

# Anti-German Hysteria In Wisconsin

See a lesson plan related to this material on the [Wisconsin Historical Society website](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org).

## Newspaper Article

"Former Fall Creek School Head Jailed on Espionage Act Warrant," Eau Claire Leader, 10/20/1918



WISCONSIN  
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## FORMER 'FALL CREEK SCHOOL HEAD JAILED ON ESPIONAGE ACT WARRANT

**ASSAULT ON JOHN B. FLEMING.  
LIBERTY BOND SALES-  
MAN, CHARGE.**

Henry A. Degner of Fall Creek, former postmaster and former school principal in that village, was arrested yesterday on a federal warrant charging violation of the espionage act, Sheriff George Garman, deputized as a federal marshal, bringing him to the county jail.

The complaint upon which the warrant was issued sets forth that on Wednesday last Degner assaulted John B. Fleming, Eau Claire corporation counsel, while Mr. Fleming was engaged with others of a committee in attempting to prevail upon Degner to buy liberty bonds. The complaint was made by J. C. Gilbertson before United States Court Commissioner A. J. Sutherland, and on receiving it United States District Attorney Wolfe, at La Crosse, caused a warrant to be issued and forwarded here for service. Bonds had not been fixed last night.

The contention in the prosecution of Degner will be that he violated Section 3 of the espionage act in "assaulting a Liberty Bond salesman regularly engaged in the performance of his duty as such a salesman," thus "interfering with and obstructing the sale of government bonds." The complaint alleges that Degner further violated the same section of the espionage act by uttering words amounting in substance to: "The government of the United States is dishonest." The utterance is alleged

to have been made on the same occasion.

An investigating committee delegated to interview persons who had failed to take bonds allotted to them went to Fall Creek last Wednesday and met some forty persons summoned to the village hall by a letter from the committee. Degner, allotted \$500 worth of bonds, did not put in appearance in response to a letter sent to him, so Mr. Fleming, Frank R. Farr, George L. Blum, J. C. Gilbertson, O. W. Moehle, Otto Niebuhr, and J. R. Garaghan motored to Degner's farm home about six miles out of the village. Herman Degner, brother of Henry, admitted the committee. They tried vainly to sell him a bond while waiting for Henry to appear. When the latter came in he presented a rather formidable appearance, carrying a shotgun. He had been hunting rabbits, he explained.

Mr. Fleming and others of the committee urged Henry to take his allotment of bonds and he declared that he would not. Mr. Fleming acted as principal spokesman in efforts to change Degner's decision. Degner, it is alleged, assaulted Mr. Fleming during the interchange. Both men struggling fell to the floor of the cabin, witnesses said, with Degner on top of Mr. Fleming. The latter, they said, hurled Degner down in a flash and got the ascendancy. Mr. Gilbertson pulled the struggling men apart.

Bond committeemen referred to the experience last evening as the "siege of Beaver Creek."

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# DEGNER GIVEN HEARING; HELD TO GRAND JURY

WITNESSES TELL OF ATTACK  
ON JOHN B. FLEMING WAR  
BOND SALESMAN

The hearing of Henry A. Degner of Fall Creek, charged with violation of the espionage act, took place before United States Court Commissioner A. J. Sutherland yesterday.

The defendant was specifically accused of having declared the United States government was dishonest and with having assaulted John B. Fleming while Mr. Fleming was endeavoring to sell him a liberty bond.

During the hearing, which lasted from 10 in the morning till 4 in the afternoon, the defendant denied that he had said the government was dishonest, but admitted saying that the espionage act abridged free speech and freedom of the press. He admitted having circulated literature opposing the war. He denied having begun the quarrel with the liberty bond salesman the week before. Testimony was given by witnesses, among whom were J. C. Gilbertson, George L. Blum and O. W. Moehle that Mr. Degner struck Mr. Fleming knocking him down.

Bonds were fixed at \$15,000 and the accused was returned to the county jail to await grand jury action.

"Degner Given Hearing; Held to Grand Jury,"  
Eau Claire Leader, 10/23/1918

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## Newspaper Article

"Farmer Charged with Pro-Kaiser Talk on Trail," Eau Claire Leader, 7/23/1918



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**FARMER CHARGED  
WITH PRO-KAISER  
TALK ON TRIAL**

DEFENDANT IS NATIVE AMERICAN AND HAS SON IN THE SERVICE

Judge Evan A. Evans' branch of United States district court yesterday afternoon began the trial of Christian Yearous, a Grant county farmer, indicted on five counts for alleged statements in advocacy of Germany's cause in the war. Yearous is charged on all counts with having said on June 2 in the presence of two witnesses: "This is a rich man's war. It will never end till all the money is gone. The Tuscania had no business upon the water. They got what they deserved. Americans have done just as bad things as Germany did to Belgium."

B. R. Goggins is handling the case for the government and Ralph Jackman of Madison is defending Yearous. In his opening statement Mr. Goggins confined himself to explaining the indictment. Mr. Jackman, in prefacing his defense, said he would offer evidence to show that the principal witness against Yearous, John Sisler, long had borne Yearous a grudge as the result of a land deal in which the two were concerned when they lived in Iowa. A son of Yearous, he said, is fighting in France as a volunteer soldier.

The first and only witness of the day was Oscar Slaght, a young farmer, who, he testified, was present during a conversation in which the defendant made alleged disloyal utterances, addressed to himself and Sisler. Slaght testified that Yearous had made the statements described above. Sisler was sworn just before court adjourned and will go on the stand this morning. Yearous will take the stand in his own defense, Mr. Jackman announced. Yearous is 58 years old and a native of Iowa. He is the father of seven children.

"Charles Naffz, Madison, Admits Pro-Kaiser Talk," Eau Claire Leader, 7/24/1918

## CHARLES NAFFZ, MADISON, ADMITS PRO-KAISER TALK

PLEADS GUILTY TO VIOLATION  
OF ESPIONAGE ACT; SEN-  
TENCE NOT PASSED.

Charles H. Naffz, a prominent Madison German-American, proprietor of a drug store in the capital city, pleaded guilty in Judge A. L. Sanborn's branch of United States district court yesterday to violation of the espionage act. Sentence was not passed.

The indictment against Naffz charged him with having said in the presence of a number of witnesses: "This is a mere capitalists' war. The morals taught by the kaiser and the government of Germany are superior to those taught by the United States. If the common people knew what was going on in a Washington they would rebel."

A representative of the Tubbs Medical company of River Falls, charged with violation of the food and drug act in having misbranded a product, pleaded guilty to a technical violation, and a fine of \$100 was imposed by the court.

"Jury Finds Grant County Farmer Guilty of Espionage Act Violation," Eau Claire Leader, 7/24/1918

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## Newspaper Article

"Another Tar and Feather Party is Staged," Ashland Daily Press, 4/11/1918

### ANOTHER TAR AND FEATHER PARTY IS STAGED

**Adolph Anton Is Taken From His Home and Given a Dose Of Tar and Feather By a Mob Last Night. Arrests Have Been Made.**

Adolph Anton, residing at 1100 Sixth Avenue West, was taken from his home at about nine o'clock last night by a party of five or six who came to the house in an auto, carried to a spot on the Beaver Avenue road known as the Chequamegon Ice company's farm, and given a coat of tar and feathers for alleged pro-German sentiments. He was then released and told to beat it for home. Stark naked but covered with a profuse coat of tar and feathers, he walked the distance to his home, about a mile.

It was about nine o'clock according to the story told by Mrs. Anton that a knock was heard at the door. The intruders claimed to be men from the dynamite plant looking for rooms but when she refused to admit them they broke open the door and the party of five or six entered, all of them masked except one, and asked for Mr. Anton. He was in a closet but the members of the party forced the door, grabbed him and took him to the waiting auto. Mr. Anton had no chance to make a determined fight to keep from being taken as he was overpowered by numbers.

#### Rifle Taken Away.

Mrs. Anton, who had a baby in her arms when the members of the posse came, grabbed a rifle when she found that they intended to take her husband from the house but before she could use the same it was torn from her hands by a member of the tar and feathering party.

### GOV. PHILIPP WRITES MAYOR A LETTER

**He Reviews The Anton Case and Despite The Fact That Court Discharged Them Says Men Were Guilty Of Crime.**

MADISON, Wis., July 27.—In an effort to check lawlessness in the city of Ashland Gov. E. L. Philipp last night directed a letter to the mayor of that municipality calling upon him to co-operate with the state government and enforce law and order. He declares that the success of the war depends to a large extent upon the good order at home and that they do not wish their homes to have the reputation of being the one spot in Wisconsin given over to lawlessness where self appointed men may commit acts of violence and go unpunished for it.

Following is the governor's letter: Mayor City of Ashland, Ashland, Wisconsin.

My dear Sir:

I feel that I should write you regarding the Anton tar and feather case and the dismissal of the accused by the court, and talk seriously with you concerning such practices and the apparent approval thereof by a considerable number of Ashland's citizens.

In the case in question the state was ready to prove by the testimony of the victim, also by the testimony of his wife, that the men who committed this act of violence, or at least two of them, were not masked and that they could identify them; that these two men, with others who were masked, came to the home of Anton, broke down the door with force, made a forcible entry into the bathroom, took the man from the house by force and carried him to a lonely spot some distance from Ashland removed his clothing, coated him with tar and covered him with feathers, that he was otherwise abused and was obliged to make his way home as best he could without clothing.

Despite this proof the case against the men who could be identified was dismissed, and I am informed that the men who were guilty of this crime stated in the court room, within the hearing of witnesses, that if the judge did not dismiss this case against them that he would receive the same treatment.

If my information is correct, and I have every reason to believe that it is, a situation has grown up in Ashland that is the natural result of giving encouragement to mob rule, and I cannot refrain from saying to you that I believe that your police department, also the sheriff's office, have not been as diligent as they should have been in suppressing that type of disorder.

Three or four victims have been tarred and feathered in Ashland, all because they were accused of having made some disloyal remarks. In the

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### GOV. PHILIPPS WRITES MAYOR A LETTER

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In the case of Anton I have not yet been able to ascertain that disloyalty was seriously charged against him. I am not writing to you for the purpose of condoning anything that the men in question have done. If any or all of them have been guilty of disloyal utterance they should be punished in accordance with their crime, but it should be done by the orderly process of the court, which is established by the people for that purpose, and not by a mob or by any secret organization that sets itself up as a judge of the people's conduct.

"Gov. Philipp Writes Mayor a Letter," Ashland Daily Press, 7/27/1918

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### Police Notified.

The Antons have a telephone but the first thing that was done by the unwelcome visitors was to tear this from the wall and put it out of business for communication with the police.

As soon as the auto departed, Mrs. Anton ran to a neighbors and notified the police. She told the police that she thought the auto went out to the cemetery road and Chief of Police Blair took the police auto and went out as far as the brick school house on the cemetery road but could find no trace of any disturbance. He then returned to the house of Mr. Anton and by that time Mr. Anton had returned home and was busily engaged in getting the tar and feathers from his anatomy.

### Recognized Members Of Party

The Antons told the police that one of the members of the party which entered the house was not masked and that it was Ephriam Gay, the house mover. They also stated that they recognized the voice of another member of the party and that it was the voice of George Buchanan, agent for the New York Life Insurance company.

### Gay and Buchanan Arrested.

This afternoon District Attorney George F. Merrill, signed a complaint for the arrest of Gay and Buchanan, charging them along with six unknown persons of breaking into the home of Adolph Anton and of tar and feathering him. The warrant issued as follows:

The warrant under which Mr. Gay and Mr. Buchanan were arrested reads as follows:

### Criminal Warrant

State of Wisconsin,

City of Ashland,

County of Ashland.

In municipal court:

The State of Wisconsin to the Sheriff or any constable of said county: ,

Whereas, Geo. F. Merrill has this day complained in writing to the judge of the Municipal court of the city of Ashland and county of Ashland on oath, that George Buchanan, Ephriam Gay and six other persons unknown to affiant, on the 10th day of April, A. D. 1918 at the city of Ashland in said county of Ashland did assemble in a violent, unlawful, and tumultuous manner to the disturbance of the peace and to the terror and disturbance of others and their present assault, strike, wound and beat Adolph Anton and did then and there in a violent, unlawful and tumultuous manner break into the dwelling house of the said Adolph Anton and did then and there in a violent, unlawful and tumultuous manner take the said Adolph Anton from his dwelling house and carry him from the said dwelling house and did then and there tear the clothing of the said Adolph Anton and stripped the clothing from him, and did beat him and cover him with a coat of tar and feathers to the great damage of the said Adolph Anton.