

April 15, 1976

BRIGHTON FIELD TRIP

Yesterday, April 14, I made a short field trip to Brighton, Colorado, a town on the South Platte River which lies some fifteen miles northeast of Denver. Brighton has a large number of Russian Germans and its GW sugar refinery has been acclaimed as the most efficient in Colorado. The community provides some excellent possibilities in regard to cross cultural research since Brighton's population is evenly split in four ways: Anglo, Chicano, Japanese., and Russian German. One can notice this diversity simply by driving down the streets of Brighton and seeing a Buddhist temple located only a few blocks from a German Congregational Church and the Catholic church in the neighboring Spanish-American barrio. Perhaps this is the model community we have been searching for.

In the afternoon, I had a long talk with a Mr. Albin Wagner, who works on both The Brighton Blade and the Fort Lupton newspaper. I had met Mr. Wagner about five years ago when I was attending CU and was pleased to discover that he is still very interested in the historical/ethnic background of his hometown of Brighton. Albin is in his early thirties, is a Russian German who married a Spanish-American, and has done graduate work at CU Harvard and Cornell. Much of his research was concentrated on the Volga Germans--especially their religious history and the Volga German Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic that was abolished in 1941. He reads German, Russian, French, Arabic, and Latin, and has studied under some prestigious scholars in central European history. He plans to return to Cornell to finish his doctoral work in the near future. There were many interesting things we discussed that I cannot go into now but I was most impressed with the depth of his knowledge and insights. He has his finger on the pulse of Brighton and promises to be an invaluable consultant.

Albin is very interested in our Germans from Russia Project at CSU and was quite receptive to the idea that perhaps Sid, Ken, and myself have lunch with him sometime soon. He is willing to come up to CSU but it might be best for us to go to Brighton so he can give us an extensive tour of the town. His office address is:

Mr. Albin Wagner
The Brighton Blade
139 North Main
Brighton, Colo. 80601
Phone: 659-1141

He spends Mondays, Tuesday mornings, Thursdays, and Fridays in Fort Lupton, where he is editor of the local newspaper there. His telephone number in Fort Lupton is 857-4440. His home address and number is:

658 South First Street
Brighton, Colo. 80601
Phone: 659-4961

Albin gave me a copy of The Brighton Blade (April 13, 1976) which contains an article on his father entitled "Jake Wagner: The Veteran Sugar Campaigner" (p. 4B). I also picked up an interesting bi-centennial booklet on the history of Brighton called "Brighton Reflections" (28 pp.) written by Albin at the Brighton Federal Savings Bank. The booklet contains some capsule histories on the Japanese, Chicanos, and Russian Germans in the Brighton area. (Both of these pieces should go into our Special Collections archive along with this report.)

While at the Brighton Federal Savings Bank, I became acquainted with another individual who has done much to preserve the historical heritage of Brighton. This person is:

Mr. Kurt Conner
Marketing Manager
1795 Bridge Street
Brighton, Colo. 80601
Office phone: 659-4724

Mr. Conner spoke to me on the telephone earlier today and indicated that he is willing to help us in any way that he can.

One last thing: I think we have finally found a Russian German who was in Colorado before 1876! Albin Wagner claims that a great uncle of his came to the Sugar City area in 1875 and settled there twenty-five years prior to the big influx of his fellow countrymen in the early 1900s. I asked Albin to find whatever material he could in order to document this ancestor's arrival in Colorado.

Timothy J. Kloberdanz