



*Lone Star
& Eagle*

German Immigration to Texas



AMERICA!

The very name cast a magic spell on 19th century Europe – the promise of a New World.

AMERICA!

A promise of hope to people with limited opportunities and meager resources – a promise which flashed around Europe like rumor of a gold rush.

AMERICA!

" . . . a free earth, among a people free."
Between 1815 and 1850 more than 50 books on America were published in Germany alone.

TEXAS!

"A great golden land" – Many of these writers praised Texas, which soon became one of the best-known states.

While some of these reports and travel accounts were written by men who had gone to America, having actually visited the place was no criterion for writing a book, so many of the first works that stirred European imagination were prepared by authors such as Charles Sealsfield, a runaway monk turned immigrant. Yet Sealsfield's exaggerated accounts had a ring of veracity to Europeans eager to start anew in America. His books, *Nathan, der Squatter Regulator oder der erste Amerikaner in Texas* (Nathan, the Squatter Overseer, or The First American in Texas) and *Das Kajütenbuch oder Schilderungen aus Leben in Texas* (The Cabin Book or Descriptions of Life in Texas) depicted the state as a paradise on earth, something few Texans were likely to contradict publicly.

One of the first Germans to settle in Texas, Friedrich Ernst, allowed his letters about his new home to be published in Germany. He vividly depicted the natural



beauty, favorable climate and glorious living conditions which awaited the newcomer to Texas and stressed that land, water and game were plentiful and the need to work minimal.

Texas was one of the best-advertised and most-lauded lands on earth. The enormous stretches of unsettled land offered an incentive to powers on both sides of the Atlantic to encourage immigration: political interests here wanted the land inhabited while land-hungry Europeans clamored for farms. Nevertheless, the story of German

immigration to Texas remains an anomaly in the history of German immigration to the United States. What happened in Texas did not happen anywhere else and so further fueled the myth.

Immigration to Texas proceeded under the orderly and organized auspices of the *Adelsverein*, an association comprised of five princes and 16 noblemen with vague notions of great riches and a potential German colony in the New World. What they offered was unique: for a flat rate, the *Adelsverein* offered the prospective immigrant a package-deal trip to Texas including one-way transportation, a wooden house, farmland and aid in getting set up.

That the *Adelsverein* was successful is amazing. With no one in the group trained in business, finance or administration, and no realistic assessment of conditions in Texas, the club suffered a staggering series of catastrophes, many foreseeable. The

Adelsverein acquired an interest in a 3,000,000-acre land grant to accommodate its customers. In a land devoid of most basic forms of infrastructure, the Fisher-Miller Grant was days away from any major waterway and too far from port cities to be readily supplied. No towns or communities were nearby, nor was the land very fertile. All of this was minor compared to the grant's main drawback: it was home to Comanche Indians. No white people had yet been able to establish a permanent settlement there.

Carl, Prince of Solms-Braunfels, headed the *Adelsverein* with vision and naivete. He is credited with founding two cities: the first was the port-of-entry for German immigrants named Carlshafen, later called Indianola, and finally wiped off the map by a succession of hurricanes; in 1845 Prince Carl and a few hundred settlers founded New Braunfels as a station on the way to the Fisher-Miller land. Cholera and yellow



fever decimated the ranks of the first inhabitants, and the war between Mexico and the United States that year exacerbated the situation. Yet New Braunfels under Prince Carl maintained its toehold and established itself as a settlement. Prince Carl now had tangible evidence of his efforts in the Lone Star State and in a small but definite way had realized his dream.

Running out of money and hounded by creditors and unhappy settlers, the *Adelsverein* was plunged into crisis. Prince Carl left Texas to wed his fiancée and never returned; it was left to the capable hands of Baron Otto von Meusebach to salvage the affairs of the *Adelsverein* and continue the organized immigration. Meusebach was a different sort of man than Prince Carl, although both came from the privileged and highly cultured ranks of German aristocracy. Meusebach changed his first name to John, surrendered his title and, unlike the prince, never went back to

Germany once he settled in Texas.

The great drawback for the *Adelsverein* had always been the inaccessibility of the land it owned. In 1846 Meusebach established Fredericksburg, a town on the actual Fisher-Miller land grant. He confounded the Anglo establishment by concluding an honorable and honored peace treaty with the Comanches the following year.

But even Meusebach was unable to save the *Adelsverein* which finally disintegrated, but not before it brought thousands of Germans to a new permanent home in Texas. Statistics, like business records for the organization's commercial dealings, are lacking, but estimates state as many as 20,000 immigrants were systematically transplanted under the auspices of the *Adelsverein*.



"Neu Braunfels" by H. Brosius, 1870

While later immigrants might have written home realistic accounts of hardships on the Texas frontier, the situation in Germany worsened to the point that many people could not be put off by stories of primitive living conditions, hard work and mosquito-filled summers. Germany experienced a revolution in 1848

after a series of political tremors the preceding decade. Where once students had rioted and intellectuals protested, there were now bloodshed and armies forming. The revolution was brief and brought no tangible reforms to Germany's failing political institutions and in no way expanded individual liberties. Out of this revolution was born a new group of immigrants—political refugees. Some were activists and militants; many were disenchanted intellectuals. They had heard of Texas, and many were wooed by the story of the gallant fight for freedom from the yoke of feudal Mexico and the birth of the republic.

Known sometimes as "Die Dreissiger" (The 30's) and "The 48-ers" depending on which uprising made them exiles, this group of intellectuals, scholars and militants trickled into Texas. The contradiction in their presence as farmers was not lost on other Texans who made



"Going Visiting" by Richard Petri, c. 1855

these academicians-turned-settlers the butt of many jokes. Their farm villages were called "Latin Communities" because it was rumored their farmers were better able to quote Latin than plant corn. Certainly some of the names these Latin farmers selected for their towns—Bettina and Latium, for example—inspired derision. Some Latin farmers were freethinkers, another anomaly in the history of German immigration: pockets of agnostic and atheistic settlers among the pious.

These scholar-homesteaders may have been unsuited for life in the wilderness since none of these Latin Communities is extant today. As the Utopian dream of arcadian splendor dried up in the Texan sun, the Latin farmers gradually blended into other German settlements, often emerging as leaders in these more heterogeneous societies.

The Germans who immigrated to Texas in the first wave prior to the Civil War came from a land that lacked political freedoms but abounded in culture: 19th century Germany was the home of Beethoven, Goethe, Schiller, Brahms, to name a few. German settlers tried to take some of that bounty to Texas. Music came to the Lone Star State in the 1830's when the Kleberg and Von Roeder families imported a piano from Germany—legend says it was the first piano in the state. Immigrants brought books and congregated to read poetry aloud or sing classical songs. With these cultural riches came a pride in the language.

A plethora of German-language periodicals appeared in Texas, many short-lived. Early editors tended to be ferociously liberal intellectuals eager to try out the First Amendment. Some of their articles might have infuriated the Texan establishment had the language barrier

been more penetrable. Adolf Douai, editor of the *San Antonio Deutsche Zeitung*, gave the Confederate Texan population the dubious privilege of reading his radical abolitionist editorials by printing them in both English and German.

During the Civil War German immigration to Texas ceased. Although a number of German Texans were martyred when they took up the Union's cause, many Germans fought for the Confederacy. After the war a second great wave of immigration from Germany took place and followed the general pattern of Texan settlement: they pushed further west.

Immigration to Texas has continued into this century with most modern-day German immigrants settling in urban areas such as Houston, Dallas, Galveston and San Antonio. While new economic bonds between the Lone Star State and the Federal Republic of Germany are being

forged, there are third- and fourth-generation Texans who still converse in German at home. There have been famous people among them, such as Elisabet Ney, Hermann Lungkwitz, Admiral Nimitz, Kathy Whitmire, and there have been thousands of more obscure individuals. They built schools, wrote books, named villages, lived and died.

The Germans have been one of the most effective ethnic groups at blending into the American mainstream. In fact, the casual observer of Texan events might never even realize the German Texans are here, nor why they came, and how they lived. This year, 1983, commemorates 300 years of German immigration to America, and the Goethe-Institut is pleased to help honor German Texans with its project LONE STAR AND EAGLE.

OTTO STRACKBEIN 4 M.	WILLIE EVERS 7 1/2 M.
HAROLD STRACKBEIN 5 M.	KEN PEACOCK 8 M.
KERMIT CREHWELGE 6 M.	AMELIO GARZA 6 M.
ALVIN CREHWELGE 6 M.	ROY BERSCHWALE 12 M.
HARRY WAHRMUND 2 M.	GILBERT KADERLI 4 M.
KARL FRIEDRICH 2 M.	REUBIN GEISTWEIDT 6 M.
BERNARD CREHWELGE 4 M.	WALTER GEISTWEIDT 6 M.
TED MUND 3 M.	ARCHIE GEISTWEIDT 5 M.
EDWIN BRAUTIGAM 6 M.	JIM FAUGHT 5 M.
CLARENCE STRACKBEIN 6 M.	HENRY BERSCHWALE 9 M.
KENNETH MANER 4 M.	JAME HENKE 7 M.
OTTO SPRETH 2 M.	DURDEN WILTROUT 10 M.
KIRCHNER BROS. 2 M.	HARRY BRUSENHAN 2 M.
SAUER RANCH 4 M.	RICHARD KASPER 2 M.
JAMES BAETHGE 5 M.	JACK EVERS 11 M.
RAYMOND KÜHLMANN 9 M.	HEINZE C. MOHR 7 M.
HENRY BAETHGE 5 M.	EDGAR WENDEL 3 M.
E. HAHN RANCH 5 M.	WALTER SÄTTLER 4 M.
G. W. BODE 7 M.	ARNOLD RODE 6 M.
EUGENE CREHWELGE 6 M.	ROBERT KORDSIK 7 M.
PETER CREHWELGE 11 M.	DENNIS LANGE 5 M.
ALVIN HEIMER 3 M.	WALTER ITZ 7 M.
ANTONIO RODRIGUES 2 M.	ROY ITZ 7 1/2 M.
JOHNNY BECKER 4 M.	BENNO ITZ 7 1/2 M.
FRERLEY ANHELOER 12 M.	EDGAR GEISTWEIDT 8 M.
MARTIN ANDEREGG 1 M.	NELSON GEISTWEIDT 8 M.
CORWIN ANDEREGG 11 M.	WALTER ECKERT 13 M.
EMIL ANDEREGG 11 M.	ERWIN ECKERT 13 M.
ERWIN ANDEREGG 9 M.	BEN EVERS 6 M.
DAN ANDEREGG 11 M.	

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For further reading, a recent awardwinning publication of The Institute of Texan Cultures is *The German Texans* by Glen E. Lich.

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