

RAPID CITY SISTER CITY PARTNERSHIP

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Rapid City version

When Dale Clement moved to Rapid City in 1989, Keith Carlyle, Mayor of Rapid City contacted him knowing that he had participated in the sister city arrangement between the city of Vermillion, South Dakota and the city of Ratingen, Germany. With the encouragement of the Rushmore German Club, Mayor Carlyle had been trying to get a movement going to obtain a sister city for Rapid City. Dale Clement then contacted people in the community who would be willing to work on this endeavor. This committee consisted of: Dale Clement, Jody Ketel, Vivian Jorgenson, Mayor Ed McLaughlin, Paul Reinke, Heide Schroeder, Harold Shunk, George Locke, Joe Wallace, Sid Goss, Judy Olson, Rev. Dalstrom, Larry Owen, Helga Roerick, Hedy & Tony Kuegel, Mary Jenner, Seth Thomas and Dick Oakland.

The late Helga Roerick of Rapid City, formally of Germany, recommended 6 cities in Germany, 3 in general area around her home town which was near the Baltic Sea. She was going home and was to contact these cities. She did visit the three cities but they expressed little interest in being a sister city. The other 3 cities she suggested were Brandenburg, Meissen and Weimar.

On a visit to Germany in September 1990, the Clements and Lockes were to visit these 3 cities. They passed on Brandenburg after viewing it from the train. The people of Meissen were very friendly but stated they were not in a position at that time to form a partnership. Their visit to Weimar was well received and they stated they would explore the idea. Dale Clement had a friend, Reiner Wudel, who lived in Germany and he put Dale in touch with Juergen Adams at the Commerzbank in Weimar. Jody Ketel visited Herr Adams in Weimar in July 1991 and was well received. The sister city committee, through Senator Tom Daschle, arranged for tickets for the Weimar delegation to visit Rapid City in 1992. At the last minute Weimar canceled. The Ketels and the Jorgensons purposely went to visit Weimar when they were in Germany in September of 1992. They tried to contact the city officials to discuss the partnership and were rebuffed. They came home knowing that Weimar was trying to tell Rapid City they were not interested.

Meanwhile Herr Adams transferred to a bank in Apolda, Germany. He visited with officials of the city and in January of 1993, Jody Ketel received a letter from Juergen Adams regarding his talks with Apolda officials. Shortly thereafter the committee received a packet from Mayor Mueller with information about the city of Apolda. The committee appointed Jody Ketel and Vivian Jorgenson to travel to Apolda to see if Apolda was the city wanted for a sister city. They went in September of 1993. The delegation was well received and extended every courtesy during their visit. They came home and gave a favorable report to the committee. They were especially impressed with the friendliness of the people. As a result, Mayor Mueller, Dr. Ulrich Burghoff and Juergen Adams visited Rapid City in October of 1993. They also were treated with every courtesy and went home very impressed with Rapid City and the Black Hills.

An agreement was reached between the two cities and the Rapid City Sister City Partnership Association, Inc. was incorporated on the 23rd of March 1994 in the State of South Dakota.

The Association, on the 5th of April 1994 designated Mayor Ed McLaughlin and his wife, Doris Marie Strom, the Clements, The Ketels, the Jorgensons, and the Lockes as the official representatives on behalf of the City of Rapid City and the Sister City Association. The delegation visited Apolda in April of 1994 and executed the formal agreement between the two cities. Apolda Mayor Michael Mueller and Rapid City Mayor Ed McLaughlin signed the partnership agreement in Apolda's historic hall on April 25, 1994. The reception the delegated were given was outstanding.

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Apolda version

“THEY WERE TOTALLY AMAZED”

Meanwhile hundreds of people know their sister city Rapid City in South Dakota. However almost nobody can remember the roots of this partnership. They go back to the cold war. By Klaus Jager

Apolda

The City is with its 63,000 inhabitants a small one for American circumstances and it is situated half the way between Chicago and Seattle – so to speak in the middle of nowhere. But most people in our town know about the living partnership with Rapid City. Not many people know where its origin was. Therefore you have to look back into the times of the cold war: near Rapid City. There was not only the Ellsworth Air Force Base, where strategic B-1-B rockets are still stationed today. Around the city there were ground-launched cruise missiles. Of course the citizens knew what kind of a volcano they were sitting on, and that's why they were relieved when the cold war was over. They decided to build up partnerships with cities of the former enemies of World War II. They found them in Imachi (Japan) and also in Apolda – but this on a detour.

Jody Ketel and Vivian Johnson, two ladies of the still young Rapid City Sister City Association, first visited Weimar that's why in the summer 1993. In the town hall – at that time with Mayor Klaus Büttner on top of the administration – nobody was interested in a partnership with Rapid City. Cowboys and Goethe, so Jorgenson and Ketel got to know, do not fit together. And then something happened what usually only happens in films.

When the two ladies were desperately sitting in a Weimar restaurant in the evening, they got into contact with Jürgen Adams. The designated chairman of the Apolda Volksbank asked them out of hand if they could imagine a partnership with Apolda. They could.

Former Mayor Michael Mueller can exactly remember the letter he wrote in a jerky English. Of course we are not so known like Weimar, but we also have something to offer. In September 1993 Jody Ketel and Vivian Jorgenson came again across the big ocean and they were decisively heading to Apolda. They were really amazed personally to be welcomed by the head of the town. In Rapid City the interest of politics and administration in sister cities is modest. But Müller showed them every corner of the city and also the county. “They were really amazed”, Müller can remember very well. Four weeks later an invitation came from America. Mueller, Adams and the former finance head of the department were the first Apolda ambassadors in Rapid City. Also here a tough programme was waiting for them: Mount Rushmore. With the heads of the presidents, the Badlands, the old gold-digger town Deadwood.....

The ice was broken. At the end of 1993 the sister city association of Rapid City said yes. At the beginning of 1994 the Apolda council decided on a partnership with the American city. What was following is well known.

A partnership which grew piece by piece and which has gathered a momentum in a way nobody had believed in before. Especially in the high school Bergschule, the Apolda fire fighters and Apolda police foster their relationship with Rapid City. They visit each other, experiences and student exchanges, folk festivals...Rapid City Fire Chief Gary Shepherd was enthusiastic after his visit of the bock beer fest as the Apolda police officer Frank Schmidt when he was allowed to help with road checking during the world famous Harley meeting in Sturgis. What do 8,000 kilometers mean among friends?.. Presumably, the friendship between the cities and among their peoples so strong because nobody demanded it from them.

Submitted by former Bürgermeister Michael Müller

Translated by Renate Rechenbach

The original letter sent to Jody Ketel from Mayor Michael Müller on January 28, 1993

Most honored Frau Ketel,

In my close acquaintance with Herr Adams, we spoke and had a conversation about your desire to find a city in Germany to become a partner city with Rapid City. Herr Adams was also so nice, to make available to me the video cassette about the Mount Rushmore anniversary. The city and the surrounding area around Rapid City are very interesting. Allow me to give you a short introduction to the City of Apolda.

Apolda lies only 15 Km (9 miles) east of Weimar, and has presently 26,000 residents. The total population will increase the city territory in the next months to 30,000. For the last hundred years, Apolda has been in the textile industry and has manufactured engraved bells. We are trying to solve present day problems in the economy through new population by industry and business (or trade). I am taking the liberty to enclose a little informational material. If you are interested in Apolda, it would make is very happy. I heartily welcome you to Apolda, and you will find the door to city hall is never locked.

With friendly greetings

Michael Mueller
Bürgermeister Der
Stadt Apolda

From Vivian Jorgenson
Exchanges 1994 – 2003

1994 – 2003 Student exchange, short term – 100 high school students from Apolda to Rapid City accompanied by 18 Apolda teachers

1994 – 2003 Student exchange, short term – 40 high school students from Rapid City to Apolda accompanied by 5 Rapid City teachers

1994 – 2003 Student exchange, long term – 20 high school students from Apolda to Rapid City & 5 students from Rapid City to Apolda. Christian Rechenbach spent 5 months as a student at Western Technical Institute.

1996 – Steven's High School Band (150 members) to Apolda

1996 – Cosmetologist, Cornelia Wechesser, internship with Rapid City hair salon

1996 – Apolda Men’s Choir (40 members) and Mayor Müller to Rapid City, performed at dedication of Berlin Wall

1998 – Sister City International Art Contest – Michaela Bergmann from Apolda won 1st prize

1998 – Sweet Adelines Chorus from Rapid City to Apolda, performed in Apolda City hall

1999 – Weimar, Germany, celebrated as cultural center of Europe in 1999. Apolda held special Lyonal Feininger Art Exhibition, invited 4 students and 1 chaperone, Jeanette Duerloo, to Apolda

1999 – German Ambassador to the United States, Juergen Chrobog, makes special visit to Rapid City

1999 – Delegation of 9 Apolda Sister City members, including Mayor Müller, to celebrate 5 years of the partnership between the two cities. Dr. Hans Ulrich Seidt, Cultural Affairs Counselor at the German Embassy in Washington, DC attended and spoke at this event.

2000 – Constanze Pechman did internship with television, radio and advertising agency in Rapid City.

2000 – Apolda Firefighters (6) to Rapid City for 1st firefighter exchange between the two cities.

2000 – Delegates of 10 Rapid City Sister City members, including Mayor Jim Shaw, to Apolda to celebrate the 10 year Anniversary of the Reunification of Germany. Timothy Savage, Consulate General from Leipzig, Germany attended special event.

2001 – Father Adolph Rudolf, priest of St. Bonifatius Catholic Church in Apolda, and interpreter to Rapid City in 1st exchange between sister city churches.

2001 – Rapid City Firemen (6) to Apolda.

2001 – Dare Band invited to Apolda for special performance in the Apolda Brewery Festival Hall.

2002 – Christian Rechenbach of Apolda did internship at KOTA Television Station in Rapid City.

2002 – Father Michael Malloy, priest at Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church in Rapid City, to Apolda.

2002 – Apolda Mens Fanfare Orchestra (20) to Rapid City.

2002 – Apolda Firefighters (7) to Rapid City.

2002 – Dare Band invited back to Apolda for 2nd special performance in Apolda Brewery Festival Hall.

There were numerous private visits between residents of Apolda and Rapid City.