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TGDP developing educational materials about Texas German history for classroom use



An old German schoolhouse in New Bern. Courtesy of the UTSA Institute for Texan Cultures.

Over the past seven years, the Texas German Dialect Project (TGDP) has interviewed more than 300 Texas German speakers and archived the recordings in the Texas German Dialect Archive, accessible over the Internet. While the TGDP continues to interview Texas German speakers across the state, we are now also in the process of developing a series of educational materials for classroom use that will complement the oral history interviews in the on-

line archive. Our first project involves the development of a Texas German history website that can be accessed over the Internet. Users will be able to look at a timeline of events relevant to Texas German history and click on a year to read more information about a particular event, such as the founding of Boerne or the Austin Sängerrunde. For each historical event there will be primary source materials (and their English translations) in digital format, such as

images, newspaper reports, diary entries, letters, minutes of meetings, etc. Thus, students will be able to click on an event and get access to a wide range of primary source materials to learn more about specific events, people, families, organizations, churches, schools, towns, etc. We plan to use the prototype of this website in the class "The Texas-German Experience" during the fall 2009 semester at UT Austin. After revising the website we plan to develop specific exercises in early 2010 that will help students learn more about Texas German history, culture, and heritage. We will also develop specific exercises for K-12 education. If you have any old pictures (of people, buildings, organizations, etc.), newspapers, letters, diaries, etc. relevant to Texas German history, please contact the TGDP at texasgermandialect@gmail.com or at (512)

279-2462. We would like to make copies of your documents, digitize them, and ask you for permission to use them for the Texas German history website.

TGDP MILESTONES 2008

- ◆ In April 2008, Texas German and the TGDP were featured in DER SPIEGEL, the most prominent news magazine in Germany.
- ◆ In 2008, members of the TGDP presented fourteen lectures on Texas German at national and international conferences.
- ◆ During 2008, the Texas German Endowment received more than \$7,000 in donations. See inside for more details about the endowment.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Featured Texas German Speaker: Jeanette Felger

Jeanette Felger is proud of her German heritage. At 57 years old, her great-grandfather Stefan Klein was the most senior of the original 200 immigrants to come to Comal Springs (now New Braunfels) with the *Adelsverein*, along with his wife and five of their ten children. Expecting to be given horses upon arrival, they instead found themselves with no other choice but to walk most of the 150 miles up the Guadalupe River. Miraculously, all 200 of the original immigrants survived the grueling journey and built their houses in present-day Comal

County. Jeanette says that stories from her ancestors and the closely-knit community of hard-working, loyal people they established in New Braunfels are central to what it means to her to be a Texas German.

Jeanette has been a teacher since the superintendent of schools asked her parents to have her stop attending college during World War II to assume the instruction of fourth, fifth and sixth graders whose teacher had just passed away.

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Another full day of interviews devoted to preserving Texas German heritage and culture



Adolph Bernhard Jr., Ashley Ritter, Florence Kerry, Guido Halder, Kitty and Robert Hunter, Hans Boas, Karen Roesch, and Charlette Deike.

On November 20th, 2008, four members of the Texas German Dialect Project (TGDP) conducted a full day of interviews at the ranch of Robert and Kitty Hunter south of Fredericksburg. After a two hour drive from Austin, Hans Boas, Guido Halder, Ashley Ritter, and Karen Roesch arrived at 10 a.m. and set up their recording equipment in different rooms of the Hunters' house. The interviews began promptly at 10:30 a.m., with each of the TGDP members interviewing a Texas German

speaker participated in three different types of interviews. The first interview was an oral history interview during which Texas German speakers were asked questions about various topics, such as where their ancestors came from and how they got to Texas, what it was like growing up in the Hill Country in the old days, ranching and farming practices, the history of the area, recipes, songs, etc. These oral history interviews are especially valuable because they capture the unique Texas German history, culture, and heritage through the eyes of Texas German speakers themselves. By listening to these interviews, future generations will be able to understand and appreciate the many contributions made by German immigrants and their descendants to

Texas. The second interview consisted of a list of English words such as "milk," "head" or "hairbrush," phrases such as "two cows" or "the red ants that sting," and sentences such as "Hang the picture over the bed" or "He takes the most sausage" that were translated into Texas German. The goal of this translation task is to compare how different Texas German speakers across the state pronounce the same words, phrases, and sentences. These data will help us understand how Texas German has developed over the past 150 years in different areas across the Lone Star State. The

third interview is a biographical questionnaire that seeks to capture language use and language attitudes. For example, by asking how much English and German was spoken to different people throughout their lives we are able to develop a detailed account of how the use of Texas German has changed over the past 75 years. One of the findings so far has been that the use of Texas German has drastically declined in public places such as stores, schools, and churches, while it has remained somewhat stable within families, in particular between spouses and siblings. Regarding language attitudes, Texas German speakers are asked whether they would like to see Texas German be preserved, taught in the schools, featured on the radio and TV, etc. Another set of questions asks speakers how strongly they identify with Texas German culture and whether they are proud of it.

After completing the first set of interviews we took a lunch break. Our wonderful hosts provided us with tasty sausage, scrumptious Kochkäse and bread, different cakes, snacks, and a selection of delicious beverages. We enjoyed the beautiful view of the Hill Country from the Hunters' huge porch and discussed how the area had changed over the past few decades. Then, we started the second round of interviews, which ended around 4 p.m. Derek Hunter, Kitty and Robert's son, observed the interviews throughout the day

and took video footage of the interviews for a documentary film on Texas German history and culture. After completing the second round of interviews, we packed our equipment up, thanked our hosts for their



Charlette Deike and Guido enjoy a glass of wine after their interview.

cordial hospitality and the Texas German speakers for their time and willingness to participate in the interviews, and drove back to Austin around 4:30 p.m.

This day turned out to be particularly successful because we were able to interview seven speakers of Texas German, totaling more than 4 hours of interviews that will be edited and then archived in the Texas German Dialect Archive (see <http://tgdp.org/archive.php>). As of November 2008, the TGDP has interviewed more than 300 speakers of Texas German and archived these interviews for future generations as a monument to the history, culture, and heritage of the German immigrants and their descendants in Texas.

View from the Hunters' house.



Hans interviews Donald Eckhardt.

speaker one-on-one for about two and a half hours – with short breaks in between.

After signing consent forms allowing TGDP members to record and archive the interviews, the Texas German



Frequently Asked Questions about the Texas German Dialect Project

What kinds of questions do interviewers ask?

Interviewers try to ask questions that will produce casual, relaxed German conversation. This usually involves questions about topics ranging from childhood games to current activities. Since our major focus is on what people are interested in as they talk, we focus on getting people to talk about their favorite topics.

Why do they need to tape record the interview?

The interviewers are interested in many aspects of the community's language, not just in hearing one or two unusual pronunciations or a new word. We can't listen for all the different features we're interested in all at once -- and pay attention to what's being said -- without making a tape that we can go back and listen to as many times as we need to.

What exactly do the interviewers do with the interview?

We go through each interview in order to describe exactly how different structures pattern. We also compare different language items across different groups of

speakers within a community. For example, we may look at how a particular type of sentence structure or even a single vowel is produced by older people, middle-aged people, and younger people to see how the language is changing over time.

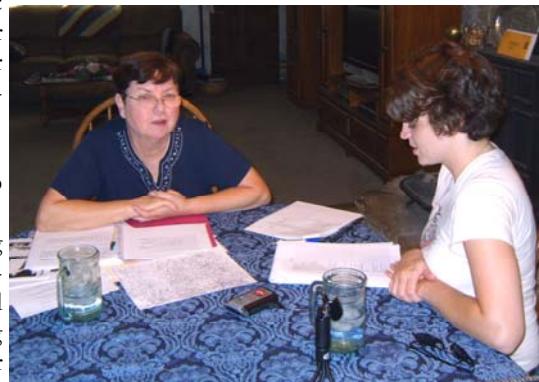
Who listens to the interview?

Before editing, only authorized TGDP members. Taped interviews are given coded labels and stored in a locked office to protect the privacy of each interviewee. When parts of interviews are used for educational purposes such as academic conferences, class presentations, or for presentation over the Internet for wider accessibility, the privacy of interviewees is guaranteed.

What good does the interview do for the community?

We are very concerned with sharing the knowledge that we get from communities with them. In fact, a critical part of our project involves working with communities to celebrate their language traditions. We do this in several ways. For example, we will write a

popular account of the Texas German dialect that can be used in historical preservation efforts. We will share this with local schools, preservation societies, and museums that are concerned with preserving cultural heritage through language. Furthermore, we will put together an archival tape collection of selected descriptions, narratives, and oral histories for these institutions. And with the Texas German Dialect Archive, we have set up a central location within Texas where these kinds of materials can be preserved for future generations.



Erin Covert interviewing Jeanette Schneider at her home in Fredericksburg.

A note from Dr. Stephen Sokolyk (N. Braunfels): Why I give to the Texas German Endowment



Historical marker in New Braunfels.

I do have German-Texan heritage—it reaches all the way back to 1952. I speak German, and though it's not always "Hochdeutsch," it doesn't have a lot in common with Texas German. So why am I an enthusiastic supporter of the Texas German Dialect

Project?

First of all, this is a unique dialect that I heard around me as I was growing up, and I still hear from a few of my patients in the Seguin area. Most of those patients will tell you that Texas German is "bad German," that they are "Deutschverderber" (ruiners of German). But the hard work of Prof. Hans Boas and others has refuted the notion that Texas German is simply low-quality, and has called attention instead to its equal status with other German varieties all over the world. I

want Texas German to be studied on a scientific level, to redeem its status as a functioning language.

More significantly, however, German immigrants played a vital role in the development of Texas, and a great many of these people lived their entire lives in communities where German was the primary language. Texas German, then, was the voice of key contributors to our common Texas heritage, including scientists like Lindheimer, educators and publishers like Seele, merchants like Roegelein and Guenther, and also the ances-

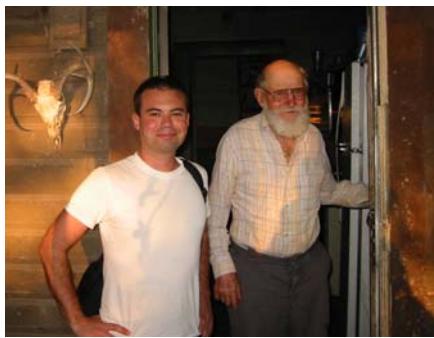
tors of hundreds of thousands of Texans. This language is like a treasured keepsake in the family, about whose history we always want to learn more.

Texas German, like many languages and dialects the world over, is fading away, no longer passed on to the younger generations. We cannot keep it in use, but it is part of our shared cultural history, and as such I believe there is great value in studying it, and acquainting future Texans with its hidden riches. I hope you agree.

Many thanks to Dr. Stephen Sokolyk for his generous support of the Texas German Endowment.



Graduate Student completes Master's degree in Germanic Linguistics



Hunter Weilbacher leaving an interview with speaker Robert Schuhmann.

Hunter Weilbacher, former TGDP graduate student research assistant, completed his M.A. thesis in May 2008 on the use and functions of the English discourse marker "anyway" in Texas German. Using interview data from the on-line Texas German Dialect Archive (TGDA), Hunter analyzed the different contexts in which Texas German speakers use "anyway." Besides many other interesting results, Hunter found that "anyway" in Texas German is used almost exactly as it is in Texas English, which is due to the word being borrowed from Texas English. As such, the use of "anyway" in Texas German reflects a partial assimilation of Texas German language and culture to its Texas English surroundings. Hunter is now a doctoral student in the Department of Germanic Studies at UT Austin. During the academic year 2008-2009, Hunter is a visiting student at the Freie Universität Berlin, where he is taking graduate seminars on Germanic linguistics in preparation for his doctoral work. He will resume his studies at UT Austin in August 2009.

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Using interview data from the on-line Texas German Dialect Ar-

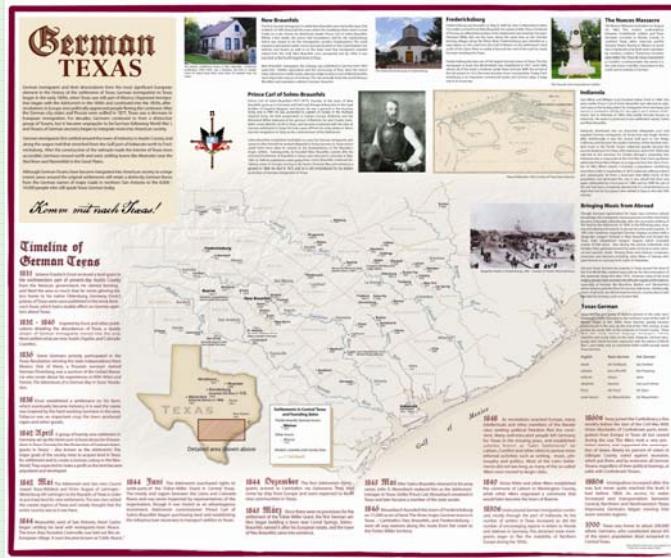


Jeanette pointing out the bluebonnets she embroidered on a handmade quilt in the Sophienburg Museum. Four quilts of its kind were made to celebrate the 150 year anniversary of the founding of New Braunfels.

Continued from p. 1: Featured Speaker

In order to teach, she had to pass a simple teaching certification test, which she was determined to fail so that she could stay in college. But in the car on the way to the test, her father told her in strong, perfect German, "Jeanette, do not fail this test and shame our family. You must do your patriotic duty." She is glad that she heeded his advice.

Jeanette now lives in the house she was born in, just across from Prince Solms Park in New Braunfels. Her family runs an inner tube rental in the summers, and she stays busy with her obligations to the Daughters of the American Revolution, New Braunfels Garden Club, Beta Sigma Phi and memberships to other organizations. She also enjoys needlepoint, sewing and other crafts. In February, she will be giving a talk for the Conservation Society of New Braunfels, telling the stories of her ancestors since their immigration to Texas with artifacts from each generation, at the Forke Store on Conservation Plaza.



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

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 **gorgeous 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 famous cities, basic differences between Texas and Standard German, the popularity of German music, and more.



TGDP Featured Member of 2008: Erin Covert



Erin graduated from UT in May 2008.

Erin Covert joined the TGDP as an undergraduate research assistant in September 2007. Though she graduated with Special Honors from the UT Department of Germanic Stud-

ies in May, she plans to hold on to her position with the TGDP at least until March 2009, when she goes to Berlin for six months to take part in the International Parliamentary Scholarship program, which includes an internship as an assistant in the office of a representative from the German Bundestag and free courses at the Humboldt University. She hopes this internship will help her gain political experience before she enters law school in the fall, preferably at UT. Her lifelong goal is to work in the U.S. judiciary or legislature.

In addition to her part-time work at the TGDP, Erin has been directing a documentary film on the Wegner Ranch at San Marcos in an effort to preserve the family's many memories and stories, and to help

them obtain a historical marker for the ranch's 100th anniversary next September. Between these two jobs, she has gained a wealth of knowledge about life in Texas, past and present.

OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE

Are you a Texas German Speaker? Do you know anyone who speaks Texas German? Contact us to set up an interview!

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New TGDP Members in 2008

Ashley Ritter is a first year graduate student at UT-Austin. She was awarded a student research mentoring fellowship, and is very happy to be working with Hans Boas. She comes from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and is enjoying all of the new experiences Texas has to offer. Ashley received her undergraduate degree from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, where she majored in German and Spanish. She also had the opportunity to explore the topic of German immigration to Wisconsin. Her work included a two year research project, in which she transcribed the diary of an 1850s immigrant to Wisconsin. Ashley was intrigued by the different language of the time period, as well as the cultural implications of being "German in America". This year, Ashley is starting her master's degree in Germanic Studies with a focus on linguistics, and she is

especially interested in Texas German phonology and morphology. In the future, she hopes to incorporate her work with the Texas German Dialect project into her master's thesis.

Luke Lindemann started learning German as a child from his Texas German speaking grandfather, Gus Lindemann of La Grange. He later became interested in linguistics at Pomona College in California, traveled to Germany with a study grant to research dialects there, and then attended a talk that Hans Boas gave in Austin. He volunteered for the TGDP for several weeks this summer interviewing speakers and editing audio files. He says that he most enjoyed "working with the staff and driving around Texas, having fascinating conversations and recording speech." Luke intends to return to help the TGDP again next summer.

Raphael Feider came all the way from Jena, Germany to intern with the TGDP for 6 weeks. A native of Trier, Germany, he moved to Jena to study English / American Studies and History

at the Friedrich-Schiller-University. As a general requirement of his studies he needed to complete an internship, and he decided that working with the TGDP was "the most interesting opportunity possible." During his time with the TGDP, Raphael conducted and edited interviews, volunteered at a linguistics conference hosted by UT and analyzed linguistic data. Besides his daily duties, Raphael explored



Raphael Feider and Ashley Ritter with Dorothy and Hans Hannemann of Fredericksburg, the first speakers they interviewed.

Texas. He was particularly charmed by Fredericksburg, saying, "It's amazing that there is a town in Texas that first reminds me of the wild west, but has German names and flags everywhere." Raphael returned to Germany six weeks later with fresh memories, American friends and a new idea of what Texas is really like.

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Plans for 2009

- The TGDP will test the first version of the Texas German history website and use it in an undergraduate class "The Texas-German Experience" at UT Austin.
- TGDP members will continue interviewing Texas German speakers throughout the state. We plan on extending our fieldwork sites to the area between Giddings and Brenham.
- Members of the TGDP will continue their fund raising efforts for the Texas German Endowment at UT.

Ways to give: How to contribute to the Texas German Dialect Endowment

Since 2001, the TGDP has conducted interviews with more than 300 speakers of Texas German throughout the Lone Star State, totaling more than 650 hours of recordings.

However, the project currently has a list of over 300 Texas Germans waiting to be interviewed. Because many of the current and potential Texas German informants are in their 80s and 90s, this means that valuable interviews could be lost in case they passed away before they are interviewed. The process of adding entries to the Dialect Archive is extremely time intensive. Per hour of interview added to the archive, an estimated 50 hours of work are necessary for setting up the interview, traveling to the interview site, recording the interview, and then digitizing, editing, analyzing, transcribing, translating, and archiving the interview material.

During the past six years the project has received funding from various sources both inside and outside the University, totaling \$200,000 so far. After years of

Hans Boas presents a lecture on Texas German at the Fredericksburg Rotary Club.



funding by different sources, the TGDP has been unable to receive further external grants for the past two years, drastically reducing the TGDP's ability to record and archive interviews.

To maintain its operations, the TGDP requires an estimated budget of about \$50,000 annually. Since both state and federal funding agencies have cut down funding for the humanities over the past four years, the TGDP has not been able to secure funding from these sources. In the summer of 2010, the project will reach an interruption in recording and processing interviews. For these reasons the sole option to guarantee continuity of the

TGDP lies in the establishment of a Texas German Endowment to ensure its permanent maintenance.

The Texas German Dialect Endowment is seeking donations from individuals, businesses, and organizations. The tax-deductible donations are deposited into an account at The University of Texas at Austin which generates interest each year. This interest will support the recordings and research activities of the TGDP for the next 30-40 years. After that, the interest generated by the endowment will be used for scholarships for students who are interested in researching Texas German culture, history, and language at the university. All donations are tax-deductible. Those who wish to contribute to the endowment can make checks out to "Texas German Dialect Endowment—UT Austin" and send them to Hans Boas, and receipts will be sent out within two weeks. If you are interested in making a donation to the endowment or have questions about the endowment, please contact Dr. Boas at (512) 279-2462.