

German Free School in Austin Texas and GTHS

from years 1991 to 1995



By
Helga von Schweinitz

Copyright 2018
by
Helga von Schweinitz

Printed in the United States of America

All rights reserved
No part of this book may be reproduced
or transmitted in any form by any means
without written permission of the author or
her representative, except for brief quotations
in reviews.

A Word to the Reader

Most of the articles appeared originally in the Schulhaus Reporter and the GTHS Journal which is published by the German - Texan Heritage Society (GTHS) headquartered in Austin, Texas.

Included are a few articles authored by Helga von Schweinitz concerning the historic "German Free School" and related topics. The columns and articles are opinion pieces.

Helga von Schweinitz

Contents

A Walk Through the German Free School in Austin, Texas	1
How the German Free School came to the GTHS	7
First years of Ownership by GTHS	12
GTHS and Free School Time Line	22
Beyond the first years	27
Free School walk through outside photos	36
Free School walk through inside photos	44
GTHS gets Free School photos	48
GTHS Free School first years photos	52
Beyond first years photos.....	63

A Walk Through the German Free School in Austin, Texas



OUTSIDE

The German Free School is a historic building in Austin, now the headquarters of the German-Texan Heritage Society (GTHS). I'll take you for a walk around and through the building.



The house is located in the eastern part of downtown, a block and a half west of IH-35 at 507 E. Tenth Street. As you park on the road you notice the slope the house sits on, there is a popular bar below and bank above.

On the wall along the sidewalk you see our signs with the house number "507" and another stating the birth year of the building (1857). The wall was built along 10th Street to stop the building from sliding downhill.

A few steps take you up to the gate. The gate's decorative iron work shows the 'Good Star' of Texas, as the last owner called it.

When entering the garden one is always struck by the beautiful terraced layout and the harmonic proportions of brick walkways and green areas. The garden is terraced "Italian Style".

A Walk Through the German Free School in Austin, Texas

Once through the gate, turn right. This section of the building with the columns in front was added to the 1857 part in 1872 by Julius Schuetze, a long time teacher at the school who had bought the house. The bottom floor is an independent apartment that is now used as a store room and kitchen. During special events at the Free School, good German food can be purchased here. Above is a balcony that was once used as sleeping area on hot summer nights. Now there are three flags flying from this balcony: USA, German, and Texas.

On the wall of the house are two historical medallions, one from the State of Texas, the other from the City of Austin. In front is the Historical Marker for the "German Free School".

To the right of the apartment is the Patio area. During special events there are tables set up here so that patrons can enjoy a quite stein of beer. In the wall near the Gate is a metal box that tilts. Nobody knows what this box was used for. In the building's wall is a stone marker with the Texas Star and 1857 to commemorate the year the building was built.



Now continue to walk under the porch. There are intriguing details in the walls here and there that will make you stop.

A cherub guards the entrance to the cellar, and there wasn't a visiting architect yet who didn't scrutinize the beautifully weathered wood over the entrance door to the basement. How old is it? Is it from the original school house? The 1857 and the 1872

structures are joined in a pleasing way by off-setting the stones. To the left of the basement door is a colorful wall insert with the Virgin.

Now turn and walk onto one of the terraces in the garden. Look around. There are various statues throughout the garden. Some are hiding (maybe they need to, take a closer look). And there are pedestals without statues. Where did the statues go?

A Walk Through the German Free School in Austin, Texas

As you walk up the garden terraces you will meet the Might Oak tree. The mighty oak tree is much older than the structure. In 2017 fairy houses were added to the mighty oak in memory of Melanie Schmidt Dumont.

To the left (uphill) of the mighty oak tree is a wall that has the car port above. In that wall is stone insert of a silhouette of a man. Who is this man?

Next to the mighty oak is a grand stairway. The star of the garden is the photogenic wide staircase which Kelly Stevens rescued from the St. Mary's Academy on 6th street when it was torn down. He used many other parts of demolished buildings in Austin during his restoration. The stairs lead to the upper level, now the main entrance to the house.



Climb the stairs and let's walk along this porch first before going into the Free School

A sunny day brings out the fancy pattern of the iron work in the railings. If you look carefully you can see the house number "507" in the intricate pattern.

If you turn uphill, at the end of the porch is the old car port and garage. As of 2017 it could not be used for cars anymore. The area is now used during special events as the Beer and Concession stand area. And during Mai and Oktober Fests the bands play use this area as a stage.

We can briefly look at the South side of the building and West (back) side, by going through the gate in the wrought iron fence. Turn right and walk up the step driveway. Half way up on the right is the parking lot for the Free School. You can reach this driveway and parking lot from Neches Street between the Hyatt hotel and the bank. This parking lot also has a stage that is used during special events.

From the parking lot you can see the West (back) side of the Free School. The difference in the brick work clearly indicates where the original structure (smooth) joins the additions (brick).

A Walk Through the German Free School in Austin, Texas

Let us go back into the building through the front entrance. Just turn around and walk down the steep driveway, through the gate and along the porch until you reach the door above the grand staircase.

INSIDE

The original building was 20 x 100 feet, one floor, with a flue on both ends for two pot belly stoves. Since the house is on a slope, only the north part has a basement. In 1872, a two story addition was built above the north end of the building. We will be walking through this "newer" secondary story.

Using the door at the top of the grand stairway, you enter into a hallway.



Immediately in front of you is the door to the bathroom. And to your left is the office of the German Texas Heritage Society (GTHS). But to your right is the rest of the house. The rooms are strung out like a railroad car. You have to walk through one room to get to another.

First turn left and enter the office. Say hello to our hard working office staff. If you walk through the office into the storage room, hiding behind the metal shelves is a tile with the little boy. Could this be a "Della Robbia", where did it come from?, and is genuine?

Now turn around and walk back through the office into the hallway. On your left is the main bathroom. In 1992 the bathroom was renovated to handicap ease of use but was not completely compliant to American Disability Act until the 2000 renovation.

The hallway enters into the library. The library which is the center of attention is named the "Charles Trenckmann Memorial Library". His widow and children gave the money to have shelves built, some behind glass, and to help

A Walk Through the German Free School in Austin, Texas

furnish it. Take time to browse through the books. Among the books are family histories that have been donated and books about German-Texans.

The double closet doors in the library had been rescued from a house on 6th Street, and it is said that Robert E. Lee walked through it while in Austin.

Next is the kitchen which has been updated. It even has a microwave. The kitchen also doubles as the gift shop. There are several unique items with a German twist or German-Texan. Many members of the GTHS are authors, and their books are available through this gift shop.

The next room is the Victorian parlor. Before 2017 the room would have been inviting you to take high tea. But in 2017 it was converted into a class room to accommodate all the German Language class GTHS provides.

Despite now being used as a class room there are still many interesting items in this room. The mantle around the fireplace came from a house that Andrew Jackson built in Tennessee in 1790. This fireplace between the parlor and the studio heats both rooms efficiently. The overpowering "shrank" was donated to GTHS and is used to store many of the delicate tea sets and other fine china. In the kitchen end of the Parlor are built in corner shelves. Sometimes they hold fine china, other times they hold gifts for sale. There are other nice and unique items



placed around this room that are interesting, such as old clocks, and old end tables.

Walk through the narrow passage into the last room has large windows with a northern light exposure, perfect for an artist studio, so we call it The Studio. Kelly Stevens, the painter who donated the building to GTHS, used this as his

Studio. Some of the paintings on the wall are his. Look for his signature. On one wall there is a photo of Kelly Stevens sitting in the terraced gardens with his many Dachshunds.

A Walk Through the German Free School in Austin, Texas

This room is now the main meeting room. Sometimes this room is furnished with an extremely long table with chairs, sometimes just the chairs. Depends on the event. The studio has a door to the balcony, which is the only original door after a 1920 fire. If you step outside to the "sleeping" balcony you have a wonderful view over east Austin. Tucked away in one corner of the studio is an old school desk with a chair. This is a Thonet Chair.

If you look carefully at the fireplace, you will see that is actual the other side of the same fire place from the Victorian Parlor.

In the Studio the floor is made from wide pine planks. The windows on the east and the west side open and allowed for a breeze. Now the windows have delicate lace curtains which were a generous donation by Anita Killen to the Free School back before 1995.

When this was a school a folding door divided the rectangular space into two rooms, one for boys, the other one for girls. Undivided, the school house could serve as a public meeting hall.

Throughout the building are glazed ceramic tiles placed in the plaster on the walls. They are from Kelly Stevens, the last owner of the Free School.

The German Free School is not just a building. It is the home of many activities. The German Free School is a unique treasure. It is now the responsibility of us German-Texans. It was built with the ideals, labor and hopes of German immigrants. It is now a German-Texan Cultural Center with programs and classes. It is a symbol of the contributions that Germans have made and are making to the colorful Texan culture and history.

How the German Free School came to the GTHS

On 27 November of 1991 Kelly Stevens passed away, and the German-Texan Heritage Society (GTHS) became the sole owner of this beautiful house at 507 East 10th Street which at one time had been the German Free School. This day was preceded by very unusual events which deserve to be chronicled.



In 1991, Ann Lindemann was the GTHS president, Anna Thompson was secretary, and Lew Marquardt was the part-time executive director. At this time I, Helga von Schweinitz, was active in many committees. GTHS was renting a small office in Manchaca and had a phone number listed in the Austin phone book for the first time ever.

This listing in the phone book proved to be of major consequence when on January 23, 1991, Lew received a phone call from one Patti Stoetzner. Patti said she was assisting an elderly gentleman who was looking for a non-profit organization to whom he might give his home. This home was the so-called "German Free School", a historic building at 501 E. Tenth Street in Austin. The gentleman had poor eyesight and had asked her to look in the phone book under G for some German organization because the house had a German Texan history. Patti found the German-Texan Heritage Society and dialed 280-3351.

Lew was not familiar with any house that was the "German Free School". He told Patti that the prospect of having that building certainly deserved to be considered, but at this moment he could not make any promises. He immediately wrote a letter to president Ann, Anna and me, to alert us of the possibilities and to expect a call from Patti. GTHS member Rodney Koenig, an attorney with Fulbright & Jaworski in Houston, was also informed and offered legal assistance to GTHS without charge. We all became cautiously excited about the prospect.

Anna and I were kept busy for a few weeks doing research about the house and its owner, the condition of both, the history of that "school", past-due tax questions, valuation, appraisals, title search and more. Patti helped us generously

How the German Free School came to the GTHS

with what she knew, but she advised us to be very discreet because the gentleman did not want his privacy violated and had not made up his mind about GTHS. He was still considering other options for his donation. Questions lingered in our mind: Why us? Why does he not give it to the University, why not to the School for the Deaf, since he was deaf, as we had heard? Had he no family to consider? Was that old house possibly in such poor state of repair that nobody else wanted it? Could GTHS afford the upkeep?



The executive members of the board and I were invited to the home on Sunday, February 9, 1991. We were greeted by five yapping dachshunds in the yard, and then we were very graciously welcomed by the owner, Dr. Kelly Stevens, a 96 year old gentleman too weak to leave his armchair. Patti Stoetzner, who knows sign language,

interpreted between Dr. Stevens and us. We walked through part of the house over oriental rugs oohing and aahing at antique furniture, oil paintings, and fine china.

Our research and the visit to the house gave us the following knowledge to report to the full GTHS board: The house, built by German settlers in 1857 as a school, had a tax valuation of \$114,474.00; the land was appraised at \$220,800.00. As a non-profit organization we would not have to pay all of the taxes, if any. The building seemed to be in surprisingly good condition inside and out. Kelly Stevens had spent the last forty years restoring and modernizing it. It had been a private residence since 1872. It had no heating, no air conditioning, but had electricity, gas and modern plumbing. Patti hinted that the furniture, a lot of art work and most things in the house might be given to us in the will as well as some money for the upkeepmight be given.

Dr. Kelly Stevens had no German ancestry. He was an artist, art collector and teacher of art. The largest room in the house was his studio, no longer used as such, but instead as a depository for a lot of “stuff” that an artistic, collecting personality accumulates through the years. He indicated that he did not want the University of Texas receive the house since it would then lose its historic

How the German Free School came to the GTHS

significance among UT's many real estate holdings. All his previously considered heirs had passed away in recent years. He thought that the descendants of the German immigrants who built the school would be the logical and most interested group to nurture the heritage that this house represented. From Patti we learned that Dr. Stevens had expressed to her that he also hoped that whoever would agree to take care of the house would also pay tribute to his personal legacy. And then there were the five yapping dachshunds that he loved (and never heard) who would not like to be separated ever.



Whatever the conditions and circumstances were, at the next board meeting it was decided, that it would be irresponsible to let a building of such importance to the history of the German-Texans slide into unrelated hands. Besides, it had long been the dream of many GTHS members to be given a house some day, a home for the Society, maybe in Fredericksburg or New Braunfels, maybe in San Antonio. This "School" in Austin dropped like a dream come true, on us. Had we been in the market to buy a building for our office and mission needs, we would have ordered inspections and estimates and consulted experts. However, Dr. Kelly's deteriorating health, combined with the historical uniqueness of the project, excluded those steps when we deliberated the acceptance of the gift. Time seemed of the essence.

Rodney Koenig undertook the delicate negotiations about a transfer of the title to the property. This was complicated by Dr. Stevens' deafness and his need for privacy.

On August 2, 1991, Kelly H. Stevens signed a Warranty Deed with Reservation of Life Estate. That document gave GTHS title to the real property, but Kelly Stevens had the right to stay in the home as long as he lived. Dr. Stevens also drafted a new will, but the contents of such an instrument is not really known until after a person's death, and all assumptions can't be relied on. We were hoping for some money towards the upkeep of the house.

How the German Free School came to the GTHS

Later in August, Dr. Stevens invited Austin GTHS members to visit his home. Although he was too ill to greet his guests, his attendant gave each woman in our group a rose that Stevens had bought for the occasion. He also asked me and my husband, Hans, to come back some other day to take photos of the house and especially one of himself with his favorite dog, Brett, on his lap. We did.



For a shot of the entire complex Hans climbed on the ledge of the high building across the street and was almost arrested by the security guards. For a view from further away showing the neighborhood, Hans and I asked in the Marriott Hotel for a certain room on the 11th floor for half an hour. We had a lot of explaining to do.

The fact, that GTHS members living in the Austin area had met monthly for years as the “Capital Area Group”, was a blessing, because there was a group already established to help take care of upcoming chores should we actually take possession of the house.

During the September, 1991, GTHS convention in Corpus Christi, the Society’s first ownership of real estate was announced and introduced to the general membership with a display of pictures. Even that early in the game fund raising efforts were initiated because it is a well known fact that the upkeep of any house costs money.

Since Dr. Stevens’ health was deteriorating, the inevitable had to be discussed at a special board meeting on October 12, 1991. By that time, W. M. Von Maszewski was the Society’s president. Anna, Hans, Patti, Helgard Suhr and I as chairperson were to take matters in hand should Kelly Stevens pass away. It was decided that we should spend \$50.- on a flower arrangement and make a donation of the same amount later to the State School for the Deaf. Thus we felt rather well prepared for the event. All the details had to be decided upon when we came to that bridge. I contacted the executrice of Kelly’s estate, Rosemary Stapp, and we

How the German Free School came to the GTHS

discussed - by exchanging written notes since she is deaf - how we could be of help to each other in the future. There was hardly any personal contact any more with Kelly Stevens, because that was his expressed desire. A letter of appreciation from Ann Lindemann and an engraved silver dish were some of the tokens by which we tried to show our gratitude for the generous gift of the home.

On November 28, 1991, Patti Stoetznier called and told me that Dr. Stevens had passed away in the hospital the night before. From that moment on, the old "German Free School" and its contents were the responsibility of the German-Texan Heritage Society. We had not seen the final version of the will, but we were the custodians of everything on and in the property. GTHS had just become the sole owner of this beautiful house and just about everything in the house, including gorgeous Victorian furniture, antiques, works of art and collectibles, and five lovable dogs whose wellbeing, we felt, was the responsibility of GTHS, as were the daily droppings.

The house stood in the middle of downtown Austin with vagrants and drug addicts swarming all around 507 East Tenth Street, especially in the dead-end alley behind the house. The house had no air conditioning, no heating, but gas leaks and termites and a crumbling wall and a truck load full of cans oozing out unidentifiable solutions, paints, and chemicals. Many of Kelly's young friends seemed to have keys to the doors which did not really lock anyway. Before the sunset that day, Hans had re-keyed all the locks, we established a schedule to feed and pamper the yapping dogs and clean up after them, and we closed all the windows. That led to other problems which will be chronicled later.

On one of the first exploratory tours through the house and through the stack of Dr. Stevens' mail that had accumulated during the last weeks of his life, we found a letter from Kelly's only surviving sister, Mary Campbell. She expressed to her brother that she shared his happiness about having discovered the German-Texan Heritage Society and about his decision to give the Society his home. Anna and I sat at Kelly's kitchen table when we read this, and it made us feel really good to know that Kelly had never regretted having given his home to the German-Texan Heritage Society which he had found in the phone book.

First years of Ownership by GTHS

Nov 1991 to Dec 1995

When Dr. Kelly Stevens passed away on November 27, 1991, the “German Free School” building on 507 E. Tenth Street in Austin, Texas, became the property of the German-Texan Heritage Society. However, before we could freely take care of the contents and access the money we expected to inherit through the will, a lot of unexpected legal problems had to be solved. The fact that we at least clearly owned the building itself, that the title transfer had already taken place months before, saved the house from destructive delays in repairs. The delay would be due to legal problems. The repairs began immediately.



Dr. Stevens’ Last Will and Testament mentioned seven heirs besides GTHS. Problems arose out of identifying some of the assets. Some stocks were misnamed, and it was not clear to whom they should go. Another problem was the fact that Dr. Stevens had given works of art and items of value to the University of Texas throughout several years; some as gifts, some

on loan, some were still in the house. Records were not clear on what was actually gifted. It was important to have all the questions answered since the Will said:”...I give any surplus and residuary estate to the German-Texan Heritage Society to be used as a fund to assist in the management and maintenance of my home...”. This meant, whatever did not belong to somebody else belonged to GTHS, but until the court had spoken, GTHS was only the custodian of everything in the house with no access to the money to be inherited. The case was taken to court not by GTHS but by one of the other heirs.

The executrix of the estate, Rosemary Stapp, hired attorney Holly Gilman of Tradd & Associates, P.C., and other legal firms to assist her in her duties - at the estate’s expense, of course. Rodney Koenig of Fulbright & Jaworski represented

First years of Ownership by GTHS

GTHS without charging any fees. Towards the end of November, 1992, a year after Dr. Stevens' death, Judge Herman had it all sorted out and ruled according to his best judgment. All parties agreed, and shortly thereafter Anna Thompson, GTHS treasurer, could issue receipts for a variety of investments that were turned over to GTHS from the Kelly Stevens estate. Now we clearly owned everything left in the home.

The "residuary estate" consisted not only of money, it included the furniture in the house, beautiful porcelain, works of art by Stevens and other painters, ordinary household goods and Kelly Stevens' large collection of private correspondence with family, friends and artists from around the world. It also included five dachshunds.



Some situations had to be taken care of before the legal problems were solved. The studio room, upstairs and the basement downstairs were filled with several dozens of cans of paints, solvents, lacquers - all liquids oozing out through the rusted metal with the fumes threatening to explode any minute. Hans, my husband, and I cautiously loaded the cans on a trailer and drove to the hazardous waste location for the City of Austin. There a dangerous- substance-specialist quickly donned his nuclear waste suit and gently sank the cans in drums of sand. Hans and I left without leaving a name or phone number.

Another near-death experience was caused by a gas leak. The house had no heater and no air conditioner. Kelly Stevens had kept a few windows partially open at all times. We, however, kept them closed overnight. When we opened the door in the morning there was this suspicion odor of gas in the house. The gas company confirmed a leak. But we could not locate it until we found a very skinny plumber who squeezed himself under the house and discovered that the pipes under the house were rusted through. A week of having the building tightly closed could have sent a

First years of Ownership by GTHS

guy entering with a cigarette in his mouth to high heaven together with the house. That brings up the question of insurance.

Even after the gas problems were solved and the place was made safe all around, we had a hard time getting insurance due to the age of the house. After a diligent search GTHS member C. A. Schutze and his agency eventually found an underwriter.

The house was filled with collectibles, beautiful furniture and a lot of “stuff”. Like any old household, it harbored everything from dirty laundry to broken cups, from moth-infested rugs to valuable Meissen porcelain which was mixed up with cracked dime store china. Exquisite quilts were rolled up in old blankets. A walk through the rooms was a treasure hunt. We found intriguing paintings and sketches under mountains of newspapers.

There was no shortage of people who were anxious to help with sorting out. We had GTHS members of the Austin area already loosely organized in the “Capital Area Group”, and other members, mainly board members from other towns, came to help. Everybody was fascinated by what we discovered in every nook and closet. When we showcased the house on May 16, 1992, as part of Preservation Week in Austin we could welcome enthusiastic visitors including archivists, museum curators and gallery owners.

Many of the eager sort-out-helpers were the “Hausfrau” type. If a piece looked old but was not obviously an antique, they said “Let’s get rid of it”, and in the trash it went. Evenings I became the trash lady, retrieving what I thought might one day turn out to be of value to us. We had two big garage sales, sold a lot of “stuff”, and later we had several silent auctions, but it became clear, that most GTHS members are not willing to pay a penny more than bargain prices. Even so, the silent auction of items in the house on 15 May 1994 was limited to members and family only, and it did net \$5,000. Over 333 items were auctioned off. Items included paintings by Kelly Stevens and pottery that Kelly Stevens collected from his travels to Mexico and South America. During this auction over 140 guests frolicked in the garden and partook in refreshments. There were choirs and musicians. Needless to say, the silent auction became very noisy towards the end.

First years of Ownership by GTHS

During the inspection of the rusted gas pipes, it had been pointed out to us, that the west wall of the building was wet and crumbling, and moisture was crawling under the house. The sloping vacant lot next door and uphill from the house sends rain water our way and into a ditch along our wall. The lot was for sale, and GTHS did later (about 1992-1993) buy the lot and created a parking lot.



The outside walls were originally made of a mixture of limestone and water in a rammed earth technique. This involved using crushed limestone and water, pouring it into a large frame to dry, and then moving the frame on top of the dried layer to repeat the process. The outside of the rammed-earth wall was

then covered in a layer of limestone. We did not know how much of them had been replaced by modern concrete during the major restoration by Kelly Stevens in the 1950s.

It was obvious that we had to make a long and longer list of matters that had to be taken care of immediately. We had to establish priorities. We contacted many local restoration architects, engineering firms, roofers, air conditioning companies, the Historical Commission of Texas, exterminators for the termites and tree specialists for the ailing oak tree. And of course, we had to take care of the five dachshunds. Most history connected specialists donated their expert opinions, and some in writing. Some purely commercial services were not anxious to get involved with a non-profit organization, and we had trouble getting estimates.

The exterminator from Action Pest Control recommended not to do the termite control until the new Central Air and Heating system had been completed. We had Brink put in an alarm system. Strand Brothers installed air conditioning and heating system. Schmidt Electric spent hours tracing and bring up to code the ancient electrical wiring system. Barlett Tree Experts of Austin rescued the big oak tree. Volunteers got rid of poison ivy all around the place so that Nelson Engineering workers could begin to restoring the west wall. To repair the west wall we needed the permission from Mrs. Buratti, owner of the neighboring lot. We

First years of Ownership by GTHS

hoped that placing an insulating barrier against the wall and drying it out would last until we had a master plan and grants and maybe own the lot next door and build on it.....dreams.



All the work on and in the house had to be done through and on solid stone walls, a challenge for local craftsmen. The Historical Commission also had to be consulted frequently.

Without charging us, Pots and Plants Nursery developed a zero-scape plan for the garden. And a necessary sprinkler system

was put in. Volunteers under the guidance of Dat Morrow (83) weeded and mowed, planted and watered endlessly and weeded close to the walls so that Action Pest Control could finally lay the circle of death for the termites.

Because the Free School was open to the public, the main bathroom had to be renovated for easy use by the handicap and physically challenged. This renovation was completed by 1994. The final renovation to make it compliant with the American Disability Act (ADA) would cost about \$4,000 and the money was not available right away, that ADA renovation was not completed until 2000.

This is a very shortened account of some of the most urgent matters that had to be taken care of. So many items on our to-do-list had to be postponed mainly for financial reasons.

There were other situations that needed attention. The apartment downstairs was rented for \$100.- a month by a deaf young man, Roger B., who had helped Kelly with garden work. Feeding and cleaning up after the five yapping dachshunds was not part of his duty. So we finally hired Dr. Stevens' former deaf caretaker Bob for \$10.- per day to take on that duty when we could not be available. Tenant Roger soon became very ill, and since due to the gas situation we could not heat the apartment, I had to ask him to move out, a difficult task.

First years of Ownership by GTHS

Executrix Rosemary eventually found a deaf family willing to take all five lovable dachshunds in exchange of a CD worth about \$10,000. That seems like a lot of money, but it was a good solution, since the dogs were running up vet bills and were not to be separated, according to Dr. Stevens' desires. When the oldest of them, Madrone, died about a year later, she had apparently expressed the wish to be buried next to her mother in a flower bed in the garden. So I got this phone call from Bob late one night, and the next morning at sunrise Bob and I buried the poor little creature in a shoe box under the lilies. Tears. The other dogs expressed no such wishes.



The GTHS office was not moved from Manchaca into the German Free School building until April 1992 for various reasons; one of them was the mildew on the walls in the new office, formerly the bedroom. Anna spent a day washing it all off with bleach. Another was the number of homeless and vagrants.

From the very beginning GTHS had to contend with homeless and vagrants living around the Free School building. The Austin city planner had put most of the soup kitchens and social services right in the downtown entertainment area, which was just a couple of blocks from the Free School. The police always responded promptly to any calls or issues. But still, anybody coming to the Free School had to be considerate of their own safety.

GTHS had a part time executive director at that time, Brett Becker, who could work only a few hours a week and was often not available when the building had to be open for workmen. That left Anna Thompson and me to spend many days from morning to late afternoon in the house during the first two years. We were mostly waiting for the contractors. But even when the many volunteers came to help, one of us had to be there, because we were the only people other than Brett who knew all the codes and moods of the security system. The security system also set the alarm off during the night occasionally, and then one of us was contacted by the police.

First years of Ownership by GTHS

Anna and I felt fortunate to get such an insight into what GTHS had inherited. There were many boxes and cabinets filled with papers Kelly Stevens had left behind, many of which had to be searched through for tax records and documentations that were needed to solve the probate problems. Closets and cabinets also hid treasures from diplomas to clothes for statues we had not found yet, and drawers full of slides, films and photos.

Although Anna and I enjoyed what we were doing, it became clear that GTHS needed a full-time person in the house, and we needed a way to organize the



volunteer effort. Now that the building itself was stabilized, the concept of the German Free School as a place that would represent German-Texan Heritage at its best and offer programs to promote the mission of the Society to the general public emerged during long board meetings and discussions.

In April of 1993 Teresa Chavez responded to our ad in the paper for an executive director. With a degree in English, good computer skills and experience dealing with people, she was just whom GTHS needed to fill a position for which the job description was still vague and the pay was modest.

She could not and was not supposed to replace all volunteers. Therefore Austin GTHS members had a brainstorming session on how to get the volunteers organized. Charles Kalteyer suggested that we look at the successful Lyric Opera Guild as a model. Bylaws were developed, the former “Task Forces” turned into committees, we elected officers with Arlene Burges as the first Guild President, and we elected vice presidents, each with a different area of responsibility. The Guild was to take care of fund raising for GTHS and organize volunteer efforts with subcommittees. The subcommittees were tasked with keeping the house in good repair, establishing the library, offering cultural programs, giving tours, helping in the office and so on and so on.

First years of Ownership by GTHS

During the first years of ownership we soon developed the German Free School into a German-Texan Culture Center. The family of Charles Trenckmann donated money to start the Charles Trenckmann Memorial Library. The Library offers not only books but also services of reading old script, translations, and help with research.

On 20 October 1992 the first Monthly Speaker Series was held at Free School on Tuesday evening 7:30pm and the speaker was Ambassador Herbert Spiro "From Hamburg to Texas in 1938 and other stories". Eventually the speaker series was moved to Sundays, and in 2018 the Speaker Series was still going strong.



To show appreciation of Dr. Kelly Stevens' gift, GTHS invited his friends for a Tea Party at the first anniversary of his death (28 November 1992). Most of his friends were deaf. Board members from all over Texas participated as hosts. We learned details of Kelly's life and particulars on the house.

His friends shared fond memories. The event was greatly appreciated by the guests.

German language courses first began on 16 March 1994. Of course, the first course was for beginners. Since 1994 the language courses have been expanded to all levels and all age groups. In 2016 summer German language camps for children were offered. In 2017 the German Free School became the only fully accredited Goethe-Institute Testing Center in Austin, Texas

The German Free School also became a center for family reunions. The Schütze family reunion was held on 25 and 26 June 1994. This party was patterned after Julius and Julie Schütze's 25th silver wedding anniversary party, which was held in this very same room in 1888 (or was that 1903?). Family heirlooms were used to decorate - including a silver punch bowl and other silver articles that had belonged to the pioneering Schützes who resided in the German Free School until 1910. Over 110 Schütze descendants (spanning 4 generations) attended.

First years of Ownership by GTHS

Exhibits were also on display during the first years of the German Free School. In April 1993 there was an exhibit by Texas Music Museum "German Music in Texas". In November 1994 there was a Hummel exhibit on loan from the Hummel Museum of New Braunfels. On 13 May 1995 there was an exhibit called



"Oma's Attic: German-Texan Handwork of Yesterday and Today" by Suzann Thompson in conjunction with Austin Preservation week. In October and November there was an exhibit "Der Stern von Texas", a farewell song written in the mid 1800s by Hoffmann von Fallersleben about emigration to Texas. And there were and are still many exhibits being displayed at the School.

First meeting of "Stammtisch" at the German Free School was held on 17 November 1995. It was every Friday from noon-1pm and offered an opportunity to speak German.. By 11 January 1996, "Stammtisch" was moved to every Thursday from noon-1pm. "Stammtisch" was started by Helga von Schweinitz and Gerhild Rogers. Unlike "Stammtisch" in Germany, attendees have to bring their own lunch, and beer is not provided. Coffee is available from the kitchen. Starting in 2017, cake and cookies are also available, but still no beer.

The first "Fröhliche Weihnachten Y'all!" Christmas Market was held from 28 November - 16 December 1995. The Market consisted of handmade items, homemade recipes, and local musicians. Over 200 people came, 140 dozen cookies sold, 51 stollen sold and the event grossed over \$2100. In December 2017 the Christmas Market was a one day event where over 3000 people come to buy items made in Germany (none made in China) and grossed over \$30,000.

Various clubs and groups also use the Free School. In 1995 some of the clubs included Friendship Force, Austin & Travis County Heritage Alliance, Knitters & Crocheters Guild, and Austin Friends of Folk Art.

First years of Ownership by GTHS

Prominent guests have visited the Free School, especially from Germany. In the summer of 1994 Dr Klaus Aurisch, Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany along with his wife and two daughters paid the School a visit. On 28 June 1994, an informal luncheon was held for Dr Erwin Vetter, minister in Staatsministerium, Baden-Württemberg, and Tomas Pawel, Honorary Consul from San Antonio.

In the years following 1995, more cultural events were added such as Maifest, and Oktoberfest. Game nights and Movie nights were events that were also briefly tried. In most months there were cultural programs open free to the public, often with distinguished speakers.

To honor the legacy of Kelly H. Stevens who trusted the German-Texan Heritage Society to take care of the historic site in memory of the settlers who built it, GTHS maintains a collection of many paintings and other works of art by Kelly Stevens and some of his deaf friends. Only a few of them are on display at any one time.

The first few years of ownership laid the foundation for great opportunities. With young people showing an interest in the history of the place and its possibilities, I hope for a continuation of the enthusiasm that propelled German-Texans in the early 1990s to overcome all hurdles and to create the Cultural Center we now enjoy. A Cultural Center where GTHS members carrying out the mission of the Society: Promoting awareness and preservation of the German cultural heritage of Texas.

GTHS and Free School Time Line

GTHS and Free School Time Line

from Jan 1991 to Dec 1995

23 January 1991 Lew Marquardt receives phone call from Patti Stoetzner who is representing Kelly Stevens about possibly donating a building that used to be the "German Free School" to GTHS

9 February 1991 Hans and Helga are invited to meet Kelly Stevens at 507 East 10th Street. Patti Stoetzner was in attendance as interpreter.

Summer 1991 GTHS Journal Volume XIII Number 2 Summer 1991 in 'President's Message' by Ann Lindemann has the first mention of possible gift of a future headquarters for GTHS. More information to follow in GTHS annual Convention in September.

2 August 1991 Kelly H Stevens signed a Warranty Deed with Reservation of Life Estate.

8 August 1991 New Deed filed to record the transfer of Free School from Kelly Stevens to GTHS. Lot 6 Block 114 Original City, Deed Volume 11496, Page 337 with an 1991 Land value of \$132,480 and Improved value of \$97,624 for a total taxable value of \$230,104. Estimated taxes for 1991 was \$107.21. First and second floor was listed at 2037 square feet each and built in 1910.

6-8 September 1991 GTHS Annual convention in Corpus Christi.

12 October 1991 GTHS Special board meeting concerning Free School

Fall 1991 GTHS Journal Volume XIII Number 3 Fall 1991 has article by Rodney Koenig about Kelly Stevens signing Warranty Deed.

27 November 1991 Kelly Stevens dies

28 November 1991 GTHS is notified of Kelly Stevens' death.

5 December 1991 Brink's Home Security installs a security system for \$1189.03

5 December 1991 Locks are replaced for \$29.10

6 January 1992 Probate court case #59034

GTHS and Free School Time Line

25 January 1992 At GTHS board meeting it was agreed that GTHS Headquarters will move from Manchaca Road to the Free School in February 1992.

26 January 1992 First open house

28-31 January 1992 Gas leakage detected and repaired by Clarke Kent Plumbing for \$500.87.

8 March 1992 Dachshund dogs are taken to live with a family.

19 March 1992 Mary El-Beheri takes inventory of almost 100 of Dr Stevens' paintings.

30 March 1992 Schmidt Electric spends four hours correcting electrical issues and charged \$168.81. Circuit breakers are in the basement.

Spring 1992 GTHS Journal Volume XIV Number 1 Spring 1992 has article by Rodney Koenig about GTHS inheriting the German Free School from Kelly Stevens. Members are encouraged to donate to an endowment fund to renovate and maintain the Free School. Tentative date for GTHS headquarter to move to Free School is expected to be April 1992.

Spring 1992 GTHS Journal Volume XIV Number 1 Spring 1992 obituary for Kelly Stevens. Died 27 November 1991 and buried in Mexia Texas

Spring 1992 In GTHS Newsletter no 2 was published a proposed layout of the garden developed by "Pots and Plants"

2 April 1992 The Travis Central Appraisal District reappraised the square footage of house. Basement was removed as living space. Square footage went from 4000 to 2500.

13 April 1992 Connie Wise does a line drawing of the Free School

21 April 1992 Bartlett Tree Experts of Austin removed dead limbs and treated the big oak tree.

22 April 1992 In trying to find the owner of the lot next door, found out that the lot is for sale at \$15 per square foot and the lot is 69 feet by 128 feet. Therefore the asking price is \$132,480.

24 April 1992 Action Pest Control does estimate for treating for termites. Treatment is delayed until a new Central air and Heat system is installed with new ducts

GTHS and Free School Time Line

Summer 1992 GTHS Journal Volume XIV Number 2 Summer 1992 has article by Rodney Koenig requesting help with landscaping and sprinkler system at the Free School.

Fall 1992 GTHS Journal Volume XIV Number 3 Fall 1992 "Editor's/president's notes:" states that at the Free School trees have been cut back and that a sprinkler system has been installed.

17 October 1992 At GTHS board meeting discussion began to buy lot on west side for possibly \$106,000.

17 October 1992 At GTHS board meeting approval was given to pay \$500 to "Nelson Engineering to do a building inspection survey and prepare or formulate a plan of action for the essential work needed on the structure."

17 October 1992 At GTHS board meeting approved gutters to be installed to reduce moisture build up at the structure's base.

20 October 1992 First Monthly Speaker Series held at Free School on Tuesday evening 7:30pm and the speaker was Ambassador Herbert Spiro "From Hamburg to Texas in 1938 and other stories"

Fall 1992 GTHS Journal Volume XIV Number 3 Fall 1992 "GTGS/Capital Area Group" states that Kelly Stevens' estate should be out of probate within days. One of Kelly Stevens' dachshunds passed away.

Dec 1992 Fireplaces were inspected

April 1993 Symposium of the Society for German American Studies "Texas Music Museum, Inc" set up their exhibit "German Music in Texas" at the German Free School.

11 September 1993 Per Minutes of GTHS General Meeting \$10,000 was pledged by Helen Trenckmann for the library and research room

14 November 1993 German Free School Guild is established.

Spring 1994 GTHS Journal Volume XVI Number 1 Spring 1994 First application for "Founding Membership for German Free School Guild" appears.

GTHS and Free School Time Line

- February 1994 Free School starts to be open to public on Thursdays from 1 to 4pm.
- March 1994 First Schulhaus Reporter (Schoolhouse Reporter) Newsletter of the German Free School Guild. Was originally going to be called "Das Haus"
- March 1994 First "Helga's Corner" appears in Schulhaus Reporter
- 16 March 1994 First class of first German language course for beginners at the German Free School
- May 1994 Major restoration work on outside of building to fix cracks and make white.
- 15 May 1994 Silent Auction open to members, friends, and invited guests only
- Summer 1994 GTHS Journal Volume XVI Number 2 Summer 1994 Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany, Dr Klaus Aurisch, wife, and two daughters toured the Free School and stayed for refreshments..
- 25-26 June 1994 Schütze family Reunion. A re-creation of the 40th anniversary party of Julia and Julius Schütze, which took place in these very rooms in 1903.
- 28 June 1994 Informal luncheon held at Free School for Herr Dr Erwin Vetter (Minister im Staatsministerium Baden-Württemberg) and his delegation, along with San Antonio's Honorary Consul Thomas Pawel.
- 6 October 1994 German American Day open house
- November 1994 Hummel exhibit on loan from the Hummel Museum of New Braunfels
- 4 February 1995 Students from the Bowie High School German Club helped with garden work.
- 17 February 1995 Approximately 35 members of the San Antonio Conservation Society toured the Free School.
- March 1995 Work to replace gutters and several wooden screens begins.
- 6-14 May 1995 During Austin Preservation Week exhibit at German Free School of "Oma's Attic: German-Texan Handwork of Yesterday and Today"

GTHS and Free School Time Line

- 6 October-15 November 1995 Exhibit "Der Stern von Texas" was a farewell song written in the Mid-1800's by Hoffmann von Fallersleben about emigration to Texas.
- 17 November 1995 First meeting of "Stammtisch" at Free School. Every Friday from noon-1pm and speak only German. By 11 January 1996, "Stammtisch" was moved to every Thursday from noon-1pm. Started by Helga von Schweinitz and Gerhild Rogers.
- Fall 1995 GTHS Journal Volume XVII Number 3 Fall 1995 "Farewell letter from Guild President" since inception of Guild over \$20,000 has been raised for maintain and restore the Free School. The Charles Trenckmann Memorial Library is due to a generous gift from the family Trenckmann. The lace curtains in the Studio were also a donation
- 28 November - 16 December 1995 First "Fröhliche Weihnachten Y'all!" Christmas Market consisting of handmade items, homemade recipes, and local musicians. Over 200 people came, 140 dozen cookies sold, 51 stollen sold and grossed over \$2100.

Beyond the first years

After 1995 many more interesting events happened at the Free School. Over the following years I wrote some articles bring these special events to the attention of the members. Here are versions of the articles. Many have been updated for various reasons.

Fine Porcelain at last

Published in Schulhaus Reporter Vol 17 #4 Jul/Aug 2010



An article in the Schulhaus Reporter about the embarrassing lack of matching cups and saucers in the dignified Old German Free School prompted several GTHS members to donate sets of fine porcelain.

Katie and Dieter Wurpes parted with a dinner service for twelve made by Lettmann in Weiden, pattern Marie Luise. Another German service, a Kaffee Service for 12 by Rosenthal, pattern Pariser Frühling, was donated by Hans and Helga von Schweinitz. Kay Binder brought in a service for eight which is so pretty, that its English origin has to be forgiven.



These elegant dishes match the silver coffee and tea service with sugar bowl and creamer on a large silver tray, donated years ago by Alicean and Charles Kalteyer. It is now the shining center piece on our new/old cabinet, the Schrank.

The next time we host special guests we can do so in style, close to the way many German immigrants used to live before they left their home.

GFS Iron Work

Published in Schulhaus Reporter Vol 6 #2 March-April 1999

Inspired by our January program on the Voss Metal Works of San Antonio, Teresa Chavez and I browsed through some old catalogs that had come to the GTHS with the GFS building. !!! Between the pages we found a note in Kelly Stevens handwriting with the words "Herrera Iron Works, Austin" on it. We checked the phonebook, called the number, and a week later Mr. Louis Herrera Sr. and his son, Louis Herrera Jr. visited the old German Free School.



Yes, they remember installing all the iron railing and the gate in the 1960s. Dr. Stevens had picked the pattern from a catalog. The railings were made by the "Tennessee Fabricating Company" in Memphis. Minor changes were done to the design, but the house number "507" that we thought Dr. Stevens had cleverly included in the design, is simply incidental, says Mr. Herrera. However, the star in the gate has to be something especially included for this home, because Kelly Stevens called his house "Good Star".



Somehow we had suspected that the Weigel Brothers of Austin had made the beautiful iron railings based on Kelly Stevens' design, but seems that we were mistaken.

Bit by bit we find out more and more about our historic house, but much has yet to be discovered. We would love to find a drawing or description of the original schoolhouse.

Miguel Ruiz, Stone Mason

Published Schulhaus Reporter Vol 19 #45 Nov/Dec 2012 under title "Living History of the German Free School"

The German Free School building, the GTHS Headquarters and German-Texan Culture Center, had a surprise visitor during Open House on 30 August, 2012: Miguel (Mike) Ruiz, who is the youngest son of David Ruiz, the stone mason who did the wonderful limestone restoration on the building in the 1950s.

Mike was accompanied by his granddaughter Michelle Benavides. They were especially interested in looking at the west side of the house, because when David Ruiz worked in that place he fell and broke his leg. That made his work on the German Free School building his last project.



The property was then owned by artist Kelly Stevens who had purchased it in 1949 when it was in poor condition and in need of massive repairs. For the masonry part of the job he hired David Ruiz who had the reputation of being among the best of the trade. Many of the lime stones were recovered from a cistern that used to be on the grounds. Since Stevens had spent many years in Spanish speaking countries, they probably had no problem communicating in Spanish, although Stevens was deaf but could still speak somewhat in those years, and they could exchange written notes. Copies of the receipts for paying Ruiz are among the Stevens papers GTHS sold to Gallaudet University.

Mike does not remember ever having met Kelly Stevens, but he remembers that his mother used to bring lunch to his father when he worked there at 507 E. 10th Street. He plans to bring other family members to the German Free School so that they can proudly see their ancestors work on this house of historical significance.

Our German Flag

Published in the Schulhaus Reporter Vol 13 No 4 Jul/Aug 2006



The GTHS flies the flags of the USA, Texas, and Germany from the balcony of the German Free School, rain or shine. When I, as a docent, give a tour for visitors from Germany, I am asked almost every time how much money the German government or a German foundation contributes to this German-Texan cultural center, since we fly the German flag. With a sad face I tell them that so far we have not received any financial help from any German source, but that we fly the flag in friendship.

When a group from Bad Königshofen, Arlington's (Texas) sister city in Germany, toured the building recently and heard my spiel, they passed a pot around and collected almost \$40 - and made a donation to the GTHS so that our German flag can fly with honor and pride. We thank the visitors from Bad Königshofen, and also the GTHS members from Arlington, including G. and M. Liesel, for organizing the visit.

Thonet Chair No 14

Published in Schulhaus Reporter Vol 17 #3 May/Jun 2010

This piece of furniture was standing idly in the library when I took Koblenz city council member Walter Baum for a special tour through the building. Being by profession a master cabinet-maker, he saw the chair, grabbed it and turned it upside down. "Nummer vierzehn," he said, reading the number stamped under the seat. Then he told me about the history of this type of chair and its German connection.



The technique for making bent-wood furniture was developed by Michael Thonet (pronounced "to-net"), who was born in Boppard on the Rhine in 1796. Experimenting with wood, steam and pressure, this cabinet-maker created light furniture which could easily be handled and shipped. It became known as Bugholzmöbel. Our model, No 14, also called "bistro chair" or "café house chair," is one of more than 50 million of its kind all over the world. They sell for up to \$500 a piece on the antique market. However, if ours is one of those that are still being produced nowadays, it is worth much less. Ours, which has a candy-stick back, looks handled enough to be an antique. We had a piece of German history here right in front of (or under) us and didn't know it.

Googling "Michael Thonet chairs" gives you an evening's worth of reading.

Thursday Open Haus

Published Schulhaus Reporter Vol 19 #3 Summer 2012

We had many visitors from out-of-town and from Germany lately, even from Shanghai. Some of them had discovered us on the internet, others are GTHS members who finally came to see the headquarters and the library.

This spring of 2012, we had two classes of high school students from Germany, one from Koblenz, one from Cologne. They let me know that the lacy window curtains that I consider “so German”, are totally outdated. I could not find



a single student among them who had read a book by Karl May who is the author of dozens of books which many folks my age grew up with in Germany. We devoured them to educate us on the Indians, the Wild West and Texas.

Two police officers from Hamburg found out about the Free School from a local policeman who had stopped to help them when their Volkswagen was in trouble. They could tell us about the differences of being on the Force in Hamburg or in Austin.

Then, a little longer ago, there came this well-dressed guy who told us in good German that he had learned the language by studying a German bible, and that his mother had killed his father, and that he was now sleeping at the Salvation Army. Another gentleman who showed up only once told me that he thinks his father was a German officer from a submarine which had entered the Gulf of Mexico during WW II and was sunk. This officer swam ashore, fathered him and disappeared. I would have loved to help him with his research, but he never came back.

Members of the German-Texan Heritage Society who live in other parts of the state and come to visit, often bring us a treasure of information, because they are also members of other organizations with a German connection.

Karl and Gisela Ziebarth are a good example. They came in early May from Dallas, unpacked a picnic lunch and had a conversation with whoever was present of

Beyond the first years

staff and volunteers. Karl and Gisela are members and very active volunteers of the “Dallas Goethe Center” which is not connected to the “Goethe Institute”. They don’t have a building to maintain, they meet in homes. Their priorities can therefore exclude big fundraising attempts like our Maifest and Oktoberfest. They feature an impressive program of cultural and educational events with speakers, musicians, films and authors of international reputation. They offer German classes, but only on Saturdays. We might learn from them about how they find their speakers and other presenters of programs, so that we in Austin can revive our program. Their website is www.dallasgoethecenter.org. We might learn from them about finding speakers and other presenters of programs, so that we can revive our own program in Austin.

I wish there were more “Thursday afternoons” in the week. The German Free School is truly serving as a German-Texan Cultural and Information Center as long as people come and visit and contribute to its mission.

Beyond the first years

Recent Special Visitors

to the German Free School in Austin.

Published in Schulhaus Reporter Vol 17 #3 May/Jun 2010

Being an enthusiastic, proud docent at the German Free School in Austin, the GTHS headquarters, gives me the pleasure to meet a great variety of interesting visitors when we have open house on Thursdays; it also provides me with the urge to invite dignitaries visiting Austin for other reasons, to come to our beautiful building and learn about German-Texan history. Following are some examples:



The Honorable Roland

Herrmann, the Consul General of Germany stationed in Houston since the summer of 2009, came to Austin on 23 February, 2010, to attend several business meetings. When he had asked where he could meet me, my husband and I invited him for *Kaffee und Kuchen* to the German Free School. I brought the cake and discovered, that the Free School has

only two sets of matching plates, saucers and cups. All three of us were quite amused about that, but I thought we have to do something about that in the future.

Mr. Herrmann showed great interest in the many features we have to offer, especially our pioneer library collection, the elegant Victorian furniture in the parlor, and our temporary exhibit in our table top display cabinet of the German *Dr. Oetker* cook books and products.

He mentioned that he'll try to get some funds from the German government so we can purchase a bigger display cabinet for our boxed up treasures.

A **Delegation from Koblenz**, Austin's German sister city, spent a few days in Austin in early March, 2010. During a reception in the Radisson Hotel on the 7th of March, some of the delegates expressed in interest in the German-Texan settlers and

Beyond the first years

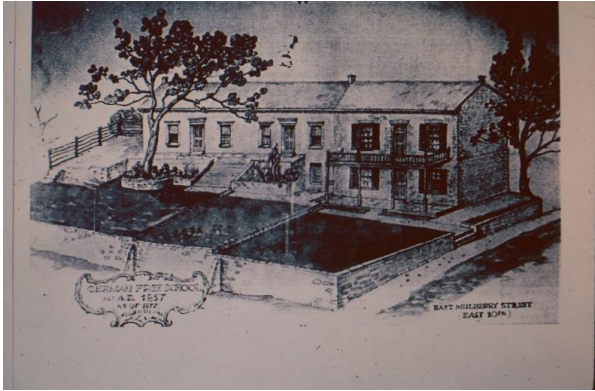
followed my invitation to spend a short hour of their busy itinerary in the German Free School.

As is usually the case, these visitors from Germany had only a faint idea of the importance of German settlers in giving Texas its identity. They were delighted to see how beautifully the German heritage is represented in our villa on Tenth Street. In the delegation were the Lord Mayor of Koblenz, city council members and professional of academia and business, so we were able to add significantly and positively to their impression of Texas.

Oberbürgermeister Schulte-Wissermann from Koblenz and Mayor Leffingwell of Austin hosted a reception for dignitaries from both cities in the Radisson Hotel on March 7, 2010. Lord Mayor Schulte-Wissermann recognized me (Helga von Schweinitz) there as the person from the German-Texan Heritage Society who had arranged a reception for his entire delegation years ago in "that beautiful old school house" during his first visit to Austin. Due to the intense itinerary of the delegation, he could not repeat his visit this time.

Free School walk through outside photos

Free School walk through outside photos



Rendering of FreeSchool



Steps up to Gate Entrance on East 10th
Street



Free School 507 E 10th Street Aug 1991



Free School number plate on gate, later
moved to front door.



Free School 507 E 10th Street Aug 1991



Gate at 10th Street entrance 2017

Free School walk through outside photos



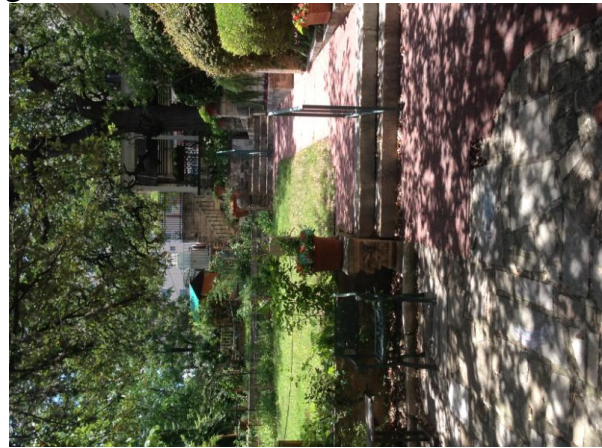
"Good Star" of Texas on Gate 2017



GTHS sign on 10th street outside of gate, 2016



Gate Entrance from East 10th Street 2008



"Italian Style" garden Terraces and brick walkways 2017



Free School plaque 1994



East side of Free School with apartment on bottom floor and balcony above.

Free School walk through outside photos



East side of Free School with apartment on bottom floor and balcony above.



Historical marker and Historical medallions from State of Texas and City of Austin



Flag of USA, Germany, and Texas flying from sleeping balcony 2017



Medallions and German Free School Association



sleeping balcony Aug 1991



Free School patio on North side

Free School walk through outside photos



View over wall on North Side Patio



Ornamental pedestal in North Patio area



Metal box in wall on North Side Patio



Marker 1857 when building was built on North side of building.



Metal box in wall on North Side Patio



Basement door with wooden beam 2009

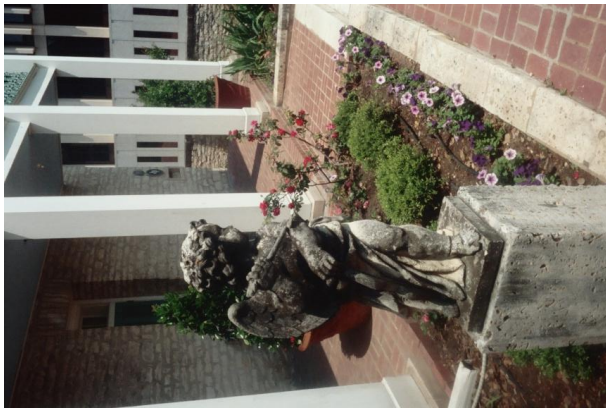
Free School walk through outside photos



Basement door with Cherub guarding and "Virgin" wall insert



Tile in outer wall "Virgin" 2017



Cherub guarding the basement door



"Italian Style" terraced gardens 2017



Cherub guarding the basement door



Empty Pedestal in Garden

Free School walk through outside photos



Horse head statue in Garden



Cherub in garden



Cherub hiding in the Garden



Mighty Oak Tree

Free School walk through outside photos



Mighty Oak Tree 2017



Silhouette of Man in Car Port wall 2017



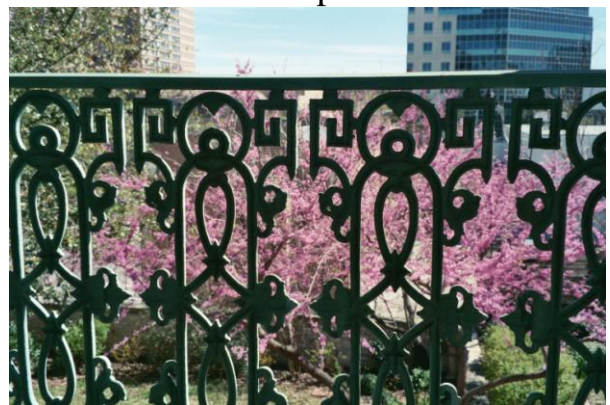
Fairy Houses added to the Mighty Oak in 2017 in memory of Melanie Schmidt Dumont



Free School front steps 2017



Fairy House in Might Oak 2017



Iron works on upper porch walkway

Free School walk through outside photos



"507" in iron works



West side wall with difference in bricks from original structure to addition



South Side steep driveway 1994



Driveway access from Neches Street
2009

Free School walk through inside photos

Free School walk through inside photos



GTHS office



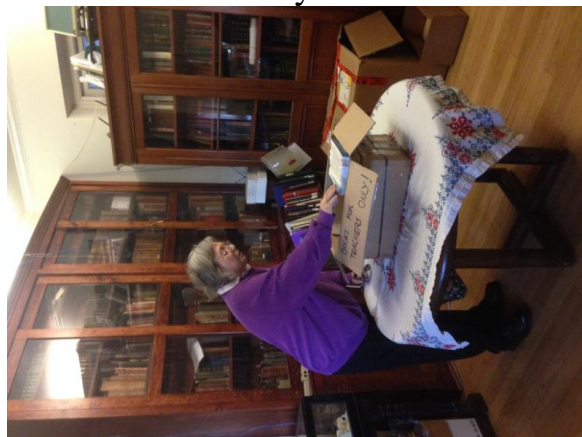
GTHS office 2018



Main Bathroom Aug 1994 before
American Disability Act renovation
which was done in 2000.



Trenckmann Library 2017



Trenckmann Library 2017 Researcher is
Helga von Schweinitz



Trenckmann Library 2017.
Researcher is Helga von Schweinitz

Free School walk through inside photos



Trenckmann Library 2017 Robert E Lee Doors



Victorian Parlor meeting room 2017



Kitchen 2009



Victorian Parlor fireplace (2018) with mantle from a house that Andrew Jackson built in Tennessee in 1790



Victoria Parlor 2017 rearranged for German Language classes.



Wooden "Shrank" donated to GTHS

Free School walk through inside photos



Victorian Parlor corner shelves with Meissen Porcelain about 1994-1999



Studio in 2018 as meeting room



Small end table in Victorian Parlor 2017



Studio room 2018 with door to outside Sleeping Balcony. Door is survivor of 1920 fire.



Clock in Victorian Parlor 2017



Fireplace from Studio side 2017.

Free School walk through inside photos



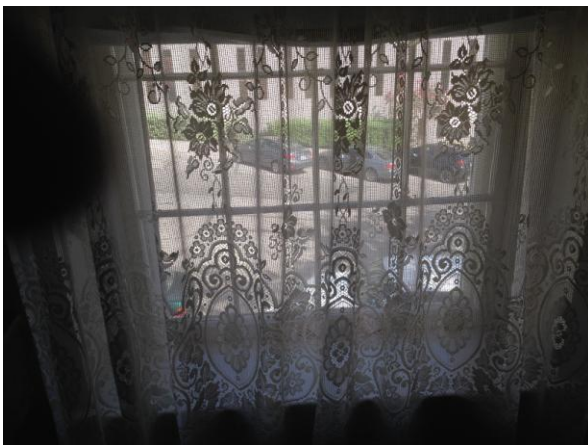
Thonet Chair No 14 and old school desk 2017



Kelly Stevens glazed ceramic tiles located in store room off of the office 2017



Photo of Kelly Stevens and his Dachshunds



Lace curtains donated pre 1995

GTHS gets Free School photos



GTHS



Last remaining 5 Dachshunds from Kelly Stevens 1991



View of Free School from across the street while up on top of building 1991 by Hans von Schweinitz



View of Free School from across the street while on a ledge 1991 by Hans von Schweinitz



View from Marriott Hotel 11th floor 1991 by Hans von Schweinitz



View of Free School from Red River and East 10th Street intersection 1991

GTHS gets Free School photos



Closer view of Free School from Red River and East 10th Street intersection 1991



Last remaining five Dachshunds of Kelly Stevens 1991



View of Free School from across 10th Street 1994



Three of the five remaining Dachshunds of Kelly Stevens 1991



Kelly Stevens with Brett 1991

GTHS gets Free School photos



Kelly Steven in 1991 with favorite
Dachshund Brett



Kelly Stevens with Brett 1991



Kelly Stevens 1991



Kelly Stevens with Brett 1991

GERMAN-TEXAN HERITAGE SOCIETY

1011 Meredith Drive, Suite C
Post Office Box 262
Manchaca, Texas 78652
January 23, 1991

Dear Ann Lindemann, Anna Thompson, Helga von Schweinitz,

A telephone call from Patti Stoetznier (115 Longwood Avenue, Austin, TX 78734 Ph:261-3893) was received this morning regarding a building in Austin, the old German Free School.

As I understand, Patti is assisting an elderly gentleman who presently owns the home in preparing for a solution to keep the home active after the demise of the gentleman. She is seeking ways of either incorporating the home itself, or having an organization take charge, or ??? I spoke of our interests and consequently gave her the names and telephone numbers of Anna and Helga to chat with. I told her that I would also alert our GTHS President.

The gentleman is 96 years of age and is associated with UT; in fact he seems to have some sort of art exhibit going on now at the Ransom Center. He seems to desire no personal gain at all but Patti hopes that his house will not be given to UT and be lost in the large size of the University. There is the possibility that all his furniture and some support could be given to the "house project." I responded by agreeing with Patti on her goals, but that we could not promise anything other than communication and discussion at this time, and that we would like to remain in touch.

This letter shall serve as a means to alert you to the possibilities before us. I suspect Patti will call one of you before this letter reaches you.

Best regards,

Lew
Lew

P. O. Box 262 • Manchaca, Texas 78652 • (512) 282-1933 or (512) 280-3351

First Contact letter January 1991

ENTER OWNER'S NAME, PARCEL #, ADDRESS, (LEGAL, OR EXIT (T)RAVIS) : \\\507 EAST 1
SEARCHING FOR 507 EAST 10TH STREET

1) Parcel # : 4004
2) Owner of Record : STEVENS KELLY H LIFE ESTATE
3) Legal Description : 507 10 STREET EAST
4) Total Value : \$210,780.01
5) Legal Address : 507 10 STREET EAST
6) Parcel Value : \$210,780.01
7) Legal Description : BLDG 114 ORIGINAL CITY

8) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
9) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
10) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
11) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
12) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
13) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
14) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
15) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
16) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
17) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
18) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
19) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
20) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
21) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
22) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
23) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
24) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
25) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
26) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
27) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
28) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
29) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
30) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
31) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
32) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
33) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
34) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
35) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
36) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
37) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
38) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
39) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
40) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
41) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
42) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
43) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
44) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
45) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
46) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
47) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
48) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
49) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
50) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
51) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
52) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
53) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
54) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
55) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
56) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
57) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
58) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
59) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
60) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
61) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
62) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
63) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
64) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
65) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
66) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
67) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
68) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
69) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
70) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
71) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
72) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
73) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
74) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
75) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
76) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
77) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
78) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
79) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
80) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
81) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
82) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
83) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
84) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
85) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
86) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
87) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
88) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
89) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
90) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
91) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
92) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
93) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
94) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
95) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
96) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
97) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
98) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
99) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00
100) AIDN : FROZEN : 0.00

[illegible]

51

GTHS Free School first years photos

GTHS Free School first years photos



Free School 1991



Free School Garden about 1992



Studio as left by Kelly Stevens



Police approaching "home" of vagrant living in lot behind Free School 1992



West Side of Free School with neighbors lot in front 1991



Trenckmann Library one set of shelves. 2008

GTHS Free School first years photos



Painting by Kelly Stevens



Garage from alley way



Patio on east side of car port with doggy house.



Garage - big enough for two?



Steps leading from Patio level up to garage



Interior of garage

GTHS Free School first years photos



Alley Way down to garage



West side of Free School with empty lot



Alley Way down to garage with view of empty lot on west side of Free School



West side of Free School with empty lot



West side of Free School with empty lot



Empty lot on West side of Free School.

GTHS Free School first years photos



Empty lot on West side of Free School.



Original placement of Texas Historical Medallion 1992



New parking lot on empty lot on west side of Free School



new location of Texas Historical and Austin Landmark Medallions



Wall that levels parking lot on West side of Free School



Stone under medallions "German Free School Association" corner stone

GTHS Free School first years photos



Corner stone 1857 year Free School was built.



Steps and garden with Dachshunds 1992



View from across East 10th street



Steps with Dachshunds 1992



View from across East 10th Street



Window and Window sill with damage 1992

GTHS Free School first years photos



Difference in bricks and stones at junction of different sections of building



Original stone and wood work on wall along north side patio



Damage to Gas lines under the building



Wooden cross beam above basement door



Damage to Gas lines under the building



Stairway entrance from East 10th Street

GTHS Free School first years photos



Trash left by homeless and vagrants



Garden 1992 with swing and Dachshund



more trash



Garden 1992 from near gate entrance



Iron works along stone walkway



Lower Apartment under balcony

GTHS Free School first years photos



Balcony as seen from stone walk way



View from Balcony 2009



Balcony



Main Bathroom Aug 1994 before American Disability Act renovation which was done in 2000.



GTHS Office at the Free School



Free School Parlor before 2017

GTHS Free School first years photos



Trenckmann library bookshelf
Memorial Library with R.E. Lee double
doors (on left) of SW Palm house. 2008



Parlor circa 1994



Free School Parlor circa 1994-99



Hans von Schweinitz enjoying a nap in
the Parlor on the Victorian Divan 2010



Free School Meissen Porcelain circa
1994-99



Tea time table in Parlor

GTHS Free School first years photos



Studio in 1994



Termite damage to door jam



Studio with half bath



Cake from Schütze family reunion June 1994



Free School in Studio door to porch.
Only original door after 1920 fire,
picture Aug 1994



Main Bathroom renovation completed
by 1994

GTHS Free School first years photos



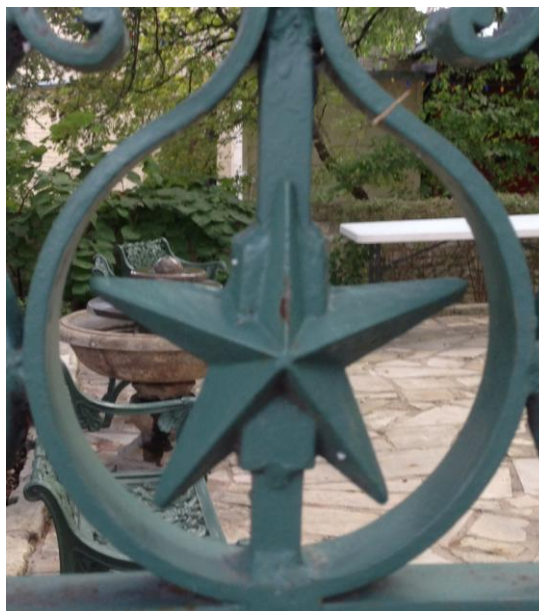
Exhibit April 1993 by Texas Music Museum "German Music in Texas"

Beyond first years photos

Beyond first years photos



Chair Thonet Chair No 14 2010



Iron "Good Star" in gate 2016



Flags flying from balcony 2017



Iron Railing on Stone Walkway and Stairs 2016



Flags flying from balcony 2017



Iron "507" on railing on stone walkway 2016

Beyond first years photos



Iron gate at entrance on 10th Street



West side of house stone mason work
2016



Lace curtains in Studio



Iron railing on Sleeping Balcony 2017



PORCELAIN Dinner service donated
by Wurpes

Beyond first years photos



Silver set donated by Kalteyer. 2016



Hans von Schweinitz taking a nap on Victorian Divan in Parlor. 2014



Victorian Divan in Parlor 2010