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### The German-English School in San Antonio: Transplanting German Humanistic Education to the Texas Frontier

After its short-lived experience as a republic, from 1836 to 1845, Texas was ready to assimilate the ever growing belief in popular education which had begun to characterize American culture. Until the 1850s, the peculiar political and geographical realities of Texan history had contributed most effectively to the making of an inhospitable environment for the establishment of educational institutions. Within less than fifty years, however, through a rapid succession of social and political happenings that included the assimilation of a new major ethnic group—the Germans—the fore-and-aftermath of the Civil War, and the industrial-economic changes brought about by the railroads, Texans managed to adopt American democratic thought and practices through an educational system that compared favorably with those in most other states by the turn of the century.

The German-English School in San Antonio, established in 1858 and merged with the public school system around 1897, represents an important facet of the process through which Texas became an integral part of the Union, joining in the national goals and cultural direction of the American experience. The history of the German-English School reflects the particular problems of this change and acculturation process, not only of a specific ethnic group, but of a larger conglomerate of Texans whose existence was for some time influenced by the proximity of the state to Mexico and the Spanish-Mexican culture.

To the German immigrants who came to Texas in the 1850s, San Antonio—then the largest city in the state—presented itself as an exotic and bewildering place. The city housed a colorful multi-ethnic population mix, whose very diversity puzzled not only the European newcomers but many travelers from the northern United States as well. One of them wrote after a visit in 1858: "Walking about the city and its environs, you may well fancy yourself in some strange land . . . [and that the city] . . . bespeaks a condition widely different from what you are accustomed to behold in any American town."<sup>1</sup>

Frederick Law Olmsted, also a visitor from the north, described San Antonio at about the same time, observing:

We have no city, except, perhaps, New Orleans, that can vie, in point of the picturesque interest that attaches to odd and antiquated foreignness, with San Antonio. Its jumble of races, costumes, languages and buildings; its religious ruins, holding to an antiquity, for us, indistinct enough to breed an unaccustomed solemnity; its remote, isolated, outposted situation, and the vague conviction that it is the first of a new class of conquered cities into whose decaying streets our rattling life is to be infused, combine with the heroic touches in its history to enliven and satisfy your traveler's curiosity.<sup>2</sup>

In the eyes of a twelve-year old German boy, arriving in San Antonio in June of 1857 with his family, "the foreignness" of the city made a rather frightening impression: While moving their belongings from the hotel to their first rented apartment, the family was advised to take "Houston street, since Main street was still littered with bodies from the previous morning's shoot out."<sup>3</sup> The same boy, Ludolph F. Lafrentz, who later became contributing editor of two German publications, the *Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung* and the *Deutschtexanische Monatshefte*, investigated with a boy's curiosity the causes of the violent disturbance that had made Houston street impassable. He wrote:

Among the desperados who had established an uneasy rule in San Antonio and its environs, a certain Bill Hart played a key role. This very man seemingly ran a little grocery store on South Alamo street, which in reality was only a cover for a gambling joint attracting mostly young people who preferred to make a living with gambling and robbery since they were too lazy to work . . . many of those eighteen and nineteen year old lads had already committed several murders. Among them was, at that time, also the notorious Bob Augustin. . . . Finally, the citizenry's patience ran out. The straw that broke the camel's back was the robbing and slaying of a Mexican family who lived near the first Mission. A vigilante committee was organized and decided, without delaying action by investigating the guilt in this particular case, to summarily take care of the entire band of desperados. All national groups living in San Antonio were represented on the committee: Germans, Americans, French, and Mexicans, the best and most reputable citizens in town.<sup>4</sup>

The Germans coming to Texas and San Antonio in the 1850s were no strangers to adverse circumstances. Their homeland was plagued by dismal economic conditions and a far-reaching political disunity, the very reasons for their emigration. By comparison, the Texas frontier seemed to promise a future when the homeland had ceased to provide even a glimmer of hope.

Intrigued with the exuberance of frontier life and the New World promise of melting diverse cultures into one nation under God, a promise of which they had heard and read a great deal, many German Texans were determined to ignore the hardships of living in Texas and to do their best to contribute to the solutions of problems concerning a scarcely civilized state. As Lafrentz explained, having looked out over the picturesque San Antonio landscape from the balcony of the Plaza House:

Though the first impression of the Texas Coast had been a disappointment

to me, this view surprised me favorably. Everything had an exotic appearance, but it was [at the same time] of strange beauty, and I loved everything beautiful. Thus my first view of San Antonio had an element of real satisfaction.<sup>5</sup>

One aspect of life in Texas, however, was difficult indeed to view with good will and optimism: the virtual absence of schools at the time of the first great wave of German immigration after 1848. In San Antonio, the first free school had been opened in 1828, but closed again seven years later. Its principal teacher, Jose Antonio Gama y Fonseca, had taught there in Spanish.<sup>6</sup> At about the same time, records certified

to the existence of the 'McClure School' which was believed to have been opened in 1828 [also] and which probably was a small institution started by a school teacher for the benefit of the growing Anglo-Saxon colony in San Antonio.<sup>7</sup>

The Texas Constitution of 1845 declared that "a general diffusion of knowledge is essential to the preservation of the rights and the liberties of the people," but the realization of such lofty goals did not begin to affect San Antonio until a decade later, when, on February 22, 1855, the Board of Education for the Regulation of the People's Schools of the City of San Antonio was formed, which began to actively promote the formation of a free system for the city and its immediate environs.<sup>8</sup> Two years earlier, in 1853, under the management of various county and city authorities, two public schools for boys and two for girls had been "constructed," but records differ on whether or not they were in operation for consistent periods.<sup>9</sup>

At the time of the founding of the German-English School in 1858, there were in San Antonio three private schools in addition to the public schools mentioned above: one school in "the Old Presbyterian Church building" for children of Protestant families; a second, the Ursuline Academy, founded in 1851; and a school for boys established by the Sons of Mary which later became St. Mary's University. Of the three, the Ursuline Academy was the most successful one. The Ursuline Sisters had come to San Antonio from New Orleans and Galveston. They took in all girls of school age, but had, at least in the beginning, a large Spanish speaking student population.<sup>10</sup>

In 1854, a school law passed by the Texas Legislature entitled all schools giving gratuitous tuition to a share in the public school fund. The schools, in turn, had to agree to inspections by state officials and had to conduct public examinations.<sup>11</sup> The first distribution of public school funds during the school year of 1854-1855 amounted to sixty-two cents per capita.<sup>12</sup> The same school law also determined that state funds would go to teachers' salaries, and that any deficit would have to be assessed equitably among all paying patrons of private schools.<sup>13</sup>

Such were the educational opportunities when the first generation of Texas-Germans arrived. Earlier Texans, especially Anglo-Americans who had taken part in the New World experience for more than one generation, looked upon education as not necessarily related to their survival in a frontier environment. Their priorities were practical ones, connected to the establishment of prosperity and fortune, and they had moved into Texas gradually, making their adjustment to an advancing frontier.

The German immigrants of the mid-nineteenth century came to their new home without this gradual transition. Having left a country with a stratified society, rigid institutions and many strictures, they could in virtually no respect have found a more striking contrast than the situation existing in South Central Texas. Arriving as a group and settling as neighbors guaranteed for some time to come the survival of German customs, German language and German education. When the German immigrants realized that no general educational system existed in San Antonio, the creation of a school became an urgent priority. For such an institution the Germans used the educational principles of their own background, convinced of their benefit and confident that they could be transplanted. Only the complete single-mindedness of purpose that launched this undertaking overcame the many problems of the first years that often threatened the very existence of the German-English School. Begun with limited funds and sustained later with difficulty through times of war and economic hardship, the school not only survived but soon ranked among the best in San Antonio and in Texas.

To create this institution, a school association—*der Schul-Verein*—was formed and assumed the task of outlining the short as well as the long range plan for the German-English School of San Antonio. Reporting on April 28, 1858, the executive committee of the *Verein*, as prescribed by its statutes, presented to the general assembly for approval a statement of purpose and the proposed structure for the school. In the beginning stages, the school was to function as an elementary school adapted to local conditions. Yet even the curriculum on this level was shaped by the ultimate aim of developing an institution of higher learning, a *Realschule*, as it existed in Germany, affording its students a humanistic education, not training them for any particular trade or profession but equipping them with a broad education as preparation for life: *Non scholae sed vitae discimus!*

The statutes of the *Verein* explicitly stated the guiding principles of the school:

1. An association under the name *Schul-Verein zu San Antonio* was formed for the purpose of founding a school in the city to provide elementary education at first, but gradually to expand into a system corresponding to the German *Realschule*.
2. Religious instruction would be excluded from the curriculum.
3. The German and the English language would have equal status, and instruction in all other subjects would be distributed as evenly between them as was practicable.
4. The founders of the association pledge their support on the condition that the guidelines as stated in 1, 2, 3 would be upheld and that they would withdraw such support and demand a refund, should these principles be violated.
5. With the exception of the English instructor, teachers educated in Germany who also had some teaching experience should be chosen, if possible.
6. A member of the association was anyone who contributed to it no less than \$30 annually, \$10 to be paid initially, the remainder in equal quarterly installments.
7. Membership privileges began upon payment of the aforementioned \$10 and ceased if a member was more than two months in arrears. The rights and privileges of membership were personal and not transferable.

8. The general assembly was formed by all members in good standing and would convene every four months during the vacation after each trimester. The executive committee might ask for additional meetings in writing.

9. The general assembly would discuss and decide upon all association business by a simple majority and would effect amendments to the statutes by a two-thirds majority vote.

10. The general assembly would elect an executive committee by secret ballot with a simple majority.

11. All items for the agenda must be submitted the previous day, petitions for amendments to the statutes had to be in the hands of the chairman two weeks, in those of the members one week prior to the meeting.

12. The executive committee was to be elected for one year and would consist of a president, a vice president, a treasurer, two school committee and two building committee members.

13. The executive committee would represent the association and would administer all its affairs according to the statutes and the decision of the general assembly.

14. The school and the building committee were to be subcommittees of the executive committee which would prepare and, after approval by the whole committee, carry out the tasks in their specific areas.

15. The executive committee would submit a written report at every regular session of the general assembly concerning the situation of the school association in general and its financial condition in particular. The transitory regulation was:

16. Following the definitive decisions concerning the statutes, the general assembly would proceed to elect an executive committee which would be given four weeks to complete all preliminary arrangements for the opening of a school, would report back, and initiate the choice of teachers, and submit all contracts and other orders of business to the assembly for approval.<sup>14</sup>

Thus the work of the school was begun according to clearly defined administrative guidelines. The statutes showed not only the idealism of the founders but their sound realism as well. The elementary school was to be the necessary prerequisite of the *Realschule*.

When the school opened with two grades on May 17, 1858, eighty children were enrolled, seventy of whom were of German, three of French, and seven of American parentage. To become eligible for state compensation for indigent students, the first trimester had to run the full three months despite the August heat. The differences in background, age, previous schooling—if any—and nationalities presented the teachers with an unusual challenge. Instructional emphasis was on teaching the children to think for themselves, to lead them to an understanding of the materials presented instead of mechanical memorization. The results of the labors of teachers and students were displayed in a first public examination to which parents and friends of the school were invited. Conducted on August 17, 1858, it showed the following program:

8 o'clock		Singing	Mr. Schuetze
8:30- 9:00	I Class	English, Reading, Grammar	Mr. Doyle
9:00- 9:30	II Class	German Reading	Mr. Moeller
9:30-10:00	I Class	Arithmetic, German	Mr. Moeller
10:00-10:30	II Class	Arithmetic, English	Mr. Doyle

10:30-11:15	I Class	Geography, Natural Science, History, Physics	Mr. Moeller
11:15-12:00	II Class	Geography, Natural Science, Physics	Mr. Doyle
Recitation by one German, one American, and one girl			
Singing			
Distribution of report cards <sup>15</sup>			

The first trimester inspired great optimism for the future of the school and the ultimate attainment of its goals. Teachers were eager and cooperative and the financial situation was still uncomplicated: Tuition plus the expected state support for indigents took care of the monthly obligations of about \$200, \$50 for building rent, and \$50 salary for each of the three teachers. A benefit performance by the German theater association of the *Casino-Verein* provided additional funds.

Despite such a promising beginning, careful scrutiny by the executive committee recognized and analyzed problems early and proposed remedies. The first trimester showed that the school would have to accommodate its students initially, until they could function within a bilingual framework. Meanwhile, as much as possible had to be offered by the school to arouse interest among the public and to increase enrollment and revenue. The executive committee submitted three proposals to this end, suggesting the institution of a higher grade, the division of the present lowest grade, arrangements for instruction in needlework for girls, and a separation of boys and girls in the higher grades. By creating a higher grade beyond the elementary level, assurance would be given that a *Realschule* was indeed in the making at a time when neither San Antonio nor any other city in Texas had a high school of any kind.

The thirty-six hours of weekly instruction for the upper grade were planned as follows:

<i>Subject (I Class)</i>	<i>Hours</i>
German Grammar, Translation, Reading, Declaiming	7
English Reading, Declaiming, Grammar, Composition	5
Geometry, Algebra, Bookkeeping, Land Surveying	6
Natural History, Natural Science	4
Geography, History	4
Drawing, Writing, Singing, Physical Education	8
Spanish	<u>2</u>
Total number of hours per week	36

The lesson plan for the same trimester for the elementary grades showed the following distribution:

<i>Subject (II Class)</i>	<i>Hours</i>
German Reading	6
English Reading	6
Geography	2
History	2
Arithmetic	4
Natural History	2
Natural Philosophy	2
Writing (English)	2

Writing (German)	2
Drawing	<u>2</u>
Total number of hours per week	30
<i>Subject (III Class)</i>	Hours
German Reading	8
English Reading	8
Arithmetic	4
Writing (English)	2
Writing (German)	2
Geography	2
German Reading: extra class for American children	<u>3</u>
Total number of hours per week	29
	(or 26) <sup>16</sup>

An insight into the philosophy of the German-English School is provided by the rules of behavior for its students, with the emphasis on mutual consideration and on maintaining an environment conducive to learning.

In the light of the proverbial "Prussian" discipline ruling German schools during the middle decades of the nineteenth century on the continent—referred to with awe by visiting American educators reporting on German educational practices—the rules of the German-English School seemed to express a pragmatic rather than a rigid approach to school life:

A It is incumbent on the pupils:

1. To clean their feet on the scraper when they enter the school.
2. To put down their hats, caps, coats, etc., in the designated place.
3. Upon entering and leaving the classroom to greet the teacher courteously if he is present.
4. To take their seats when the bell is rung. To avoid all unnecessary noise in the building at all times.
5. To keep themselves, their clothes and their shoes clean. To take their books, etc., home with them at night and to bring them back to school in the morning; and to go home immediately after dismissal quietly and orderly.
6. To hand over pens, knives or books in such a way that the recipient has it properly before him right away and is able to use it.
7. To bow when handing over or receiving an object and to rise when speaking with the teacher.
8. To keep their books, etc., neat and their desks orderly.
9. To give everything they find in the classroom such as slates, pens, etc., to the teacher.
10. Everyone is responsible for order and neatness around his seat.
11. Everyone must be especially quiet whenever the teacher is called out of the room and should do his best to contribute to the well-being and progress of the class.

B The pupils are forbidden:

1. To throw pens, paper, or anything else on the floor or through the window and to spit on the floor.
2. To write on any part of the school house, tables or benches with slate pencil or chalk, to cut into them or to damage them in any way.

3. To touch someone else's property in the desk or to make noise with their own things.
4. To use their knives without permission and to absent themselves from the classroom without leave.<sup>17</sup>

The teachers had to keep attendance records required by the state, list all punishments administered to students, collect tuition payments as far as possible, take turns supervising pupils in the school yard, and enforce all rules and regulations of discipline with friendliness and kindness as well as strictness and consistency. Repeated tardiness, unruliness in class, inattentiveness, neglect of assigned homework, disobedience, noise, and rowdiness in the school yard were to be punished by having to stand in the corner, having no recess, or having to stay after school. In a meeting at the end of each trimester, all teachers evaluated together the behavior, diligence, and progress of each student. Seating order and promotions for the next trimester were also decided at this time. The school committee was instructed to hold a conference with the teachers at the beginning of each month to discuss matters of discipline, teaching methods and suggestions deemed useful and necessary to the school.

The school association report of April 20, 1859, was printed in the *Staatszeitung*, the German language newspaper. The institution had successfully completed its first year. It was an occasion for looking back, for recounting the difficulties but also for reaffirming and restating the founding principles of the school. Detractors and doubters had criticized the new institution on some or all of four counts: the equality of the two languages, the exclusion of religious instruction, the fixed curriculum, and the teaching methods. More convinced than ever of the benefits of the system, the committee in its report elaborated on each of the points stating that the purpose of drawing closer together the two most numerous nationalities would be best served by total equality and mutual respect. Learning both languages, the pupils would not be divided by arguments over nationality. That the system was indeed practicable was shown by the fact that most of the non-German children were reading, translating, and pronouncing German passably well after a short time. The exclusion of religious instruction was suspicious only to the so-called pious, the narrow-minded and the unthinking, the founders felt. In an institution that proposed to be a *Menschenschule*, not a *Sektenschule*, children of all denominations should play and learn together free of religious strife. The founder stated that the principle of teaching all subjects in the curriculum to all students apparently found its opponents particularly among parents who regarded a humanistic education as a waste of time and who thought that to be a merchant one only needed arithmetic and that for a lawyer or physician Latin and Greek were considered essential while geography, history, and natural science were deemed purposeless and no sooner taught than forgotten. Had not the older states of the Union recognized the error of such reasoning long ago, and was it not obvious that this school was carrying its conviction of the benefit of such an education into the "farthest south"? The teachers of the school also addressed themselves to the child's capacity for comprehension, not to his ability to memorize. Children could not learn to think, as the founders' re-



port emphatically stated, nor to comprehend, nor to express themselves if all the answers were printed in a textbook.<sup>18</sup>

Thus the report commended and encouraged the work of the school. Despite the city's growing number of either partly or completely tuition-free institutions, the attendance of the German-English School was satisfactory. The report praised the teachers for their dedication and effectiveness but also mentioned that several new teachers were sought because of resignations. A girls' class was discontinued because of insufficient numbers, and the committee urged parents to send their daughters to school. An evening school for young people who worked during the day showed disappointing results with an average attendance of twelve students, most of whom could not be persuaded to further their progress through homework. The second public examination held in the Casino ballroom on April 15, 1859, had shown, however, that day students were pleasantly advanced. It was noted with regret that few parents and friends of the school attended when such a show of interest surely would have encouraged the children in the pursuit of their studies!

A report of the executive committee on August 8, 1859, showed an average attendance of one hundred students, with many absences caused by the heat. Singing was taught with good results, and physical education was started despite a lack of equipment. On August 26, Julius Berends, principal founder of the school and president of the executive committee, presented that body with a resolution of the *Casino-Verein* to establish a *Schiller-Stiftung*, on the occasion of the great poet's hundredth birthday, for the promotion and support of the school. The *Casino-Verein* donated \$250 and asked for pledges for the purchase of a lot and the construction of a school building. The *Casino-Verein* would transfer the property to the *Schul-Verein* provided the school continued to follow its established principles, and that a bust of Friedrich von Schiller and a plaque were kept in a suitable place as a permanent tribute. The *Casino-Verein* scheduled the centennial celebration for November 10, 1859. It became the highlight of the trimester.

Construction of the school began, and the Texas legislature was petitioned for a letter of tax remission and for a grant of additional land. Despite a decline in enrollment to a total of ninety students, the small I Class was maintained while the evening school with only three students was closed down. In order to continue the school with three grades, not only I Class tuition but standards as well had to be lowered, thus closing the considerable gap between the I and II Class, and effecting an almost even distribution of students among the grades. The new three-room schoolhouse was now fully occupied. When one of the regular teachers left in the spring of 1861, no replacement was hired to continue teaching mathematics, history and Spanish, and the school was reduced to two elementary grades.

While the reports never mentioned the Civil War, they often referred to "hard times" and the attending financial problems. Out of 102 students in January, thirty-three were indigent. The teachers accepted a reduction in pay from \$70 to \$50 per month. The president of the executive committee, Julius Berends, taught drawing without pay, and the physical education teacher was another volunteer. A lady to teach the girls needlework part-time completed the staff. Meanwhile trees had been planted in the school

yard, which now had a fence, referred to as *die Fenz*. An expansion of the school was now in order according to the long-range plan, but the accounting for the first three years showed an annual deficit of \$770.50. Survival was therefore the immediate concern.

During the summer of 1861, the school lost its dedicated English teacher who had been urged by the administration to leave town because of repeated political agitation against him. Mr. Berends, with the help of the only remaining regular teacher, took over the vacancy without pay. The August 1861 report mentioned greater public acceptance of the school but no increase in enrollment. The city's *Turnverein* disbanded, and the school inherited the much needed sports equipment—even a swing for the girls. The December 1861 report showed an average of eighty-three students, an increase of ten over the previous trimester which justified an additional class and the hiring of a new English teacher. Mr. Berends was willing to continue since his bookstore business was slow, due to the bad times, and did not require much attention. He did so without pay.

During 1862, enrollment gradually increased to 140 students, presumably as a result of greater public acceptance and the closing of several local schools. The classrooms were filled to overflowing, but while tuition income paid for increased teachers' salaries, it did not suffice to reduce the debt of the school. Expansion of the physical plant and of the academic program had to be postponed indefinitely. The school continued to teach children to the ages of twelve and thirteen, when it should have educated them until age fifteen or sixteen. There was still no high school in San Antonio.

Yet, in reviewing the first five years of the German-English School, the committee felt that the guiding principles had stood the test of time. Instruction in both languages was deemed a complete success: The children were neither unduly taxed by it nor confused but gained with ease the lifetime advantage of mastering two living languages.

Because of rising prices and the devaluation of paper money, tuition and salaries continued to increase. The August 1865 report showed an average enrollment of 154, and for forty applications there were only eight available places. Tuition not only met all current expenses but began to pay off some of the debts.

Mr. Berends, who planned to leave the state temporarily, wrote a memorandum concerning expansion of the school and submitted it to the general assembly. He expressed his concern over the school situation in San Antonio, a city "doubtlessly large enough not to supply just one but several larger schools with children and rich enough to support them." Meanwhile, it was once again up to the *Schul-Verein* and to the German population of San Antonio to assume the burden and to fulfill the school's original purpose. Since the school was probably one of the best in the state, it could not be satisfied with its present situation. Despite total lack of state support since secession, financial conditions were sound. This had been achieved by saving one teacher's salary for years and by accepting excessive enrollment. However, the large number of students put a heavier burden on the teachers and slowed progress. The three existing grades were equivalent to an elementary school since the average student spent two years in each grade and

finished at age twelve. A bright student could accomplish the same in less time, and repetition dulled his interest. About ten boys and six to eight girls were now ready for a higher level and had no other school in which to continue their education. If the *Verein* believed in the present need and worked for the opening in 1866 of an expanded school, Mr. Berends suggested that the three new rooms would be used as follows: one for an upper grade for girls, another for an upper grade for boys, and the third as a teachers' room, a library, and a place for teaching apparatus. At least five regular teachers were needed to divide the subjects, including Spanish and perhaps French, among themselves. A library was necessary for teachers and students.

Mr. Berends encouraged frequent visitations of the school. Men of education, he urged, should spend several hours a month getting well acquainted with the school, the teachers, the curriculum, and the students in order to establish a link between the institution and the public.

By January 1866, the first room of the new building was ready for use, and a fourth regular teacher had been hired. In July, Mr. Berends returned from New York with books and supplies he had purchased for the school.

The July 1866 report mentioned that only twenty new students had been accepted out of sixty applicants. The decision to expand the school to five classes by creating a new grade between the present III Class and II Class made room for approximately fifty new children. By August, a new elementary teacher had been hired. In October, a cholera outbreak disrupted school as many families left town or kept their children at home.

The year 1867 began with all six classes filled, and during the summer, 276 children attended, the highest enrollment recorded for the school. A woman was selected to teach English, the first time a woman had been employed to teach classes other than sewing. Parents of new students were asked for a \$100 donation. The enrollment ranged between 259 and 269 in 1869, and in November, the school committee agreed to the establishment of a new foundation, the *Humboldtstiftung*, to raise funds for further expansion of the school, and the construction of three new rooms began in 1870.

Several personnel problems developed after Mr. Berends relinquished his unpaid directorship of the school to devote more time to his business. In 1868, two teachers became co-principals, and the report of August 1869 described poor communication and interaction among the teachers, terming the situation a "pedagogical anarchy," caused in part by too many students and too few teachers. The report of August 1870 showed a principal from Detroit hired at \$100 a month, three teachers at \$85 each, one at \$65, and three women teachers at \$60 each. The next year two teachers were refused raises and resigned. The August 1870 report contained first mention of a deficit (\$112.40), "despite an average enrollment of 256."<sup>19</sup> There was, at last, a I Class for boys and another for girls, and approximately one fourth of the student body was of non-German origin.

The additional building had barely been completed when the new state school law went into effect on September 1, 1871, and the January 1872 report reflected the first impact of the free public school system. The enrollment declined from 267 students in 1870 to 233 in 1871, to 167 in 1872, and to 143 in 1873, with most of the attrition in the lowest grade as non-German

students opted for the public schools. After "graduating" the I Class of only ten students, the institution once again taught only on the elementary level, in three completely filled classes. In July 1873 the resignation of the principal is reported, and Mr. Berends once again took over, with the help of the school committee. During the next two years enrollment increased again, and the 1875 school year showed 201 children in six classes, including a I Class. Mr. Berends, before leaving San Antonio for Germany permanently, turned the school over to a joint principalship of all teachers, with a president elected for a half-year term. The August 1875 report emphasized that the three-day public examination had impressed the public with the progress and the "moral attitude" of the school. Confidence in the school and its teachers appeared to be growing. The president of the *Verein* expressed his conviction that the goal of becoming a first-rate educational institution was close at hand.<sup>20</sup>

Records concerning administrative activities of the *Schul-Verein* end in 1881, although a collection of monthly lesson plans from September 1881 to May 1885 indicates that changes were made to adjust to new needs and altered circumstances.<sup>21</sup> The years 1881 to 1885 show an enrollment between 184 and 233 students, six classes and a staff of six teachers, two of whom had been with the school in the seventies. Judging from the lesson plans, the I Class may be considered as having been on *Realschule* level with a curriculum of German, English, Algebra, Geometry, Physics, Geography, History and Spanish, the latter whenever a teacher was available. Although there is no mention of financial matters, it may be conjectured that they were stable since four of the six teachers—three men and one woman—were still there at the end of the recorded period.

Enrollment increased slowly from 205 in September of 1881 to its peak in April of 1883 and reached its lowest level between December 1884 and May 1885. It seems possible that the decline which eventually brought about the closing of the German-English School began at this time, although Adolf Paul Weber in his book, *Deutsche Pioniere*, claims that the institution was still thriving in 1894.<sup>22</sup> The school plant was sold for debt in 1897 and, in 1903, bought by the San Antonio school district and named the George W. Brackenridge Grammar School. By this time, San Antonio was a remarkably different city from the one encountered by the first German immigrants of the forties and fifties. The city was now connected to a country-wide railroad system. It had an opera house and many theaters in which American touring companies staged elaborate theatrical productions. Most importantly, San Antonio had a public school system and several colleges which rapidly established an educational environment comparable to that of other states.

In its forty-five years of existence, beginning in a frontier setting, the German-English School proved to be a factor of importance in the life and growth of San Antonio. Established and led by German immigrants of outstanding education, the school filled a need for many settlers. With the exception of a few sectarian schools, all previous attempts to bring even minimal education to the city had been sporadic and short-lived. That the ambitious plan to transplant German humanistic education to Texas was realized and sustained a half century speaks well of the founders' dedication

and determination. Several crises documented in the school papers seemed almost impossible to weather at the time. Although periods of increased enrollment were met with new investments and plant expansions, nearly catastrophic setbacks seemed to follow immediately: war, inflation, Reconstruction, and free public education. Finally developing to a comprehensive system strong enough to supply the educational needs of a rapidly growing population, including the already assimilated second generation of Texas Germans in San Antonio, it was this last confrontation, public education, that retired the German-English School from its mission of bringing humanistic learning to an educational wasteland.

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### Notes

1. San Antonio-Bexar County Education Files. Photostat copy of an article published in *Leslie's Weekly* for January 15, 1859, DRT Library at the Alamo, San Antonio, Texas.
2. Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey Through Texas* (New York: Dix, Edwards and Co., 1857), pp. 150-151.
3. Ludolph F. Lafrentz, "Erinnerungen über San Antonio im Jahre 1857," *Jahrbuch der Neu-Braunfeler Zeitung fuer 1944* (New Braunfels, 27 April 1944), p. 43.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
6. San Antonio-Bexar County Education Files. Photostat copy of an unidentified article "School Systems Here Begun Before 1789 by Francisco de la Mata," DRT Library at the Alamo, San Antonio, Texas.
7. San Antonio-Bexar County Education Files. DRT Library at the Alamo, San Antonio, Texas.
8. C. E. Evans, *The Story of Texas Schools* (Austin, Texas: Steck Co., 1955), p. 60.
9. San Antonio-Bexar County Education Files. Photostat copy of an unidentified article "How San Antonio Schools Have Grown," DRT Library at the Alamo, San Antonio, Texas.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Mary Clarence Friesenhahn, "Catholic Secondary Education in the Province of San Antonio," Diss. Catholic University, Washington, D.C. 1930, p. 30.
12. C. E. Evans, *The Story of Texas Schools*, p. 61.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 101.
14. "Statuten," in *German-English School Papers, 1858-1865*, DRT Library at the Alamo, San Antonio, Texas. This and all following quotations from this collection were transcribed and translated by Annelise M. Duncan.
15. "Öffentliche Prüfungen," in *German-English School Papers, 1858-1865*.
16. "Stundenpläne," in *German-English School Papers, 1858-1865*. The grade designated I Class is the most advanced.
17. "Schulregeln," in *German-English School Papers, 1858-1865*.
18. *German-English School Papers, 1858-1865*. Photostat copy of a published report in the *Staatszeitung*.
19. *German-English School Papers, 1865-1877*. Subsequent years recorded even higher deficits, and the last available figure on the school's total indebtedness was \$4,100, as reported in August 1874.
20. *Ibid.*
21. "Stundenpläne," in *German-English School Papers, 1881-1885*.
22. Adolf Paul Weber, *Deutsche Pioniere* (1894), p. 22, as cited in the *San Antonio Express*,

March 4, 1928, and March 29, 1929, as cited in Walter Prescott Webb, editor-in-chief, *The Handbook of Texas* (Austin: The Texas State Historical Association, 1952), I, 684.