

GERMANS IN THE HILL COUNTRY

A Pictorial Essay

on

Immigration to Texas in the Nineteenth Century

by

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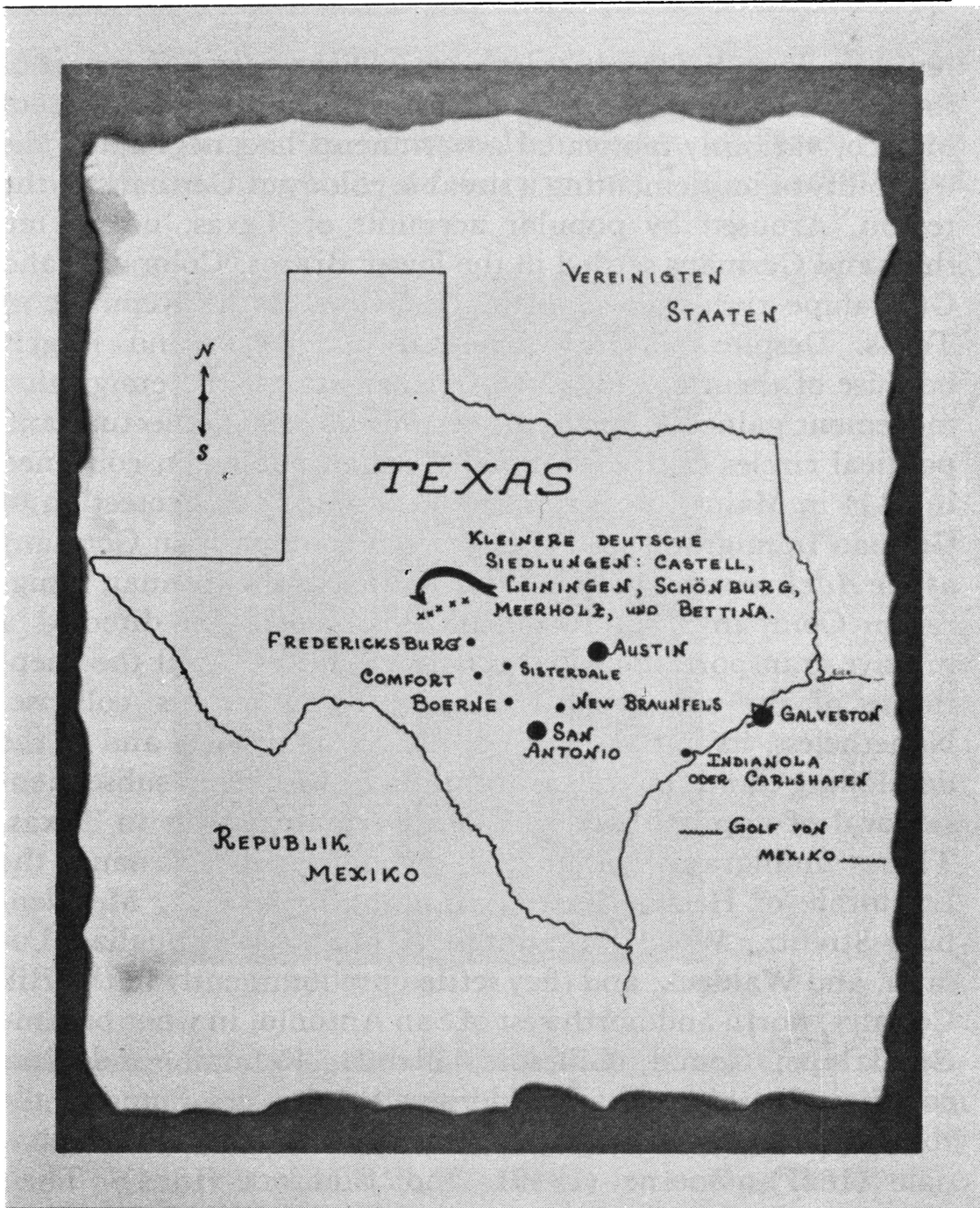
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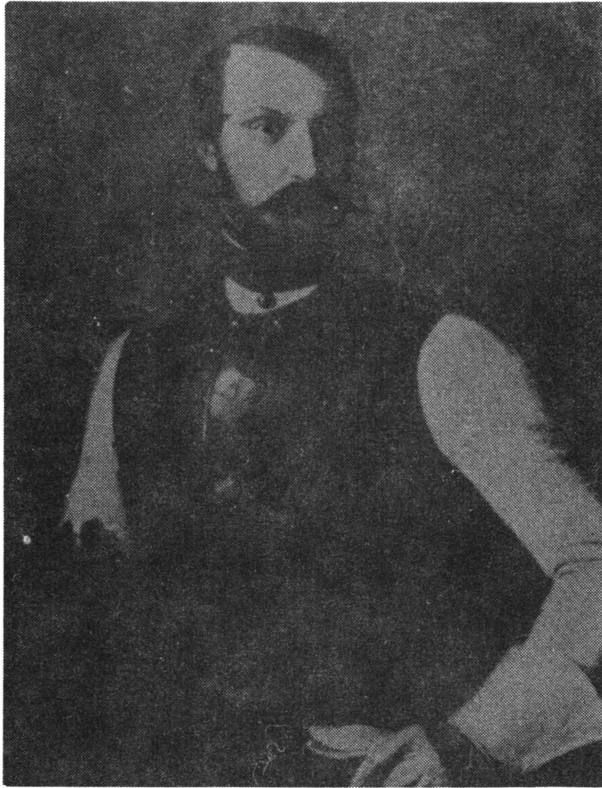


The most significant German emigration of the nineteenth century was directed toward the sparsely settled North American continent. Newspapers and travel literature presented a picture of the frontier colored by idealism, Utopian fervor, and too often based on indirect observations. When the Anglo-American incursions into Texas began, the attention of German journalists and entrepreneurs was directed to this new land, which in 1836 succeeded in becoming an independent

republic. Even before that time, while Texas was first a part of the Spanish New World empire and then a province of Mexico, variously motivated governments had negotiated the feasibility of implementing a sizeable colony of Germans in the region. Aroused by popular accounts of Texas, nearly ten thousand Germans settled in the lower Brazos, Colorado, and Guadalupe river valleys during the days of the Republic of Texas. Despite political upheavals in Texas and largely because of them in the North German states, the emigration movement gained impetus in certain liberal intellectual and political circles until a group of German noblemen convened in 1844 in Mainz to charter the Society for the Protection of German Immigrants in Texas, known commonly in Germany as the *Adelsverein* and in North America as the German Emigration Company. For two years this association directed a massive transportation of Germans to Texas, until the ineptitude of the society's directions precipitated its collapse. Nonetheless, its initial service to the German states and to the developing land of Texas continued with the subsequent removal of approximately 25,000 German natives to Texas. These immigrants originated primarily in Nassau, the Electorate of Hesse, Hesse-Darmstadt, Brunswick, Mecklenburg-Strelitz, Wetzlar-Braunfels, Anhalt, Westphalia, Lusatia, and Waldeck, and they settled predominantly in the Hill Country, north and northwest of San Antonio, in what became Guadalupe, Comal, Gillespie, Blanco, Kendall, and Kerr counties. In this rugged wilderness the settlers founded the towns of New Braunfels (1845), Fredericksburg (1846), Sisterdale (1847), Boerne (1849), and Comfort (1854). Their cultural influence on the state of Texas was significant. Even today, descendants of the Texas-Germans constitute an ethnic majority in the Hill Country.

The visionary nobleman who accompanied the Germans into the wilderness of the Texas Hill Country was Prince Carl of Solms-Braunfels, scion of a family and a castle dating from the thirteenth century in the Lahn River valley. The expedi-

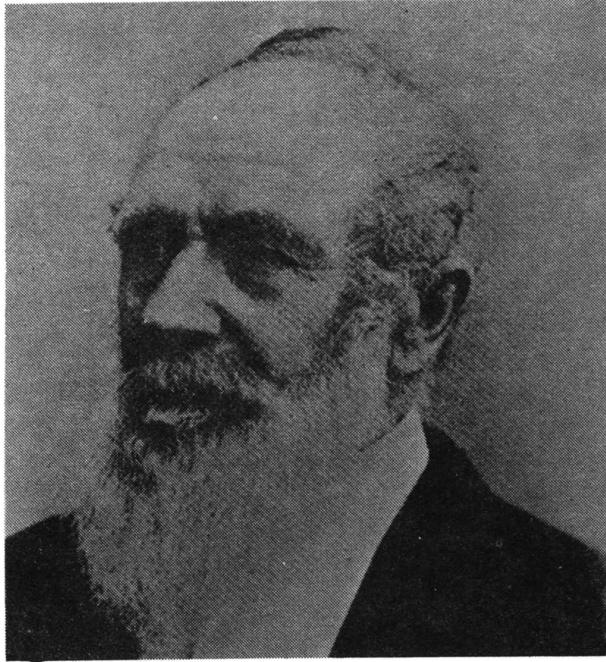
tion to Texas was financed by an association of German noblemen who gathered in 1844 in Mainz to form the Society for the Protection of German Immigrants in Texas. It was under the auspices of the *Adelsverein* that Prince Carl founded



the settlement of New Braunfels in 1845, but after the philanthropic organization collapsed, immigrants in the small town were left to their own resources. This portrait is reproduced by kind permission of Mrs. R. L. Biesele in Austin, Texas.

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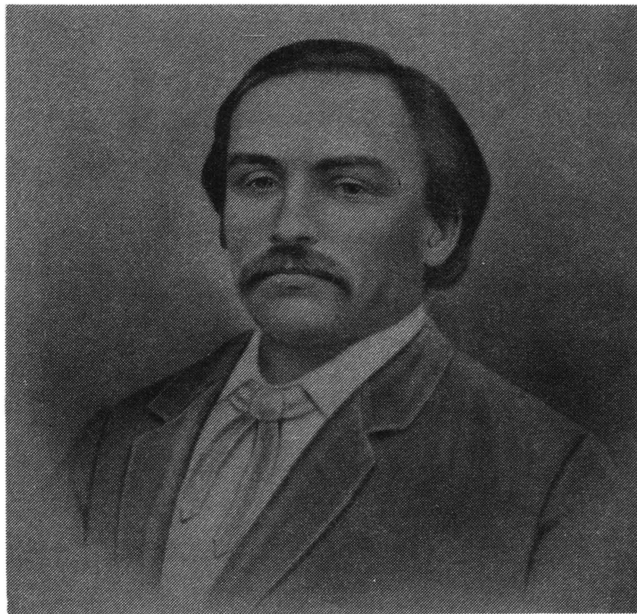
Fredericksburg, the second German settlement, was laid out in 1846 by Baron Ottfried Hans von Meusebach from Dillenburger and named in honor of his mentor, Prince Friedrich of Hohenzollern. Meusebach settled along with the other immigrants in the new town, married Countess Coreth of New



Braunfels, and presented himself as Mr. John O. Meusebach. Titles of nobility fell away as a matter of course in the new land. With permission of Mrs. R. L. Biesele.

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Balthasar Lich, a native of Londorf-on-the-Lumda in the Grand Duchy of Hesse-Darmstadt, built a mill on the Guadalupe River after he landed in Texas in 1857. He was associated



with its operation until the outbreak of the Civil War, when he commenced freighting activities. By the end of the war he could buy a farmstead on the Cypress Creek. From 1868 until his death twenty years later, Balthasar Lich engaged alternately in freighting and ranching operations, while he and his wife acquired title to nearly eight thousand acres of farm and ranch land.

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Resolution and strength of character are read in the face of this old woman who was one of the earliest *Adelsverein* settlers in Texas. Johanna Dorothea Charlotte Auguste Wilhelmine Rosenberg from a merchant family in Göttingen, was the wife



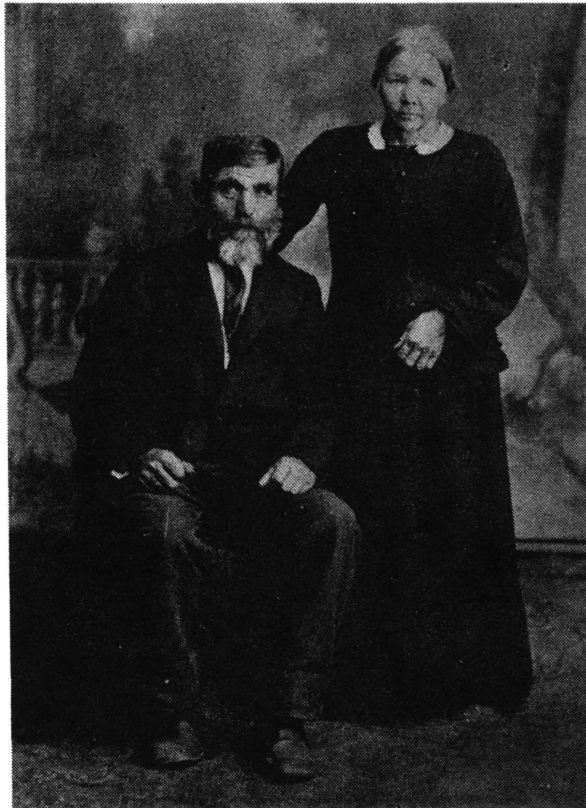
of the brickmaker Heinrich Lorenz Schelper of New Braunfels. An amusing anecdote from her life is the story of how she abducted an infant grandson from her Catholic daughter-in-law and presented him for baptism by the Evangelical pastor. The daughter-in-law responded with a firmness of her own and a determination not to be outdone. Later on the same day she carried the child to the Catholic baptismal font. After the untimely death of her husband, Johanna Schelper managed her own millinery shop on the town square. Her obituary

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testifies that the townspeople held her in high respect as a stalwart defender of her beliefs.

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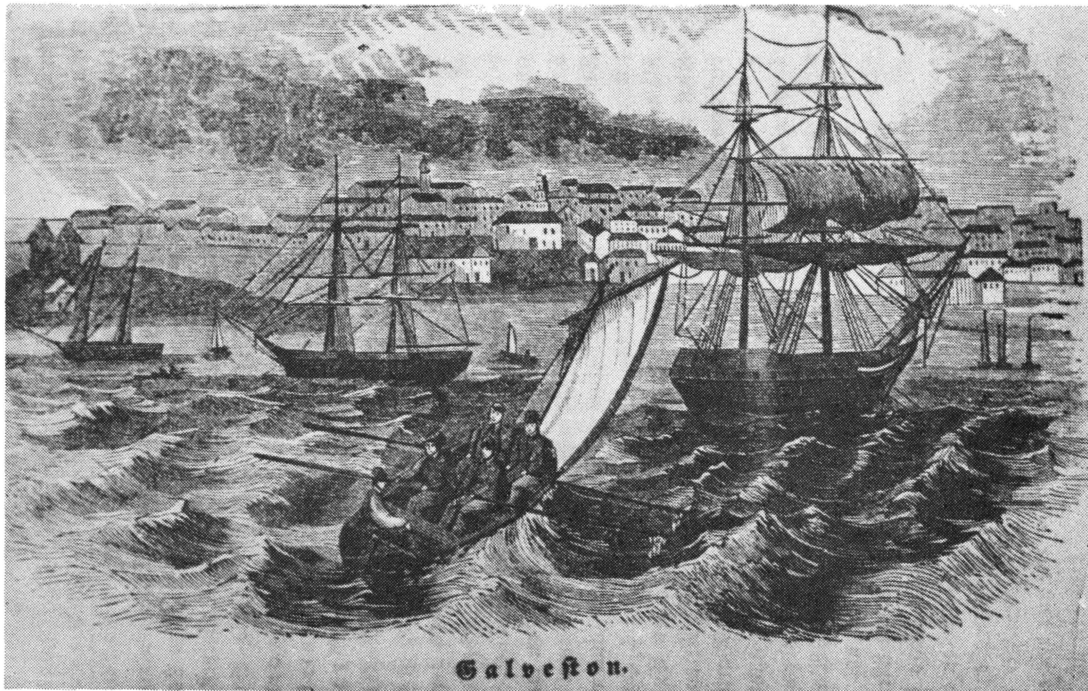
Johannes Hoerner was the son of a grand ducal inspector in Heppenheim on the Bergstrasse. He belonged to a politically suppressed fraternity of Giessen and Darmstadt, which was influenced by Young German writers like George Büchner and



Ludwig Börne. Following the Revolution of 1848, the students fled from Germany under the name "The Forty," an appellation derived from the number of their membership. On the fringe of white civilization in Texas, they established the communities of Boerne and Bettina, the latter named for the wife of Eichendorff and sister of Brentano.

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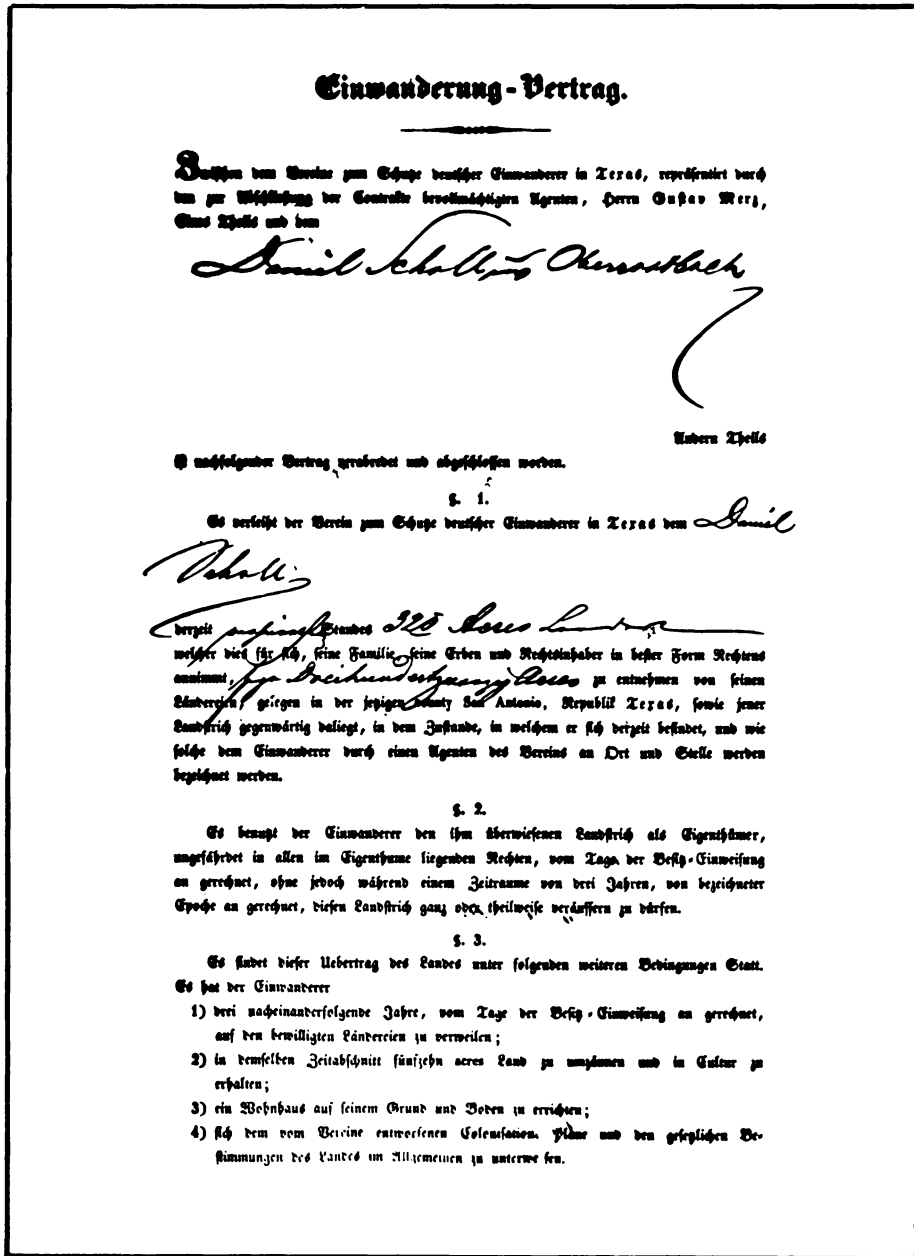
The immigrants sailed in barques, brigs, and schooners from Antwerp or Bremen to the ports of Galveston and India-



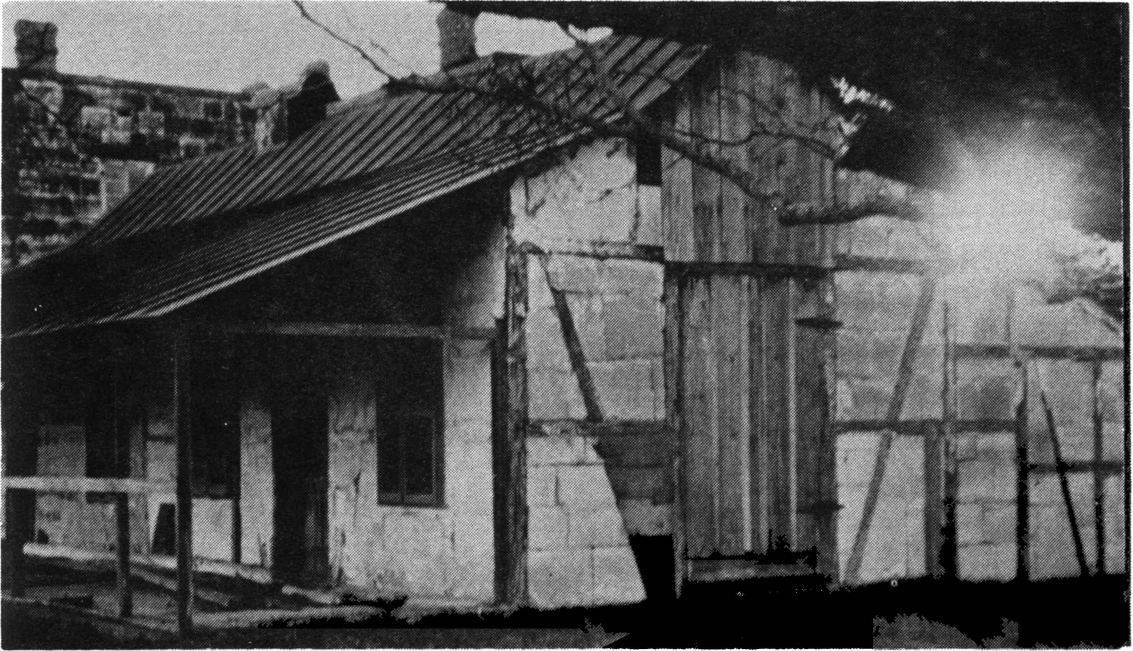
nola on the Gulf of Mexico. The ten- to twelve-week voyage was followed then by a two-week overland journey in wagons from the coast to the German settlements of New Braunfels and Fredericksburg in the Hill Country. This lithograph of the Galveston harbor is from the *Illustrierte Geographie von Nord- und Süd-Amerika* (1855).

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The immigration contract of Johann Daniel Scholl from Oberrossbach in the Dukedom of Nassau is an example of the printed agreements executed in Germany by representatives of the *Adelsverein* and prospective settlers. The contractual terms between the society and the colonist were carefully stipulated. The emigrant was promised a specified number of acres under the conditions that he live on the land for three years, fence and cultivate fifteen acres of the land, build a dwelling on his property, and submit in his conduct to the rules of the society and the laws of the land.



A typical home of the German settlers was erected in the traditional *Fachwerk* construction but with the adaptation of a shingled veranda from which two front doors opened to the interior: one led into a living room and the other into a bedroom. Although the predominately warm and semi-arid climate did not require buildings with heavy walls, the half-timber was the preferred style during the first decade.



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Not all German immigrants built half-timber homes. The ruins of an old dwelling in Sisterdale represent early German construction in the popular log cabin style of the Anglo-Ame-



The old Nicolaus Zink home at Sisterdale, Texas

ricans in Texas. This pencil sketch is based on an earlier print of the Nicolaus Zink farmhouse.

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The residence of the botanist Ferdinand Lindheimer was built in 1852 in New Braunfels. It housed in its small rooms not only the botanist's large family but also the presses and editing room of the *Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung*. Lindheimer, the father of botany in Texas, came from Frankfurt-on-the-Main and was a relative of Goethe. He was one of many intellectuals who sought to lead a pioneer life on the periphery of civiliza-



tion. Their number included physicians, educators, scientists, journalists, writers, and military officers. The training and experience of these men earned for them positions of political and social leadership in the German communities and the respect of their Anglo-American counterparts outside the Hill Country. As judges, state legislators, senators, and U.S. representatives, the Texas-German element exerted an influence far exceeding their relative size in the state population.

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The majority of German settlers were farmers and craftsmen who settled individually on the land granted through the immigration contracts. The frontier settlements never became villages in the German sense, because the farmers lived outside the towns, which became commercial and social centers for the surrounding rural areas. On the weekends, farm families often



traveled in wagons and buggies to town for marketing, social gatherings, and church attendance. During these visits, they used not public hospices but small private homes, called Sunday-Houses, built for this purpose. The stylized construction was comprised of three rooms on the ground floor, a front porch, and a wooden exterior stairway leading on one side to an attic door, where the children slept in a half-storey bedroom.

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The old St. Mary's Catholic Church in Fredericksburg was dedicated in 1861. It is a testimony in stone to cultural blending, for it combines recollections of German village

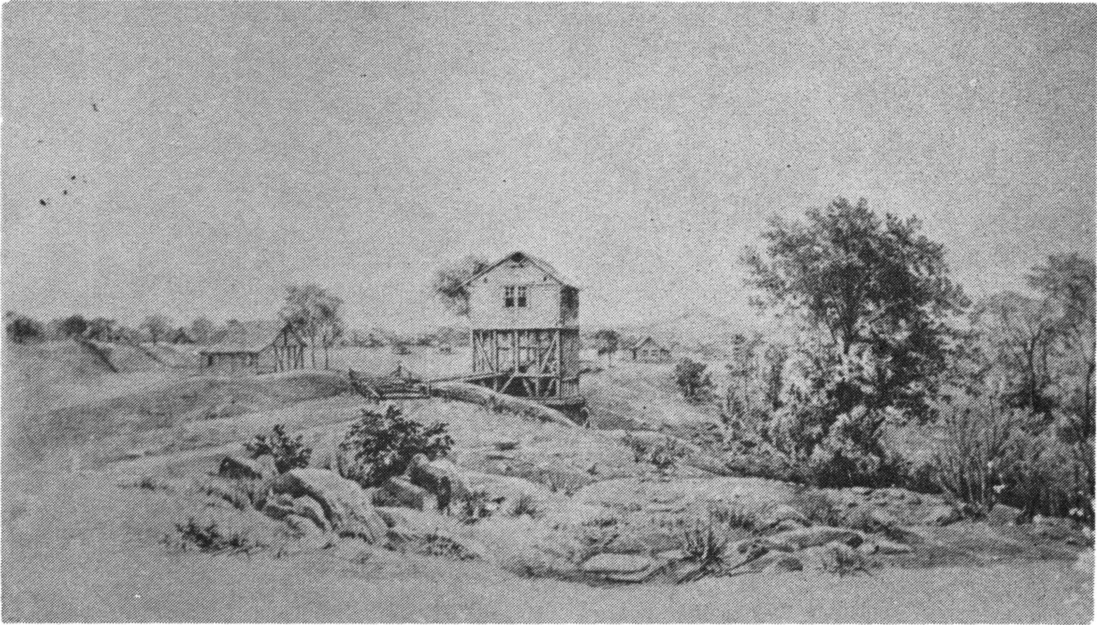


Gothic with characteristics of ecclesiastical architecture of the Spanish colonization, impressions the German travelers encountered as they settled their new land.

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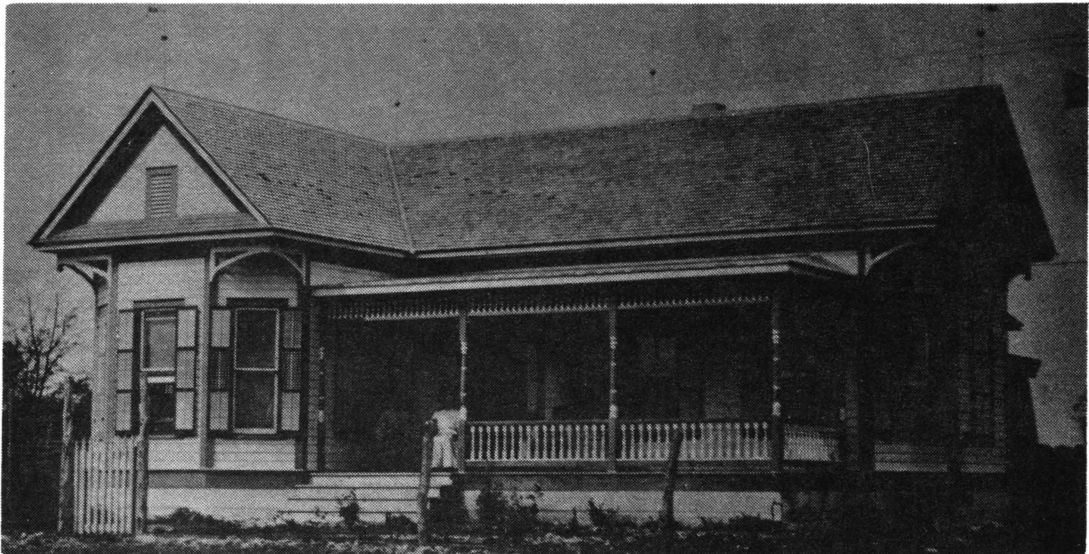
One of the first settlers of Comfort erected the Altgelt Mill in the year 1855. The sawmill and gristmill was situated on the Cypress Creek near its confluence with the Guadalupe River, in a region of the Hill Country subject to frequent Indian depredations. It was destroyed, however, not by Indians but by one of the flash floods so characteristic of autumn weather in the Southwest. This print is taken from the town history of comfort by Guido Ernst Ransleben.

GLEN LICH



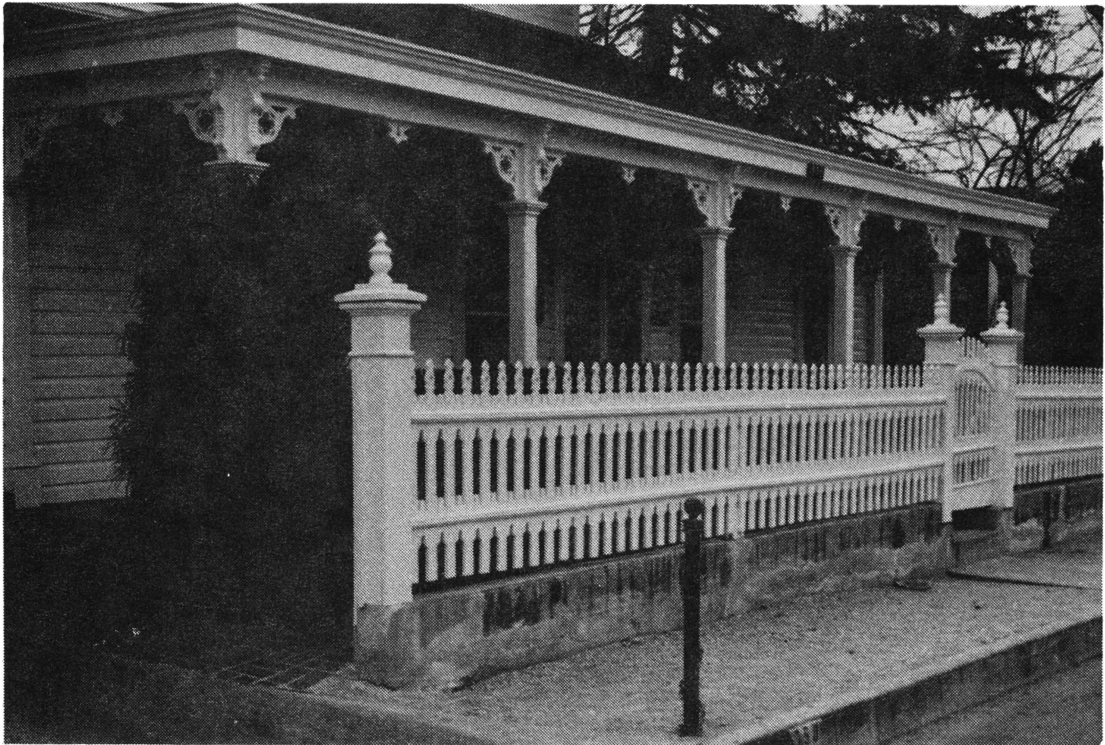
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Upon retirement from farm life, the first generation removed to the towns. An attractive example of these homes is found in a picture from 1906 of the home of the widow



Elisabeth Lich, née Scholl from the Dillkreis. Large front galleries attracted friends and neighbors to conversation during the heat of mid-afternoon.

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An exceptionally well-preserved wooden house, which grew from a one-room cabin built by a settler in 1852, shows the affinity of the second generation for gingerbread and carpenter Victorian styles.

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Even to this day, German traditions are cultivated in communities which have never forgotten their ethnic identity. One

expression of this heritage is found in the German language of Texas, now a somewhat archaic and grammatically defective tongue, but one which descendants use devotedly in private and business affairs and occasionally still at public ceremonies.

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Cattle brands from Kendall County indicate a preponderance of German descendants: Hoerner from Heppenheim on the Bergstrasse, Boerner from Bodenwerder-on-the-Weser,

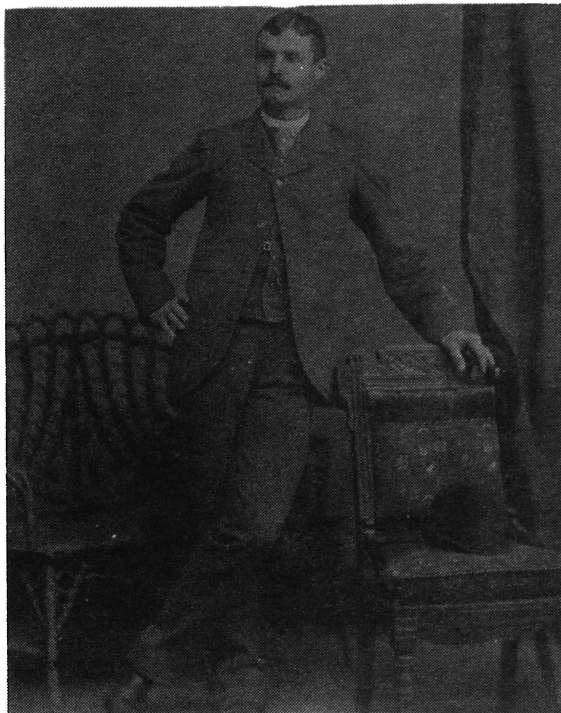
KENDALL COUNTY		
F. H. Schlador,	WR	☉☉
T. A. Giles,	PS	☉☉
do.	P	☉☉
T. Weidenfeld,	CW	☉☉*☉☉
H. Seldenticker,	SS	☉☉
Otto Brinkmann,	OB	☉☉
John Hoerner,	HR	☉☉
Henry Wittbold,	HW	☉☉
Sophia Herbst,	II	☉☉
E. Serger,	LS	☉☉

KENDALL COUNTY		
Henry Boerner,	HB	☉☉
E. Schilling,	S3	☉☉
do.	DS	☉☉
H. Lindner,	ML	☉☉
F. Saur,	SR	☉☉
G. H. Luessmann,	HL	☉☉
H. Willie,	W	☉☉
do.	JK	
C. Schlador,	CS	☉☉
Henry Sauer,	HS	☉☉
C. Flach,	CF	☉☉

Flach from Michelstadt in the Odenwald, Schlador from Waldeck, Weidenfeld, Brinkmann, Wittbold, Herbst from Hildesheim, Lindner and Saur from Bavaria.

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The photographs of people from these times reveal marked differences in social status. Clothing of people from rural areas often shows how little time or money could expend for

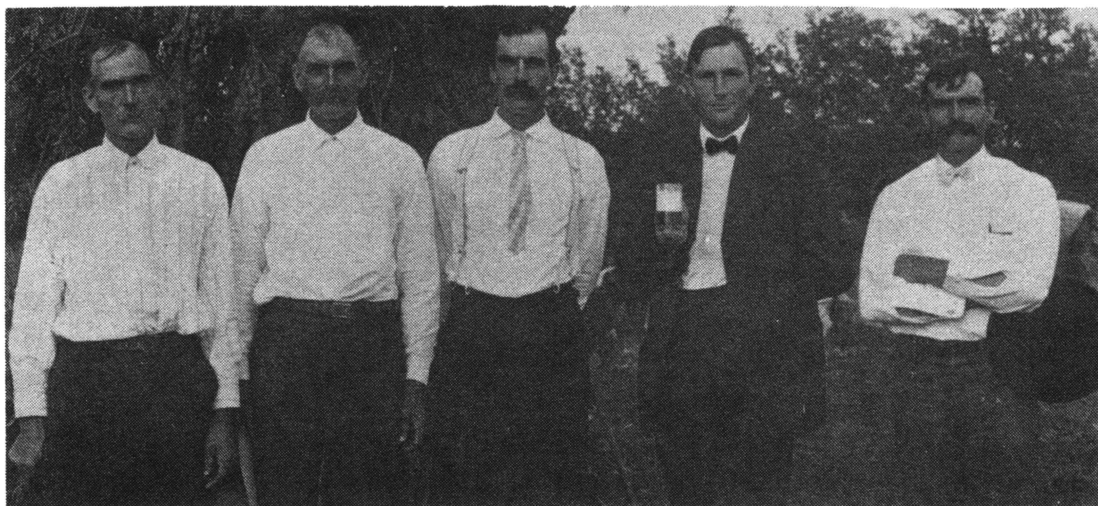


fashionable clothing. On the other hand, the studio portrait of a modish Texas-German lady from the King William Street neighborhood in San Antonio presents a sharp contrast.

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These five brothers owned nearly ten thousand acres of farm and ranch land in 1908. The extended, fenced holdings were located for the most part in the plateau west of Comfort. Because neither soil nor climate was conducive to sustained farming, they augmented their agricultural operations by maintaining herds of sheep, Angora goats, mules, and horses.

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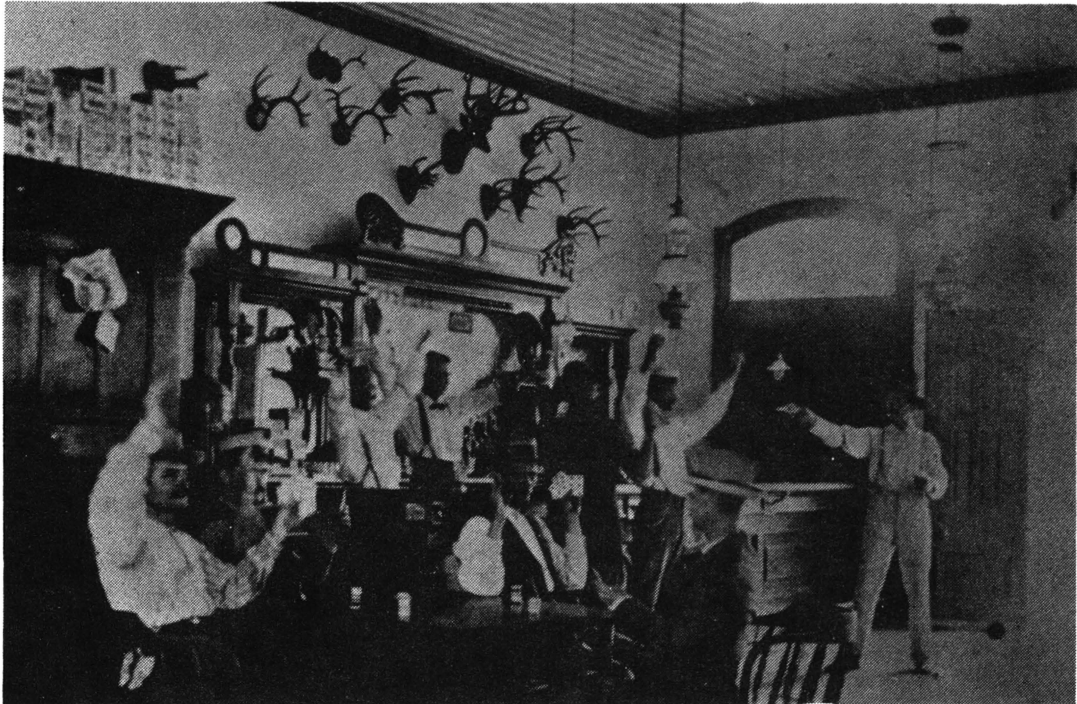
Large distances made the farmer-rancher a master of many trades, independent during much of the year of towns and stores: he was his own blacksmith, wainwright, cobbler, carpenter, mason, and butcher. Wives managed households, gardens, and domestic animals around the homestead. Most of them professed rudimentary skills as midwives. Churches and schools were attended on horseback or in buggies as frequently as the extended distances would permit.

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The son of a bailiff of an estate and game preserve near Erfurt, the Texas rancher William Henry Schuchardt stands for a photograph in 1925 with a deer which he shot on his own land in the vicinity of Boerne. Today, hunting is one of the most reliable sources of income in the German Hill Country.

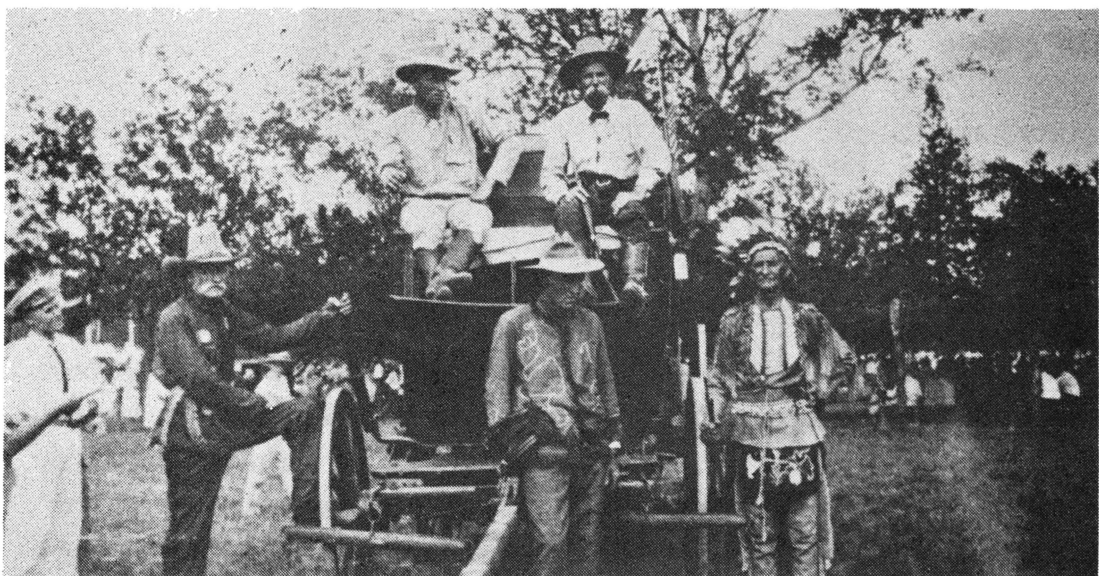
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The Favorite Saloon in Comfort featured mock "hold-ups" performed by guests of the house to pass time. The turn of the century picture shows a number of trophy antlers above the mirror of the bar. From the Comfort town history by Guido Ernst Ransleben.

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Notwithstanding their constant fear of Indians raids, the pioneers infrequently encountered hostile bands of Indians. It was an uncommon occurrence for a German family to suffer



an attack or for German children to be stolen from their homes. When the earliest *Adelsverein* immigrants moved into regions inhabited only by native tribes, their leaders concluded treaties with the Indian chiefs, which both the Germans and the Indians honored fairly consistently. Nevertheless, there are scattered instances of the murder of solitary settlers or the abduction of young children. This gathering in 1929 includes three white men in partial or complete Indian dress who were captured as boys and grew to manhood with the Apaches and Comanches. From *A Hundred Years of Comfort in Texas, 1854-1954*.

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This landscape by Susan Lich, a German descendant, depicts the ruggedness of the Hill Country as it rises from the blackland belt and coastal plains of Texas to the arid upland expanse of the Edwards Plateau. Like the land and its people



today, the weather of Texas is a thing of extreme contrasts. Long dry spells in summer precede rapidly fluctuating autumn and winter weather which can include heavy rainfall, flooding, hail, tornadoes, and snow. Agriculture, mills, and even towns in pioneer times ultimately measured their success by the amount of water which was readily available. The dependable windmill in all forms of its evolution played a vital role in the development of the Hill Country by innovative German settlers of the nineteenth century, who adapted their agriculture and their way of life to a different climate and geography from those to which they were accustomed in Europe.

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SAMUEL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
IN BUTLER COUNTY, OHIO

by

KAREN LAMBERT and THOMAS F. STANDER
Hamilton, Ohio

Samuel's Lutheran Church was formed in 1815 in Hanover Township, Butler County, Ohio. In 1842, some differences arose as to church creed and a division of the congregation took place.

One group built a new church in Millville known as Mt. Zion and it was used until 1867. By that time the congregation had disbanded and the meeting house had been torn down.

The remaining members of the Samuel's Church removed to Millville in 1853 and built a new brick house known as the Millville German Reformed Church.

In 1929, the Reformed Church and the Presbyterian (Bethel) Church united to become the Millville Federated Church. Later the Church voted to become a part of the United Church of Christ.

The following surnames are found in the old Cemetery on Minton Road: Beeler, Brisleh, Bristley, Brosier, Dilg, Forlow, Hossler, Manson, Schmidt, Schwab, Snider, Spangler, Stephenson, Yaekle, Zarlnan, Ziegler, and Zortman.