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The German Saxon Community in the Illinois Mississippi River Bottoms

“. . . the prospect for the future seems much brighter in the regions along the Mississippi,” Gottfried Duden published in his 1829 *Report on a Journey to the Western States of North America* written as a series of letters to his fellow Germans.¹ During the early nineteenth century, thousands of Germans immigrated, enticed by Duden's *Report*. One of those inspired to lead others to immigrate from Saxony, the Saxon Duchies and Saxon Province of Prussia was Martin Stephan, an ultra conservative clergyman in conflict with the state Saxon Lutheran church. By 1837 he formed an Emigration Association with plans to move from Dresden to Hamburg on the Elbe River, from Hamburg by chartered ship to New Orleans, then to St. Louis by steamboat. In St. Louis the group would choose a site for their colony. Those plans never fundamentally altered. Between 3 and 18 November 1838, 665 people departed from Bremen on five ships. One ship, the *Amalia* with fifty-eight people on board, was lost at sea. The remaining voyagers arrived in St. Louis during January and February 1839. Four-fifths of the immigrants were farmers and craftsmen. In May 1839, they purchased 4,475 acres of private and government land for \$9,234.25 in Perry County, Missouri.²

Some of the German Saxons remained in St. Louis where they could be employed at their traditional crafts. Between 1839 to 1841, Stephan's "immorality, unfaithfulness and hypocrisy" as well as his expenditures led the clergy to expel Stephan from the colony to "Devil's Bake Oven," a rock formation near Grand Tower, Illinois. Later he moved north in Illinois to organize a congregation near Red Bud, where he died in 1846. Eventually it was the Saxon German Lutherans of Perry County and St. Louis that founded a major American church, the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod.³

The Missouri colonists separated into six major settlements: Altenburg, Nieder Frohna, Dresden, Seelitz, Johannisberg and Wittenberg, the river landing on the Mississippi River nearly opposite Grand Tower in Illinois. The villages were set up based on the old country's *Straßendörfer* or string-shaped villages. This elongated village allowed each farmer to have a town lot and a strip of farmland stretching from the back of the village for some distance. Often the narrow town lot faced a major road. For example, Altenburg, Missouri, was two miles long and two lots wide.⁴

The Saxon German settlements continued to grow and attract other immigrants from the fatherland as well as conservative Lutherans in Hanover, Prussia and Germany. As Perry County Lutheran Pastor Heinrich Loeber commented: "Nor did a year pass in which some new families came to us from the old Fatherland

and settled here."⁵ Communication through individuals, through churches, spread the news of the American colony. As Frederick Emerson stated in his *Geography of Missouri* concerning chain migration: "If communication lines are kept open between the new settlements and relatives and neighbors back home, positive information may induce the latter to pack up and follow."⁶ The Missouri colony continued to expand, and new settlers searched for new land. It was not unusual that they would look across the Mississippi River to Illinois.

Trade and traffic across the Mississippi River between Jackson County, Illinois, and Perry County, Missouri, occurred early in the two states' history. Colonel James Gill settled at Devil's Bake Oven, Illinois, in 1805 and with William Gaston constructed and managed a ferry across the Mississippi River connecting the two counties.⁷ After the Civil War, the Grand Tower Mining, Manufacturing and Transportation Company built coke ovens and an iron furnace near the same location. It used iron ore from Missouri and coal from the Illinois Upper Big Muddy River mines.⁸ The Company employed workers from both states.

During the 1870s, Township Nine South of Jackson County, Illinois, the county opposite Perry County, Missouri, became known simultaneously as both Big Lake Township and Fountain Bluff Township. Big Lake referred to the northern wetland section of the township and Fountain Bluff to the southern ridge section. Bordered by the Mississippi River on the west, the township contained a limestone ridge of bluffs and the flat bottomlands of the Big Muddy River. During the early days, Big Lake and Swan Pond covered a large portion of the lowlands. The Mississippi River often flooded the remainder of the land. As a floodplain, the soil was deep, rich, and fertile.

The 1878 *History of Jackson County* stated of the township's wetlands: "Big Lake is a hunter's paradise." With lakes, marshes, woods and reeds, the bottomlands attracted migrating fowl including the canvasback, ruffle-headed, Pintail and wood ducks, mallards, teal, spoonbill and Canada geese. According to John James Audubon's early observation of the region, the white swan wintered at Big Lake. Other fowl included jack snipe, woodcock, rails, plovers, grouse, wild turkey, pheasant and quail. Deer and rabbit abounded. The township attracted hunters from the East Coast as well as the Midwest.⁹ Joseph Brunkhorst of Grand Tower, son of an 1870s German settler, recalled local stories of hunters coming to the Big Lake region from across the nation. "Game was so plentiful that...some of them had two guns and they would shoot until it [the gun] got too hot and then take the other one."¹⁰

Mississippi River floods of the Jackson County bottomlands were disastrous. In 1844, the water rose four feet higher than recorded in history and the Big Muddy River ran upstream, opposite its normal course, for a month. The Mississippi widened to four, then to six miles. Recognizing the disaster, the Illinois General Assembly released the flood victims from taxation in 1845. Floods continued to plague Fountain Bluff Township.¹¹

Soon after immigration, the German Saxon settlement conceived of possible migration across the Mississippi River into Illinois. In an 1839 letter to family in Saxony, Christina Loeber wrote to potential immigrants that "there is much good land in this neighborhood" and that "twenty farmers who are living at a place a few miles from here" might move to Illinois "to make room for our dear children."¹² Documentation of any 1830-40s Saxon migration from Missouri to Illinois cannot be found.

In October 1861, German Saxon Emmanuel Estel of Perry County purchased land in Jackson County, Fountain Bluff Township that lay almost directly east of

Wittenberg and within one section of the shore of the Mississippi River. Specifically he bought the south half of the southeast quarter of Section 23, Township 9, Range 4 from Benjamin and Mary Ann Bradshaw for \$425.¹³ Emmanuel and T. Christian Estel were the children of Johann Estel, a joiner craftsman. They were respectively six and eight years old when they migrated with their family from Saxony in 1839.¹⁴ By August 1863, Emmanuel Estel had sold that same Bradshaw property for \$500 to John D. Moore, by surname probably not a German.¹⁵ The sale was not filed until July 1866, probably because of Estel's activities during the Civil War. The Sixty-fourth Regiment of the Enrolled Missouri Militia organized in Perry County on 27 October 1862. Emmanuel Estel commanded Company I.¹⁶

Both T. Christian and Emmanuel Estel bought and sold land in Fountain Bluff Township during the late 1860s and early 1870s. The first piece of property sold to another German Saxon from Missouri was on 11 August 1873.¹⁷ The brothers sold John Luedemann irregular lot two, which lay on the Mississippi River and was bounded by Duncan Mill Slough. Joseph Weinhold, a notary public, witnessed the sale at Wittenberg, Missouri. Weinhold was part proprietor of the firm Weinhold and Estel, a flourmill at Wittenberg. Weinhold served as a county judge and a justice of the peace and evidently was both a partner and friend of Emmanuel and T. Christian Estel.¹⁸

In November 1874, Emmanuel Estel purchased over 600 acres of Mississippi River bottomland in Jackson County. He bought it with the highest bid at the Murphysboro Courthouse auction of the estate of Leonard Woolnick.¹⁹ Also during 1874, he purchased 1,084 acres from his brother T. Christian Estel and wife Ferrike for \$5,000.²⁰ Throughout this time he continued to purchase land in small segments and began to sell land to other Saxon Germans. In 1874 Estel sold land to Henry Frederking, in 1875 to Henry Ehlers, Leo Hines [probably Heins], John Luedemann, Joachim Heitmann and John Heeszal.²¹ This group appeared to be the initial German settlers from Perry County to Jackson County, Illinois. Land purchased was in Sections 25, 26 and 35 in Township 9, known as Fountain Bluff Township. The southern boundaries of Sections 25 and 26 meet Sections 35 and 36, which are fractional sections on the curve of the Mississippi River.

On 15 February 1878, Estel sold the land he had purchased from his brother T. Christian to Peter Versemann, Fredrich Hollmann, Frederick Rathjen, John Bellmann and Johann Brunkhorst for a total of \$6,325. The land sold to individuals fronted on the Mississippi River and had been marked into "irregular lots." For example Peter Versemann's irregular lot number eight lay between the Mississippi River and the church lot. John Bellmann's irregular lot number six was in Section 36 and Survey 683 [an early militia man claim] on the banks of the Mississippi River and contained forty-one acres. An unknown person plotted the land into lots, possibly Estel since he purchased and sold many of the lots which consisted of several acres: Fredrich Hollmann's lot nine held 62.50 acres, Johann Brunkhorst's "irregular" lot contained 53.39 acres. All lots were on the banks of the Mississippi River and formed the traditional string shaped pattern of German villages, *Straßendörfer*, long and narrow, similar to the lots in Altenburg.²² Brunkhorst constructed a store, house and barn on his property and created Brunkhorst Landing on the banks of the Mississippi River, north of present-day Grand Tower and Wittenberg. The area became known as the Fountain Bluff community.

From the available evidence, Emmanuel Estel never lived in Illinois.

Land sales were conducted from Perry County, Missouri, and witnessed by local notary publics. In fact, Estel moved from Perry County to St. Louis between 1874 and 1875 during the period that he sold land.

Some of the Saxon Germans may have lived in Jackson County, Illinois, before they purchased land and settled. According to the naturalization records, Joachim Heitmann, Henry Ehlers, John Luedemann, John Brunkhorst, Johann Bellmann, John Heeszel, Fredrich Hollmann and Henry Haehnlein all became citizens of the United State on 28 March 1876.²³ For some of the group, this naturalization occurred two years before they purchased land from Emmanuel Estel. To become citizens, these men swore that they had lived in the United States for five years and in the state of Illinois for one year. According to local history, many German Saxons came to Illinois to work for the Grand Tower Mining, Manufacturing, and Transportation Company.²⁴ The company mined coal and transported it by railroad and up and down the Big Muddy and Mississippi Rivers by steamboat. It later also smelted pig iron from Missouri iron ore. In the 1870 Industrial Census, the Grand Tower Mining, Manufacturing and Transportation Company stated that it employed 647 men, owned three mines that produced 165,000 tons of bituminous coal, and would soon construct an iron foundry that would employ 200 men.²⁵ Possibly young Missouri German men came to Illinois to earn enough money to purchase farms in the Illinois bottomlands of the Mississippi River.

The 1850 U. S. Census did not list any residents of Fountain Bluff precinct with the birthplace of Germany.²⁶ The 1880 federal census listed nineteen families of German birth or heritage related to the Perry County settlement out of the ninety-seven families in Fountain Bluff Township. Thus, from the first Saxon Germans settling in 1873, by 1880, only seven years later, twenty percent of the residents of Fountain Bluff were of Saxon German or German heritage. This illustrated the migration across the Mississippi River. The majority of the Germans listed on the U. S. Census had a land connection to Emmanuel Estel.²⁷

Stories of the original Illinois settlers continue to be told among family descendants. According to Joseph Brunkhorst, his father, Johann Brunkhorst, came from Germany with an aunt to Wittenberg, Missouri, in 1864 when Johann was twelve years old. Johann recalled that life was hard in Germany. His aunt worked "in a commissary" and would "bring the heel of a piece of bread home and put it under his pillow." When Johann inherited sufficient monies from his father, "he was ready to come over here." At that time in Germany, the state required "them to ... study agriculture, and the women, folk weaving" and "that was the reason they left over there."²⁸ In 1868, when Johann was sixteen, he and six others from the German Saxon colony in Missouri began working at the Grand Tower Mining, Manufacturing and Transportation Company iron smelters just north of Grand Tower in Jackson County. It is probable that they worked with coal and coke ovens since, according to the census, the iron foundry was not instituted until the 1870s. This information by Joseph Brunkhorst corresponded to the written record of naturalization and deeds, although the exact date of 1868 could not be verified.

The early Illinois German settlers confronted primitive conditions compared to those in Perry County. Anna Stegmann Oetjen related a story as heard from her husband's grandparents. The newly married Guetersloh's arrived to live in a small shanty where an apparent suicide had occurred. The sixteen-year-old wife

was "so scared and... so homesick." The husband as a Civil War soldier "was used to a rough life." The shanty held no windows and "they only had blocks of wood to sit on, they didn't have a chair." For food, "grandpa would get a turkey or whatever. . . . grandma and grandpa cleared all of that where Neunert is (Neunert was three miles northwest of Fountain Bluff). The Gueterslohs were first [to migrate across the Mississippi River] with Brunkhorst, Heins."²⁹

Others from the Heins family heard similar family stories. "They [German Saxons in Missouri] had a lot a hills. That's why there was always this or that one drawn over here. . . . This was all in woods." The Heins family arrived around 1875 after purchasing land from Emmanuel Estel. "He was forty and she was twenty. And when they got married, then they just had a little place where they built a cabin and all their land was all woods, in lumber, where they had to clear themselves in order to raise a little bit of something,"³⁰

One of the earliest problems the settlers faced was flooding in the spring. Flooding plagued the German settlers as it had their predecessors in the township. Tales of high water abounded. Joseph Brunkhorst related his father's experience of buying land: "about half of it was still under [water] because he could a got land for a dollar an acre." Johann did not take the land "because one man owed him ninety some dollars and he was gonna give him an hundred dollar duck pond" for a farm. Joseph spoke of the later drained bottomland with levees: "Now it's worth a thousand or maybe two thousand dollars an acre."³¹

Under the authority of the Farm Drainage Act of 1885, the Drainage District drained Big Lake in 1895. Drainage of the Big Lake area and levee building was a lengthy process. According to the *Record of the Organization and Proceeding of the Degognia and Fountain Bluff Levee and Drainage District, 1912-1924*, the construction and maintenance of culverts, locks, floodgates, drains, levees and earth embankments continued over time. The District hired engineers, hauled earth for fill, and laid drain-tile. The earth fill embankments settled and eroded with heavy rains and floods from both the Mississippi and Big Muddy Rivers, and therefore levees had to be raised. Government monies and local assessments funded Drainage District improvements. As members of the commission, the German settlement employed workers and petitioned for new drainage systems. In January 1914, G. H. Hahnlein, John Darnstaedt, Henry Vogel, J. Dietrich, John Meisner and Fred Oetjen requested drainage of lands by Forked Lake on the western edge of the settlement.³²

Before the construction of the modern levee system on the Mississippi River, the most famous flood was in 1903. As Ida Darnstaedt stated: "It was as high as the chair seats in the house."³³ In 1911 the District constructed the first Mississippi River levee by human and horsepower. It withstood many floods but broke in 1922 and 1927. In 1949 the Army Corps of Engineers completed a new levee. They constructed it with sand dredged from the Mississippi River and earth moved by cable cars. The levee changed the Bottoms. Joseph Brunkhorst recalled that since 1903: "Most of the farmers were flooded every third year," but they looked forward to the flooding since it fertilized the soil. "They raised big crops. It [the flood] was nothing for them, they would just take their changes."³⁴

In spring 1973, the Mississippi River reached its highest point in history, floodgates closed and the farmers waited with anxiety. The levees held but internal flooding from heavy rains inundated roads for eight weeks. On July 10, the

floodgates opened and the water finally drained away. The Mississippi River always haunted the Illinois German Saxons of the Bottoms. The Brunkhorst family farm originally contained 200 acres, then "the government [Army Corps of Engineers] changed the River and the River come right towards our farm, the main current. It got down to about sixty acres all we had left . . . just kept caving in and caving in."³⁵

Stabilizing their land through levees was not as important to the settlement as securing their ethnic and religious community. Like their Missouri relatives, the Illinois German settlers believed in education, especially in the German language and Lutheranism. As if following the original "Regulations for Settlement of the Germans 'Gesellschaft' Emigrating with Herr Pastor Stephan to the United States of North American," the Illinois Germans founded a church and school simultaneously. The original code for public buildings stated: "A church shall be the first of the public buildings constructed, thereafter . . . the school."³⁶

In 1876, the community constructed a log Christ Lutheran Church, "Die Deutsche Ev. Lutheran Christus Gemeinde U. A. C. zu Fountain Bluff, Jackson County, Ill." in German, twenty-two by thirty-two feet, on land donated by Emmanuel Estel. Johann Brunkhorst, Johann Bellmann, Heinrich Ehlers, Johann Heeszel, Joachim Heitman, Fredrich Hollmann and Johann Luedemann founded the congregation.³⁷ All of the church organizers purchased land from Estel between 1873 and 1878. In 1877 the Estel gift of five acres in the northeast quarter of Section 35 and the deed to Christ Lutheran Church in Jackson County was clarified.³⁸ By 1878 the trustees of the new church were John Heeszel, John Bellmann and Fredrich Hollmann. Heeszel had purchased land from Estel in 1873 and Bellmann and Hollmann in 1878. In 1895 Johann Brunkhorst donated two acres adjoining the church for a cemetery.³⁹

According to the church records of the relocated Christ Lutheran Church, Neunert, Illinois, the first death in the congregation was Anna-Maria Brunkhorst in 1877, the year of her birth. She was the daughter of John (Johann) and Maria Bellmann Brunkhorst. The first marriage performed was for Johann Miesner and Anna Luedemann in April 1879 and the first birth was Maria Heitmann, in January 1878.⁴⁰ All of these persons were related to settlers who purchased land from Estel. In the church records from 1888, sixty-four families registered as church members.⁴¹ One third of the names connected to the original purchasers of land from Estel; the others were new German names. From this evidence, it is probable that migration from Germany and from Perry County, Missouri, continued into the Illinois bottomlands of the Mississippi River. The last German immigrant recorded in the church records was Anna Meisner who arrived with her parents and seven brothers and sisters in 1885 and died in 1976 at the age of ninety-five years.⁴²

Pastors and their assistants held the first school classes in the log church at Fountain Bluff. In 1895, because of the school's distance from the growing settlement, the Germans constructed another school six miles northwest of Fountain Bluff on land donated by G. H. Haehnlein. Students from the pastoral college in Springfield, Missouri, taught at this school. From his early school days in the early 1900s, Joseph Brunkhorst recalled a typical boy's scheme. The school clapboard roof captured the snow and when the potbelly stove heated the roof, the roof leaked. The teacher always sent a student up to clear the roof. "This particular day. I didn't have my lesson too good, the minister, he was our teacher, he sent me and another fellow up there and when I got there the snow was all gone."

So Joseph and his friend concocted a plan: "I took a whole bucket full of snow back up with me and sprinkled it over. It dripped and we worked all afternoon, we'd take down a half-bucket full and bring a whole bucket of snow back up."⁴³

In 1904 the Germans purchased land from the Oetjen family in Neunert to centralize the school in the expanding community. Three miles northwest of Fountain Bluff and three miles east of the Haehnlein farm, the Neunert settlement included two stores, a harness shop, a blacksmith, and an 1892 post office. The Germans moved the schoolhouse on the Haehnlein farm and expanded it on the new site to accommodate the children of both the Fountain Bluff and Haehnlein farm schools. A new brick church was erected in 1906 at the same site. The Neunert location became the permanent site of Christ Lutheran School and Church. Although the old log church was dismantled in 1914, the cemetery remained on the original Fountain Bluff site.⁴⁴

According to students in the early twentieth century at the school, subjects included religion, arithmetic, geography, physiology, history and English. The teacher taught the alphabet in German and English. The history of Martin Luther and catechism was in German, although later catechism books included both English and German. *Der Lutheraner*, a religious newspaper of the Missouri Synod, was regular reading. For additional reading in German, books could be ordered through pastors. Students attended for five to seven years, usually beginning school at seven years old and continuing until they were twelve or thirteen.⁴⁵

Beginning in the late nineteenth century and continuing into the twentieth, the Illinois Germans worked together as a community even as small settlements increased. "From here on all the way to Chester [to the north, Randolph County] or Rockwood, . . . all of them is German people that their father or grandfather came from Germany, from Altenburg, and then bought land over here."⁴⁶ As Joseph Brunkhorst noted: "All the neighbors would go together and raise barns or even build houses." When acreage was in timber ". . . we would organize, get together and roll logs. Clean the land and burn them. There was no big sawmill down here."⁴⁷ Meta Miesner Fritsche also recalled the community working together on timber cutting in the early 1910s. "The men would clear in the winter, make firewood." Brush and large logs that wouldn't split were burned. "They had plenty of wood, could be a little choosy. They'd roll the logs when the women quilted."⁴⁸ Farmers found some of the wood to be salable. At Brunkhorst Landing ". . . people would bring logs and they would float them down to Grand Tower, had a big box factory. . . They were tied together [log rafts], had a spike with a chain on it and brought 'em down."⁴⁹

The average sixty-to-eighty acre German farmstead included several cows for milk and butter, horses or mules as work animals, hogs for fall butchering, and chickens for food and marketing. Farm buildings included the barn, smoke house, chicken house, and a shed for storage of machinery and equipment. The farmhouse, originally a log cabin, often grew to a two story white framed house with a steel roof. The total family worked to produce the major crops of corn, wheat and cow peas and performed other farm duties such as milking, churning and butchering.

Like all farmers, the German Saxons worked long full days when planting and harvesting crops. Days ran from sunrise to sunset. Farmers hired extra hands to help with harvesting, and as Natalie Heins recalled: "At that time you washed and ironed and patched for your hired help as well as your own."⁵⁰ Farm women also cooked the seemingly endless meals. Hilda Arbeiter Amschler commented about

the "so many darned hired hands." For the summer harvest of spring wheat, a farmer often hired two or three men to help shock wheat. "They eat breakfast, nine o'clock they eat lunch, come for dinner, three o'clock they eat lunch again and then for supper." Beyond the caring for hired help, a housewife continued her daily duties managing the chickens and milking cows. "You was busy. You had your cows . . . to be milked morning and night. You made your own butter. You baked your own bread."⁵¹ German Saxon farmwomen used wheat flour, not the corn meal popular with Southern neighbors, for their bread and multiple varieties of coffeecakes. Late fall sausage making included summer sausage, liver sausage, frying sausage, blood sausage, headcheese and "grid" sausage made with steel cut oats.

Brunkhorst Landing of the Fountain Bluff community, three miles north of Wittenberg, became the major market transportation point for the newly settled Illinois German Saxons in the 1870s through early 1900s. Brunkhorst Landing grew to include several buildings: a restaurant, a blacksmith shop, the Brunkhorst store, house and barn, holding pens for livestock and a wagon shop that built wagons by hand and also supplied the community with furniture and coffins. Riverboats docked at the Landing and carried corn, wheat, oats, cattle and hogs both north and south. The paddlewheel boats sometimes towed an additional barge for products. Wood was sold at the Landing for use in steamboats. Later coal became the fuel and also a product delivered at Brunkhorst Landing.⁵

Corn and wheat were major marketable crops of the Saxon Germans. Cows, pigs, chickens, ducks and hogs were mostly for home use. Farmers shipped by steamboat. Boats stopped for about two days to load and "they would give the Negroes or the white people that came a penny a sack" to put it onboard. "A lot of them would take two sacks at a time to get two cents. They would load a whole boat of corn or wheat."⁵³

At the Landing, the Brunkhorst home and store on Sunday morning appeared a beehive of activity. After church, farmers often traded their home cured bacon and brought in cattle hides; "we had to salt them down, put them in barrels and then, most times, my father had water over them." When Brunkhorst wanted to ship the hides, "we'd take it out of the barrel and just have it loose". Eggs also were shipped by boat and "one time, they were down to four cents a dozen" and the next shipment "they wanted us to pay the freight." Prices were so low that the eggs wouldn't sell for enough to pay the freight. On one occasion farmers harvested a bumper crop of potatoes and "we couldn't give them away and they started rotting and we hauled them to the River to get rid of them."⁵⁴

A dinner invitation often accompanied trading. Joseph Brunkhorst remembered that the dining room table seated sixteen people and "I sometimes seen it was loaded three times before they was all through, coffeecake piled up two feet." Salesmen arrived with a horse and buggy and stayed overnight; "For a quarter for the horse and your bed was a quarter and your meal was a quarter."⁵⁵

The steamboat trade faded as the railroads captured more and more trade. The Carbondale-Grand Tower Railroad established a station at Fountain Bluff in the 1850s. A post office opened in 1868 and continued until 1908. Jacob, northeast of Neunert, was established in 1904 on the Missouri Pacific Railroad. Emmanuel Bellmann opened a general store, which included grocery staples, clothing, hardware, furniture, caskets, and also operated as a post office. The community constructed the first grain elevator in the region in 1905.⁵⁶ The railroad and the elevator changed

the winter habit of traveling to Missouri to get flour. Formerly the settlers waited till the Mississippi River froze. "We'd take horses and drive from Brunkhorst Landing, ...across the Mississippi River and get flour from Wittenberg." The German farmers wore winter beards and "By the time they'd get back with the flour, their moustaches or their whiskers were all frozen, all solid ice." On their trip home, they stopped at the potbelly stove in the Brunkhorst store and "pulled the ice off of their beards."⁵⁷ All three of the German small villages, Fountain Bluff, Neunert, and Jacob, easily adapted to the railroad even though it distanced them from relatives and friends in Perry County, Missouri. The Fountain Bluff community of five buildings and Brunkhorst Landing were destroyed by fire in 1916. This forced residents to travel to Grand Tower to use the Wittenberg ferry to visit relatives in Missouri.

The families in the Illinois Bottoms continued intermarriages as they had in the old country and in Perry County. Early in the nineteenth century because of economic depression and over-population, German states placed restrictions on marriages. Some states demanded proof of income earning ability before marriage was allowed, and by 1852 an additional requirement demanded ownership of land, a needed craft occupation, or tools.⁵⁸ This policy indirectly influenced the Germans' descendants and the age for marriage among Germans in Illinois. German women in Jackson County did not marry until their middle twenties. Most, if not needed at home or by relatives, traveled to St. Louis to work as cooks or housekeepers for other German Lutheran families. Young men also often went to St. Louis to earn money to purchase farmland. Many times, attracted by their mutual homesickness, couples formed relationships in the city and returned home to the Bottoms to be married. Other young people were lucky to find employment closer to home. Joe Brunkhorst recalled their ten-room house at threshing time: "We had four hired girls and we gave them a dollar a week and their board and clothing. They did housework and cooking. I guess we could have had a dozen of them because they came from Missouri and they all looking for work." When the young women grew old enough, "then they got married, some big farmer's boy over here."⁵⁹

The couples formed from the work relationship did not wander far from the family farmstead. Carl O. Sauer noted in his Missouri Ozarks Highland geographical study: "Stability remains the most distinguishing characteristic of the German stock. Where Germans have located in most they have remained." Germans did not generally sell their land. "Property is handed down from father to son, and in many cases the descendants of the original entrymen still retain the land."⁶⁰ Concerning the Saxon Germans, Russel L. Gerlach recorded with his 1970s research of Ozark immigrants: "In the case of the Saxon area of eastern Perry County, sixty percent of the surnames of the original Saxon immigrants--164 out of 272 original surnames—are represented in the rolls of the present population."⁶¹

Concerning the Illinois Germans, in a comparison of the Christ Lutheran Church membership list of 1888 with the names on the 1982 plat map of Fountain Bluff Township, sixty-one percent of the surnames remained the same as the original church list.⁶² Thirty-nine names out of the original sixty-four family surnames of the earliest 1870s German settlers of Fountain Bluff Township were the same. In all likelihood the percentage could be greater,

since through personal conversations with this author, many residents of the Bottoms linked their names through marriage to the original settlers' group.

Similarly, in a comparison of the 1907 plat map and the 1982 plat map, at least fifty percent of the land ownership continued to remain with the same family. For example, in 1907, Section 17 contained Haehnlein, Darnstaedt, Guetersloh, Luedemann, Weston and Oetjen. In 1982 the same section contained Darnstaedt, Guetersloh, Luedemann, Oetjen and Fritsche. Out of the original six surnames, four remained the same over seventy-seven years.

Many of the settlers in Fountain Bluff Township were related to the original Missouri Saxon German immigrants of 1839. Names found in Fountain Bluff Township of the Illinois Bottoms such as Fritsche, Weber, Mueller, Darnstaedt and Schlimpert appeared on the original immigrant passenger lists of 1839.⁶³ The original immigrants came from varied Saxon regions: Hanover-eighteen immigrants, Saxony- 460, Prussia (Saxon Province)- sixty-nine and the Saxon Duchies-seventy-eight.⁶⁴ Later immigrants into Fountain Bluff Township noted similar homelands including Prussia, Hanover, and Saxony.⁶⁵ Word passed through relatives, friends, and churches. Chain migration from the Old World for religious, economic, and political reasons continued into the early twentieth century.

Martin Stephan founded a Lutheran Saxon German colony in Missouri. That colony continued to grow through the nineteenth century and spilled over the Mississippi River to create a new colony in Illinois. Through continued German immigration and intermarriages, the Illinois German Saxon population expanded to become a separate community. Gottfried Duden's comment was well founded; the prospect for the future of the Saxon Germans was much brighter in the regions along the Mississippi River.

Asheville, North Carolina

Notes

¹ Gottfried Duden, *Report on a Journey to the Western States of North America (1824-27)* (Columbia, Missouri: The State Historical Society of Missouri and University of Missouri Press, 1980), 245.

² Walter O. Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), 378-379; P. E. Kreuzmann, "Saxon Immigration to Missouri," *Missouri Historical Review* 33 (January 1939): 159-161.

³ Forster, *Zion*, 413.

⁴ Russel L. Gerlach, *Immigrants in the Ozarks: A Study in Ethnic Geography* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1976), 67.

⁵ Gotthold Heinrich Loeber, *History of Saxon Lutheran Immigration to East Perry County, Missouri, in 1839*, trans. Vernon R. Meyr (Cape Girardeau: Center for Regional History and Cultural Heritage, 1984), 8.

⁶ Frederick V. Emerson, *Geography of Missouri* quoted in Russel L. Gerlach, *Immigrants in the Ozarks*, 59.

⁷ *History of Jackson County, Illinois* (Philadelphia: Brink, McDonough and Company, 1878), 32.

⁸ Jess E. Thilenius and Felix Snider, *Tower Rock* (Cape Girardeau, MO: Ramfre Press, 1968), 34.

⁹ *History of Jackson County*, 122-123.

¹⁰ Joseph Brunkhorst, Grand Tower, IL, interview by Sharon Celsor, 16 August 1983, transcript, EP 33, Ethnic Patterns in Handwork, University Museum Archives, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale.

¹¹ *History of Jackson County*, 19.

¹² Kreutzmann, "Saxon Immigration," 168.

¹³ Jackson County, Illinois, *Deed Record* (1861-1863), Book P, 402-403.

¹⁴ Forster, *Zion*, 542.

¹⁵ Jackson County, Illinois, *Deed Record* (1866-1867), Book T, 316.

¹⁶ *History of Southeast Missouri* (Cape Girardeau: Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1888), 737-738.

¹⁷ Jackson County, Illinois, *Deed Record* (1872-1873), Book 4, 428.

¹⁸ *History of Southeast Missouri*, 737-738.

¹⁹ Jackson County, Illinois, *Deed Record* (1872-1874), Book 6, 497-499.

²⁰ Jackson County, Illinois, *Deed Record* (1874-1875), Book 8, 247-248.

²¹ Jackson County, Illinois, *General Index Grantor* (1873-1881), 48; *General Index Grantee* (1873-1881), 68, 69, 94; *General Index Grantor* (1873-1881), 49.

²² Jackson County, Illinois, *General Grantor Index* (1873-1881), 50.

²³ Jackson County, Illinois, *Naturalization Record* (1859-1892) (Springfield, Illinois: Illinois States Archives, microfilm 6/232/2) No. 48, 80-85.

²⁴ Interview with Joseph Brunkhorst

²⁵ U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Industrial Schedules of Illinois: 1880*, Jackson County, Illinois (Springfield, Illinois: Illinois State Archives, microfilm 951.15)

²⁶ Jackson County, Illinois, *1850 U. S. Census Population Schedules* (Washington, DC: Microfilm Publications, National Archives) Roll 82.

²⁷ U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Tenth Census of the United States, 1880: Population*, Jackson County, Illinois. (Washington DC: Microfilm Publications, National Archives).

²⁸ Interview with Joseph Brunkhorst

²⁹ Anna Stegman Oetjen, Murphysboro, IL, interview by Bonnie J. Krause, 2 April 1979, transcript, Southern Illinois Folk Art Research Project, Special Collections, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale..

³⁰ Natalie Vogel Heins, Gorham, IL, interview by Bonnie J. Krause, 19 March 1979, transcript, Southern Illinois Folk Art Research Project, Special Collections, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois.

³¹ Interview with Joseph Brunkhorst

³² Jackson County, Illinois, *Record of Organization and Proceeding of Degognia and Fountain Bluff Levee and Drainage District* (1912-1924), 52.

³³ Ida Guttersloh Darnstaedt, Jacob, IL, interview by Bonnie J. Krause, 18 April 1979, transcript, Southern Illinois Folk Art Research Project, Special Collections, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois.

³⁴ Interview with Joseph Brunkhorst

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Forster, *Zion*, 578.

³⁷ *Serving God and Country 1876-1976: Christ Lutheran Church, Jacob, Illinois* (Sparta, Illinois: Sparta News-Plaindealer, 1976), 8

³⁸ Jackson County, Illinois, *General Grantor Index* (1873-1881), 50.

³⁹ *Serving God*, 4.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

⁴¹ Christ Lutheran Church Records, Jacob, Illinois, "Baptisms, Weddings, Deaths," (1876-1976),

2.

⁴² *Serving God*, 18.

⁴³ Interview with Joseph Brunkhorst

⁴⁴ *Serving God*, 9

⁴⁵ Christ Lutheran Church Ladies Aid, Jacob, IL, interview by Bonnie J. Krause, 7 March 1985, transcript in possession of author.

⁴⁶ Interview with Joseph Brunkhorst.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Meta Miesner Fritsche, Steeleville, IL, interview by Bonnie J. Krause, 27 March 1979, transcript, Southern Illinois Folk Arts Research Project, Special Collections, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois.

⁴⁹ Interview with Joseph Brunkhorst

⁵⁰ Interview with Natalie Vogel Heins.

⁵¹ Hilda Arbeiter Amschler, Jacob, IL, interview by Bonnie J. Krause, 19 March 1979, transcript, Southern Illinois Folk Art Research Project, Special Collections, Morris Library, Southern Illinois

University, Carbondale, Illinois.

⁵² Interview with Joseph Brunkhorst

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ *Serving God*, 32-35.

⁵⁷ Interview with Joseph Brunkhorst

⁵⁸ Mack Walker, *Germany and the Emigration 1816-1885* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1964), 54-55.

⁵⁹ Interview with Joseph Brunkhorst

⁶⁰ Carl O. Sauer, *The Geography of the Ozark Highland of Missouri* quoted in Russel L. Gerlach, *Immigrants in the Ozarks*, 60.

⁶¹ Gerlach, *Immigrants in the Ozarks*, 60.

⁶² Christ Lutheran Church Records, Jacob, Illinois (1876-1976) 2; Jackson County Farm Bureau, *Land Atlas and Plat Book, Jackson County, Illinois* (Rockford: Rockford Map Publishers, Incorporated, 1982), 12.

⁶³ Forster, *Zion*, 542-560.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 562.

⁶⁵ *Tenth Census, 1880: Population*, Jackson County, Illinois.