

FRIEDRICH WILHELM FERDINAND GOLDBECK

(1831—1899)

by

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Friedrich Wilhelm Ferdinand Goldbeck, more commonly known as Fritz Goldbeck, the noted German-Texan poet, was born August 12, 1831 at Idsingen, Hannover, according to the church archives of Walsrode, where his baptism occurred with Friederike Sophie Katherine Westermann of Stellichte and his uncle Johann Friedrich Goldbeck of Kirchlinteln as *Paten*. Fritz was the illegitimate son of the *Förster* Friedrich Wilhelm Ferdinand Küster and Judith Annette ("Annchen") Christiane Goldbeck, and it is probable that the couple met while Annchen was visiting her older brother Ludwig Christian Gottlieb Goldbeck who occupied the same position as did Küster in the village of Wedehof.

Unfortunately, nothing is known of Fritz's father and his paternal ancestry, but that of his mother has been the subject of considerable research. Annchen's father, Reverend Nicolaus Goldbeck (1771-1850), was a noted churchman and theologian of Northern Germany, serving first the Evangelical congregation of Wolterdingen bei Soltau from 1798 until 1816 and then that of Kirchlinteln bei Verden/Aller from 1816 until his death in 1850. Descended from a family of churchmen, Pastor Goldbeck also possessed a great interest in both music and astrology, the latter leading to a close friendship with the famous professor, Karl Friedrich Gauss of Göttingen, a frequent visitor in the Goldbeck home.¹ Frau Goldbeck, the former Catharina Julianna Sophie Dorothea Horn (1779-1819), was the daughter of Reverend Ludwig Gottlieb Horn, who had

succeeded his father as pastor of St. Johannis in Verden an der Aller and later served the congregation at Beverstedt. Reverend Horn was a direct descendant of a sister of Dr. Martin Luther of Reformation fame through his paternal ancestry; his mother, Dorothea Elenora Horn née Dankwerths, through her descent from such families of the old German Nobility as those of von Saldern, von der Asseburg, von Büren, von Broich, von Isenburg and von Limburg, could claim direct descent from such notable figures of history as Karl der Grosse, Heinrich I, and King Alfred of England.

Fritz was not Annchen's only illegitimate child. Prior to his birth had been born Otto circa 1825 and Theodor in 1826; there is some evidence to indicate that there may have also been a daughter who later married a Captain Wundram and resided in Hamburg. On December 12, 1832, Annchen married the *Kaufmann* Heinrich Conrad Friedrich Christian Bremer of Verden an der Aller. The family resided at Grosse Strasse 80.² In 1844, economic and social reasons being the motivation, the Bremers decided to emigrate and were accepted by the *Verein zum Schutze deutscher Einwanderer in Texas*³ to leave with the first ship of colonists. The Bremers sailed from the nearby port of Bremen on September 16, 1844 aboard the *Johann Detthardt*, arriving at the Texas port of Galveston on November 23, 1844.⁴ The family group consisted of seven members, the youngest being Caroline Anna who was born aboard ship in Cuban waters and later received the distinction of being the first of the *Verein* colonists to be baptized in Texas. Karl, Prinz zum Solms-Braunfels, the *Verein* Commissioner General in Texas, although a devout Catholic himself, stood as a sponsor in the Protestant ceremony.⁵

Although the *Verein* had acquired a tract of land in Texas known as the Fisher-Miller Grant, settlement upon it was impossible due to its location deep inside Comanche territory. A second piece of land much smaller in size was obtained after the arrival of the first contingent of settlers; at this site some thirty miles from San Antonio the settlement of New Braunfels was founded in March/April of 1845. City

lots were drawn and Fritz's step-father acquired Lot No. 33.⁶ It was upon this plot that the Bremers immediately began the construction of their home, a structure which is still standing today at 217 East Mill Street. Pastor Louis Cachard-Ervendberg entered the Bremers as charter members of the Deutsch Protestantische Gemeinde zu Neu-Braunfels in 1845, Fritz being listed as Member No. 104.⁷ It is not known whether he was one of the fifteen children who in 1845 made up the first school class in New Braunfels under the direction of Hermann Seele, but he was a member of the seven member confirmation class of 1846.⁸

The year 1846 was a hard one for the colony, as many of the 1845 and 1846 immigrants had been stranded on the Texas coast due to lack of transportation because of the Mexican War. A devastating epidemic broke out among them and was later carried inland to the settlement at New Braunfels. It is believed that it was for this reason that the Bremers moved to the Buffalo Springs Community on the Guadalupe River west of New Braunfels in the Hill Country, and it was here that Fritz spent many happy times (according to his poems). In 1849, Heinrich purchased land in the adjoining county of Guadalupe and moved his family some four miles west of the town of Seguin. It is apparent that Fritz and his older brother Theodor helped with the move and settling and then returned to New Braunfels.⁹ Circa 1851, at the age of forty-seven, Fritz's mother, Annchen died.¹⁰

From the main *Verein* settlements of New Braunfels and Fredericksburg, the colonists began to spread out to found many small towns, and in 1854 Fritz was a member of Ernst Hermann Altgelt's party which surveyed and founded the town of Comfort in Kendall County.¹¹ It was here that Fritz and his brother, Theo, opened a combination mercantile store-saloon-and-post office, which they operated for several years.¹² It may well be that in Comfort Fritz received his first taste of writing, while contributing to the town's handwritten newspaper which was known as the *Bettelsack*.¹³ He also sang second tenor with a very vocal quartet composed of

Ernst Altgelt, C. W. Boerner and Fritz Holekamp.¹⁴ During their sojourn in Comfort, the Goldbeck brothers were responsible on one occasion for the Fourth of July celebration taking place a day early. Confronted with the delivery of several kegs of beer (from San Antonio's Menger Brewery) which would spoil if not drunk quickly, they fired the cannon reserved to call residents together in case of an Indian attack or an emergency. The people who quickly responded soon lost their indignation at the ruse and began the annual celebration a day before schedule.¹⁵

Following the sale of their business in Comfort and Theodore's removal to San Antonio to become associated with the firm of H. Mayer & Company, Fritz traveled extensively in Northern Mexico, Baja, California and Arizona, many of these travels being written about in his second volume of poetry. In 1857, as an employee of the Pony Express, he rode with the first mail to be delivered to Fort Yuma in Arizona. By 1859, Fritz had returned to Texas and on February 27 of that year in San Antonio was united in marriage with Natalia Eugenia Angelina Emelie Müller. His wife, born April 9, 1839 in Hessen-Darmstadt, first arrived in Texas in 1848. After a brief stay, the Müller family returned to Germany. They subsequently settled in Texas in the 1850's. Emelie's father was Johann Philipp Müller; her mother was Emma Mumm, daughter of Jacob Mumm and Johanna Maria Ruebel van Sinderen.¹⁶

Fritz and his wife soon moved to New Braunfels, where in 1860 the Comal County census enumerator listed his occupation as that of "Trader in Stock of Mexico." Shortly thereafter, the Civil War erupted, and as was the case with most of the German element of Texas, the Goldbeck brothers were Union sympathizers. As no attempt was made on their part to conceal their feelings, they were forced to flee with their families for safety to Monterrey, Mexico, where they lived in exile for the duration of the war.¹⁷ Fritz returned to New Braunfels prior to 1867, where he built a small home at 182 East Mill Street which is still standing. Following his

return, he served as Justice of the Peace and Tax Collector as well as Mayor of New Braunfels (from May 12, 1867 until November 8, 1872, having been appointed by Governor Davis), and as Comal County Judge (from 1879 until 1874).¹⁸

Fritz later settled on a ranch some twenty miles above New Braunfels on the Guadalupe River, moving several years prior to his death to San Antonio, where he and Emelie resided at 822 Avenue B. It was while in his retirement during the 1880's and early 1890's and after he had lost almost totally his sight in both eyes from cataracts, that he composed the some 140 poems found in his two-volume *Seit Fünfzig Jahren*. He died on April 4, 1899, and was buried the following day in San Antonio's Sons of Hermann Cemetery. His wife of forty years was laid to rest beside him a quarter of a century later, following her death at the home of their daughter in San Antonio on July 3, 1924. They were the parents of eight children: Hermann (1859-1860); Robert (1861-1928) who married Edith Martyr; Alfred (1862-1888); Adolph (1863-1921) who married Ottilie Specht; Fritz (1865-1869); Ernst (1867-1948) who married Emma Lasteree; Lizzie (1869-1947) who married Rudolph C. Specht; infant son unnamed (1871); and Gustav (1872-1915) who married Carrie Coy de los Santos. Descendants today are found in Texas, California and Oregon.

It has been said of Fritz that "no one has left a more complete historical record of the times."¹⁹ He himself called his poems *Prosa in Versen*, and they leave us a very vivid picture of his recollections of the early days of the German-Texans. The first volume of *Seit Fünfzig Jahren* was published in paperback by Fritz in 1895 and the second volume a year later, both by John Schott (printer), San Antonio. He is also said to have published a short story entitled *Der alte in der Schlucht*.

Fort mit dem trügerischen Schein,
Ein Deutscher bin ich, will es sein!
Ob ich auch englisch reden kann,
Bin ich darum kein and'rer Mann.

O Muttersprache, süsster Laut,
Wie klingst mir doch so vertraut!—
Wo ich im Leben immer bin,
Mein Denken ist ein deutscher Sinn!

Was in der Kindheit ich geseh'n
Bleibt treu und fest im Herzen steh'n
Solange, bis mein Auge bricht,
Bleib ich ein Deutscher, läug'n es nicht!

Das Land, wo an der Mutter Brust
Ich einst geruht, noch unbewusst,
Es ist und bleibt mein Vaterland.
Ob ich ein neues Heim auch fand.

Die Zeit hat längst gebleicht mein Haar,
Soll ich vielleicht mich schämen gar?
Das müsst' ich doch, wollt ich zum Schein
Ein Andrer, als ein Deutscher sein!

Ein Bürger, wie es Pflicht und Recht—
Nicht jener, Ueberhebung Knecht—
Der bin ich, und der bleib ich auch!—
Es ist so ein Germanen Brauch.

Wer sieht es gern, wenn dummer Stolz,
Ihn formen möcht, wie ein Stück Holz?
Wer dienet gern als Hampelmann,
Mit dem die Einfalt spielen kann?

NOTES

¹Robert Kienzle, *Chronik Kirchlinteln* (Kirchlinteln, 1969), p. 116.

²The Bremer home at Grosse Strasse 80 today has the number 69. Built in 1802 by the *Seilermeister* Jacob Schneider, the house was acquired by the Bremer family on January 20, 1820, remaining in the family's possession until its sale in 1844 by Heinrich to Heinrich Löbering, at which time Heinrich and Annchen emigrated to Texas with their family.

³The organization, also known as the *Mainzer Adelsverein* or simply the *Verein*, was a business society formed by a group of German noblemen for the purpose of settling Germans in the then Republic of Texas. Although it was poorly organized and fell far short of reaching its long-range objectives, it was responsible for bringing 10,695 colonists aboard ninety-three ships between 1844 and 1850. The towns of New Braunfels and Fredericksburg were directly founded by the *Verein*. (Ethel Hander Geue, *New Homes In a New Land—German Immigration to Texas 1847-1861* [Waco, 1970], pp. 12-31.)

⁴Chester W. and Ethel H. Geue, *A New Land Beckoned—German Immigration to Texas 1844-1847* (Waco, 1966 and 1972), p. 159.

⁵Oscar Haas, *The First Protestant Church, Its History And Its People, 1845-1955* (New Braunfels, 1955), p. 3. Hereafter referred to as Haas I. Oscar Haas, *History of New Braunfels and Comal County, Texas 1844-1946* (Austin, 1968), p. 307. Hereafter referred to as Haas II.

⁶Haas II, p. 49. Fritz's older half-brother, Theodor Goldbeck, being over the age of seventeen, was allowed a lot as a single man and drew No. 102. (*Ibid.*, p. 50.)

⁷Haas I, p. 115. Haas II, p. 304. Today the congregation is known as the First Protestant United Church of Christ of New Braunfels.

⁸Haas I, p. 118.

⁹Theodor and Fritz Goldbeck are listed in the Bremer household in the 1850 Guadalupe County census records and are also found in New Braunfels in the 1850 Comal County census records, indicating that they moved from one to the other during the time the two counties were being enumerated.

¹⁰Annchen was the mother of three known illegitimate children: Otto, Theodor and Fritz. Otto, the eldest, became a seaman and did not accompany the family to Texas. Fritz had a brief encounter with him at the old seaport of Bagdad on the mouth of the Rio Grande River in 1863. A captain by then, Otto died soon afterwards in Cuba. Theodor Georg Ludwig Goldbeck (1826-1890) was the son of Annchen and her cousin Theodor Goldbeck of Braunschweig; he married Bianca Nohl, daughter of Dr. Louis Nohl and Henriette née Tips, natives of Barmen-Eberfeld who arrived in Texas in 1849. From his mother's marriage to Heinrich Conrad Friedrich Christian Bremer (1814-1880), Fritz had seven half-brothers and sisters: Heinrich Conrad Friedrich Nicolaus Bremer (1833-1912) who married Auguste Fechner of Coburg; Julius Carl Luis Bremer (1835-1836); Catharina Rosina Henriette Juliane Bremer (1837-1843); Dorothea Charlotte Judith Bremer (1839-1901) who married Anton Elsner of Friedland, Böhmen; Adolph Conrad Bremer (1841-1908) who married Maria Sophie Müller (Fritz's wife's sister) of Hessen-Darmstadt; Carolina Anna Bremer (1844-1928) who married Julius Louis Boek of Borkenmühle, Kreis Kolmar, Wartheland, and later H. Michel; and Julius August Hermann Bremer (1848-1894) who mar-

ried Emma Förster of Texas. Following Annchen's death, Fritz's step-father remarried in 1853 to Johanna Charlotte Caroline Keilmann (1835-1883), daughter of Carl Friedrich Ludwig Keilmann and Sophie Elisa Christine née Fierstnow, who arrived in Texas in 1851 from Stralsund, Pommern. Fritz's five step-sisters resulting from this union were: Ida Rose Bremer (1855-1932) who married Louis A. Bartholomae of Texas; Charlotte Clara Bremer (1857-1933) who married Heinrich Krueger of Germany; Emelie Helene Bremer (1860-1939) who married Wilhelm Thiel of Texas; Emma Valeska Bremer (1863-1951) who married Louis Jauer of Texas; and Theresa Bremer (1866-1872).

¹¹Guido E. Ransleben, *A Hundred Years of Comfort in Texas — A Centennial History* (San Antonio, 1954 and 1974), p. 19.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 138.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 214.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 135.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 138.

¹⁶Jacob Mumm was a descendant of a family well-known in Germany in the banking and champagne business. Information on the Mumm von Schwarzenstein family is found in Band XI (1974) of the *Genealogisches Handbuch des Adels* published by C. A. Starke Verlag, Limburg/Lahn. The Ruebel van Sinderen family has a historical account given in Band 35 of the *Deutsches Geschlechterbuch (Genealogisches Handbuch Bürgerlicher Familien)* which was also published by C. A. Starke Verlag. In addition to Emilie, Johann Philipp (circa 1813-1867) and Emma (1815-1891) were the parents of five other children: Gustav Müller (1844-1912) who married Constance van der Stucken; Dorothea Müller (1845-1925) who married Felix van der Stucken; Sophie Marie Müller (1847-1920) who married Fritz's half-brother, Adolf Conrad Bremer; Sophie Müller (1849-1925) who married Hermann Förster; and August Müller (1850-1915) whose wife's name has not yet been located.

¹⁷In addition to Fritz, Theodor and their immediate families, other relatives known to have accompanied them to Mexico or who arrived later included Carolina Anna Bremer, Adolph Conrad Bremer and Sophie Marie Müller.

¹⁸Haas II, p. 299.

¹⁹Haas II, p. 23, quoting Robert A. Govier, B. A., B. Mu., *The University of Texas*, 1962, unpublished thesis, page 10.