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# German-Canadian Studies Newsletter

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Volume 2, Issues 1 & 2 • Fall 1997

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## Editorial

### New Beginnings . . .

There was excitement in the air. The thirteen scholars - five graduate students and eight junior and senior academics - who had travelled to Edmonton in early October 1996, had not expected the conference on "German-Canadian Identity" to be any different from other academic meetings. In fact, some of them probably felt a bit leery: would the workshop be a comparison of numbers and ethnic achievements? Would they be expected to sing the praises of the subjects of their research, the "German Canadians"?

What happened instead was what one participant enthusiastically described as the "Urknall" of German-Canadian Studies: a big bang from which a new universe started to unfold. Over the course of two days in an intense yet intimate working atmosphere and observed by a small audience from Edmonton's German-Canadian business and media community, the scholars opened up the field of German-Canadian Studies. They deconstructed it, filled it with new meaning and challenged each other to reconsider their preconceived ideas about "German Canadians".

Some presented detailed and ground-breaking empirical research. In this respect it was especially the graduate students who demonstrated how case studies, instilled by new ideas and concepts, can lead to a fresh understanding of an old subject. Others examined the methods and philosophies underlying ethnic studies. Ideas clashed; heated discussions continued over a glass of wine and dinner. Does a German-Canadian identity exist? Is there such a thing as a German Canadian? Is the German-Canadian community a historical reality or an artificial construct hatched by multiculturalism and ethnic politics?

In the end, everybody agreed that there was a need for solid academic research and continuing discourse. The Chair in German-Canadian Studies was encouraged to continue in its role as initiator and facilitator of academic discussions. The value of several disciplines in shedding light on the German-Canadian experiences was highlighted. Most of all, the stigma that insidiously attaches itself to ethnic studies, making young academics reluctant to embark on a career in the area, seemed to dissipate in the cold Edmonton air. The participants left



convinced that they were doing something worthwhile. They went home to revise their papers and rethink their positions. The result will soon be available as a book: In 1998 Peter Lang Publishers in New York will publish *A Chorus of Different Voices: German-Canadian Identities*, edited by Matthias Zimmer and Angelika Sauer.

As Chair in German-Canadian Studies I feel encouraged by the experience. Despite its obvious and important community connections, the Chair must primarily continue to develop as a synergistic academic institution at the heart of a network of academic researchers. It is important to teach our students about German-Canadian experiences in a meaningful context,

but good teaching has to be based on high-quality and up-to-date research. The network requires a wide range of sources, known and available to the researcher. It requires financial support and opportunities to present and share results. It requires the cultivation of contacts with colleagues in related areas, be it the new Canadian Centre for German Studies; other ethnic chairs and the Canadian Ethnic Studies Association; the Metropolis project; the Max-Kade Institute for German-American Studies; or international centres for migration studies.

As I am heading into the final eighteen months of my five-year contract, the Chair will continue to improve communication between various interested parties through the newsletter, conferences and an electronic discussion group, to be started in 1998. But I am counting on you to make it work. This will be exciting!

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## Resources in German-Albertan History

By Manfred Prokop

In 1990, the German-Canadian Association of Alberta, in collaboration with an advisory committee consisting of representatives from Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism and the University of Alberta, launched an ambitious project which was intended to locate, identify and document the existence of items from the history of the "Germans" in Alberta. The project was funded with the generous support of Canadian Heritage and the Alberta Multiculturalism Commission.

A researcher, Mr. Kevin Brown, spent almost six months sifting through catalogues in libraries, public archives and private collections Edmonton, Calgary and Medicine Hat, conducted interviews in some of the rural areas, and gathered altogether more than 1,700 references. They were grouped by major categories, such as Businesses, Churches and Organizations, Culture and Celebrations, Settlements, Customs, History, Newspapers, and were then broken down further and cross-indexed in categories like recipes, songs, letters, literature, etc. With permission from the owners, photocopies were also made of significant documents not available in public archives. Subsequently, the data were entered in a professional-quality data base so that the information could be readily retrieved by keywords.

At that time, the intention was to put the database on computer disks and to provide all libraries in the Province with a gratis copy of the data; individuals would be able to purchase the disks at a nominal price.

Because of budgetary constraints, the project remains incomplete at this time. About one third of the items have been entered in the database, but more are being added slowly by volunteers. Mr. Brown estimates that only about half of the available material on Albertan-German history has been documented; it is hoped that funds from public or private sources will become available to complete the research, data classification and entry in the near to medium-term. Because of advances in technology, a great deal more information can now be stored on CD-ROMs than would have been possible six years ago, and the plan therefore is to issue the database and materials in this format when the collection may be considered reasonably complete.

This collection of reference to German-Albertana will be of interest not only to individuals and scholarly researchers, but to teachers in public and heritage language schools as well who would like to demonstrate the rich historical heritage of German-Albertans.

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## Research Funding Sources

### I.) ICCS Program for International Research Linkages (PIRL)

The International Council for Canadian Studies, with the financial assistance of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade is offering grants of between \$5,000 and \$10,000 to assist in the establishment of international research networks in the area of Canadian Studies between Canada and other countries.

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To be eligible, a proposal must be submitted by at least two research teams, one of which based at a Canadian university. Each research team must be a group of at least two researchers having completed their graduate studies. The proposal must be submitted either by conventional mail or by e-mail, before January 15, 1999, in one of Canada's official languages. Additionally, the applicants must show how they intend to pursue research linkages after the initial activity.

Applications can be sent directly to the ICCS or through a Canadian Studies association. All things being equal, priority will be given to applications endorsed by an association.

For more information contact:  
Executive Director  
Program for International Research Linkages  
International Council for Canadian Studies  
325 Dalhousie St., Suite 800  
Ottawa, ON, K1N 7G2  
Phone: (613) 789-7834  
Fax: (613) 789-7830  
E-mail: [aguimont@iccs-ciec.ca](mailto:aguimont@iccs-ciec.ca)

Internet: <http://www.iccs-ciec.ca/info/awards/e-pirl.html>

## II.) TransCoop Program (GAAC)

The German-American Academic Council Foundation (GAAC) in cooperation with the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation is awarding TransCoop Program grants for transatlantic research cooperation among and between German, American and/or Canadian scholars in the humanities, social sciences, economics and law. Funds are available to support cooperative projects among and between German, American and/or Canadian scholars (Ph.D. required). Projects can receive up to \$60,000 U.S. (DM 90,000) each over a three-year period, provided that the amount granted by TransCoop is matched by funds from U.S. or Canadian sources. The funds can be applied to a variety of projects.

The application deadline for TransCoop projects that can begin no earlier than November 1998 is June 30, 1998.

For more information contact:  
German-American Academic Council Foundation  
1055 Thomas Jefferson St., N.W. Suite 2020  
Washington, D.C. 20007, U.S.A.  
Phone: (202) 296-2991  
Fax: (202) 833-8514  
E-mail: [gaac@nas.edu](mailto:gaac@nas.edu)

Internet: <http://www.gaac.org/transco.html>



## Books of Interest

Could the new, united Germany be in trouble? Could it be trouble for its European neighbours? Those in Canada who are interested in the history of Germany as it unfolds at the end of the millennium should not miss *Germany: Phoenix in Trouble?* ed. by Matthias Zimmer (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1997). Scholars from Germany, Great Britain, the United States and Canada have contributed to this collection of essays, examining a broad range of issues from German foreign policy and its role in Europe to the place of women and youth in social and educational policies. Absent, unfortunately, is a chapter on the impact of immigration (in its various guises) on an increasingly multicultural country. Still, a most welcome addition to the growing English-language literature on Germany.

Those who feel that North American reactions to any thing (and anybody) German have been inexorably changed by Germany's Nazi past will find the most recent book by American writer Ursula Hegi (best known perhaps for her novel *Stones from the River*) revealing. In *Tearing the Silence: On Being German in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997) Hegi reveals the other side of the coin: how German-born immigrants in the United States deal (or don't deal) with questions of Germany's Nazi past and its impact on German identity.

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### A Note for Genealogists

If you are interested in tracing your German ancestors, the following information might be helpful:

**The German Genealogical Society** offers general information and assistance. Please write to:

DAGV, Schloßstr. 12, D-50321 Brühl  
Different federal states, such as Baden-Württemberg, Bayern, Hessen etc. also feature their own genealogical societies. For their addresses visit the website of the German Embassy in Ottawa:

<http://www.docuweb.ca/Germany/>

## Graduate Scholarships and Research Grants in German-Canadian Studies

*Watch for details on  
next year's competition!*

The Chair in German-Canadian Studies at the University of Winnipeg is devoted to the study of the history and culture of German-speaking immigrants and their descendants in Canada. The government's ethnic studies program, under which the Chair was established, attempts to create a community of scholars interested in ethnic and immigration studies, especially by encouraging younger scholars to concern themselves with ethno-cultural communities. Following this goal, the Chair has initiated a program to fund graduate (master's and Ph.D.) Research in the area of German-Canadian Studies. It is hoped that through this program graduate students will be encouraged to study all aspects of the German-Canadian experience, - past and present.

Eligible applicants are:

1. Students who are enrolled in a program of graduate studies at a Canadian university in such disciplines as history, linguistics, literature, sociology, geography, political science, economics, or cultural anthropology, and who are writing a thesis on a topic related to the mandate of the Chair.
2. Students enrolled at a university outside Canada who have completed their first degree and are working towards a higher degree, preparing a thesis or equivalent on a topic related to the mandate of the Chair and planning to carry out substantial parts of their research in Canada.

Students should apply only after being accepted into a graduate program with an approved research proposal pertaining to German-Canadian Studies. Applications must be received **on or before January 30, 1998**. Successful candidates will have completed most of their course work before taking up the award. Each scholarship will be awarded on a competitive basis, and the candidates will be evaluated by an interdisciplinary panel of five Canadian scholars.

Two new scholarships will be given per year. The amount of the award is \$6,000 per annum for a master's student and \$8,000 per annum for a Ph.D. student. The master's scholarship is not renewable. A recipient of a Ph.D. scholarship may apply for renewal once. The awards will be announced no later than March 31, 1998.

In addition to promoting graduate student research, the Chair in German-Canadian Studies has a special obligation to the German-Canadian community of Manitoba, which through its financial support, has helped to establish the program. In order to stimulate and facilitate research that explores past and present experiences of German-speaking immigrants and their descendants in what is today the province of Manitoba, the Chair will award up to \$1,000 to specific research projects which are related to this topic.

The research grant is intended for both academic researchers, either at the faculty or student level, and private researchers who are not associated with a university. Two research grants will be given per year. The amount of each grant is up to \$1,000; the award is not renewable, but researchers may apply with a different project in subsequent competitions. Applicants must submit an application form and research proposal, along with a detailed budget. Applications must be received **on or before March 31, 1998** for projects carried out in the summer of 1998, and **on or before October 1, 1998** for projects carried out in the fall and winter of 1998.

Each research grant will be awarded on a competitive basis. The candidates be evaluated by a local committee including the Chair, two members of Manitoba universities and two members of the community. The committee will assess the merit of the proposal, and the candidate's willingness to share his/her findings with the community in public lectures, publications or exhibitions.

For further information and application forms for both graduate scholarships and research grants, please contact Kathy Bent, Assistant to the Chair in German-Canadian Studies:

The University of Winnipeg,  
515 Portage Ave., Winnipeg, MB  
R3B 2E9  
Phone: (204) 786-9797. Fax: (204) 783-8910.  
E-mail: kathy.bent@uwinnipeg.ca



## Hystery: A Historical Mystery

In this new series of articles, the German-Canadian Studies Newsletter will address puzzling or unsolved questions of German-Canadian history. If you have questions, or answers, please write...

**M**uch is known about the less than stellar record of the Canadian government in its treatment of ethnic minorities during the two world wars. Historians have told the story of harassment and internment, of people losing their property and their freedom. Much outrage has focused on the War Measures Act that gave the government such extraordinary powers; less has been written about the Wartime Elections Act of 1917 which stripped those born in an enemy country and naturalized after 31 March 1902 (in effect those who had immigrated after 1899) of their right to vote (the franchise was not restored until 1920).

Such a blatant gerrymander was not repeated during the Second World War. But is it necessarily true that naturalization - having been made a "British subject within Canada" (Canadian citizenship as such was not introduced until 1 January 1947) - protected German immigrants from wartime emergency measures between 1939 and 1945? Were only non-naturalized citizens of Germany subjected to special treatment?

Then what happened to Eric Mundiger, an auto mechanic from the Black Forest who had come to Canada in 1929? He played the accordion on Canadian radio and was naturalized in 1935. During the war his radio contract was terminated and his citizenship was revoked. (source: *The Literary Review of Canada* vol. 6, no.7, Oct. 1997). And how do we explain a memorandum written by a Canadian journalist in November 1942: "St. Laurent will probably put the Germans back in the Canadian citizenship column." *The Winnipeg Free Press* also reported on 29 December 1942 that citizenship was being restored to thousands of Italians and Germans whose naturalization papers had been revoked in 1940. (source: *Ottawa at War: The Grant Dexter Memoranda 1939-1945*. ed. F.W. Gibson and B. Robertson).

How many German Canadians were affected by these 1940 denaturalization measures? What criteria were applied in 1940 to justify denaturalization? What did denaturalization mean in practical terms - disfranchisement, registration, internment, deportation? The answers to these questions may lie in the files of the Justice Department, to be unlocked by a "historian-detective".

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### A Note of Apology . . .

Due to unforeseen delays in the production of this newsletter, some of the funding deadlines have already passed. However, these are ongoing competitions, and we will publish the new deadlines as they become available.

The following issue of the German-Canadian Studies Newsletter will be in your mailboxes during May 1998. Check the last page for more information about the next issue.

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Though flawed as an oral history (because of editing choices that distort the nature of the interviews and reveal nothing about the interviewees), Hegi's collection of 15 interviews and her own experiences is a fascinating exploration of the themes of guilt and denial and demonstrates how even those who were too young to be involved cannot escape a troubled heritage.

**A** very different immigrant story can be found in John Koch's *Martin Nordegg: The Uncommon Immigrant* (Edmonton: Brightest Pebble Publishing, 1997). Nordegg was born Martin Cohn in Reichenbach, Silesia in 1868. He became a mining engineer in Berlin and, in 1906, travelled to Canada to explore investment opportunities in Canadian mining for a newly formed German "Deutsches Canada Syndikat." During his extended stay he took a liking to the country, expressed over the years in assuming the last name "Nordegg" and Canadian citizenship. Nordegg suffered the discrimination of being an enemy alien during the First World War but nevertheless felt a deep affinity with Canada and Canadians that was complemented by an increasing dislike of his erstwhile German backers and other Germans he encountered in Canada. With so much ethnic research being focused on immigrants living in ethnic settlements or neighbourhoods and celebrating their heritage in clubs and ethnic institutions, it is tempting to call Nordegg an uncommon immigrant. But is he really?

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## Community News

- Set your VCR: a new series on the History Channel called *A Scattering of Seeds* airs on Wednesday evenings. It portrays the contributions of immigrants to the building of Canada in a series of portraits focusing on one ethnic group at a time. An episode on German immigrants is scheduled for 11 March 1998. Check your local listings.
- In the summer of 1997, the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) approved the Deutsche Welle TV as a foreign provider of specialty services on pay-TV. The Deutsche Welle is producing programs specifically for non-German speaking countries.
- Reflecting the latest trend in Germany's love affair with Canada, the South Shore community of Nova Scotia has a new German-language paper: *Der Leuchtturm* is published for the more than 10,000 Germans who have bought properties in the area in recent years as well as the many thousand tourists that visit every year.
- Why is Canada not more attractive to German medium-size investors? According to the German-Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Toronto, German money is scared off by the socialist tendencies of the federal and several provincial governments. Did something get lost in the translation?

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## German-Canadian Studies Web Page

The beginning of 1998 marked the launch of an updated and expanded web page providing information to the German-Canadian community. This media will allow the Chair to promote German-Canadian issues, and provide information to the public. Therefore, the Chair will ensure frequent updates, and diverse content.

Currently, the web page includes news regarding present German-Canadian research, information about past conferences, research funding sources, and a bibliography of German-Canadian books located at the University of Winnipeg. In the near future, this newsletter and its back issues will be added, as well as information about the mailing list, news bites, links to other sites and much more!

Our location is <http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/~germcan/>

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## In the Next Issue . . .

The next issue of the German-Canadian Studies newsletter will be published in the spring of 1998, introducing "The Who's Who of German-Canadian history": This new series of brief articles will feature people who have left their mark on German-Canadian history; scheduled are brief pieces on Wilhelm Hespeler, William Wagner, Sonja Roeder, Gerhard Herzfeld, and many more. The next issue also features:

- Another Hystery: How Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, became a typical British settlement
  - Our first graduate scholarship recipient and her research
  - The new Canadian Centre of German Studies
  - And much more!!! Don't miss it!
  - In your mailbox May, 1998!
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