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Texas German Dialect Project celebrates 10-year anniversary!



Interview with a Texas German speaker in May 2010

Ten years ago, a brief stop in Fredericksburg on a road trip from Berkeley to Austin compelled Hans Boas to begin an in-depth investigation of Texas German. By September of 2001, after Dr. Boas conducted some preliminary research, he founded the Texas German Dialect Project (TGDP) at UT Austin. In 2002, the TGDP pilot web site went online, and a few months later the current TGDP interface and web design were launched.

With the help of more than forty members, five of whom are still involved today, the TGDP has interviewed over 380 speakers of Texas German to date, yielding more than 680 hours of recordings, all of which are deposited in the online Texas German Dialect Archive. In 2008, the TGDP also began work on the online Texas German history and culture time-line. The first prototype, which is currently undergoing redesign, was tested in 2009

and used in Dr. Boas' Spring 2010 class, "The Texas German Experience" at UT.

Ten years of research have generated a digital on-line archive of Texas German as well as an impressive amount of discussion about Texas German in the form of public outreach lectures in the U.S. and Germany, publications, theses, press coverage, and presentations at academic conferences around the world.

Members of the TGDP have also given more than 70 presentations about Texas German and the Project itself over the past ten years. Occasions have ranged from linguistics conferences and German Heritage Society and Rotary Club meetings to a family reunion in Meyersville. Venues have been no less diverse, including various locations across central Texas, the United States, Canada, Germany, and even Australia. TGDP

associates have explored topics such as the use of 'well' in Texas German, heritage preservation in the 21st Century, and language attitudes among bilingual Texas Germans. Outreach presentations

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TGDP MILESTONES 2010

- ◆ TGDP members publish the article "The Texas German Dialect Archive" in the *Journal of Germanic Linguistics* 22.3: 277-296.
- ◆ Dr. Boas teaches a class on Texas German at the *Viadrina University* in Frankfurt/Oder, Germany.
- ◆ The TGDP receives a collection of Texas German recordings from the 1960s from Dr. Pulte of Southern Methodist University. In 2011, these historical recordings are being digitized for preservation purposes.

What happened to the 2010 newsletter?

You may recall that the TGDP began sending out an annual newsletter four years ago, in 2007. And you may also have noticed that last year no newsletter came to your door. 2010 was a financially difficult year for the TGDP, and we are grateful this year to have a newsletter once more, and the opportunity to explain our temporary, albeit reluctant, absence.

From 2001 to 2006, we received grants from UT Austin as well as Humanities Texas, the National Endowment for the

Humanities. These funds supported the significant operating costs of the TGDP, and helped establish the Endowment Fund (see *How to preserve Texas German* on p. 2). However, the economic climate in the last few years has resulted in budget cuts for many humanities and arts programs, and less grant money has been available for non-profits.

This lack of funding since 2006 has drastically reduced our ability to record interviews for storage in our archive, and has left us *(Continued on p. 4)*

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How to preserve Texas German heritage and culture



Recording of an oral history interview in Freyburg, TX

Crack open a typical public school history textbook, and you will notice that German immigrants to Texas are merely mentioned in passing. Visit the Texas History Museum in Austin, and you will find one small text about German immigrants; nothing more. Many college students at UT Austin are shocked when they learn that German, Czech, Swedish, and Norwegian immigrants were instrumental in shaping 19th century Texas. It is no wonder that Texas students and the general public know very



Texas Germans having a good time in the 1870s. Photo courtesy of the La Grange Public Library.

little about the wealth of cultural, architectural, educational, military, and culinary traditions brought to Texas by German immigrants in the 19th century. This lack of

information is regrettable, but it is not too late to change the situation. By the year 2050, a unique and important window onto the world of the Texas Germans has the potential to close. When the spoken language vanishes at last, all that will be left to future generations is the understated presence that German immigrants

currently occupy in public awareness, as well as current researchers' preservation efforts. The work of the TGDP is time-sensitive; we are the only organization recording interviews in the field, and each additional speaker we interview now leaves the future window onto Texas German heritage a little more open.

Members of the TGDP have interviewed nearly 400 speakers of Texas German across Texas, with a waiting list of 400 more speakers to go. These interviews are recorded, transcribed, translated, archived, and published on the internet so that anyone can have free access to this invaluable information – linguists, historians, students, professors, Texas Germans, and curious individuals around the world. Simultaneously, the TGDP is launching a socio-historical presentation of

all the information it has archived in the form of an interactive, wiki-enabled online time-line. This time-line will provide free public access to a host of digital

copies of historical photographs and documents, sound clips, and English translations of the personal and family stories told by TGDP informants.

However, as described in *What Happened to the 2010 newsletter?* (see article on p. 1), funding for the TGDP has all but diminished, leading to a slow-down of operations. Whereas previously up to ten new informants were interviewed each month, our budget currently only allows for only one interview per month. We are losing valuable time. To re-establish the old level of operation, the Texas German Dialect Project requires an estimated budget of at least \$40,000 annually. Given the current lack of state funding, the sole option to guarantee the continuation of the TGDP lies in the establishment of a Texas German Endowment, similar to the already existing Texas Czech and Texas Swedish endowments at the University of Texas. By raising \$1,000,000, the interest generated by the Endowment every year alone would fund the efforts of the TGDP for the next forty years. Once no speakers of Texas German remain, the Endowment will be used for scholarships for students interested in researching Texas German at UT.

More than this, the Endowment is an excellent way for individuals who care about the preservation of Texas German heritage to make a lasting and continuing contri-

butio n to the cause. A donation today helps establish the Endowment; the interest it generates tomorrow helps perpetuate the preservation and dissemination of an essential body of Texas German



Dr. Boas presenting a lecture on Texas German in Fredericksburg

history, lore and language. Currently, the Endowment is valued at around \$40,000. The TGDP welcomes anyone who is interested in contributing – individuals, businesses, corporations, and other organization. Donations are tax-deductible, and any amount, in the form of money, land, assets, or inclusion of the TGDP in a will, is welcome. Those who wish to contribute can make checks out to the “Texas German Endowment – UT Austin” and send them to Hans Boas; receipts will be sent out within two weeks. If you are interested in making a donation to the Endowment or have any questions, please contact Dr. Boas at (512) 796-3046 or by email at hcb@mail.utexas.edu.

Old sketch of the Vereinskirche in Fredericksburg





The future of Texas German: The Texas German Dialect Archive

In thirty to forty years, it is very likely that no speakers of Texas German will remain. Since it is not being passed on to younger generations, the dialect is rapidly eroding and will die out. What will remain of Texas German culture, heritage, and history? Will Texans remember the important contributions made by German immigrants and their descendants to the Lone Star State the same way that they remember the Alamo? Most likely not. Indeed, Texas German music, food, beer, and tombstones are cultural artifacts that are likely to be continued once the Texas German dialect itself has died out. But should these be the only remnants of a once thriving culture that will be remembered by future generations? We think not, because an integral part of a group's identity is its way of speaking, the stories that are passed on through the generations, songs, prayers, recipes, and anything that can be communicated by language. We strongly believe that this unique way of speaking - the Texas German Dialect—should not be lost entirely. At the heart of the Texas German Dialect Project is the Texas German Dialect Ar-

The screenshot shows the Texas German Dialect Archive website. On the left, there is a table of audio files with columns for title, length, ID, and file name. The titles include various recordings such as 'Fredericksburg', 'Viva Employment as a Young Woman', and 'Learning English at school and German at church'. On the right, there is a map of Texas with red location markers for various cities including Houston, Dallas, Austin, San Antonio, and Fredericksburg. Below the map, there is a list of interview transcripts with speaker numbers and text snippets.

The web-based Texas German Dialect Archive will preserve Texas German

chive (TGDA). Hosted at UT Austin, records stored in the archive are guaranteed safekeeping as long as the University of Texas at Austin exists. Every interview the TGDP conducts is stored here. Moreover, the archive contents are published online, so anyone in the world can have access to this invaluable information for free, whether for academic study, community outreach, or simply to satisfy personal curiosity. Currently, more than 3,000 people benefit from the

archive world-wide. There has long been a need for an accessible archive of audio materials of language in use. Researchers have grown increasingly aware of the fragility of non-digitized media and the unfortunate frequency with which irreplaceable data is lost. The need for such an archive also stems from the difficulty of publishing large corpora, whether in audio or text format.

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10 year anniversary — Continued from page 1



On the way to conducting an interview in the Hill Country

provide an opportunity to educate the public about a proud yet unsung culture. From print to wireless, the TGDP has had its fair share of press coverage in the last ten years. It was featured in more than fifteen newspapers across Texas, the L.A. times,

the German magazines *Der Spiegel* and *Stern*, as well as on *National Public Radio*, and the *Canadian Broadcasting Company*. Through the efforts of the TGDP, Texas German culture, heritage, and history is becoming much more than a local topic for discussion. The Texas German on-line archive has supported the research of four theses at UT, a dissertation, and various publications. The largest work to date based on the archive data is Dr. Boas' book, *The Life and Death of Texas German*, published in March of 2009. Apart from numerous grants, Dr. Boas

has also received two significant rewards for his work on Texas German. In March of 2007, he received the Hugo-Moser Prize for Germanic Linguistics, awarded by the Institute for the German Language in Mannheim, Germany. More recently, in January 2011, Dr. Boas received the Leonard Bloomfield Book Award from the Linguistic Society of America (LSA) for his 2009 book *The Life and Death of Texas German*. The award is given to the most outstanding contribution to the development of our understanding of language and linguistics. According to the

LSA, Dr. Boas' book "presents the first major study of Texas German" and is "a masterful work [which] combines a socio-linguistic analysis of the phonological, morphological, and syntactic developments in the German spoken in New Braunfels, Texas, with a study of the larger socio-historical context that framed these developments. Written lucidly and accessibly, the book contributes significantly to the understanding of the dynamics underlying new-dialect formation, language contact, language change, and language death."



Texas German documents wanted

Continued from p. 1: What happened to 2010?

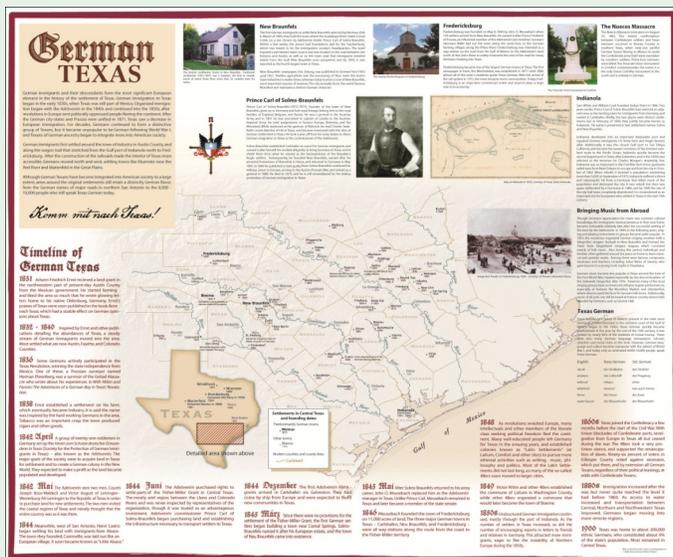


The Star-Spangled Banner in German (19th century)

Do you have any old Texas German documents? For its on-line Texas German history website, the TGDP is looking for old pictures, diaries, letters, newspapers, minutes of church meetings, or any other type of document that helps us understand today what Texas German life in the 19th and early 20th century was like. We are interested in scanning these documents and using them for the Texas German history website so people can learn more about Texas German life in the old days. If you have any such documents, please contact Dr. Boas by email at

recording, one average, on interview per month – with more than 400 informants waiting to be interviewed. By 2010, financing our annual newsletter was out of the question. Thanks to continuing private donations, we are back in print this year and able to continue this important outreach activity. We believe it is vital to connect with members of the community who have a strong interest in Texas German culture, history, and language. Our mission to preserve language and oral histories can only succeed with the help of these people. We view last year's lack of funds not as a setback, but as a warning to roll up our sleeves and establish something lasting before it is too late. We are re-focusing our attention on growing the Endowment, so that people who care about Texas German culture, history, and language can donate a gift that keeps on giving. Once we reach our goal of one million dollars, the interest generated by the Endowment will fund all TGDP operations for the next 30-40 years; once the dialect has died out, the interest will fund student scholarships at UT Austin for those who wish to study Texas German culture and language in the future. So in effect, donors who choose to support the Endowment are giving more than they might realize; today their gift aids in establishing an Endowment; tomorrow it creates financial independence for the Texas German project and our mission to preserve everything Texas German. Remember the Texas Germans!

hcb@mail.utexas.edu or by phone at (512) 796-3046 to arrange for a member of the Texas German Project to stop by your house to scan these documents. We have more than two years of experience handling old documents with care: we use a digital scanner to create electronic versions of your documents for use on the Texas German history website. If you like, we provide you with a digital copy of the scanned materials for your personal use.



Featured: Texas German Map

Show your Texas German pride and contribute to the Texas German Endowment at the University of Texas at Austin by purchasing one of our high-quality prints of the history of German immigration into Texas!

Donated for fundraising purposes by mapmaker and German American Justin Cozart, this beautiful 34"x28" map includes a chronology of the history of Texas Germans dating back to 1831, when Johann Friedrich Ernst first fell in love with the wide-open country and wrote a book about it, *Reise nach Texas*. It also explains key concepts in German immigration, such as the role of the *Adelsverein*, an organization that was instrumental in the settling of Texas, the founding of Texas German towns, basic differences between Texas and Standard German, the popularity of German music, and more.

German Texas map, available exclusively from the TGDP for \$40.00 including shipping and handling. See included order form for details.



Featured Alum: Cheryl Moran



Cheryl with her son Felix

Cheryl graduated from UT in 2004. As a fifth-generation Texas German, Cheryl Moran was drawn to study German as a foreign language at UT. Speaking German as a first

language had ended in her family with her grandparents' generation, and she was eager to revive this aspect of her family heritage. Through her experiences traveling to Würzburg and to Berlin through Germanic Studies programs as an undergraduate, her interest in language studies, German in particular, deepened, and she chose German and Linguistics as majors.

In 2002, Cheryl was taking a class in German Linguistics with Hans Boas when he advertised a position for student research assistants for the recently founded Texas German Dialect Project. She jumped at the opportunity to put her German language

skills into practice and, as a heritage learner, to help with the effort of preserving Texas German.

It was an enriching experience for Cheryl through her years of German and Linguistic study at UT to relate her education to the practical application of working with the TGDP. She authored a paper with Hans and two graduate students on the development of Texas German consonants and vowels, and presented the findings at the Penn Linguistics Colloquium in 2004. She expanded this research to write her undergraduate honor's thesis for which she was granted a Rapoport-King Thesis Scholarship. Cheryl looks back now with gratitude

on these valuable opportunities for her professional growth through working with the TGDP, as well as an appreciation for the enthusiasm that continues to thrive with the Project.

Today, Cheryl lives in Austin with her husband and three-year-old son, Felix. She is currently working at a software company whose offices in other countries include Germany. Working daily with a global client base, it is easy for Cheryl to be reminded of how valuable foreign-language and cultural knowledge can be in life. She has introduced a bit of German into her household vocabulary, and is keen on deepening his knowledge of German, to carry on a family tradition as well as giving him the skills needed to get ahead in the future.

Call for Volunteers

In March 2011, Donnie Hill of San Angelo, Gabi van Tassel of San Marcos, and Christina Kellner at UT Austin contacted Hans Boas. He was happy to hear that they wanted to help out with the Texas German Dialect Project. Dr. Boas met with the three volunteers and spent three hours training them in the process of conducting interviews. The volunteers plan to start interviewing informants this summer and in the fall.

This is an exciting kind of community initiative that could help the TGDP in a big way. There are 400 speakers of Texas German who are waiting to be interviewed, and with the current lack of state funding, TGDP members can

only schedule one interview per month.

Interviews are one of the most important parts of preserving Texas German. Because it can only be completed before the dialect disappears, estimated around 2040, it is much more time-sensitive than other tasks at the TGDP. Once an interview is conducted, it can be stored in the archive at UT indefinitely, so that analysis can take place at a later date.

Initially, the volunteering requires a brief training session, which prepares the volunteer for the format of the interview and the recording process. TGDP interviewers try to ask questions that encourage casual, relaxed conversation. This usually involves questions about topics

ranging from childhood games to current activities. Since we want people to feel comfortable during the recording, we ask them about their favorite topics. Interviewers record the session, because data analyzers are interested in many aspects of the community's language, not just in hearing one or two unusual pronunciations or a new word. It is not possible to listen for all the different features simultaneously without creating a recording that researchers can go back and listen to as many times as necessary. One of the TGDP's main goals is to paint as accurate a picture of the history, culture, and language of Texas Germans as possible; the recordings help us ensure that the descriptions we develop are based on real-life language use



Interview in Doss

and not on vague impressions or hearsay.

Volunteers can make a significant contribution to capturing the voices of a fading culture. If you are a German speaker interested in volunteering, or you know of anyone else, please contact Dr. Boas at (512) 796-3046, or by email at hcb@mail.utexas.edu. Thank you for your support!



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AND



The future of Texas German (continued from p. 3)



Plans for 2011 and 2012

- The TGDP will collaborate with Czech and Spanish heritage preservation projects at UT Austin.
- TGDP members will continue interviewing Texas German speakers throughout the state. We plan on extending our fieldwork sites to Muenster and San Angelo.
- Members of the TGDP will continue their fund raising efforts for the Texas German Endowment at UT.

Until the advent of Internet technology, an internationally-accessible digital audio archive



Texas German tombstones are likely to be preserved in the future

was unfeasible. Now, with recent advances in digital technology and the decreasing costs of its implementation, an archive like the TGDA, long envisioned by scholars and others who value these materials, is a reality. The archive allows a wider academic audience to utilize information collected by the TGDP, and promotes further original research. More than this, it creates a popular account of Texas German heritage and language that can be used in historical preservation efforts. The aim of the TGDP is to share this material with local

schools, preservation societies, and museums concerned with upholding cultural heritage through language. The TGDP will compose an archival tape collection of selected descriptions, narratives, and oral histories for these institutions. The Project also strives to protect the intellectual and cultural property rights of the individuals and groups from whom the data originate.

The database is structured around data from three questionnaires. The first is the so-called Open Interview, where the interviewer and the speaker have an unstructured conversation; this a sociolinguistic type of interview, where speakers tell stories in Texas German about their lives, their families, and local history, etc. These recordings are transcribed and translated into English. Archive users can either search for a specific file following one or several search criteria, or select a town on the interactive map to generate a list of all entries from that town. The other two questionnaires consist of lists of English words, phrases, and sentences which informants are asked to trans-

late into Texas German. These lists were devised by Fred Eikel in the 1940s and Glenn



Texas German music is likely to be passed on to future generations

Gilbert in the 1960s. Archive users can compare different pronunciations of words, phrases and sentences from various parts of Texas. To navigate these interviews users select a sound phrase and a town from the interactive map. The future of the archive revolves around preserving as many interviews with Texas German speakers as possible, and publishing more of the interviews already recorded. Its continuation is tied to the success of the Texas German Endowment, which will guarantee its existence as long as UT remains.