

German Free School & GTHS 1858 to 2025

<https://www.germantexans.org/>

About the GTHS:

The German-Texan Heritage Society was founded in the summer of 1978 by Mary El-Beheri, Dona Reeves, Patrick McGuire, Anna Thompson, Maria Watson, and Susan Clayton. The first issue of the GTHS Journal was published six months later in January of 1979.

In 1858, the German Free School of Austin opened its doors in a small, two-classroom building – two decades before the first city-funded school. Its opening was a community affair. The von Rosenberg family donated land and volunteers constructed the building. Soon, officials described the school as “flourishing.” After the Civil War, the German-led push for free public education met resistance – some legislators worried about educating African-American children. But Austin’s German Free School served as a model for urban public schools throughout the state — one of German-Texans’ most lasting legacies.

Kelly Stevens, a famous deaf Austin artist, purchased the building in 1948 and lived in it until his death in 1991. The building was then deeded to the German Texas Heritage Society.

Today, it is the headquarters for the German-Texan Heritage Society, a nonprofit organization that preserves German culture in Texas through festivals, language classes, genealogical searches, and other services. The German Free School is a City of Austin Landmark and Recorded Texas Historic Landmark.

German Genealogy

GTHS website Genealogy page: <https://www.germantexans.org/genealogy>. This page has connections to the Genealogy Resources page, Online Library page, and the Journal page.

GTHS Genealogy Resources page: <https://www.germantexans.org/genealogy-resources>
This page gives you listings of various families that have records in our library, a listing of persons associated with the German Free School and many online resources for German Genealogy. You can also access our online catalog of library resources that are available for in-person research in the GTHS offices. Links to digitized copies of the GTHS Journal are also featured on this page.

Portal to Texas History GTHS: <https://texashistory.unt.edu/explore/partners/GTHS/> Page dedicated to the GTHS

Texas Wendish Research Exchange: <https://wendishresearch.org/>

Genealogy Editor Elizabeth “Liz” Nitschke Hicks, , e-mail: erootrot@usa.net

German-Texan Heritage Society <https://www.germantexans.org/contact>

Free queries published in the quarterly, “Journal” for members and non-members as space permits.

German Genealogy Resource Map: <https://palam.org/resource-map>

Hosted on the website of the Palatines to America website, this interactive map allows you search for German Genealogy Resources around the world. Contact information for the resources is provided.

International German Genealogy Partnership: <https://iggp.org/> The IGGP connects German Genealogy groups from around the world. The website has links to organizations and resources related to genealogy, copies of their newsletter the *Partner Zeitung* and notices of conferences.

Newspapers and City Directories

Portal to Texas History <https://texashistory.unt.edu/search/> (search by name, or location or search term such as Texas Germans. Site has more than newspapers).

<https://texashistory.unt.edu/explore/partners/GTHS/>

New Braunfels Zeitung (Sophienburg Archives, www.Sophienburg.com), New Braunfels, Texas, phone: (830) 629-1572.

Early Texas News 1831-1848 by Helen S. Swenson

Early Texas Newspaper Collection, 1813-1961 partial card index (UT & Clayton Library)

Misc. Texas Newspaper Abstracts 1839-1882 Michael Kelsey (book and fiche)

Texas Newspapers 1813-1939 (WPA), a list of newspaper files in offices of publishers, libraries, and a few private collections (Clayton Library, Houston, TX).

Other Resources

German Emigration Contract: Texas General Land Office, Austin, TX;

<https://www.glo.texas.gov/> Click- Heritage tab. Then click- Land Grant Search. Do two searches (1) Grantee and (2) Patentee. Just type in the surname you are looking for (no first name, no county).

Land and Tax records: Check for jurisdiction- Republic, State? Texas General Land Office

<https://www.glo.texas.gov/> Name Index to Military Bounty and Donation Land Grants of Texas (1835-1888): http://www.tshaonline.org/supsites/military/rep_cont.htm

Suggested reading for researching Texas Germans and German Genealogy

All at Clayton Library

History of the German Settlements in Texas 1831-1861 by Rudolf Biesele (GTHS publication)

German Seed in Texas Soil by Dr. Terry Jordan

Germans and Texans by Walter Struve (S927 TX)

History of New Braunfels and Comal County, Texas 1844-1946 by Oscar Haas (see separate index to this book)

Ships Passenger Lists Port of Galveston, Texas 1846-1871 (book and microfilm)

Volume I Passenger Lists for Galveston 1850-1855 published by: Albert J. Blaha, Sr.

The Bremers and Their Kin in Germany and in Texas Vol. I & II by Robert R. Robinson, Jr.

(R655 Breme) in Family History Section Clayton Library. Practically every family in Gillespie Co., TX

Beginner's Guide to Germanic Genealogy by Lois Hemmeter Edwards

Germanic Genealogy: A Guide to Worldwide Sources and Migration Patterns by Edward R. Brandt, PhD, published by Germanic Genealogy Society(MN).

Periodicals:

The *Journal* (quarterly publ. of the German-Texan Heritage Society) **Free Queries**

Der Blumenbaum (quarterly publ.) Sacramento German Gen. Society, P.O. Box 660061,
Sacramento, CA 95866-0061

Germanic Genealogy Journal (quarterly publ. Germanic Gen. Society, PO Box 16312, St. Paul,
MN 55116-0312

Richard Gruetzner ©2025 richard.gruetzner@germantexans.org