

# Heinrich Kurtz (1875-1885)

*"In professor Krutz the spirit and strength of Christ was clearly reflected in all its loveliness"*<sup>1</sup>

In the early 1960s Mission House stood as a fledgling seminary in Herman township. The history of Mission House began in 1848, with a band of 68 immigrants fleeing from the German Revolutions in Germany, to Sheboygan county<sup>2</sup>. This small band of immigrants would make up the Immanuel Congregation from whence the Mission House originated . By 1854, the immigrants had grown to a settlement and the Sheboygan classis was formed. The classis was a group of four men, pastors and elders, whom were to govern the local churches. These four men were - H.A. Muehlmeier, Herman August Winter, Jakob J. Bossard, and Johann Traugott Klug<sup>3</sup>.

As the group began work in Sheboygan county, it became apparent that there was a need for more local ministers, thus, as early as 1855, the teaching of ministers had already begun, unofficially, in Herman township. However, it wasn't until 1860 that the classis had officially adopted the rules necessary for creating Mission House and a building was erected for such purposes in Herman township.

As Mission House grew in number of students, it began to accept more, including those who were not in ministry, and was beginning to shape itself into a 'regular institution'<sup>4</sup>. In 1875, the Mission House would officially be recognized as a college and Prof. Heinrich A. Kurtz would be called to the helm as the first president of the institution.

Heinrich Kurtz was born on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 1823<sup>5</sup>. Austrian by birth, he had trained in the Roman priesthood, but left it behind to teach due to his evangelical interests<sup>6</sup>. He served as head of a high school for several years before leaving for Silesia and also served as a pastor of Reformed Congregation. In 1865 he was sent to Milwaukee, WI, to preach. By 1872, Mission House had induced him as Professor of Exegesis. He served on the Board of Trustees alongside Muehmeier, Kluge, Bossard, M. Stern, J.H. Klein, Dr. Zimmerman and two elders.

During his time as President and Professor at Mission House, Kurtz was known for his musical talent and for raising the status of the music department of the school to become one of the school's most outstanding features. One of his greatest legacies is as a choral composer. During his lifetime he had several songs published as hymnals by Cleveland Publishing House<sup>7</sup>. His original compositions were often composed for the school choir and generally consisted of a passage from Scripture accompanied with an elaborate instrumental<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> J.J. Schlicher, "The Beginning and Early Years of the Mission House : The Mission House of the Eighties," *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 1923, 28.

<sup>2</sup> J.J. Schlicher, 2.

<sup>3</sup> J.J. Schlicher, 5.

<sup>4</sup> Jaberg, Eugene C., Reinhard Ulrich, Roland G. Kley, Arthur M. Krueger, and Theophilus F. H. Hilgeman. *A History of Mission House-Lakeland*. Philadelphia, Penn.: Christian Education Press, 1962.

<sup>5</sup> "Heinrich Kurtz (1823-1889)." Find A Grave. Accessed November 15, 2019. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/115835898/heinrich-kurtz>.

<sup>6</sup> Jaberg, Eugene C, et al, 73.

<sup>7</sup> Jaberg, Eugene C et al, 98.

<sup>8</sup> J.J. Schlicher, 30.

Kurtz resigned Presidency in 1885, but continued teaching music until his death on May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1889. It speaks much to the character of Kurtz that he is remembered for reflecting the spirit of Christ. As one of the founding professors of Mission House and the first President, he is remembered for his commitment to teaching and the role he played in stabilizing the beginning institution. Today, he would be proud to see his instillment of the love of music in Mission House still showing itself today in Lakeland's modern music programs.