

**A History of
The Romberg Family
1650-1900**

Consisting of Annie Romberg's
History of The Romberg Family
Originally published about 1960

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Index and Factual Corrections
and
Romberg Family Addenda

EDITED BY

Karl Bartels, Jacquelyn Romberg & Arnold Romberg

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***Johannes Christlieb Nathanael Romberg
(1808 - 1891)***

***Friederike Amalie Elise Bauch Romberg
(1812 - 1883)***

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ANCESTORS

[1] The first Romberg about whom the family has information came about 1650 from Holland and settled in Prussian-Holland, which was the chief city of the governmental district of Königsberg in East Prussia.

What is the historical background of this area?

This land along the south coast of the Baltic Sea was the early home of the Goths, Lombards, and Burgundians, who with other Germanic tribes overran Europe in the fourth and fifth centuries and eventually brought about the fall of Rome, 476 A.D. The Baltic region was then gradually settled by Slavic races that pushed in from the east.

In 1229, which was during the crusades, the Teutonic Knights entered this area at the request of the resident Catholic bishop to defend the church and to convert the heathens. The order established headquarters at Königsberg. The Teutonic Knights started as a charity organization during the third crusade, but like the Knights Templars and Hospitallers, the order gradually assumed military duties too. In East Prussia, it engaged in an unceasing struggle to defend Christianity against the heathens. At the end of the crusades, the grandmaster of the Teutonic Order moved in 1309 from the Holy Land to Marienburg near Königsberg; the order formed twenty governmental districts and became a governing aristocracy.

Under this centralized government, the country prospered. It also prospered on account of the stimulating influence of the Hanseatic League and the colonization of farmers from Holland.

The Hanseatic League, 1360-1630, was formed to protect trade routes on land and sea against marauders. Lübeck and Königsberg both were Hansa cities. They stimulated imports and exports and brought in more settlers.

The Hanseatic League also had a very stimulating influence on the Low Countries. Dutch commercial vessels developed trade all over northern Europe and in the East and West Indies. To hold the countries where they developed trade and to find homes for their rapidly increasing population, the Dutch engaged in extensive colonization. The fertile fields of Holland bloomed like a garden, but the land was overcrowded. On the other hand, the land along

the Oder and Vistula was mainly level, suitable for agriculture, and certainly suitable for colonization. It is doubtless under such conditions that JOHANNES ROMBERG (1) came from Holland and settled in Prussian-Holland. *Kreisstadt* of the *Regierungsbezierk* of Königsberg, which means that Prussian-Holland was the chief city, governmental center, maybe capital or county seat of the governmental district of Königsberg. Later Johannes Romberg lived also in Regenwald in the district of Stettin, and in Rügenwalde in the district of Köslin. Both Köslin and Stettin lie farther west than Königsberg. They are near the Oder, while Königsberg is east of the Vistula. Johannes Romberg must have come to Prussian-Holland about 1650. This date is derived from the fact that a grandson was born 1677, according to a church record. Johannes Romberg was an *arrendator*, which means that he held land under a feudal overlord.

His son, whose name was also JOHANNES ROMBERG (2), was a musician [2] and lived south of Rügenwalde at Slave, also spelled Sclave and Schlawe. This Romberg had seventeen sons.

A son of this musician was JOHANN ROMBERG (3), who was born 1677. He married Ursula Gertrud Detloffen, also born 1677. This Romberg was official organist at Gültzov (Gülzow?). He must have died about 1749 because according to the church records at Klein-Schönfeld, his widow, Ursula Gertrud, came in 1749 to her son, Johannes Gottlieb Romberg, who was pastor at Klein-Schönfeld. She died there 1759 at the age of eighty. It seems that Johann and Ursula had an older son; for in the church book at Schlawe is recorded that the *Kunstpfeiffer* Jochem Romberg as widower married Dorothea Ruddoffen in 1727 and that they had four children. A *Kunstpfeiffer* is an artistic performer on a fife, perhaps a flute player.

The son of the organist was JOHANN GOTTLIEB ROMBERG (4), who was born 1708. He was pastor of the church at Borkenhagen near Labes; and later, 1741, pastor at Klein-Schönfeld near Greifenhagen, Pomerania. Greifenhagen is on the Oder and south of Stettm. His first wife was Anna Friederike Sievertin 1714-1754. After her death he married Anna Dorothea Christiane Moldenhauer, daughter of Johann Friedrich Moldenhauer, who was pastor at Mertzendorf in the Priegnitz. She was born there, 1726. As an orphan she came to her mother's

brother, pastor Schultz at Gartz. She married Johann Gottlieb Romberg at Klein-Schönfeld in 1755. Gartz is on the Oder a little below Greifenhagen and on the west side of the river. It was therefore in the grand duchy of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, the country from which the Texas Rombergs emigrated.

Pastor Romberg and his first wife had thirteen children. In his second union seven children were born. The names of these children indicate the type of names in vogue at that time. They also indicate what type of names were considered suitable in a pastor's family. The names and dates of birth are as follows: Gottlieb Wilhelm, 1739; Johann Christlieb, 1741; Charlotte Lowise, 1742; Karl Gotthilf, 1743; Friederike Charlotte, 1744; Gottfried, 1745; Friedrich Nathanael, (No date given); Johann Christian, 1745; Johanna Katharina, 1749; August Jakob Elias, 1751; Dorothea Karolina, 1752; Bertha Christiana, 1753. The children of the second union were Anna Juliana, 1756; Bertha Justina, 1758; Samuel Gottlob, 1760; Friedrich Josephus, 1762; David (Second name illegible), 1764; Johann Gottlieb Nehemia, 1765; Joseph Christlieb, 1768.

At the death of his first wife the father wrote in the church record: "1754. On the sixth of October on 7 Trinitatus, hor, 10-11 ante merid., my God cast me and my ten children into the deepest grief; for He took from us their devoted mother and from me my dearly beloved, devout, faithful helpmate. Before the end came, her sins seemed overpowering to her, but her faith finally conquered so that she not only attained final mercy but demanded her inheritance in Heaven, as she said. Her heroic departure alone consoles me, and her love at least remains with me and mine as a blessing. Amen. Age 39 years less 3 months. The parentation (funeral rites for parent) was in charge of Binowiensis Pastor Wittig."

At the death of the second wife he wrote: "1770. The 23 day of May hor. 10-11 ante merid., died a faithful stepmother, Anna Dorothea Christiana, nee Moldenhauer, my beloved wife, by marriage [3] Mrs. Pastor Romberg of this place. She was born November 23, 1726, at Mertensdorf in the Priegnitz, came to her mother's brother, honorary pastor (*Ehrenpastor*) Schultz, as an orphan in 1736. In 1755 she became the mother to 10 orphans in Klein-Schönfeld. She went through her married life quietly,

lovingly, and industriously, through sorrow and distress calmly, more active in works than in words. She suffered through a long illness, and died in the faith of Jesus. She left three sons and one daughter. Parentation. Hebrews 11: "All these died in the Faith. Age 44 years."

At the death of Johann Gottlieb Romberg this was recorded:

"At Klein-Schönfeld on March 1, 1792, the Right Reverend (*Hochwohlehrwürden*) Johann Gottlieb Romberg, pastor emeritus at that place, died of a mere cold at the age of 83 years, 7 months, and 5 days."

Of the twenty children of Johann Gottlieb Romberg, the ancestor of the Texas Rombergs was JOHANN CHRISTLIEB ROMBERG (5), who was born at Klein-Schönfeld August 3, 1741. First he was assistant pastor at St. Georgen in Parchim, 1766; was ordained on December 26, and became pastor at Alt-Buckow in the grand duchy of Mecklenburg-Schwerin in 1769. He was promoted to *Praepositus* August 1, 1778, and became pastor emeritus in May, 1806. He kept his position as *Praepositus* until his death July 24, 1812, in his seventy-first year. A *Praepositus* is a higher church official, a dean or acting superintendent. Johann Christlieb Romberg was married October 24, 1769, at Parchim, to Dorothea Wildschenk, who was born at Parchim in 1732. Dorothea was daughter of the peruke maker Daniel Gabriel Wildschenk. She died of dropsy, 1785, in her fifty-fourth year. Their three children were Sophia Dorothea Elizabeth, born 1770; Christoph Ferdinand, born 1773; and Bernhard Friedrich Christlieb, born 1776.

Nearly two centuries after the marriage of Johann Christlieb and Dorothea in 1769, their descendants in Texas still had a large silver spoon that was shaped like an ordinary serving spoon but was again as wide and again as long. It was worn thin with much use and had the inscription CL 1769. Was the old spoon originally a wedding present for Johann Christlieb and Dorothea?

BERNHARD FRIEDRICH CHRISTLIEB ROMBERG (6), son of Johann Christlieb and Dorothea, was born at Alt-Buckow and became pastor there as his father's successor on May 19, 1798. He died of an abdominal complaint with convulsions August 25, 1822, in his forty-seventh year. The illness and death were said to have been the result of an act of devil-banishing performed by him. In the tavern at Wartenbrügg — so goes the legend — a number of

men, after they had gone to confession on Saturday as was then customary, had begun a game of cards which lasted into the next morning and beyond, and which finally caused them to miss the communion service. And so the devil had attained power over them. As one of them turned to pick up a card that had fallen under the table, all at once he with the cloven hoof sat right there grinning at him so that the man died of terror. For some time the devil continued to play his tricks at the tavern until Romberg, who had the power, banished him from the house. On the way home, however, he was followed by the devil and tormented in such a manner under the Wartenbrügger bridge and later [4] again in the Quertiner woods, that he was seized with convulsions and came home dripping with perspiration and died soon afterwards.

Bernhard Friedrich Christlieb Romberg on July 27, 1807, had married Conradine Sophie Friederike Hast, christened at Hagenow April 5, 1779. She was the daughter of the *Praepositus* Johann Ulrich Christoph Hast at Hagenow in Mecklenburg-Schwerin.

When she was a girl, Friederike Hast was anxious to study, since her brothers were university students; so she persuaded one of the brothers to tutor her. However, it was very difficult to carry out this plan; so she continued the studies by herself. It is said that she made good progress. Astronomy was her favorite study, and for this subject she got a chart of the stars that was in later years used by her son, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren in Texas.

Shortly before his death, her husband pledged security for a friend. Later when this debt could not be paid, she kept her husband's pledge by paying with the property she had inherited from her family — even though her legal advisers explained that she could not be forced to pay. During the Napoleonic invasion, the family fled to the northern coast. Her son, Johannes, remembered this experience well.

Her son and his family wanted her to go to Texas with them, but she declared that she was too old to make such a radical change; so she continued to live in Hagenow. She had an elderly relative for a companion. An old photograph the family has of the grandmother shows these two white-haired ladies together. A small silhouette of her was brought to Texas and decorated the first log-cabin home. This silhouette is still in existence. From Friederike came the supply of linen and silver that the pioneer

family used in Texas. From time to time she sent money, toys, articles of clothing, candy, dried fruit, flower seed, jewelry, and good books. She died after a widowhood of forty-one years in Hagenow January 16, 1863, in her eighty-fourth year.

Bernhard Friedrich Christlieb Romberg and Friederike had one son, JOHANNES CHRISTLIEB NATHANAEL (7). Since this Johannes, 1808-1892, was the son of a pastor, it was a foregone conclusion that he too would get a university education and enter the ministry; but he had very weak eyes, the result of a case of measles followed by a severe inflammation of the eyes. This condition forced him to stay in a darkened room for several months. Due to his weakened eyes, studying and therefore the ministry were out of the question. He was interested in learning some mechanical trade. All his life he was interested in carpentry. But to learn such a trade for a livelihood was for the son of a pastor unthinkable in that social class and at that time. So it was decided by his elders that he was to become a merchant, a calling for which he was totally unsuited and which was distasteful to him. At the age of fifteen he entered for training the business house of Johannes Dietrich Bauch in Schwerin. He lived in the home of his employer and pursued literary studies with the daughter, Friederike Amalie Elise Bauch. After ten years of apprenticeship, he established himself as merchant in Boizenburg and during the same year, on October 8, 1833, he married Friederike. They had been engaged ten years. Their children were: Bernhardine, born 1834; Johannes, 1836; Bernhard 1838 (died in infancy); Louise, [5] 1840; Bernhard, 1841; Ida, 1843; Caroline, 1846; Friederike, 1847; Julius, 1851.

In 1847 Johannes Romberg emigrated with his family to Texas. From now on in this account Johannes and Friederike Romberg shall be called simply Grandfather and Grandmother Romberg.

Where did all the information concerning the early history of the Romberg family come from? Is the source authentic?

The Lutheran pastor was required to keep an accurate church record. All births, baptisms, weddings, deaths, and so on were carefully recorded in the "church book." A distant relative in Germany, *Praepositus* Franz Romberg of Dassau, Mecklenburg, compiled the information and later sent it upon request to a Texas Romberg (Annie Romberg). On that occasion he wrote as follows:

“The records which I am sending of our ancestors, I have taken mainly from the notes of my father, the *Praepositus* Hermann Romberg of Kalkhorst, who procured a very careful collection of the annals of the family in the eighties of the last century through the help of his colleagues in Klein-Schönfeld, Dreißig, Alt-Buckow, Waren . . . Sternberg, and Boizenburg, who gladly assisted in securing the information. Besides, he used Willgerott: *Die Mecklenburg-Schwerinschen Pfarren seit dem Dreißig Jährigen Kriege* (The Pastorates of Mecklenburg-Schwerin Since the Thirty Years War), a work in which one can find accurate information about every pastorate and every pastor in Mecklenburg-Schwerin.”

Information regarding the parents of Grandfather and Grandmother Romberg comes mainly from Father’s manuscripts and from information given years ago by Aunt Ida Romberg to her niece Annie Romberg and recorded at that time.

What traits did the Texas descendents inherit from their Romberg ancestors?

A Lutheran pastor was employed and paid by the state. In fact, during the reformation the lay princes had taken over the properties of the Catholic Church on the plea that the wealth was needed to finance the new religion. A prerequisite to state employment was a university degree, a Doctor of Divinity degree, that may have meant less or more as the centuries passed. However, it may be assumed that the pastors listed in the Romberg family tree were educated people. The Texas Rombergs doubtless inherited from them a love for books and learning. It may also be assumed that generations of pastors developed and passed on to their descendants an appreciation for justice and honor, a desire to do right, a sense of duty and responsibility. The feeling of duty to help the community is strong in most Texas Rombergs.

The Texas Rombergs may have inherited the physical trait of longevity. Of the first generation in Texas all lived to be over seventy, most of them were over eighty, some over ninety.

The love and talent for music may come from Romberg ancestors, but it certainly came also from the Bauch family.

There is less information available about the Bauch family than about the Rombergs. The mother of Grandmother Romberg was Dorothea Bauch, nee Schleaf. She married Johannes Dietrich

Bauch, a merchant in Schwerin. Schwerin, by the way, is the capital of Mecklenburg-Schwerin and a large city. After the death of her husband, Dorothea continued the business herself. She was an energetic and [6] practical woman and successfully managed to support her household and to give her children an education. Eventually, she came to Texas and lived with her son, Hermann, near the Rombergs. In later years when her house was already gone, there was still a grove of trees in Uncle Johannes' pasture — trees regularly spaced, that had been planted around the grandmother Bauch's house. She had eight children:

Helene, who married Bühring and continued to live in Europe
Friederike, who married Johannes Romberg
Elise, who died on the voyage to Texas
Louise, who married her cousin Adolf Bauch
Caroline, who married the engineer Kellersberger
Eckhard, who married Minna Engel
Hermann, who married Erna Engel
Wilhelm, who died as a young man

About this family Father wrote as follows: “Helene was a wonderful pianist. I remember that one time I stopped in the middle of a dance to listen to her as she played, ‘Mädel wash dich, putz dich, kaemm dich schön.’ Her playing was so precise, so artistic, that it was a delight to listen. Her daughter Caroline and grandson Walter inherited this talent for music. Friederike, our mother, was not musical and Father not in the least. Elise must have been the most talented. When the theatre director was in difficulties, he came to her and asked her to substitute for the pianist. Of course she played at sight, entirely without preparation. One time she even had to take over the role of the prima donna and sing, which she did flawlessly without previous rehearsal by just reading words and music off the printed page. On the voyage to Texas, she died of cholera and was buried at sea. Louise had musical talent, but I do not recall that I ever heard her play the piano. Caroline could play well and brought a piano to Texas with her. When she married Kellersberger and he, as engineer moved from place to place, the piano was sold to a neighbor at Cat Spring. [The neighbor was named Amthor, and both he and Pastor Adolf

Fuchs wanted to buy it. His home soon became the center of lively song fests. – Louise Romberg Fuchs, *Erinnerungen*] Eckhard could read notes rapidly even though he was blind in one eye. With the heavy work here in Texas, his fingers lost their nimbleness. He played with preference Beethoven sonatas. Hermann also was musical and liked to sing; but I do not recall that he ever touched a musical instrument. Wilhelm was an expert flutist. I remember distinctly that he walked up and down in our living room playing the flute with trills and cadenzas. Perhaps he was composing. One day he came on foot from High Hill in the heat of the day. He was hot to exhaustion, drank several glasses of buttermilk, collapsed, and died.”

Grandmother was the only one among her sisters who had no musical talent, could not sing or play a musical instrument; but evidently the law of compensation in nature provided her with superior intelligence [7] and love for books and learning. She became a governess in her fourteenth year. This work was not easy, but she continued it until she married seven or eight years later. Grandmother must have been capable and practical like her mother. In Texas, she was the one who attended to the business affairs. In Boizenburg Grandfather had several apprentices in his grocery. These lived with the Romberg family. Several maids also lived with the family. Consequently Grandmother had a big household to supervise.

Grandmother must have had the qualifications that were needed for pioneering in Texas.

EMIGRATION TO TEXAS

[8] Why did Grandfather want to emigrate to Texas?

One must understand the political, social, and economic background to a situation that brought the question of emigration to the forefront. The political situation should be considered first because it had a dominating influence and affected both the social and economic conditions.

It should be remembered that there was no united German nation until 1871. At the time the Romberg family left Europe, 1847, there were only a number of independent countries in the region that later constituted Germany.

After the Napoleonic wars at the Congress of Vienna, 1815, all hopes for more liberal governments were pushed aside and the reactionary hereditary rulers with their entrenched privileges were firmly placed in control again; also, all hopes of forming a strong united German nation were pushed aside and another loose confederation was created. However, progress could not be entirely checked. From 1815 on there was more or less agitation for the establishment of representative government, constitutional monarchies, and republics. In 1819 there was a flare-up led mainly by university students and professors. This outbreak was followed by repressive measures by the various governments. There were more revolutionary movements from 1831 to 1833. The July Revolution in France, 1832, had its repercussions all over Europe. These disturbances were followed by further repressive measures especially against freedom of debate and of the press. Finally the great revolutionary movement of 1848 broke out. Its failure sent many Germans to the United States. These emigrants were known as the Forty-eighters. Many of them came to Texas.

While Grandfather Romberg did not take an active part in the different revolutionary outbreaks, he was exposed all his mature years to the discussions regarding liberty, democracy, and national unity. During the disturbances of 1832, he was already twenty-four years old, mature enough to evaluate the reasons why people were discontented. A frequent topic for discussion among those who advocated government changes, must have been the principles laid down in the introduction to our Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator

with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” and that “governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed.”

Carl Perlitz, who was about thirteen when his family came to Texas in the middle of the last century, remembered an incident that was typical of the times. His father and friends held meetings and discussions behind closed doors. One time Carl Perlitz and some of his playmates hid under the table in the father’s study — a good hiding place, for the table cloth touched the floor. The boys were too young to grasp the full import of the conversation, but they realized that the word *Freiheit*, freedom, was a bad word to use. So later they used it as a word of malediction. They employed it also when calling each other names. That word *Freiheit* was considered by them especially spicy.

[9] Grandfather’s viewpoints regarding the dignity of man, equality of opportunity, and personal freedom must have been shaped also by a great German literature — philosophical, historical, and poetic — with which he was familiar.

That the political situation in the grand duchy of Mecklenburg-Schwerin was far from perfect even as late as 1872 may be judged from a letter written September 19, 1872, by Grandmother Romberg to her son Julius, who was then a student in Schwerin, the capital of the grand duchy. Referring to the political conditions in Germany she wrote: “Your judgment regarding Germany must be one-sided. Unfortunately you are in the most notorious of the small countries in Germany. But believe me, if the political life there is dark, here it is dirty; and when I read in the newspapers the mutual accusations of dishonor, it makes me ill. . . . Your judgment may be correct so far as Mecklenburg is concerned, but surely the conditions are not the same in all of Germany. Recently Wenmohs expressed to Ida his regret that fate happened to lead you to Mecklenburg where your judgment regarding Germany must be affected so unfavorably.”

Judging from this letter, the political situation must have been highly unsatisfactory at the time the Romberg family left Mecklenburg, and this situation must therefore have been a contributing factor in the decision to emigrate.

The economic situation also must have been unsatisfactory. In some parts of the German countries, there was overpopulation,

lack of employment, and actual want. Taxes were high to keep up expensive military establishments; furthermore, there was extravagance at the courts of many of the rulers.

Agriculture was still hampered by feudal restrictions. There was a rich and privileged class and the peasant class. Friedrich Perlitz was a civil engineer; and before he came to Texas in 1848, his work was to survey for his government the agricultural land and reapportion it among the different peasants. Instead of having a long strip in one field, another few rows in another field, certain rights to a meadow, and so on, each peasant was to receive his share of land all in one piece. This work was so involved with old established rights that the surveyor spent the evenings at the village inn listening to individual claims.

Into this situation came the astounding report from reliable sources that in Texas an immigrant would be given free as much land as some of the nobility had in Europe.

Some of the emigrants of the thirties and forties left Europe because they could not live there *standesgemäß*, that is, they could not live there according to the demands of the social class to which they belonged. The son of a nobleman might enter the army and become an officer, or he might enter the clergy. As the son of a clergyman, Grandfather could associate with the nobility, as a merchant he could not. No merchant, no matter how well educated or how wealthy, was on an equal social footing with the nobility. While it may be assumed that Grandfather with his philosophical mind was not disturbed by any considerations of living *standesgemäß* or not, it is interesting that a number of persons who were later his friends and neighbors in the Latin Settlement around La Grange emigrated to [10] Texas because they could not live *standesgemäß* in the German countries.

There were for example the two young noblemen, orphans, who did not have the means to live according to their social standing. They settled near La Grange. There was the family of the French nobleman who married a beautiful fisher maiden of the Rhine. She was not *standesgemäß*, so they went to Texas. Then there was the countess who lost her husband. She had no income to live *standesgemäß*, so she moved to Texas. To help her son with the farming, she took a stool to sit on and a basket and went to the cotton field. As she progressed down the row, she moved stool and

basket. There was also the nobleman, a major in the army, who married an opera singer. She did not belong to the same social class that he did. They also lived in the Latin Settlement. To be sure the idea of living according to social standing, could not be carried out in Texas; it had no place in pioneer life, certainly not in the Latin Settlement where even the most cultured families lived in log cabins and had to do their own washing and milking — or do without.

The idea of going to America spread rapidly because most of the leaders of the movement were literary men, journalists, lawyers, and so on. Those that had left during the thirties wrote back to family and friends, stirring up more interest. In 1844 the Society for the Protection of German Immigrants in Texas attracted attention especially to Texas.

Grandfather was a cautious man. He must have considered carefully all available information concerning the question of exchanging the familiar, even with all its known drawbacks, for the probable difficulties, hardships, and hazards of the unknown. The decisive consideration that finally caused him to emigrate was the conviction that he could give his children a better opportunity for progress in the new country.

And it may have been eventually Grandmother who made the final decision to bring the family to Texas.

After the decision to emigrate had been made, the next big problem that faced the family was what to take along. What would be needed most by the family living fairly isolated under pioneer conditions?

Grandfather packed up his carpenter's tools. Then he packed up his books — boxes full of them. Mainly classics. Furthermore he bought the latest edition of Pierer's encyclopaedia, which consisted of about forty volumes. All these books Grandfather considered not a luxury but a necessity for life on the frontier. Grandmother packed up household necessities, clothing, food for the long voyage, some treasured family pictures, an ample supply of linen and silver. Much of the linen and silver had the initials FH, for it came from the dowry of Friederike Hast, Grandfather's mother.

Louise Romberg Fuchs in her reminiscences, *Erinnerungen*, written when she was eighty-four, relates the following incident

connected with the beginning of the long journey to Texas:

“While Grandfather was delayed a few more days to conclude his business affairs, Grandmother said good-bye to relatives and friends and went to the railroad station accompanied by a distant cousin. In the waiting room she directed her six children, ‘Sit right [11] here until I come back.’ Then she went on to buy the tickets and arrange for the baggage. The children got tired of waiting; they got up and met the mother. Then the conductor called, ‘All aboard.’ They got on the train and departed. However, not all got on the train. Obedient little Ida was still sitting in the station waiting for her mother. A great wailing arose on the train, but nothing could be done until next morning; for there was no telegraph and no telephone. Leaving the other children with relatives in Schwerin, the mother returned to hunt for her little girl. Fortunately the cousin had noticed Ida and had taken her home. There the mother found her little girl comforted and calmly eating a piece of bread and butter.” The harrowing experience was a terrible beginning for the long journey to Texas.

The voyage to Texas by way of New Orleans took eleven weeks. Drinking-water, carefully portioned out, was furnished by the captain. Bread was also furnished. It was a dark hard mass. Grandmother made it more palatable by beating it into crumbs and mixing it with dried fruit, which she had brought along.

Concerning Grandmother Romberg, Helene Romberg Mackensen has written as follows:

“One of her outstanding characteristics must have been courage. Quite a few years ago the *Nation* published a series of articles about American women, which explained why these women were different from those of other nationalities. In the first place, the man who wanted to go to America could go only if his wife had courage and ability to cope with unusual difficulties.

“Our grandmother must have had these qualities in a rather high degree. Think of the long ocean voyage. Add to this the fact that passengers had to furnish their own provisions. That was no easy task without refrigeration and without canned goods. Some captains provided fresh milk for the small children by taking a few goats along on the deck of the ‘old box.’ Whether the captain in this case did so, is not known.

“When the journey was ended and the family landed and

settled somewhere in the new land, they surely could not get many supplies in the stores. The stores must have been few and far away in this new and undeveloped land. Fresh fruits and vegetables must have been a rarity.

“The voyage of the Rombergs by sailboat took nearly three months — longer than had been anticipated. The new baby that Grandmother had expected shortly after arrival in Texas, came on a stormy night — the last night on the Gulf. That baby was Friederike, born November 17, 1847. Next morning Grandmother had to be carried off the boat at Galveston. A cousin of hers (Bauch), a man of athletic build, performed that service for her. To come to a new country with a new baby just in time for winter, that took more than ordinary courage.”

While Grandmother regained her strength, the family lived for several weeks in a Galveston hotel, where the rooms were divided by cloth. In the meantime, Grandfather bought a farm about one hundred miles inland on the San Bernard River near Cat Spring and rented a room in the neighborhood where the family could stay while [12] a house was built. True to frontier style, the family made the journey inland by ox wagon.

How did Grandfather happen to settle at Cat Spring?

There were two paths that led early German immigrants into Texas. During the thirties, immigrants went mainly from Galveston over Harrisburg to Austin County and later to Washington and Fayette County. The second route followed by German immigrants, especially during the forties, led from Indianola inward to New Braunfels and Fredericksburg. New Braunfels was founded in 1845. The settling of the New Braunfels-Fredericksburg area was a definite colonial enterprise. In contrast, the settlers that came into Texas over Galveston and Harrisburg came without concerted action. Grandfather just followed an established path when he went to Cat Spring.

PIONEER LIFE

[13] Life on the Bernard was for the Romberg family much like that of other early Texas settlers. Grandfather and the Bauch cousin built the log house themselves. They even split the shingles. The house had two rooms with an open hall between. Curtains in front of the attic rooms gave privacy for two bedrooms, one for the girls, the other for the boys. One reached the attic by means of a bench with a high back that Grandfather had made and that stood in the hall. Grandfather also made other needed furniture. The fireplace was constructed of wood and lined with mud in true frontier fashion.

Life on the Bernard was primitive. Grandmother tried to help the first Christmas celebration by hanging little baked sweet potatoes on the tree. The water for household use was first carried with buckets, later a barrel on a sled was used. The children gathered firewood, which they picked up under the trees near the house. From the front door, prairie chickens, wild turkeys, and deer could be seen wandering around in the vicinity. The menu consisted of beef, sweet potatoes, cornbread, and molasses. The molasses was carefully apportioned. The oldest sister poured a dab on each plate. The family did not always have milk. Farming was done on a small scale. There was no market for corn; so it was raised only in sufficient quantity to supply the family with bread. Cotton, however, could be marketed. Tobacco was readily sold at good prices.

When Grandfather reached Cat Spring, there was already a scattered German settlement, mainly of well educated professional people. The fewest of these could continue in their chosen work; most of them became farmers and stock raisers. One of the earliest families to settle there was the Von Röder family. One of the Von Rödgers shot a wild cat at one of the springs of the Bernard; therefore the name Cat Spring. A former Lutheran pastor Adolf Fuchs and his family also lived in the vicinity. The friendship with this family culminated years later in two marriages: Louise Romberg married Wilhelm Fuchs and Caroline married Hermann Fuchs. Visiting was limited, because one had to go on horseback or in a heavy wagon. There was no church. When groups got together, the men liked to sing student songs. Since the houses

were small, the visiting was usually done under the trees in the yard.

Since they had to learn all about Texas farming, it is natural that these educated people formed an organization for the purpose of getting information and of exchanging experiences regarding agriculture. Grandfather must have interested himself in the organization; for among his manuscripts was a constitution for such a club. However he had moved to Fayette County before the first regular meeting was held, which was in 1854.

The early records of the Cat Spring Agricultural Society indicate the problems that faced the immigrant farmers: where to get salt for their cattle, what to do when someone unlawfully burned off the prairies, how to grow asparagus, what marketable crops to plant and how to cultivate them.

If European relatives sent seed to Texas kinfolk, the seed was [14] carefully distributed and members later could compare methods of production and results. The annual dues of the society were fifty cents and the first expense was \$2.50 for a United States flag. That flag is still raised once a year by the society, which still holds regular monthly meetings.

Charles Nagel, who once lived in the Cat Spring neighborhood and who, years later, was Secretary of Commerce and Labor in the cabinet of President Taft, has this to say about the Cat Spring community in his book *A Boy's Civil War Story*: "The German contingent in my memory . . . represented quite largely the professional class — men and women who had been driven to emigrate from conviction, moved by a demand for greater individual freedom and opportunity. They were not a reckless lot. They had at least attempted to reckon with the chances of their adventure. The impelling force of their hazardous undertaking was the same old dream of liberty which had prompted the earliest immigration to our country, and which we are still struggling to redeem. They were of a high order, moved by the spirit for sacrifice that sustained settlers in the earlier days."

He also wrote of the Cat Spring community, "All in all it was a colony of peace and good will, in which men and women found what they had sought — liberty, and in which they patiently struggled to obtain the comforts of civilized conditions. There was neither self-assertion nor apology. Self-respect was the keynote . . .

If any disturbance of the peace among us had ever gotten into a court, we should have heard; and we never did.”

The father of Charles Nagel was the doctor of the community, who made the long trips to his scattered patients by riding a big mule that was a spectacular but also a fast and easy traveler.

One of the important family events on the Bernard was the arrival from Europe of Grandmother Bauch, (the mother of Grandmother Romberg) with her daughter Caroline and sons, Hermann and Eckhard. They brought their piano, but that luxury had to be sold here. Another event was the marriage of the oldest Romberg daughter, Bernhardine and Ludwig Franke, who had been a law student in Europe but was temporarily making a living in Texas by raising tobacco and selling cigars. Another important event in the Romberg family was the birth of the youngest son on February 2, 1851. He was named Julius; but since he was born in Texas and might therefore eventually become president of the United States, the baby was given the pet name President, which was soon shortened to Dente. And Dente he was called for years. A memento of this time is an old rawhide-bottomed rocking chair which was constructed by a cabinet maker of the Cat Spring community so that Grandmother Romberg would have a comfortable chair. It was, however, also used as a cradle for little Dente.

Living on the Bernard had one great disadvantage: too much malaria. It was reported that farther inland, Texas had a more healthful climate. So Grandfather sold his farm after six years and moved to the vicinity of La Grange in Fayette County. The farm on the Bernard was sold to Friedrich Trenckmann, the father of the Trenckmann who for years edited the *Bellville Wochenblatt* and then for many more years the *Austin Wochenblatt*. The preliminary contract, still in existence, was signed June 17, 1853. For the land Grandfather [15] was to receive \$700. Unfortunately on the original contract the paper has crumbled away where the number of acres was stated. Two-hundred head of cattle, more or less, were sold for \$5 per head; the crop for \$400; hogs were \$5 for three-year olds, \$3.75 for two-year olds, and \$1 for the younger ones. One witness who signed this contract was Dr. Hermann Nagel.

Grandfather had evidently moved to Fayette County by November 10, 1853, because on that date he appeared before the

district court at La Grange and after he had renounced “all allegiance, to every foreign Prince, Potentate, State or Sovereignty whatever, and particularly to the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg,” he became a citizen of the United States.

Concerning the purchase of land, Father has given this information: “Many early settlers came to Texas with the definite plan of buying more and more land and of improving this to increase the family income. Now, Grandfather’s mother in Europe from time to time sent money to her only child. There was no discussion of investing that money so that it would bring in profitable returns. Gold coin could always be buried under the corn crib. The viewpoint seems to have been that there was enough pasture, cattle, and field to provide for the needs of the family; and of course in Fayette County there was no market for farm products during the fifties and sixties.” The coast was too far away.

Life on the Navidad in Fayette County had its agreeable aspects. The farm had improvements: a house, barns, and a fenced-in field. The house was again a double log house with a passage, but it was built of good hewn cedar logs. Relatives lived close by. It was a few minutes’ walk to the Frankes. Similarly close by but in the opposite direction lived Grandmother Bauch with her son Hermann. Grandmother Romberg’s sister Louise had married a cousin, Adolf Bauch. They lived a few miles a way on the road to La Grange. Also on the way to La Grange lived the Perlitz family. Then Grandmother Romberg’s brother Eckhard and other relatives lived in High Hill, about eight miles away. High Hill was a German settlement with store and school. Towards La Grange lived more German families in the Latin Settlement, usually just called the Settlement.

The Perlitz family came to Texas in 1848. Like the rest of the Forty-eighters, they came on account of political conditions in Europe. Friederich Perlitz was a civil engineer. He had been educated at the home of Baron von Münchhausen together with that man’s son, so that the son would have a companion.

Friederich Perlitz related that the boy had to go without sufficient food, so that he would not be big boned like a mere peasant but would grow up to be slender and aristocratic looking. The boy’s solution to this situation was to go to the quarters of the working men at their meal time and crawl under the table. There

some kind-hearted old fellow would turn a dumpling over in the gravy, stick it on the fork and hold it under the table.

North of Grandfather Romberg lived Mr. Fitzgerald, a rich and influential slave holder. It was Mr. Fitzgerald who once remarked, "A turkey is an uncomfortable bird: too much for one person, not enough for two."

[16] A few families from the old South had their plantations along the Colorado River bottoms, where the rich soil was suitable for profitable cotton fields. However, most of the big cotton plantations with slaves and mansions were in southeast Texas, not in the prairies or timbered section of Fayette County.

Grandfather's farm was in the blackland prairie. Just west of his land extended the Texas Post Oak Belt. First attempts at neighborliness with the English-speaking people in the post oak were not encouraging, for the backwoods women smoked corncob pipes and spat into the fireplace; and so the intercourse with these people was not cultivated. However Uncle Johannes, who was friendly and easygoing, got along very well with them.

Since there was no school in the Romberg neighborhood during the fifties and early sixties, the children studied at home. Father has written as follows: "I do not recall that Father ever tried to teach us children. What we learned from him we learned through his conversation with us and with other persons; from his discussions, argumentations, and philosophizing; his occasional opinions expressed concerning such subjects as ethics, esthetics, or poetry. Mother, did everything humanly possible to teach us language, grammar, and catechism. Mother knew German and French thoroughly. I do not know when she learned English — probably after the decision was made to emigrate to Texas; however I do know that she served as interpreter when English-speaking neighbors had to transact business with Father."

"During the day she would read Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans* and then at night she would translate it, and what is more, as fluently as if she had the printed translation before her. She translated French books with the same ease.

"In the winter she always read at night to the family. It was remarkable how much she could see and read with one glance. While reading, she was always knitting-with lightning speed. When one knitting needle was empty, Mother had to look at her

knitting to pick up a new stitch; but while attending to this, she continued reading. She would turn a page and take her time smoothing it down while she was finishing the reading of the preceding page.”

The reading matter furnished good material for subsequent discussions.

German is a highly inflected language. Every sentence furnishes difficulties in conjugational and declensional endings. It was Grandmother who corrected the speech of the children and explained the grammar.

It was also Grandmother who had to do the chastising in the family when it was necessary. Grandfather would not do that. He would say, “Mother, the boy has been naughty, he needs punishment.”

This is typical of Grandfather: If one of the boys did not come home at the time he was expected, then Grandfather would begin to worry and explain to Grandmother what should be done to prevent another such occurrence. When the boy finally arrived, Grandfather would be greatly relieved, and the intended lecture would be promptly forgotten.

“Mother could go on a leisurely walk with Father; but while [17] doing her housework, was nearly always going fast,” the youngest son observed. It was the custom of Grandfather and Grandmother to take a little walk while the daughters put supper on the table. During the meal, Grandfather liked to give some attention to each child. He had a caress for one, a little bantering for another harmless fun with all of them.

Grandfather liked humor. He would not let the family overlook a little incident like the following: One time the boys had been gone several hours. Uncle Johannes came in first, and Grandfather asked “Well, what have you been doing, Johannes?” “Oh, nothing.” A little later Uncle Bernhard came in and Grandfather asked again, “What have you been doing, Bernhard?” And the answer was “Helping Johannes.”

The family used not cotton but linen towels for every day — even in the kitchen. At first it was the supply that Grandmother brought to Texas. Later it was from the supply Aunt Joline brought when she came to Texas in 1877. In the farm home at Black Jack Springs, there was never oil cloth on the dining table; it was

always the imported linen. The family had a few wooden and ordinary iron spoons that were used when meals were prepared, but on the table only silver was used.

Very agreeable was the association with the German settlers in High Hill and in the Latin Settlement near La Grange.

The Latins were so called because they were well educated had studied Latin. They were proud of their culture, and they spoke of others whose interests were centered mainly in good farming and plenty of good bacon in the smoke house as *Speckbauern* (bacon farmers). When this expression reached the bacon farmers, who had reason to be proud of their progress in this new land, they retorted by calling the Latins *Schwartenbauern*, (bacon rind farmers), this term being symbolical of very plain living, for in spite of their university education, these intellectuals often found it difficult to adjust themselves to their new surroundings.

This story is typical of the Latins: One genteel lady made a deprecating remark about the *Speckbauern*. Another person then defended the bacon farmers, saying that these people were practical and industrious; they would eventually be prosperous and important citizens in this new country. The genteel lady was distressed and retorted, "But they have no *pli*." *Pli* is a French word meaning social graces.

In order to promote social contacts and intellectual interests Grandfather organized about 1857 a literary society among the young people of the Latin Settlement. Uncle Johannes, Aunt Louise, and Uncle Bernhard were of the age to enjoy these meetings; and Aunt Louise was an especially enthusiastic and talented contributor. The organization was called the "Prairieblume" (Prairie Flower). Each member wrote usually about a previously assigned subject and handed the material to one person who read it to the group. Whenever possible, the material was handed in early enough for all of it to be copied so that even the handwriting could not give a clue as to what each one had contributed. This method encouraged those who were timid about their ability to write. Caroline Perlitz said years later that it was always interesting to guess who might have [18] written the various contributions.

The collective contributions for one meeting were also spoken of as *Prairieblume*. After a century four issues of the *Prairieblume*

are still in existence. They are especially valuable because they reveal the interests, activities, and viewpoints of the young people of the settlement during the later fifties. For example, the uneventful daily life of pioneer times and the hunger for entertainment is described in the *Prairieblume* in a letter supposedly by a young woman to some friend in Europe.

When she came to Texas, she writes, there were no schools nor time for study. Later in her desire to learn, she studied by herself. Life was simple, a farm maiden's work "monotonous," and one day followed the other in "eternal sameness." She realized that she was developing some skills in doing housework but deplored the fact that there was so little mental stimulation. Since the weekdays were so quiet, Sunday with its pleasant social affairs — if the weather permitted — was anticipated with joy. One listened for hoofbeats announcing the coming of visitors or went off to fish fries and picnics. The latter events often ended with games or dancing on the prairie grass. The stars served as chandeliers or a fire of cedar logs furnished plenty of light. She thought nothing of riding horseback fourteen or even seventeen miles to a meeting of the *Prairieblume*, which according to her report was organized to bring some poetry into the otherwise prosaic life and to give the young people an opportunity to furnish in writing something taken from the field of fantasy.

That the young men also welcomed eagerly such entertainment as the *Prairieblume* offered is plainly seen in an account, evidently written by a young man, about forms of amusement open to them. He, too, mentions that everyday life could be "desperately monotonous." When they were boys, they could go swimming on Sundays or engage in horse racing — the latter not approved of by the parents, for such racing was not always beneficial to the horses. In the adolescent age, life was "frightfully monotonous." They were not interested in children's games any more, and they shied away from association with the girls growing up into young ladies, for it became necessary to use the formal *Sie* when addressing them. Physical exercises, such as contests in running and jumping, were popular at this age. Then he mentions hunting for ducks and geese, which came in large numbers in winter. Even a cold and wet norther could not dampen the enthusiasm of an ardent hunter.

Later they took part in round games, of which some were interesting because they were “intellectual.” Most entertaining were charades, which usually left the whole house in disorder. Fortunately dancing became popular. He, too, mentions that dancing was engaged in at picnics. When dancing outdoors, a young man sometimes stumbled and fell, but no one paid much attention to such a mishap. Perhaps such dancing was not as difficult as may appear on first thought, for the dances mentioned in the *Prairieblume* are the scottische, polonaise, and the slow waltz (*Ländler*).

With everyday life as simple and uneventful as described by these two young people, and the young folk starving for entertainment, it is no wonder that the literary society prospered. Besides, in the four weeks that intervened between the meetings, there was

[19] plenty of time during the “frightfully monotonous” days to create something worthwhile for the *Prairieblume*. There was time to rewrite and polish up a poem, to think up a conundrum and put it in verse form, or to add a serious thought to an otherwise simple narrative.

The young people used the conventional mode of address, *Sie*, and were more formal in their intercourse than is customary now. The following scene illustrating this point impressed itself vividly on the memory of Caroline Perlitz: Julius Willrich riding up to the yard gate invited Carl Perlitz, “I have the honor to invite you to the next meeting of the *Prairieblume* at our house.” To this Carl Perlitz answered in all seriousness, “It is an honor to accept.” And Julius Willrich concluded, “The honor is distinctly ours.”

The families took time about in entertaining the group. At such a meeting the literary program was given first then refreshments were served, and indoor games or dancing usually ended the evening. There were pianos in the settlement; a good flute player and occasionally a violinist assisted with the music. Those coming from a distance spent the night in the neighborhood.

In the four copies of the *Prairieblume*, the topics written about were such as the events of a particular Sunday or the significance of Sunday; accounts of short trips; experiences during a journey; humorous events; the hunting of ducks, deer, bears, and so on. Then these young pioneer folks, who lived much out in the open,

mention frequently horseback riding, the prairie in its different moods, the sheltering live oak, the gray Spanish moss, long lines of flying geese, the destructive norther, the fresh morning, restful noonday, the quiet evening. Repeatedly they mention the wonder of the stars — especially sitting in front of the house in the evening under the stars.

A more serious subject that is brought up repeatedly is the comparison of social and political conditions in Europe and in Texas. In connection with conditions in Europe, the following significant expressions are used: chains, prisons, censorship, persecutions, mental chains, and rebellions. In contrast Texas is praised for its freedom of speech and religion, its democratic institutions, the right to vote, and the opportunity for progress.

In their writings these young persons show a tendency to philosophize. This probably developed from the fact that they spent long hours alone, out in the prairie or field, going about their daily tasks. They read few books, mainly classics; and they had ample time to think about the contents. In their lonely hours, these young folks then tried to find laws that explained conditions in their environment. In this effort they had the guidance of well educated parents. Such a situation seems to explain why so many of the articles and poems conclude with a generalization, a moral, or a bit of philosophy.

In studying the style of the writings, one soon observes the easy use of French words, such as *frappant*, *fontaine*, *revanche*, and *revier*. Such words indicate the influence of the brilliant court of the later Bourbons at the small capitals of Central Europe. At the time the Latins emigrated, it was still a sign of culture to speak French or at least to use French expressions. Such expressions were evidently [20] used in the homes of the Latins and found their way into the *Prairieblume*.

It is evident that some of the earlier settlers could give their children only elementary schooling here in Texas; for in a few cases the handwriting and spelling are poor, but the thought, nevertheless, is usually worthwhile, original, and arresting. On the other hand, complex sentence structure and excellent diction indicate good education, good reading, and contact with cultured people.

Approximately half of the contributions to the *Prairieblume*

are poems. That they appear so frequently and are so well written is no doubt partly to be ascribed to the influence of the mentor of the group, Grandfather Romberg. He helped by example, suggestion, and encouragement. Some of his best poems originated in this period and were written for the *Prairieblume*. Sometimes he rewrote the material furnished by a less experienced writer and handed it in to be read at a later meeting. In this manner he indicated how the same material might be treated in a different way. Many years later his younger friends still spoke of their mentor with affection and veneration.

When the Civil War broke out, the activities of this organization declined, and finally the work was entirely discontinued.

When the war spirit became tense, Uncle Johannes, Uncle Bernhard, and Carl Perlitz left Texas for hard years in Mexico, Central America, and finally in California. Now, why did they not join the Southern army and fight for the Confederacy? Simply because they did not have the Southern viewpoint. They were newcomers. They were still hampered by language difficulties. They lived on the Texas frontier where news from outside of the community was scarce and where the problems of the Old South were too far removed to be understood.

Some time after the young men had left, the uneventful life of Grandfather Romberg was interrupted by a frightening incident. A neighbor from the post oak area, looking for one of his horses, found it right by Grandfather's barn — dead. The horse had a deep gash in its side. The owner, an embittered Southerner, readily reached the conclusion that Grandfather, who was suspected of having no secessionist leanings, had tried to weaken the Southern cause by depriving it of the possible use of this horse by cutting that deep gash with a butcher knife. Justice had to be executed with vigor. Reinforced by neighbors, the owner of the horse induced Grandfather to go with him to Mr. Fitzgerald, where more men had assembled. Grandmother was alarmed and Aunt Ida hurried to notify her brother-in-law, Louis Franke, who as a former law student and a fluent speaker might be helpful in this situation. Louis Franke hastily saddled a horse and left immediately. It may have been due to his representations that the self-appointed court of justice took no action. It may have been due to the influence of

Mr. Fitzgerald, who was a neighbor and friend of the Rombergs. It may have been due mainly to the fact that Grandfather Romberg, quiet, scholarly, gentle, and peaceful, just did not give a convincing impression of being capable of cruel and spiteful deeds. The members of the court eased away, and Louis Franke took Grandfather home again.

Father has explained the incident in this manner: Wild cattle [21] always collected around the cow lot. They found escape there from the mosquitoes that swarmed in the overflow bottoms of the Navidad and nested in the tall grass of the hog-wallow flats. On the hillside by the house the grass was nibbled off and trodden down, and Gulf breeze kept the mosquitoes away. Wild cattle congregated and milling around, started fighting. Under such a condition, a fighting animal must have gored the horse.

Aunt Bernhardine's oldest son, Henry Franke, once went along when the post oak neighbors were trailing a horse thief. When they caught him, the majority voted for hanging. At that point, Henry Franke decided that he was wanted at home.

Even without such hair-raising events, the duties of everyday life furnished plenty of difficulties and hardships during the fifties and early sixties. The experiences of these years Father [Julius Romberg] described decades later in an article which he prepared for a family reunion and to which he gave the title "The Rawhide Era." The article is given here just as he wrote it.

"At the present time we fix most anything with a piece of wire. Not long ago it used to be rawhide. We had rawhide doorhinges and rawhide latchstrings. We had rawhide seats in our chairs and rawhide in our beds or cots, if any, on which we placed matr~s~s filled with corn husks. We had rawhide ropes and bridles. While the girls played with their cotton dolls, the boys worked rawhides. The ladies made hoops out of rawhide.

"Our attempts at tanning were not very successful. Our rawhide shoes would slip off when wet and pinch when dry. We tried all kinds of footwear with wooden soles and rawhide or cloth tops to keep them on, but they were clumsy. We used to go barefooted a good deal. We got used to it. Our soles got hardened. I used to run over grass burrs for some distance, then stop and rub my feet on the ground to remove the burrs that stuck. It was pretty

bad for the feet in the hot sand during the heat of the day. I sometimes had to step aside and put my feet in the shade of some cockleburr bush to let them cool off a bit. Sometimes it happened that I ran my big toe against a snag, and while it was blooming sore an obstinate calf would step on it; that would put anybody's Christian religion to a severe test. The pent-up feelings of a cowboy sometimes came to an explosion in some impious or nasty expressions.

“Hard as my soles were, I always knew when I stepped on a snake, and I always knew how to get off. We had lots of blowing adders. The darned things would blow flat, but they would not budge.

“I had no saddle, I used to ride one pony bareback until its back was sore and I had to straddle another one. Though I was on horseback most every day, I never was much of a bronco buster. Whenever a horse jerked its head down and tried to jump over it, somehow I couldn't stay on. I have been run down by an infuriated cow and knocked unconscious. Another time a cow stepped on my collarbone and broke it. We had lots of hogs. They got to breaking through the worm fence into the cornfield, and I had to get up during the night and drag them out. One of my dogs was ripped open by a pig and the poor fellow bled to death. Once an infuriated boar whetted his tusks and went for me; and in trying to dodge, I got tangled in [22] some balloon vines and fell flat on my back. The dogs saved me.

“We had lots of tarantulas. When a tarantula, runs at you, its intention is not to bite, but to crawl up on you and get a free ride. When our sheep and hogs came home, they frequently had a tarantula on the back. Some daredevil boys would extend their hands and let the tarantulas crawl up their arms, just to show their nerve. They would also handle live snakes. Such stunts never did appeal to my fancy. I have had my hands on live snakes, but not intentionally and not for long. We had a darkey sleeping in a shed. Somehow a big chicken snake dropped off a clapboard roof on his bed. We heard him yell fit to raise the dead from their slumber. He vowed that he and a snake could not occupy the same bed.

“In those days we had no matches. Most everybody carried flint, steel, and spunk in his pocket. Some had regular tinder boxes with a cotton fuse. The first matches came in a little box bored out

of soft pine containing some twenty-four hand-split, hand-dipped, sulphur-phosphorus matches. We had plenty of firewood and always tried to keep up a fire. It was carefully banked and covered with ashes during the night. We had no stove. A skillet was the one universal kitchen utensil. We baked our ponies in it, fried our meat in it and washed our dishes in it.

“We had no coffee. We tried parched corn, acorns, peas, okra, and potatoes cut in small cubes, dried, and parched. We drank some horsemint tea. Sweet potatoes and roasting ears we cooked in hot ashes. We had no success with Irish potatoes. Probably the seed had run out. Now-a-days, good Irish potatoes are raised at my old home, but the sweet potatoes dry rot.

“Most every family had an ash hopper and extracted lye for washing. We even made pretty fair soap — if the moon was right. Salt was scarce. People talked about washing it out of the dirt in the salt licks. We were fortunate in acquiring half a sack of mud scooped up on the coast near Port Lavaca. It was salt, but it was black. The meat brine we used to cook over, skim, and use again. We had no sugar. We used to boil down watermelons to a thick jelly for sweetening. Later on we constructed our own wooden molasses mill and cooked molasses. We had no evaporator but used large wash kettles. The product was dark and had a metallic taste, but it was good, if not superior to any molasses one can buy now. The first sugar we got was brown ribbon cane sugar held together by molasses not yet crystallized. When dry, it stuck together; but it was sweeter than our present-day white sugar. We had no flour. We made some starch by grating roasting ears or potatoes and pouring on water. The starch settled at the bottom and had to be dried quickly before it soured. I don’t know whether it was used for culinary purposes to make that good old brown gravy or some delicacies for special occasions. The first flour came in a barrel, was divided out among ever so many families, and had to do for most of the year.

“We had to spin, weave, and knit our own clothing. The blankets we made were not fancy but were equal if not superior to most blankets one gets now. They were all wool and not shoddy. We had no raincoats. We used a blanket instead with a hole in the center to put the head through. We dyed our cloth with different kinds of weeds, bark, green moss or lichens. We made ink out of

pokeberries, gallnuts, [23] and copperas. In the school we had slates and pencils. We had no desk to write on. The teacher had a goods box to rap on.

“We had no insect powder or kerosene. Certain insects had to be kept in check by boiling-hot water and eternal vigilance. We had no screens to our doors and windows. Everybody was full of malaria. Immigrants from Europe were not recognized as citizens until they had had their spell of chills and fever, had lost their milky white complexion and turned yellow and tan. We had no quinine. We tried all kinds of concoctions: tea or red pepper or pickly ash bark. Calomel used to be our screw worm medicine, but it gave out. Then we tried pokeweed and jimson weed. We gathered the tops of broomweeds when in bloom and boiled them down to a paste. We poured melted tallow into the wound and held the poor creature until the tallow had hardened, then covered the sore with tar. It was cruel, but it also would have been cruel to let the poor animal be eaten alive without trying everything possible to help it. We had to do the best we could.

“One of our neighbors shot his leg into splinters. Dr. Moore amputated it with a common carpenter’s saw. His assistant whimpered, “Doctor, you will kill him, you will kill him.” But the doctor saved the patient’s life. I suppose we had good doctors, but they were short on medicine. Whiskey was the popular medicine for all real, imaginary, or anticipated ailments

“In our family we practiced hydropathy a good deal. We noticed that the first thing the doctors would do was to see that the bowels were open. We thought that it was just as important that the pores should be open. For the bowels we used injections. In severe cases we added an irritant or soap to the water, which worked like a charm. The best medicine is hard work; but if that is too strong a medicine, one can produce sweat artificially by wrapping up in a wet sheet and covering with half a dozen blankets. After copious perspiration, one washed and rubbed off thoroughly to keep the pores from being clogged. If this is too simple, one can take a Turkish bath or go to some fashionable hot spring, drink mineral water and wallow in hot mud. For some intestinal worms, tomatoes — the small cherry kind — were recommended. For tape worms the doctors would put the patient on a diet of salted herring and castor oil for some three days, and then the druggist would give

him a tea of pomegranate root and charge him \$5. We found that pumpkin seed was an effective, inexpensive, pleasant, simple remedy.

“We were fortunate to have a gin and gristmill in our neighborhood. The power was a tread wheel. The gin was fed by hand. The press was on the outside and had a large vertical wooden screw. One could hear it for miles. We did not raise much cotton as our draft animals were oxen, and the only farming implements were some eye hoes and a turning plow with a wooden mouldboard. Besides during the Civil War, there was no market for cotton unless one could smuggle it across the border into Mexico and dodge the jayhawks coming back.

“When we began to use horses, we made collars out of cornshucks and slipped them over the heads of the horses. We made hats out of shucks. Later on we used palmetto. The palmetto shoots had to be gathered before they opened into a fan; they were then spread [24] and dried in the shade and bleached in the sun. They made dandy hats.

“We had a board knife and split our own shingles. If we had no nails, we put on some weight to keep the shingles from blowing off. Our first nails were wrought iron or cut out of sheet iron.

“Our lamp was some vessel into which we put a wick fed with tallow or lard. We poured melted wax down a wick to make tapers for special occasions. Some people had candle moulds into which they threaded a wick and poured melted tallow.

“When we wanted music for a dance, some one could sing on a comb covered with paper.

“Our creeks and branches were boggy, but the country was open. If we could not cross at one place, we probably could at another. Sometimes we had to pile rocks or logs or brush into a creek in order to fix a crossing.

“People wore whatever they had. One could see a man plowing barefooted but wearing a stovepipe hat. Or perhaps he wore a swallowtail coat with pants tucked up on a string or fastened with a nail in lieu of a button.

“During the Civil War, we had a weekly newspaper, which made its appearance occasionally. It was printed on all sorts of paper, even wallpaper, and brought us news of our glorious victories and daring advances.”

This concludes Father's article on life as he knew it in Texas during pioneer times, an article to which he gave the appropriate title "The Rawhide Era." It describes experiences not only of the Romberg family but conditions as they were in the entire settlement.

It should be remembered that during the Civil War, Father was only ten to fourteen years old; and that he was the only son at home during the latter part of the war. Often he had to assume a man's duties.

RECONSTRUCTION YEARS

[25] The privations and hardships that characterized frontier times and the Civil War period, gradually abated during the reconstruction years of the later sixties. There were social and economic changes; more of the Fayette County prairie was turned into fields, more fences were built, more families moved into the neighborhood, and more homes were established. The chief events in the Romberg family were the return of the two oldest sons and three weddings.

Life in the Central American states furnished plenty of hardships for Uncle Johannes and Uncle Bernhard. Suitable work was difficult to find in that underdeveloped region. During the rainy season outdoor work was reduced to a minimum. They were subject to tropical illnesses. In 1865 Uncle Johannes wrote, "At last the deplorable war (Civil War) is ended and the hope of seeing you again soon, becomes more real. However this hope is hampered by difficulties for due to so much illness our savings all wandered to the doctor. .. I am glad that after so many hardships, I can regain my strength by doing just steady work." The same year Uncle Bernhard wrote, "We were employed by a German in St. Miguel, San Salvador, who had a steam engine and a cotton gin. There we were paid \$30 per month; but unfortunately that job was not to last long, for a revolution made an end of all work."

The letters indicate how homesick the two were. Civil War conditions had interfered with the mail service. "We could not send you our address, for we did not know when we would leave again . . . Write. Write a thousand letters so that we may know at least how you are getting along at home."

The two eventually had been in all Central American states but did not like what they had seen and experienced. In July 1865 Uncle Bernhard wrote, "When we are back in the United States, we will never have never an inclination to leave again. I am sorry that I spent years of my life in such an uncivilized country when I still could have learned something. Since we finally have peace now, I hope this letter will reach you — and then answer immediately." Also in July of 1865 Uncle Johannes wrote, "I have come to the incontestable assurance that Texas is a thousand times better than Central America. Advise everyone who has an

inclination to leave Texas not to come here. . . . When I finally set my foot on Texas soil again it will be like entering Paradise.”

The ardently desired return to Texas was delayed on account of insufficient funds. Uncle Johannes finally had the opportunity to work his way by steamer to California. In the hope of securing steady employment and higher wages in a more healthful climate, he left for California; and Uncle Bernhard followed later. They lost contact by that time, but accidentally they heard of each other again. Each one worked on a ranch.

A letter written a year later, July 1, 1866, by Grandmother Romberg to Uncle Bernhard in California gives further information about the wanderings of her two sons.

“I believed, my dear boy, that you were already on your journey [26] home; and now it seems that you still have to work to earn the money for your return trip. I am so sorry that the money we sent you to Panama did not arrive there. Anyway, Mr. H. Little, the United States consul, wrote us that he did not receive it. The merchant in Galveston was to have sent that money, and now he notifies us indirectly that he attended to it and that it might have been sent to another consul than Little. All day long we have considered the problem how we could help you, but we have come to no solution.

“But first hear this joyful news: We have a letter from Johannes. One June 9 he wrote from New York where he had arrived the day before. He was a shepherd in California, and his great longing for home induced him to leave before he had sufficient funds to pay for the entire trip. He went over Greytown (port in Nicaragua). Imagine whom he met there! Carl Perlitz, who was also on his way home. They are now together and both have written for money for the trip. We sent them the funds immediately and hope they will be here in August.

“Whether it is advisable for you to follow their example, I do not know. In New York and vicinity it is probably difficult to earn any money. If you should work there in August and September, then you would arrive in New Orleans at the beginning of the yellow fever period. Therefore consider well whether you have enough funds to take you past New Orleans. If illness should again strike you or any other misfortune, and you need money, then

write how much you need and where we are to send it. It might indeed take a long time before you receive it, and so I hope that you will not need it. How I long to see you. We all do.

“What else shall I tell you about us? After finishing the crop, Julius went to High Hill to attend school there. He is now fifteen years old; and if he still is to learn something, it is high time to be at it.

“Father has had a good deal of anxiety and aggravation recently. I wrote you that we bought an additional 22.5 acres from old Mr. Gorham. Then Father wanted rails for the pasture, and rails were hard to get. You can’t imagine how much building is done here now and how rails are in demand. Father finally bought the rails, and now he can not get waggoners to haul them.

“You may wonder where we got the money for these purchases.

We sold our sheep; and since our old mother in Hagenow died, (mother of Grandfather Romberg) there was an inheritance of about \$600 more. Almost all of that money has now been spent; and the sooner you boys will be home, the better it will be. You can help Father and you can establish yourselves too. If you want to farm, you will have to break more prairie land because the old home place will be hardly large enough for all. And you will want to build, and so on. You, Bernhard, can attend to the building. Oh, you dear boys, how wonderful it will be when you are at last back home.

“The Frankes constructed a fairly large earthen tank in their pasture. They bathe in it too, which is wonderful. You will have to do something like that too. Hermann (brother of Grandmother Romberg) has bought land, too, and close by. That dear old boy still has fever from time to time. . . .

[27] “I am glad that you with all your illness and hard work have not lost the pleasure to ponder about vital questions. May these meditations lead you to a practical philosophy and fill your soul with virtue and happiness. . . .

“It was wise that you wrote to Panama. After all it might be that the money is still there, and that your acquaintances could send it to you at San Francisco by check — however, I do not believe that it will show up.

“Even though you boys will find work here too, I think you

should not over-exert yourselves as you did on your travels. And then remember that whatever you do here, you do for yourselves.”

Uncle Johannes returned home in due time and without further mishaps. Uncle Bernhard was on his way back by April of the following year, 1867. However, that Grandmother still had problems that caused her wakeful hours, may be gathered from a letter dated April 8, 1867, and written to her daughter Louise.

Aunt Louise and Uncle Wilhelm Fuchs had married in 1861 and had courageously moved to the Pecan Creek in Burnet County where Indians still prowled around occasionally to steal horses. For reasons of safety, Uncle Wilhelm brought his family to Fayette County during the later war years; but after the close of the war he moved his family back to Burnet County. Nearby lived his married older brother [Conrad Fuchs]. The two families were engaged in joint business undertakings. Grandmother’s letter is interesting because it reveals her character. Very tactfully she warns against a situation which she does not consider sound. It should be remembered that the letter was written before women took university courses in psychology.

“Dear Louise,

“Today it is already April 8, and I am beginning to look for my Bernhard. He could have arrived already; however, I have to tell myself that it may take longer till he comes — even as long as May. Perhaps, we have to celebrate Easter without my boy just as we celebrated my birthday last summer without Johannes

“Our Herman (Grandmother’s youngest brother) here has sold his herd of cattle in High Hill. For him the sale was beneficial because it gave him ready cash. For selfish reasons I regretted the sale because he had intended to bring the milk cows to our farm. With the prospect of a larger household, I will have to skimp with milk and butter; and this increase in milk cows would have been very much appreciated. Hermann was paid five dollars per head, and he delivers them immediately after Easter. . . . When the fencing of our pasture is completed we would like to have fifty to one hundred head of sheep. However, when one sees the scabbed animals, one loses all courage to buy.

“You write about your joint undertakings and how wonderful

the community of work is. Here the situation is the same with Hermann and us. I decided to keep an exact account and really started to do it; but it is such a complicated affair — first half a day's work then maybe a few hours — that I gave it up. But I must tell myself that I do not like the arrangement. We are just *human* and my feeling of justice demands of me that I see to it that my brother gets a fair deal. But how can I see that he gets a fair deal when I do not even know what my obligations to him are?

However, I am also selfish and [28] I feel that I have to care more for my immediate family than for him. Father Fuchs too says, 'A partnership arrangement is a trashy affair.' And ours is such an arrangement. I have to add this observation: Order and fairness rule the world, and they do not exclude love but fortify it.

"Eighteen days ago the Wenmohs family moved into our rent house. They sold their business. . . .

"Johannes has his team going now and has already hauled five hundred rails. We have finally had the desired rain. It is too wet for hauling; so today the men want to break prairie for Hermann.

"I want to return to what you find so beautiful, the partnership work, and add a few observations that have been on my mind too much and that have absorbed my attention when I happened to be awake at night — as again last night, when I could not decide whether to write about this subject or not. I still have not decided, but I am writing now anyway.

"Bernstein says the character of a person is determined by his inclinations, and I think he is eminently right. In our actions we follow our inclinations and not our principles, and then with great conviction we gloss over and explain our decisions. We do not permit ourselves to see that we have acted wrong. Sometimes when I saw that others according to my judgment made a wrong decision because they were led by their inclinations, I have argued against such a decision; but I have found every time that I was talking into the wind. And so, these words will probably be written in vain too.

"The selfish person — no I must not use that word 'selfish' because it is not my purpose to portray weak or mean persons but to describe how average people act. The orderly, carefully calculating, saving person figures painstakingly and may go too far in doing this. He has to provide for his family. He has to look out

for his own carefree old age. Those are his excuses for his actions; and he is right as long as he does not encroach on the duties demanded by love and justice, and as long as his care for material welfare does not overgrow the softer feelings and kill the poetry in life. The one who is careless planless, disorderly, improvident, he too has a thousand reasons for his actions.

“You criticize Anna because she patches too much. . . . On the other hand, she probably thinks that your expenses for food do not conform to your circumstances. C. and Anna act according to their tendencies and can give important reasons for doing so. You do that too. Not keeping an exact account of each one’s labor in your joint undertakings — this you all look upon as a beautiful ideal relation full of love. And it is that. But all of us are ordinary people with human weaknesses; and the danger is too great that such relations, if they are not guided by order and justice, result in the opposite relations. . . .

“I got this far and had in mind other comments that I wanted to add since the ice was broken anyway. But Bernhard is here and brought us right away his betrothed! Joy has flooded over all other thoughts. I want to add only one more thought: Avoid debts.

“Yesterday afternoon we had gone to Wenmohs. You know how well one can watch from there all roads and paths. Then late in the afternoon one lady and four gentlemen came riding through the pasture. [29] Lina (Perlitz) was recognized, the Perlitz brothers Kremkau. Concerning the fourth rider the opinion was, ‘That’s not Bernhard.’ However Father and I hastened towards them anyway and imagine that one rider and Lina left the rest and came toward us. It was our Bernhard! He had walked from Alleyton, had camped at night four miles from La Grange, and had arrived at the Perlitz home about noon. It had not been his intention to speak to her so soon, but to wait and see whether she still loved him, which must somehow have been evident right away. And so for us a long cherished wish has at last been fulfilled. We anticipate great joy in this house when Hermann too will be here at Easter. (Hermann Fuchs, younger brother of Wilhelm, was engaged to Grandmother’s daughter Caroline.)

“It is natural that of the travelers (Johannes, Bernhard, and Carl Perlitz) Bernhard has changed most. He is taller and also broader in the shoulders. It is remarkable how Americanized he has

become. It is difficult for him to speak a fluent German. His language is German with a strong admixture of English expressions. But that difficulty will be gradually overcome. It was worse when he first arrived at the Perlitzes. Werner says that his speech was absolutely funny. But his language difficulties are not surprising since it is the first German he has spoken after a year and a half. Otherwise in his ways he is still the same.

“I wish that we lived a little closer together so that you could be with us too. I write this while the engaged couple and Father are making a visit at Wenmohses. It took Bernhard twenty-two days to make the trip from San Francisco to New York, where he stopped only two days before he took a steamer direct to Galveston. His supply of money for the journey was barely enough. He had only a few dollars left.”

As is evident from Grandmother Romberg’s letters, there was great rejoicing over the home coming of the two sons. Other important and joyful events of the later fifties were three weddings in the family.

Uncle Bernhard and Caroline Perlitz married, settled in the Romberg community, and lived there the rest of their lives. In July, 1868 Caroline Romberg married Hermann Fuchs. They established themselves near the old home of the Fuchs family, several miles west of present Marble Falls in Burnet County. Also in July, 1868, the youngest daughter, Friederike, married Carl Perlitz. They lived on the Perltz place, which was on the road to La Grange.

When some ten years later Father married Caroline Mackensen and Uncle Johannes married Caroline Bühring, there were four aunt Carolines in the family. To clear up the resulting confusion each aunt was called by a combination of the first syllable of her husband’s given name and the last syllable of her own given name. They were then Berline, Herline, Joline, and Juline. The names were pronounced in three syllables, like Ju-lee-ne.

Aunt Ida never married. This good aunt continued to live at the old home, took care of her aging parents, and helped out in the whole Romberg community — particularly in case of illness.

THE SEVENTIES AND EARLY EIGHTIES

[30] The events in the Romberg family during the seventies and early eighties may be taken from nearly two hundred letters that were written to Father after he left home. Most of the letters were written by his mother.

By this time Father was not called Dente any more but Julius. However, he kept the D from Dente as his middle initial.

When the Civil War started, he was only ten; but because his older brothers were gone, he gradually assumed a man's duties. During one dry summer, he hauled the family's water supply from the Black Jack Springs, a mile away. The hauling was done with a yoke of oxen, sled, and barrel.

His mother supervised his studies and observed that it was easy for him to learn. When he was fifteen, he was sent to High Hill, where he stayed with his Uncle Eckhard Bauch and his Aunt Minna, nee Engel, who had no children. There he attended the private school of Mr. Stuerke, a very strict teacher.

Later he attended as a boarding pupil Professor Kirk's private school near La Grange, where one was not permitted to lift the eyes off the page during study time. Here he was always hungry, because he was too timid to continue eating after the professor and his wife had finished their meal.

Since it was difficult in 1871 to get a college education in Texas, he went to Schwerin, capital of the grand duchy of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, where he attended college, *Realschule*, nearly two years. To finance the trip, his mother sewed twenty-dollar gold pieces into the belt of his drawers and gave orders that the underwear was not

to be changed during the journey.

To save money Father went steerage and was quite seasick on the trip. His entire belongings were in one valise — the same valise that for several generations held and protected the treasured letters he received during the seventies and early eighties.

Father started for Europe August 3, 1871. By October 3, a letter announcing his arrival was received at Black Jack Springs. He was then twenty years old. Before he left he had his picture taken in Galveston. According to Texas style, he had on a heavy woolen shirt bound at the neck with a plain band of the same

material. No turndown collar. The shirt was probably made by his mother, since all garments for the family were homemade at that time. Also, as the Texas style demanded, he had a goatee — frail looking to be sure, but still a goatee. A year or two later he had his picture taken in Schwerin. It shows coat, collar, and tie — but no goatee. In Schwerin Father lived with a cousin of Grandmother Romberg.

In one of his first letters Father wrote that he went to Boizenburg to spend the day there. He visited the family that had bought Grandfather's business, and he looked at the old home. Soon all Boizenburg gathered around to see "den Sähn von den ollen Romberg." "From all sides I was stared at with curious eyes and besieged with a thousand questions. Many were introduced to me. . . . An old woman, Mrs. Bolten, was there who was said to have been a servant in your house. . . . Everybody sent greetings."

[31] A report of his studies in the *Realschule* shows that Father took during the fall semester religion, German, arithmetic, geometry, natural history, physics, chemistry, geography, history, writing, and drawing. The average grade was "Good." Also the attention, industry, and behavior were marked "Good." Besides all the school studies, Father took private violin lessons, for he had bought a violin.

When Uncle Bernhard married, he moved into the house where Grandmother Bauch had lived, which was close to the Romberg home. In 1872 he built his own house about half a mile away. Because it was difficult to get help of any kind, he built the house himself, dug his well, and planted trees. While he was considering the advisability of providing the house with a lightning rod and trying to get information on this point from Father, who was studying electricity in Schwerin, an agent arrived, fully explained the value of the lightning rod as a safety device, and installed it. The rod ended six feet deep in the soil.

To have money for current expenses Uncle Bernhard made rawhide-bottom chairs. The wood was taken from mulberry trees and had a yellowish tint. First he used hand and foot power; then he built a windmill sixty feet high to have power for saw and turning lathe. This windmill had four canvas-covered wings in the style of the Dutch windmills. The structure could be seen for miles and was a landmark in the region. One time Hugo Ehlers wrote

how glad he was when, returning horseback from Cypress Mill, he caught sight of Uncle Bernhard's windmill. It was the signal that he was getting out of the post oak country and that he was nearly home. In the later seventies, Uncle Bernhard was building a windmill that was to regulate itself. Still later he was making brooms for sale.

In the early seventies Uncle Bernhard wrote Father a lengthy letter about a new book, *Sein und Werden in der Organischen Welt* by Fritz Ratzel. "It is written according to Darwin. It is very interesting, and gives me an entirely new viewpoint." In the same letter Uncle Bernhard expressed the opinion that science is the most cultural subject.

Some of the social events mentioned in the letters from Black Jack Springs during the seventies were connected with the *Turner* organization in High Hill. It should be explained that a *Turnverein* was interested in gymnastics. When Napoleon had defeated and humiliated the German countries, Professor Ludwig Jahn thought that he could develop again both the physical and moral powers of his country through organizations interested in gymnastics. Military drill was forbidden by the conqueror; so this physical training was substituted. Boys, youths, and men took part in the movement. The gymnasts were taught to look upon themselves as a kind of guild for the emancipation of their fatherland. When Napoleon was defeated in 1815, the *Turner* organizations were continued at the universities as patriotic fraternities known as *Burschenschaften*. These *Burschenschaften* took an active part in the revolutions for representative governments, especially in the revolution of 1848. No wonder that *Turner* organizations were found in German settlements of the United States, especially in localities where former university students had settled. The *Turnverein* with its *Turner* hall at High Hill was such an organization. Its members were interested in gymnastics and entertainment. They also established and promoted the local private school.

[32] In 1872 Grandmother wrote that Uncle Johannes had gone to Austin with Fritz Seidler, Ernst Goeth, and a few others to attend the State *Turnerfest*. "Thursday morning I heard from the distance a trumpet call which announced their coming. They wanted to go as far as Negrat, candidate for representative, in order

to reach Austin in time next day for the festive reception for the visiting *Turner*. Johannes is a member but had not attended the club for quite a while. However, he ordered himself a *Turner* book from New York.”

“On the second Christmas day, 1872, there was a *Turner* dance at Lucks. Johannes went, but for the rest it was too cold. On New Year’s there is a *Turner* dance at the High Hill *Turner* hall. All want to attend — if the weather permits.” Another time there was a masquerade at the *Turner* hall at High Hill. “Bernhard is busy working with difficult arithmetic problems. Through the *Turner* club he got acquainted with Berrify, who is reported to be a good mathematician and chemist.”

On July 13, 1873, the *Turnverein* in High Hill celebrated its anniversary. Flags had been made, and some young ladies were to present these. Speeches were to be made by Carl Luck and a Mr. Bellin. “There will be a drill on horseback. Johannes and John Wenmohs went early this morning to decorate the hall. At night a big dance.” In 1877 mention is made of a play given in the *Turner* hall, followed by a dance. In 1878 *The Homage of the Arts* by Schiller was given.

Someone came from Europe to Texas and made contacts with the Rombergs. Grandmother wrote Father subsequently in regard to the musical family of her sister Louise Bauch: “I wish you had sent to Bauchs with this opportunity some violin music, simple melodies and dances. You would have given them a great deal of pleasure with that. And next time there is an opportunity, send to the men here pipes and to me photographs of our dear relatives — if you can get me such photographs.” “Last Sunday there was a play and dance at Bockles. Adolph (Bauch) had much difficulty in getting up this play. First one and then another sent back his role. Ida thought that some recited their parts quite well — but that they just recited them. There was no such thing as a life-like portrayal.”

However, by December, 1872, Adolph Bauch seems to have made some progress. “It is drizzling again today, nevertheless our young people have gone to the Settlement (Latin Settlement). Adolph is presenting the play, *The Festival of the Mechanics*. Fritz (oldest son of Aunt Louise and Uncle Adolph) is the lover and Mrs. Naumann is his sweetheart. Adolph has gone to a great deal of trouble to find the melodies for the songs; and when he could

not find these, he found other melodies to suit the words. He spends a great deal of time and thought on such a play; and I must confess if the weather were not so disagreeable, I would like to go myself to see the fun.” Later Grandmother writes that Adolph had an invitation to present his theatrical performance at Fayetteville, “and if his actors are of the same mind as he, they will go.” And still later Adolph was director of a social club on the Bluff, which was near La Grange.

So much for social affairs mentioned in the letters of the seventies.

In her letters Grandmother frequently mentioned the Franke family. Aunt Bernhardine’s husband was well educated and when they were first married, Ludwig Franke taught at Baylor College, which [33] was then at Independence. According to Baylor records, he was “Professor in the Female Department of Baylor University” for the years 1856-1859. He taught “French, German, pianoforte, guitar, and vocal music.” However there was so much malaria in Independence that he gave up this teaching and the family moved to Black Jack Springs, where they lived a quarter of a mile from the Rombergs. Ludwig Franke, who had studied law in a European university, was in 1872 elected to the Texas House of Representatives. Then a tragedy struck the family, as may be seen from the following letter written by Grandmother. The capitol mentioned is the one that was built in 1853 and that burned down in 1881. The letter is dated February 23, 1873.

“My dear Julius,

“Today I write you in the name of Bernhardine, who wants me to notify you of the death of Franke, which occurred in Austin on the twentieth of this month at three-thirty in the morning. Bernhardine also asked me to request that you go immediately to Ludwigslust to his sister, Miss Franke, in order to inform her of the death and also of the more detailed circumstances of his death. Later when Bernhardine has regained more composure, she will write herself to the sister.

“On the evening of the twentieth, a son of Mr. Zapp brought us a telegram from his father in which he announced the death of Franke and also inquired where the burial was to be, whether here or in Austin at the cemetery of the legislators. You can imagine

what a terrible shock the news was, especially since Franke had always written cheerfully. He asserted that he was in excellent health, mentioned his long walks for exercise, and finally also expressed in the most affectionate terms his joyful anticipation of seeing his family again on February 22, as he would then have a short vacation. 'I have reached this age', he wrote, 'and still don't know myself. I should have known how much I would miss my family.'

"It was now my duty as the mother to bring the news to the family, late in the evening as it was. I would indeed have preferred to wait until morning, but the messenger still had to ride with the answer thirty miles that night to the telegraph station. I need not tell you what a shock the news was to Bernhardine and the children — except the little ones who had no conception of their loss. Her decision was firm that the body was to be brought home. Franke and Bernhardine had already selected a burial place under two beautiful live oaks. And so Henry and Johannes left immediately to receive the casket at the station, Ledbetter, and to bring it home.

"On the twenty-first, we received through the mail more information about the terrible death of Franke. The legislators had received payment at noon on the nineteenth. Franke received \$260. Circumstances induced him not to leave this sum in his living quarters. At seven in the evening, he wants to attend his committee in the Land Office but goes first into the Capitol for some documents. You have probably been in Austin and can have a clearer picture of the situation than I can. The portico with its high steps leads into the building. As he steps out and turns toward the Land Office, he is attacked by two scoundrels, hit with a rock on the temple, injured otherwise, thrown down the steps, and robbed. It is almost inconceivable how the attack could have been perpetrated at that place. Hardly two minutes later another gentleman steps out of the building and hears Franke's moaning. [34] He is taken into a nearby dwelling. Doctors are called. Hopeless. There was a brain concussion. He was conscious for about half an hour. His last clear thoughts concerned his wife and his children. Gradually he became more quiet, until about three-thirty he fell asleep. Zapp also wrote, 'Franke had the full respect of both houses of the Legislature.' The costs of the funeral are paid

by the State. The metal casket with large silver crosses was placed in the House of Representatives. The members of both the Senate and House of Representatives attended the impressive funeral service and then formed a funeral procession that moved to the station. A deputation of four representatives went along as far as Ledbetter, where they arrived at midnight. One representative even came out here. It was Mr. Negrat of Sandy, who spent the night with us. And so Franke arrived here — dead — just at the time to which he had looked forward with so much pleasure, because then he would be with his loved ones again.

“Bernhardine is in deep, deep sorrow. She has the sole responsibility now for the eight children of which the youngest is only three months old. And Henry, that poor boy. He was so anxious to study, and now he has to provide for the family.

“Give all this information to the sister of our Franke. Bernhardine requests that you tell the sister that there is no cause to worry about material needs, but that the plans Franke had for the further education of his children will now have to be left incomplete.

“I return once more to the subject of Henry, that poor boy. It would have been so beneficial if he could have gone out into the world for a while so that his desire for learning could have found the best outlet. Write him real soon. It is so easy for you to find the correct tone with your nephews and nieces; and I wish them a little diversion right now, especially him.

“Good-bye my dearly beloved son.

Friederike Romberg”

Aunt Bernhardine was a courageous and intelligent woman. She did her best to give her children an education. Grandmother Romberg’s letters mention that Henry, the oldest son, was back at Professor Kirk’s school. At Christmas he was coming home, and Paul, Anna, and Marie were going till cotton picking time. In 1873 Ida Engholm, a distant relative newly arrived from Mecklenburg, was teaching the girls twice a week while her husband was establishing himself in business. In May of that year, there was a school of about thirty pupils at Black Jack Springs. One man and one woman were teaching. In May 1873, Henry wrote that he was translating from English into German and that Ida Engholm was

correcting his work. He had to stay at home to farm. That summer Henry was going for a month to Professor Kirk, who was conducting during vacation time an extra course for older students; and since cotton picking was late, Henry could get off. Another letter reports, "Paul is at Professor Kirk's but will probably have to come home now and then to help; for Henry can not attend to the farming all by himself. The hired hand has gone again."

When Caroline Bühring came in October, 1877, Aunt Bernhardine paid her \$100 and board and lodging for five months' teaching of music and school subjects. Later the older children at Franke's were teaching the younger ones music and regular school subjects. And [35] still later Grandmother wrote that she herself was teaching the three younger children.

So it was with the frequently interrupted schooling for the Franke children during the seventies. The farming had to go on unhindered. "We are trying to farm as Father would have done it," wrote Paul.

Aunt Bernhardine was an excellent business executive. In 1876 the Frankes harvested twenty-one bales of cotton and bought more land from Mr. Fitzgerald at \$15 per acre. In 1878 they had thirty-eight bales. Another letter of 1876 states that Henry and Paul were harvesting broom corn. They had a machine that stripped off the seed. The machine worked fine. The boys made brooms for sale. They made so many that Grandfather wondered how they could sell all of them.

Paul made a windmill for churning. His mother seemed to think there was no great advantage in using the device, but "it gave me much pleasure to work on the thing and the butter certainly will taste much better." Uncle Bernhard had made a windmill out of an old spinning wheel by nailing shingles on the spokes. It really churned well.

In 1876 Uncle Johannes also used a new labor saving device. He had plowed the cotton five times with an instrument that was called the Black Eagle. The animal "ate up" all the tie vines, but they always came back. It was an instrument with two wheels, two bull-tongs, two plows. It was pulled by two horses, and the instrument saved Uncle Johannes lots of work.

Some prices of the seventies are interesting. Eggs sold at Thuelemeyer's country store at three cents per dozen. Late in 1872

the Rombergs sold a mare to Mr. Lingnau for \$100. It was a fine saddle horse but no draft animal. Also in 1872, the Rombergs made a good cotton crop of twelve bales and the price was good: fifteen cents per pound. Land prices at Tiger Mill in Burnet County were seventy-five cents to one dollar per acre. The rate of interest was twelve per cent.

Politics and school laws furnished news. In 1871 Professor Kirk wrote to Father, "The new school system does not find any favor with the people because the authorities have made it a party system. The result is that we have no public schools in our country."

In the fall of 1871 Mr. Kirk had fifty-eight pupils. He had a young lady as assistant. He wrote, "Julius, you must come back and devote your life to the schoolroom. We need so much honest, earnest teachers, men who are content with good given as wages rather than position or wealth. Such men are few, and Texas can not afford to lose you from that number."

May 6, 1872, Mr. Kirk wrote:

"We thank you for the photograph. It is very much like you, but you seem to have grown more muscular and look more Teutonic than before. I was not mistaken in regard to the capacity of German students, but still repeat the question and venture the assertion that not one of your classmates can give a clear logical reason for inversion in the division of fractions.

"Innumerable herds of cattle have again started en route for Kansas. The trade last season was not so profitable as formerly. On account of reduced prices, many herds were left over to winter; but the cold was so severe that thousands of cattle and some drivers were frozen.

"My school now numbers eighty-seven pupils and is in good condition. I am now running the public free school, which requires but [36] five hours tuition per day. The whole series of books is changed; and now we have a series adopted by law, which will give uniformity and make teaching more pleasant. The pay of my school is \$75 currency per month, which is not enough; but it will increase with the advancement of the pupils. The salaries of teachers in our county have been all paid up to the present, but in some parts of the state this is not the case. . . .

“Julius, you must come back with the great knowledge you will acquire there and help me to build up a school on our prairie of which we may be proud. You love teaching, I too; and the material, rough though now it is, is here in the minds of Texas boys, which may be worked up into orators, statesmen, poets, and best of all into great and good men, Christians, who will prove an ornament and blessing to the land.

“Mrs. Kirk sends regards and adds that in the land of science, ’mid all the luxuries it can boast, you must not forget Texas, the land of dewberry pies. She says when cooking rolls, she often thinks of you.

“Employ well your time, my friend, that when you again cross the water to your native land, no regret for lost time may follow after. May your advancement be rapid and your stay pleasant is the prayer of

Your friend

R. P. Kirk”

In November, 1872, Grandmother wrote, “The entire Democratic ticket was elected. Franke with a great majority, also Negrat. Now I am anxious to see how these Democratic gentlemen will manage. The Republicans did not do well. They drove the taxes so high that we had to pay \$80 in taxes, and then they still went into debt. The Democrats could not possibly have been elected with such unanimity if the Republicans had not been so detested. The situation is different in the North. Grant has been reelected.”

On January 30, 1773, Uncle Bernhard wrote: “Taxes for Father were \$130. Franke went to the Legislature January 14. We hope very much that they will change the school law.”

In 1874 Stuerke was still teaching in High Hill, and Schulenburg had developed so far as to think of a teacher. At Luck’s somebody was teaching for two months on trial.

In letters of the seventies, these were some of the comments that concerned schools.

The letters also show that Grandmother was a teacher and guide. As a young man, Father seems to have used a type of wit that Grandmother thought was too caustic. She warned him in her letters not to direct his wit to individuals. In a letter dated

September 19, 1872, she wrote: “You know, my dear Julius, that you did not observe my warning not to send off hastily written letters. That grieves me because such letters must necessarily detract from the good opinion that people seem to have of you. And why do you want to destroy willfully such regard for you? You might destroy your future happiness.

“You should never write carelessly. Writing correctly and a fluent forceful style should become second nature to you. You say that you can not spend much time on your letters. That is very foolish. The time will be richly repaid later when you write letters and essays in an easy and effective style. . . .

[37] “I do not recommend that you flatter people, but a correct and courteous behavior is becoming to a man, especially is it to be recommended to him who wants to be useful and to have a good influence. For instance, you might have omitted the cocky remark, ‘Nothing doing’ and said instead simply, ‘Where I may teach in the future is difficult to determine at this time.’ Couldn’t you write again and correct the impression you may have made?”

The letter continues with this family picture: “You ask that your letters be not read by everybody in the family. I really can not avoid that. If we are all together when your letter arrives, I read it aloud. If Hermann has not heard it, I have to give it to him. I can not deny him the pleasure, because he takes too much interest in you and in the relatives in Germany. And Bernhard, Bernhardine, and Rike! Since Franke is a candidate for the Legislature, he sees to it that somebody goes for the mail regularly; and when a letter from you arrives, Henry stays to hear what you have written. He may also ask, ‘May I take the letter along?’ I repeat, if you have a remark or want to relate something that not everybody is to know, just put it on a separate slip.

“Tomorrow is the time for the mail to arrive.”

In 1873 the letters discuss this question: Would it be better for Father to continue his studies in the United States? The climate on the Baltic was damp and cold. The Texan was troubled with a constant cough. One slept between featherbeds the year around, and the relative with whom he shared the room insisted that the windows be kept closed all the time. Grandmother Romberg wrote of the advantage of studying more English in an American institute of learning, where one would acquire “more versatility of

expression than can be learned on the farm and in the shop.”

Both parents left the decision for the change with their son.

However Grandfather wrote in this characteristic way: “I have often written you, and I repeat it: Good health is the best thing you have in life, and you must seek to preserve it in every way. Jean Paul says, ‘Of what value is it to me if the whole Paradise with its ocean of flowers is set before me, and I have a cold and do not want to take a sniff?’”

How difficult it was for the parents isolated on a farm in remote Texas to give advice regarding the son’s future education. “You might ask Dr. Adams of the *Realschule*.” “You might write for information to E. Steiger of New York.” The Rombergs ordered books from the E. Steiger company in New York. The agricultural report of 1870 recommended the University of Kentucky in Lexington which had an agricultural department. It also offered courses in science and mechanics. Students could live in clubs and could reduce their expenses to one hundred dollars. Would it be better to secure a teaching position? It might be wise to do a little traveling while in Europe. Grandfather was really worried: “Don’t get murdered in New York.”

The suggested traveling in Europe was omitted. Father left Schwerin after Easter, 1873. He went steerage again to save money, and again he was horribly seasick during the entire voyage. He landed in New York. To recover from the trip and to earn some money, [38] he worked on a farm in Morristown, New Jersey. From there he went back to New York and traveled by way of Albany, Niagara Falls, Buffalo, Cleveland, Columbus, Louisville, Cincinnati and finally reached St. Louis. There he stopped and wrote for money to come home.

Sending money had its problems. Money orders were not considered safe. It was better to buy a draft from a Galveston business house to a St. Louis business house. So advised Carl Luck, and Grandmother wrote, “If you get into trouble, go to Dr. Nagel in St. Louis, who was our neighbor on the Bernard. He should be able to advise you. And give best regards to the Nagel family. Your papers should be sufficient to introduce you.”

Father eventually got the money to complete the trip home, and then the letters stop for a while.

When Father got back home after an absence of about two

years, he observed that everything in the old house was just as it always had been; nothing had been moved or changed. Years later, after Father had married, he was surprised that Mother tried a new arrangement of the furniture now and then. Such a thing had never been done in the old Black Jack Springs home. It is typical that some of Grandfather's manuscripts after eighty years were still wrapped in a newspaper, *New Yorker Staats Zeitung*, dated February 23, 1861.

Cousin Helene [Romberg Mackensen] wrote for a family reunion [1936, at Barton Spring, Austin] a description of the Romberg home as it was during the later seventies. Since nothing was ever changed, the home must have looked for decades as she described it in the following interesting article to which she gave the title "At Grandfather's."

"Will you join me this morning for a short visit to my childhood land of memory? I am on my way to Grandfather's. We will walk up the hill together and turn in at the rough-hewn gate in the corner of the fence. Our path leads us past a rosebush with dark red velvety roses, up to the old log house. Just in front of the gallery, on each side of the walk is a trellis overgrown with Madeira vine, fragrant with lacy, white blossoms, and with roses that grow in clusters and shade from the faintest pink into dark red, some even into blue.

"We step from the gallery with its sand floor into a wide hall connecting the two log houses. The floor of the hall is of red cedar, worn uneven with long use, the knots in the wood forming little hills as the softer wood around them has worn away. Many times during the summer the relatives gathered in this hall for a happy social time.

"To the right is Grandfather's room. Here he spent most of his time. I can see him plainly now, sitting over a chess game, with perhaps Uncle Johannes, Uncle Julius, Uncle Hermann, or Henry Franke — Grandfather with his long white hair and beard, smoking a long pipe. These chess games lasted for hours and, if begun in the morning would be often continued after dinner. The players entered into them with all their might; and sitting motionless, each would study how he might get the best of his opponent. So we will let them play and turn to the left toward the

kitchen.

“To the left of the kitchen door is a small table with a sandstone top, which Uncle Johannes made. The water bucket has its place there, also the washbowl, and the turtle shell — bleached white with [39] age — which holds the soap. To the right is the pantry with its door of slats through which one can peep at the bags and boxes and dishes on the shelves, wondering what might be in them. As it is almost dinner time, we will have a look at the kitchen. It is lighted by a long, low window on the south, which slides open all the way when it is pushed. It was on the fireplace in the back of the room that Grandmother and her daughters prepared the meals before our modern iron stoves came into use.

“I do not know what we will have to eat today, but I am sure there will be some smoked beef. Aunt Ida used to slice a big hunk of it, big as your arm, on a hard board. That board, by the way, is still in use at Cousin Hedwig Stanford’s and brings up memories of good things to eat every time I see it. We may have ambrosia too — *Götterspeise*, we used to call it — made of fruit and crumbled rye bread with thick cream and finally cinnamon sprinkled over all of it. Perhaps we will eat some of those big yellow clingstone peaches from Grandfather’s orchard back of the house.

“And now we will go to Grandfather’s room; and while he and his partner finish their game of chess, we will take a look at the room. It is rather large, not very high, the beams in the ceiling showing dark against the freshly whitewashed background. Up over the door a shelf crowded with books runs the whole length of the room. I often wonder why it was so high. Perhaps because books, though always precious, were especially so almost a hundred years ago when that shelf was put there, high up, out of harm’s way. Grandfather thought a great deal of his books. In fact, he looked upon them as a necessity of life and used to call reading matter mental nourishment. An encyclopaedia, Shakespeare, Dickens, Goethe, Schiller, and other classical works found their places up there. A wardrobe and some more shelves occupied the space below. In the center of the north wall stood the dresser. Above it stood the clock — the same one now rests peacefully in my attic. On each side of the dresser was a bed.

“There was a small square window near the south-east corner

of the room where Grandfather's table stood. He usually sat in the home-made rocker in front of it. Some inexperienced hand had evidently fashioned this chair out of green wood, for it is quite warped. The runners are about four-inch boards and accompany any effort at rocking with a kind of knotty little tune. When it was first made, it served as a cradle for Uncle Julius, long years ago.

“When Grandfather smoked and mused about something he was writing, he sat in that chair. The writing was first done on a slate with slate pencil. Sometimes that pencil would get dull, then Grandfather would sharpen it by rubbing it on the edge of the table, gradually wearing grooves into the wood. We grandchildren used to marvel at these grooves and admire them according to their depth. When the writing was finished, Grandfather would usually copy it in ink at a small desk that was so high that he had to stand before it. The ink he used was not the ink you buy in a store, but ink he made out of those brown balls that are occasionally found on the leaves of oak trees.

“When his pipe went out, Grandfather took a *Fidibus* from the holder on the table, and then turned around to light it at the stove just back of him. A *Fidibus* is a strip of paper folded like a bias tape [40] mothers use to bind the armholes in their children's underwear. A supply was made out of an old copy book. We used to make a bundle of them for Grandfather's birthday and found it quite hard to cut and fold them evenly.

“But I must tell you about the stove and the queer drum over it. This drum was a part of the stove pipe and helped to keep the room warm. It looked like a small barrel closed up, but a hole like a stove pipe went through the length of it. Grandfather baked an apple there once in a while just as is done in the German stories you read.

“Grandfather liked fun too. Occasionally he would make little jigsaw puzzles that we all enjoyed. He could cut a square or triangle into a few more triangles, squares and oblong pieces in such a way that it would take you a long time to put them together again.

“For a last look at the old place that has changed altogether, let me take you to the back yard where the old walnut tree with spreading branches stood. We children romped in its shade and ate the nuts while the grown folks sat quietly chatting. Finally the old

tree died, and Uncle Johannes made a bookcase out of boards cut from its solid trunk. Cousin Hedwig Stanford has it in her home, and probably some of the old books from Grandfather's high shelf are resting still behind its doors."

This ends Cousin Helene's description of the old Romberg home. In 1876 while Father was visiting his sister Louise in Blanco County, he was offered a position as tutor for the boys in the Ebeling home. This he accepted, and another set of family letters accumulated in the valise that had gone with him to Europe and back again to Texas.

Excitement and confusion pervade the letters of the latter half of 1876. A report reached Black Jack that Father was engaged. Now, Father had written about various charming damsels to whom he was paying court. Which one of these could be the prospective bride! Write us! No answer to that plea. To make matters worse, Aunt Herline mentioned in one of her letters casually that Father had announced to her his engagement to Lina Mackensen. And who was Lina Mackensen? Please write us! The eventual explanation of all the confusion was very simple. Grandfather Mackensen on a business trip to his old friend Mr. Ebeling had brought his daughter Caroline along. Then while Grandfather went back to Bell County to get a load of flour to sell in Blanco County, Caroline stayed with friends for a longer visit. When she arrived at the Ebelings, Father immediately told himself, "She's the one!" — as he confessed later. After a few short weeks they were engaged, but Mother naturally wanted to wait with an announcement until her father had returned and they had asked his permission. But her father's return was delayed. So the young couple just kept their engagement a deep secret — so they thought; however, miraculous as it may seem, everybody knew about the engagement anyway. Soon the report reached Black Jack. Explanations followed and everybody was happy — especially the engaged couple.

Early in 1877 Father started teaching at Cypress Mill. Grandmother and Aunt Louise were glad that the children at last could go to a regular school. With the income from the school assured, Father then married March 15, 1877.

Traveling during the seventies was done by wagon or light buckboard, [41] but mainly on horseback. No fences hindered the

progress, but maybe high water. In 1877 Mother wrote from Belton to Father at Cypress Mill, "If the Colorado is high, we may have a wedding announced here and no bridegroom."

Christmas 1876, Father made on horseback a trip first from Round Mountain in Blanco County to Belton, then to Black Jack Springs, then back to Round Mountain. It was a trip of over three hundred miles in the middle of the winter. Of his trip from Belton to Fayette County he wrote: "Two of our neighbors caught up with me, and so I could continue with them. I was especially pleased because I did not have to spur and whip up my pony all the time. They claimed to know the way exactly; so I followed them although their direction was too far west. Finally I told them good-bye and took a course towards the south and south-east. Saturday I had to ride all day in the rain; and when it got dark, I finally lost my way in the post oak and Buckner's Creek bottom when I was only five miles away from home. About ten o'clock I came to the home of an acquaintance, where I spent the night. On Sunday, finally, I reached the home prairies and surprised the loved ones here. Christmas was celebrated at the home of my sister Bernhardine because most of the Black Jack children are in that family. No one had mentioned my arrival to them; so that I surprised all of them too. Santa Claus was very generous this year.

The little children soon demonstrated that they were good musicians. Here one heard a pipe and a flute, there a harmonica, and in between was heard the doleful howling of a top. It is difficult to describe the joys of a Christmas festivity. Where there are so many children each communicates to the others his pleasure and increases the joy.

"Monday I tuned the piano at Frankes."

Mail was slow in the seventies. A letter mailed by Father in Morristown, New Jersey, in May, 1873, arrived at Black Jack Springs August 20. Grandmother wrote, "We have had so much rain here that the mail riders just have not been out." Mail was not delivered every day anyway. From Cypress Mill Mother wrote to Belton in 1877, "If you will address our letters to Fredericksburg, we will get them two weeks sooner."

There was also the difficulty of sending freight. It was usually sent through business houses. For example, Grandfather Mackensen had some freight delivered at a designated business

house in Brenham; from there it was sent with other freight to a designated firm in Belton. The latter business concern then notified the addressee that the stuff had arrived at the warehouse.

In 1876 Grandmother Romberg wrote to Father, “We sent your trunk to Austin and left it at Robinson’s. Get it from him when there is an opportunity.” Robinson’s was a business firm in Austin.

Packages were also sent with friends, relatives, and neighbors. In 1876 Grandmother wrote to Father at Round Mountain, “I am sending with Carl Perlitz your atlas, school magazines scientific magazines, and your music stand.

“I am sending a new pair of pants that I made. I am also sending pieces of cloth for your black suit in case it should need patching later.” Grandmother also sent a piece of material “like the brown coat” so that his sister Louise could patch the hole in that brown coat. The suits were sewed by hand. Naturally great excitement prevailed [42] when in the fall of 1877 Uncle Bernhard bought a sewing machine for Aunt Berline’s birthday. Aunt Bernhardine with her big family also had a sewing machine early. It was small enough to set on a table. On one side, the machine had a wheel with a handle. The operator turned the wheel with one hand and managed the cloth with the other.

Style was a minor problem for the Romberg family during the seventies. However, when a trunk was unpacked after traveling, the trousers were carefully pressed out in stove pipe fashion so that no creases showed anywhere.

One of the older grandchildren, Helene, wrote this: “I remember Grandmother as a tall slender woman, usually in a dark, preferably brown dress. The right side of the waist crossed over the left. All her dresses were made that way.” When Grandfather needed new pants, an old garment was taken to pieces and used as pattern, so that the style remained the same throughout the decades.

Grandfather wore his hair shoulder length, somewhat in the manner of Benjamin Franklin. This mode was adopted in boyhood after a severe inflammation of the eyes which kept him in a darkened room for months. The inflammation, he thought, was due to a cold contracted after his hair had been clipped — although the cause may have been measles contracted about the same time. During pioneer times such long hair was not particularly conspicuous. It

was the time when the clipping was undertaken by someone in the family and when, to simplify matters, most men wore beards.

In 1877 when Mother was on her wedding trip, she wrote her parents that Grandfather was a jovial and kindly old gentleman and that Grandmother looked rather old, but was still quite active.

While Grandmother's oldest child, Aunt Bernhardine and her family naturally were frequently mentioned in Grandmother's letters of the seventies, Uncle Johannes, Grandmother's second child, became the chief topic in 1878; for in the spring of that year he married his cousin Caroline Bühring, who had come to Texas in October of the year before and had stayed with Aunt Bernhardine to teach the children there. Every evening Aunt Caroline walked over to the Romberg home and when the weather permitted, went walking with Grandfather. Then some time after supper, Uncle Johannes escorted her back to Aunt Bernhardine's. In January he was already making house plans. The old kitchen was moved back and four rooms were built on the west side of the hall, which was open on the south. On the north side the hall had double doors that were kept closed during the winter. This hallway was always spoken of as the passage. It was the family gathering place in the summer. It took care of the overflow audience when music was produced in the living room, and young people danced here occasionally.

Aunt Joline, as the new Aunt Caroline was promptly called, had saved some money from her teaching; and so she bought a piano for her new home. Anna Franke wrote, "It has a good tone. In the evening we can hear her play, and we can hear both of them sing." To Aunt Joline a piano was not a luxury but a necessity. In one of her first letters to Mother she wrote, "I played Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata to Johannes this morning. He always enjoys such good music."

In 1867 Aunt Louise and her family moved from Burnet County to [43] the Cypress Creek in Blanco County, where Uncle Wilhelm had a lumber mill and also a flour mill.

The letters written by Grandmother Romberg during this time are especially concerned with the schooling of Aunt Louise's children. She thought of the young women in the Kellersberger and Bühring family as possible teachers. These cousins, however, married as soon as they arrived in Texas. When in January of 1877

Father consented to open a school at Cypress Mill, Grandmother rejoiced and hoped that gradually more pupils would attend. She expressed her relief that Mother was a near neighbor when serious illness came to Aunt Louise's family.

Aunt Herline and Hermann Fuchs continued to live at Tiger Mill. The letters of the seventies do not give much information about them. These two seemed to have had no major problems that could disturb the relatives. They were well suited to each other and their surroundings. They were both cheerful, and both could see the funny things in life. Uncle Hermann and Grandfather wrote to each other now and then, but not about family troubles or business problems. They wrote whimsical observations and recounted humorous events — all in rhyme.

Aunt Friederike never complained. Consequently the letters of the seventies and early eighties discuss no problems or worries concerning her. When Mother was on her wedding trip, she wrote home, "Friederike has five charming little girls." Aunt Ida would go over occasionally to help catch up on the sewing. In the early days Uncle Carl had to stay at home to do the nursing and housekeeping when another little girl had arrived. It was impossible to get help in the house. Also it was difficult to get help in the fields.

In the fall of 1878 Aunt Friederike and her family moved to a ranch they had bought near Cypress Mill. When they left, Uncle Johannes said with genuine sincerity to his Mother, "I am really sorry that Carl is going away from here." (*"Es tut mir doch so recht leid."*) Uncle Carl built a house, barns, and fences on his new ranch; but sold it again in 1882 to Uncle Johannes and Father. Uncle Carl then bought a blackland farm in Williamson County. He planned to dig a well, build a barn, and then move his family without further delay. Mother and Aunt Friederike in the meantime lived together on the ranch. The house had five rooms, an upstairs, and a porch. "We are fourteen people, but we are getting along fine together."

On April 18, 1883, a few weeks after Grandmother Romberg had died, Aunt Friederike wrote from Williamson County, "I feel like I should call to all the brothers and sisters, 'Hold together.' She who kept firmly in her hands the family ties, is no more; but hold together — and do not forget your far-away sister.

“The children enjoy the new piano and practice diligently. . . . Little Erich is getting into his mischievous years. Fortunately there are many little guardians, who can look after him. . . . We had a good fireplace to keep us warm during this cold winter.”

The health of the family at Black Jack Springs seems to have been good, except for occasional chills and fever.

At times Grandmother mentioned in her letters that Grandfather had trouble with his eyes. They were red and inflamed, they were draining, they were causing pain, and so on. It was probably due to [44] his poor eyesight that his handwriting was scratchy and irregular.

In 1877 Paul Franke had to go to San Antonio to have an operation on his harelip. “Some time ago he went, but only half of the split was sewed together. It was the more difficult operation of the two. Dr. Herff had his son, also a doctor, to help; but five more doctors were present to assist. Paul was not permitted to speak and eat for a while. Now he is there for the last part of the work. They have to wait for a clear day for the operation.” The outside work on the lip had been done when Paul was four weeks old. At that time the parents went by wagon from Black Jack Springs to San Antonio with the baby.

Grandmother took an active part in gardening and in her letters often mentioned gardening. The fall garden was important. Irish potatoes and beans were planted again and for winter lettuce, mustard, parsley, and multiplying onions. In the spring the potatoes again were important. So were English peas. Grandfather was interested in fruit trees, and planted seeds and saplings. He planted mustang grapes for which he erected scaffolding so that eventually there was an arbor under which one walked daily to and from the cow pen. From the mustang grapes the Rombergs produced their own wine, which was served in small wine glasses on festive occasions. Grandmother dried the hulls of the grapes, which then kept through the year. In the winter she made a juice out of the hulls, sweetened it, and served it hot as a soup with dumplings. She also made a crock full of sauerkraut.

The family raised its own tobacco. It took constant attention to pick insects off the plants so that the leaves would not be perforated. It took experience to dry and cure tobacco.

The chief topic in the letters of the later seventies and early

eighties was sheep ranching. The excitement was like that of a minor gold rush. Wool prices were high. Uncle Hermann Fuchs and Benny Fuchs wrote about sheep. Grandfather Mackensen turned his herd at the Ebeling ranch over to Father. Carl Perlitz sold his farm in Fayette County and bought a sheep ranch near Cypress Mill. Hugo Ehlers left for Cypress Mill and herded for Father for a while. Later Grandmother wrote, "Hugo Ehlers returned. His account has everybody here in a flutter of excitement. Sladczyk, Wilhelm Ehlers, and Engholm have sold out and are ready to leave." Uncle Johannes invested in sheep together with Father. Grandfather Romberg, Henry Franke, and Aunt Ida loaned money to sheep raisers. Sheep dipping became a community affair around Cypress Mill. Father, who had bought and had moved to the Cleveland place, was teaching with one hand and running a sheep ranch with the other. To have more room, he and Uncle Johannes later bought the Carl Perlitz ranch. Everybody was building up a sheep herd. Alois Goebel organized a reading club so that well-educated persons could have interesting literature to read while herding sheep. It might have been better if they had read instructive books on business trends and on politics. About 1883, Congress lifted the tariff on wool and prices on wool, lambs, sheep, and ranch land sagged. Ranchers continued sheep raising, especially as a side line; but the rush for gold through sheep ranching was over.

In 1879 Grandfather and Grandmother made an extended visit to [45] their children in Blanco County. They stayed mainly with Father and Mother since it was quieter there than in the busy and lively home of Aunt Louise. It was typical of Grandmother that she had Aunt Louise's two oldest boys come over every day so that she could help them with their arithmetic. In 1882 the grandparents came for another visit in Blanco County. Grandmother must have had a premonition that she would not see her children again, for she seemed very sad when the time for leave-taking approached. But Grandmother was stern with herself. There was no complaint or mention of illness in her letters, though during the last months of her illness she suffered intensely with what must have been an internal cancer. On March 4, 1883, Uncle Johannes wrote that he had not been off the place since Christmas except to go to the doctor, who prescribed laudanum powders to numb the pain.

Grandmother died on March 8, 1883.

In the last letter the family has in her handwriting, she wrote on December 13, 1882, “Yes, we all would like to have our children live near us, but fate separates them. It is my wish that there should always be a friendly understanding among you brothers and sisters; and if you cannot live close together, always write to each other.”

And in the last sentence of this letter she writes one more time, “You like to use irony, my dear Julius, and therefore sometimes hurt people’s feeling. Oh, it is always more desirable not to live under strained relations, but to be surrounded by friends and love.”

With Grandmother gone, there were fewer letters. Then in the fall of 1885 Father moved back to Fayette County where most of the Romberg family lived. So that date ended the collection of Romberg letters in the old battered valise.

GRANDFATHER'S WRITINGS

[46] Grandfather Romberg's writings consist of letters to members of his family, some philosophical articles, five longer narrative poems, a humorous short story in dialect, and finally numerous poems. A collection of the poems was published under the title *Gedichte* in 1900 by E. Pierson's Verlag, Dresden and Leipzig. His writings are all in the German language.

In his letters, Grandfather did not write all the news connected with the family as Aunt Ida did. Instead, he usually started on a current subject and then elaborated on it. The result was a sort of informal essay on such subjects, for example, as the evils of gossip, the idiosyncrasies of his home-made ink, the making of cigars — of which Johannes smoked the cripples.

Grandfather's letters show that he worried easily: "Be careful about that cough. Take enough exercise." "Don't get into debt. The interest when due continually peeps into all the cooking pots. It is a disagreeable guest who snaps the best bites away before your open mouth."

In a letter dated December 10, 1872, Grandfather wrote Father, "Thank you for the pipe" in the following typical manner:

"When the instrument known as *Schmölstaken* was unpacked, no one really knew for whom it was, for you sent it to 'us.' Therefore, according to human egotism, everyone wanted to claim it. One grabbed the reed, another the bowl, and a third one the *Abguss*. I stood by in dismay with nothing in my hands. However I followed the manner of a shrewd and experienced lawyer who takes the object of strife away from the quarreling individuals whereupon, after a little grumbling, general satisfaction is established — in which mood the lawyer takes the lead, setting a good example. In other words, I promised to settle the controversy by a compromise, fitted the tripartite instrument together and kept it for myself. To be sure, after the conclusion of the lawsuit, the duty devolves upon me to thank you for the transmission of this apple of discord, which obligation I herewith solemnly execute, and which, after reading these lines, you will be forced to acknowledge as an accomplished reality."

This pipe was of course in the style of the then popular and picturesque student pipe, an affair two, three feet long. The *Abguss*

was the bottom part of the pipe, a porcelain vessel, which collected a dark fluid rich in nicotine and which could be detached and emptied.

The letter continues: "I hear that in Germany the tax on salt has been lifted and that instead a tax on tobacco has been introduced. Such a procedure must surely transport every German into deepest grief and at the same time stir up his soul in secret rage; yes, and even press a tear of sympathy from outlanders. You, who are neither snuffer, smoker, nor chewer, can indeed have no sympathy for such sufferings of a suppressed people."

On February 12, 1881, Grandfather wrote to Father: "For some time our letters were concerned almost entirely with business and had a strong odor of sheep and lambs. No matter how penetrating this perfume may be, it can not be favorably compared with attar of roses; although I must on the other hand acknowledge that a long row of [47] tightly packed wool sacks has about it something pleasing — though not for a sentimental nose. This prominent gable of the human front and sunny side, has many aristocratic ways and peculiarities, and occupies without any commotion on the dial of our mechanism the central position, pushing our other sense implements somewhat back into the periphery. Yes, the nose looks with so much courage and self-confidence into the world that even Schiller very modestly questions, 'Do I really have a provable right to reprimand her?' People have themselves to blame if this instrument is forward and prying. Naturally she will rear up higher and prouder when so many offerings are brought to her, ranging from little candles to dense sacrificial fumes in so many churches, as if she were a goddess. Whole forests of roses are planted and picked so that she may sniff the attar of roses. When she has a cold, how brazenly she sometimes interrupts with loud sneezes the best conversation. And how much attention she demands when she has a cold! Besides, when she sneezes, we are to say courteously, 'Your health.'"

Among Grandfather's letters one finds riddles and conundrums that he devised, wrote in verse form, and sent on to his children for solution.

Among his posthumous works are several articles on philosophical subjects, discussions of books — probably the books that were passed around in the reading circle he had organized.

Then there are a few articles written to Grandfather prefaced formally with "Esteemed Sir" and signed with artistic curved lines under a name that was written in elaborate as well as illegible script. Philosophical subjects too deep to interest most people seemed to have been popular reading material and entertainment for these intellectuals on isolated farms.

The five longer narrative poems and the humorous short story, all unpublished, are based on family life and each features a love story. In plot and style all these belong to the romantic period of literature. In all of them are found the touches of philosophy and humor so characteristic of Grandfather's writings. The scene for each one of these is laid in Germany, which is in contrast to the Texas local color found in almost all of Grandfather's poems.

The first and most obvious impression made by Grandfather's poems is the fact that there are so many of them. The printed collection of his poems, *Gedichte*, comprises nearly three hundred pages. He must have had an intense interest in poetry and a strong urge to express himself in poetic form to accomplish so much when his energies must have been largely taken up by his family and by pioneer conditions in Texas. As Mrs. Selma Matzenthin-Raunick puts it: "He was a poet with all his heart and soul."

Mrs. Matzenthin-Raunick is presumably the best informed person on German writings in Texas. She wrote her master's thesis at the University of Texas on the subject, and later expanded the study for a doctor's dissertation. Besides, a number of her articles on this and related subjects have appeared in both American and German magazines.

Her estimate of Grandfather's poetry is translated from her work, *Deutsche Schriften in Texas* as follows: "Johannes Romberg may be rightly considered the most distinguished of the older German-Texas poets." Furthermore, in an article, "Johannes Christlieb Nathanael [48] Romberg, German Poet of Texas," which appeared in the *American-German Review*, Mrs. Matzenthin-Raunick has this to say: "Johannes Romberg is not the only outstanding German poet of Texas. A few may perhaps be said to have surpassed him in certain qualities . . . , but there are only two poets . . . whose compositions are of the same consistent merit as Romberg's. And there is not one of our German-Texas poets who equaled him in variety of subject matter, of form and

metre . . . Each poem seems to be poured into its own appropriate form. We find in Romberg's compositions lyric, narrative, and poetry — pastorals, romances, and brief dramas."

She concludes her discussion of Grandfather's writings in her *Deutsche Schriften in Texas* with this appreciative paragraph: "Johannes Romberg remains one of the strongest personalities who came from Germany to Texas. Since there was nothing sensational in his life, and since he was not prominent politically but worked quietly, his name is not as well known as he deserves."

What are the characteristics of Grandfather's poetry?

One characteristic is the cheerful contented tone. Grandfather rejoiced over the peach tree in full bloom and the dew crystal on the grass blade. For him, life was good and beautiful and justice ruled. A description of stormy weather concludes with the idea that such storms can not destroy our inner peace; or the description of a freezing norther that rattled the shingles is followed by the picture of the farmer sitting comfortably by his fireplace relating adventures. Grandfather admonishes: Sing joyful songs. "Inner peace," he says, "can not be given you by Fortuna. No one can take it away. It is your own. You are the master."

A humorous tone is also found frequently in Grandfather's poems. It is always gentle humor, refreshing, never caustic.

When considering the subject matter of Grandfather's poems, one notices that a proportionately large number are about spring. He writes that a thousand poets have sung about spring, that the melody and words vary but that the feeling of joy is always the same.

*"Tausend Dichter besangen den jungen sprossenden Frühling
Und stets wird er im Liede jubelnd von neuem begrüßt.
Ewig, tönt der Gesang, kein Dichter singt ihn zu Ende,
Weil der Frühling aufs Neu alles erweckt und belebt,
Immer wechselt der Klang, die Melodie und die Sprache,
Gleiches Wonnegefühl weckt er in jeglicher Brust."*

Grandfather was not a church-going man. However this thought pervades his poetry:

"And I have felt

A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of men;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.”

The above quotation is taken from Wordsworth’s “Lines Composed [49] a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey.” However the thought and manner of expression are like Grandfather’s and are found repeatedly in his poetry.

*“Was uns umgiebt, das ist Natur,
Die Welten laufen ihre Bahnen,
Wir können tief im Herzen nur,
Den Gott, den Quell des Daseins ahnen.*

*Und unser Herz ist auch Natur,
Kann es uns eine Lüge sagen,
Wenn wir des grossen Geistes Spur
Im All der Welt zu ahnen wagen?”*

A good deal of Grandfather’s poetry is philosophical. It is time to concentrate when he takes up subjects like these: What is judgment? Eternity? Genius? Nature? God?

As was the style a century ago, Grandfather used frequent references to Greek mythology.

It would be natural to expect that a person who had spent two score years in Mecklenburg should refer frequently to the land of his youth and extoll its charms. Grandfather did not do this. His interests were in Texas. In his “*Idyll*,” which is a favorite with his readers, he lets several young people contrast the political oppressions of Europe with the peaceful quiet and the freedom on a Texas farm. These young people finally agree that in spite of hard physical labor and an occasional drouth, Texas farm life is preferable — but that the farmer should have besides his work

some intellectual interests and stimulation. The poem ends with this peaceful scene of a Texas corn field that seemed to wisper in its sleep at night:

*“Flüsternd im Abendhauch, vom kühlen erquickenden Tau
feucht,
Schienen im Schlafe zu reden des Maiskorns üpige Stauden,
Gleich des Traumes Idyll, so ruhig, so selig und dämmernd,
Deckte die heilige Nacht mit ihrem Frieden die Gegend.”*

It was a hard blow when Grandmother died in the spring of 1883 after nearly fifty years of married life. Grandfather was stirred to express himself in poetry.

*“Zur Natur und zu den Musen
Flüchtet sich mein wundes Herz;
Denn an ihrem reinen Busen
Lindert sich der heisse Schmerz.”*

The poem he wrote in the spring of 1886 is also a favorite. He still had loving children around him, and the early spring was beautiful.

*“Glücklich hab’ ich gelebt, viel Freude ward mir auf Erden,
Und noch heutigen Tags umgeben mich liebend die Meinen.
Was mich im Leben betrübt, das sei vergessen, das ruhe
In der Vergangenheit Nacht. Ich will mich der Meinen
erfreuen,
Will den kommenden Lenz und der Vögel Gesang und die
Blüten
Und das erfrischende Grün mit frohem Herzen begrüßen.”*

[50] During his seventies Grandfather’s familiar figure could be seen any pleasant day as he walked to one of his children. He was small in stature, still straight, had a cane in hand and a homemade cloth bag on his arm. In this bag he carried mail to be distributed and also newspapers and magazines that were passed around. He took these walks because he liked the exercise and because he wanted to be useful. Also he enjoyed the visits with his

children. Cousin Hermann Franke has written: "As far as my memory tells me, Grandfather lived his old age quietly and peacefully, writing poetry, and walking almost daily the quarter of a mile to my mother's house, where he got a cup of coffee. She read to him and discussed with him deep and shallow thoughts — mostly deep. At other times, he walked the half mile to Uncle Bernhard's home where Aunt Berline entertained him the same way." Aunt Berline, who wrote very good poetry herself, has related how Grandfather would bring her some manuscripts and remark, "This is not anything notable; but you see, Lining, I can't do anything any more, and yet I have to do something. Would you like to read this sometimes?" Grandfather was unpretentious about his writings.

What poetry meant to him even in his old age, is well indicated in his poem "*Die Muse.*"

*"Dich, o Muse, verkennt und dein tiefgreifendes Wirken,
Wer zum Spiel dich erwählt. Du forderst dauernde Liebe.
Innig schmiegest du dich dem Knaben, dem wachsenden*

Jüngling

An das empfindende Herz. Dich grüßt der Mann mit

Begeisterung.

*Dem ergrauenden Greise verleihst du ewige Jugend,
Führst ihn still in ein Land, von wannen du kommst und
von wannen*

Der hohe Apoll dich heruntergesandt zum Menschen."

In 1881 on his seventy-third birthday, Grandfather wrote that his mind was still full of songs that wanted expression. He hoped that the desire to express himself in poetry would cease only with the last heartbeat.

*"Doch noch hör' ich leises Singen
In mir, Lied um Lied wird wach,
Mög erst Sang und Lied verklingen
Mit des Herzens letztem Schlag."*

Grandfather's favorite subjects of conversation were poetry and philosophy, and his favorite authors were Homer, Schiller,

Goethe, Shakespeare, Wieland, Jean Paul, Lessing, and Gustav Freitag.

Mother said of Grandfather, “He liked a good conversation, an interesting discussion, kindly humor, and was especially pleased when he could play a game of chess with a good antagonist. Uncle Hermann Bauch, Uncle Johannes, and Father played mostly with him.

“As his eyesight was impaired, Uncle Johannes and Aunt Caroline read a great deal to him. He was therefore well informed about current affairs.”

Friederich Perlitz, a man with a university education, said of him, “He is one of the most intellectual persons I have known.”

LIFE AT BLACK JACK SPRINGS DURING THE NINETIES

[51] Grandfather was happy that so many of his children lived near him — within walking distance. At the time of his death in 1891, when he was eighty-two, five of his children lived in the community. Uncle Johannes and Aunt Ida lived in the old home. Aunt Bernhardine, Uncle Bernhard, and Father lived within half a mile. During the nineties Aunt Friederike also lived in Black Jack for several years. Besides, Uncle Hermann Bauch lived within walking distance. These aunts and uncles passed on to the next generation the traditions, customs, viewpoints, and modes of thinking of the forebears.

The influence of the elders on the thinking of the younger generation was increased by the fact that the maturer viewpoints were not diluted as in modern times by impressions from outside sources: radio, televisions, picture shows, and contact with many other children at school.

The Romberg community was rather isolated and depended for schooling and entertainment on its own resources. It was isolated because to the north and east was the big Berry pasture with bluestem grass, milkweeds, hogwallows, wild-looking cattle, and an occasional rider. One never saw the people who lived on the other side of Berry's pasture. Then to the northwest was Aunt Bernhardine's big pasture, which extended into the post oak.

To the south were farms with big barns, many hay stacks, farm houses painted white and surrounded by rows of trees. Here lived industrious farmers of German descent. A few of the nearest families sent their children to the Romberg school, but there was no active social intercourse with these families. Partly this was due to mud roads.

The roads of the blackland prairie were impassable during wet weather except on horseback. Vehicles cut deep ruts into the black sticky mud of the road; the hoofs of draft animals left holes; more showers filled up ruts and holes and increased the mire. Fayette County is close enough to the Gulf of Mexico to receive frequent rains.

There were no gravel roads. No bus stopped in front of the house to take the children to a consolidated school. The Rombergs

lived in a little world to themselves. The children learned in the community school, and they learned from their elders, their parents, aunts and uncles.

What kind of people were these aunts and uncles?

The oldest relatives in the community were white-haired Uncle Hermann Bauch, the youngest brother of Grandmother Romberg, and the equally white-haired Aunt Erna, two dear people in a cozy home. Of them Mother has written: "Their house was painted white and had green shutters and trimmings; the picket fence that surrounded the shaded yard also was painted white. Everybody liked to go to this home, for no one knew better how to entertain guests than these two old experienced and well-read people. Aunt Erna's excellent coffee was served in quaint china cups, and her cake was served on some antique plate. There were silver spoons of ancient designs and a beautiful, old, linen table cover was spread over the round table that stood [52] in front of the sofa. Over the table was a hanging lamp. Its shade was fringed with glass tassels that were much admired by the youngsters. The windows had snowy curtains, and on the walls were old-fashioned pictures. Aunt Erna, who always looked like a distinguished lady, presided at her coffee table with dignity; and Uncle Hermann knew how to keep the conversation going. They subscribed to some excellent illustrated German magazines, and they passed these on to the other homes. The discussion of the continued stories or the articles in those magazines formed part of the conversation at such a visit. Yes, one always spent very pleasant hours with these two old people in their cozy home."

Aunt Bernhardine was the oldest one of Grandfather Romberg's children. She married at eighteen and lived first in Independence where her husband was teacher of music in Baylor College. Because there was too much malaria in Independence, they moved to Fayette County where she lived for many years. Part of the time her husband was away from home because the doctors advised him to go north. When he died suddenly in Austin, her children ranged in age from three months to eighteen years. Since that time Aunt Bernhardine had the entire responsibility of bringing up her eight children.

She took this responsibility very seriously, keeping the children away from possible country entertainments, and seeing to

it that they attended church — when a Lutheran congregation had finally been organized and a church built only a few miles away. Aunt Bernhardine’s children were hard-working, dependable, studious and ambitious.

Mother wrote: “Aunt Bernhardine was intelligent, capable, and practical. The many responsibilities she had to assume early in her life made her appear a bit stern. But she was really kind and sympathetic.”

Mother remembered this scene: As a half grown lad, Ludwig had to leave home to attend as a boarding student Professor Kirk’s school. At his departure the boy was nearly in tears, but Aunt Bernhardine stood by without showing any disturbance. After Ludwig was gone she said to Mother, “I know that I seemed hardhearted, but the boy has never been away from home and on his own responsibility. He needs to get away for a while. It’s ‘best for him.’” She was right. A few years later he decided to go to Boston because he could get in a school there, the training in which he was particularly interested.

Aunt Bernhardine’s youngest son in his mature years said of her, “She gave orders only once, and we obeyed immediately. She had no time to repeat the order and to persuade like modern parents do. Perhaps she seemed rather harsh, but she had to be stern in her circumstances. Perhaps we loved and respected her more than modern children — who have too much freedom — respect their parents.”

Aunt Bernhardine saw to it that her children received the best possible education she could give them. The three older ones, besides being tutored at home, went from time to time to Professor Kirk’s school. The next four went to northern states for further schooling, and the youngest son went to the University of Texas to study law. These interesting older cousins coming back at vacation time from the outside world, were an example to be imitated by the younger cousins. Some of Aunt Bernhardine’s children had evidently inherited their father’s musical talent; they practiced diligently and eventually [53] could play the piano with even greater artistry than their former teacher, Aunt Jolina. Ben could freeze his young listeners to the chair when he declaimed and debated. Ludwig brought home a bicycle and Rudolf a typewriter — during the nineties.

Aunt Bernhardine could defend her viewpoint in discussions, for she was an intelligent and well informed person. She read even the difficult books that Uncle Bernhard brought her. She and Aunt Berline liked to talk over their family and other problems. At the end of one such discussion Aunt Berline commented, "Yes, life is interesting." Aunt Bernhardine answered, "Sometimes more than ample."

Aunt Bernhardine was an excellent business manager. The story was told around Black Jack that Mr. Fitzgerald once said, "Here lies my plantation, and there lies Mr. Franke's plantation." At that time the Frankes had only a few acres. As the years passed, more and more of Mr. Fitzgerald's land passed over to the Frankes. By that time their white, eleven-room, two-story residence with portico and columns certainly looked like the mansion that goes with a plantation.

Aunt Bernhardine really had a beautiful farm home. The grapevine that ran up to the second story of the portico was picturesque, and the broad stone steps in front of the portico were equally imposing. In front of the house was a lawn enclosed by a trimmed hedge, and beyond the hedge was a grass meadow of several acres. Beyond all this were a pasture with trees and the Navidad, which started as a creek at the Black Jack Springs in Aunt Bernhardine's pasture. On the right side of the meadow was a beautiful grove of live oaks and around the house were more live oaks.

Toward the rear of the residence were a number of barns, because much cattle was raised on the farm when the children were still at home.

However, one by one the energetic children left to establish themselves in other parts of Texas. Eventually, Aunt Bernhardine divided the old home place into four farms, sold these, and then moved away to be with her children.

The second child of Grandfather and Grandmother Romberg was Uncle Johannes, which was pronounced Yo-hann-es. He was short and plump, cheerful, wise, friendly, jovial, kindhearted, lovable. He bought Grandfather's farm and continued to live there for years. His wife, Aunt Jolina, lived in Europe until she was in the thirties. She was therefore well educated, especially in music. She came to Texas to teach Aunt Louise's children; but stopping

first with her aunt, who was Grandmother Romberg, she was so pleased with her reception that she stayed with her cousin, Aunt Bernhardine, to teach the children. It was not long before she and Uncle Johannes were married, and it was a very happy union.

Uncle Johannes was loved and adored by all the children of the community. He had been a bachelor uncle for so long that when he finally had a little son, he picked up the whimpering little fellow one day and forgetting his new role as father said in a tender consoling tone, "Come to your Uncle Johannes."

Cousin Ernst Romberg has related this about Uncle Johannes:

"He was an outdoor man and a keen observer. Although he was not as tall as his brothers, he was very strong. As a young man he could [54] hold an ox by the horns. He had excellent eyesight and could see some of the moons of Jupiter with the naked eye. When he was a youth, there were plenty of deer around. Old-timers shot them. Uncle Johannes prodded his father to buy a rifle. 'We can't do that,' was the steady reply. One day, however, a mover with an Old Kentucky rifle strapped to his saddle came through the prairie. Uncle Johannes saw his chance and bought the rifle. From then on the family had venison occasionally.

"One day cranes were dancing close to where he was plowing. At noon he took his old Kentucky rifle and sneaked down behind the rail fence. He took aim at one of the pretty bent necks visible in the field. He let go, but the cranes flew away. When he was ready to grab the plow handles in the afternoon, one of them was broken off and lay on the ground with a bullet hole through it.

"Uncle John loved song and good company. He was the founder of the Cedar *Männer Chor* and later the Shulenburg *Liederkrantz*. One evening in a wet winter, he hitched his horse to the buggy to attend the regular rehearsal at Cedar — miles away. Soon he broke a singletree. Then he decided to hitch two horses to the hack, but the black dirt was so sticky that the doubletree snapped. Instead of quitting, he calmly saddled old Jim, rode into the evening, and sang his song."

Uncle Johannes once said, if he, an older man, came in all kinds of weather to the rehearsals, there was no excuse for the younger men to stay at home; and so the practice evenings were attended regularly, and encouraging progress was made.

The choir had for years an excellent director in Professor

Hansen, who was also the teacher of the Cedar school. The choir took part in district and state music conventions, also called *Sängerfeste*, which Uncle Johannes attended and enjoyed. He had a high clear tenor voice, sang with pleasure, and sang a great deal.

With both Uncle Johannes and Aunt Jolina so much interested in music, it is no wonder that their two children became absorbed in it; and after they had received good training here in Texas, both went to Europe for further prolonged and intensive study.

The Black Jack relatives saw Aunt Louise very seldom. Although a railroad was finally built from Austin to Marble Falls, the best way to travel between Blanco County and Black Jack during the nineties was still by buggy and by hack.

In 1884 Aunt Louise and her family moved from Cypress Mill to their ranch, which was located a few miles away along the Pedernales River. Everybody enjoyed a visit in her lively home. For Aunt Louise — active, capable, and farsighted — it was no particular problem to have twenty people for dinner. That happened often. She had a large family, and then there were many relatives and friends far and near who enjoyed to come. Aunt Louise was one of those women who could run a dozen projects in her home at one time and have all of them run smoothly.

A new school building was erected in a more central location and a large hall in connection with it. The latter was used for community gatherings, all-day picnics, dances, an occasional concert or play by local talent. The students who could not reach the school on foot just rode horseback. Six of Aunt Louise's married children lived near [55] enough to come and spend the day with her even in horse and buggy times.

Aunt Louise continued to be the center of life in the Cypress Mill community for many years, for she lived to be ninety-one. At the age of eighty-four, she wrote her memoirs, which then appeared in book form.

In modern times, Uncle Bernhard would have been a research professor in the engineering department of a university, or maybe a lecturer on economic problems.

The following comes from cousin Helene: "One time in his boyhood, Father had to stay at home on a Sunday afternoon while the rest of the family went visiting. This was his punishment for some misdemeanor. The absence of the family gave Father an

excellent opportunity to look undisturbed into the old clock up on the wall. He pushed the table against the wall and took down the clock. He had a wonderful time taking it apart and putting it together again before the family returned. Strange as it may seem, the clock continued to run.

“Once he made a ‘violin’ by drawing strings across the open well, which was in the back yard and which was wide at the bottom like a cistern. When he tried out the strings, the effect was startling. The hogs snorted out from under the corn crib and the cows hightailed into the farther reaches of the pasture.

“He also tried his hand at sculpture, chiseling some kind of figure out of sandstone. The family referred to it as Bernhard’s idol, Bernhard *sin Goetzen*, whenever they happened to come across it in later years.” Later Father wrote, “After thousands of years, this idol may perhaps be found again and turned over to a museum, and the anthropologists will rack their brains about it. In that case Bernhard would be the only one of us who had left a trace for future ages.”

Cousin Ernst wrote: “While Uncle Johannes loved music; Uncle Julius mathematics, botany, and language; Father liked physics. Later he studied a little chemistry and botany. But after diversifying a little, he came to read *Progress and Poverty* by Henry George. That settled it for him. He pestered the family and buttonholed strangers to explain the principles of tax reforms. In this field of study he read Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer, Arthur Schopenhauer, Rudolph Ihring, Wilhelm von Humbolt, and others.”

Father has written, “It is said that the Rombergs are idealists. I myself have sacrificed much time and many a dollar in order to establish an independent telephone system in our community, and I am proud of the success. Bernhard has sacrificed much for his single tax ideas. He has given out pamphlets and provided for lectures on the subject, for all of which he paid out of his own pocket.”

No one, friend or stranger, youth or adult, could be with Uncle Bernhard for an hour without getting wrapped up in a discussion and being stirred to thought.

Of all the relatives, none was loved more than Aunt Ida. She was the unmarried daughter in the Romberg family who continued

to live in the old home and take care of her parents. She also helped Aunt Jolina with the housekeeping and with the two children. Gradually she took over the housework entirely and was a second mother to the children. Aunt Jolina was greatly handicapped in her efforts at housekeeping [56] because she was very nearsighted. To see the frying bacon and turn it at the right moment, she had to get so close to the pan that the fat splattered into her face; and to kindle a fire in a wood range and keep it going was a major undertaking. Everybody was well satisfied when Aunt Ida put the food on the table and Aunt Jolina kept an interesting conversation going during the meal — at which she was an expert.

Aunt Ida was a second mother to all her nieces and nephews.

Everybody brought problems to Aunt Ida for a sympathetic understanding, for consultation and advice. All through her life Aunt Ida helped out whenever there was illness in the family.

Concerning her Cousin Helene has written as follows: “We children were very fond of Aunt Ida. It was always, ‘We are going to Aunt Ida’s.’ No matter who else lived there, she seemed the soul of the house.

“Whenever the sun came out after a spell of rainy weather, Aunt Ida came over. We always looked for her as soon as it quit raining.

“New Year’s Eve we celebrated at Aunt Ida’s. First there was supper: brown bread, butter, and sausage followed by a dish of clabber covered with cream and grated rye bread and seasoned with sugar and a little cinnamon. All the relatives in the neighborhood gathered for the evening, playing games, singing, guessing charades. Young and old joined in the fun until midnight. Then Aunt Ida came in with hot spicy punch and everybody drank to the new year. If the weather was bad, we spent the night. It was wonderful to wake up in the morning and find yourself at Aunt Ida’s.”

In her old age, she lived with cousin Hedwig and helped as usual with the cooking and the children. When some of the relatives urged her to retire, she pleaded, “Please let me work.” So she helped until one morning she just went to sleep. According to her last will and testament, her property was divided evenly among her nieces and nephews. It was her last deed of devotion to them.

Aunt Herline was another near relative whom the Black Jack

folks saw very seldom. She and Uncle Hermann continued to live on their ranch in Burnet County, where they reared three orphans besides their own three children. Uncle Hermann built a roomy two-story rock house near a spring on the Tiger Creek. A two-story porch ran across the whole front of the house, and the upstairs porch served as a sort of breezy summer living room.

In this home the mere accumulation of riches was not as important as a life of ease, peace, and contentment. However, Uncle Hermann introduced angora goats in that region of Texas; and they brought a good income. Besides attending to necessary ranch chores the boys enjoyed fishing and hunting along the Colorado River and riding horseback up Castle Mountain, where the view across the river valley was especially fine. At the same time, Aunt Herline might be on the upstairs porch with a piece of fancy work while the older daughter read Goethe's poems to her and the younger daughter practiced Mendelssohn's "Flower Song" on the square piano. A favorite pastime of Uncle Hermann's was to write articles for newspapers and humorous letters in rhymes to Grandfather Romberg or to Father. The children learned at home, for school was too far away. However, later the two girls [Frieda and Johanna] went to Aunt Friederike in San Antonio for a [57] change and for specialized study. Their brother [Albano] eventually established himself in the Texas Panhandle where land was more fertile and where the big ranches were then divided into smaller tracts and sold. After the death of Uncle Hermann, the family finally had to give up the ranch. They sold it, and Aunt Herline moved to Fredericksburg, where she lived with her two daughters. On her ninetieth birthday she was still interested in music, good literature, and of course in her grandchildren.

The old rock house is still well preserved. Even the two-story front porch is still in good condition, for Uncle Hermann constructed it of durable cedar posts and cypress boards. Inside, the rooms have been divided into a number of small apartments for ranch guests, who also enjoy leisure on the porch, horseback riding, hunting and fishing, and the view from Castle Mountain. The view, however, has changed; for a dam now spans the river to form Granite Shoals Lake [today, Lake LBJ].

The great tragedy in Aunt Friederike's life was that Uncle Carl died too soon. Half a century ago, farming took a great deal of

physical labor, no matter how rich the soil and how good the improvements. Aunt Friederike had eight children, but all were girls except the youngest one — and he was still a child when he lost his father. So Aunt Friederike decided to leave the farm and move where the children could get good schooling. First she moved to Black Jack and later to San Antonio — where the schools were excellent but the expenses appalling. Her older daughters taught at the Romberg school from time to time.

After all her efforts and sacrifices to give her children a good education, it must have been a source of great satisfaction to her that two of her younger daughters were eventually college professors.

Cousin Helene has written: “It is remarkable that Aunt Friederike did not lose her sense of humor during a long hard life, for she had more than her share of sorrows and hardships, battling along with the world after Uncle Carl’s death. After her own children were grown, she had to start over and raise three motherless grandchildren.”

She was superior to life’s frustrations and confusions, serene, courageous, and cheerful.

One of Father’s outstanding character traits was his control over himself and others. When he started teaching at O’Quinn in Fayette County, the men of the community informed him that the big boys were mean and needed plenty of tough whippings. Only one time in his four years there he had to slap a boy. The pupils were always quiet, busy, and contented. He managed his employees with the same ease. At home there never was a situation calling for severe discipline. It seems that problems had been foreseen and avoided. Father’s severest censure was a quiet and serious, “One does not do that.” He believed that one who led and directed must set a good example. He was quiet, gentle, and retiring.

Another outstanding trait of Father’s was his love for books and learning. On his desk one could usually find a scrap of paper with a geometry or other mathematical problem on which he had worked — for entertainment. Always on his desk was a book on botany. If Father did not know the name of a plant, he brought home a sprig and [58] looked up the species. Neatly stacked on his desk were also dictionaries of different languages, and in his

pockets one could usually find lists of foreign words. When he was doing repetitious work, he fished out such a list. As a young man he studied French systematically, a little every day, until he had a fair reading knowledge. A good deal later, he subscribed to a Spanish newspaper and started to learn Spanish. He explained that one could understand a foreign people better by reading in their language. Another purpose he had in mind probably was to show his children that it was never too late to learn.

During all of his mature years, Father wrote articles for newspapers on a great variety of subjects, most frequently on local, state, and national problems. These articles were clipped from the paper, enclosed with letters to children and other relatives — and lost.

One of Father's hobbies was astronomy, another was chess. In Black Jack inclement weather, known as chess weather, brought men and boys together in Grandfather's room for long, almost wordless sessions around the chess board. Father must have been a good player, for as a young man he played in St. Louis a number of times with the national champion, upon the latter's invitation. About that time Father plotted a chess problem that both Grandfather and Uncle Hermann Bauch could not solve. Father's main sphere of influence was the schoolroom. He taught in fall and winter, while a hired man did the plowing. Then when cotton chopping started, a school vacation was declared, and teacher and pupils went to work in the fields. Then there was a summer school of about eight weeks that started after cotton chopping and lasted until picking started. That school was usually conducted by older cousins back from college for vacation.

School was a local undertaking paid for partly by state funds and partly by private contributions. So each instructor felt free to teach — besides reading, writing, and arithmetic — any subjects he or she liked or thought important. Aunt Berline one summer emphasized ancient history, which she could present like a fascinating story. One cousin specialized in German grammar.

Father taught the older cousins algebra, astronomy, and physics.

From a private school in San Antonio that was to be discontinued, he secured an imported telescope with a three inch lens with which one could see the rings of Saturn. He bought

books on astronomy, and in summer night sessions the cousins learned the location of constellations, of planets, and the brighter fixed stars. In Black Jack, even the first graders could point out the North Star.

Shortly after Father had returned from Europe, he decided that people here in Texas would be interested in electricity. So he prepared a lecture that was to be enlivened by demonstrations with instruments. The lecture proved a failure as a money making proposition, so the electrical equipment was stored in the attic above Grandfather's room. Then when Father was teaching physics to the older boys in the Romberg school, this equipment was brought to light again for the benefit of the boys — who were most willing to assist with the unpacking, the sorting, and the demonstrations.

Problems of discipline never marred the classroom work or the recess periods. In the schoolroom all were busy; on the school grounds Father knew how to start a new game before the enthusiasm for the former one had waned.

[59] While Father influenced the young people of the community through the school, Aunt Berline did so with a literary society, which she organized and encouraged. Everybody assisted and contributed, but she was the guiding spirit of the organization. As a child she had attended the meetings of the Prairieblume and had decided that some time in later life she, too, would organize such a literary society for young people.

Mother has written of Aunt Berline as follows: "She saw to it that at every family gathering there was an interesting conversation. She read much in order to stimulate such a conversation. She was aided in this by her excellent memory. She would read a poem a few times, and then know it by heart. And she could write beautiful poems herself.

"Uncle Bernhard was a deep thinker and always ready to take part in a discussion, but she was the one who brought up the topics that were suitable for general discussion. She did this in a larger group, and she did this every day at home at the dinner table.

"As her children were growing up and needed some social life, she organized a literary society at which she presided. This organization flourished especially during the summer months. She was interested in giving her boys and the other young folks an

opportunity to practice speaking before an audience. Father took an active part in the programs; so did Uncle Bernhard and the older cousins who were home from college or from their teaching. Even the children participated. Mostly these recited a poem, took part in a dialogue, or sang a song. Then they ran off to play outside while the older ones took up an assigned topic for discussion. Perhaps the older children would stay and listen for a while. Frequently there was a debate — with judges to render a decision later. Usually the subject was assigned to definite speakers who were prepared. After these finished, everybody who wanted to could contribute facts or opinions. Topics for discussion were such as, ‘What is character?’ and ‘Who was the best president?’ In this informal organization all were encouraged to contribute.

“The meetings were held at the different homes and always on Sunday afternoons. Coffee and cake were served. Everybody departed with the feeling of having spent a pleasant and enjoyable afternoon. One summer when these meetings were starting again, everybody was to suggest a name for the organization. Many beautiful and suitable names were submitted. Finally Father suggested the name Opossum, as the organization usually died down in the winter and then came to life again during the next summer. This name seemed appropriate, and it stuck. For years, then, the Romberg families attended the Opossum.”

The meetings were kept up for a decade or more — until most of the young people had left the community. The older cousins who had been off to school were a distinct stimulus. Aunt Bernhardine’s and Uncle Bernhard’s older boys were good debaters.

The Opossum had a definite influence and contributed to the intellectual life of the community.

“Aunt Jolina was another aunt who contributed much to the social life of the community.” So wrote Mother. “She had time for this because Aunt Ida attended to the household duties. She was well educated [60] and continued to find time to read. Having always lived in large cities before she came to Texas, she had met interesting people. Everybody liked to be in her company because she was entertaining. She was a good conversationalist and could tell any little incident in an interesting manner.

“Aunt Jolina was a good musician. She was an accomplished

pianist and also had a well trained voice. She gladly contributed suitable music to any of our gatherings, taught the children how to play the piano and how to sing, and accompanied them with ease and with pleasure.

“Aunt Jolina had a distinguished appearance and moved with poise in any gathering. However, she was almost at a loss when left alone to entertain a plain farm woman. Somehow she always met interesting and cultured people whom she invited for a visit in her home. She did this because she liked to entertain, and because these visitors brought a change into the quiet country life.

“It was Aunt Jolina who instigated occasional theatricals. For Grandfather’s and for Uncle Johannes’ birthdays and for New Year’s Night she practiced little plays with the children. She found time to select suitable plays; to plan and arrange costumes, decorations, stage, and curtains. Soon all were enthusiastic helpers. Skilled hands prepared angel wings, crowns, trains, peasants’ costumes, and so on. And the children of the community learned to act before an audience — which consisted of all the kinfolks and intimate friends, young and old.

“These affairs were staged in Uncle Johannes’ large hall, open on the south and closed on the north side. The north end with its many exits was very well suited for a stage.

“To Aunt Jolina no play, no social gathering was complete without music. She could select the right music for each occasion and enjoyed training singers and performers on instruments.

“It was fortunate there was in the Romberg family one person who had the time, the inclination, and ability to undertake such social activities, so stimulating to all. Her influence helped to make life very different from what it was in most rural communities.

“Aunt Jolina loved children; and the children were all very fond of her and were therefore easily influenced by this talented and interesting aunt, who contributed so much to the social life of the little community.”

Mental activity in the community was also stimulated by a number of good magazines. Uncle Herman and Aunt Erna had magazines with continued stories and illustrated articles of current interest. Father had a scientific monthly. Aunt Bernhardine had magazines. Even the children had three magazines. All these were

passed around from family to family and furnished topics of conversation.

Grandfather's classics were passed around and Uncle Bernhard's books on economics. In her home, it was Aunt Berline's custom to eat her lunch early; and after everybody was served, she read for a while. Then she started a conversation or discussion.

Everybody read — for diversion and for information. In spite of relative isolation, these people kept up with the times.

In Black Jack Springs, the children learned to work. No mechanized farming then. The children picked cotton through the season [61] until picking was finished. Then school started. For cotton chopping a vacation was declared and the children again helped in the fields. After school hours, too, each child had regular chores to do. The smaller children brought in wood and kindling for the kitchen range or hunted the eggs. The lucrative wage of five cents per hundred eggs brought in was an extra incentive to hunt around in a big hay barn for new nests.

The girls sewed their own dresses; they sewed shirts and pants for the boys and all underwear for the family. No linoleum then. It took a broom and soap suds to clean the floor. No home appliances made housekeeping easy. It was the time of the rubbing board and the iron wash pot in the back yard. During the hot summer, butter and milk were cooled on a breezy porch with the aid of a pan of water and some wet cloths. The left-over meat roast was put in a bucket and suspended down the well.

Hams, bacon, sausages, and smoked beef were produced at home. It took constant vigilance to keep the fire in the smoke house smoking but not burning. Too much fire spoiled the meat. No fresh vegetables were for sale at the country store. Those served at the family table all came from the home garden. The mother made her own sauerkraut, dried her own peaches, and made all her preserves. She even made cheese. With all this housework, the daughters had to help.

The boys had duties about the barn, where they soon learned the necessity of performing their tasks regularly. The hogs had to be watered, or they died. The calves had to be turned out of the cow pen at night, or there was no milk in the morning. If the corn was not shucked by daylight, it had to be done in the dark; for the

father fed the horses at dawn, then ate his breakfast, then hitched up the team for a hard day's plowing.

The children had plenty of regular work, but the boys still had energy to race to the swimming hole or to spend a noisy Sunday afternoon fighting a nest of bumblebees; and the girls were still interested in practicing on the piano — for every girl desired to play a piece when company came in.

And so the generation that grew up in the Romberg community during the nineties learned to work and learned to appreciate the value of diligence.

However, the Romberg community life at old Black Jack Springs was doomed. The young people left first. Soon after the turn of the century, the older people moved to be near their children. Only Uncle Bernhard stayed on until he died at the age of ninety-eight. His son Ernst was the last relatives to leave — one hundred years plus a few months after Grandfather Romberg settled in the community.

Grandfather's homestead was sold, torn down, rebuilt. Nothing there looks like it did in his lifetime.

But although the old homestead is obliterated, the traits that were characteristic of the family in that home are still found in more or less pronounced manner among the Romberg descendants.

CONCLUSION

[62] What are some of the outstanding Romberg family traits? How were they developed?

In arriving at the answers to these questions, it should be recalled that Grandfather's ancestors for several generations were either Lutheran pastors or higher Lutheran church officials. Each one of these forefathers spent a lifetime in emphasizing in word and deed certain traits that should be found in a Christian character.

One of these traits was integrity, in other words honesty, fairness, the desire to do right.

Another trait was charity: kindness and helpfulness. Grandfather Romberg was helpful, gentle, and kind. The feeling for responsibility to the community is strong in the Rombergs.

A further trait was lack of interest in accumulating riches. The Lutheran pastors received a regular salary from the state; consequently they were not pressed by necessity to spend thought and effort day by day on income, savings, and investments. To Grandfather Romberg business dealings were not only alien but really distasteful.

Another trait was love for learning. The Lutheran pastor, before he was employed by the state, had to acquire the university degree of Doctor of Divinity. Much of his lifetime was spent pouring over books. Grandfather had this love for books and learning. He looked upon books as a necessity and spoke of them as furnishing mental nourishment.

Character traits may be inherited as well as silver spoons and linen table cloths. During pioneer times the intimate family life played an important part in the transference of distinctive characteristics from parent to child. In modern times the members of a family — if they do not go off in the family car — can scatter after supper all over the house to electrically lighted, comfortably air conditioned or gas heated rooms. Each one can pursue his hobbies, follow his own inclinations. Life was different during pioneer times. On summer evenings members of the family took chairs into the yard to cool off in the Gulf breeze and to enjoy companionship and conversation. In winter the family gathered for light, warmth, and companionship around the living room

fireplace. There during conversation and discussion the viewpoints, attitudes, and convictions of the elders could gradually and unconsciously be absorbed by the younger members of the family circle. Around the fireplace ideas could be formed regarding integrity, charity, the value of learning, and so on.

When Grandfather brought to the Texas frontier his collection of books and when Grandmother read to the family regularly, it was done with plan and purpose. How well they succeeded may be gathered from the fact that of the young people who grew up at Black Jack Springs, two out of every three went off for study in higher institutions of learning. Four of them achieved the high scholastic honor of Phi Beta Kappa at the University of Texas. It was not possible for all to get away to study; but it is remarkable that so many left for further schooling some seventy years ago when few young people thought of going to college, let alone from such an isolated country community. Certainly it was at that time unusual for young women to attend college. [63] But in school or out, the Rombergs were characterized by the desire to investigate, to acquire knowledge.

The young people from old Black Jack Springs responded to their heritage. For them too, Grandfather and Grandmother Romberg kept the intellectual light burning during the long, hard pioneer period.

Diligence, integrity, charity, and knowledge form a solid foundation for economic progress and therefore also for comfortable living conditions and desirable social surroundings. They promote a normal outlook on life and lead to contentment.

The Texas Rombergs of pioneer times were no churchgoers. There was no church. However, when the young people finally left the isolation of old Black Jack Springs to study, to start a business, or to find employment in a community that promised progress, then these young people easily found their way into a church again. Eventually, many of the Romberg descendants joined a church and became ardent workers in that organization. The Christian religion too was part of the Romberg heritage.

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**Translation of the passport of
Johannes Christlieb Nathanael Romberg**

No. 58
of the Passport Register

**We Friedrich Franz, by God's Grace
Grandduke of Mecklenburg, etc. etc. etc.**

Passport
valid for *One Year*

Description of Person

Age: *39 years*
Stature: *medium*
Hair: *blond*

Special Recognition Marks

**Signature of the Passport
Owner**

Johannes Romberg

Preparation fee: 26 schilling
Stamp 2 schilling
 28 schilling

Entreat all and every foreign Authority and
Commander, and most graciously direct
our own, upon presentation of this, to
permit
the former Merchant Johannes Romberg
born in Alt Buckow, resident in
Boitzenburg
attested to through *his own deposition*
who for purposes of emigration with his
wife and six children via Hamburg and
New Orleans to Texas

is traveling, to come and go everywhere
unhindered, to allow him also all
protections and necessary compaisance.
Given at Schwerin, the *30th of August*
one thousand eight hundred *forty-seven*.
At his Royal Highnesses allhighest
special command.
The Grand Duchy's State
Government.

Existing Copies of the *Prairieblume*

Four “issues” of the writings of the members of the Prairieblume Literary Society are in the Barker Historical Library at the University of Texas at Austin. These were located and deposited in the library by Annie Romberg. Someone, probably Annie, has read through all of the issues and made notes (in English) on and about them. Some of the notes explain people and places mentioned in the writings; some identify the writer as “Grandfather Romberg.” The issues were apparently numbered 1 through 4 by Annie Romberg, but there is no indication of when or in what order they actually were created.

All of the writing is in German script on fairly thin paper, most of it legal size sheets. The paper is thin enough that the writing on the reverse side shows through in a photocopy. The material is written clearly, in different hands, apparently copied out in final form for the meetings. It is readable by someone familiar with the language and the script.

The issue marked “4” mentions the *Prairieblume* itself. The first item is identified in the notes on this issue as a toast to the *Prairieblume*. The title is “*Ein trockner Blatt zur grünen Prairieblume*” — a dry leaf to the green *Prairieblume*. The first line reads “*Schon wieder beginnt der Nordwind mit riesigem Kraft die krümmigen Eichbäume zu schütteln, und die von dem Herbstluft geblasten Blätter hinab in die Thaler zu wirbeln.*” (Already the north wind begins to shake the twisted oak trees with great force, and to swirl the leaves blown by the autumn air down into the valleys.)

The second item, at the end of the second page, is a four-line riddle – “Ein Ratsel.”

*Die ersten Zwei ißt jeder gern,
Doch mit den Dritten bleibt mir fern,
Das Ganze lieb ich wieder sehr,
Denn davon kam man die ersten her.*

The first two one eats with glee
But keep the third away from me,
The whole however, I love much,
Because from it comes the first such.

The third page is two short poems by Grandfather Romberg.

The first is the poem titled simply “The Prairieblume”:

*“Blümelein,
Zart and klein,
Wünscht dir gutes Wetter,
Mögst gedeihn
Auf texanischer Prairie.
Prosa deuten deine Blätter,
Deine Blüten Poesie.”*
(Little flower,
Small and tender,
Wish you good weather,
May you flourish
On the Texas prairie.
Prose signify your leaves,
Your blossoms poetry.)

The last item is:

*Der Brechmittel
Eines Morgens ziemlich frühe
Macht ich mir die kleine Mühe,
Ging zur Gartenlaube hin
Wo ich immer gerne bin.*

*Hört die Vöglein munter singen
Wo die weisen Trauben bingen,
Sah die Vöglein Trauben essen,
Hat sie lieber selbst gegessen.*

*Doch ich kletterte hinauf,
Aß die süßten Trauben auf
Da kam mein Zielkammerad
Den ich mir zu Tische bat.*

*Sieh doch her in diesem Papier
Ist Brechmittel für uns hier,
Wir wollen mal recht lustig leben,
Und uns recht tüchtig übergeben.*

*Mit Freuden ward er ausgeübt
Jedoch des Ende war betrübt.
Ich las in manchem Buch
Nach Schaden wird man klug.
– Nach einem wahren Ereignis.*

The Emetic
One morning fairly early
I made the small effort
to go to the garden
where I am always glad to be.

Heard a small bird singing bravely
where the white grapes hung,
saw the bird eat grapes
I would rather have eaten myself.

So I climbed up,
consumed the sweetest grapes,
There came my friend with the same
goal
Whom I invited to join me at table.

See here in this paper
Is an emetic for us here.
We want to live right lustily.
And present ourselves as clever.

Eagerly he fell to
Although distressed by the result
I have read in many a book that
A bad experience can be very
enlightening.
– After a real episode

A Concert in the Brazos Bottom

A story written by a member of the Prairieblume Literary Society (Fayette County, Texas) between 1857 and 1861, translated (about 1994) by Ute Ritzenhoven, a University of Houston Texas-German scholarship exchange student from the University of Mainz

An overall gray and gloomy cloud had completely darkened the Texas sky. For several days nothing could be heard except the rain dropping monotonously on the shingle roofs of the farmhouses. This unpleasant weather was made even more unbearable by the chill brought by a blue norther, with its dark, melancholy bass voice. The cattle had taken refuge in the bottoms, feeding on Spanish moss, which hung down from the trees.

Not a farmer was seen working outside. Everybody sat next to a fireplace, turning often, trying to catch the warmth from every angle. All the creeks, paths and roads were impassable. Even the most ardent teamster had to stay at home. In spite of the cold and wet weather, a young man was walking in the mud along the Brazos bottom. He was carrying all his possessions in a bundle on his back. Since he was an immigrant, he feared the cold less. Lack of money had made him leave swampy Houston almost immediately to reach his brother, who was living in San Felipe.

He walked almost the whole day, only rarely encountering a rider in this desert of mud. It would have been amusing to watch him jump from side to side, at the same time trying to reach an occasional dry spot and to not fall in the mud. When the going was easier, he took a flute out of his pocket, and, in spite of the cold, skillfully piped the merriest tunes, which were in stark contrast to his surroundings. The notes echoed through the leafless trees, accompanied by the cackling of some crows, which were not used to hearing such a melody. If somebody had seen him there, playing a march and skillfully extracting his feet from the mud, the observer would have to think that he was successful in his efforts to keep the gloomy surroundings from depressing him.

While he was trying to move forward in this manner, he met two Americans, who were very surprised to hear this merry music ringing out in such a prosaic setting. When the traveler noticed

them, he put the flute back into his pocket and continued on quietly. But they approached him and asked him to play a tune, since they loved to listen to music, and they had not heard a flute for a long time. But the traveler did not feel like stopping there and satisfying their request. And he also thought that they wanted to make fun of him and so he just wanted to go on undisturbed. But when the Americans realized that they were not going to hear any music, they dug in their pockets and both pulled out a dollar. They threw them at the musician with the words: "Pray, let us hear some music!" When he realized that they really just wanted to hear something, he picked up the money, and he returned it to them saying that he would play for them without being paid. As he began, one of the Americans got down from his horse and sat down next to him on a fallen tree. He had hardly begun, when a large group of riders came along and joined his audience. When he had finished, they cheered him heartily.

Then the one sitting next to him asked him if he could play "Yankee Doodle." When he said that he did not know it, the other one began to hum the melody. After he had hummed it a few times, the traveler picked up his flute, and after a few attempts, to the astonishment and delight of his audience, he piped "Yankee Doodle" without missing a note. When the musician was finished, amidst the cheers "That is a man!" he was showered with coins. The one sitting next to him picked up the coins, added some himself, and gave them to him. Then the traveler got up, saluted the Americans and continued on his way, still piping "Yankee Doodle." Now he really hurried to make up the lost time and also to avoid the undesirable adventure of spending the night in the bottom. Although he had intended to reach his brother's place that day, it was already late at night when he reached the Brazos. The ferryman did not want to bring him to the other side, because it was dark and the river was too high. But the ferryman invited him to spend the night at his place, which he decided to do. The ferryman, like the others, soon discovered his musical talent and asked him to play something. The next morning, when he asked how much he owed, his host replied that the situation was quite the opposite, that he, the host, was indebted to him. He assured him that he would never make guests as delightful as him pay. He also refused to take any money for the crossing.

The gray clouds had now parted; the sun rose radiantly in the east. The traveler was thus greeted by a beautiful and clear morning, as he approached his destination. He thought to himself, "Your progress here will be easy, if you are as welcome everywhere as you have been so far." He then started looking for the town of San Felipe, assuming that it was close by. Since he found only a few houses, but no town, he approached a little girl, who was walking along. He asked: "Dear child, do you know where to find the town of San Felipe? Do you know how far it is? I was hoping to find it here, but, apparently, I was wrong. I can see no indication of a town here." "No", the girl replied, "You were right. This is the town." "Really?" the young man exclaimed, "This is supposed to be a town?" He was simply flabbergasted and gaped as if he were about to swallow the whole town. "That is San Felipe?" he exclaimed again and he could hardly get over his surprise. The girl had stopped, startled by the strange way in which he expressed his surprise. "Surely, if the town is not bigger than this, you can certainly tell me where I can find my brother Herr Meier?" "He's your brother?" the little girl asked. "Oh, I know", she added, "You're from Germany!" She dropped her books and quickly ran to a house near by. The traveler, left by himself, heard her shouting, "Vater, Mutter, Uncle has arrived! I just talked to him! There! He's coming!" And now he received a hearty greeting.

