

During the summer of 2014 I worked alongside Sewanee history Professor Kelly Whitmer as a research assistant in Gotha and Halle, both towns in Germany. This opportunity to undertake hands-on research is part of a new initiative by the history department that allows undergraduate students to experience archival research first hand, just as a professional historian does. Presently Professor Whitmer's work deals with the history of education in early modern Germany, and Gotha and Halle were both centers of progressive educational thinking in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The archives of the University of Erfurt's Gotha branch contain a wealth of knowledge dealing with the educational reforms that occurred there and were our starting point. After spending roughly a week and a half there, we proceeded to Halle. Here the Franckesche Stiftungen (Francke Institute) maintains a separate archive preserving their history. This organization had been involved in not only education but also religious and missionary work around the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The research assistantship was divided into two phases, each one separated by our locations. For the first part, while in the Gotha sub branch of the University of Erfurt's library, I would act as an assistant to Professor Whitmer. I helped completed various tasks she needed done and would use this time to become familiar with the archival setting and learn how to approach primary sources before faced with that task myself in the second phase. The second half began once we arrived at the Franckesche Stiftungen in Halle. Here I began my own research under Professor Whitmer's guidance, using the lessons learned from assisting her previously in Gotha. The research conducted here will serve as the basis of my senior thesis for the completion of my degree.

One of my roles while in Gotha included sorting through microfilm copies of letters for Professor Whitmer. This job helped familiarize me with the traditional Sütterlin style of German handwriting which was used until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It also helped Professor Whitmer by freeing her to examine other materials and then know where in the next document to look for relevant information. Additionally I assisted by making and arranging copies of source materials so that more detailed analysis could be done after leaving the library. These roles allowed Professor Whitmer to use our time in the library on what could not be duplicated or removed. Most importantly however, was learning how to work in an archive. While it is much like a normal library, with many of the same rules and procedures, much was foreign. The vast majority of materials must be requested, and often can only be viewed one or two at a time. However the biggest challenge of this work setting is simply the quantity of material available. Such large volumes are helpful as a project develops and new questions begin arising, but can also be overwhelming, especially with the limited time one has in the archive. This challenge became apparent not only while I sifted through microfilm, but really set in once in Halle and working on my own materials. Even though I reviewed 37 letters in addition to secondary sources, there are still hundreds of other relevant letters I was unable to review in Halle simply because of time constraints.

After moving on to Halle from Gotha, I began my own research in the Franckesche Stiftungen. Due to Professor Whitmer's familiarity with this archive, she was able to recommend several topics to explore beforehand and helped set the foundation for my project by provide secondary reading recommendations. Here I began working with letters from Heinrich Wilhelm Ludolf, a man who used diplomatic networks to spread the Pietist message from Halle

across Europe in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. His letters and actions have not been studied to the same degree as many of the other figures involved in the Pietist circles in Halle. The lessons learned from assisting and watching Professor Whitmer earlier in Gotha allowed me to work fairly independently during this stage of the apprenticeship. Professor Whitmer and I would meet to discuss our work, swapping ideas about what materials to explore next and to get a second opinion on our work. To a degree the work process is much like that of a research paper for a normal course, the chief difference being the lack of pressure for an immediate product. This phase of a research project was focused just on the research, another impact of the time constraints. In Halle, I also moved from assistant to more of a colleague as we worked and collaborated in this way. Even as a student, who still needed guidance, I was able to begin working more as a professional historian. Listening to the other researchers I also developed a much greater appreciation for the effort researchers and authors must undertake in order to complete large scale projects such as theses and books.

Overall, this research period in Germany had a significant impact on my career goals. Before completing this apprenticeship, I already enjoyed research based papers for history classes. To me they were always an opportunity to explore more specific topics that interested me, and often were not as well covered in textbooks. I had already begun considering pursuing a career in history, either as a professor or in museum/ conservation work. Having completed a period of research as a professional historian would I feel these previous ideas were correct. Despite having more work ahead to complete this summer's project, I feel that having completed this initial research period and experiencing how professional historical work functions has helped confirm my earlier inclinations about a future career in a history field.