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Star of the Republic Museum

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“Wanderlust”

German Immigration during the Republic

We are now quite content and happy. When one gets adjusted, that is, has his house finished and field fenced, it is a better living here than that of a farmer in Europe. I have no desire ever to go back. Whoever wants to see must come here; I do not believe that he will regret it.

Hubert Lux
German Settler

“Wanderlust,” the adventurous urge to see far away places, provided impetus for bringing German colonists into Texas even while Texas was still a part of the Spanish possessions in North America and continued into the period of Mexican control. Germans were part of a great population movement, the *Auswanderung* (emigration), during which hundreds of thousands of families left Germany and come to the New World; they were by far the most numerous European immigrants to Western Texas. Most of those who reached Texas were small farmers and village artisans who had left Germany for economic reasons, but a literate and influential minority were aristocrats no longer able to live in the old country; still others were adventurers drawn by romantic accounts of the Texas frontier.

Numerous causes impelled this tide of immigration; the Napoleonic wars had devastated a great portion of the land and drove many from employment, the business depression beginning in 1815 had caused great economic distress, and the Paris revolution of July 1830 threatened to dissolve the liberal political and social tranquillity of the German Confederation. During the decade of the 1830s, repression and political reprisals against the liberal movement forced highly educated individuals who suffered most from the political persecution to look to emigration as an alternative to a worsening situation. Poverty and overpopulation had already spawned the emigration of numerous German farmers and peasants lured by the prospects of cheap and fertile land.

From descriptions of earlier travelers and immigrants, America appeared to the oppressed and discontented as the home of liberty, free speech, and free press. For many of the Germans who emigrated during the 1820s and 1830s, the enterprise proved highly successful. Settled and prospering, they wrote to family and friends in Germany glowing accounts, often exaggerated, of the opportunities available in their adopted land. The most ambitious plan proposed for German colonization came from a retired Prussian army officer, J. Val. Hecke, who in 1821 published a book about his travels in North America. His opinion of the value of Texas as a Prussian colony is expressed in an excerpt from his account: “If there is a tract of land on the trans-Atlantic continent that is suited as a colonial possession for Prussia, it is the province of Texas, the acquisition of which by purchase from Spain, to which country it is neither useful nor of political worth,



“Remembrance” plate, nineteenth-century.
Collection of the Star of the Republic Museum

should be very easily accomplished." Although his plan was not carried out, later emigrants retained the idea of establishing German states within the United States where German was to be the language of business, school, and government and where German culture should flourish unhindered.

Among the first Germans to establish settlements in Texas were Friedrich Ernst and Charles Fordtran. Although not the first Germans to come to Texas, they established the first permanent German settlement there, and Mrs. Ernst is recognized as being the first German woman in Texas. Their settlement was established where the town of Industry, in Austin County, now stands. Ernst, like many who followed, was ill-prepared for pioneer life. He lacked the knowledge to build a cabin, hated guns, and brought none of the necessary equipment to clothe his family on the frontier. Nevertheless, his enthusiasm for his new country ignited German interest and started the first steady stream of migration to Texas. Ernst promised assistance to fellow immigrants, "I have a stopping place on my estate for my countrymen until they have selected a league of land. Colonel Austin has recently promised to take care that German arrivals be settled immediately." Austin greatly valued the character and industry of the Germans and said that "they have not in general that horrible *mania* for speculation which is so prominent a trait in the English and North American character, and above all they will oppose slavery." In addition to individuals, a number of organizations were formed in both Germany and

America to assist and protect emigrants, however, dissension, inadequate financing, and administrative mismanagement resulted in their ultimate failure.

Germans have formed an important part of the Texas population from the beginning; they took part in the Texan War of Independence, one of the most interesting accounts was written by German Hermann Ehrenberg, who was a participant in many of its engagements. The Germans as a class were educated and cultured, many of them belonging to high rank in their own country. Under their auspices, the first public school supported by taxation was established, and many of the officials of the state have been Germans. The courage and perseverance of these early German pioneers was bolstered by a love of freedom that guided these intrepid individuals to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles.



Wagon Train Rolls Through Washington

On September 25, the mule-driven Statehood Wagon Train stops at Washington on its way around the state. A post office on wheels will be set up to issue special commemorative cancellations in observance of the sesquicentennial of Texas statehood. Envelopes with the statehood stamp and special cancellation may be obtained at the Washington Post Office during the event, or from the Museum's giftshop.

Farm Development Includes Staff Additions

The Barrington Farm has a new director; his name is Bill Irwin. Bill comes to the park from Yuma, Arizona, where he was working as Director of Programs for a nonprofit corporation, the Yuma Crossing Foundation, which is developing several Living History sites along the Colorado River. Originally from Iowa, Bill started his career at Iowa's Living History Farms where he met his wife Shari. Bill and Shari have worked in Iowa, Utah, and Arizona in a variety of outdoor living history museums. In addition to helping Bill, Shari is also an elementary school teacher. After five years in the desert, both Bill and Shari are looking forward to living in Washington and developing the Barrington Farm.

The new Park Ranger with the big smile and the friendly greeting is San Antonio native Jim Herold. He has been giving tours at the Anson Jones home since last winter when he became an understudy to recently retired Park Ranger Jim Flick. A veteran of two decades in living history, Jim comes to us from Baylor University where he spent seven years as associate curator of the Governor Bill and Vara Daniel Historic Village. Jim tells us "the favorite part of my thirty years as an educator is the time I taught graphics and weaving at Purdue University where I met my wife, Debs, a talented quilter and spinner and an expert dog trainer. My first experience in living history came at Conner Prairie Pioneer Settlement, the renowned farming village-museum in Central Indiana. I taught there, learned about first-person role playing there, and developed interpretive programs there. I've never been far from quality living history since. What a thrill it is to be a part of Washington-on-the-Brazos."

Editor's Note: The following handwriting analysis of General Sam Houston is found in the Museum's collections. Primary documents such as this provide researchers with a window into the past and illustrate a variety of aspects of nineteenth-century culture. This particular piece helps us understand the complex man upon whom time has placed a diadem of immortality, and see him more for the individual who was described at the time of his death as having "not always been right, nor has he always been successful, but he always kept the impress of his mind upon the times in which he acted."

Dr. Humphries,
Sir,

The following is my opinion of the gentleman whose writing you have placed before me as a test.

The writer is in all his plans and purposes gen{?} his views and plans are always upon a large scale—there is nothing in his character that is small & contracted, except that he is probably somewhat close in money matters—he is ambitious, energetic and persevering; difficulties only tend to increase his abilities. He does not know what defeat is, in matters that lie within the compass of human achievement—he is fond of his family; loves his wife & children and adheres to his friends as long as they adhere to him or so long as he can make them mutually serviceable. He is, in the language of the day honorable and honest—that he may be biased in favor of his own purposes I think probable, but he aims to be honest. He is prompt, decisive and commanding—would make a bad soldier but a good leader. Calculated for learning & science; property he wants because it can command other purposes—when acting under a special motive he is concealed and prudent, but his general manner is communicative and frank.

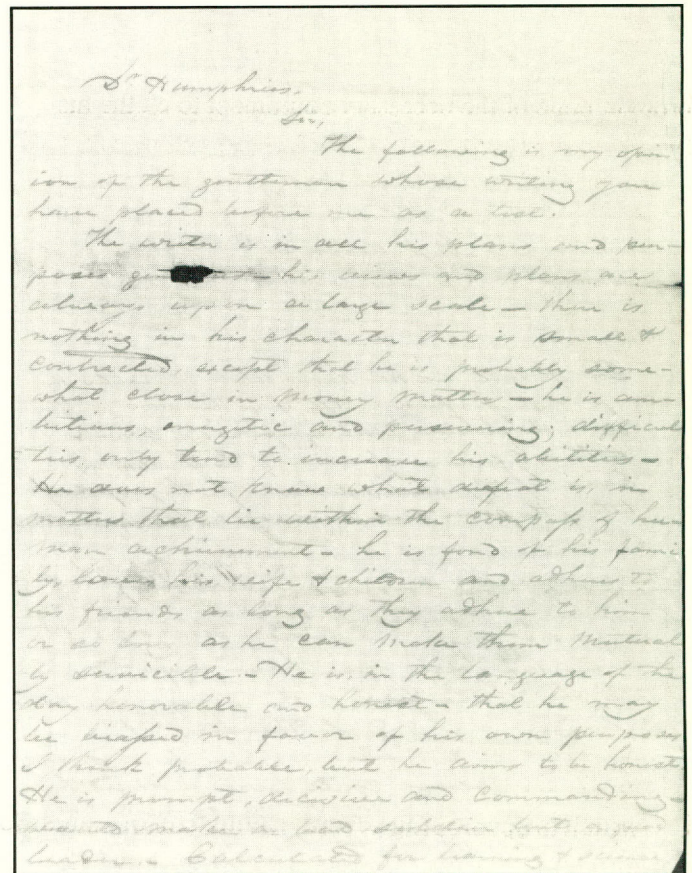
Columbus, Miss. March 21st 1839
W. Byrd Powell

Dr. Powell did not know to whose character the proceeding remarks referred until after they were written and the opinion above expressed was formed exclusively from a specimen of the gentleman's handwriting which I submitted for the purpose of testing the power and accuracy [of] his discrimination.

The writer was Genl. Houston W. W. Humphries
Late President of Texas

Remark — Since you have informed me that the writer of the paper you have submitted to me is Genl. Houston, I have one remark to make. Nothing but strong domestic feelings could have induced him to leave a woman he could not love—a mercenary man could, with other objects in mind.

W. Byrd Powell



Handwriting analysis of Sam Houston, March 21, 1839.
Collection of the Star of the Republic Museum

The Star of the Republic Museum is considering conducting a Preservation Workshop in October open to the public. The purpose would be to teach individuals the proper methods to care for their family heirlooms. If you would be interested in participating in this type of workshop, please tell us by writing to the Museum, or calling 409-878-2461.

P. O. Box 317 Washington, Texas 77880

Notes

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Star of the Republic Museum

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Joyce Schoepf. Hockley, Texas

Nineteenth-century pieced quilt, Alabama. Made by Vera Saddler, grandmother of donor.

Frances Broemer. Livingston, Texas

Nineteen Sesquicentennial artifacts including glasses, cups, and other containers. A framed drawing of Alabama Coushatta Chief Clayton Marion Sylestine. The following were all made by members of the Alabama Coushatta tribe of Texas; a pine needle basket made by Florence Robinson (Coushatta), a rivercane basket made by Maggie Poncho (Alabama), and a grass basket made by Isabella Robinson (Coushatta).

Kathryn Winkelman. Rockport, Texas

Early nineteenth-century "calash" style bonnet.

Ollie Mae Cox Hamilton and Elmer G. Hamilton. Houston, Texas

Large map of Grimes County printed on linen.

Sudie Schaer Stark. Brenham, Texas

Souvenir programs commemorating Texas Independence Day for March 2, 1939 and March 2, 1940. Souvenir program for Arbor Day, January 16, 1979.

Mr. and Mrs. Alton Linne. Bryan, Texas

Republic of Texas land grant, February 1846, signed by President Anson Jones. Receipt for land, February 1846. Deed, June 1849.

John Benson. Byron, Georgia.

Quilt made by Joanna Troutman, "The Betsy Ross of Texas," maker of the Texas flag, "Liberty or Death."

A portion of the Museum's general operating funds for this fiscal year has been provided through a \$53,633.00 grant from the Institute of Museum Services, a Federal agency that offers general operating support to the nation's museums.

Anonymous Donor.

Staffordshire canteen, handpainted, early nineteenth-century.

Washington-on-the-Brazos State Park Association. Washington, Texas

Furniture from the Hatfield Plantation in Washington County. (Described in Spring 1995 issue of the *Notes*).

Alene Moody Arrington and Jesse Moody Brown. Texas.

Nineteenth-century quilt. (Described in Winter 1995 issue of the *Notes*).

EXHIBIT SCHEDULE

The Tejanos

Foreigners in Their Native Land

Texas Furniture

Showers-Brown Exhibit Hall

MUSEUM SCHEDULE

Open Daily

10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

409-878-2461 (fax) 409-878-2462

Administered by Blinn College, Brenham, Texas

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Curator of Exhibits Sherry B. Humphreys
Curator of Education and Editor Lisa G. Kalmus
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