



The Texas German Dialect Project turns 20!



In September, 2001, Professor Hans C. Boas founded the Texas German Dialect Project (www.tgdp.org) at the University of Texas at Austin. He first encountered Texas German when he traveled through Fredericksburg on his way from California to Austin in August of 2001. The

project was originally designed to record and archive interviews with 50 Texas German speakers. Boas quickly decided to expand the scope of the project once he recognized how different Texas German is from all of the other German dialects spoken in North America. With grants

from the University of Texas and Texas Humanities, he hired students to assist him with conducting interviews, transcribing and translating them, and archiving them in the freely accessible Texas German Dialect Archive. The interviews are used for teaching, research, and outreach. Over the past twenty years, the project has grown steadily and it has served as an inspiration for the Texas Czech Legacy Project and the Texas Polish Dialect Project. For a look at some of the TGDP's many accomplishments over the years, see pp. 2-3.

German Abroad 4 conference in Namibia

German Abroad is a conference series that focuses on structural and sociolinguistic issues of German-speaking minority groups from the perspectives of variationist sociolinguistics, language contact, and multilingualism. The first German Abroad conference was held in Vienna in 2014, followed by Austin

(2016), Erfurt (2018), and Namibia (2021). German Abroad 5 will take place at Eichstätt in 2023. Three members of the UT Austin Germanic Studies department presented: Matthias Warmuth "Sound change in a moribund dialect: the case of Texas German," Hans C. Boas "The forms, meanings, and func-

tions of *mit* in Texas German," and Marc Pierce, "The History of /pf/ in new Braunsfels German." German Abroad 4 was hosted in Namibia as there is a significant German-speaking minority there. Communities of German heritage speakers can be found on almost every continent.

TGDP MILESTONES 2020–2021

- ◆ The TGDP has interviewed 25 new speakers since December 2020.
- ◆ TGDP members presented academic talks at workshops and conferences in Austin (TX), Houston (TX), Antwerp (Belgium), Windhoek (Namibia), and Bordeaux (France).
- ◆ New book on language contact is published: H.C. Boas & Steffen Hoeder (eds.): *Constructions in Contact 2*. John Benjamins.
- ◆ Dr. Barbara Berthold teaches class on "Texas German Experiences" at UT Arlington.
- ◆ The TGDP receives a generous donation from an anonymous donor to support a Graduate Research Assistant for one year.

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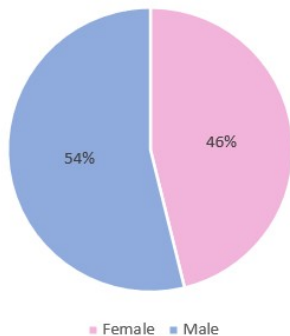
Auswanderbriefe 6



The Texas German Dialect Project turns 20

a look at the numbers

Who has been interviewed?



Our archives contain recordings for

800+

Texas German speakers

How old are they?

39

youngest person

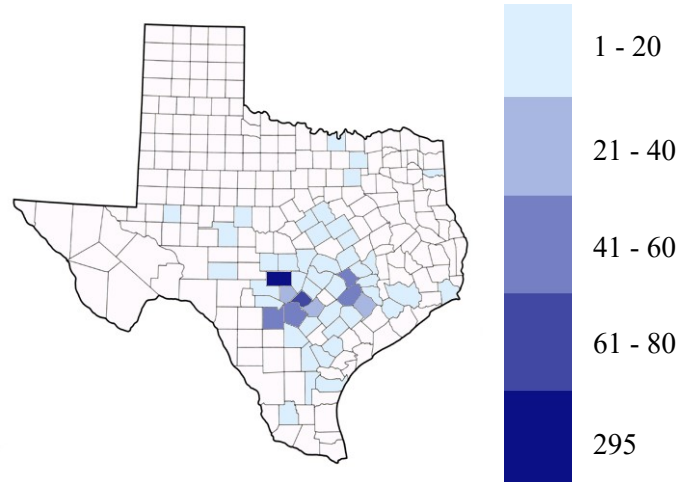
108

oldest person

77

average age

Where were they born?



Who has worked with the TGDP?

our teams have gone on

250+

interview trips

125

interviewers

130+

student workers

The TGDP is founded at UT Austin

Sept. 15, 2001

The TGDP interviews its 100th speaker

Oct. 2004

The TGDP publishes its first issue of *The Texas German Times*, the annual newsletter of the TGDP

Nov. 2007

Hans C. Boas publishes *The Life and Death of Texas German*

Mar. 31, 2009





Outreach

89 presentations at heritage societies, community groups, schools, and family reunions

In the Media



47 newspaper articles, including one AP story that appeared in 75 newspapers around the world



9 radio features



3 television shows, including one documentary

Academics

109 presentations at academic conferences and workshops around the world

32 academic articles and book chapters

5 books published

10 classes involving Texas German history and language at three different universities

3 UT dissertations based on Texas German

The TGDP has inspired the creation of three other heritage preservation efforts: The Texas Czech Legacy Project, The Indiana German Dialect Project, and The Texas Polish Dialect Project

Texas Polish Dialect Project



Karen Roesch publishes *Language Maintenance and Language Death: The Decline of Texas Alsatian*, based on her 2009 dissertation

2012

The TGDP interviews its 500th speaker

2016

TGDP starts collaboration with Glenn Gilbert, author of the famous 1972 *Linguistic Atlas of Texas German*

2017

The TGDP celebrates its 20th anniversary

Sept. 2021

2015

2020



New TGDP Member: Ellen Jones

Ellen Jones is a second year graduate student in the Department of Germanic Studies at UT Austin. Coming to Austin from Vermont, she completed her undergraduate studies with a double major in Linguistics and German at the University of Vermont, and is excited to combine those two fields during her time at UT Austin. Her research interests include sociolinguistics, specifically dialectology and gendered speech, as well as language teaching pedagogy and language in film. She joined the TGDP in January 2020 as a Graduate Research Assistant and has been assisting the project this past spring and summer by con-



Ellen Jones

ducting remote interviews and helping to organize some of the data. Ellen will be presenting a paper at a conference in March 2022 in Bamberg, Germany about some of the sociolinguistic sides of Texas German.

Featured TGDP alum: Abigail Amick

Abigail Amick started with the TGDP in the fall of 2018 and has continued to work with the project through 2021. As part of her undergraduate studies she conducted research on the intonation of Texas German using data from the Texas German Dialect Archive, with the purpose of expanding the body of knowledge and awareness of Texas German in linguistic communities. She is currently in the process of publishing this research. Working with the TGDP reinforced a passion for researching and preserving endangered languages and dialects. Abigail plans to pursue graduate studies and



Abigail Amick

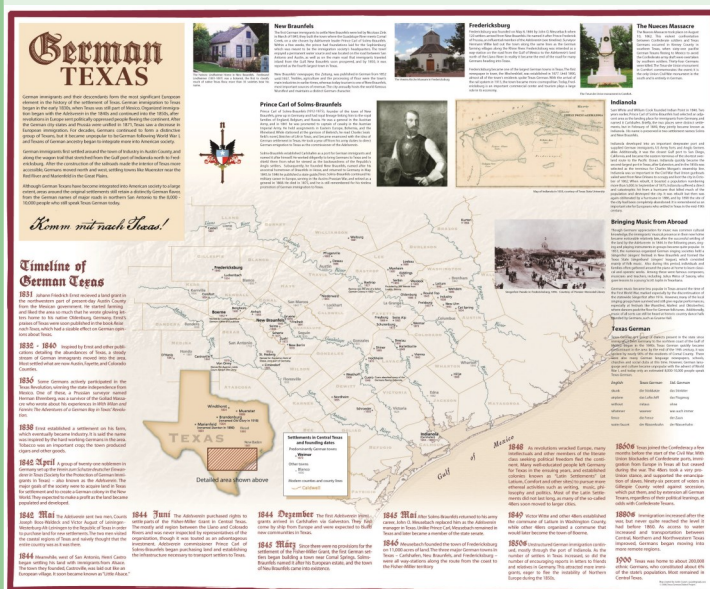
a career in the field of linguistics and language documentation.

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/abigail-amick-402518169/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/abigail-amick-402518169/)
Instagram: @abbieamick

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 Hill 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. **Contact the TGDP for yours today!**



The German Texas map is available exclusively from the TGDP for \$40.00 (includes shipping and handling). See enclosed order form for details.



Dissertation on Texas German Phonology

Matthias Warmuth's UT Austin dissertation project, "Patterns of Phonological Convergence and Variation in a Dying Language: The case of Texas German" focuses on how language death and language attrition, i.e., the process of forgetting a native or first language, affect the pronunciation of Texas German. More specifically, the dissertation addresses a variety of changes in the sound system, contrasting data collected in the 1960s with more recent data collected by the TGDP. His focus lies on developments that are most likely due to transfer from American English (AE), the dominant/every-day language for all current speakers of Texas German. The analysis relies on quantifiable measurements of consonants and vowels using the phonetic software *Praat* and perceptual analysis. The data reveals a variety of previously undoc-

umented changes that suggest the transfer of dominant language articulatory habits, e.g., the long vowels /e:/ and /o:/ are often articulated as AE diphthongs [eɪ] and [oʊ]. This phenomenon has not yet been described for any of the German-based dialects in North America. Furthermore, Matthias' analysis suggests the centering/fronting of segment /u:/ to /ʊ/ (e.g. in words such as *gut* 'good' and *tun* 'do') and a much broader distribution of lateral /l/ and approximant /ɹ/, the AE r- and l-sounds. The analysis will not only help document Texas German specifically but also lead to a better understanding of sound change in moribund dialects, which is of significant interest to scholars of German-American Studies, historical linguistics, language contact, and language death.

New TGDP Member: Simon Gerst

Simon is a junior from Houston, completing a double major in Jewish Studies and German and a minor in History. His primary interests include WWII, the Holocaust, post-20th century Germany, and the weaponization of disinformation. He is currently an intern with the U.S. Department of State in the Office of the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism. He is also a conversation partner with the UT German Department. Upon



Simon Gerst

graduation, Simon hopes to study in Germany before beginning a career in public service.

New TGDP Member: Grant Owens

Grant Owens is a third-year undergraduate student at UT double majoring in International Relations and Global Studies and Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies. He began learning German last fall at UT, and has since fallen in love with the language. This past summer he studied German at the Middlebury Language Schools, which boosted his interest in the language. Originally from San Antonio, Grant has known about Texas German from a young age, but first became interested in it after studying German in the classroom. Outside of TGDP, Grant is a section leader in the Longhorn Band and is very in-



Grant Owens

involved with other ensembles on campus throughout the year. Grant is very excited to be working with the TGDP team and he looks forward to enriching his knowledge of Texas German through this project!

New TGDP Member: Samantha Woolard

Samantha Woolard is from Raleigh, North Carolina. She is double majoring in International Relations and Global Studies and German and minoring in International Business and German, Scandinavian, and Dutch Studies. Before coming to UT, she took a gap year in Berlin, Germany to study German. Here at UT, she is involved in the Texas Economics Association and the Germanic Department's German Outreach Program where she teaches German to sixth graders. She hopes to pursue a career in environmental law after graduation, and would like to live in Germany



Samantha Woolard

again. She is very excited to work at the TGDP and to learn about the Texas German dialect!

TEXAS GERMAN DIALECT PROJECT (TGDP)

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AS REPORTED BY



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Plans for 2022

- ◆ Record more Texas German speakers.
- ◆ Begin research on letters written by German immigrants in Texas to relatives in Germany during the 19th century.
- ◆ Collaborate with the German-American Heritage Foundation on producing a museum exhibition on Texas German language, culture, and history.

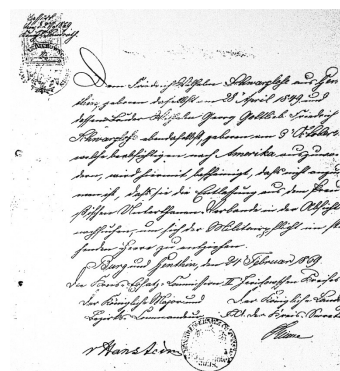
Auswandererbriefe

In the 19th century, German-speaking immigrants in Texas (as well as elsewhere in the U.S.) wrote letters back to their families in Europe. Over the past years, the collection “Auswandererbriefe” (emigration letters) collected more than 11,000 of these letters and archived them. Today, they are housed at the research library in Gotha, Germany (<http://auswandererbriefe.de>).

In August of 2021, the TGDP received a digital copy of several dozen letters written from German immigrants in Texas to their friends and families back in Germany during the 19th century. Over the next few years, we plan to transcribe many of these letters in order to build a digital research corpus that can be used to search for spe-

cific words or word forms in these letters. We hope to get a better understanding of what the written German of Texas Germans in the 19th century looked like, because there are no recordings of spoken Texas German from that time. While written German is obviously not spoken German, it will help us understand some aspects of variation in the dialects of German used by German settlers in Texas in the 19th century.

Another resource that might be interesting to our readers is the project “German Heritage in Letters,” spearheaded by the German Historical Institute in Washington, D.C. (see <http://germanletters.org>).



Dem Friedrich Wilhelm Schwarzlose aus Genthin geboren daselbst am 28. April 1849 und dessen Bruder Wilhelm Georg Gottlieb Friedrich Schwarzlose ebendasselbst geboren am 3. October 1852 welche beabsichtigen nach Amerika auszuwandern, wird hiermit bescheinigt, daß nicht anzunehmen ist, daß sie die Entlassung aus dem Preussischen Untertanen Verbands in der Absicht nachsuchen um sich der Militärplicht im stehenden Heere zu entziehen.
Burg und Genthin, den 21. Februar 1869
Die Kreis-Ersatz-Commission II Jerichowschen Kreise
Der Königl. Major und Der Königl. Landrat
Bezirks-Commandeur s. z. der Königl. Secretari
v. Manstein Thieme

Stempel

Königl. Ersatz-Commission
Jerichow
Kreis

Letter and its typewritten transcription from the *Texanische Auswandererbriefe* collection at the Gotha-Erfurt research library