



Joseph B. Wilson

Professor Emeritus, Rice University, German Studies

Education

- PhD, Stanford University, 1960
- MA, Rice University, 1953
- BA, Rice University, 1950

Areas of Interest

- Old Germanic languages and literatures
- the archives and history of the Slavic-German Wendish colony in Texas
- Texas-German language and literature
- excavation and analysis of a paleo-Indian archeological site (Texas 41FY53)

Personal Statement

Joseph B. Wilson is Professor Emeritus of German. He joined the Rice faculty in 1954 as Instructor in German and rose through the ranks until retiring in 1998. He has continued to be active on various research projects since that time.

Born in Houston in 1928, he was a child of the Depression, and was only able to attend college because Rice did not charge tuition. Evidently as a result of the atmosphere after World War I, he acquired a life-long fascination for Germany and the German language. He married into the Wendish-Germans of the Serbin, Texas, area, when German was still very much alive there, so he naturally was drawn into that branch of his research interests. A scholarship for a year's study of Swedish language and literature at Stockholm University broadened his knowledge of Germanic languages, and he combined his knowledge of Scandinavian and German to write his PhD dissertation on *The Passive Voice in Old Icelandic*.

His teaching specialty was Old Germanic languages and literatures, i.e. Gothic, Old High German, Middle High German, Old Saxon, Old Icelandic. He also taught all levels of the German language (especially of scientific German), various courses on Goethe and other pre-modern literature, introductory Swedish, the German and Wendish languages of immigrant communities in Texas, "Viking literature" (sagas, Eddic poetry, runestones) in English translation, and extending a knowledge of German to a reading knowledge of Dutch and Scandinavian (Swedish, Norwegian, Danish).

Since his retirement, his research has been dominated by requests from other scholars and Wendish-German institutions for his expertise in the translation and editing of early German (and sometimes

Wendish) records written in the old script. However, he also is continuing to work on various unfinished projects in his different fields of interest.

Selected Publications

“A Preliminary Report on 41 FY 53, a Site with Clovis, Plainview, and Subsequent Artifacts in Fayette County, Texas,” *Bulletin [Yearbook] of the Texas Archeological Society* 50 (1980), 135-40.

“Hook-Rhymes in Runes, Notably Högby,” in Edward Haymes (ed.), *Crossings—Kreuzungen: Festschrift for Helmut Kreuzer* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1990), 164-71.

“The Kalender/Jahrbuch of the Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung,” in Henry Geitz (ed.), *The German American Press* (Madison, WI: Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies, 1992), 131-42.

“Serbske narowne napisy w Serbinje a Starej Wardze (Texas),” *Rozhlad* 43 (1993), 14-6.

“Zazne Serbinske nekrologi,” *Rozhlad* 54 (2004), 282-5.

“Lebendiges Deutsch: Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Houston—a Congregation Founded During World War II for the German Language,” *Journal of the German-Texan Heritage Society* 30 (2008), 34-8 (updated reprint of the 1980 article).

Ed. and transl., Pastor H. T. Kilian, *Baptismal Records of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Serbin, Texas, 1884-1919*, ed. and trans. Joseph B. Wilson (Serbin, TX: St. Paul Lutheran Church, 2003).

“Chronik” and “Zion’s First Fifty Years,” trans. Joseph B. Wilson, both in *Zion Lutheran 125th Anniversary, Walburg, Texas, 1882-2007* (Walburg, TX: Zion Lutheran, 2007), 19 and 20-30.