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# Die Deutsche Ecke

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The German Corner: #12

Cranberry Prairie

David A. Hoying

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Damme, Oldenburg provided the greatest number of immigrants to west-central Ohio, over 500 in number. Thus, they are the largest single group of immigrants from anywhere to settle in west-central Ohio. Such a group would undoubtedly have a tremendous impact on the area of settlement. Many of their names are still evident, such as: Bäumer, Bergmann, Böckmann, Börger, Brörmann, Dahlinghaus, Bruns, Elking, Enneking, Grevenkamp, Hausfeld, Heitkamp, Lübke, Moormann, Otting, Piening, Pöppelmann, Putthoff, Römer, Ronnebaum, Schmiesing, and Schulze. Perhaps their greatest impact was on the now nearly lost **Plattdütsk** or Low German of west-central Ohio, which overall bore the characteristics of the **Damme Platt**.

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Now that the *German - Latin Lexicon* has been completed, a new feature is presented, entitled *Lower Saxon Customs*. This feature will present in brief form the customs that prevailed in the northwest German area, and will do so by following the Liturgical Calendar. Now that the Third Christian Millenium is commencing with the turning of the calendar to 2000, we will begin with a description of the customs associated with New Year's Eve and Day.

## **NEW YEAR'S EVE - 31 DECEMBER - SILVESTERSABEND (SYLVESTER EVENING)**

The last day of the year is the feast of Saint Sylvester. He was the first pope not to be martyred, and so in art he is depicted an elderly man with a crosier. (With a little imagination one can see that the figure of the passing year, and old man with a scythe, was originally the figure of Saint Sylvester! The infant at his side is not that of the new year, but that of the Christ Child.) For delivering on this night, special wreathes, called **Tunschere** or **Wäpelraut**, made of whittled frizzly wooden roses from willow wood were made. Each village had their favorite shape, such as a star or a heart, and they were at times decorated with evergreens and apples. Such a wreath was placed before the door of a neighbor, without the neighbor's notice of whom is the giver. They were given as a wish for good luck in the new year. (Boys would especially leave one for their sweetheart.) An evening meal of green beans, peas, or kale with sausage was eaten, and dessert was sweet milkrice with prunes. At midnight the young men ushered in the new year with gunshot - **Niejohrscheiten** - and other noises. Others would throw potsherds against the door symbolizing that the old year was kaput.

## **NEW YEAR'S DAY - 1 JANUARY - NIEJOHR**

A task for children on New Year's Day was the writing of **Bökerbreef (Hammer Letters)**. Letters were written to parents, grandparents, teachers, pastors, and others, wishing them God's blessing for the new year. Once written, the children hand delivered their letters. Upon the door of the house to which the letters were being delivered, the children knocked with a wooden hammer. The hammer being a symbol of Saint Sylvester. Upon giving the letter, the children wished the recipient a blessed new year. The children in some villages also enjoyed **Kokensingen (Cookie Singing)**. As groups, the children went from house to house in the neighborhood, singing for cookies. Special for this day were **Queekoken (Squeaky Cookies)** - a waffle like cookie made in a hot iron and flavored with anise - and **Päpernütten (Pfeffernüssen)**. Also eaten was a pancake-like cookie made with raisins and apples and fried in fat. ©

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### ***From whence they came...***

	<b>PROVINCE OF WESTPHALIA, KINGDOM OF PRUSSIA</b>
<b>Ahaus:</b>	Bills, Büning, Popping, Rawers, Saalman, Severt
<b>Alstätte:</b>	Dues
<b>Altenberge:</b>	Abels, Löchtefeld
<b>Arnsberg:</b>	Oppenheim
<b>Ascheberg:</b>	Brockmann, Hegemann, Fränzer, Mör, Panning
<b>Bargweg:</b>	Wendker

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