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Contented among Strangers: Rural German-Speaking Women and Their Families in the Nineteenth-Century Midwest (Statue of Liberty Ellis Island)

Linda Pickle

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German-Americans make up one of the largest ethnic groups in the United States, yet their very success at assimilating has also made them one of the least visible. What were their experiences? What cultural baggage did they bring with them, and how did it affect their lives in America? How did the German-speaking immigrants differ among themselves, and how did these differences influence their behavior and reactions? Contented among Strangers attempts to answer these questions by examining the central role German-speaking women played in preserving their ethnic and cultural identity in rural areas of the Midwest. Even while living far from their original homelands, these women applied traditional European patterns of rural family life and values to their new homes in Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska. As a result they were often more content with their modest lives than were their Anglo-American counterparts. Through personal recollections - including interesting diary accounts translated by the author, church and community documents, and migration and census data - Pickle reveals the diversity and richness of the women's experiences.

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