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**Skepticism Turns to Enthusiasm:  
Seventeen Letters Written by a German Immigrant  
in New Jersey to His Father in Hesse-Darmstadt  
between 1852 and 1859**

One week after his arrival in New Jersey, Christoph [Christoph] Farnkopf called the country "unhealthy" and vowed "not to stay here."<sup>1</sup> Nine weeks later he declared America "a land of rascals because there is no government and police" (III). But eighteen months after arriving he informed his family in Hesse-Darmstadt, that he "had decided to stay in America, because . . . [it] is a free country, one can do his business any way one wishes . . . and I do not pay taxes as in Germany" (VII).

The first few years for this twenty-three-year-old man in New Jersey were as confusing and complex as for any immigrant trying to decide in a new environment if he should remain in the New World or return "to Old Germany." The confusion was compounded by a multitude of factors which made this case a peculiar one. Farnkopf had departed his homeland illegally, leaving behind a sweetheart with an illegitimate child as well as his own prosperous father; he had brought with him money and found work immediately in New Jersey.<sup>2</sup> Christoph Farnkopf apparently had not left to escape economic misery or social injustice, but to avoid criminal prosecution. He settled in an area populated by Hessians and maintained close contacts with immigrants from his hometown. The confusion reflected in his early letters underlined the complexity of his case. Christoph Farnkopf was not an ordinary immigrant. Beginning with his first letter he vacillated about his true intentions. Yet within two years he decided to make New Jersey his home, to raise a family and to establish himself in business.<sup>3</sup>

This study will examine the gradual adjustment of Christoph Farnkopf to life in New Jersey based on his letters to his family in Hesse-Darmstadt and on the existing public records in New Jersey and in Hesse. The early letters tell of his frustrations in America, yet also show



his ambitions to improve his economic conditions. The later letters speak of the misunderstandings between his family in Germany and himself and of his success in settling in an alien world.<sup>4</sup> The study will also trace this growing discontent with his relatives. Finally we will answer the question as to whether New Jersey provided the expected golden opportunity for him and his family.

Christopf Farnkopf was born in Waldmichelbach, a small village south of Darmstadt, on 7 August 1829.<sup>5</sup> His father Martin was a successful master stonemason who had his own quarry. Christopf's mother, née Reinhard, died in 1839. Martin remarried in 1842, but his second wife, née Weber, died within three years. He did not marry again. Martin Farnkopf's death certificate listed eight surviving children in 1869, two of them living in North America. His assets represented a monetary value of 1,494.38 gulden. But he did not leave a will.<sup>6</sup>

Judging from his letters to his father and siblings, Christopf must have learned a trade involving stone cutting in Waldmichelbach but had not applied for the master examination (VII). Apparently he did not serve in the military, since his name is not to be found in any of the registers. However, he might have paid a substitute to serve in the army in his place, or he might have won the lottery and thus avoided service. Unfortunately, no evidence could be found to support either thesis. The Farnkopfs were Catholic, which however did not prevent Franziska, Christopf's younger sister, from marrying Sebastian Haid, a Protestant. Neither intermarriage nor religious ceremonies of different denominations were unusual in Waldmichelbach. Religious tolerance appeared to be common in the village.

Christopf Farnkopf was a popular and hard-drinking man. Friends asked him to witness marriages and to be a godfather for a baby boy. His signatures show a clear script and suggest a literate and strong-minded individual. The high number of illegitimate children registered in the birth record books of the Catholic and Evangelical churches in Waldmichelbach indicates a degree of promiscuity. Christopf Farnkopf must have felt a special relationship to Barbara Ackermann. On 3 February 1852 she gave birth to a boy and at the baptism Christopf admitted responsibility for the child.<sup>7</sup> Yet they did not marry. When he left in September 1852, the reader of his first letter might assume that Barbara and son Michael were the cause for his departure to North America. In later letters, however, Christopf Farnkopf urged Barbara to join him in New Jersey and his fervent pleas give evidence of a concerned and loving man.

On 8 September 1852 Christopf Farnkopf and Johannes Adam Roth left home rather abruptly, boarding a ship in Mannheim, a city south of the Grand Duchy of Hesse-Darmstadt, traveled on the Rhine to Rotterdam, transferred to another ship bound for Hull, England, and then went by rail to Liverpool. On 16 September 1852 Farnkopf and Roth and 612 other passengers left for North America and arrived in New York on 17 October 1852. Their main complaints were not their sick days and the stormy weather, but the 596 Englishmen and Irishmen (II) on board with whom Farnkopf and Roth could not converse. Perhaps this encounter



with English-speaking persons foreshadows his habit of close association with Hessians during the first few years in New Jersey.

In their first letter written on 14 September 1852 in Liverpool, England, Christopf Farnkopf and Johannes Adam Roth implied there had been a possible illegal act committed by them when they expressed fear whenever the police boarded the ship carrying them from Mannheim to Rotterdam, "now we will be handed over" (I). There were probably two stops, Worms and Mainz, within the boundary of their home principality, where officials had the right to demand identification papers from the passengers including exit visas, which Farnkopf and Roth did not have.

Young men fleeing the law in mid-nineteenth-century Germany did so for a number of reasons: draft evasion, criminal acts, political involvement, disillusioned husband or an unwed lover with an illegitimate child.

The last reason can be dismissed immediately, because Christopf in a separate note attached to the first letter to his father and siblings instructed them not to forget his sweetheart and to visit his seven-month-old child. Also he asked them to show the letter to the Ackermanns. Judging from these remarks and other comments including his invitation to Barbara in subsequent letters to join him in Hoboken, it is clear she and the baby were not the cause for his sudden departure. Also, why then would Roth join him in the escape? The marriage and baptism records of neither of the Waldmichelbach churches list Roth during this period as husband or father. However, it appears that the men's escape was not only secretive but also so abrupt that they were unable to make appropriate arrangements. They seemed to have been hiding, since they had not heard of invitations to the weddings of two friends (III).

The haste of the departure seems to have been caused by an illegal or political act rather than a moral lapse. Hesse-Darmstadt was also absorbed in the political turmoil and violence caused by the Revolution of 1848 that prevailed throughout Germany for several years. A new government introduced reforms in the grand duchy, giving hope to thousands of economically depressed subjects. Yet when the revolution was lost, its leaders were persecuted by the returning establishment, and this contributed to an exodus of revolutionaries. Christopf Farnkopf, however, was not part of the political unrest, since the registers of convicted rebels including those in absentia do not contain his name.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, Christopf did not immediately participate in political life in New Jersey, unlike so many forty-eighters, who assumed an active role in American politics as soon as they arrived in the United States.<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps the most common cause for illegal emigration in Germany was to avoid military service. Written announcements displayed in town halls and newspapers in Darmstadt listed not only those who were summoned to the draft boards, but also men who purchased their military freedom by paying others to serve in their place. A close examination of existing military records indicating emigration of soldiers



without permission submitted in 1852 by Hessian regiments to the Interior Department in Darmstadt shows no listing of Farnkopf and Roth. Furthermore the list containing the names of men who were of draft age or soldiers and who had left the county of Lindenfels without receiving permission from the authorities in 1852 does not show these two names.<sup>10</sup> While the available newspapers do not include the critical years of 1848 to 1850, those which exist for later years list neither Christoph Farnkopf nor Johannes Adam Roth.<sup>11</sup> There is also the age of Christoph to consider. In 1852 he was twenty-three years old and past the normal draft age. He should have either completed his military service by 1852 or been serving. Men born in 1829 were drafted before 1852.<sup>12</sup> Neither draft evasion nor desertion seems to have been the reason for this sudden departure.

The second reference to his fleeing occurs in his letter dated 28 December 1852, when he informed his father that a friend from Waldmichelbach had informed them that their departure had been unwarranted: "And we discovered that our escape was unnecessary. All went well with that *matter*, which we appreciate" (III). Again, newspapers of this period do not mention any infractions or commutations involving these two men. And the above citation cannot refer to Barbara Ackermann. "Die Sach" ("the matter") can neither apply to draft evasion nor a major criminal violation. These charges would be too serious to be labeled simply "the matter." Rather it seems it might have been a mischievous prank perhaps bordering on a petty crime which could have been settled out of court.

In all of the first three letters from the two men and later his own letters there is only one direct reference to an illegal act. Farnkopf referred to the situation "about the stones" and "even if it did not turn out to the best, he would return" (IV). Had he stolen stones with Johannes Adam Roth? Were those urgent appeals to his father pleas to pay off the victim? Since the crime must have occurred in the summer of 1852, and neither the court records nor the newspaper articles mention any criminal acts committed by these two, it is possible that theft was the underlying cause for this illegal emigration.

Yet the good news in December 1852 was short-lived, because somewhere later he was informed of an investigation and on 4 December 1853 he asked his father directly about the matter:

I want to know how the investigation is progressing. Sebastian said as soon as I arrived in Waldmichelbach the police would arrest me and hand me over to the courts and I might be confined for a half year as well as have to pay expenses. (VI)

The shortness of his possible prison term suggests that Christoph Farnkopf was neither a political activist nor a draft dodger. The sentences for treason issued in 1852 ranged from seven to fourteen years.<sup>13</sup>

At the end of January or beginning of February 1854 Martin Farnkopf must have gone through much trouble to take care of "the matter,"



since on 22 March 1854 Christopf thanked his father for having taken care of this matter "so that I can return to you," and at the end of the letter he asked his father "to send the bill for the trouble you undertook. I and Adam will pay for it" (VII). Martin had sent two letters to his son: 17 January and 8 February 1854. The former arrived on 17 March and the latter on 21 March. Christopf answered the second one immediately on the following day suggesting that he had not responded to the first. This implies that the good news arrived in the second letter and the matter had been settled during the period between the time the two letters had been written. But it was too late. Christopf Farnkopf had already decided to make New Jersey his home.

Hoboken in 1852 had attracted many Germans including Hessians. It is not possible to determine the exact number of persons from Waldmichelbach in Hoboken and surrounding areas because of incomplete and missing records and the illegal emigration of some. Not all Germans were listed in the Hoboken city directories, including Farnkopf and Roth, and the applications for naturalization and census records of 1860 list only Hesse-Darmstadt or Germany as place of birth. A similar void exists among the death and birth certificates in Hudson County. Legal emigration from Waldmichelbach to North America is not documented prior to 1852. From 1852 to 1860 an average of twenty persons per year, including children, left the village after securing permission from the government.<sup>14</sup> These figures do not include men such as Farnkopf and Roth who fled secretly because of dubious activities or criminal involvement which might lead to the government's refusal to grant the exit visas. Every citizen wishing to emigrate from Hesse-Darmstadt was required to apply for an exit visa and to prove that he or she owed no debts. In addition, males had to prove that they had fulfilled their military obligation.<sup>15</sup> By 1852 both legal and illegal emigrants from this village had settled in New York and New Jersey. A network of communication among these people from Hesse-Darmstadt existed to announce the coming of new arrivals and to help them find work and lodging. When Farnkopf and Roth arrived in New York City on 17 October 1852, they were greeted by several friends and their arrival was celebrated with other former residents of Waldmichelbach with beer. The bacchanalian festivities lasted for five days while they were staying at a friend's house in New York until they were assured work in Hoboken (II). Such receptions of and attempts to find work for Waldmichelbach friends were repeated several times later, and judging from Farnkopf's letters these were common practices among the former residents (III and IX).

Welcoming new arrivals by renting a boat to approach the steamships was not uncommon (IX). Once they had landed, the first hours were spent drinking beer, reading letters, and listening to the news from the village. The first two major objectives of any immigrant were to secure employment and to find lodging. Neither Farnkopf nor the persons he mentioned in his letters encountered any difficulty accomplishing these objectives. Christopf's brother-in-law, Sebastian Haid, for example, was welcomed by Farnkopf on his arrival in New York on 17



November 1853 and "we . . . drank to our health until the next day" (VI). They then went to Hoboken, where Haid stayed with him for eight days "until he found employment" in a quarry (VI). In each case it was the Waldmichelbach connection that provided the initial shelter and employment.

The closeness of the former residents is mentioned throughout the letters.<sup>16</sup> In the March 1854 letter he listed all the people who had visited him or whom he had seen lately. A strong closeness among the immigrants from Waldmichelbach must have existed, a relationship of support and encouragement. They were never alone. Michael Reinhard, Christopf's cousin, either visited them in Hoboken every other Sunday in 1853 or Christopf and Adam went to his house (V). The trip itself did not constitute a hardship since the ferryboat connections between Hoboken and Manhattan were frequent and convenient. In Farnkopf's quarters they met with others from the village. In one letter Christopf asked his father for the address of Christopf Voss who apparently was living nearby. A reference in a later letter showed that Farnkopf did contact Voss (II). This request seemed unusual since they seemed to know the address of everyone from Waldmichelbach living in Hudson County. Others lived within walking distance from Farnkopf's house (VII). One Sunday during the middle of July 1856 they had a house full of friends (XIV). The letter listed over ten persons and spoke of congeniality and sharing of letters from the old country.

At Christopf's first place of work he found two other men from his hometown (II). Others later joined this business, including his brother-in-law and another former resident of Waldmichelbach, Franz Stai. The latter seemed to be an embarrassment to the Hessians. Farnkopf called him mean and insolent, and eventually Stai was fired (VII and XI).

Why did Christopf Farnkopf settle in Hoboken? In Waldmichelbach he had worked with stone in his father's quarry and his sudden departure was also apparently related to stone. Several quarries were located in and north of Hoboken, and they employed Germans. The Waldmichelbach connection offered job opportunities to these two men who were working with two others from Waldmichelbach, Joseph Arnold and Nickolaus Kollmar, in the same quarry (II).

Farnkopf's inability to speak English apparently forced him to accept a lower-paying job. He would later advise his relatives and friends in Hesse to learn English, if they were planning to emigrate to the United States. Farnkopf had acquired the skills for his trade, but his expertise was apparently not enough in October 1852, and he had to perform a lesser job to meet his financial expenses for room and board. Prior job training in Germany must have been another major concern, since he advised his Hessian friends to come prepared. A third piece of advice to would-be immigrants was to avoid arriving in autumn, since work opportunities were limited during the winter season, forcing immigrants to accept mediocre jobs, as he had done.

Christopf Farnkopf left home to avoid criminal prosecution. Was this flight a permanent one or did he intend to return to Waldmichelbach to his family and to Barbara Ackermann and their son? Farnkopf in his first



few letters sent mixed signals home. From Liverpool he wrote: "We now say good-bye, good-bye to our homeland and we are now seeking another homeland, namely America . . . until we see each other again" (I). Certainly his father with a thriving business would not come to America, and considering Christopf's legal status he could not return immediately. Is this hope of a reunion an indication of the insignificance of his troubles in Hesse? Or is it merely an expression to alleviate any sorrow or anger among his relatives?

In their first letter from Hoboken Christopf and Adam sent confusing signals to their parents. The two men were critical of what they called the unhealthy climate, and expressed fear that the winter would be severe. The moderate summer temperatures and the cold rather than severe winter of Hesse sharply contrasted with the weather in New Jersey. Otherwise the letter is filled with positive reactions including a lengthy description of the available food, implying that in Hesse they ate considerably less. As usual, they boasted about beer drinking. Their letter exudes enthusiasm about New Jersey and the job opportunities they expected in the spring. Their urging Sebastian Haid to emigrate, and their reports of others' decisions to stay in North America, indicate two optimistic men who anticipate a great future in New Jersey. They closed their letter: "Dear parents, we repeat do not worry about us, we are in good spirits and do not wish to be in Germany right now" (II).

About nine weeks later they reported about their good health and their satisfaction about being in America: "We still like it here" (III). Yet they had one criticism:

Christmas we spent happily drinking beer. But the Americans work like any other day and so also do many Germans; that we consider incorrect, because America is a land of rascals because there is no government and police. (III)

The passage shows how politically naive these men were and supports the previous contention that they were not involved in the Revolution of 1848. Were they objecting on religious grounds? Christopf's letters never include Biblical or religious references. Religion and church are never mentioned in his letters. On another level, however, these lines explain the anger of English Protestants in New Jersey toward Germans who drank too much.<sup>17</sup> The political naiveté of Farnkopf is also reflected in the absence of any references to the political and social environment of Hudson County. The New Jersey Know-Nothings, who achieved their political apex in the election of 1856,<sup>18</sup> and the riots in Newark in 1854 are never mentioned in his letters.<sup>19</sup>

One could explain this outburst as a reaction by a homesick man celebrating Christmas away from home for the first time, yet there are other indications of a longing for Germany. At the time of writing Christopf and Adam were unemployed and had spent their savings to pay for room and board ("things are not good"). But there is no anger coming from these lines; rather, the earlier optimism is repeated here: "but everything will be different in the spring, then we can earn



money." This letter reveals two calculating men aspiring to improve their lives and prepared to struggle to achieve their goals. In a previous letter Martin Farnkopf had told them that life in Germany was also good. Their response was succinct: "You wrote that we had our America in Germany, which is not true, because we never had it so good in Germany" (III). Ten weeks after their arrival, even though unemployed, these two men exuded optimism and confidence. Perhaps in a mood of depression during the holidays, they informed their parents on 28 December 1852 that they might return "in two to three years." Only if business were poor would they leave New Jersey earlier. This letter is filled with mixed signals that may have been deliberate.

By May 1853, Adam Roth and Christopf Farnkopf were no longer living in the same boarding house in Hoboken. Christopf gave no reason. But he did inform his father that he would visit Germany during the coming winter and that he wanted to take his brother Michael back with him to New Jersey. Work was plentiful in his business and "one can earn a pretty penny." He did not object to the hard work of spending eleven hours at the quarry, because "we live the way we want to" and "here we drink more beer than water in Germany." Christopf was again employed in the stone business (IV). He saw the opportunities and was willing to work hard to realize them.

In his next letter, 4 September 1853, Farnkopf repeated his intention to return to Germany in late 1853 in order to allow him to save more money and come to Waldmichelbach with more than he had left with one year earlier. Adam Roth and Nickolaus Kollmar would accompany him. But a major change had occurred. His return would be a permanent one. The heat of the summer and illnesses cause him to call America "an unhealthy country and I would not like to remain here, because one is not sure of one's life in the summer." It was his health that concerned him and temporarily caused him to doubt chances for personal betterment (V).

On 17 November 1853 his brother-in-law, Sebastian Haid, arrived in North America bringing with him the bad news that Christopf was being investigated. This date is important, since in the previous letter Christopf had predicted his departure by now. Why had he postponed his return? With the arrival of fall Farnkopf examined his life in terms of work, earnings and food. Relief from the smoldering heat allowed him to reassess the practical aspects of his new homeland.

On 4 December 1853 Farnkopf announced his change of heart about a return to Germany to visit his relatives over the winter. His indecision becomes apparent upon reading these two letters. There was probably no reason for him to leave New Jersey, except for the temporary frustration about the heat. Lack of money could not have been a factor, because in this letter he included a check for \$20 for his infant son (VI).

The following spring he received the good news of being able to return to Hesse-Darmstadt. But he had decided to remain in New Jersey. His arguments are convincing and reflect a positive and optimistic attitude toward his new homeland:



I have considered everything. If I go home I will have a difficult time in becoming a master, and without this certificate one cannot accomplish much in Germany. . . . because here one can make a living in many different ways. Here is a free country, one can do his business any way one wishes and what I own is mine. And I do not have to pay taxes as in Germany. If you think about it one lives here like in heaven when compared with Germany. . . . here one can live without worries. (VII)

This excerpt reveals much about Christopf Farnkopf, Hesse-Darmstadt and his new environment. He had not left to escape economic misery, since he must have completed his journeyman requirements and was eligible to apply for the master's program, a process which led to economic stability and social status. Yet the last step demanded a vigorous involvement, living away from home, and arduous work before receiving the master's certificate. The calculating Farnkopf was apparently not willing to subject himself to this exhausting process, since he anticipated greater economic benefits and social recognition in New Jersey. Fewer commercial restrictions and a prospering economy were the motivations for remaining in New Jersey. Freedom to move and to change work without governmental interference convinced Christopf Farnkopf to look forward to a more expansive future in 1854, only two years after his arrival in New Jersey. His arguments went beyond work, abundance of food, and economic freedom. There was also a personal reason for staying. Shortly before his 22 March 1854 letter, Farnkopf had received a communication from Barbara announcing her plans to arrive during the following summer. Besides her companionship and his anticipation of seeing his son, he had practical reasons for welcoming her. She could do the laundry for which he was currently paying. His room and board would not increase because of her, and he also wrote that he would not have to go to strangers anymore (VII). Unfortunately, he did not elaborate this point. Another reason for staying was probably the camaraderie that existed in Hoboken.

The 22 March 1854 letter represented a definite break with his past and a determination to commit all his energies to his new homeland. Christopf Farnkopf had decided to become an American. That fall he applied for naturalization in Jersey City and four years later, on 1 November 1858, he became an American citizen.<sup>20</sup>

While Christopf enjoyed the friendships of his fellow immigrants from Waldmichelbach during the initial years and maintained close contact with them, including joining a *Turnverein* (VIII), he seemed to separate himself very gradually from them. His letters after 1856 contain fewer references to friends from Hesse-Darmstadt. Definite changes had occurred in the life of Christopf Farnkopf. Although not a decisive reason, naturalization was one indication. In 1856 he did not report to his father so extensively about Germans as previously. In November 1856 he signed his letter in Latin script for the first time, and he began using English words in his letters to his family.

Apparently he had learned sufficient English by 1854 to approach



county officials to give him a death certificate for Johannes Adam Roth, who had drowned during the summer (VIII). This accident had required an investigation by the sheriff in order to issue a certificate. The process was lengthy enough to require Christopf to take off from work. He later charged Roth's parents for this service. He must have spoken well enough to have accomplished this task, since his bill to Roth's parents did not mention an aide or translator (XI). In later letters he used "rent" and "money" rather than the German equivalents (XV).

Another reason for the claim of a sufficient mastery of English by Christopf is his and Nickolaus Kollmar's decision to start a business in 1856. The stone business probably could not be limited only to German-speaking builders and future home owners, the way a neighborhood bakery could, for example. Farnkopf and Kollmar needed a market beyond the German-speaking population, and in order to extend their business, they had to speak English. At the same time as he was mastering English and doing business with non-Germans, a separation from his ethnic identity occurred.

Until March 1853 he lived with Roth in the same boarding house and then, for unexplained reasons, they separated. The following year on 17 August 1854 Barbara Ackermann and their child arrived. Young Michael, however, died within eight days, leaving them both in deep shock, especially Barbara, who for several weeks was unable to function normally. They finally married and on 3 February 1856 another boy was born.<sup>22</sup> Yet this important event was mentioned by Christopf almost in passing at the end of the letter: "I don't know any other news than that we have a new baby boy . . . who is quite healthy and cheerful" (XV).

Family disputes had developed both in North America and in Hesse-Darmstadt. Beginning in 1856 the letters become shorter, reveal fewer personal matters, and end in 1859 bringing the written correspondence between father and son to a sorrowful finale.

Christopf had arrived in New Jersey with savings inherited from his mother.<sup>22</sup> He first cut stone for low wages barely covering his living expenses and not allowing him to save any money. But six months later he doubled his weekly salary (IV) and by September 1853 he saved one hundred gulden in two months (V). Farnkopf was proud of his earnings and throughout the coming years he stressed the hard work and improving the quality of his life, such as buying clothing for two hundred gulden.<sup>23</sup>

The seasons were extreme for this German coming from a temperate climate. He compared New Jersey's fall with Germany's summer. In two letters he described the heat in Hoboken. The heat was so unbearable that on some days in 1853 fifty to sixty persons died of heat stroke (V). And the following year they worked from sunrise until 10 or 10:30 in the morning, rested for several hours and returned later in the afternoon. At night they could not sleep because of the heat. Farnkopf suffered much from the heat, but second-hand reports to his father that his son was resting too much infuriated Christopf more than the heat:

I believe I make the most out of it as any one else, to make it short, no



worker is in the position to work at noon in the summer under the sky. And you wrote that you had informed yourself. . . . I would like to know these blockheads who speak this way. (IX)

With his savings from New Jersey and financial contributions from his father and Barbara's family, Christoph Farnkopf was able to buy land in Guttenberg within four years after arrival.<sup>24</sup> On 21 October 1856 he purchased his first undeveloped lot with Kollmar, although the deed does not list Christoph.<sup>25</sup> On 29 November 1856 he informed his father that "I and Kollmar started a business . . . we bought a quarry . . . because the rent was too high." They first rented the land and realized that purchasing would create more profits since "there was work for three years." In his letter Christoph mentioned the sales price of \$600, while the deed stated \$140.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps they had bought an existing business and paid also for good will and equipment. Initially they employed fifteen persons but with the arrival of winter they had to lay off five men.

They struggled through the winter and "desperately needed money for the business." But his father's "check arrived in the nick of time . . . and still we survived." Optimism and commitment emerge from this letter. There is neither doubt nor pessimism; on the contrary he saw a bright future for them and "I am not going to switch with you. I would not sell my part of the business for less than 2,000 dollars." Perhaps his enthusiasm was exaggerated, since they had bought the business five months earlier for only \$600. He even wrote his father that he is not "bragging" (XVI). Unfortunately, this was the last letter dealing with his business. On 11 July 1857 he and Kollmar bought two adjoining lots for \$400, holding joint title with their wives. The value of the two lots increased by almost 50 percent in less than nine months.<sup>27</sup>

In considering Christoph's financial involvement, a number of questions arise. His letter indicated success in his new business, but there is no evidence of a commercial enterprise owned by Farnkopf and Kollmar during this period. The public records do not list them.<sup>28</sup> On 20 November 1857, four months after the last purchase, they sold the three lots for \$1,000.<sup>29</sup> Were they real estate speculators in a developing town? Or were they victims of the depression of 1857, which had a severe impact on the growing industries of New Jersey?<sup>30</sup> Their three lots would remain with the purchaser until after 1873. What motivated them to sell? Was there a rift between the two? It could not have been lack of work, since the area was still growing. In his last letter to his father, Farnkopf mentioned neither work nor the business. Letters from Sebastian and Franziska Haid to Waldmichelbach indicated prosperity for Christoph, but there were no specific references to his wealth.<sup>31</sup>

On 25 August 1858 he purchased a lot with a house on Hudson Avenue in Guttenberg, four blocks from his former business.<sup>32</sup> This became the residence for the Farnkopf family until 1873. There was one more acquisition within the period under consideration. On 11 June 1860 he bought two additional undeveloped lots on Herrman Avenue, in Guttenberg.<sup>33</sup> Had he become a land speculator?



The year 1854 was a pivotal year for Christopf Farnkopf. He was reunited with his sweetheart, married her and established a family in Guttenberg. His personal and professional life was gratifying and promised a success story for this immigrant. Another factor seemed to contribute also to a fulfilling life, the arrival of his sister, the first member of his family to join him in Hoboken. In almost every letter Christopf had wished to be with his family, now she was in New Jersey. She and Barbara arrived on the same ship on 17 August 1854 (IX).

Greed and gossip seemed gradually to cause a rift between sister and brother. The tension emerged several months after the arrival of his sister Franziska, who joined her husband, Sebastian Haid, in Hoboken in August 1854. Sebastian, a carpenter by trade, had first found work as a stonemason with Christopf. When his wife joined him one year later, they apparently lived together with Christopf and Barbara. Then tension, which, judging from later letters, was caused by financial differences, eventually led to a separation of the two families. "We do not live together anymore. It would not be good for siblings" (XI). Franz (Franziska's nickname) and Sebastian were envious of Barbara and Christopf. Sebastian was not only performing a task for which he was untrained, but he also received lower pay. Within one year they moved to New York after the Farnkopfs rented space in Guttenberg (X). This new town, carved out of North Bergen in 1853, welcomed new settlers within its borders.<sup>34</sup> Did Farnkopf seize the opportunity to improve his lifestyle in 1855? Or did they move further north to evade Franz and Sebastian? Had the Farnkopfs been subsidizing the Haid's living expenses? There seems to be an affirmative response to these questions. In his 21 April 1856 letter, Christopf assumed that his father's silence is caused by Franz's scolding her brother in her letters: "Is it perhaps because of my sister and my brother-in-law. They probably scolded me because I did not share everything with them" (XIII).

Aggravating the family feud, Christopf accused his sister and two siblings in Waldmichelbach of stealing money from their father (XVI). The friction between brother and sister finally climaxed in 1859, when Christopf rejected Franz as sister and called Sebastian "Mr. Haid," in his last letter to his father. Christopf's attack was also directed against his father, who had listened to his sister and former residents of Waldmichelbach without asking him about the truth. His father's silence about Christopf's family infuriated the son, forcing him to call his father biased, and he concluded the letter: "In reference to news you can read about it in my wife's letter to her sister Katharina" (XVII). On 12 December 1857 the Haid's informed their parents that they talked and drank with the Farnkopfs at friends' houses but no longer visited each other.

What had happened in those seven years that caused a permanent separation between father and son, and brother and sister? Christopf Farnkopf had always expressed a loving and concerned feeling toward all members of his family by wishing them well and inquiring about their health. After he established himself he advised some to come over. He was particularly interested in having his brother Michael come to



Hoboken (IV). Michael never came. Christopf also encouraged his sister Franz to join her husband and, of course, while still struggling himself, he advised Sebastian to emigrate. Christopf was an optimistic and hard-working man. Perhaps his enthusiasm toward his work and his new country alienated the Haidts, who were confronted by hard times during their first year. Later letters to their families confirm the difficulties experienced by this family, including sick children, high doctors' bills, and a rebellious son.<sup>35</sup> It seems the Farnkopfs' success contributed to the disillusionment of the Haidts and their envy caused the isolation of Christopf.

Farnkopf's letters indicated that he experienced a gradual increase in wealth by saving, buying land, and purchasing a quarry with a fellow immigrant from Waldmichelbach. But how rich was he? The 1860 census listed him as a quarryman (and all birth and death records of his children during the 1850s and 1860s do so as well). Furthermore, the census showed him owning no real and personal property. Why did he lie? Although the legal owner of two lots and a house, he told census takers on 10 July 1860 that he owned no real estate and had no personal assets.<sup>36</sup> Why did he deceive the census officials? Did the memories of Hessian tax collectors remind him of an unpleasant incident? Was he evading taxes? The answers seem to be affirmative and might lead one to understand his answers on the 1860 census.

Although interested in socializing with people from his village and apparently maintaining a German lifestyle, he did become a naturalized citizen on 1 November 1858, slightly more than five years after arriving in the United States. While there are no statistics on how many Germans were naturalized in the 1850s, his step proved his belief in settling permanently in New Jersey and his faith in this country. He had applied for naturalization in 1854, two years after settling in New Jersey, and this application indicated no intended permanent return to Waldmichelbach.

His strong belief in this country did not emerge immediately after he received his first job in Hoboken. To the contrary, his feelings toward North America were initially negative, but his trust and conviction in the values of this nation changed within eighteen months after his arrival. Christopf Farnkopf eventually conveyed confidence in and optimism toward New Jersey.

Christopf Farnkopf was not driven by economic circumstances or political conditions, when he fled Hesse-Darmstadt with his friend in 1852. The twenty-three-year-old man appeared ambitiously enterprising, and he sought economic betterment and developed a personal confidence in New Jersey. Being literate and possessing a small inheritance gave him an advantage over many other immigrants. Although eventually permitted to return to Waldmichelbach, Christopf Farnkopf and his wife and children chose Guttenberg as their home to seek economic prosperity and social acceptance. When he wrote his last letter to his father in 1859, Christopf had already purchased a house, was employed as a skilled quarryman, and had saved money through land



speculation. He earned his economic success through vigorous work and responsive dealings with the market. He became a naturalized citizen and learned English. In his early years in Hudson County he lived in German-speaking areas with other persons from Waldmichelbach. However, social mobility had infected most Germans in Guttenberg and by 1870 only three German families remained in his neighborhood.<sup>37</sup>

In the end, Christopf Farnkopf's circumstances must have changed. A decline in health is indicated by his use of a mark rather than his signature on later documents. And his financial stability must have deteriorated, as his death certificate lists him as a "laborer." He died of "consumption" on 28 February 1873,<sup>38</sup> and four years later his widow's house was sold at a public auction by the county sheriff.<sup>39</sup>

In any case, Christopf Farnkopf had certainly achieved economic success during the first ten years in New Jersey. He had improved his lifestyle and could confidently claim a better life than if he had stayed in Hesse. For Christopf Farnkopf, New Jersey proved to be, at least for a while, the land of golden opportunity.

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#### Appendix Letters

I	Liverpool	14 September 1852	C.F. + A.R.
II	Hoboken	5 November 1852	C.F. + A.R.
III	Hoboken	28 December 1852	C.F. + A.R.
IV	Hoboken	15 May 1853	C.F.
V	Hoboken	4 September 1853	C.F.
VI	Hoboken	4 December 1853	C.F.
VII	North Hoboken	22 March 1854	C.F.
VIII	North Hoboken	16 July 1854	C.F.
IX	North Hoboken	18 September 1854	C.F. + B.[A.]
X	Guttenberg	13 May 1855	C.F.
XI	Guttenberg	19 June 1855	C.F.
XII	Guttenberg	30 September 1855	C.F.
XIII	Guttenberg	21 April 1856	C.F.
XIV	Guttenberg	2 August 1856	B.[F.]
XV	Guttenberg	29 November 1856	C.F.
XVI	Guttenberg	18 March 1857	C.F.
XVII	Guttenberg	17 March 1859	C.F.

C.F. = Christopf Farnkopf, A.R. = Adam Roth, B.A. = Barbara Ackermann, B.F. = Barbara Farnkopf



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This study was made possible through a grant from the New Jersey Historical Commission and a stipend and released time from Trenton State College. I would like to thank the two institutions for their generous assistance. No project could be successful without the advice and help from individuals, only two of whom I want to name and thank here, Else Winkel and Helmut Jockel. Mrs. Winkel helped me in transcribing the letters written in German script. Mr. Jockel first showed me the seventeen letters and later contributed in many ways to this research. My thanks are also extended to the staffs of the New Jersey Archives in Trenton and of the Hessian Archives in Darmstadt, Federal Republic of Germany.

During my research in the summer of 1986 in the Hessian Archives in Darmstadt, Mr. Jockel informed me of the existence of seventeen letters written by an immigrant in New Jersey to his father in Hesse-Darmstadt during the mid-nineteenth century. My first task was to transcribe them from German script into modern German, and then translate the seventeen letters into English. I have assigned Roman numerals to the seventeen letters, in the order of the dates they were written. The numbers appear within the text. The photocopies of these original letters are in my possession. The originals can be found under call number G 28 Waldmichelbach F 134.

<sup>2</sup> Examining the existing official emigration lists of Hesse-Darmstadt located in the Hessian State Archives, I concluded that most of the single men who left Germany were penniless and unskilled. I plan to document this finding in a paper in which I will compare the lives of Hessian immigrants in Hesse and New Jersey in the mid-nineteenth century.

<sup>3</sup> Seventeen letters have survived, and they are located in Martin Farnkopf's death record file in the Hessian Archives in Darmstadt, West Germany. The first three letters were written by Christopf but addressed to his family as well as to the family of Johannes Adam Roth, his friend from home who had emigrated with Christopf. Both signed these three letters. Letter XIV was written by Barbara Ackermann, Christopf's wife, to her family. The letter found its way into Martin's file because of financial transactions he had performed for the Ackermanns. Other letters were written and lost or ignored, since both parties complained about unanswered questions contained in these missing letters. No letters written by the Farnkops and Ackermanns to their children in New Jersey have survived. My query about Christopf Farnkopf's descendants published by the *Newark Star Ledger* (NJ) did not produce any positive results.

<sup>4</sup> Christopf Farnkopf's spelling varies during these seven years. I will be consistent with the spelling. Christopf signed sixteen out of seventeen letters with "pf" as well as a receipt in 1851. His father's death certificate also listed Christopf as a surviving son "in Amerika." His last letter written in 1859 showed a new spelling "ph." American clerks wrote his name "Christopher" on deeds, US Census forms, and his death certificate. Other variations of names and towns exist. The names of his acquaintances Christopf Voss and Nickolaus Kollmar are spelled with "pf" and "ck," respectively. The current spelling of Christopf's hometown is Wald-Michelbach. Farnkopf's later residence in New Jersey also was spelled differently. I chose the present version: Guttenberg. Whenever possible, I render the modern spelling.

<sup>5</sup> Hessisches Staatsarchiv, Darmstadt (HSA,DA), *Pfarrbuch der katholischen Pfarrei, Waldmichelbach, 1829*, 5.

<sup>6</sup> HSA,DA, call number: G 28 Waldmichelbach F 134.

<sup>7</sup> HSA,DA, *Geburts = Protocoll für die katholische Kirche zu Waldmichelbach für das Jahr 1852*, 3.

<sup>8</sup> HSA,DA. An examination of the *Darmstädter Zeitung* of this period and the public conviction notices, "Straferkenntnisse der Gerichte der Provinz Starkenburg," do not list Farnkopf or Roth.

<sup>9</sup> One of several books: Carl Wittke, *Refugees of Revolution: The German Forty-eighters in America* (Philadelphia, 1952).

<sup>10</sup> HSA,DA, Abteilung Ministerium des Innern, Verzeichnis 11, Konvolut 54. This microfilm contains the correspondence of the Department of Justice and the county administrations regarding secret emigration and the lists of secret emigrants between May and December 1852. There is a total of nine microfilms of nineteenth-century documents of the Grand-Ducal Ministry of Justice, which had been filmed by the Library of Congress in



1934. These original materials were destroyed during World War II. The nine microfilms are now available in the Library of Congress (James Madison Building) and the HSA,DA.

<sup>11</sup> I examined the *Darmstädter Zeitung* for this period.

<sup>12</sup> See n. 10.

<sup>13</sup> See n. 8.

<sup>14</sup> HSA,DA, Official emigration lists for Kreis Lindenfels, G 15 Heppenheim J 8. For example, on 17 June 1854 twelve persons from Waldmichelbach received permission to emigrate, including Barbara Ackermann and her son Michael, and Franziska Haid (Christopf's sister) and her two sons.

<sup>15</sup> HSA,DA. There are many administrative notices dealing with emigration published by the Grand-Ducal Department of Justice and sent to the county administrations or local municipalities during the 1850s, e.g., Reminder no. 7, dated 11 March 1853. Emigration was obviously a major concern of the government. Administrators warned of illegal emigrants avoiding the military service or paying their debts, and instructed the governing bodies to prevent such emigration. There also seemed to be a great concern for the health and welfare of the emigrants, and laws were passed to assure the emigrants' safety and well-being.

<sup>16</sup> Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted* (Boston, 1973), 152-79.

<sup>17</sup> Various articles of this period in the *Sentinel of Freedom* (Newark) refer to the excessive drinking habits of German immigrants: 26 December 1854, p. 3, and 7 May 1850, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> Irving S. Kull, ed., *New Jersey: A History* (Philadelphia, 1930), 3:751-52. For a general account of Nativism and German-Americans see La Vern J. Rippley, *The German Americans* (Boston, 1976), 186-90, and Wittke, *Refugees of Revolution*.

<sup>19</sup> William Starr Myers, *The Story of New Jersey* (New York, 1945) 2:330, and the *Newark Sentinel of Freedom*, 4 September 1854. This paper also covered riots between Germans and Irish immigrants, and it is difficult to understand how Farnkopf could have missed these mob actions.

<sup>20</sup> Genealogical Society, Hudson County, Clerk's Office, Declaration of Intention and Petition for Naturalization, Roll 1, p. 18.

<sup>21</sup> New Jersey Vital Statistics, Hudson County, Birth Records, Reel 14, P.

<sup>22</sup> HSA,DA, call number: G 28 Waldmichelbach F 134.

<sup>23</sup> Mack Walker, *Germany and the Emigration, 1816-1885* (Cambridge, MA, 1964), 160, fn 21: "The Gulden was worth \$.38. . . ."

<sup>24</sup> In several letters Christopf Farnkopf refers to receiving money from his father and the Ackermanns. These contributions were probably settlements for future inheritance claims.

<sup>25</sup> Genealogical Society, Hudson County, Register of Deeds, L 50, p. 672. All future references to Hudson County Deeds will be indicated with "Deeds."

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Deeds, L 62, p. 180.

<sup>28</sup> I checked the deeds and commercial records of this period in the Administration Building of Hudson County in Jersey City, and I did not find any references to Farnkopf or Kollmar owning a business.

<sup>29</sup> Deeds, L 64, p. 207.

<sup>30</sup> Kull, 2:584-87. See also John T. Cunningham, *New Jersey: America's Main Road* (Garden City, New York, 1976), 151-53.

<sup>31</sup> There are also original letters written by Franziska and Sebastian Haid to Martin Farnkopf. G 28 Waldmichelbach F 134. The photocopies of these originals are in my possession. A reference to Christopf Farnkopf's well-being is found in a letter written by the Haid on 4 May 1864, for example. The Haid letters are much more personal than those by Farnkopf. The former discuss in detail their own life and seem to express a greater concern for their family.

<sup>32</sup> Deeds, L 70, p. 342.

<sup>33</sup> Deeds, L 95, p. 32.

<sup>34</sup> By 1860 most of Farnkopf's neighbors were Germans, ten years later, only a few Germans remained in the neighborhood. They had been replaced by Irish families. See also Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted*, 145-51.

<sup>35</sup> Haid's letter dated 4 May 1864.



<sup>36</sup> 1860 Census Population Schedules, New Jersey, Hudson County, North Bergen Township, p. 123.

<sup>37</sup> 1870 US Census Population Schedules, New Jersey, Hudson County, Union Township, pp. 18–21. Also in G. M. Hopkins, *Combined Atlas of the State of New Jersey and the County of Hudson* (Philadelphia, 1873). The map of Guttenberg showing the names of property owners indicates few Germans living in Christoph Farnkopf's neighborhood at the beginning of the 1870s.

<sup>38</sup> New Jersey Vital Statistics, Hudson County, Death Records, Township of Union, Roll 36 AV, p. 515.

<sup>39</sup> Deeds, L 316, p. 607.



