

NOVEMBER 2021

HERITAGE is the newsletter for Pabst Mansion, Inc., a historic house museum dedicated to the restoration of the Pabst Mansion and the preservation of the Pabst family legacy.

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THE 'BEST' IMMIGRANT SNAPSHOT: Insights into Transcribing and Translating the *Best-Pabst Family Letters* Archival Collection

In 2005 when exploring seldom-visited spaces at Pabst Farms in Oconomowoc, John Eastberg discovered a small black metal box which contained hundreds of remarkably preserved mid-19th century letters. After the letters were donated to the Pabst Mansion, they were kept untouched in collections storage until 2018 when the collection, which came to be known as the *Best-Pabst Family Letters* collection, could be archivally processed. This collection of letters, written between 1841-1887, were physically accessible but remained largely inaccessible in terms of interpretation, as they were written in German *Kurrentschrift*.

In March of 2020, Pabst Mansion Curator of Collections Jocelyn Slocum began a conversation with UW-Milwaukee's Translation and Interpreting Studies department to start a multi-year partnership in which select German language graduate students, assisted by Professor Viktorija Bilic, would transcribe the letters into contemporary German as well as translate them into English. The pioneering graduate students, Marisa Irwin and Nastassja Myer, completed their work with the first batch of the collection in August of 2020. During their time working on the project, the two not only navigated the complicated process of transcribing and translating historical correspondence while staying true to the authors' original content, but were also able to learn about the Best/Pabst family and those connected to them, gaining new insights into the family during the early years of the brewing company and daily life in mid-19th century southeastern Wisconsin.

The first step in the process was transcribing the letters from *Kurrentschrift*, a German handwriting style which fell out of use by the mid-20th century, into contemporary German. This can prove a particular challenge to the translator. Marisa notes, "Even when one has experience reading *Kurrentschrift*, one must still take the time to learn the

Continued on page 2



The box found in 2005 at Pabst Farms containing the 'Best-Pabst Family Letters' Collection

THE 'BEST' IMMIGRANT SNAPSHOT:

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individual idiosyncrasies of each handwriting style. For historical letters, half the battle is simply in transcribing the text into standard contemporary German.” She further comments, “As if this were not challenging enough, writers in this period often used English cursive when describing foreign names. The translator must determine whether the word in question is written in *Kurrentschrift*, English, or simply misspelled since there was no standard German orthography until the 20th century either.” Thus, the complicated dance of learning an individual’s writing and their word usage precedes all.

A product of the time and place in which these letters were written, German immigrant composers of these letters often made use of a new ‘language’ through mixing German and English, or Deutsch-English, creating *Denglish*. Nastassja explains how the mixing of the two cultures can be seen merging linguistically through *Denglish* words “such as *Stohr* (store), as well as place names with German spellings, such as *Milwaukie*.” The existence of *Denglish* in these letters goes beyond the individual nuances and points to a deeper linguistic truth of adaptability. Although continuing to speak German after their move to Milwaukee, the influence of their new home had a clear effect on the contextualization of their surroundings and thus their



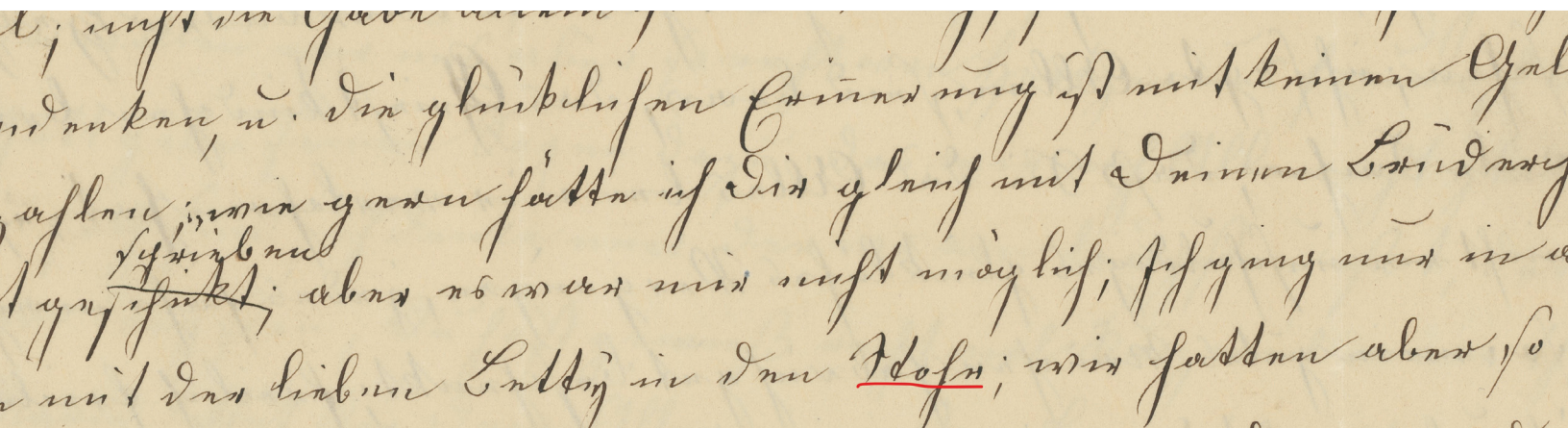
Phillip Best, c. 1860

speech. Marissa unpacks this by commenting, “This aspect is what turns this series of letters from only providing insight into the Best family’s innerworkings to providing historians with the opportunity to see in what ways the authors are playing with the standard language of the time. These particular letters provide the opportunity to study what writing conventions were present within 19th century German, as well as showing how these conventions were played with by the authors.” Spaces such as these where linguistic traditions clash offer a fertile setting to explore the malleability of language and how new forms of communication can become established amongst those within them.

Beyond the linguistic treasures unearthed through this project, Nastassja remarks that, “Through their personal correspondence, we can glimpse this distinct time period in the mid-nineteenth century when German-born parents raised *amerikanische* children and shaped Milwaukee culturally, socially, and politically.” This unique setting when Wisconsin was being shaped as a state, literally by receiving statehood in 1848 and figuratively through the waves of immigrants working to establish their place as Wisconsinites, serves as the backdrop for the letters’ contents. As a collection of letters likely assembled and saved by a sentimental family

Continued on page 3

An example of *Denglish* with the author writing the English word ‘store’ in a phonetically German way with the spelling ‘stohr’



THE 'BEST' IMMIGRANT SNAPSHOT:

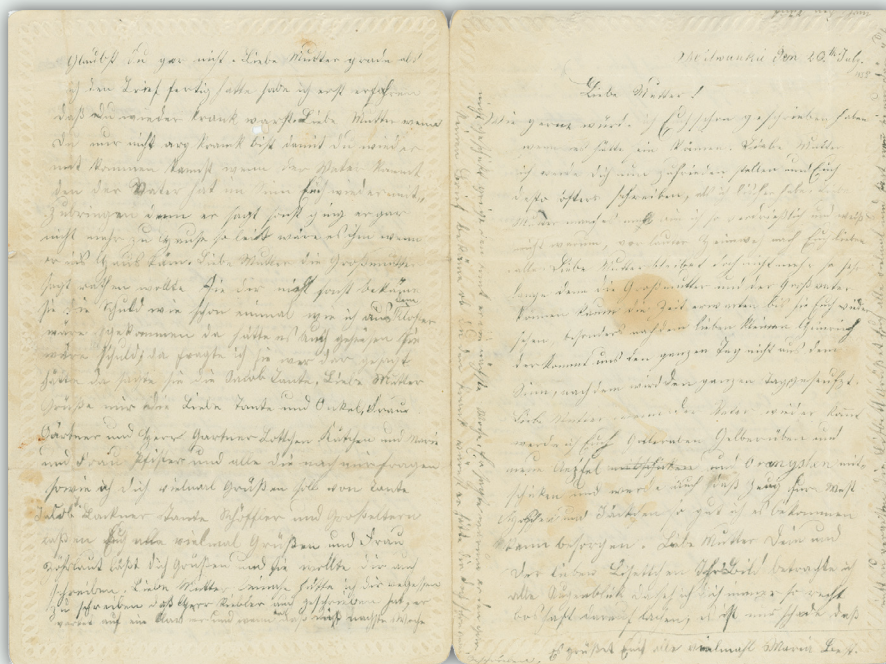
Insights into Transcribing and Translating the Best-Pabst Family Letters Archival Collection

member, the content of these letters covers a wide range of topics. Of the letters thus far translated, the subject matter includes topics such as “marriage announcements, business transactions, birthday greetings, homesick notes from abroad, and intimate details of the everyday lives of the Pabst and Best families as well as their acquaintances,” Nastassja states.

Through the process of intimately dissecting letters, the individual becomes visible through the immediacy of pen to paper. Of Phillip Best, Marisa explains, “The picture painted by these letters shows Phillip to be a man who was extremely involved in the brewery, a person who exemplifies the hardworking mentality that is often used to characterize German immigrant stories. Although his passion for business is

undeniable, he was still a caring family man who shared a close connection with his wife and children.” Moreover, details about social life also came to surface. Marisa further comments, “The letters also confirm that the Best family belonged to the Milwaukee elite of the time, running in the same circles as the likes of the Pfisters, who are well-known for the creation of the grandiose Pfister Hotel in Milwaukee.” Such informal connections through personal

correspondence allow for a greater depth in understanding relationships and the social fabric surrounding them. This glimpse into the communications, in every sense of the word, of the Best-Pabst families will only continue to grow as the project progresses and we can only imagine what new information will come to surface and how many more questions will in turn arise.



Maria Best squeezes extra notes in the margins when writing to her mother Margaretha Lucas Muth in 1858.

Thank You Next Electric!

Many thanks to Next Electric for their extensive work this past year. Not only did they undertake the largest project ever completed by the Pabst Mansion, rewiring of the entire home, but also donated their time and talent for the completion of the exterior lighting. We thank you for helping set the Mansion up for a better, brighter future!



Christmas

AT THE PABST MANSION

Returns!



After the first year without Christmas at the Pabst Mansion since 1978, the home will again be dripping with holiday décor!

OPENING RECEPTION

November 17 • 5:30pm-7:30pm

Tickets: \$35-member/\$45-non-member

Beer Baron level membership & above receive two complimentary passes (must RSVP)

Join us for the official unveiling of *Christmas at the Pabst Mansion*! Guests will be the first to view the holiday décor during an evening which will include champagne toasts, an array of classic holiday desserts, and a pianist playing seasonal favorites at the grand piano in the music room – just as Captain Pabst would have had it!

DAILY SELF-GUIDED TOURS

November 18, 2021 – January 9, 2022 (Closed on holidays)

Tickets: Adult: \$18, Senior/Student/Military: \$16, Child (6 & over): \$11, Child (5 & under): Free, Member: Free

A Milwaukee holiday tradition! With unique decorations every year, this grand exhibition offers an ever-changing feast for your eyes. Perfect for kids from one to ninety-two, enjoy this time with family and friends at the Mansion as you enjoy the elegantly decorated interiors.

TWILIGHT TOURS

Fridays & Saturdays, 4:45pm-7:30pm • November 26 – December 18

Tickets: Adult: \$23, Senior/Student/Military: \$21, Members: \$5

The evening open house invites guests to visit the Pabst Mansion after dark to behold the enchanting glow of kindled Christmas trees accompanied by live music and light refreshments for purchase. Cheers to enjoying the holiday season in traditional German Milwaukee style...with Glühwein and Pabst products!

VISIT FATHER CHRISTMAS!

Sundays, 3:30pm – 5:30pm • November 28 – December 26

What could be more enchanting than a visit to *Christmas at the Pabst Mansion* with Father Christmas greeting guests as they begin their visit. Enjoy the beautiful Pabst Mansion holiday display, purchase some holiday treats, and write your letter to Santa and mail it. Special holidays memories will be made and perhaps a holiday tradition will begin.



Thank you to our holiday sponsors!



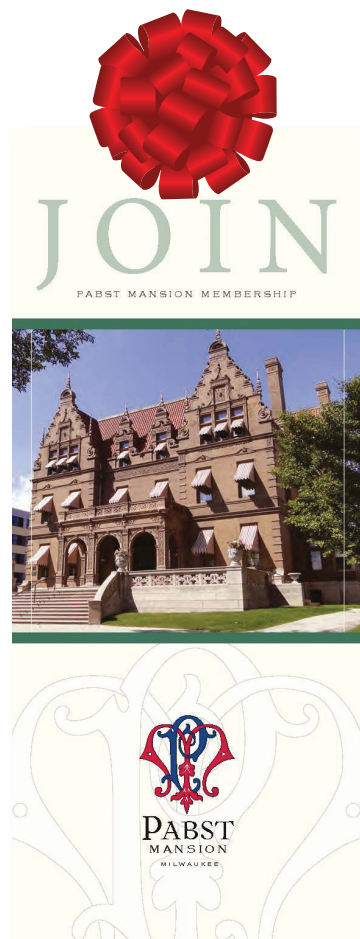
Tickets for all holiday offers can be purchased at pabstmansion.com. Advance ticket purchase highly recommended.

Give the Gift OF MEMBERSHIP

Give the gift that keeps on giving!

Membership in the Pabst Mansion includes:

- Free admission to the Pabst Mansion, anytime of year
- 10% discount in the Pabst Mansion gift shop
- Subscription to our *Heritage* newsletter
- Discounts on special tours and events
- Join or renew at the Brewmaster level [\$175] or above and you will automatically be enrolled in NARM [North American Reciprocal Museum Association]. This enrollment automatically provides you access to free admission and discounts to over 1,000 arts, cultural and historical institutions across the United States, Canada and Mexico through the North American Reciprocal Membership (NARM) Association.



MEMBERSHIP

Yes, I want to be a member of the Pabst Mansion!

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------|--------------------------------------|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Comet | \$1,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Brewmaster | \$175 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grand Circle | \$500 | <input type="checkbox"/> Blue Ribbon | \$95 |
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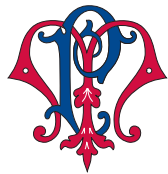
Please make checks out to Pabst Mansion. To pay securely by credit card, visit www.pabstmansion.com

- ☐ I am interested in volunteer opportunities, please contact me.

I would like to make a contribution to the Mansion.

Enclosed is my contribution for \$ _____.

Detach and mail to: Pabst Mansion
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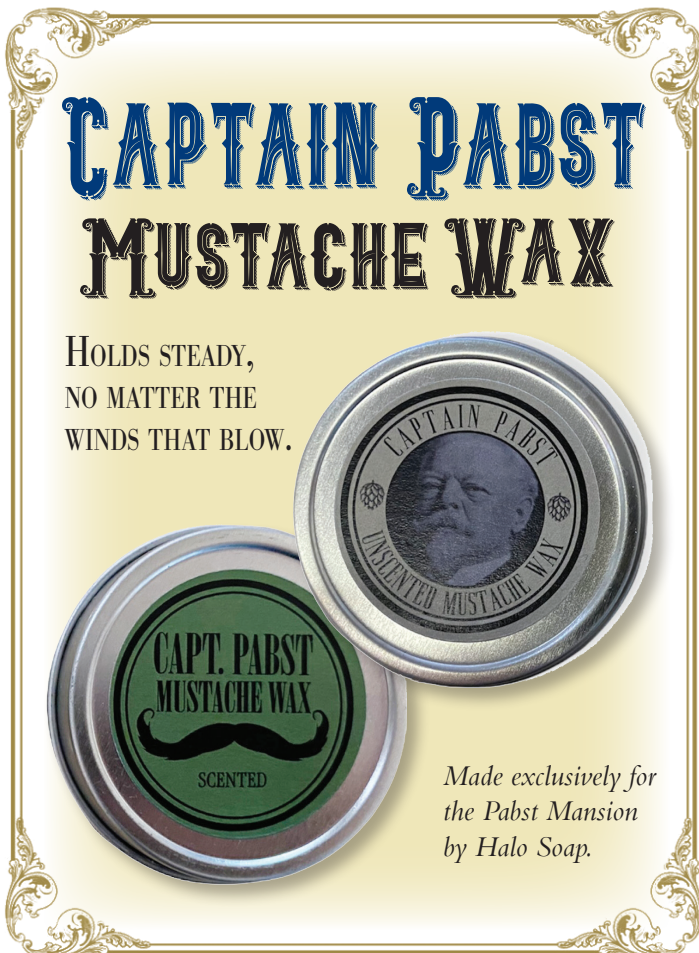
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Christmas AT THE PABST MANSION

HOURS/ADMISSION

November 18, 2021 – January 9, 2022

DAILY SELF-GUIDED TOURS

Monday-Saturday 10am-4pm • Sunday 11am-5:30pm

Last Entry 45 min. to close

Closed: Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day,
New Year's Eve, New Year's Day

Adult: \$18

Senior/Student/Military: \$16

Child (6-17): \$11

Child (5 and under): Free

Member: Free

Prices and hours subject to change.

TWILIGHT TOURS

Fridays & Saturdays 4:45pm-7:30pm

November 26 – December 18

Adult: \$23

Senior/Student/Military: \$21

Member: \$5

*Located on 20th and Wisconsin Avenue.
Limited parking is available. Wheelchair accessible.*