

Newsletter # 17 TGAC

Emigrants' letters as a communication bridge – the North America Letter Collection:

In the 19th century, Germany was an emigrant country. Between 1820 and 1914, over 5 million Germans moved to America. Their letters report about their experience, fears and expectations and they also deliver elements of the new culture in America to the family left behind in Germany. By sharing their experience, these emigrants not just found a way to cope with the new situation but also contributed to an increase of knowledge and understanding of the American culture back in Germany. Throughout way into the 20th century, the science of history was almost exclusively interested in the stories of “important men” ignoring the history of the masses of the people. But recently science of history has developed an increased interest in the every day life of common people including their living strategies, world view, feelings, experience... Emigrants' letters are a classic and precious source to learn more about the individual social, emotional and economic living conditions in the 19th century. Usually farmers and craftsmen didn't write many letters but the emigrants had a special reason to do so: to communicate and share their new life experience with family back in Germany in a time without phones or the internet. Based on the awareness of the historical value of these letters, the “Bochumer Auswandererbrief-Sammlung” BABS (Bochum Emigrants' Letter Collection) was created in Germany in the 1980s. Along with a collection of more than 5,000 printed letters, it contains approx. 7,000 unpublished letters mostly from the period between 1830 and 1930. These letters have been microfilmed and are accessible at the Library of Congress in Washington D.C.. Four books have been published so far, translated into english: Kamphoefner / Helbich / Sommer “News from the land of freedom: German immigrants write home. Documents in American social history” Ithaca, 1991. This letter collection is an ongoing project meaning that the historians are looking for more material to work with and to preserve these precious cultural artifacts for future generations. Every contribution of German emigrants' letters written in the 19th and 20th century in North America is highly appreciated. Please contact us for more information:

German Ancestry Tours – TGAC – Ute Boese & Jo Ann Wolf, Email: info@tgac-us.com
http://www.thegermanamericanconnection.com/German_Ancestry_Tours.html

More information about the North America Letter Collection (in German only):
<http://www.auswandererbriefe.de>

The fine Art of German Porcelain Ppainting – Marlen Sohr’s painting school: In September 2011, a small exclusive group of American porcelain painters went on a special “Porcelain Art & Beyond” Tour to Germany, a joint travel project of culTOURinaria and Sullivan’s Custom Tours. They had the opportunity to paint with an extraordinary porcelain painting artist who runs a studio and offers classes in the small town of Lenggries in Bavaria, Germany: Marlen Sohr. Many porcelain painters in the U.S. know Jorg & Petra Kugelmeier or Andreas Knobl who are also residing in Lenggries. They all know each other from back then at the Meissen porcelain manufactory. All four of them were trained in the fine art of porcelain painting in one of the prestigious Meissen Master Classes. Although Marlen Sohr is not as well known internationally, the premium quality of her work speaks for itself and she has proved herself being a wonderful teacher to experienced and ambitious American painters at our 2011 “Porcelain Art & Beyond” Tour in Germany.

Testimonial by Kay Campbell, TX: "I really enjoyed painting with Marlen. Even though I was not acquainted with her work, I quickly saw that she is a really talented artist. She welcomed us and made us feel right at home. It was a wonderful experience painting with a Meissen trained artist and in such a beautiful setting in Bavaria."

Testimonial by Martha Van Winkle, TX: "The experience we had painting with Marlen Sohr in Lenggries in 2011 was wonderful! She was so generous in sharing her knowledge of the art and was able to give us plenty of one-on-one time in order to have a piece we were very proud of. I painted the iris and wish I could have had time to paint the scene she offered too. Her style of painting is very soft in color but very sharp and detailed. Her studio was nicely set up with all of the supplies we needed. She is one of the most talented painters I have ever painted with and I look forward to going back... She and her husband were wonderful hosts and made us feel right at home. The village of Lenggries is so quaint and picturesque – it is picture postcard perfect! I can't wait to get back there..."

Join us for one of our 2012 “Porcelain Art & Beyond” Tours to Germany and enjoy the wonderful experience of painting with Marlen Sohr at her studio. Here you can have a look at the gallery with impressive examples of Marlen Sohr’s beautiful work: <http://www.porzellanmalerschule.de/en/?Gallery>

More information about our “Porcelain Art & Beyond” Tours in Germany: http://cultourinaria.com/Porcelain_Art_Tours.html

Travel dates 2012: May 31 – June 14 / August 30 – September 13 / October 11 – 25

Tradition and Culture of German Beer Brewing – Monastery Brewery Scheyern, Bavaria:

Since 1119, the monks at the Benedictine monastery in Scheyern have brewed their own beer. These days the beer is brewed in a completely remodeled modern brewhouse but still following old traditions and recipes. Their beer is brewed mostly for local consumption in the monastery tavern or in other local pubs. The Scheyern beers are: Hell (mildly hopped, smooth, aromatic), Dunkel (100% dark roasted malt), Weissbier (naturally cloudy, unfiltered, refreshing), Hopfazupfabier (fine Maerzen beer brewed during hops harvest season), Doppelbock (malty, hoppy, aromatic, dark, riped for several month for its unique taste) and Premium Pils (fine tart hops note). Nestled in the heart of Bavaria, the Benedictine monastery Scheyern is located in the scenic hill country of “Hallertau” just south of Pfaffenhofen. In 1119, the royal Wittelsbach family relinquished their fortress to the Black Monks who right away started brewing beer along with farming and butchering. The Scheyern monastery, sanctified to the Holy Cross and Mary’s Assumption, is one of the oldest Benedictine monasteries in Bavaria with over 800 years old buildings. Visitors are free to stroll the premise and visit the cloistered courtyard, the basilica and the chapel with the tombs of the Wittelsbach family. And when you have finished your independent or guided tour through this impressive historian place, you are welcome to savor the monastery brewery’s beer right there, in the “Klosterstube” (“monastery parlor”) or in the beer garden. There the beers are being served fresh for the best original taste. The “Hallertau” area is also the world’s largest region of hops growing – one more reason to visit this special region in the “beer state” of Bavaria, Germany!

We plan, organize and escort “Cultural Beer Tours” to Germany on request for small groups and individuals. Since we are specialized in special interest custom tours, a “group” with us starts with a party or only 4 people! I am sure you know 3 (or more) people who would love to join you on a tailor-made beer tour – when and where YOU want to go! Just contact us and we plan the trip together with you – step by step.

Monstery Brewery Scheyern <http://www.klosterbrauerei-scheyern.de>

TGAC: http://www.thegermanamericanconnection.com/German_Beer_Tours.html

Reformation and Music 2012 – Bach meets Luther in Thuringia: The lives and work of both famous Germans, Martin Luther and Johann Sebastian Bach are closely linked to the beautiful State of Thuringia, the so-called “green heart” of Germany. Martin Luther attended the St. George’s School in Eisenach where he later – being forced to hide in the Wartburg Castle – translated the Bible into German. Martin Luther was a student at the University of Erfurt and in 1507 he was ordained to priesthood in the Augustinian Monastery in Erfurt where he stayed as a monk until 1511. It is said that Erfurt was the young Luther’s spiritual home. In the small town of Schmalkalden, Martin Luther presented his articles of faith which were incorporated into the Book of Concord of the Evangelical Church as the “Schmalkaldic Articles” forming the basis for the ordination of Lutheran Pastors. Johann Sebastian Bach was born in Eisenach in 1685 and he has spent his childhood and early years in Thuringia: Ohrdruf, Arnstadt, Weimar. From 1708 until 1717, J.S. Bach has worked as the court organist and concert master at the ducal court in Weimar. As an example, the largest single piece of his fugal work, the “well-tempered piano”, was composed in Weimar. Martin Luther himself was a well trained singer and lute player and he also composed in the polyphonic style of the 16th century. In his childhood, he sang in the church boys choir in Eisenach. It is known from his writings that music played an essential role for Luther. It was his opinion that music has a huge moral and spiritual influence on humans. As stated in his preamble for hymnbooks, he considered music being an effective tool against “anger, quarrel, hate, envy, greed, worry, sadness and murder”. Luther also demanded an active participation of the congregation in the musical performances at church service. Parts of the Latin mass should be replaced by songs in German also adjusting the music to the characteristics of the German language. About 40 songs prepared by Luther are delivered to posterity, for about 20 of them he also composed the melodies. Along with liturgic cantos he also used melodies of popular folk songs, Christmas carols and student chants. The so-called “Luther Chorals” were first published in 1523/24 in the eight-song-book. Cherishing this side of Luther’s work, many concerts and special events are being held in Thuringia not only this year. To highlight only two examples of special annual events: Thuringia Bach Festival in April and the Luther Festival in Eisenach in August.

The German American Connection offers a unique small group tour “The Spirit of Martin Luther” in Germany which also includes the Luther Festival in Eisenach.

Travel date: August 09 – 20, 2012

More information and contact:

http://www.thegermanamericanconnection.com/Martin_Luther_Tour.html

Dresden's Christmas Market "Striezelmarkt" – A tradition since 1434: The city of Dresden is world-renowned as the former residence of the royal family of Saxony, mostly for the famous Augustus the Strong, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, who has made Dresden a centre of the arts in Europe. Even back than in his lifetime in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, Dresden already had a Christmas Market. The "Dresden Striezelmarkt" was first mentioned in writing in 1434 and that makes it one of the oldest Christmas Markets in Germany. Inextricably linked with the Dresden Christmas Market is the "Striezel" or also called "Stollen", a traditional Christmas pastry, which was already sold at the market in the early 16th century and therefore became the name of the Dresden Christmas Market. It started with the privilege to hold a free weekly market including the day before Christmas Eve, granted by prince-electors Frederick II and his brother duke Sigismund in 1434. First it was just a meat market but it soon became a popular market place where the Dresden people bought their delicacies including the "Striezel" (Stollen) pastry. Despite the inevitable changes in modern times, the Dresden Striezelmarkt preserved its unique charm of German traditions right in the historic center of the city of Dresden at the "Altmarkt" – Old Market Square. Every year more than 250 vendors and performers come to Dresden and traditional German handcraft and arts still play a very important role here. Especially woodcraft from the Saxon Ore Mountains "Erzgebirge" is very popular and the Dresden Christmas Market is surely one of the best places to enjoy a great variety of authentic German handcraft, especially wooden angels, nutcrackers, smoking manikins, spinning Christmas pyramids, Christmas glitter balls, lace and much more... A signature of the Dresden Striezelmarkt is its huge Christmas Pyramid which was admitted to the Guinness Books of Records in 1999 as the world's biggest pyramid. Of course the Dresden Christmas Market, as well as any other Christmas Market in Germany, is a great place to taste and savor local culinary specialties. Dresden is famous for its pastries including the "Stollen". But the Saxon cuisine has many more delicious dishes on its menu such the Saxon Sauerbraten and Goulash to mention just two examples. Traditionally Saxony is also a region of great beers and fine wines from the vineyards at the banks of the Elbe river.

Join us for our exclusive small group tour to German Christmas Markets – Go East:
http://www.thegermanamericanconnection.com/Christmas_Markets.html

Travel date: December 07 – 16, 2012

More news & travel tips:

<http://www.tgac-us.com>