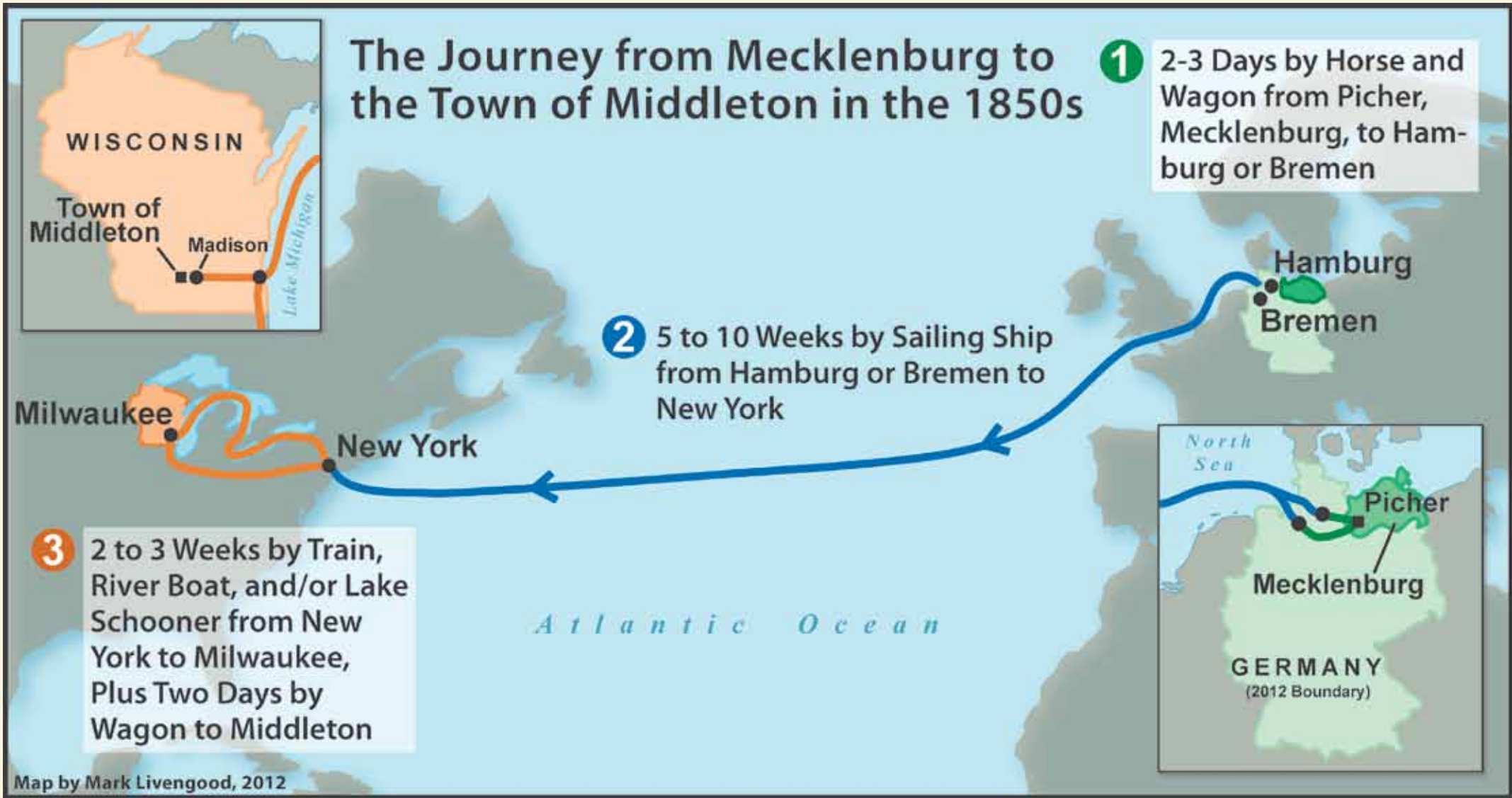


# German Immigration to Wisconsin

## Overview

150 years ago Pope Farm Conservancy lay in the center of a new immigrant settlement area from the small German duchy of Mecklenburg-Schwerin on the Baltic Sea. German immigrants were not the first to settle this area, but in the second half of the nineteenth century, more immigrants arrived in the state from German lands than from any other foreign region. They came in three distinct waves and from different parts of German-speaking Europe in the 1850s, from 1865 to 1875, and in the 1880s.



## The Journey from Mecklenburg to Middleton

The journey from Mecklenburg to Middleton was long and strenuous. First, immigrants took one or two days to travel to a harbor city by wagon. Then came the crossing of the Atlantic Ocean on a sailing ship which took between five and ten weeks. In later decades, steamships shortened the trip to a week or two. Most immigrants traveled in the cramped, unventilated quarters below the decks. People got seasick, food and water became scarce, and diseases spread rapidly in the overcrowded living conditions. After landing on the East Coast, the immigrants still had to reach Dane County. According to a map for emigrants printed in Germany in 1853, the trip by train and lake schooner from New York to Milwaukee took 628 hours, and it was another two-day wagon trip on to Middleton.

Booklet in German, published by the State of Wisconsin Board of Immigration [undated, ca. 1895] to entice German immigrants to settle in the state.

## Family Names From Mecklenburg In The Township of Middleton 1870

Albrecht	Elver	Hoch	Munster	Stichman
Arns	Engel	Hoffmann	Niebuhr	Stoldt
Bark	Frantz	Jacob	Nieman	Takem
Barkhan	Freeman	Jaske	Orth	Tiede
Bielefeld	Freiman	Jens	Pierstorf	Tiedeman
Blom	Gath	Johnson	Prien	Voss
Botker	Gerds	Jungblut	Reding	Walter
Brum	Goefke	Kloepfkorn	Reuter	Wancke
Brumm	Goth	Kloos	Roloff	Wendt
Brunswick	Graack	Koch	Rosine	Wesel
Busch	Grabat	Kulgast	Rowedel	Wesenberg
Dahlke	Greenwald	Lauden	Sanftleben	Westphal
Dehling	Hagen	Louden	Schader	Wieland
Deters	Hansen	Lubcke	Schave	Wiese
Dohr	Harloff	Luebcke	Schen	Wittenburg
Dross	Henkel	Lunenberg	Schenck	Youngblut
Duwe	Hergendorf	Meibo	Schneider	Zug
Eggerts	Hinrichs	Muhlenbruch	Schroeder	

Source: U.S. Federal Census 1870

## Push and Pull

For all immigrants **push factors** figure in the decision to leave their homeland, while **pull factors** attract them to a different place. Economic reasons were the most common motivation for nineteenth-century German-speaking immigrants. Their dream was to have their own land and become financially independent. Those who could afford the expensive journey went to the American frontier states, such as Wisconsin.

The region was attractive because of the quality of its affordable farm land and because a labor shortage in the Midwest offered opportunities for employment. The Wisconsin government actively advertised among potential German emigrants to encourage them to settle in the state, but the biggest “pull” came from the settlers themselves, who wrote letters home, urging family members and friends to join them. In a process called **chain migration**, people from a few neighboring communities in the Old World established adjacent communities in America. In the Town of Middleton, many settlers came from a 15-square-mile rural area between the towns of Hagenow and Ludwigslust in Mecklenburg, including the Goth family: Jürgen (John) in 1855; his future wife Maria Grandt and his nephew Carl (Charles) in 1857; Carl’s mother Sophie and his brother Joachim (James) with wife and son in 1867.



1883 letter from Mecklenburg addressed in German to “Carl Goht [sic], Town Midleben [sic], in the state of Wisconsin, in America.”