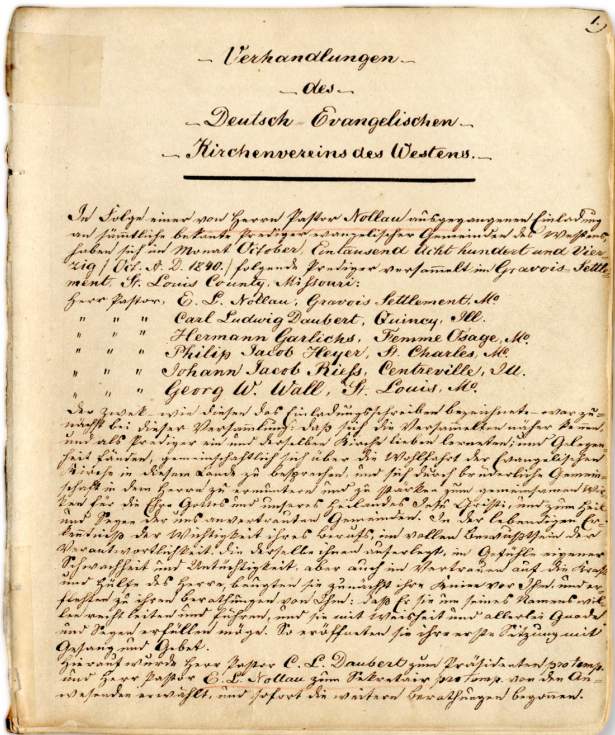


**This Week in Eden History**  
**October 14 | Birth of the Evangelical Synod of North America**



*First minutes of the German Evangelical Church Society of the West, Oct. 14, 1840.*  
 Eden Seminary Archives

The birth of the **Evangelical Synod of North America** originated in an ecumenical meeting of frontier German Protestant ministers at Gravois Settlement, St. Louis County, Missouri, on **Oct. 14, 1840**. By that year, the number of German immigrants living in Missouri and Illinois had increased to 50,000, but few German-speaking pastors were among them. Itinerant ministers travelled among far-flung homesteads and communities until German missionaries settled in the St. Louis area and began to organize congregations. One of them was Eduard Nollau from the Rhenish Mission Society in Barmen. Nollau was delayed in St. Louis in 1837 while on his way to a mission assignment in Oregon. Observing the situation of German immigrants, he settled in Gravois Settlement (now Mehlville) and founded St. John's Church.

Nollau sent a letter to an unknown number of German pastors in the St. Louis region suggesting "the need of fellowship and fraternal

cooperation" and inviting them to meet on October 14 "to become mutually acquainted." Five pastors responded. The attendees discussed how they "could better organize their work in the face of the "opposition of the English Lutheran Synods" and the "Ultra Lutherans."\*

Their conversation resulted in the organization of *Der Deutsche Evangelische Kirchenverein des Westens* (The German Evangelical Church Society of the West). The founders intentionally avoided establishing a "synod" because of resistance to proselytizing by European or Eastern

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U.S. denominations. The group favored the union of German Lutheran and Reformed churches and thus was branded heretical by the ultra-orthodox “Old Lutheran” Saxon immigrants. They were also savagely attacked by the rationalistic German press, who saw in the group an effort to reestablish the “evils” of religion in the immigrant German community.

Although the early years were difficult, the gradual addition of new pastoral members and the increasing number of congregations affiliating with the *Kirchenverein* strengthened its ministry. Plans for a catechism, hymnal, and a book of worship were initiated, and a seminary—Eden’s predecessor—was established near Marthasville, Missouri in 1850. The foundation of a new, American-born denomination was in place, and the *Kirchenverein* would grow into the Evangelical Synod of North America.

\*A. Mallinckroth. “Rev. E. L. Nollau (1810-1869) Founder of Evangelical Charity.” *Eduard Ludwig Nollau—Mission und Migration im 19. Jahrhundert: Eine Spurensuche / Eduard Ludwig Nollau—Searching for Traces of Migration and Mission in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*. Her-rnhut, Germany: Verein für Schlesische Kirchengeschichte, 2011, 52.

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