutheran Church (Broadlands, Ill.)  
Immanuel Lutheran Church (Flatville, Ill.)  
Immigrants, United States, History  
Lutheran Church  
Ostfriesian Heritage Society of East Central Illinois  
Pontoppidan Lutheran Church (Elliot, Ill.)  
St. John's Lutheran Church (Anchor, Ill.)  
St. John's Lutheran Church (Royal, Ill.)



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St. Paul's Lutheran Church (Gifford, Ill.)

## **Name Terms:**

Buenting, Ella Emkes  
Blobaum, August  
Blobaum, Marie H.  
Blobaum, Melvin C.  
Busboom, Barbara  
Cornelius, Peter Anton  
Duden, Ida  
Duden, John Duden,  
Marie H.  
Emkes, Harm Anton  
Emkes, Wilke Anton  
Feldkamp, Louise  
Flessner, Henry  
Janssen, Jan Meints  
Mutschmann, Friedrich  
Poppingo, Carrie  
Schluter Voss, Minnie  
Schluter, Alberta  
Schluter, Alma  
Schluter, Angie  
Schluter, Christian  
Schluter, Dick  
Schluter, Harm, 1867-1945  
Schluter, Henry  
Schluter, Irena  
Schluter, Johann Wilhelm  
Schluter, John Wilhelm  
Schluter, Johanna  
Schluter, Viona

## **Container List**

### **Box #1**

#### **Series 1: St. Paul's Lutheran Church (Gifford, Ill.)**

Folder 1: Bulletins, 1967

Folder 2: Bulletins, 1968



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Folder 3: Bulletins, 1969  
Folder 4: Bulletins, 1970  
Folder 5: Bulletins, 1971  
Folder 6: Bulletins, 1972  
Folder 7: Bulletins, 1973  
Folder 8: Bulletins, 1974  
Folder 9: Bulletins, 1975  
Folder 10: Bulletins, 1976  
Folder 11: Bulletins, 1977  
Folder 12: Bulletins, 1978  
Folder 13: Bulletins, 1979  
Folder 14: Bulletins, January – July 1980  
Folder 15: Penfield & Gifford Community Birthday & Activity Calendar, 1975

## **Box #2**

Folder 1: Bulletins, August – December 1980  
Folder 2: Bulletins, January – July 1981  
Folder 3: Bulletins, August – December 1981  
Folder 4: Newsletters, 1968  
Folder 5: Newsletters, 1969  
Folder 6: Newsletters, 1970  
Folder 7: Newsletters, 1971  
Folder 8: Newsletters, 1972  
Folder 9: Newsletters, 1973  
Folder 10: Newsletters, 1974  
Folder 11: Newsletters, 1975  
Folder 12: Newsletters, 1976  
Folder 13: Newsletters, 1977  
Folder 14: Newsletters, 1978  
Folder 15: Newsletters, 1979  
Folder 16: Newsletters, 1980  
Folder 17: Newsletters, 1981  
Folder 18: Annual Reports, 1966-'72,'74-'76,'78-'81  
Folder 19: Treasurer's Report & Vacation Bible School, 1968  
Folder 20: Anniversary Booklets, 1956, 1969, 1979, 1981, 2006  
Folder 21: Church Directories, 1976, 1988, 1995, 2000, 2006, 2016  
Folder 22: "In Praise of God's Mercy" Recollections of the Professional Life of Pastor Friedrich Mutschmann, 1969



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Folder 23: Barbara Busboom, St. Paul's (Gifford, Ill.)  
Folder 24: ALCW Germanfest Cookbook, 1973  
Folder 25: German Programs, 1929, 1970  
Folder 26: Women's Missionary Society, 1946  
Folder 27: Pastor Melvin Blobaum Installation Program, 1967  
Folder 28: Programs and Ephemera, 1939-1986  
Folder 29: 50<sup>th</sup> Church Dedication Materials, 1979

## **Series 2: Immanuel Lutheran Church (Flatville, Ill.)**

Folder 30: Church Bulletins and Newspaper Clippings, 1949 – 1988  
Folder 31: Centennial: Blest to Blessed Centennial Book, 1974  
Folder 32: Church Directories 1968, 1975, 1981, 1994, 1995  
Folder 33: The Gospel in Glass and Paint by Rev. Henry Flessner, 1999

## **Series 3: American Lutheran Churches (Gibson City and Rantoul, Ill.)**

Folder 34: American Lutheran Church (Gibson City, Ill.) Directories, 1982, 1993  
Folder 35: American Lutheran Church Materials (Rantoul, Ill.), 1951-1972  
Folder 36: American Lutheran Church 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Cookbook (Rantoul, Ill.), 1979

## **Box 3**

### **Series 4: St. John's Lutheran Church (Royal, Ill.)**

Folder 1: St. John's Lutheran Church Directories and Newspaper Clipping, 1972-2016

### **Series 5: Other Churches**

Folder 2: Prince of Peace (St. Joseph), Good Shepherd (Champaign), Trinity (Urbana), St. Matthew's (Urbana), St. John's (Champaign), First Evangelical (Paxton), Immanuel (Broadlands)

### **Series 6: Ostfriesian Heritage Society of East Central Illinois**

Folder 3: Platt Service, 1997  
Folder 4: Platt Service, 1998  
Folder 5: Platt Service, 1999  
Folder 6: Platt Service, 2000  
Folder 7: Platt Service, 2001  
Folder 8: Platt Service, 2002  
Folder 9: Platt Service, 2003, A/V removed  
Folder 10: Platt Service, 2004, A/V removed  
Folder 11: Platt Service, 2005  
Folder 12: Platt Service, 2006



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Folder 13: Platt Service, 2007  
Folder 14: Platt Service, 2008  
Folder 15: Platt Service, 2009  
Folder 16: Platt Service, 2010  
Folder 17: Platt Service, 2011  
Folder 18: Platt Service, 2012  
Folder 19: Ostfriesian Histories, undated  
Folder 20: Newsletter, 1997  
Folder 21: By-Laws, undated  
Folder 22: Correspondence, 1996-2004

## **Series 7: Ella Emkes Buenting Materials**

Folder 23: Provenance of the Johann (John) Herman Schluter Letters Collection, 2022  
Folder 24: Schluter Family Letters (Transcribed), c. 1969  
Folder 25: Descendants of Johann Wilhelm Schluter, 1978  
Folder 26: Familie Harm Anton Emkes (1862-1982), 1982  
Folder 27: Harm Anton Emkes (1837-1987), 1987  
Folder 28: Wilke Anton Emkes Family Genealogy, 1981, 1987  
Folder 29: Schluter Family Plattdeutsch Letters (Originals), 1858-1887  
Folder 30: Photocopies of Schluter Letters, Handwritten, and Typed Transcripts, undated  
Folder 31: Correspondence from Carrie Poppingo, Canby, MN, 1969-1970. Photographs removed.  
Folder 32: Emkes & Buenting Family Letters & Genealogy Notes, 1942-1975  
Folder 33: Correspondence and Family History Sheets, Jan Meints Janssen, Anton Harm Emkes, Family Sheets, undated  
Folder 34: Prayer Book (Habermann's Gebet Buch), undated

## **Series 8: Directories and Plat Books**

Folder 35: Champaign County Rural Directory, 1982  
Folder 36: Stacy's Farm Plat Book, Champaign County, 1939  
Folder 37: Gifford City Directories, 1971, 1986

## **Box #4**

### **Series 9: Audiovisual Materials**

All items have been digitized and are available in the digital collection: D089\_Melvin C. Blobaum  
Ostfriesian Heritage Society Christmas Service 1999, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Flatville, IL, VHS  
Ostfriesian Heritage Society Christmas Service 2002, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Flatville, IL, VHS  
Ostfriesian Heritage Society Christmas Service 2003, St. John Lutheran Church, Royal, IL, VHS  
Ostfriesian Heritage Society Christmas Service 2006, St. John Lutheran Church, Royal, IL, VHS



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Ostfriesian Heritage Society Christmas Service 2011, St. John Lutheran Church, Royal, IL, CD  
Ostfriesian Heritage Society Christmas Service 2012, St. John Lutheran Church, Royal, IL, CD (2)  
German Christmas Service, December 7, 1980, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Gifford, IL, Cassette  
Ostfriesian Heritage Society Christmas Service 1999, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Flatville, IL, Cassette  
Ostfriesian Heritage Society Christmas Service 2003, St. John Lutheran Church, Royal, IL, Cassette (2)  
Ostfriesian Heritage Society Christmas Service 2008, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Flatville, IL, Cassette  
Ostfriesian Heritage Society Christmas Service 2010, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Flatville, IL, Cassette  
Dorothy L. Krueger Burman presentation, "Memories of My Grandparents Rev. Friederich and Johanna Mutschmann," June 17, 1979, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Gifford, IL, 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Church Dedication, Cassette  
Flatville Mission Festival in Plattdeutsch, 1980, Cassette  
Plaatdeutsch Christmas Service 2003 at Aurich-Oldendorf Church, Germany, Cassette

## **2024 Accrual**

Digital copy of the American Ostfriesen Journal Vol. 27, No. 1, published by the Ostfriesen Genealogical Society of American. The journal includes an article about the Schluter letters. Available in the digital collection: D089\_Melvin C. Blobaum.