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Thomas Meinecke visits the TGDP



Hans C. Boas and Thomas Meinecke

During the first week of November 2023, German author Thomas Meinecke visited the Texas German Dialect Project at UT Austin. He is a well-known writer throughout Germany who has written many books since the late 1980s. Meinecke also used to work as a DJ for one of the radio stations of the *Bayrischer Rundfunk* ('Bavarian Broad-

casting System'), and he has been playing in the same rock band *Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle* ('Voluntary Self Control') that he co-founded in 1980. As an author and musician, Meinecke has several connections with Texas and the Texas German dialect. In the 1990s, he traveled throughout central Texas by car, when he first encountered Texas Ger-

man while stopping to fill up his gas tank. Fascinated by this unique dialect, Meinecke recorded several speakers on cassette tape (and later on video), and he returned to record Texas German speakers and a number of German and Czech bands throughout central Texas. His documentary film *Texas Bohemia*, which aired on German public TV in 1993, is based on these recordings. In 2007, Meinecke returned to central Texas to record more Texas German speakers for a follow-up documentary film *Texas Bohemia revisited*, which aired on German public TV that same year. In addition to recording materials for the two documentary films,

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Update: Texas German dictionary

The TGDP continues to make headway on its Texas German dictionary project, as announced in 2022. The dictionary is projected to take 10+ years to complete a first draft, as dictionaries are notoriously lengthy projects. For example, the Grimm's dictionary, started by the brothers Jacob and Wilhelm

Grimm in 1838, was not completed until over 100 years later in 1961, and although work on the Oxford English Dictionary started in 1857, the first complete edition was not finished until 70 years later. That being said, the TGDP is not planning on having the expansive coverage that the Grimms and Oxford dictionaries

have—the Grimm's dictionary contains over 331,000 entries, and the Oxford English Dictionary originally had over 252,000 entries. The first edition of our Texas German Dictionary will likely have 3,000—10,000 entries, as it will primarily be a collection of ways in which spoken Texas

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TGDP MILESTONES 2023–2024

- ◆ The TGDP has interviewed 31 new speakers since November 2023.
- ◆ January 2024: Dr. Thomas Schmidt visited the TGDP to collaborate on upgrading its Texas German Dialect Archive.
- ◆ TGDP members presented their research at academic conferences in Austin (TX), Miami (FL), and Edinburgh (Scotland).
- ◆ Hans C. Boas was interviewed on Texas German by the *Deutschlandfunk* ('National Public Radio'), *Texas Highways Magazine*, and Hans C. Boas and Jim Kearney were interviewed by *Der Spiegel* (weekly German news magazine).

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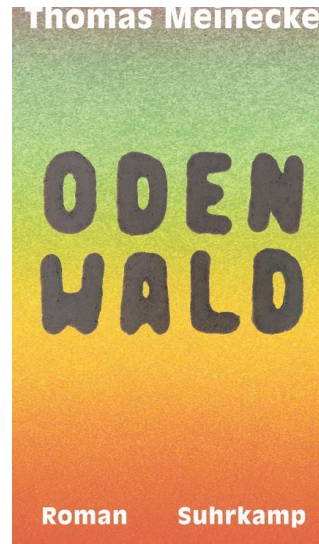
Meinecke visit, cont.

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Meinecke also collected a sample of different Texas Czech and German songs that he recorded during his travels throughout central Texas, and he published them as three different CDs with the German music label Trikont. The first CD, titled *The Texas Bohemian-Moravian-German Bands*, was released by Trikont in 1994, the second CD, called *Slow Music - Texas Bohemia II*, was released in 1996, and the third CD, titled *Texas Bohemia Revisited*, was released in 2011. While visiting UT Austin in November 2023, Meinecke brought his original cassette tapes and other recordings and donated them to the TGDP. These historical recordings are of great value for the documentation and

study of Texas German as Meinecke interviewed some speakers who have since passed away and who had not been recorded by the members of the TGDP. During the 1990s, Meinecke also interviewed four speakers of Texas German who were interviewed by the TGDP some 10-20 years later. Meinecke's earlier interviews provide an important baseline for our study of Texas German, because we can find out how someone's speech has changed over time (and why). The TGDP is incredibly thankful to Thomas Meinecke for donating his historical recordings of Texas German to us.

Besides music and interviews, Meinecke's written works include the novels



Holz ('wood') in 1988, *The Church of John F. Kennedy* (1996), *Hellblau* ('pale blue') in 2001, and *Selbst* ('self') in 2016. During his visit to UT Austin in November 2023, Meinecke was an invited speaker at two events. The first was a re-reading of his

1998 novel *Tomboy*, followed by a discussion of its impact on the national German literary scene. The second event was an author's reading of sections of Meinecke's manuscript of his novel *Odenwald* ('Odenwald forest'), which was published by Suhrkamp publishing house in Germany in October 2024. The novel plays primarily in the small town of Amorbach in the Odenwald region of Germany, but it also has a story line that extends to central Texas and involves Texas Germans as well as members of the Texas German Dialect Project. We hope to have Thomas Meinecke back on the UT Austin campus some time in 2025.

New TGDP members

- **Lyo Coleman** is from Austin, Texas and graduated from Skidmore College with a B.A. in German. He also minored in Physics. Lyo has been taking German since seventh grade, he researched the Texas German Dialect Project in high school, and his thesis centered around the project and the death of minority languages. He participated in a German American exchange program in high school and studied in Berlin for a semester abroad. Lyo loves to learn about languages and cultures and has studied Korean and Mandarin in the past. He

hopes to help as much as possible seeing as German and Texas culture are two things very close to his heart.

- **Riley Greene** is a junior at the University of Texas at Austin, pursuing a degree in German and European Studies. Her passion for German language, culture, and history was ignited by a transformative exchange program in Germany and Austria during her high school years. Living with a host family, she immersed herself in the German/Austrian way of life, fostering a deep appreciation for

their rich heritage.

With a strong desire to continue her academic journey, Riley aspires to pursue a master's degree and ultimately embark on a career as a German language instructor. She is eager to gain practical experience working with German speakers through the TGDP and is excited to be expanding her knowledge and skills in the field.

- **Tanja Haupt** is a German exchange student visiting UT Austin in Fall 2024. She has an undergraduate degree in International Relations and is currently pursu-

ing a master's degree in political science at the University of Freiburg, Germany. Her main areas of interest include American politics and transatlantic relations, making the Texas German Dialect Project of central interest to her. Coming from the state of Baden-Wuerttemberg, she is fluent in German as well as the Badisch dialect spoken in southwestern Germany. She is very interested in learning more about the Texas German dialect and comparing it to today's German.

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New TGDP members, cont.

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● **Leon Nast** came to UT Austin as an exchange student from Würzburg, Germany and is currently majoring in History. In his home country, he is studying to teach English, History, and Social Studies to high school students. As a Fulbright grantee, he is particularly interested in German-American relations. The TGDP combines historical and linguistic elements in a unique way and is predestined to deepen Leon's knowledge in both subjects.

● **Katherine Norman** is from Austin and is a third-year history major with a German certificate. After graduation, Katherine hopes

to pursue a PhD with a research concentration on German immigrants in the United States Civil War. She is excited to work with TGDP to help preserve and share Texas German.

● **Anna Reschke** was born in Russia, raised in Germany, and has lived in various countries ever since. She is currently an international student at UT, where she is studying Political Science and Sociology, with her home university located in Bavaria. Growing up bilingual and learning additional languages over the years, she developed a keen interest in the societal and historical changes within languages. She has always aspired to

work on a research project and is excited to contribute to the TGDP team.

● **Moritz Schanbacher** is a Master's student in Chemistry from the University of Würzburg, Germany, currently participating in an one-year exchange program at the University of Texas at Austin. He joined the TGDP to deepen his understanding of the unique German-Texan cultural and linguistic heritage. Growing up in Lower Franconia, he was exposed to a blend of regional dialects, including Franconian, Hessian, and Bavarian. Moritz first learned about the TGDP through conversations with exchange students from UT

while serving as a tutor in the Würzburg Summer Program.

● **Joren Somers** studied English, German, Dutch, and Icelandic at Ghent University, the University of Kent, and the University of Iceland. After a short career in teaching, he obtained a PhD from Ghent University on alternating Dat-Nom/Nom-Dat verbs in German and Icelandic. As of September 2024, he has been employed as a Francqui Fellow of the Belgian American Educational Foundation at the University of Texas at Austin. His research is focused on non-canonical subjecthood in German, Icelandic, and Dutch.



Lyo Coleman



Riley Greene



Tanja Haupt



Leon Nast



Katherine Norman



Anna Reschke



Moritz Schanbacher



Joren Somers



“Texas German Experience” at UT Austin

In Spring 2024, Jana Weiss took over the undergraduate course “Texas German Experiences” at UT Austin, previously taught and conceptualized by her former colleague Dr. James Kearney (and his course was based on a class Hans Boas developed and taught at UT in 2003). It is a First-Year Signature Course designed to introduce undergraduates to scholarly analysis from an interdisciplinary perspective. Through a decidedly historical, political, literary, and linguistic lens, the course

explores the multi-cultural richness of Texas, covering the beginnings of large-scale German immigration to Texas in the 1830s to the present day. By examining the past, students are given context and perspective with which to confront current and future challenges regarding immigration. Moreover, the students are introduced to University and city resources such as the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History Studies, the Elisabet Ney Museum, and the Oakwood Cemetery.

Jim Kearney publications

The Dewitt County Historical Society has self-published Jim Kearney’s annotated

translation of C.H. Waltersdorf’s *Geschichte von DeWitt County* “History of DeWitt

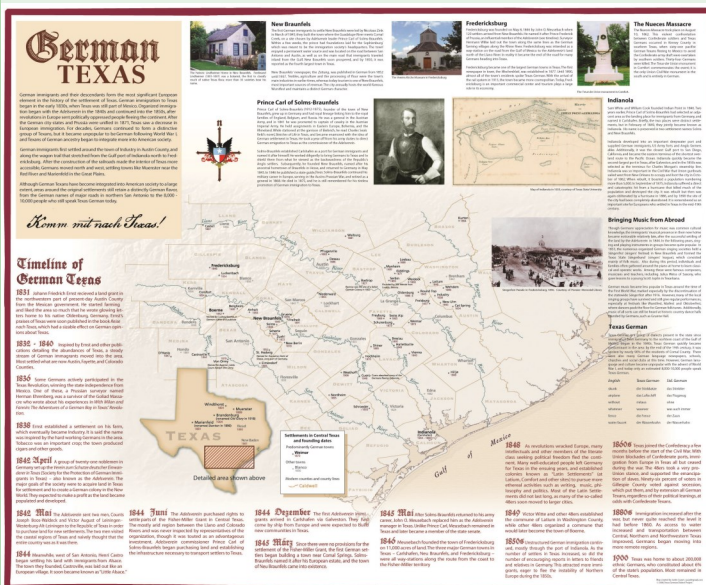
County.” Kearney’s work includes heretofore unpublished writings by Rudolph Kleberg, including a short autobiographical sketch and a history of the founding and development of Cuero, Texas. Rudolph was the son of Robert Justus Kleberg, who founded Cat Spring in 1835. Along with Gustav Schleicher, Rudolph is considered the co-founder of Cuero. He later had a distinguished career as newspaper editor, state legislator, US congressman, and federal district attorney for the State of Texas. He was a fascinating character who always stood for the rule of law even when it brought him into conflict with his fellow Texas Germans. The book

will be released in December in time for Christmas. In addition to this, the Nesbitt Memorial Library Foundation, co-founded by Kearney, Tracey Wegenhoft, and Bill Stein, has self-published a book based on the 150+ scripts they (especially Tracey Wegenhoft) have compiled over the years for their annual cemetery tour fundraiser. The scripts are arranged into thematic groups, such as “The Civil War Years,” “Pestilence,” “Scandals,” “Hardships,” “Strong Women,” “Scoundrels and Town Characters,” etc. The book also includes photos and documents from the Nesbitt Memorial Library archives, and is available now.

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. 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.



Support the Texas German Endowment at the University of Texas at Austin: Purchase a Texas German Map!

The Texas German Dialect Project (TGDP) is proud to offer a **beautiful 34x28” map** of German Texas for purchase (**see reverse for image**). Surrounding the map of Central Texas are several paragraphs about important Texas German people, places and events, and an extensive timeline of German Texas from 1844 to 1900. The maps cost **\$40.00 each, including shipping** in a 36” cardboard tube mailer via USPS.

Please fill out this order form completely and return with payment to:

Department of Germanic Studies
Texas German Dialect Project
2505 University Ave, C3300
Burdine Hall 336, 3rd Floor
The University of Texas at Austin
Austin, TX 78712 –1802

All proceeds from this map benefit the Texas German Endowment. Delivery will take 2-3 weeks.

Billing information:

Name (Last, First) _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____
Home Phone _____ Other Phone _____
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Would you like to include a donation amount of your choice with your purchase?
(Donations are tax-deductible.)

Yes! I have added an extra donation in the amount of \$ _____ No

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Form of payment:

Check enclosed made payable to University of Texas at Austin. Please write “Texas German Endowment” in the memo line
 Credit card: Visa MasterCard Discover American Express
Credit Card Number _____ Expiration Date _____
Name on Card _____
Shipping address: Same as above Alternative address - indicated below
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____
Signature x _____ Date _____



Glenn Gilbert visits UT Austin again

In November 2023, Glenn Gilbert (professor emeritus) visited the TGDP at UT Austin to donate more of his historic research materials and to give a talk on his 1960s research on Texas German, which led to his 1963 Harvard dissertation on Texas German and his widely known groundbreaking 1972 *Linguistic Atlas of Texas German* (published by The University of Texas Press). His talk was attended

by a few dozen members of the Department of Germanic Studies, the Texas German Dialect Project, and by his granddaughter who started as a freshman at UT Austin in August 2023. Prof. Gilbert's donations to the TGDP include a sampling of draft manuscripts of various papers he published on Texas German in the 1960s as well as old research and grant reports. In the summer of 2024, Professor Gilbert



Marc Pierce, Glenn Gilbert, and Matthias Warmuth

mailed two additional boxes of his research materials, including field notes used to compile his 1972 *Linguistic Atlas of Texas German*, several rare linguistics books, and, perhaps the most interesting one, a hand-drawn Linguistic Atlas of Williamson County (north of Austin), compiled by two of his former UT graduate students during the 1960s, based on the methodology of the 1972 *Linguistic*

Atlas of Texas German. In the fall 2024 semester, we started comparing this hitherto unknown research record of spoken Texas German with Gilbert's published 1972 *Linguistic Atlas of Texas German*. We hope to be able to report on our results in next year's newsletter.

TGDP alum update: Katja Levina



Katja Levina

Katja Levina, the TGDP's former Graduate Research Assistant (2022-2024) received her PhD in Linguistics from UT Austin, successfully defending her dissertation *Accusative external possessives in German, English, Spanish, and Russian*. Starting Oct. 1, 2024, she is a post-doctoral researcher at the Department of Linguistics at the University of Vienna, where she is working on a research project on linguistic typology.

TGDP alum update: Verena Sauer



Verena Sauer

Verena Sauer, a former visiting researcher with the TGDP in 2022-2023, accepted a position as University Professor at the University of Vienna, starting Sept. 1, 2024. Her research focuses on language contact / minority languages / multilingualism (esp. Texas German and Low German); language history (esp. Early New High German); linguistic variation; discourse linguistics; and more.



Texas German dictionary, cont.

cont. from p. 1

German differs from modern, standard German, and as such will not include words that Texas Germans use that are the same as in contemporary Germany. Creating dictionary entries is a process that requires a lot of attention to detail, time, and training.

Below, we showcase some of the kinds of entries that our dictionary will have, and what makes them special. In Figure 1, there is a draft of the entry for *aufpicken* 'to pick up.' *Aufpicken* is interesting for multiple reasons. For one, instead of being a complete borrowing from English, it is a mixture of German and English, with

aufpicken ('aʊf.pɪkən) verb (past participle: aufgepickt); from German *auf-* 'up' + English *pick* **1** to take hold of and lift up // English: pick up; modern standard German: aufheben ▶ ... *da hat der ein Stück Holz aufgepickt und hat's reingetragen* '... then he picked up a piece of wood and brought it in.' (1-55-1-13-a) **2** to acquire casually or by chance // English: pick (something) up; modern standard German: sich etw. aneignen ▶ *da haben die andern das dann ein bisschen aufgepickt von das Englische*. 'That's where the others picked up a little English.' (1-177-2-3-a) **3** to take (passengers or freight) into a vehicle // English: pick up; modern standard German: abholen ▶ *From da, mein Freund hat uns aufgepickt, und hat uns nach ihr Haus genommen*. 'From there, my friend picked us up and took us to her house.' (21-205-2-10-a) **4** to gather together // English: pick up; modern standard German: zusammenpacken ▶ *Ich habe sogar aufgepickt und nach the Philippines und Hawaii einmal gegangen*. 'I even picked up and went to the Philippines and Hawaii once' (10-140-1-3-a) **5** to gather by plucking // English: pick; modern standard German: ernten ▶ *wir haben Pecans gehabt. Und we haben die aufgepicked, but wir haben andere Leute haben geholfen*. 'We had pecans. We picked them, but we had help from other people.' (118-452-1-5-a) **6** to pick up, answer (the phone) // English: pick up, answer (the phone); modern, standard German: aufheben, ans Telefon gehen ▶ *Und dann konnten wir die rec- die receivers konnte man dann hören, und - was die Nachbarn alle aufgepickt haben* 'And then we could pick up the receiver and one could hear that the neighbors had all picked up [their phones].' (115-743-1-14-a)

Figure 1. Draft of the dictionary entry for *aufpicken*

word *Norder*, which is a direct translation of English *norther*. As several scholars have noted, many of the

weather phenomenon that is well-known in Texas, but that the immigrants had never experienced in Germany.

In Figure 3, we see another interesting aspect of Texas German, where words that are now considered to be outdated or obsolete in Germany are still alive and well in Texas. Since the two main waves of immigration of German-speaking people to Texas occurred before WWI, the German they brought with them was 50-150+ years old by the turn of the 21st century. Some of the words and phrases that these people brought with them remained in Texas, while the language in Germany developed in a slightly

Norder, der; ? ('noʊ.de) noun; from English *norther* **1** a strong north wind // English: norther; modern standard German: Norther ▶ *Sehn Uhr da kammn Norder reingeblesen. Bei zwei Uhr war die Erd weiß mit Schnee*. 'Ten o'clock, a norther blew in. By two o'clock, the ground was white with snow.' (149-177-1-2-a); *Als in letzter Nacht ein fester Norder zwischen den Eichen= und Zederstämmen der Hausmauern und durch die klaffenden Dielen, auf denen wir in unsere Decken gehüllt lagen, hindurchblies, den Schlaf verscheuchte und uns vor Frost zittern machte ...* 'Last night, when a strong norther blew between the oak and cedar trunks of the house walls and through the gaping floorboards on which we lay wrapped in our blankets, chasing away our sleep and making us shiver with frost ...' (Sörgel 1847: 27); Previously mentioned in: Gilbert 1965: 110, Jordan 1977: 69, Wilson 1981: 108.

Figure 2. Draft of the dictionary entry for *Norder*

auf being a direct translation of English *up*. In addition to this, the phrase 'to pick up' has a lot of meanings in English, and many of these have carried over into Texas German, meaning that this single word, *aufpicken*, has at least six different meanings. This showcases the linguistic creativity and productivity of Texas German speakers.

English words borrowed into Texas German come from technology, agriculture,

Words like this were often borrowed soon after arriving in Texas, as can be seen in

mehrst- (me:ɛst) determiner **1** superlative degree of *many*: the comparatively largest number of (construed with the definite article) // English: most; modern standard German: meist- ▶ *But die mersten sin durch Indianola gekomm*. 'But most [of the people] came through Indianola.' (1-158-2-1-a)

Figure 3. Draft of the dictionary entry for *mehrst-*

weather, and other things for which the original immigrants did not yet have words. Northers are a

the example from Sörgel in 1847, which is from a letter that he wrote home shortly after arriving in Texas.

different direction. This means Texas German sometimes has an "old fashioned"

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Plans for 2025

- ◆ Record more Texas German speakers.
- ◆ Release the Texas German Dialect Archive 2.0, with greater search capabilities
- ◆ Continue to work on the Texas German dictionary project by adding and enriching lexical entries.
- ◆ Present the results of our research on Texas German at academic conferences and at local outreach events across Texas.

Texas German dictionary, cont.

cont. from p. 7

flavor to modern German speakers. One example of this is *mebrst-*, which is marked as being a term from the 18th/19th century in the Duden dictionary—the most widely accepted dictionary of standard German since 1905—and is no longer used today.

Other interesting examples include words such as *allsmol*

‘sometimes,’ which comes from the Hesse region in Germany and therefore has a dialectal flavor which can serve as a window into where some Texas German speakers’ ancestors came from; *marode* ‘tired, worn out’ which is probably a shift in meaning from its modern German meaning of ‘dilapidated,’ and *(eine) Masse* ‘a lot, tons of,’ which can be

used in more contexts in Texas than it is in contemporary German.

Once the first edition of our Texas German dictionary is complete, we plan on expanding it to include both examples from spoken Texas German, as well as examples from written Texas German, e.g., from historical letters, newspapers, diaries, etc.

Prof. Boas interviewed for BBQ documentary

In early November 2024, Hans Boas, the director of the TGDP, was interviewed by the owners of Smoke BBQ in Duesseldorf, Germany. They were traveling throughout central Texas in late October and early November to film a documentary film about Texas BBQ. They interviewed Hans about the German influences on Texas BBQ and wanted to learn more about German immigration to Texas in the 19th century and how it has influenced Texan culture over time.



Crew from Smoke BBQ in Düsseldorf
with Hans C. Boas