

REVIEW

Curt E. Schmidt, *Oma and Opa, German-Texan Pioneers*. New Braunfels: Folkways Publishing Company, 1975. 129 pp.

Die Alten (the Old Ones) was a term affectionately applied to the hearty pioneers who forsook their Nineteenth Century Germany to establish a new home for themselves and their families in Texas. Today, Texas having an estimated 400,000 people in 1960 with at least one-half German ancestry, the descendants of these stalwart *Omas and Opas* constitute the fourth largest ethnic group in the State, outnumbered only by Texans of Anglo-American, Black and Mexican descent.

Curt E. Schmidt in his *Oma and Opa, German-Texan Pioneers* has provided what might well be termed a handbook for German-Texans. After a short but concise historical accounting of the German immigration and settlement and the German language in Texas, *Oma and Opa* concentrates on the life of the pioneers, delving into such diverse subjects as the role of religion among *Die Alten*, *Sprichwörter* used by them, their arcane practices, their organizations and their social life. In short, *Oma and Opa* provides the reader with a look at both his ethnic and cultural heritage, the writing accomplished in such a manner to entertain as well as to inform. An important part of the book is also the inclusion of fifty-two German songs, many as popular today as they were over a century ago. In addition, the reader will appreciate the author's skill with a pen to draw as well as to write, all the many illustrations in *Oma and Opa* done by Mr. Schmidt himself.

At present a practicing attorney in New Braunfels, Texas, Curt E. Schmidt is a former New Braunfels Independent School District superintendent and Comal County Attorney. He was born November 5, 1903 in thickly German-Texan populated Gillespie County and developed an early interest and appreciation of his ethnic heritage. Growing up, he enjoyed an especially close relationship with his maternal grandfather, Johannes Wilhelm Heimann, born May 5, 1838 in Manderbach, Dillkreis, Hessen and died in Gillespie County February 17, 1924, who had arrived in Texas with his parents and other relatives as a youth of seven in 1845. It was from the tales of *Fadder Heimann* and others of *Die Alten* that Curt Schmidt's imagination and interest was captured and which is reflected in his knowledge of the subjects about which he writes in his book. In addition to *Oma and Opa*, Mr. Schmidt has written several genealogies, *Schmidt, History of a Family* (1958) and *Heimann, History of Family* (1976), as well as other historical works. At present, he is completing the Manuscript for *Die Manderbacher*, a work covering the background and history of nine families which traveled to Texas in 1845 under the auspices of the *Verein zum Schutze deutscher Einwanderer in Texas*.

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