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**La Bahia Turnverein: Vereinsdeutsche in
Kirchendeutsch Territory**

La Bahia Turnverein is a fascinating example of Texas German material and immaterial culture. Although the name suggests Spanish-German bilingualism, La Bahia is simply the road along which it stands, established back in colonial times.¹ Its Verein's hall is an example of ethnogenesis, a distinctive type of Texas dance hall architecture, not derived from Anglo culture but also unlike anything in the Old Country. Regardless of what kind of Verein sponsored them—whether choral societies as with the Liedertafel in Sealy or Harmonie Hall in Shelby; agricultural societies such as the Germania Farmer Verein's Anhalt Hall or the Cat Spring Landwirtschaftsverein; athletic clubs such as La Bahia or the Turnverein Pavilion in Bellville; the Lindenau Rifle Club near Cuero or the Round Top Schützen Verein—these halls, often shaded by ancient live oaks and fitted with outdoor barbecue pits, are distinguished by their natural ventilation from the days before air conditioning, their clear-span dance floors, and sometimes by their geometric architecture.² Whatever the official purpose of their sponsoring organization, over the course of time, music, dance, and conviviality became the main rationale for their existence. That was certainly true of La Bahia Turnverein. In their original charter, they declared their purpose to be “physical and spiritual development of their members and the promotion of social life.” They did have a bar on the wall where prospective members had to do at least one chin-up in order to qualify. But over time, as a profile from 1990 relates, the organization “became more of a social center where members and their families could find amusement and recreation and where they could meet for dances and other social gatherings.”³

There were rumors that the Turnverein kept its minutes *auf Deutsch* until 1946, and I even repeated this assertion in print, but I was wrong, too early by nearly a decade on the language transition.⁴ Despite repeated inquiries, it proved quite difficult to track down the evidence. But the Turnverein was featured in a 2019 NPR “Marketplace” story on Texas Dance Halls, in which its current president, Roy Schmidt, was interviewed.⁵ A couple of e-mails and phone calls were sufficient to set up a meeting at the Turnverein, on a rural road near Burton, Texas, about an hour’s drive from College Station. I arrived a bit early, when a guy in his seventies pulled up, alighted from his pickup truck, and apologized for his tardiness, saying “Fünfzehn Minuten zu früh ist nie zu spät.” My bumper sticker for Democratic Senate candidate Beto O’Rourke initially gave him misgivings, but my fluent German and farm background soon established my credibility. Not only was I given a tour of the hall and its history; I was authorized to borrow the entire set of records in order to digitize them. Hans Boas and the Texas German Dialect Project pitched in to finance the work, and now have posted the entire ten books of minutes to make them publicly available to scholars.⁶

These records provide a wealth of insights—linguistic, social, cultural, and political—which other scholars may wish to pursue. For a social historian, they offer evidence of the kind of environment that supports heritage language preservation, something this article explores. These records show how much German Texans valued music, dance, and conviviality, even when Federal law tried to stamp out the latter. They offer a valuable resource for the study of Texas dance hall music, since the records list all the bands that were hired to play for their dances and the amount paid them. Especially during the two world wars with Germany, they reflect, to use the metaphor of Carl Schurz, the relative affection felt for the old mother as opposed to the new bride. And these records complement the Texas German Dialect Project, which has done a remarkable job of recording the oral evidence of a beleaguered heritage language, by documenting its written counterpart. Since English and German are written in different scripts, the Turnverein records illuminate which homonyms are considered part of which language, as in the case of house/Haus or beer/Bier. Readers can probably guess in the latter case.

Dating the language transition was easy; one needed only to page through the minutes looking for the first English. Shortly before, there was a resolution of May 2, 1955: „Es wurde beschlossen, die Statuten im English übersetzen lassen und auf die jährliche Versammlung über abstimmen zu annahmen oder nicht“ [*sic*]. The minutes of May 16 and 30, 1955, were also still recorded in German. Then on June 12, 1955, “A motion was made and carried to write our minutes in the English Language.” Further down was a motion “honoring the retiring secretary ‘Willie Kieke’ who had served for twenty-

seven years.” Members also resolved to spend \$25-\$30 to buy him an easy chair. According to his census entries on Ancestry.com, Willie Kieke was a farmer, born in 1892 of two German parents, who served in World War I and had his immigrant father-in-law in the household in the 1940 census. It initially appeared that Kieke might be incapable of writing competently in English, since the minutes in English for that day were signed “Willie H. Kieke, Secy, by Herbert Bathe.” However, an English-language resolution on April 30, 1951, to pursue an oil lease was clearly written in Kieke’s hand.⁷

The Turnverein records provide evidence that Theodore Roosevelt was woefully misguided in his fulminations against the hyphen: “We have room for but one language here, and that is the English language ... and we have room for but one sole loyalty and that is a loyalty to the American people.” In the case of the Turnverein and elsewhere in German America, language and loyalty proved to be unrelated.⁸ A month after the United States entered World War I, the Verein made a \$1 donation for the Red Cross Society of America; perhaps an insignificant token, especially compared to the nearly \$40 the beer stand brought in that day. But records from March, 1918, document a Liberty Loan purchase worth \$50.00. Three months later in June, the Verein bought \$50.04 worth of War Saving Stamps. In June, 1922, the Verein bought a United States flag for \$3, though it is unclear whether this was the first such purchase. Perhaps it was flattery, but Lieutenant Governor Barry Miller, the speaker at the Verein’s Fiftieth Anniversary celebration in 1929, “spoke in glowing terms of the patriotism of these people of foreign descent,” remarking that as a recruiter, he “saw old German men and women bring their sons in ready to go to battle for American, and added forcefully that any one who says the Germans are not loyal to the American flag is a liar.” Thus it comes as no surprise to see that on Dec. 26, 1941, the first meeting after Pearl Harbor, the Verein purchased \$74.10 worth of Defense Bonds.⁹

One of the casualties of World War I was the German language paper in the county seat of Brenham, the *Texas Volksbote*. How it came about is interesting. In June 1918, the paper posted a list of eighty-three persons, representing the cream of the town’s business community, who distanced themselves from the antiwar American Party. Shortly thereafter the statement was carried by the town’s English paper, and a few days later the German paper ceased publication. The Verein subscribed to the *Volksbote* until its dying day, for example, publishing a resolution on the death of member Wm. Fuchs on June 24, 1918. Thereafter the English-language *Brenham Banner* took its place, where the Verein published a resolution in English on death of member Christian Matthies on August 27, 1919.¹⁰

On the topic of language, the Turnverein minutes and treasurer’s records show many interesting and often humorous examples of German-English

interaction in vocabulary and script that should be of particular interest to linguists.¹¹ All the following quotes are literal transcriptions; *italics* indicate words in normal “Latin” rather than Kurrent “German” script. A 1918 entry recorded the payment of 50 cents to a “*Notary Republic*,” although the next year they got it right. The first mention of Barbecue came in 1924. The next page recorded: “*Barbecue* Fleisch: *Beef* \$.08, *Mutton* \$.10. The following year, the Verein decided “ein *Piano* zu kaufen.” By 1920, the automobile had apparently replaced horsepower: “Es wurde eine Komitee . . . ernannt um die *cars* hier bei das Fest auf zu *line*.” That policy was continued in 1923: “Car liner Willie Neumann Ewald Kieke.” The minutes go on to record: “Es wurde Beschlossen ein *Old time dance* am 10 November abzuhalten mit *Baca Band*.”

Worth noting is not only the English insertion but also what the choice of bands tells us about interethnic relations. The Bacas were a Czech family from Fayetteville, 20 miles away, whose bands performed traditional ethnic music throughout the twentieth century. They were back at the Turnverein two years later, and also played at the Verein’s fiftieth anniversary celebration in 1929, as well as the following year when it was noted: “Music will be furnished by Baca’s Band of Fayetteville, an old favorite of the La Bahia section.”¹² Prophetic words: Bacas were back for the sixtieth anniversary as well. They were not the only Czech band patronized at La Bahia. In 1923 there is a puzzling notation: “Es hat die Navratil Band ein antrag gemacht das sie für den *trip* nicht verkomgen [?] wen wir ihr unser Halle am Donnerstag abend frei willig geben.” Whatever the request was, apparently for use of the hall on Thursday before they played a weekend dance, it was granted. Navratil, who immigrated from Moravia in 1897, led a band for forty years in Brenham, 16 miles away. The two bands that played at the 75th anniversary celebration in 1954, Adolf Hofner’s Orchestra in the afternoon and Ray Krenek’s for the evening dance, were both well-known Texas Czech groups. Germans and Czechs obviously got along much better in Texas than in the Old Country.¹³

The Turnverein poses some interesting parallels, as well as some contrasts, to the Cat Spring Landwirtschaftsverein or Agricultural Society, the oldest society of its kind in the state with its 1856 founding. It operated in German longer than La Bahia, for some eighty-five years, but not as late, switching to English shortly after Pearl Harbor. Its minutes and membership rolls were translated and published at its 100th anniversary in 1956, aiding in the process of analysis, but providing no insights into language competence or interference.

The Cat Spring Society was even friendlier to Czechs, who were more common in their area, than was La Bahia. During the two decades before World War I, its festivities were not bilingual but often trilingual, with

“Bohemian” speakers invited to give addresses alongside German and English orators.¹⁴ Czechs made up a significant minority on the society’s membership rolls, easily outnumbering Anglo-Americans. In fact, Jozef Ernst Bergmann, often considered the father of the Czech immigration to Texas, was one of its founding members and was elected its first vice-president.¹⁵ Still, it took until 1887 before the Czech language makes an official appearance in the minutes, when in preparation for the Harvest Festival: “It was further resolved to arrange for three speakers in German, English and Bohemian.” From then on, Czech orators made regular appearances, being mentioned in six of the years between 1888 and 1898. In 1903 there was not only a Czech speaker, but the local lodge of the SPJST, the secular Czech fraternal organization, was expressly invited. Even after World War I there are Czech as well as German names among the musicians hired for various dances and festivities, with German groups alternating with the famous Baca’s Band from Fayetteville, some 24 miles away, which shows up from 1920 all the way into the 1940s, and even the Gold Chain Bohemian Band from Schulenburg, a 40-mile drive.¹⁶

In yet another parallel, Cat Spring Germans appeared remarkably unperturbed by the onset of nationwide Prohibition. The minutes of 1922 record preparations for that summer’s Anniversary Fest: “It was decided . . . to order 40 gallons of ice cream, three gallons of orangeade, five kegs of beer. . . . The sheriff and constable will be invited.” In fact, from 1921 to 1926, the minutes record orders for no less than thirty-one kegs of beer for the society’s various balls and festivities. After 1926, beer purchases no longer show up explicitly in the minutes, but that does not indicate a switch to lemonade. The sheriff, himself a Texas German, seems to have been a particular favorite of the society; the minutes record at least seven balls or festivities to which he was explicitly invited, and on one occasion he was presented with a box of cigars.¹⁷

La Bahia Turnverein was if anything more blatant in its defiance of the Volstead Act. Its minutes regularly note which members were responsible for the “Bier Stand.” In contrast to the minutes (*Protokolle*), the treasurer’s reports were already kept mostly in English at this time (though they spelled Bier the German way).¹⁸ But from month to month they systematically recorded receipts from the “Bier Stand” averaging just over \$50 per meeting in the period from 1920 through the end of 1922. On October 3, 1920, they brought in an impressive \$145. The only time receipts fell below \$10 was on December 26, 1920, a measly \$7.28, maybe because it was a Sunday; the weather was not extreme. But on Friday, December 26, 1924, they had a respectable income of \$36. That date was also the first time a constable was hired, for \$4. A typical entry from June 1925 shows an amusing mixture

of German and English vocabulary and scripts, and also the presence of beer sales and constable at the same event [Illustration 1]. The “Bier Stand” receipts show up regularly in the records at least until 1927, though some months only show “Soda Stand,” perhaps based on availability of beer. From 1928 on, beer appeared rarely, and there were even a couple of entries for “near beer,” but they made up for it on July 14, 1929, when beer sales hit \$109.80. The Turnverein’s defiance of alcohol laws in Washington County was more remarkable than at Cat Spring in Austin County where the sheriff was sympathetic. By contrast, up until 1924, the sheriff in Brenham was an Anglo Klansman who waged a violent crusade, including threats, tar and feathering, and beatings, against use of the German language, and also against bootlegging (which the sheriff was rumored to carry on himself).¹⁹

One point of contrast between the Cat Spring and La Bahia societies was the religious outlook of its members. The venerable Fred Luebke, in his standard work on German Americans’ experience in World War I, defined the contrasts between *Kirchendeutsche* (church Germans) and *Vereinsdeutsche* (club Germans) as follows: “In contrast to the church people, most of whom lived in rural areas and small towns and were conservative in their religious, economic, and political beliefs, the club Germans were oriented toward secular values and attitudes. Overwhelmingly urban in residence, they demonstrated a tendency to be liberal or even radical in their politics. . . . The ethnic lodge frequently stood in lieu of a church, especially for the freethinker.”²⁰

Although rural, the Cat Spring Agricultural Society and the adjacent Latin Farmer settlement of Millheim otherwise fit this description perfectly. Millheim was never home to a German church, and Cat Spring only intermittently. Latin Farmers tended to be Freethinkers, and the Cat Spring centennial book made no attempt to disguise this, even in the conservative atmosphere of 1956. Its chapter on churches is one of the shortest in the book: “The German settlers at Cat Spring who were so greatly interested in agriculture, education, literature, music, and art, manifested little interest in religion.”²¹

However, Luebke does concede, on the page following the previous citation: “It is possible to draw too sharp a line of distinction between the church Germans and the club Germans.”²² This was certainly the case with La Bahia Turnverein, as an analysis of its participants demonstrates. Two cross-sections of its membership were constructed: the forty-eight charter members from 1879, and another profile of the sixty-five members listed on two nearly identical membership lists taken just before and after 1900. Their proximity to the 1880 and 1900 census dates made it possible to further identify with a good deal of confidence the great majority of these members using Ancestry.com.²³ La Bahia Turnverein had its own associated cemetery, which provided

La Bahia Turnverein

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Stoffen des La Bahia Turn Verein

June 14 1925		fin	oril
May 31	Stoffen Aufhohnd	552	11
June 14	Lins Stand	✓ 73	95
	Ticket	✓ 58	50
	Lins Abend	✓	4 95
	Soda water	✓	40 80
	Music	✓	37 00
	Grinder	✓	7 00
	Collectors	✓	4 00
	Frühmahl	✓	2 50
	in Bruchring	✓	2 25
	Constable	✓	2 00
	Notary April	✓	25
	Louis Kieke repairing	✓	1 00
	Secretary	✓	10 00
	Treasurer	✓	5 00
	Cash	✓	2 47
	Hat stand, Ham Hotel	✓	7 00
	Otto Kieke Monthly dues	✓	3 60
	Frank Bathe 2 40 Edward Kieke 2 40	✓	4 80
	Fritz Bergman 3 40 alb Eickler 6 00	✓	9 60
	Aug Stobner 1 20 Philip Joke 1 20	✓	2 40
	Martin Kieke 3 60 Hy Fuchs 2 40	✓	6 00
	Ewald Kieke 1 20 Louis Kieke 1 20	✓	2 40
	Emil Eickler 1 20 Aug Kieke jr 1 20	✓	2 40
	Ewald Bathe 30 Max Bathe 30	✓	60
	Ham Hotel 1 20 Chas Hingz 1 20	✓	1 40
	Dr A Kieke 1 20 John Wagner 1 20	✓	2 40
	Cash	✓	11 37
	Cash	✓	18 84
	Cigars 1000	✓	41 95
	Har tax Rev officers	✓	94 99
	Penalty " "	✓	25 00
June 14	Stoffen Aufhohnd	✓	476 45
	Dick Smith Beer	✓	2 95
		✓	473 70
		759	147 59 14

Illustration 1. Treasurer's record for La Bahia Turnverein, June 14, 1925.

further verification for a dozen charter member and seventeen of the 1900 links.²⁴

There was a “Latin Farmer” settlement of freethinkers called Latium just four miles from the Verein’s hall which had its own cemetery, but among the forty-eight charter members, there was not a single one buried on the Latium cemetery. The same thing held true for those on the membership rolls two decades later. In fact, there was only one overlap in family names on this cemetery on each of the Verein’s member lists.²⁵

Ancestry.com also has links to many of the Lutheran baptismal and marriage records in the area, and they clearly demonstrate that *Vereinsdeutsche* and *Kirchendeutsche* were not mutually exclusive. Fully half of the 48 charter members had one or more of their children baptized Lutheran, good evidence that they continued to be active church members into adulthood. All but two were baptized at Bethlehem Lutheran in Round Top, about eight miles from the Verein’s hall. That does not mean the other half were freethinkers; many had moved to other communities where church records were not on Ancestry, though most of their cemeteries were on Findagrave.com. For example, one member who moved to Paige erected a tombstone entirely in the German language at St. John’s Lutheran cemetery for a son killed in action in World War I.²⁶ Others engaged in religious activities that were perhaps less reflective of their own values than those of their parents or wives or survivors. Besides those with children baptized, records on Ancestry.com show that three charter members were themselves baptized Lutheran, and two others so confirmed. Eight more were married by Lutheran pastors; two of them and three others were buried on Lutheran cemeteries. Although church marriage is a low threshold, only two members were married by justices of the peace. One of them, and two with church marriages, had multiple children baptized as adults, probably after their fathers had died. That still only accounts for a half-dozen suspected freethinkers, including one borderline case who was married Lutheran and had a child baptized at the late age of seven.

There were if anything fewer indications of freethinking among the sixty-five men in the 1900 membership cohort, (seventeen of whom were charter members). No less than thirty of them had one or more of their children baptized Lutheran. Eight more were buried on Lutheran cemeteries, apparently faithful until death. Nineteen others were married by a minister, compared to only one couple united by a justice of the peace. As was noted above, absence of any children in the baptismal records does not necessarily indicate religious indifference; some members had moved away to communities whose church records are not on Ancestry.com, as was also the case with nearby Burton, which had no Lutheran church, but a German Evangelical congregation, St. Johns, established in 1895. Names of the pastors performing marriages suggest

that many of these couples were Evangelical.²⁷ There is strong evidence of freethinking with only one 1900 member who was also a founder, a German immigrant whose four children were all baptized on the same day—in 1920 a decade after his death. However, one obituary from September, 1931 does smack mildly of deism: “Whereas it has pleased the Supreme Ruler of the Universe to take from our midst Edward F.W. Fischer . . .”

Some twenty-four members had children’s baptisms performed at Bethlehem Lutheran in Round Top, a few miles south of the Turnverein in Fayette County. Normally churches are the most linguistically conservative institutions of all. One Lutheran congregation in an adjoining county had monthly German services into the twenty-first century.²⁸ But Bethlehem Lutheran undertook the language transformation earlier than the Turnverein. The pastor who served from 1930 to 1948 introduced “English services in an informal style,” while all other services were still held in German. His successor, who served from 1948 to 1957, “introduced English in Adult Bible Class, Ladies Aid and worship,” apparently alternating with German services each week at the beginning. By 1955 when the Turnverein made its language switch, Bethlehem Lutheran was worshipping in German just once a month, usually supplemented by an English language service in the evening. With the next pastor from 1957 to 1962, German was reduced to only four communion services annually, and thereafter apparently ceased entirely.²⁹

Besides Bethlehem, several other Lutheran congregations in the area show up multiple times with Turnverein member affiliations. Although members were usually found in Washington or Fayette County in the 1880 census shortly after the Verein was established, by 1900, some had moved to other communities to the north and west, often showing evidence of chain migration. It was not surprising to find members in Paige, less than 35 miles west, or in the county seat of Brenham. But the largest concentration was in Buckholts some 75 miles to the northwest, and a couple of members even settled in and around the Norwegian Lutheran settlement in Bosque County west of Waco, more than 150 miles away. Apparently, they maintained membership for old times’ sake.

Before the advent of the automobile, most of the Turnverein membership was locally based as one might expect. Texas counties are divided into precincts that are similar to Midwestern townships, but with boundaries not as regular or well mapped. No less than twenty-seven charter members lived in the census district or precinct in Washington County where the Verein’s hall was located; two decades later it was up to thirty-three. Thirteen charter members, and ten in 1900 lived in an adjacent precinct south of the Fayette County line toward Round Top.³⁰ There were a half-dozen charter members who lived in other precincts of the two counties, but only two who lived in

other counties in 1880. By 1900, six other counties were represented on the rolls, accounting for a total of nine members. Of the twenty-three charter members who had survived until 1929, almost half remained in the local area of Washington County, seven at nearby Burton and another four down the road in Carmine. Four others lived within a thirty-mile radius in adjacent counties. But eight had made moves of considerable distance, one 200 miles away to Ft. Worth.

The membership of the Turnverein was predominantly agricultural, as might be expected given its location on a rural road four miles from the nearest town. Half of the charter members show up as farmers in the census, and eleven indicated they were farmhands, as were most or all of the nine people who just listed "Laborer." That leaves only two merchants and a blacksmith. The occupational mix had diversified somewhat by 1900, but nearly three-fourths of the sixty-five members were still listed with agricultural occupations: thirty as farmers, sixteen as farm laborers, plus a stock driver, a blacksmith, and one who combined farming with cotton ginning. Other local businessmen included four general merchants or storekeepers, one lumber dealer, and one "beer agent" who was not doubt most welcome at the Verein. Rounding out the lot were two school teachers, a postmaster, and a "publisher" of a short-lived English language newspaper in nearby Carmine.

In terms of birthplace, the second generation had only a slight edge over German immigrants in 1880, but by 1900 there were only thirteen immigrants remaining, compare to forty-four of the second generation, plus five in the third with no immigrants closer than their grandparents. In addition, one of the merchants had an unmistakably Anglo name, Thomas Watson, but he was trusted enough to be put in charge of the "Bier Stand" on April 8, 1923, among other assignments. It turned out he was a storekeeper and funeral home director, and married to Emma Knittel, the daughter of a prominent German storekeeper in nearby Burton. He was also the only local businessman with not just one but two of his advertisements painted on the proscenium arch above the stage in the Verein's hall. One suspects that he had learned German because of proximity and business reasons. But his was the sole Anglo name on the Turnverein membership rolls in 1900. Besides him, there was one other member from a mixed marriage, named after Confederate general Tom Green, with a mother born in Mississippi. But he is listed on the Verein rolls as "Grien" Wendt, spelled the German way.

So it looks as if Anglo neighbors were assimilating to German culture rather than vice versa, already by 1880. Among the founders were three Adams brothers, with a mother from Mississippi and a father from Rhode Island. He seems to have assimilated to the South, because they named one of their sons Lee Beauregard after two Confederate generals. However, the

sons apparently assimilated to their German surroundings. All three of their wives were children of immigrants, two from the prominent Von Rosenberg and Weyand families, and the third the sister of a Turnverein member who had their child baptized Lutheran. When Frau Weyand was widowed, a Texas German became her second husband. Thus it appears likely that the Adams brothers had learned their wives' language as well. These Anglos were not the only ones. Current Turnverein president Roy Schmidt related that his father Laurence walked to school in the 1930s with a black neighbor child, Sterling "Buster" Ray, who spoke fluent German, though they went their separate ways when they arrived at their segregated schools.³¹

Regardless of language, the activities of the Verein in the twentieth century show evidence of a mixture of cultures. On October 6, 1910, the Verein celebrated an anniversary, and also German American Day, but along with a "grand ball" in the evening, there was also an afternoon baseball game. During the 1920s and 1930s Turnverein dances and other activities such as a skat tournament were regularly reported in the Brenham paper under the local news from Greenvine, the nearest village to the hall's location, although by then it was withering on the vine. Barbecue and baseball were regularly on the program, which may indicate acculturation, but Germans and Czechs in this area actually adopted baseball earlier than Anglos and also contributed heavily to the barbecue culture.³² In the 1920s, there was even a La Bahia Base Ball Club to which the Verein contributed \$10 toward the purchase of uniforms. In later years, the *Brenham Banner* only reported on round anniversary celebrations, but the fiftieth was front page news in 1929, and featured baseball and barbecue as well as a speech by the lieutenant governor and a dance in the evening. The sixtieth anniversary followed the same pattern.

The switch to English initially changed little in the operation of the Turnverein. The 1990 report concluded: "Today the La Bahia Turn Verein remains an active and viable family oriented organization whose purpose continues to be the promotion of the social life of member families." Surviving members born in the 1940s have confirmed this family orientation. Current president Roy Schmidt claims to have attended his first dance at the Verein when only two weeks old, and drank his first beer there at age two when his mother was trying to put him to sleep. Another acquaintance reported something very similar from her late husband, whose family were charter members of the Verein. Born in 1946 on a farm nearby, Jimmie Hinze grew up with German as his first language, and long after earning a Stanford Ph.D., still spoke it fluently decades later on visits to Germany even though he had never studied it in school. As his wife related, "My husband's family . . . went to the dances as young children and his parents went to the dances

into their 80's. My husband tells the story that all 4 children would go to the dances with his parents and his mom would spread a quilt under a table and they all would stay there! [The four ranged in age from three to seven in the 1950 census] . . . Apparently each week the dance was at a different hall and there was even a designation for a hall if there was a 5th Saturday in the month." This weekly rotation was confirmed by a conversation with someone born in 1960 whom I actually met at the Verein recently.³³

At some point between 1960 and 1990, the Verein's monthly meetings and dances were changed to quarterly. In 2004, it was reorganized as a (501)(c)(3) nonprofit corporation.³⁴ Most of the dances currently held at the hall are for wedding receptions. This is something that has also kept other dancehalls viable; I have personally witnessed the setups for wedding celebrations at Millheim Harmonie Verein, the Cat Spring Agricultural Society, and Anhalt Hall.³⁵ The Texas Dance Hall Preservation, Inc. offers seed grants to help dance halls make repairs to roofs, dance floors, and other critical items, and La Bahia is one of the images featured front and center on its webpage.³⁶ The Turnverein has something else going for it: nearby Round Top is the capital of the Texas antique business, to the extent that it sometimes becomes a traffic hindrance on La Bahia Road. Antique festivals lasting more than two weeks are held every spring and fall, and are an important source of revenue for the Turnverein.³⁷ It is impressive how traces of the German cultural footprint are still visible in Central Texas nearly two centuries after the first settlement in 1832.

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Notes

¹ Carole E. Christian, "La Bahia, TX," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed May 04, 2023, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/la-bahia-tx>.

² <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/entertainment/restaurants-bars/bbq/article/Houston-features-headline-5559058.php>.

³ Charles R. Schultz, "A Brief History of the La Bahia Turn Verein" (November, 1990), *Texas Dance Hall Preservation Newsletter*, October 2015. A longer version was posted without attribution at <https://texasfolklife.org/venue/la-bahia-turn-verein-dance-hall>.

⁴ Walter D. Kamphoefner, "Elvis and Other Germans: Some Reflections and Modest Proposals on the Study of German-American Ethnicity," in *Paths Crossing: Essays in German-American Studies*, ed. Cora Lee Kluge (Munich et al.: Peter Lang, 2010), 33-53, here 43.

⁵ <https://www.marketplace.org/2019/04/26/weddings-are-helping-save-historic-texas-dance-halls/>.

⁶ La Bahia Turnverein Minutes Books are posted here: <https://doi.org/10.18738/T8/A4BT2V>. Roy Schmidt was interviewed by the Texas German Dialect Project on Jan 23, 2016, in Winedale, Texas, speaker number 522. His narrative interview is file 112-522-1-0-a. It is

available in the Texas German Dialect Archive (<https://tgdg.org/dialect-archive/>). Schmidt, born in 1948, knew no English until he started school; that was also true of his elder brother and his sister, born in 1951, who were punished with ruler blows to the hand for speaking German, even though the teacher himself knew German. Phone conversation, January 30, 2024.

⁷ La Bahia Turnverein Minutes, Book 10, p. 399.

⁸ Theodore Roosevelt, speech held July 4, 1917 at Forest Hills, NY. For additional examples of where language and loyalty were unrelated, see my “Doughboys auf Deutsch: U.S. Soldiers Writing Home in German from France,” *Yearbook of German-American Studies* 54 (2019), 114-134.

⁹ Reported in “Thousands Attend Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration At La Bahia Turn Verein Sunday,” *Brenham Banner-Press*, Monday, July 29, 1929, p. 1.

¹⁰ La Bahia Turnverein Minutes, Book 6; 1914-20, p. 72: resolution in German on death of member Wm. Fuchs, published in *Texas Volksbote*, June 24, 1918: p. 88: resolution in English on death of member Christian Matthies, published in *Brenham Weekly Banner*, August 27, 1919.

¹¹ An important if brief early study of the Texas situation is Joseph C. Salmons, “Issues in Texas German Language Maintenance and Shift” *Monatshefte* 75 (1983), 187-196. Although they deal more with oral than written German, the broadest and most recent study in this field is Hans C. Boas, *The Life and Death of Texas German* (Durham: Duke University Press for the American Dialect Society, 2009). For a related case study see Karen A. Roesch, *Language Maintenance and Language Death: The Decline of Texas Alsatian* (Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Pub. Co., 2012). Both studies address issues promoting or retarding the language transition in their concluding chapters. Some suggestive insights are also offered by Marc Pierce, “Language Death and Language Revival: Contrasting Manx and Texas German,” in *The Medieval Cultures of the Irish Sea and the North Sea: Manannán and his Neighbors*, ed. Joseph Nagy and Charles MacQuarrie (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 183-206.

¹² Brandy Schnautz and Laurie E. Jasinski, “Bacas of Fayetteville,” *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed April 05, 2023, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/bacas-of-fayetteville>.

¹³ Martin Donell Kohout, “Hofner, Adolph,” *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed April 05, 2023, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/hofner-adolph>. Brandy Schnautz, “Czech Music,” *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed April 05, 2023, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/czech-music>. For more detail see my “German-Slavic Relations in Texas and the Midwest,” *Studia Migracyjne – Przegląd Polonijny* 41 (2015), 27-53.

¹⁴ Cat Spring Agricultural Society, *A Century of Agricultural Progress, 1856-1956* (San Antonio: Lone Star Printing Co., 1956), pp. 255, 278, 281, 284, and passim.

¹⁵ Cat Spring Agricultural Society, *The Cat Spring Story* (San Antonio: Lone Star Printing Co., 1956), pp. 23-24, 104, 110 and passim. David Z. Chroust, “Jozef Ernst Bergmann: ‘Father’ of the Czech-Speaking Immigration in Texas?” *Kosmas: Czechoslovak and Central European Journal*, Vol. 20 (2006), pp. 48-64.

¹⁶ *A Century of Agricultural Progress*, 288-385, passim. Mark Odintz, “SCHULENBURG, TX,” *Handbook of Texas Online* <<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hjs11>>, June 15, 2010. Published by the Texas State Historical Association. On the Baca bands, see Sean N. Gallup, *Journeys into Czech-Moravian Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press), 91.

¹⁷ Walter D. Kamphoefner, “The Handwriting on the Wall: The Klan, Language Issues, and Prohibition in the German Settlements of Eastern Texas,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 111 (2008), 52-66, here 59-62.

¹⁸ Scholars who have studied the language of mathematics among bilinguals find that they usually do math in the language in which they first learned it, which would have been English in Texas public schools in that era; <https://www.utsa.edu/discovery/2012/story/feature-math-bilingual-brain.html>.

¹⁹ Kamphoefner, "The Handwriting on the Wall," 52-59. The Verein purchased a 3.2% beer license as soon as it was available, and on September 17, 1933 took in a record \$247.37 from sales at the beer stand. Now operating legally, they had to enforce the drinking age: "Mitglieder die nich 21 jahr sind wurden von die beer liste gestrichen [sic]." La Bahia Turnverein Minutes, Book 8; 1927-35, pp. 126-27, 189.

²⁰ Frederick C. Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German-Americans and World War I* (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974), 42-43. Luebke won the SGAS Outstanding Achievement Award in 2010.

²¹ *Preserving German Texan Identity: Reminiscences of William A. Trenckmann, 1859-1935*, ed. Walter L. Buenger and Walter D. Kamphoefner, (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2018), 7-8.

²² Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 44.

²³ Forty-eight charter members were listed in a newspaper article, "Thousands Attend Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration"; it also noted which were deceased in 1929, and of those living, where they resided, a further aid in disambiguation. Another list, formerly posted on the internet but no longer available, is quite similar but slightly more accurate on spelling of names. The first book of Turnverein minutes is rather tattered and of limited use. In both years, a few members died before the census was taken or were missed. Charter member Otto Ponfick only paid his initial dues before he died, apparently from a mule kick, as recorded in the 1880 census mortality schedules. A couple of the occupations were derived from the 1910 census when missed in 1900.

²⁴ Judy and Nath Winfield, Jr., *Cemetery Records of Washington County, Texas, 1826-1960* (privately published, 1974), 199-200, 235-42. In one case, it was the infant child of a charter member who was buried at La Bahia.

²⁵ Carole E. Christian, "Latium, TX," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed April 06, 2023, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/latium-tx>. Rudolph L. Biesele, "Latin Settlements of Texas," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed April 06, 2023, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/latin-settlements-of-texas>. The freethinking reputation of Latium is confirmed by the fact that of some 44 tombstones of people who died before 1900, there were only a half dozen or so with any Christian inscriptions. Both graveyards are also covered on Findagrave.com. Even at La Bahia, there were more deceased "resting in peace" than "resting in God," but the images are often of poor quality, making it impossible to determine whether the verses on many gravestones are scriptural or secular.

²⁶ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/47856363/richard-andrew-kissmann>. Kissmann wrote a detailed account in the German language of his train trip from Texas to New York before embarkation, which was published in the *Giddings Deutsches Volksblatt*, as well as three German letters from the battlefield in France which the paper published posthumously.

²⁷ The church at Paige belonged to a different Lutheran synod than that at Round Top and did not allow Ancestry.com access to its baptismal records. See also <https://stjohnsburton.org/about-us>.

²⁸ Walter D. Kamphoefner, "German Language Persistence in Texas and Missouri," *Yearbook of German American Studies* 55 (2020), 1-20, here p. 8.

²⁹ Martin Obst and John Banik, ed. Susan Watkins Grasty, *Our God is Marching On* (Austin, TX: Von-Boeckmann-Jones Printers, 1966); <http://www.rtis.com/reg/roundtop/berth3.htm>. Weekly *La Grange Journal* (La Grange, TX); bi-weekly *Fayette County Record* (La Grange, TX), 1950-1955, passim.

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³⁰ The Verein's hall was located in Washington County Enumeration District 149 in 1880, which was probably identical with Precinct 4 in the 1900 census or nearly so. For Fayette County, the respective units were Enumeration District 163 and Precinct 3.

³¹ E-mail exchange with Roy Schmidt, August 14-15, 2019. Lawrence Schmidt and Sterling "Buster" Ray were both born in 1920, and were just four pages apart in the 1930 census.

³² *Brenham Evening Press*, Saturday, October 8, 1910; actually it was the anniversary of the hall's erection or the incorporation of the Verein, since its founding goes back to 1979. Carole E. Christian, "Greenvine, TX," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed March 17, 2023, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/greenvine-tx>. David Vaught, *The Farmer's Game: Baseball in Rural America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 50-75. On barbecues see note 2.

³³ Personal conversation with Roy Schmidt, May 13, 2019; telephone conversation on January 24, 2024. E-mail exchange with Maxine Mueller Hinze, July 29, 2019. Clarence and Grace Hinze had four children between the ages of 3 and 7 in the 1950 census, including said Jimmie, age 4. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/117096037/jimmie-wayne-hinze>. Personal conversation with Wade Weigelt, La Bahia Turnverein, April 1, 2023.

³⁴ <https://www.guidestar.org/profile/74-0733780>; <https://projects.propublica.org/non-profits/organizations/740733780>.

³⁵ <https://texasdancehall.org/wp-content/uploads/TDHP-May-2019-Newsletter-Wedding-small.pdf>. On the continuing Texas ethnic dance hall tradition see Clayton Stromberger, "Everybody's Happy: Welcome Another Polka Weekend," *Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative News*, May 1, 2023: <https://bluebonnet.coop/everybodys-happy-welcome-another-polka-weekend>. See also FN 5.

³⁶ <https://texasdancehall.org/category/member-hall-project/>.

³⁷ <https://www.thevintageroundtop.com/guide-to-round-top-antiques-week>. Katy Vine, "How Round Top Became a Whole Vibe," *Texas Monthly*, November 2022.

