



**EXPERIENCES  
RECORDED  
FOR HIS DESCENDANTS**

By Heinrich Otto Mackensen

Written down when he was 73 (1903)

Translated by Annie Romberg

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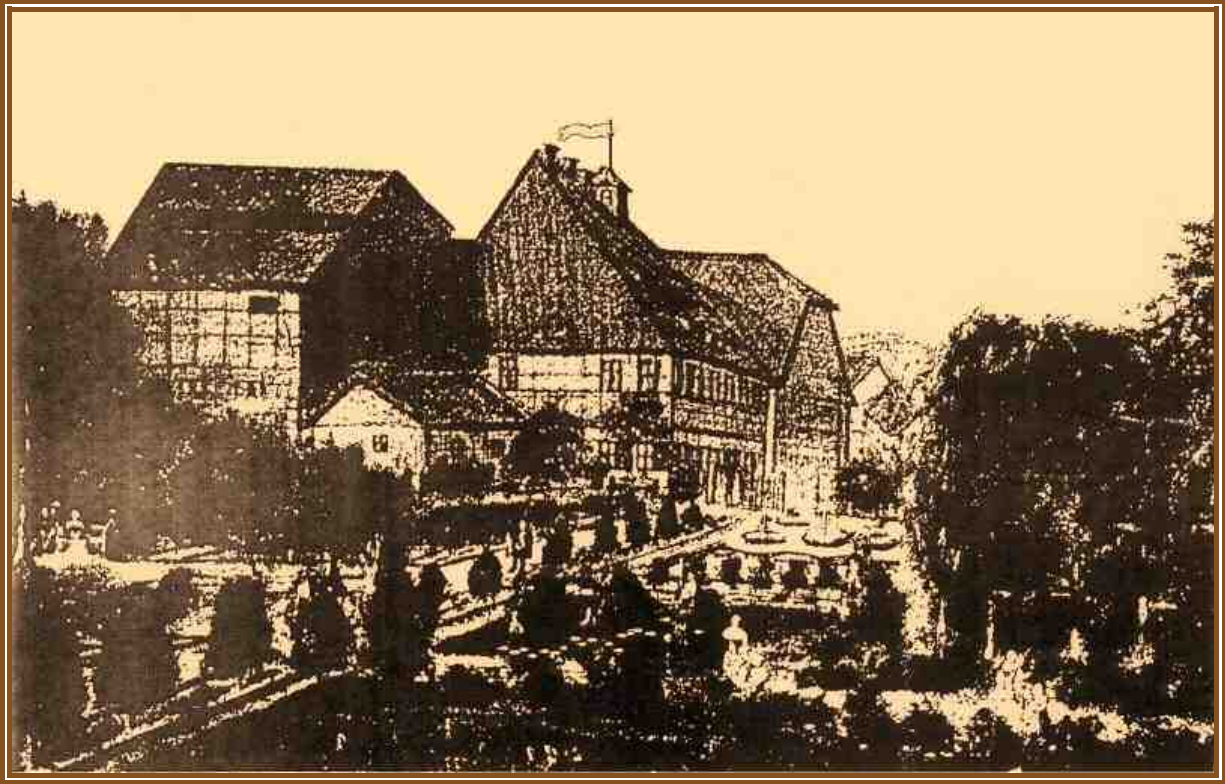
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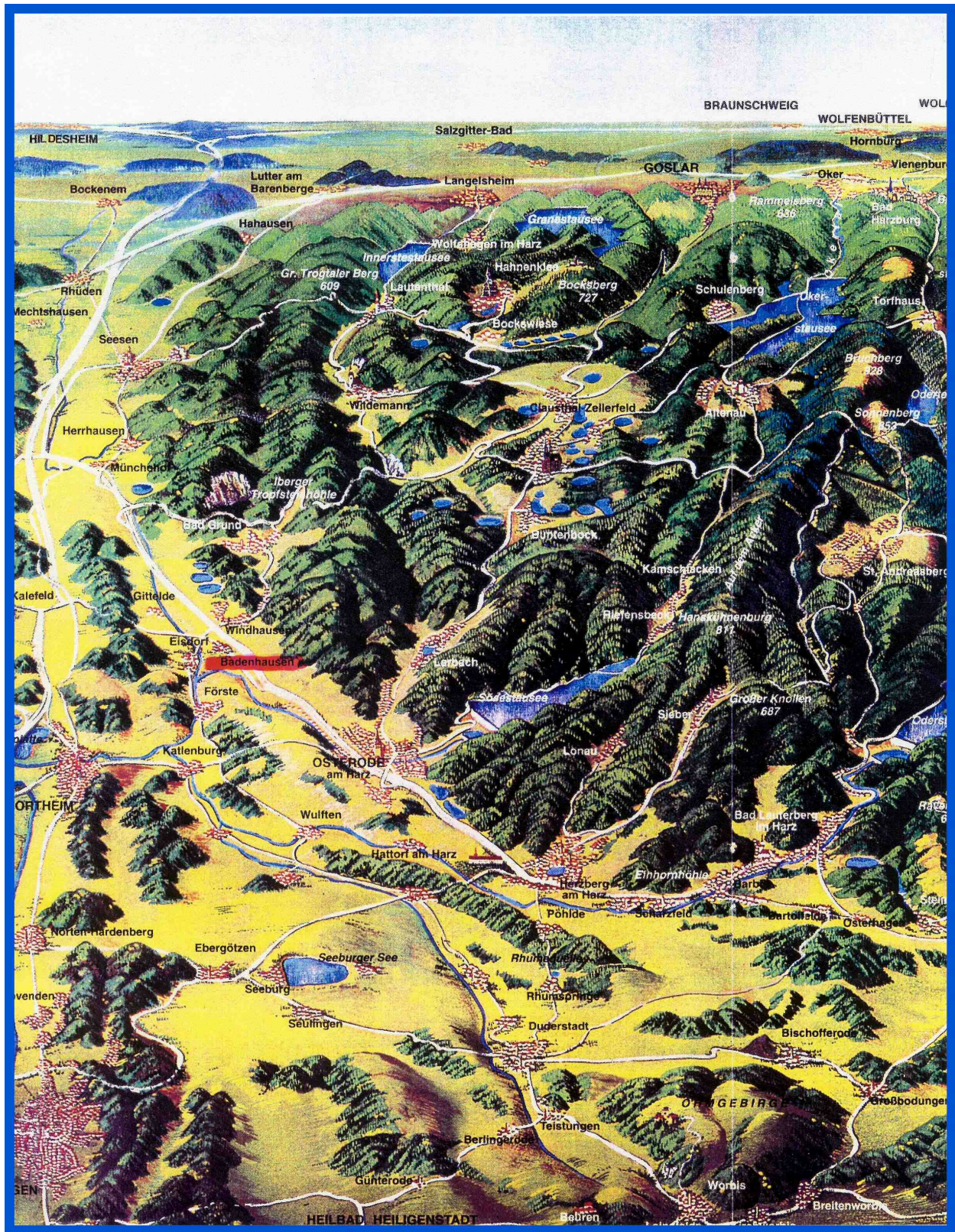


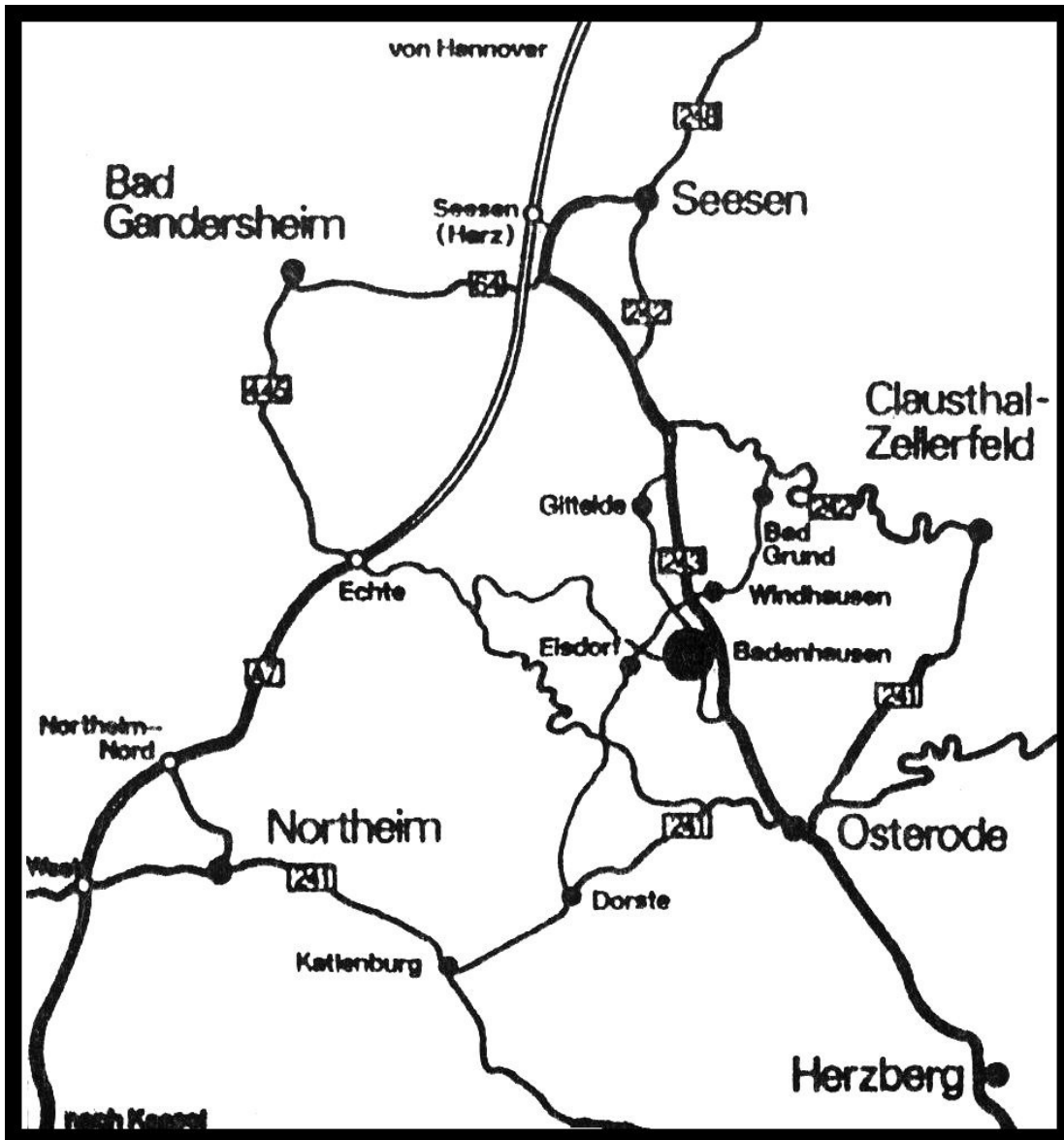
**Heinrich Otto Mackensen, c. 1915**



*The Mackensen Estate, painted by Fritz Schuseil in 1849*

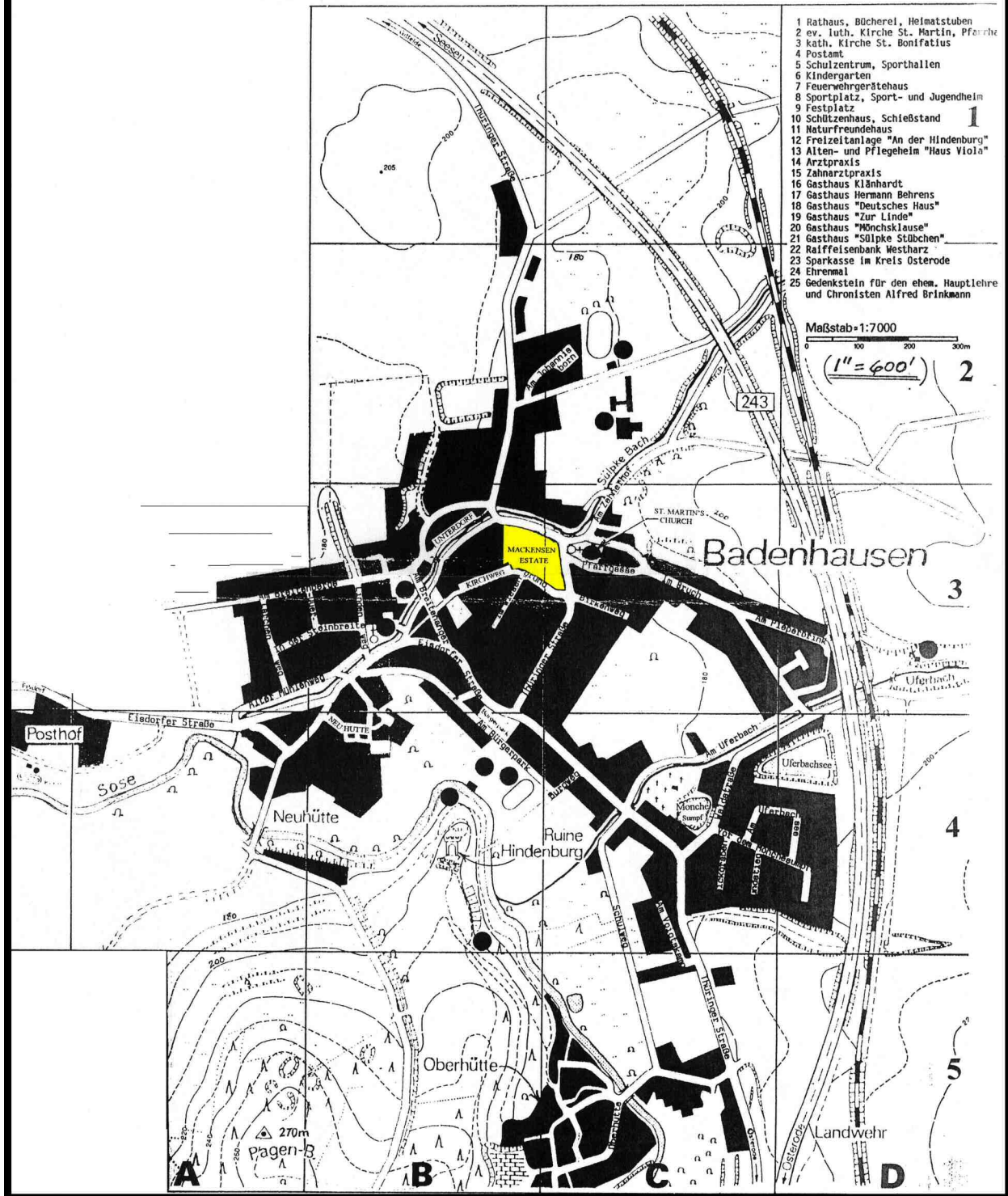
Showing factory buildings, a circular arbor at the left, Fritz standing in the entry road, girls playing at the front right, and Conrad Mackensen standing in one of the upper windows.

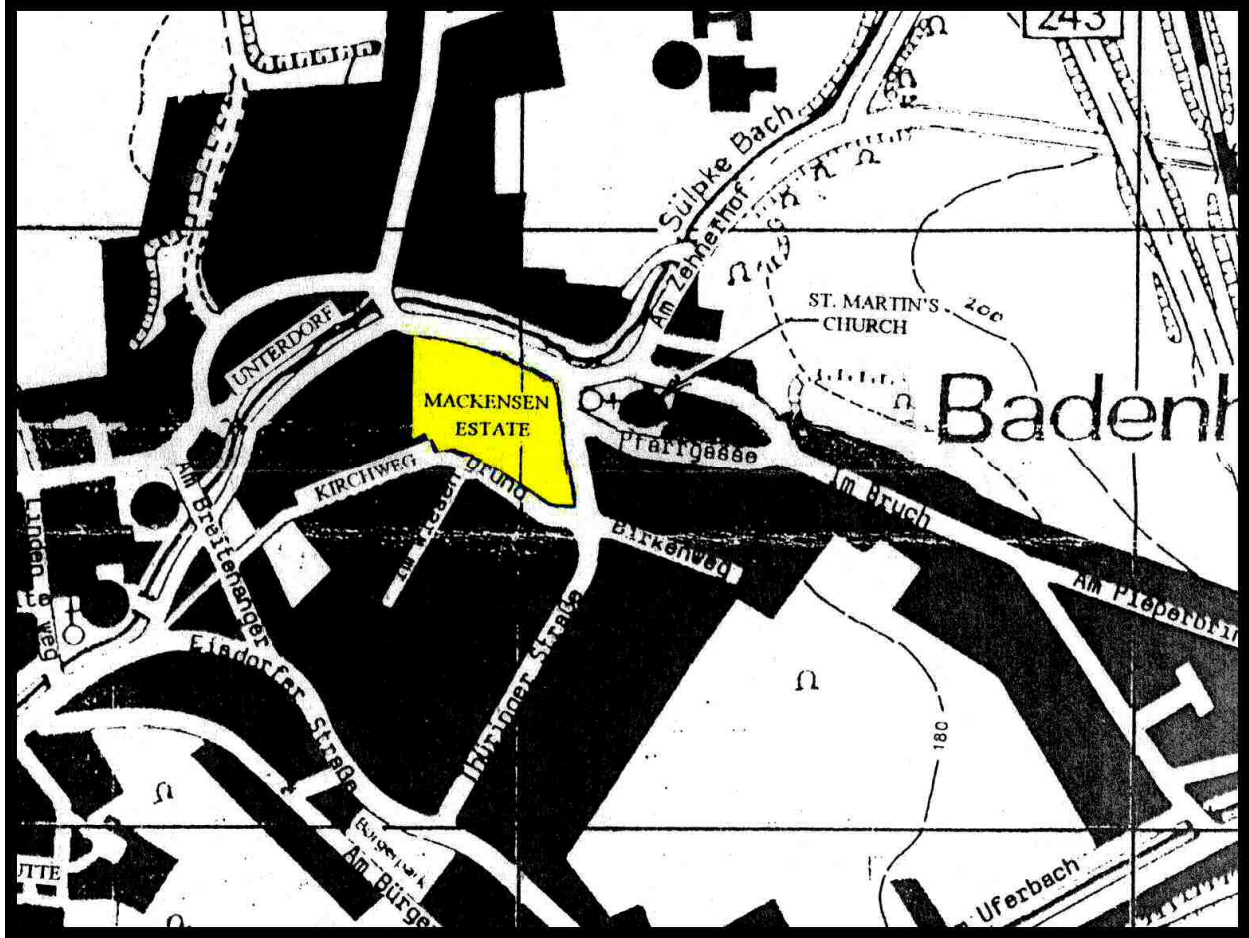






# Badenhausen







## LIFE IN BADENHAUSEN

### Native Country

I was born on [November 28, and christened on] December 4, 1830, in the village of Badenhäusen in the Duchy of Braunschweig; and since this region, besides its mines and the other industries, has also points of historical interest, I shall give a somewhat detailed description of it.

Badenhäusen lies in the pleasant valley of the Söse half a mile up on the southwestern slope of the Harz Mountains. To the southwest on the same small stream lies the little factory town of Osterode; and from here to Badenhäusen the Söse washes sharply on the south side against the Pagenberg, a hill composed entirely of white gypsum, so that in many places steep cliffs are formed. These cliffs and the thick smoke and steam columns of the adjacent gypsum kilns contribute to the beauty and picturesqueness of the valley.

Close to Badenhäusen the Pagenberg ends in a conical peak on which are still found the remains of walls of a tower, popularly known as the Hinenburg. However, a citadel could not well have stood there, as the circumference of the peak would have been too small. It was probably a watchtower, because from the hill one can see far over the entire valley, which bends sharply around this hill.

Here the stream formed a pond and waterfall so that water could flow out of its natural bed into a ditch, in order to furnish power for a sledge hammer in the iron works a little farther down at Neuhütte.

Still farther down the stream was a sawmill, a flour mill, and a farmstead – the Posthof. The latter was part of my father's property. Towards the west, the valley spread out considerably. The Söse flows into the Ruhme, which – combining with the Aller – flows into the Weser not far above Bremen.

The name Kattelsburg is probably proof that the Katten, supposedly ancestors of the Hessians, must have settled as far as this region. The little city Nordheim, already mentioned in German history of the eleventh century, is not far from Kattelsburg.

To the east and north of Badenhäusen rises the Lower Harz, with its covering of dark spruce

forests. One and one-half miles away is Klausthal, the most important of the "seven mountain cities" – so called because all seven are in the Harz Mountains. The principal occupation in these cities is mining. Since these mountain folks are from the Erzgebirge, they are different in appearance and language from the people of the surrounding plains. Their forefathers were induced by the Emperor Otto (936-937) to move to the Harz in order to start the mining industry there.

If one followed the turnpike which comes from Osterode and leads out of Badenhausen in a northwestern direction, one reached Teichhütte – only a quarter of a mile from Badenhausen. Teichhütte consisted of a few scattered farmyards and a blast furnace, used for smelting iron ore. In order to obtain the necessary waterpower for the blast furnace, a small artificial lake had been created by building a dam across the valley.

Just beyond Teichhütte was the little place Gittelde; and a quarter of a mile beyond was the crown land Staufenburg, with its extensive farm buildings. Beyond this rises a round, steep, bare hill visible from far off. On the crest are the ruins of the Staufenburg – which is not to be mistaken for the castle of Hohenstaufen in Swabia.

In this vicinity the turnpike leads through a narrow defile, known as the Heinrichswinkel, where from both sides the dense forests reached down to the edge of the road. It was here that Eberhard, the brother of King Konrad I, and other princes brought to the Duke Henry (Heinrich) of Saxony the message that he had been elected king. The dying king had advised the German princes to elect young Henry because the latter gave promise of being a strong ruler. This advice was given though Henry had once fought and defeated the king.

It is reported that Henry happened to be busy at his fowling-floor when the emissaries found him; and that upon receiving the important message, he called out, "That is a good birdcatch." He became Henry I (919-956), generally known as Henry the Fowler, the father of the emperor Otto I.

One and one-half miles beyond the Staufenburg was Seesen, the seat of a lower court. The magistrate functioned somewhat like a county judge. Half a mile farther on, along the edge of the woods and on the watershed between the Leine and the Oker, was a solitary inn called New Brag. It was said that in this region the notorious robber Schinderhannes roamed about after the Thirty Years War.

A half mile farther on was Lutter am Barenberge, where at the beginning of the Thirty Years

War, the Danish King Christian IV was defeated in 1626 by Tilly, commander-in-chief of the Catholic League. Half a mile farther east lies Goslar, a small but ancient city where the former German Emperors, especially the Frankish line, often held court in a building called the Kaiserwarte (imperial citadel) – now used as the best hotel of the city. In the middle of the marketplace is a large rock known as the Teufelsstein (Devil's Rock), probably a sacrificial stone of the time of the heathens. In the vicinity of Goslar are mining operations.

Our family descended from free landholders; that is, they did not hold their land in fee under an overlord. Their only legal obligations to their duke were to pay taxes and when necessary to serve in the army; consequently, there was no manorial estate in our village.

Formerly the village had been located on the mountain slope half a mile farther east, where the old millrace may still be seen; but at the time of the battle at Lutter, the place was plundered and burned by Tilly's hordes. Then the villagers decided, "Now we will build along the highway" (Bahn); and so the new village was named Bahnhausen, later changed to Badenhausen.

Remarkably, considering its size, the village had in its center on a small elevation an imposing, massive church with spire clock and two rather large, harmoniously tuned bells that could be heard far over mountain and valley. The turnpike passed at the foot of the church hill; then it followed a lovely clear mountain brook for a short distance to cross it finally by means of an arched bridge. Around the church were grouped the rectory, the school building and the larger farmsteads with their neat vegetable and flower gardens.

### Homestead

Our spacious yard reached to the turnpike, on the other side of which was the church with high broad stone steps leading to the church door. The yard extended then along the turnpike to the east side of our residence and contained, besides the customary arbors, also a small fishpond fed by the water system of our factory.

My parental home was a large but old-fashioned two-story building, a wooden framework filled in with masonry. The original building was constructed during the Thirty Years War, but since that time it had suffered several remodelings. Besides lower and upper large halls, the house had sixteen living and bedrooms, storage rooms for groceries and supplies, and two large cellars.

## The Family

My grandfather Engelhard Mackensen had, besides his innkeeping and agricultural pursuits, considerable trade – for those times – in cattle, which were driven to Hamburg for sale. During his absence my grandmother, nee Kreidel – also from Badenhäusen – not only managed the entire establishment but also attended to the buying of cattle.

At that time when railroads were unknown, the highways sometimes in a deplorable condition and the postal service in its infancy, a letter from Hamburg to the Harz was on its way longer than it is now when sent from Hamburg to New York. The cattle were raised to be tame and were driven by attendants who were on foot and were assisted by trained dogs. Once when my grandfather arrived with a herd at Hamburg, there had been a considerable drop in price, so that he could not sell his herd with a profit; and an acute loss could be expected if my grandmother continued to buy at former prices until she could be notified by means of a letter. My grandfather had a solution. He fed his dog well, fastened a note to his collar and commanded the dog to go home. The faithful animal arrived at home the next day, jumped and whined around his mistress until she discovered the letter. Swimming the wide Elbe River at Hamburg, he had traveled the hundred and twenty-five English miles without resting.

When my grandfather was only sixty years old and still strong and hale, he died of a minor injury caused by a tight shoe. He had paid no attention to the ailment, which then developed into so-called mortification. He refused amputation of the leg, preferring to risk death. He was survived by three daughters, Mrs. Misling, Mrs. Berkenbush, and Mrs. Von Billerbeck; and three sons Christian, Zacharias and Conrad, my father.

The latter, the youngest of them, took over the paternal homestead when he was twenty-four years old. He had received training in merchandising; and, together with Zacharias, he had a spirits factory in Nordhausen and later also a starch factory. After his marriage with Caroline Thiele, he built in Badenhäusen first a spirits factory and later also a starch factory. My father was an efficient business man and my mother, like my grandmother, was a capable person who could take charge while her husband was away on business affairs; consequently, the enterprises prospered. With the profits the business was expanded, more land was purchased and correspondingly more farm buildings were erected.

Unfortunately my good mother died in 1836, shortly after she had lost her youngest son, Conrad. She left four sons: Louis, Bernhard, me (Otto) – then only six years old – and Wilhelm. In such a large establishment, in spite of housekeeper and farm managers, the absence of the lady of the house was soon very noticeable; and so my father, a year later, married again. His second wife was Caroline, daughter of the Superintendent Schuseil. (A *Superintendent* is a Lutheran ecclesiastic similar to a bishop.) She was a good woman and for us children a good mother, so far as her strength reached; however, soon she was hampered by ill health and could not occupy herself much with household affairs.

### Tutors and Schooling

I spent the years of my youth like most children on the playground and the school bench. It probably would have been better if I had not pressed the school bench so early and so continuously. On account of his numerous business affairs, my father could devote but little time to his boys; and so he secured a tutor for us, even though there was a relatively good public school in Badenhausen.

The three gentlemen who followed each other as tutors in our home were all candidates of theology; that is, they had completed the prescribed course of studies at the university and were waiting for a church assignment. Their studies were almost entirely humanistic or classical. They knew nothing of the sciences. Accordingly, we were taught from eight to twelve in the morning; and with the exception of Wednesdays and Saturdays, also from two to four in the afternoons. Then at five o'clock we had to be back in the schoolroom to study the ample assignments. These consisted mainly of memorizing Latin and Greek vocabularies, studying grammar and syntax with painful accuracy, translating and memorizing whole sentences of so-called *logia*.

German, French, history, geography and mathematics were unimportant studies – in some of which the gentlemen were not sitting so firmly in the saddle themselves. For instance, one time I asked the last tutor we had to explain what a *sine* was. He answered, "A sine is just a sine." He could have explained that one meant by that the relation in a right angle triangle between the opposite of a given acute angle (Kathebe) to the hypotenuse. Reading aloud or public speaking was not practiced at all – an omission which I often had opportunity to deplore in later years.

Later at the gymnasium, a classical state-school of junior college rank, our instruction continued in the same manner. We were taught only theory but no useful application of what was learned, even though the latter is the purpose of learning the theory, helps to impress it on the mind and arouses more interest and pleasure in studying.

### Boyhood Pleasures

There was no lack of playmates since many of the boys at the nearby farmsteads were of our age. In the winter, which at the foot of the Harz Mountains brought plenty of ice and snow, the boys pulled little sleds up steep hills, seated themselves and then shot down like an arrow. Of course there were many turnovers and tumbles, bloody noses and skinned faces. Or a boy whizzing down might crash between the legs of another pulling his sled back uphill and tear that unfortunate youngster down, too, a prank usually followed by a fight with more or less participants – to the amusement of the laughing and shouting onlookers.

At the snowslide were similar adventures. One made a running start to get the necessary momentum, jumped on the slick ice and glided forward standing up; but often one lost balance and experienced a hard fall. Sometimes hands or feet got too cold, producing such a sharp needling pain that hot tears ran over the boy's cheeks. This acute pain develops when the extremities are rapidly cooled and then suddenly warmed again. The circulation is hampered. In such a case, one should not go into a heated room but start the necessary warmth through rubbing or exercise.

When we were a little older, regular ice skating was substituted for the simple snow sliding – to the great grief of the other village boys, who did not possess skates. We tried to console our friends among these boys by shoving them in front of us along the ice.

For such pleasures the Mönchensumpf (Monks' Swamp) furnished a good place. This Mönchensumpf, a fairly large pond close to the village, was formed by whirling water going down a sinkhole, leaving a funnel-like depression. There were many of these depressions in this region, and the larger ones were filled with water. According to legend, in ancient times a monastery had stood on the place where the Mönchensumpf was located. To punish the monks for their godlessness, the monastery with all the monks had here sunk into the depths.

However, the water was not swampy as the name implies, but clear and – on account of its depth – cool; and so in the summer it furnished the finest swimming place, which we visited daily, if possible. We always had to ask our father, or if he was absent, our mother for permission to go swimming. This permission was usually gladly granted, but with the proviso to take old Bruenau along for safety – an advisable precaution, for we boys were spirited and careless.

Bruenau was a veteran of the wars for freedom who had fought under the Duke Wilhelm of Braunschweig, when the latter with his Hannoverian and Braunschweig troops had led the main attack against Napoleon at Waterloo (1815) and there met his death.

The services old Bruenau performed were more a pleasant pastime than work. All he had to do was to feed and curry a few saddle horses and to sleep at night on the large, old-fashioned leather-covered sofa in the big entrance hall as a sort of guard – a function which his little dog Spitz dutifully shared with him.

Whenever we were going swimming, we would call into his horse-stable, "Bruenau, we want to go swimming in the Mönchensumpf, and you are to go with us." Then he would regularly answer, "Well, you go along. I'll be there right away." Then when we had long finished swimming and were on the way back home, we would meet the peaceful old man on his way out, as he calmly stopped here and there by a bush to cut a switch. Whenever he brought the saddle-horse to my father, he would always hand him such a switch.

We boys also had a mount, a beautiful little pony, and also a little saddle for it; but our father would not permit us to use the saddle because he was afraid that in case we were thrown – which sometimes happened – we might get hung in the stirrup and be dragged. Therefore, we were only permitted to buckle on a blanket. Riding in this manner, one certainly gets accustomed to the movements of the horse.

When my older brothers later attended the junior college (Gymnasium) in the Klausthal, they frequently brought school-friends home with them, and these naturally wanted to ride on our nice little pony. So it was led to the large meadow adjoining our farm-yard; and the amateur riders were, one after the other, placed on the pony. The idea of Tom, Dick and Harry riding him was distasteful to the pony. At first he would take a few slow steps to make the gentleman

over-confident; then he made some sudden jumps, and the equestrian was on the ground – his desire to ride buried there forever.

Our tutor, Mr. Regnor, was a scholarly and kindly gentleman – also he was exceedingly nervous. Now we had fortunately an ancient mule, which – not by nature but through long years of service – had finally become a gray-haired saddle animal. This old mule, now living on the charity of his devoted friend Bruenau, was attached with almost motherly affection to his stable companion, the little pony. Several times when I was going horseback-riding, Mr. Regner had expressed the wish to accompany me. At last upon my advice and also upon my father's and Bruenau's assurance that there would be no risk and no danger, Mr. Regner decided to mount the ancient mule. In an old Hungarian saddle with long horn fore and aft, to which he could conveniently cling, Mr. Regner now sat proudly; but conscious of danger, he urged me to proceed very slowly. We went riding a few times so carefully that I had to reign in my pony continuously. Since that sort of performance was soon monotonous for me, I suggested that we try a trot – because he would want to learn that also. But as soon as my pony took a faster step, then the old mule – to stay with his friend – broke into a little dog trot. Then Mr. Regner shrieked, "Oh, oh! Stop, Otto. Stop! I forbid you to race so terribly. Oh, oh, Otto! I'll report this to your father – this senseless railing. Please, my dear Otto! Stop just for a little while." By this time, he had dropped the reins and was clinging with an iron grip to the high saddle horn with both hands; and his black trousers had worked up above his knees. At the evening meal, however, he would recount to my father boastfully how well he could already ride at a trot.

One of our chief enjoyments was playing soldiers. In our extensive courtyard there were always big piles of wooden staves, of which barrels were to be made. We built blockhouse forts out of these staves. The warriors, often as many as twenty, were divided into attackers and defenders and were provided with wooden swords and shields. Heavy blows were dealt out – sometimes not just in play but in all seriousness.

During my early boyhood my grandmother Thiele lived with two of her children in Förste, a village two and one-half miles from Badenhausen, where they had leased a small estate. Her son Louis was my mother's only brother; and her daughter Auguste was my mother's only sister. We children often walked to Förste on Sunday morning and returned in the evening. Such an



occasion was always a festivity for us, for there we were petted and pampered as nowhere else. Our favorite food was set before us at dinner; chocolate and cake were served in the afternoon; and in season the choicest fruits and berries were picked and eaten in the garden.

The garden also had a spring, the water of which appeared first at the foot of the gypsum cliffs above Badenhausen, then disappeared in a nearby cave to appear again in this garden, where it fed a small fishpond. Usually a big wooden bread-kneading trough floated around on the pond; and I never let this opportunity for a little boat ride pass by, a venture my brothers never attempted. Usually it did not take long before the frail vessel capsized, bringing me in immediate contact with the blue waves. Then I had to stay in Grandmother's room, dressed only in one of her petticoats until my clothes were dry again. Even at that time my grandmother often said, "That boy will surely be a seaman." And she was right.

## YEARS SPENT AT SEA

### Cabin Boy

After the death of my grandmother Thiele, my uncle Louis F. Thiele married Charlotte Jacobi of Osterode and leased near Halberstadt a large estate, known as Anderbeck, which he later bought. When the buildings of the junior college at Klausthal burned down, my two older brothers were sent to the junior college at Halberstadt; and after my confirmation my brother Wilhelm and I went there, too. The course of study there was the same as with our tutors. Latin and Greek were the main subjects. For these I had neither talent nor inclination, and therefore I decided to become a seaman.

At first my parents were much opposed to the plan. My stepmother, who loved me very much, wished to make out of me her ideal, a pastor. At that time she had no sons of her own, only three daughters, Friederike, Dorette and Caroline. Several of her children had died in infancy, and her youngest child, Engelhard, was born later. When he was baptized, I held him in my arms as his godfather. That was a few days before I emigrated to America.

I was a strong, healthy youth a little over fifteen years old when I exchanged school life for the occupation of seaman – a very abrupt transition. Up to that time I had never done any real physical labor, had been under the influence of and associated with cultured people, and was accustomed to the mode of life of better situated people.

Now suddenly I was not only placed among the roughest class of people, the sailors, but as cabin boy I was, in a certain sense, even placed below these. When I speak of these German sailors as rough or unpolished, I do not mean coarse. People who from their youth have battled against wind and weather develop a hard outer shell. On the average, these sailors were honest, kindhearted, accommodating and very dependable. They were not such a drunken gang as I have seen on the English and American ships. I believe the German, Dutch, Danish, Norwegian and Swedish seamen are the best in the world. Although I had to perform the humblest type of work as a cabin boy, I still cannot complain about the treatment I received. On a ship everyone, even the captain, must know every type of work in all its details; and in order to know it that thoroughly, he must have done the work himself.

One reads of beatings to which the cabin boy is subjected. On the ships with which I sailed that

was never the case. I myself received only once, at the beginning of my first trip, a slap on the ear; and even this one was more a hint than a slap. On this occasion my work was to knock and scratch rust from iron bolts; and I seated myself right above the cabin of the boatswain, who was just ready to go to sleep. With the deck serving as sounding board, the turmoil caused by my work was increased, and sleep was, of course, impossible. I did not hear the shouts of the usually kind old gentleman, and so he suddenly appeared in his underclothes on deck; and with the words, "Stupid boy, do you have to scrape and knock right here?" he handed me a slap on the ear and disappeared as quickly in the underworld, while I transferred the field of my activities.

Later one time when I was already a sailor, serving on another ship, and stopping in the harbor of Puerto Cabello to load coffee, I was alone with a boy in a lower room to lay boards against the damp walls so that the coffee sacks would not come into immediate contact with the moisture. The first mate came down to inspect the work; and since he may not have been in a good humor, he scolded the boy as lazy – an unjust accusation – and then hit him with his fist. Still not satisfied, he threw the helpless boy down and kicked him. Then I could not contain my displeasure any longer. I shoved the angry mate back and said, "One more kick, and you have to fight me." The first mate did not seem to relish the idea and withdrew cursing. Soon after I was called to the captain's cabin. The captain, who was from my section of the country and who had been my captain for some time, questioned me regarding an attack on the first mate; but when I explained the facts, he was satisfied.

### Steward

I made my second voyage as steward or waiter for the captain's cabin. Captain Witting was a corpulent, kindly gentleman – but he could flare up in anger. Once he and the mates sat at the dinner table. I was uncorking a bottle of wine to serve them, and the captain was carving the roast. He remarked, "Steward, this knife is so dull, I can't even cut my throat with it." Saying this, he sharpened the back edge of the knife, moving it back and forth on his thick neck. All this was so comical that I broke out laughing. This, however, aroused his anger. Red in his face as a turkey gobbler, he yelled, "Dog, are you laughing at me? I'll kill you." At the same time, he made a stab at me with the long carving knife. I guarded with the bottle – scattering wine and glass fragments all over the table and floor, dashed up the steps and ran to the kitchen. "Cook," I yelled, "the

captain wants to stab me."

The old man, who liked me, remarked, "Oh, just stay here a little while. That will pass over." Then we heard the captain calling; and the cook said, "Go right back now, steward. He's over his anger now."

When I stepped back into the cabin, the captain said calmly, "Why did you run away?"

"You were going to run the knife through me."

"Stupid boy! Well, just wipe off the table and bring another bottle of wine."

The mates laughed, and that concluded the whole affair.

Although high-tempered, this captain was a very good, high-tempered man. When I started work as steward with him, he told me I should eat at his table, after he and the mates had finished, and should also drink a glass of wine as they did. I might also drink of the various beverages of which I had charge, or smoke his cigars – "but not too much"; and I was never to smoke in his presence, as that would not be respectful. I had to serve him a cognac or brandy every little while, but I never saw him drunk. It seemed to me that he must have begun this frequent drinking just to kill time, inasmuch as most of the supervision of the ship is left to the mates; and then the drinking developed into a habit. I let this observation be a warning to me all through my life.

### Sailor

My next voyage on a large ship I made with this same captain, serving as a sailor (*Deichmatrose*). Both the new mates were crude fellows who from the very beginning did not like me. They felt that I came from a higher level of society than they; besides, it angered them that persons from up-land, as I was, came to compete with them and take their bread away – as they said. They knew that the senate of the Free City of Bremen was endeavoring to raise the educational standards of ship officials and to discontinue the old simple training system.

For this purpose the Navigation School in Bremen was reorganized with Dr. Breusing in charge. The prospects for advancement of well-schooled aspirants were, therefore, improved considerably. It was this situation which brought me the disfavor of the two mates. Their animosity was doubtless increased because my work and behavior gave them no cause for fault-finding, much as they searched for it.

We were sailing with emigrants to New York and were just entering the Narrows, and I was busy fastening the mizzen (half-sail) to the leeward side on the back end of the ship when the order was called out to fasten the lowest sail on the front mast (*Vormast*). Of course, I could not reach the designated place as quickly as those who were already nearby. From a post as far away as I was, many would not even have made the effort to obey the command. However, I ran over, jumped on the entrenchment (*Verschanzung*) in order to climb from there into the shrouds of the mast. Suddenly I received a blow on my back that almost threw me forward into the sea, and I heard the sneering call, "Again you are the last one." That was the croaking voice of the first mate, and he had performed the blow. I turned and threw him down on the dirty anchor chain, and dealt him a few hard blows – which beautified his ugly face with a few blue spots. Then I climbed up to the sail and arrived early enough to help fasten it, while below shouts of laughter arose from the emigrants. On account of his brusque manner, the first mate was not very popular.

This gentleman then did not attack me any more, but later a sailor told me that both mates had threatened to push me overboard at an opportune moment during the return voyage. They probably hoped that out of fear I would desert at New York and that they would thus be rid of me. However, I answered loud enough so that many could hear, "Anybody pushing me overboard will surely be taken along for company." The contemplated attempt against me was never made; but the second mate, who was stronger than his companion, tried in other ways to revenge himself.

One time during bad weather when only the watch was on deck and the big (*Parsegel*) sail had to be gathered up, the captain took charge of the steering himself, so that every last man could help with the difficult task. Just as we had hoisted the sail, the second mate turned to me yelling, "Thunderation! You are not helping!"

"More than, you, thunderation." I answered, whereupon he led with his fist. While I headed this blow off with my left, I grabbed him by the collar with the right, locked my left leg behind his, and promptly he was lying in the scullery exhaust with its collection of dishwater and trash. While the rest of the crew were enjoying the spectacle of our fight, in which I naturally had the advantage because I was on top, the captain's command to brace the top sail went unobserved. Suddenly the captain's voice was heard right over us, and we jumped up. "Thunderation! Do you lay violent hands on my mates, first on the big one and now on this one! In a minute, I'll knock you down on

the deck."

"He attacked me first, and I won't permit that," I answered.

"Brace the main sail," he commanded again and hastened back to the steering wheel. His commands were now carried out without further delay.

No mention was made of this incident until he asked me in Bremen whether I would sail with him again on the next trip. Then I asked him whether the same mates would also go along.

"Otto," he said, "you cannot expect me to dismiss the two on your account?"

"No," I answered, "but I do not wish to sail with them any longer." And I left the ship.

### The Navigation School

During the first German-Danish war when German shipping was threatened by the Danish fleet, I attended in Braunschweig the Collegium Carolinum; but the interruption was of short duration. Later, after I had made several voyages as a full-fledged seaman, I attended the Navigation School at Bremen; and this period was probably the most wonderful of my life. With youthful strength and vigor I devoted myself enthusiastically to my studies, for which I had both interest and talent; and soon I had the satisfaction of being one of the best.

Dr. Breusing was not only an excellent teacher, who knew how to make the different subjects interesting and easily understood; but he also knew how to keep up the discipline in an easy and pleasing manner – which was no light task, considering the unrestrained nature of young seamen. In his association with us, he emphasized more the friend than the teacher; and in his bachelor's quarters – he was himself still a young man – students who visited him at night were welcome guests. He served us wine and cigars while we conversed with ease, the subject-matter usually being the natural sciences. When I was taking more advanced studies, he selected, besides me, three more of his best students and gave us an hour of free private instruction three times a week, in order to impart to us even more information than was expected at the examination. On the examination I received the report of "Very good" in every subject, the highest grade that could be given at that school. I still think Dr. Breusing with love and veneration, and I shall always remain grateful to him.

Later when I decided to emigrate to Texas, he tried to turn me from this plan and promised me the command of a ship within a year's time, if I would stay. He would have carried out his promise,

I am sure; for he had much influence with the shipowners. However, I did not change my resolution. If I had done so, I would probably have been swallowed by the waves long ago or would have died of yellow fever in a strange land, as did so many of my companions of whom I heard later.

### MATE

Kuhlmann, the captain with whom I made my first voyage as second mate, was a coarse uneducated man. He was a relative of old Watje, the owner of the largest ship business in Bremen; and it was on account of this kinship that Kuhlmann captained a perfectly new ship. It was said of old Watje that he had come to Bremen a poor untutored country boy, and that, after much effort, he first found work as a messenger-boy for a merchant. Then through industry and aptitude, he won the favor of his employer and was given office work. Through his ability, he became first a partner, then general manager and finally owner of the firm.

We had four hundred emigrants on board and were sailing with a southwest wind and rough sea into the English Channel. When I took over the watch from the first mate in the early morning, we were sailing with sails gathered close (*gerafft*), veering (*lavieren*) toward the French coast and could see the light-towers of Calais in front a little to the left. The first mate told me, "We cannot get too near the lights before we turn again. When that has to be done, you call the captain." Then he went to sleep.

After an hour I thought it was time to change the course of the ship and went to the captain, who lay fully dressed on the sofa – drunk. I could not awaken him; and I could not trust my judgment regarding the course of the ship because I had not been present when the course was charted. Under these circumstances, I went to the first mate and begged him to take over the command of the ship. However, he refused emphatically and said I should follow my own judgment.

So I gave the command to turn with the wind, because turning against the wind would have been impossible with the shortened sails and the rough sea; but hardly had the maneuver been executed – I was still on deck myself assisting with putting things in order – when the captain appeared on deck, probably awakened by the unavoidable racket, and gave the command to turn against the wind. His commands were promptly executed; but his effort resulted in failure, as could be foreseen; and the ship fell back into its former position. Now the captain was going to try the same experiment

again; but the experienced sailor at the steering wheel, who had realized the uselessness and danger of the attempt and had noticed the drunkenness of the captain, did not obey the command. Then when the captain grasped the wheel to do the steering himself, the sailor shoved him back so hard that he fell down, whereupon he withdrew to his cabin – cursing.

In the meantime daylight spread; and the first mate, sailors and emigrants appeared on deck, suspecting on account of the continued noise that something unusual must be going on. Then suddenly we received such a blow that all passengers fell down. The ship had struck a shoal. Every wave lifted the ship to let it strike bottom again the next minute. Terror seized the emigrants. Women and children screamed and, clinging to the sailors, prayed to be saved.

Under these circumstances the best thing to do was to set more sails, in order to float back to deep water as fast as possible. I gave the order for this; and when I saw the first mate, I called to him to take over the command while I climbed up to help loosen the sails. Up in the masts the impact of the ship on the shoal was felt with such intensity that one had to hold with all might so as not to be hurled into the sea. It was fortunate that the entire ship, every rope, was near and strong. In a short time we had so many sails up that the masts bent and the ship was back in deep water. The pumps were started and showed no evidence of a leak; and gradually the wind abated.

The captain stayed out of sight till the next day. He did not mention the occurrence, then or later. Since there were no serious consequences, the first mate did not enter the incident in the daily record, as was his duty; for even though the greater part of the blame fell on the captain, the first mate was not without fault. In spite of my report and the request that he come on deck, the mate had refused to help. The captain must have discovered this refusal of responsibility. Probably he had also investigated the ship's log in our cabin while we were both busy outside. Assured that the first mate could not appear as accuser against him, the captain now tried to pick on the mate and to belittle him in the eyes of the crew. Although personally I had no cause for complaint, this treatment of the mate angered me and degraded the captain in my eyes.

After our return to Bremerhaven and the release of the rest of the crew, the captain held me for a longer time to supervise the ship and to finish the accounts and other reports. Repeatedly he attempted to persuade me to make the next trip with him, letting me understand that it would be to my advantage to stay with him, and pointing out that young people who wanted to be successful had



to learn to obey. However, I would not comply with his desires; and so he finally had to release me.

I could relate much about the dangers and difficulties on my voyages to Venezuela, Cuba, Galveston, Antwerp, Plymouth, Copenhagen, New Orleans, Baltimore and New York; but one may find sufficient information in books of travel, and so I can omit it here.

On our trip to the North American ports, we always carried emigrants. The mixture of people from all parts of Germany, Bohemia, Poland, Hungary and so on, produced a confused scene in the steerage, especially during bad weather when seasickness prevailed; however, during good weather, especially when we sailed with the trade wind, there was joyful activity on deck. No one complained about lack of space. Here there was card-playing; there, conversation, chorus singing or instrumental music. At night when the deck was cleared between the main mast and the captain's cabin, there was dancing, with the young women preferring to waltz with the sailors in whose strong arms they felt secure when the ship rolled and pitched.

On one such voyage to Galveston, we brought the family Korff and the old judge (*Amtmann*) Hagedorn, his wife and youngest daughter Adele. The latter, who married in Texas H. von Bieberstein, is the mother of Auguste, wife of our cousin [nephew?] Julius Ohlendorf.

For the return trip we were loading bales of cotton at Galveston. I had charge in the hold of the ship, and as usual I worked vigorously myself. One day it was very sultry in the hold, so that we were all dripping with perspiration. Above, all sails were hanging loose to dry, for it had just showered. Suddenly the first mate called us all up on deck to fasten the sails again, as a norther was coming. In my energy and youthful high spirits, I always found it a pleasure to climb around in the masts. Although as mate I was not required to help, I climbed up too, still dripping with perspiration. Hardly were we up in the masts when the norther blew in, and a torrent of ice-cold rain washed off our perspiration thoroughly. In spite of that, I did not think of putting on dry clothes until the work was finished. However, I was soon to learn the consequences of this carelessness. When we sailed a few days later, I was encumbered with a bad cold. My condition grew rapidly worse. I had a terrible cough and soon was so weak that I could not climb up the captain's steps alone. I had to stay in bed and would doubtless have succumbed to this illness if we had not fortunately had as a cabin passenger an old gentleman who was an experienced apothecary. In this capacity he had worked many years in Texas and was now on his way back to enjoy in Germany quietly the fruits

of his industry.

He took an interest in me, gave me footbaths, brewed tea of Islandic moss for me and made me do regular breathing exercises under his supervision. All this had the favorable result that with our landing at Antwerp, I was again so well and active that I could enjoy the Mardi Gras which was taking place there at that time, as in all Catholic lands. The kind old apothecary had doubtless saved me from tuberculosis.

### Coastal Trip in a One-Master

Since I had so far made trips only in three-masted ships, I decided to make a short journey in a Holland *Tjalk* in order to increase my experience in shipping in this way, too. This ship had only one mast, carried 160,000 pounds; and the attendants consisted of the skipper, myself and a fourteen-year-old cook. Right before the steering wheel was a small cabin, which one could occupy only in a stooped position. The cabin contained a small cookstove and necessary dishes. It also contained our three clothing chests, which served as seats and table.

We traveled from Bremen through the North Sea to the Eider, which forms the division line between Schleswig and Holstein; and from there to Rendsburg we went through the canal, which ended near Kiel and was passable only for small vessels. Here we had neither ebb nor flood. When the wind could not serve as power of locomotion, we had to walk along the bank and pull the boat by means of a rope or we could sit in a small rowboat and pull. Astronomical observations to determine our position were not made, but log, and "ronegrafs" were charted. When the water was rough, the spray waves often swept over the boat; and often while fastening the "Kleur," I was almost dipped into the water.

In Copenhagen we discharged our cargo and without freight went on to Køge, a small harbor not far south on the Danish island Seeland. We anchored just outside the harbor, as it was already too dark to enter. During the night a storm arose from the west, and we had to throw out the second chain anchor because the ship began to drift. As the storm grew steadily worse and the waves beat higher, the two anchors would not hold, although the whole length of the anchor chains were out all night. In order not to drift against the Swedish coast, there was one expedient left: throwing out the emergency anchor. This anchor, so heavy that two men could hardly lift it and fastened to a cable

the size of a man's arm, was lowered to me in a small boat, which I then rowed as far against wind and waves as the cable reached, where I dropped it into the sea. That anchor held. I got safely back on board, and we did not drift anymore, but I have probably never performed a more difficult and dangerous task, and a man with less physical strength could doubtlessly not have completed it. Towards evening the storm abated, and next morning we entered the safe harbor. The power of the waves could be gauged by the appearance of the cable, which was worn to the size of a finger and which would have broken had the storm lasted longer.

We loaded rye for Hamburg, which was poured in loose until the hold was filled. We returned the same way we had come and soon entered the canal with a favorable but cold wind from the east. The skipper was at the steering wheel when we neared the lock, so I dropped the sail, grabbed the boat hook and ran to the front edge of the deck to prevent the ship from striking the quay. The pressure on the long shaft of the boat hook, the end of which rested against my chest, was so strong that the shaft broke, and through my own force I was thrown overboard. Like an arrow I shot headfirst to the bottom of the canal. Unfortunately, I had on not only much heavy clothing, because it was very cold, but also heavy water boots. All this weight naturally impeded my swimming. When I reached the surface again, I saw that the ship had gone on some distance, but had finally stopped and was now being fastened. I reached it by swimming and climbed on by means of a rope which the skipper had thrown out. The latter met me with a big jug of Genever [gin], and after I had lightened it a bit and had put on dry clothing, the little misadventure passed without any further ill effects.

Next morning the ship was frozen fast in the canal. Since it was already late in the fall with no prospects of a thaw, and since I had no inclination to wait on this little ship till spring weather set in, I left the vessel with the consent of the skipper and rode to Kiel with a man who happened to pass with a load of pigs.

Kiel was then an unimportant but picturesque seaport, which has since developed into one of the most important and strongly fortified German naval ports. Here and later in Hamburg I stopped a few days to get acquainted with the cities. Then after a short visit with my parents, I went to sea again from Bremen.



## A Storm

I made my last voyage as mate again to Galveston in the summer of 1854. The other mate and the captain were also young unmarried men. For the return voyage to Bremen, the captain had loaded the steerage and cabin space with bales of cotton, as he was entitled to the freight charges. Consequently, the rear end of the ship was rather heavily loaded. After we left the Gulf Stream, we had at first a very favorable west wind; soon however this wind turned into such a gale that we flew along with sails rolled up.

The towering waves swept up from behind so that with each wave we feared the back part of the ship would be beaten in and we would drown. In our desire to make use of the favorable wind, we had waited too long to turn against it, in which position the ship is much more able to resist. To attempt such a maneuver in this storm was too dangerous; so we raced along for two days as if whipped by the Furies.

All men on deck were tied to ropes so as not to wash overboard with one of the tumbling waves. There was no cooking, no thought of sleep. Fortunately, the weather was warm. Now and then a sailor would go downstairs to get a little bread and sliced ham or a bottle of beer to pass around. Finally the wind abated. Our ship, the *Neptune*, had stood the storm very well. We had covered a long stretch of the way and were all glad that the hazardous adventure had turned out so well.

## TEXAS

### Trip to Galveston

On my trips to America, I had often and with pleasure listened to accounts and descriptions of passengers who had prospered in Texas and were traveling to or from the old home in Europe. The life of the farmers and ranchers in still thinly settled Texas seemed especially agreeable to me. I myself was a child of a country man, and my most cherished recollections were connected with life in the country. Since I had always had a love for home and family life and knew these were almost excluded from the life of a seaman, I decided abruptly to give up the latter occupation and emigrate to Texas.

I started for home to submit my plan to my parents. At Hildesheim I met a friend, Edmund [Eduard/Edward ] Ebeling, who as a very young man had come to my father as steward. As such, he supervised the laborers on the estate, collected rents, kept accounts and so on. Due to his ability he stayed on until he, with a partner, finally started a small business of his own. Not long before we met, he had sold his share to the partner and was now undecided what to begin with his small capital of four hundred dollars. I told him that I intended to settle in Texas, and he immediately decided to accompany me.

Our departure was delayed because I became seriously ill at home. The doctor told me that my stomach was an acid factory and that I had to be very careful with my eating, if I did not want to turn it into a sugar factory. Although I did not have much opportunity in the coming years to be very particular about my diet, and suffered considerably from the excess acid, this evil prophecy was never fulfilled.

After a few weeks I had recovered from my illness and as godfather had held in my arms my little brother Engelhard at his baptism. Then I took leave from my parents, brothers and sisters. All were in tears. We all probably felt that we would never see each other again. Then I visited my brother Bernhard on an estate on the Elbe near Wittenburg, where he was assistant manager. I saw Wilhelm in Braunschweig, where he was doing his one year of military duty. Then I went by Hildesheim for Ebeling. He took passage on a ship that sailed to New Orleans. I received my transportation for serving as sailor. In this way, I saved money, of which I did not have an excess.

There were many other emigrants on the ship who were also going to Texas; and immediately after our arrival in New Orleans, we transferred to a steamboat which was ready for its departure to Galveston. In the latter port I met an acquaintance who had formerly also been mate on Bremen ships and who now functioned here as pilot. He tried to persuade me do the same thing by figuring out for me how profitable the business was and how wealth would accumulate if the earnings were invested in real estate of this rapidly developing city. I did not let him change my plans, especially since I did not have much confidence in the sandy island which extended only a few feet above sea level. That my judgment was correct was proved later by the destruction of Indianola and the inundations of Galveston.

### Trip to Austin County

In Galveston, too, we stopped only long enough to transfer our baggage to a small steamboat bound for Houston. The only way of reaching Houston was by ship, as there were no railroads here at that time. Another ship with emigrants had arrived from Bremen and these passengers had to use the same boat to Houston. As a result there was only standing room; and since we made our trip during the night, pickpockets – who already existed then – used this opportunity to steal from the newly-arrived "greenhorns," as they were called here, their few valuables.

One woman, the mother of Karl Korff, who had come with our ship to join the family of her brother in Texas, requested my protection – since she was traveling alone. Because I had known her family on a former voyage, she gave me her money for safekeeping. On this boat trip a pocket she had in her dress was cut away. It contained only a little change and her trunk key. Many had lost their entire currency in this manner, a calamity which was discovered only after our arrival in Houston, causing copious wails and curses.

To continue the journey we had to find in Houston means of conveyance for our belongings. We could get only heavy wagons pulled by eight to twelve oxen – and even these were rare, considering the large number of newcomers. Accidentally, I met a young man at an inn, and during the course of a casual conversation, discovered that he was a friend and neighbor of the Korff family, who lived at the Shelby post office in Austin County. I also found out that he would start back home next day with two wagons loaded with merchandise. He offered to take Mrs. Korff and her baggage; and

since Ebeling and I had not yet chosen any particular destination, we also went along.

The owner of the wagon and oxen was Karl Ohlendorf, a veteran of the Mexican war, who later became my brother-in-law. His assistant was Hermann Giesecke. They had bought the necessary provisions, and we bought some too. In order to simplify matters, we cooked together.

Of such a trip in an ox wagon as we started on Christmas Day in 1854, no one who has grown up under present circumstances can have a conception. These wagons piled high with merchandise and covered with a wagon-sheet in order to protect the goods from rain, offered no seat; one just walked alongside. Besides, these wagons moved so slowly – eight miles per day – that no one had the perseverance to stay on top.

We two, therefore, usually went ahead to the next camping place – which the drivers had described to us, built a fire there, and gathered wood to keep the fire burning all night, as it was very cold. We also went hunting. Ebeling and I each shot a deer, wild ducks and geese. These extensive coastal prairies covered with long grass and with many swamps, were at that time entirely without settlers and enlivened with all sorts of waterfowls. However, in this open territory, it was very difficult to crawl within shooting distance of the game.

Our meals consisted of cornbread, fried bacon, molasses and black coffee; so the results of our hunting offered a welcome change. In the evening when the drivers arrived in camp, the oxen, which were necked together by twos, were unharnessed. Of each pair one was hobbled, that is, his forelegs were tied together so that he could only walk slowly; bells were hung on a few; and then they were turned loose so that they could hunt their feed during the night.

Since the roads were in a terrible condition, so that the wagons often sank into the mire up to the hubs, it was unavoidable that many of the animals succumbed to this step-motherly treatment; and one could see along the roadside more or less decomposed cadavers, circled by buzzards.

On the second day of our trip we had rain, then a norther with sleet. At night we always made a big fire so that we could get thoroughly warm and dry. When ready to lie down, we scraped the fire a little farther north and prepared our resting place on the former site of the fire, first cleaning it thoroughly of all coals and ashes. This site was already warm and dry. We also got the warmth of the fire. But we would have to get up several times at night to replenish the fire and to warm ourselves again. In the morning one was glad that such a night was over. One of the drivers would



ride out horseback to find the oxen and drive them back – a task which sometimes took considerable time. The rest of us cooked breakfast. After breakfast, the journey continued in the usual manner.

When we reached the Brazos, which we had to cross by means of a ferry boat, we found there a collection of ox-wagons and their owners, who were in a very bad humor. On the day before a steamboat had severed a cable with which the ferry boat was pulled across the river. The real ferry man had gone to Houston, and the young man who was to substitute did not know how to go about repairing a cable. What to do? There was no grazing here for so many oxen. To wait for days till the ferryman returned was not advisable. To hunt for another ferry by driving downstream through the lowland, where the morass was knee-deep and sometimes bottomless, also was not appealing.

Here I stepped in as helper for the distressed. In a small boat, I brought from the other side of the river the piece of cable that had been fastened there to a willow. Then I spliced this piece to the end of the cable fastened on our side. It was a difficult task because the cable was wet all the way through. Then I had to take the loose end back. This work was complicated because the river was up and the current strong. While I crossed with the cable hanging in the water, not only the current but also the driftwood tore at it; and I had to use all my strength and skill to get the cable across. There were cheers from the drivers when I tied the cable to the willow again, and now all wagons could be brought across safely.

If I had been a smart Texan, I would not have undertaken the work without getting a dollar per wagon beforehand; but as a plain German, I had not thought of that. By being easygoing, we often passed by an opportunity to make money, while the Texan's first question is, "How much can you pay?"

We ended our journey without further mishaps; and on New Year's Day, 1855, we arrived at the Ohlendorf farm. By the yard fence stood a lovely young woman, who gazed at us – her expression showing a little curiosity; and in the living room an elderly woman gave us a friendly welcome. They were the sister and mother of our host. Also with him lived a younger brother, Ferdinand, thirteen years old.

### Life in Austin County

Since Ohlendorf had large fields and intended to increase this acreage, it was necessary for him

to look for farm help. On the other hand, Ebeling and I had decided to work the first year for a farmer to learn how field work was carried on in Texas. For these reasons and also because we liked him and the neighborhood, we agreed to work for Ohlendorf for seven dollars per month. We started without delay. At first we cleared bottom land; that is, we felled the trees, split the trunks into fence rails and piled the branches in heaps for burning. All this was, of course, unaccustomed work for us, but we took hold courageously, and soon became accustomed to it.

We fared worse when we started to plow this land. In Germany, where so-called cartplows were used, one pressed down on the plow-handles to plow deep or lifted them up to accomplish the opposite. The Texas hand plows had to be manipulated the opposite way, which was learned only after practice; and so our plow point ran under the roots of trees and bushes and stuck there. To get it out, we had to back the oxen first. Since we were also novices in giving orders to the oxen, there were often misunderstandings and stormy scenes.

After we had thus satisfied during the week our craving for work, we enjoyed the Sundays by riding horseback for visits in the neighborhood. Close by lived Fisslers, where several unmarried sons and daughters were pleasant company. Also in the vicinity lived old Mr. Giesecke with several sons and sons-in-law. He had been a higher mining official in the Harz and had known my father. On Sundays his home was always the gathering place for relatives and friends. We also received a courteous reception there.

In the middle of the settlement, a large tent had been erected, where on designated Sundays the entire neighborhood assembled for games and dancing. The families brought plenty to eat and drink. All ate together following the motto: "Everybody brings what he can, everybody eats what he likes." There was no formality and no restraint regarding style. He who did not have patent leather shoes and Panama, wore brogans and a twenty-five cent straw hat. In spite of this, the behavior of the group was entirely correct and respectable.

In the idyllic surroundings it was inevitable that with the first approach of spring, love also unfolded its blossoms in our hearts. I became engaged to Auguste Ohlendorf; and Ebeling, following my good example a little later, to Christiane Fissler. To us it was evident that only with the aid of an efficient housewife could a well-regulated and financially successful farm be a possibility; and even though we had not studied national economy, it seemed to us that this new country needed a

larger population.

### Difficulties with Farming

After we had finished our year of apprenticeship with Ohlendorf, we thought we were capable of raising a crop profitably by ourselves. For this purpose we rented a thirty-acre field from our tutor, together with a little log-house which we helped to erect close to the field; and I married in February 1856. We moved into our Elysium with a light heart and still lighter purse. Ebeling lived in the smaller of the two small rooms, while the larger one served as kitchen, dining room and living room for us newly-weds. Besides the necessary utensils, our supplies consisted of one hundred bushels of corn, one load of hay, one-half barrel flour, one-half sack of salt, the products of two slaughtered hogs and half of an ox. We also had quantities of coffee, sugar, syrup and so on.

I had bought three cows and two horses. Ebeling also had a horse. Besides, we had one yoke of oxen and two plows in partnership. We divided the expenses and income, and my wife kept house for both of us.

We had made our plans and calculations very carefully, but we had neglected to consult the weather-prophet. So it happened that in spite of much hard work and the avoidance of all unnecessary expenses, we were at the end of the year richer in experience but not in cash. Although the year was too dry to produce a good crop, we had in the spring three such heavy and sudden downpours that our ten-acre bottom field was flooded every time. The fence was swept away, and the young cotton plants were washed down or covered with mud. On each occasion we had the horrible work of pulling the fence rails out of the slime and water of the adjoining woods where the rails had been caught. We set up the fence again and replanted the cotton.

In spite of all setbacks, the cotton finally thrived and promised a big crop; but unfortunately the army worms appeared so early and in such large numbers that they ate not only the leaves but even the bolls, for these were still too young and tender to withstand these ravenous insects. So we picked only half a bale from the whole field after all our labor.

After this failure, I was inclined to give up farming and return to the sea. My young wife, however, opposed this plan. To her, it was a terrible prospect to be separated from her husband by oceans and to be in uncertainty about his fate. Naturally, she had the desire to live near her mother

and other relatives. So we stayed; but had she known the war between the states would soon break out and that I would take part in the dangers and hardships, she probably would have followed me to Germany gladly.

In the fall I bought in the vicinity of Roundtop in Fayette County two hundred acres of land, of which twenty acres were field. The purchase also included a small dwelling, smokehouse and corn-crib – all built of logs. For this I paid \$1400. In cash, I paid \$800, a sum my father had sent me. I paid the remaining \$600 a year later. This sum my wife had received from Germany as her part of an inheritance. After my wife had made me a present of a little daughter on December 29, her own birthday, we moved to our own farm in February of 1857. Ferdinand went with us to help me with the field work, for which he was to receive a share of the crop. Ebeling, who married soon, rented from his future father-in-law.

Good luck had not entered our new home with us. My wife was in poor health; and the years 1857 to 1859 were probably the driest and for farming the most unfavorable I have experienced here in Texas. In spite of this drought, cotton was very cheap, selling on the average only at seven cents per pound. It was a long way to the gin, which ran slowly and worked poorly. I remember that one time I received only 500 pounds lint for 2100 pounds of raw cotton. In the first year, I lost my entire corn due to a late frost and my best cow due to bloody moraine.

During the second year, just at the time when the fields had to be cultivated, I was unable to work because I had a bone felon on the middle finger of each hand; and during the third year, I was sick with fever during the same season. Because my wife was frail, I had to keep a maid-servant most of the time – especially when a second daughter was born to us after sixteen months. Naturally I could not advance financially under such circumstances.

In the early summer of 1857 my brother, Bernhard, arrived from Germany. At first his purpose was only to visit me; later however, he decided to stay and farm with me, as he was unmarried, until he could establish his own home.

Bernhard had more schooling than I. He had wished to study law, but my father was opposed to the plan, mainly because he feared that Bernhard might deteriorate morally and physically. Even under the stronger control of the junior college, Bernhard had shown his lack of responsibility by being extravagant and contracting debts. Otherwise, he was one of the best students.

A second reason why my father opposed Bernhard's plan to attend a university was that a professional career was a long and expensive undertaking. Even after the studies were completed, the young aspirants, on account of slow promotions, had to live out of their pockets. Such expenses, my father believed, he could not incur for this one son without detriment to all the other children. So after graduation from junior college, Bernhard decided to learn how to manage a country estate at Anderbeck under our uncle Thiele, who was known as a very capable and also a very strict master. Consequently, before he came to Texas, Bernhard had already proved himself, through the independent management of several large estates, a capable agriculturalist – for European conditions. For our small Texas farms, he was not suited because he wanted to change everything here immediately according to the German pattern. For such plans, our means and available labor were insufficient.

We soon realized that for people of our type there was not much income in farming. For us, it was impossible to pick more than a hundred pounds of cotton per day, even with the greatest effort; besides, such monotonous work did not appeal to us. For others who had grown up with field work, farming was not only easy but also profitable – especially if they had a large family to help from early morning till late at night.

### Difficulties with Ranching

We decided, therefore, to make use of the free pasturage on the thousands of acres of unfenced land still accessible to everyone at that time. We planned to raise particularly fine sheep and good horses and bought a herd of the former and also several good mares. Horses were plentiful in Texas at that time, and there probably was not a person who did not own a riding horse. However, they were small wild ponies and very cheap, while the heavier breeds were rare and brought good prices. There were comparatively few sheep – small scrubby bunches that ran around wild. Wolves and dogs kept down an over-supply.

Only one German settler, Krebs, who had arrived here in the forties and who lived near Uncle Ohlendorf, had a few fine sheep, which he had brought along. However, he had only a few hundred and their fleece was too light.

Since fine wool then brought twenty-five to thirty cents per pound, unwashed, it could be

assumed that sheep-raising would soon be pursued on a larger scale and that fine, blooded rams would be in great demand.

Our Uncle Thiele in Anderbeck had for many years owned one of the most famous flocks of Negrette Marinos; and many of his blooded rams had been shipped to Hungary, Russia, Australia, North and South America. Bernhard turned to him now with the request to send us a few of his sheep, whereupon Uncle Thiele made us a present of one ram and two ewes.

At the same time Bernhard wrote our father to ship us two wagons, several plows, harness, a small carpenter's bench – as used in Germany by cabinet-makers – tools and other articles. The bench and tools had been a Christmas present when we were boys.

All of these articles arrived in the summer of 1858 under the supervision of our sheep master Blanke; and due to his care the sheep had stood the long voyage very well. Bernhard went to Galveston to arrange for the further transportation. Arriving in Houston, he hired a driver with six yoke of oxen. He assembled one wagon and hitched one yoke of oxen to it, while the driver used the other yoke. All the freight could be loaded on the wagons and with the good weather soon reached its destination. Blanke stayed only a few days with us and returned to Europe with the same ship.

Unfortunately, we soon found out that the great expense connected with the shipment was partly money thrown away. The plows proved to be entirely unsuitable for this country. The harness, made for heavy draft animals, was much too large for our horses. For many of the tools we had no use at all, and they were just lying in our way. The new pieces that we needed we could have bought here cheaper and then they would have suited the local situation. Since we needed only one wagon, Bernhard exchanged his for cattle. Two shepherd dogs, male and female, had been sent. Unfortunately, our flock was still small – so small that it was hardly worthwhile to herd it.

Just as everything else here seems to develop in jumps, so sheep ranching became popular overnight. Every lawyer, doctor and preacher who did not understand the first principles of sheep raising and was not even willing to devote time to the matter, turned the ranching over to any Tom, Dick or Harry. To satisfy the demand for flocks, the scrubby kind was introduced.

Two close neighbors on one side of us bought such sheep and thereby reduced our grazing range; and Ebeling, who had bought a flock in partnership with his father-in-law – with whom he then

quarreled, rented the farm on our other side and pastured his sheep there. Due to the continually dry years, we had to water our sheep at our well. Besides, the other neighbors looked with disfavor on the many sheep because they believed their cattle were placed at a disadvantage in grazing.

### Life in Bell County

Considering all the difficulties we had in getting enough grazing for our livestock, Bernhard and I made a horseback trip of several days in the summer of 1858 in order to look for a suitable ranch country. During my first summer in Texas, I had already made a trip of several weeks with Kornitius, Rohmoser and Ebeling through the following counties: Washington, Burleson, Milam, Bell, Williamson, Burnet, Travis, Bastrop and Fayette. It was our purpose to get acquainted with the country and its people.

At that time, I was particularly attracted to the Darrs Creek region in the southern part of Bell County, where rich rolling prairies crossed by running creeks invited one to buy – especially since prices were very reasonable. To this region we now turned our horses again.

When we stopped on the second evening of our trip to camp on a small hill on the south side of South Darrs Creek and gazed north, east and west over the wide prairie, this country contrasted so favorably with the dry and wretched post oak region of the Yegua and Brushy Creek, which we had just left, that we decided immediately not to hunt further but to buy here.

Next morning we rode to the upper of the several farms along the creek, and the owner offered us at once a farm of 320 acres lying two miles farther up the creek at the price of two dollars per acre. Right then we looked the place over. Everywhere prairie with some shady groves and good springs! So we soon agreed to return Christmas – as we did not carry the money with us – and exchange land and deed for cash. I already had a buyer, Hetzel, for my farm; and after my return home, I sold it to him without delay for \$2200, of which \$1200 was cash. The rest was to be paid in several yearly installments – under the condition that I would have possession for one more year, during which time we could make the necessary preparations on the new farm.

At the designated time I set out to deliver the purchase money. My brother-in-law Ohlendorf accompanied me, not only to see our new home but also to decrease the danger of being robbed. We had covered only a few miles when it started snowing; and after riding two and a half days, we found

the whole prairie buried under four to six inches of snow – which stayed on the ground for about a week. This fact should have been a warning to us, since we could realize that the extensive prairie during such weather offered neither protection nor grazing, while under the conditions of that time it was almost impossible to provide feed.

When we arrived at the landowner concerned, he was astounded to see us again and confessed that he had sold the land, under a much less favorable agreement, to three brothers because they assured him we would never return. German immigrants, they had said, thought it was funny to ride around in the country and lead a person by the nose in this manner – and this backwoodsman had believed them.

At the same time he told us that a 220-acre farm was for sale on a different branch of the same creek. So we rode to the North Darrs; and I soon agreed to pay the owner, Coley, the price of \$1000, with the condition that he could stay one more year. I gave him the money I carried with me and a note for the rest and received his deed. We started on our return trip better satisfied with the present business transaction than the first one.

In spite of our optimism, it became evident later that this region, although excellent for agriculture, was not so suitable for cattle and especially not for sheep-raising. The predominating sage grass, although excellent in the spring after a prairie fire, soon was too long and hard. It tired the sheep to work through it in search of a few more tender sprigs. There was also a lack of trees and shrubbery for shade in summer and for protection in winter against the strong winds. Buds and twigs could also have furnished nourishment because after a frost, the prairie grass was totally worthless for this purpose.

There were indeed some kinds of grasses, scattered among the rest, that came up in the fall and stayed green during the winter; however, its growth during the winter was so weak that it did not furnish much feed. Later when it ripened, it often brought death, especially to the lambs. The seed, with a point hard as steel, first was caught in the wool; and then with every movement its spiral form was pushed on through hide and flesh into lungs and bowels.

Later, when Ebeling visited us one time, he told me, "You can be excused because you are not a trained farmer; but Bernhard should have known that this is no pasturage for Marino sheep." In spite of all these drawbacks, we might have succeeded in our undertaking if we had been granted



peace.

In the summer of 1860 Bernhard drove our sheep with the help of a young man, Gute, to the new range, where the latter was to watch them until we could move. Bernhard took along on a wagon provisions, cooking; utensils, clothing and also a few scythes. He intended to stack a few loads of hay for winter feeding. On the long drive, continuing for days through woods with little grass and no water, some of the over-heated and jaded sheep died; the rest reached their destination in poor condition.

Bernhard found out that a farmer in the neighborhood owned a mower; and so he induced this man to cut a few acres of prairie grass, paying him for his work. This neighbor made the effort; but could accomplish nothing. The mowers of that time were indeed expensive but so imperfect that they could be used only for cutting ripe grain. Undiscouraged, Bernhard then mowed with the scythe and hauled it together until he had a big stack of hay in the field. When he returned to us, he could report that the sheep seemed to have recuperated.

In the fall the family moved to Bell County. On the wagon, to which four horses were hitched, we had a little cook stove, a table, a chest of drawers, a bed taken apart, bedding, a barrel of molasses, a sack of coffee and so on. We also had a seat there for your mother, Lina and Anna. Bernhard drove from the saddle – but usually walked alongside – while I followed on horseback driving the rest of the horses. We had sold our cattle.

We had waited so long with the moving because we hoped that eventually more favorable weather conditions would prevail. As a result of several dry years, the aridity was excessive; but the heat was just as great and water as scarce as before – until we had crossed the San Gabriel. There we had a big rain during the night so that we had to ask for shelter at a farm home. Since our course led from there for another day's journey through black prairie soil, which was now thoroughly soaked by the rain, we wanted to save our lean horses and therefore hired our host to drive our wagon the rest of the way with several yoke of oxen.

I want to mention here that we had crossed Brushy Creek on the day before the rain. It was the day on which Lincoln was elected president. Fortunately, the creek was still dry; otherwise, it would have been boggy. However, the creek bed was so deep and the bank so steep that we had to put brakes on all four wheels to get down safely. Then we had to unload everything and drive up in a

gallop. Finally we had to carry everything up the bank and reload it. We worked in sweltering heat, and there was no breath of air! Soon the rain started.

You became acquainted with the new home and its vicinity in the coming years, but you never knew it as we found it upon our arrival. It was not as now: fertile fields as far as the eye can reach with farmers working in there; and comfortable farm houses, painted white. Then there was only rolling prairie in the monotonous gray-brown of dry grass. No human habitation was visible except our own poor home, because the house of our nearest neighbor was hidden by the small strip of woods along the creek, and the other neighbors lived miles away. There was no rumbling of trains or whistling of locomotives, humming of cotton gins, the noise of reapers and threshers and voices of working men and children. Only the lowing; of cattle or bleating of sheep reached our ears occasionally.

Our dilapidated house consisted of a fourteen-by-fourteen-foot log house with a rock fireplace and two "lean-to's." Another small hut stood about a thousand steps away near the sheep pen. There our shepherd had taken up his quarters for the protection of the sheep during the night. The dismal surroundings had a depressing effect – especially on your mother, who was now pregnant and who was by nature easily discouraged anyway.

On account of the continual drought and the almost antediluvian methods of farming, no corn had been grown in this region. I bought seed corn for \$2.50 per bushel. All the hay Bernhard had harvested during the summer was destroyed by cattle; which, on account of the carelessness of the farmers, were accustomed to break through the fences regularly in the fall to browse around in the fields. So we were entirely without feed for our jaded horses. Our own menu was skimpy. Without corn there were no fatted hogs; so three times a day there was a repetition of light bread or biscuits, salt beef, molasses and black coffee. Milk, butter and eggs were unknown in this locality, even in favorable years.

Our first task was to provide a shelter to protect at least the ewes and lambs against inclement weather. For such a stable all material had to be hauled from a distance; however, we had brought along from Austin County a sufficient quantity of strong domestic for a temporary cover. Without corn to feed, our emaciated horses could not be used, now or later, for field work; and so we were forced to buy a yoke of oxen with which we could haul the necessary material for the stable. We

erected the shelter without outside help – and faster than we had expected. Unfortunately, the canvas roof proved to be only small protection; for during the worst northwest storms, it tore several times. The following summer we had to supplant it with a shingle roof.

Finally we got through the hardships of the first winter without loss of any animals, but later we lost many lambs because the lean ewes did not have sufficient milk to keep them alive.

After the shearing and the necessary field work had been completed, I took your mother with Lina, Anna and little Konrad – who had been born in the meantime, to her relatives at the old home in Austin County. I felt obligated to do this, for she was so homesick that I feared for her health and therefore also for the child's.

We hitched two yoke of oxen to the wagon, loaded the necessary provisions, bedding, and a large trunk full of clothing. We arranged for seats so that the travelers could sit as well as lie down and sleep. Bernhard and I went on foot. It was fortunate that we had provided so well for the convenience of the family because we had barely started when rain set in, which lasted during the several days of the journey. When all the creeks went up, we had fortunately crossed the San Gabriel and Brushy Creeks – the largest we had to cross.

Although we succeeded in keeping everything inside the wagon fairly dry, we two pedestrians lived in wet clothes all the way. Often we could not kindle a fire to cook coffee and to warm ourselves, because all fuel dripped with water. For our night's rest, we raked twigs and leaves together under the wagon, so that we did not have to lie directly on the wet ground.

Although we finally ended our journey in good health and spirits, the trip had very evil consequences anyway; for a few weeks later an epidemic of bloody flux spread among the children of the settlement, claiming as victims our little Konrad, Uncle Ohlendorf's oldest son, Karl, a child of Ohlendorf's cousin Kreuger and many others. Soon after our return to Bell County, Bernhard and I developed a severe fever, which could at least partly be attributed to the exposures to which we had been subjected. Our sheepherder also caught the fever so that we were in a rather helpless situation, but in a few weeks we recovered without the aid of doctor or medicine. Our sheepherder then left to join the Southern army as a volunteer in the War of the Secession, which had broken out.

Our first crop was very satisfactory. In the latter part of November, I brought back Mother and children. The spirits of the mother had not improved. She could not forget the loss of her little son.

Now the evil influence of the outbreak of the war was felt everywhere. Already many young men, lured by promises of easy earnings and of glory, had joined the army; and so we were entirely dependent on our own work. One of us had to herd the sheep, while the other attended to all the rest of the work. Our situation became more difficult from day to day, not only because we lived so isolated, but also because the war and blockade had halted all trade at our ports and cut us off more and more from the resources of civilization.

Conditions grew worse with conscription. We both had to enter the Southern army. We joined Company G of the Fourth Mounted Infantry Regiment of Texas with Julius Giesecke as our captain. Our departure would leave your mother entirely alone in the wilderness with the two little girls, Lina and Anna. Fortunately, our good neighbors were always kind and willing to lend a hand.

With the assistance of Uncle Rothaermel, I succeeded in hiring an old German laborer. I had to promise him twelve dollars per month in gold – and paid it, too. Later he proved to be so rough and obstinate that your mother's life was not made easier but more difficult. To take his place, Uncle Ohlendorf had to send another old man, Kreuger. After the war, I had to pay him the same high wages.

Then in the spring of 1863, Bernhard was born. Fortunately, a good old neighbor, the wife of Captain Evens – your mother had already known her in Austin County – helped at this difficult time.

About the hardships and dangers to which Bernhard and I were exposed during the war, I shall not waste words here. Only I want to mention here that in our thinking we were on the Union side. Of these sentiments we made no secret and therefore exposed ourselves often to hostility. In spite of all this and the fact that we had lived during the last winter almost without clothing, blankets or tents in the swampy bottoms of Arkansas, we both returned home from the war in the spring of 1865 safe and without injuries.

But how depressing everything here at home looked. Buildings and fences dilapidated. Even the wagon, except for the few parts of iron, had crumbled to pieces. Horses and cattle were stolen or lost. The sheep were so afflicted with mange that they were almost worthless. As it was too late in the season to plant anything in the field, we had to buy the provisions which we could otherwise have raised. We made several unsuccessful attempts to cure the mange of the sheep through dipping, using great care and expensive ingredients. The trouble was that there were too many other lost and

mangy sheep straggling around the prairie and running unnoticed with our flock.

At the cost of much time and energy, we had searched around until we found most of our horses; then we attempted to train them to stay on our ranch by feeding them through the next winter with expensive corn, which we had to buy. Then during the following summer a disease like anthrax broke out among them and of the forty, almost half – and those the most valuable – died. Of our cattle we found not a single head.

Under these circumstances Bernhard became discouraged and decided to return to Germany, especially since it was our father's wish that he return; and so in the summer of 1867 he took passage on a ship, with the idea that he might come back to Texas later. However, he never carried out this plan. Our father later bequeathed him a country estate.

After the war many people without means left the Old South, attracted by the good cheap land in Texas. These new-comers first had to rent farms to earn the means of buying their own land; and since cotton had a good price at that time, they could – with thrift and industry – easily execute their plans.

Considering these conditions, I decided to enlarge my field and rent it out – an undertaking entailing much work and expense since wire fences were unknown at that time. While I was busy with these improvements, my neighbors reached the same conclusions that I had; and so we readily agreed to fence around all our land and thus save the fences between the different farms. This plan made the task easier and less expensive. Nevertheless, it took several years before I had all the land under cultivation and the necessary buildings erected, because in 1870 I had bought some property in Belton and moved there. This change was made because Lina and Anna were old enough now to attend a good school, which we did not have near the farm.

You already know that with B. Decherd as partner I bought the retail store of H. C. Denny. You also know that the store burned down later, but I want to consider this later event further. It was during the last days of September of 1879 that I returned from Burnet County, where Ebeling was taking care of my sheep for a share of the income. I stayed at home only one day. Then on the following day I drove to Salado to assist some Germans who had a case before the Squire and could not understand English.

On the return trip I heard about the fire and drove back to Belton as fast as I could. The entire

north side of the square was a smoking ruin. My first question to Decherd was, "Did you renew the insurance?" He answered that he had forgotten to do so. We had insurance with two companies, with one for \$5,000 and the other for \$8,000. The latter had run out during my stay in Burnet County, although I had reminded him especially to renew the insurance.

Since our account books had burned, too, we had to depend on the honesty of our debtors and therefore suffered losses. We had already received all our fall goods, but had not sold any as yet; and we had so far received almost no income from a new drug-store which had cost us \$2,000.

It was suggested that we pay our debtors only fifty per cent of the debt, that they might be satisfied with that much under the existing conditions. Under the bankruptcy laws of that time almost any swindle was possible. But I insisted that all debts be paid. Since our collections were insufficient for this purpose and since Decherd had no property outside a little homestead, I paid the rest with the sale of land, the income from the farm and sheep, and finally through the sale of the flock. Through the help of ex-Governor R. J. Davis, I entered the railroad mail service in May of 1882. Even with my salary, I paid off some of these old debts.

When your good mother was released from ill health through death in May of 1894, I gave up the taxing and dangerous work of railroad postal clerk. I am surprised that I still feel so well after completing my seventy-third year of life. As I thank my fate for this blessing and as I also thank you, my dear children, for having always given me only joy, I shall conclude this narration, as I shall probably soon conclude life itself.

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In his business undertakings, Grandfather was finally very successful. After moving to San Antonio, the family lived for a few years in a modern home, but Grandfather kept his attention on a good investment in the rapidly developing city of San Antonio.

After a few years he bought a block of land that was located a few streets east of Alamo Plaza and on the edge of the city. where land was comparatively cheap. On the east end of the block was the Southern Pacific Railroad track – and then there was only mesquite brush. However, Grandfather figured correctly that the land next to the railroad would eventually be very valuable for a factory or warehouse.

The lot contained a good residence – facing Chestnut Street. It also had a good servant house, a wash house, barns for feed, horses and buggy. Grandfather eventually divided the land into lots and built, for rent or sale, houses using partly the lumber from the empty buildings.

# Supplement



## THE LAST THIRTY YEARS

Written by the Oldest Grandchild of Otto Mackensen

When one considers the many difficulties Grandfather had to overcome in order to establish himself here in Texas under frontier conditions, one could assume that he spent his last years an embittered old man. This was not the case. He finished the reminiscences when he was seventy-three years old. Then he lived thirty more years, a serene, kindly, cheerful, contented, lovable grandfather.

In 1898, Grandfather divided his property among his four children, and with the changing seasons lived with one or the other. My mother received from him the Bell County homestead. Here he stayed in late spring and summer. The fall months he stayed with Uncle Bernhard and family in San Antonio, and the winter he spent with Uncle Louis and Aunt Anna in Houston.

His entire possessions he took with him in one small trunk. In it were a few old photographs, his account book, some clothes, tobacco, several pipes, a leather-bound copy of logarithms and a book on navigation by his old Bremen teacher Breusing – which looks like higher mathematics to me. The rest of the trunk was filled with a small featherbed to keep things from rattling around.

When we built the new house, the southwest room, which was cool and comparatively quiet, was set aside for him. It is still designated as Grandfather's room.

He read a great deal. He kept up with the daily news, and liked the *New Republic*, the *Nation* and the *Literary Digest*. He was interested in science; and for a special diversion, he worked on problems in mathematics.

He appeared for breakfast when the morning rush in our big family was over. Mother would then bring in his coffee and breakfast and sit down by him to chat while she perhaps peeled peaches. At noon we children profited by the conversation between Father and Grandfather, who were interested in national and international affairs. After lunch he retired to his room for a nap and more reading. In mid-afternoon, Mother always had ready for him coffee or lemonade with some cookies. There was then an informal gathering on the porch; for Grandfather, with his wide experience, many journeys, constant reading and his excellent memory, was a good conversationalist.

He liked to find some work to do around the place, and often he would wander off with a hoe

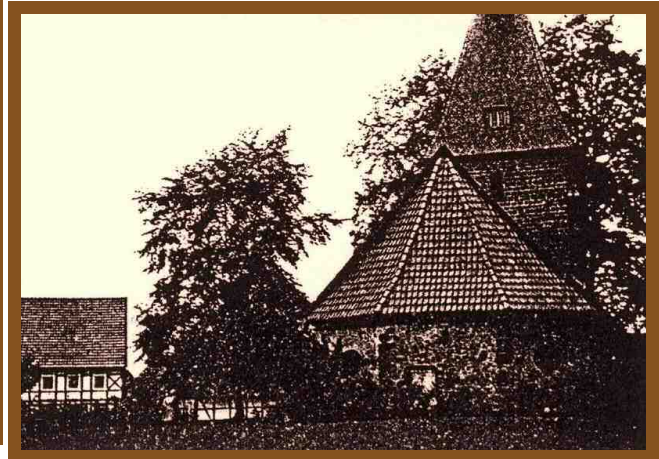
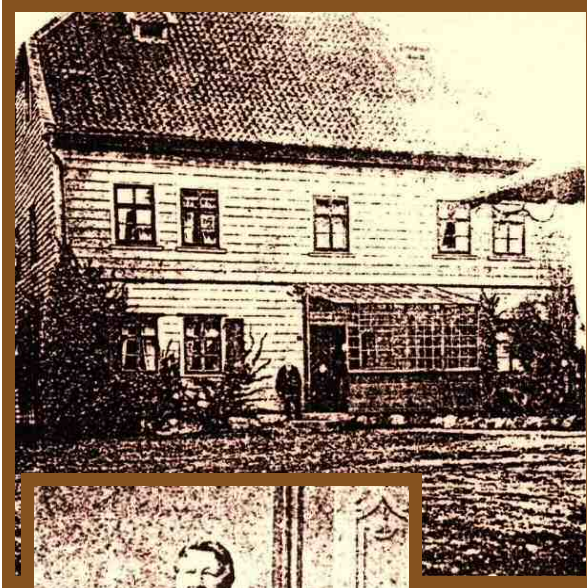
over his shoulder. When he was in the nineties, he finally gave up his visiting and stayed permanently with Uncle Louis in Houston. When he was ninety-eight, he gave up his daily exercise of chopping wood because he could not see well enough. However, he could still read by a good light. Because his eyesight finally dimmed, he was confined to his room during the last three years of his life. However, his mind was still active and his memory good.

I spent three of my summer vacations in Houston, for he liked company. I could ask, "Grandfather, who was Henry the Fowler?" or "What was the cause of the Third Crusade?" Then he could talk for an hour on the subject. Such a lecture was entertaining to him and both interesting and informative to me.

I have a very dim recollection of my grandmother but have a mental picture of her because Grandfather liked to speak of her. When I was attending high school in San Antonio and staying with him, he often laid a caressing hand on my head and told me that my hair had the same beautiful dark brown color as Grandmother's, but she had much heavier braids. I was about her size. She was straight and poised. She was always neatly dressed and usually wore a white collar. She had some freckles; but then, according to Grandfather, some faces were more interesting with freckles.

Grandfather left us on Christmas Day, 1933. There was no illness. He had his breakfast and talked cheerfully. Soon after, when someone returned to his room, his heart had evidently stopped – after 103 years.

No, the reverses in Grandfather's life did not cast a shadow over his later years. As Mother says, he had too many other interests.



Top - Johann Heinrich Conrad Mackensen, Grandfather's father and Caroline Thiele, Grandfather's mother, who died when he was 6. Above - One end of the Mackensen home, and the church Grandfather's father's contribution helped build. He is buried at the shrubs. Left Center - The Thiele home 2 miles from Badenhausen where Grandfather visited his grandmother frequently. Left - Grandfather's uncle Ludwig Thiele who became owner and operator of a plantation in the neighboring kingdom of Hannover.

## THE MACKENSEN FAMILY TREE

(By Annie Romberg)

The ancestors of the Badenhausen Mackensen family lived in the region between Sollig and Harz. The lineage of this family of land-owners and farmers is traced back in direct line to the Thirty Years War. The forefathers called themselves Mackenhausen, which was also the name of a village on the Sollig. The village and the family at the same time shortened the name to Mackensen.

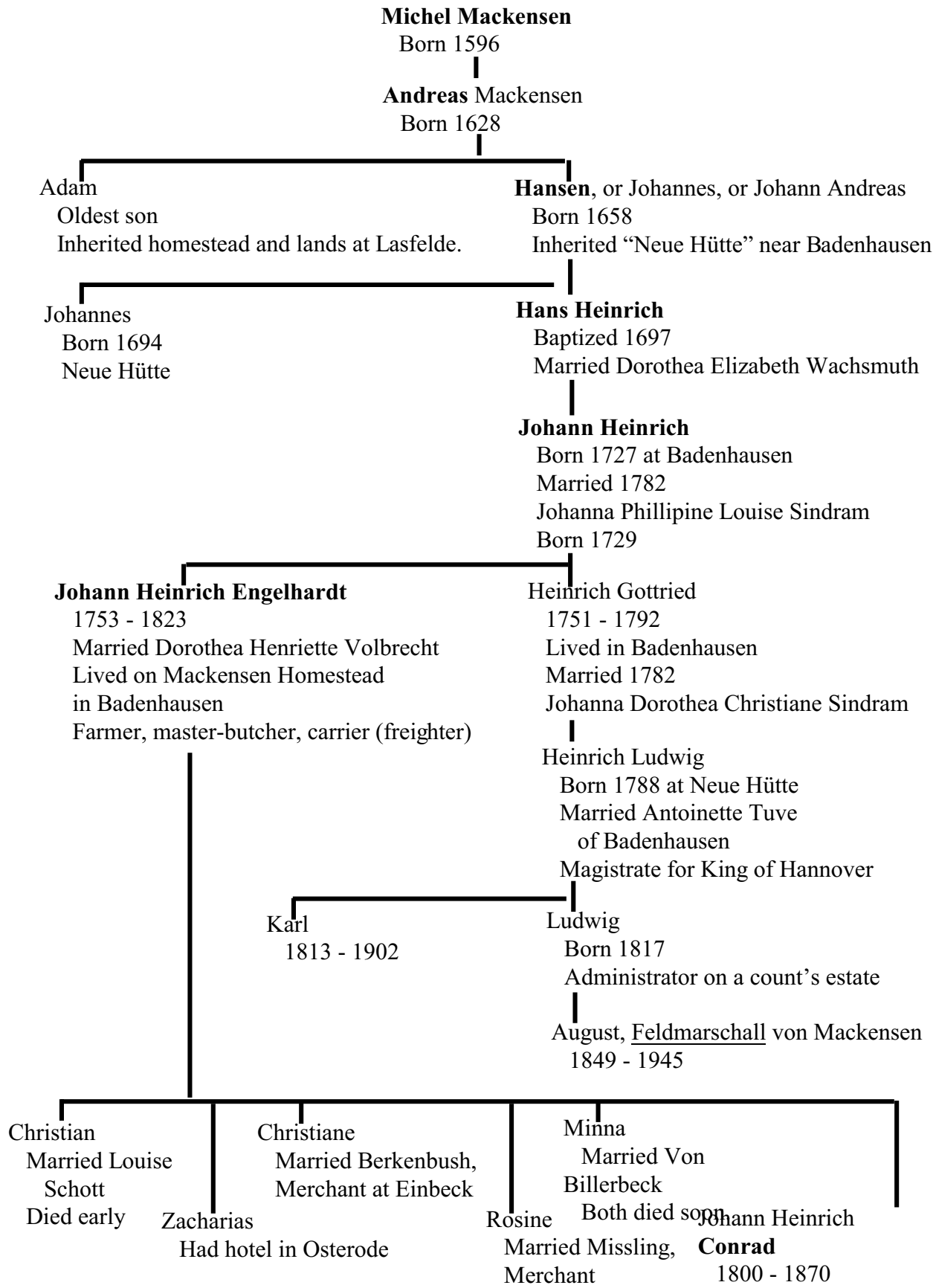
The first records of the Mackenhausen family are found in the year 1144 in Mackenhausen, in 1282 in Einbeck and in 1628 in Lasfelde as also in the Harz region and in the Hannover and Braunschwig regions.

The oldest ancestors whose names are definitely known lived in Badenhausen near Osterode and in Lasfelde. They were "Ackermänner," that is, farmers. The oldest, Andreas, was born in 1628.

The oldest son of Andreas Mackensen received the homestead and lands at Lasfelde, which to this day belong to his descendants.

The second son of Andreas Mackensen, named Hansen and born 1658, received from his father the estate known as Neue Hütte near Badenhausen. According to church records, the baptism of Hans Heinrich, son of Hansen, took place at Badenhausen on Latare Sunday, 1697. The wife of Hans Heinrich was Dorothea Elizabeth, nee Wachsmund.

The first part of the record of the Mackensen family is translated from *General Feldmarschall von Mackensen*, by Carl Lange, published by Schlieffen, Berlin, 1935, pages 29 and 30. The remainder of the record comes from Otto Mackensen, 1830-1933, and European relatives.



Johann Heinrich **Conrad** Mackensen

Born 1800 - Died 1870

Lived on Mackensen homestead in Badenhausen

Married:

(1) Caroline Louise Ferdinandine Thiele

Born 1803 at Windhausen

Died 1837 at Badenhausen

Her parents were Ludwig Thiele,  
who lived on Zehnthof in Förste,  
and Dorothea Sindram, 1777-1839

Four sons of Caroline Thiele were  
all born at Badenhausen

(2) Caroline Schuseil

Several children died in infancy.

Others were:

Friedericke, born 1842

Married Warnsdorf, 1868

Lived in Nordheim

Dorothea, 1843-1914

Married Gustav Peters, 1868

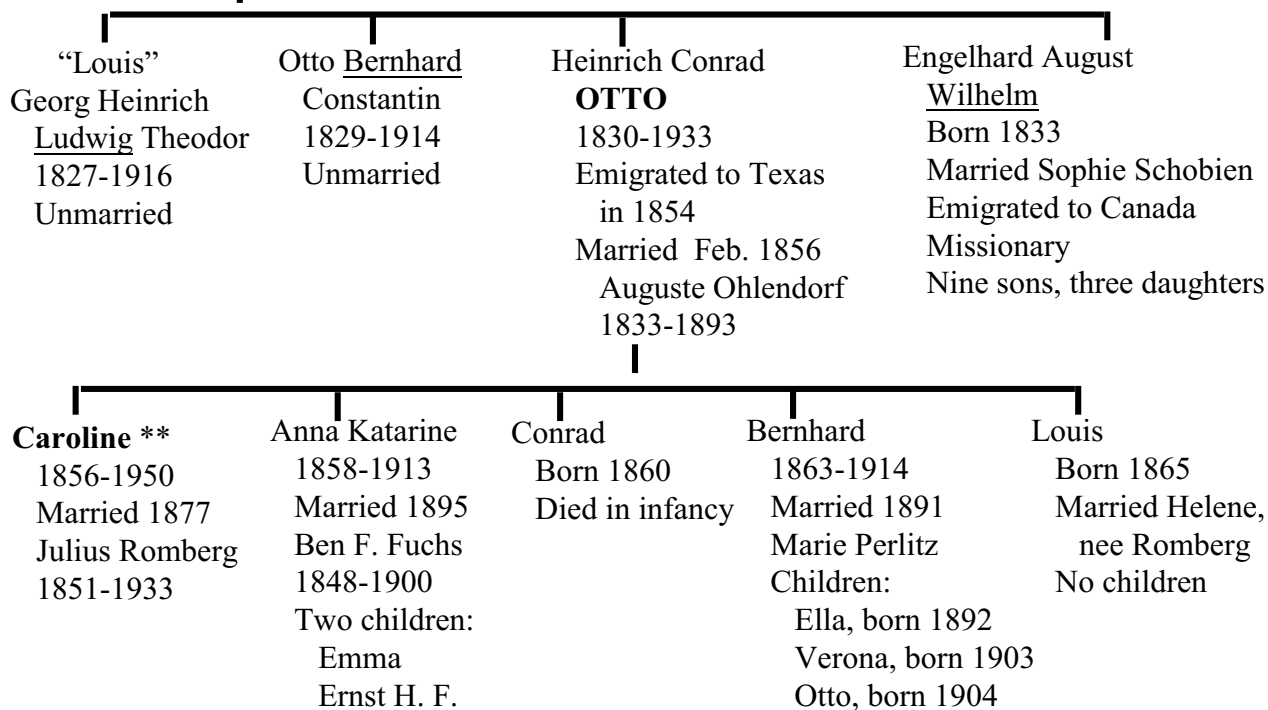
Lived at Landwehr by Badenhausen

Caroline, born 1845

Unmarried

Engelhard, 1853-1882 \*

Married Anna Reese



\* Engelhard inherited the Mackensen home in Badenhausen. He had one unmarried daughter, Minna, born 1880. The widow of Engelhard married Fritz Ohlendorf and continued to live with Minna at the homestead in Badenhausen. They were still living there in 1912.

\*\* The children of **Caroline Mackensen Romberg** were Otto Johannes, Anna Auguste, Ida Amalie, Herman Julius, Friederike Louise, Carl Bernhard, Erna Bernhardine, Felix Berthold, Louis Dente and Conrad Julius.

## The Thiele Family

The father-in-law of Dorothea Thiele, nee Sindram, was Ludwig Thiele, who lived on the farmstead Zehnthof in Förste near Badenhausen. All that is known of his family now is that one brother was a captain of cavalry who fought under Napoleon in the Spanish campaign in 1808. Another brother was a first lieutenant who fought with Napoleon in the Russian campaign and was in the battle of Berezina. A third brother was both soldier and farmer.

Dorothea Thiele, nee Sindram, was the mother of Caroline Thiele Mackensen of Badenhausen. There is a picture of Dorothea Thiele in the home of Caroline Mackensen Romberg. This picture shows Dorothea with her oldest grandson, Ludwig, then a child of four or five. The picture is a photograph of the original oil portrait.

After the death of Ludwig Thiele, the Zehnthof passed to the family of Dorothea's brother, Zacharias Sindram. The descendants of Zacharias still lived on the Zehnthof in 1912. A picture taken of the house in 1912 shows a two story residence covered with square pieces of slate. The walls of the porch or entrance were covered with glass. The furniture in the house was very old and heavy. The dining room chairs were solid mahogany with "S" for Sindram carved on the top rung. In the garden was still the spring and pool on which Otto Mackensen as a child had tried to take boat rides in bread troughs. Förste is within walking distance of Badenhausen.

Ludwig and Dorothea Thiele had three children: Auguste, Ludwig and Caroline. Auguste was unmarried and lived with her brother Ludwig. She took a great interest in her four motherless Mackensen nephews. It was Aunt Auguste who sent to the family of Otto Mackensen in Belton the big chest full of linen, clothes especially made for the children, shoes, fancy parasols – which were fashionable then. She also included some heirlooms: a Dresden china fruit plate, a white china match holder that represented two boots and that had been in the *Verwalter* [assistant managers'] room as far back as Otto Mackensen could remember.

Dorothea's brother Ludwig Thiele was a trained farm manager like his father. He first leased and later bought the estate Anderbeck near Halberstadt. In his later years he was a *Justitzrat*

(justiciary), a state official. He was a representative of his district in the diet of Braunschweig. There is still a photograph of this Uncle Thiele in the home of Caroline Mackensen Romberg. He looks very distinguished, dressed in the style of John C. Calhoun. Grandfather Mackensen always spoke with great esteem and affection of his Uncle Thiele; so did his brother Bernhard. When Uncle Thiele had moved to Anderbeck, the boys went to school (junior college) at Halberstadt and then spent the weekends at Anderbeck.

There are still letters in the family of Caroline Romberg that Uncle Thiele wrote in the late fifties and early sixties to his nephews, Otto and Bernhard, in Texas. These letters show affection and understanding and give sage counsel.

The youngest daughter of Dorothea Sindram Thiele was Caroline. She married Conrad Mackensen of Badenhausen and her four sons were Ludwig, Bernhard, Otto and Wilhelm. An oil portrait of her was brought to Texas in 1912 and is still in the home of Caroline Romberg.



**FLOOR PLAN OF MACKENSEN HOME IN BADENHAUSEN**

Kitchen	Back hall and winter dining room	Employees' room	Bakery	
Mother's room with piano, sofa, two chests			Entrance hall	Store room
Reception or visitor's room	Dining table	Store room		
Father's office				

Front – First Floor

Master bedroom	Nursery	Workroom for the <i>Verwalter</i>	Bedroom for the <i>Verwalter</i>	
Hall		Heater	Stairs to third floor	
Bedroom	Boys' room	Linen room	Bedroom for three maid servants	Tutor's room. Also, school room

Second Floor

These sketches are to show the relative positions of the rooms, not the correct proportions.

## THE MACKENSEN HOME IN BADENHAUSEN

By

Annie Romberg

When Grandfather was already blind, I asked him one day to describe the house at Badenhausen. We had an interesting time together. He relived childhood experiences, while I took notes, made sketches and asked questions.

In the floor plan the number, uses, and relative positions of the rooms are correct; but we made no attempt to determine the correct proportions.

The entrance hall was always referred to as large. Here the family ate their meals in the summer. In the winter the regular dining room back of the entrance hall was more comfortable.

The father sat at the head of the table. At the other end sat the oldest child, Louis. On the father's right was first the mother, next to her the youngest child, then the other boys. On the father's left sat first the tutor, then about three *Verwalter*, and then finally two or three *Mamsellen*.

A *Verwalter* was an assistant to the manager of a country estate. He was usually from a good family, expected to manage an estate of his own in later years and was therefore getting practical experience under a capable manager, who assigned to him gradually more and more responsibilities.

A *Mamsell* had more responsibilities than an ordinary maid servant. For instance, she might have charge of the dairy. For many years the head *Mamsell* in the Mackensen household was Lottchen, who came when she was only sixteen and helped first by looking after the children. Later she was the nurse for the children and slept in the nursery at night. Then finally she had charge of the entire housekeeping and all the women servants. Loved and respected, she stayed with the family until her death at the age of sixty-five.

The servants did not sleep in the room set aside for them on the first floor. They ate there, warmed themselves, did some of their work there and came in to chat and rest.

The baking was done at the village bakery, but the dough was prepared in a corner room of the house. This room contained two wooden kneading troughs. Bread made in the smaller trough was for the master's family; bread made in the larger one was for the help – not the day laborers, but the workers who lived on the place, domestic servants, stablemen, plowmen and so on.

The two store rooms on the ground floor contained barrels of molasses, sugar and the like, which was bought and sold mainly wholesale. However, if one of the villagers wanted a smaller portion, a maid would measure the material and sell it. The corner store room had in generations before been used as a threshing floor. The house was already two hundred years old when Otto Mackensen was born in 1830.

There were two large cellars under the house. One of these was a wine cellar. The wine was also sold wholesale. In the family it was served at dinner on state occasions.

On the second floor the *Verwalter* had a work room where they kept the records. They stood while doing their writing, the table being conveniently high for such a purpose.

Also on the second floor was the tutor's room, large enough for a big study table. Around this sat the four boys of the family and the two von Billabeck orphan cousins. The 'von' indicates a title of nobility.

The linen room was also on the second floor. When a maid had no other work to do, she sat down by her spinning wheel to spin linen thread. This spinning was probably done in the servant's room. The finished thread was eventually taken to a weaver, but the sewing was done in the home by the maids – by hand. The finished sheets, towels, tablecloths and so on were then spread on a meadow for bleaching. Finally the pieces were initialed with colored linen thread, pressed, and stored in the linen room – each dozen tied neatly with ribbon. For daughters in a family, this was the beginning of a dowry.

In the family of Otto Mackensen, during pioneer times in Texas, linen sheets, towels and tablecloths were used every day. In fact, it was all they had at the beginning. Finally, the linen pieces were laid away as keepsakes and antiques. In the family of Caroline Romberg there are still table napkins with the initials O M. The napkins are thirty-two inches square, which was evidently the fashionable size a century ago. These napkins come from the linen room of the Mackensen home in Badenhausen.

The bedrooms were mainly on the second floor, but there were also some on the third floor. On the third floor, too, was a room for laundry and a room with a mangle [a laundry machine for pressing fabrics].

In the upper regions of the house somewhere was a room into which the smoke from the flue

could be turned. This room contained the hams, sausages and sides of bacon. Of the butchering days in the winter, Friederike Mackensen Warnsdorf writes in her reminiscences, "There was the pleasure of dividing with others. While the butcher cut up the meat, Father stood by with a list and placed cuts in baskets and dishes for old Mrs. Gremsen, for the cantor, for the widow's house, for the pastor's family and so on. The rich harvest of honey furnished a similar scene."

There was a fourth and a fifth floor to the house. These upper spaces had low ceilings and were used for storage.

Back of the residence was a courtyard surrounded by the house, the factory buildings and two enormous barns. The barns, built of rock, sheltered both feed and livestock. Friederike Warnsdorf writes of "about eighty to one hundred head of cattle in the feed stables and twenty-four horses."

There were a few riding horses; the rest were plow and draft horses. The latter were used to transport by heavy wagons the products of the factory, which were starch, alcohol and vinegar – all of which were sold wholesale. Also distributed wholesale were materials like molasses and sugar, which were brought back from Bremen and other markets to which the cattle were driven for sale. For each span of horses one driver or plowman was employed.

Grain and Irish potatoes were used in the factory, and these were bought from the farmers. Grandfather related that in certain seasons the entire courtyard was filled all day long with carts and wagons of farmers bringing in their products.

What became of all these buildings? Sometime after the death of Conrad Mackensen in 1870, his youngest son Engelhard took over the management of the Badenhausen property. A few years later a destructive fire swept away all the buildings except one of the big barns. Shortly after this catastrophe, when Engelhard took his own life in 1882, the tragedy seemed complete. One old barn was still there in 1912, but a more modern two-story residence had taken the place of the former three-century-old home.

## WARTIME EXPERIENCES OF OTTO MACKENSEN

by

K. F. Bartels

After retirement at the age of 73, Otto wrote "Experiences Recorded for His Descendants" which detailed a life fully lived, including several narrow escapes as a young man and an interesting life as an older man. Everything is well detailed except a period of about 3 years when he served in the Confederate Army during the Civil War, the accounting of which he dismissed as "wasted words." While he was correct that this time was a total waste of effort, it is a shame that he did not detail some of his experiences for family and historical interest. The following accounts are added in 1991 from verbal stories told by Otto through the years and retold by Felix and Louis Romberg and Erna Bartels. Also, important information was furnished by the Confederate Research Center in Hillsboro, Texas, including the diary of Julius Giesecke. Finally, his war record was obtained from the National Archives.

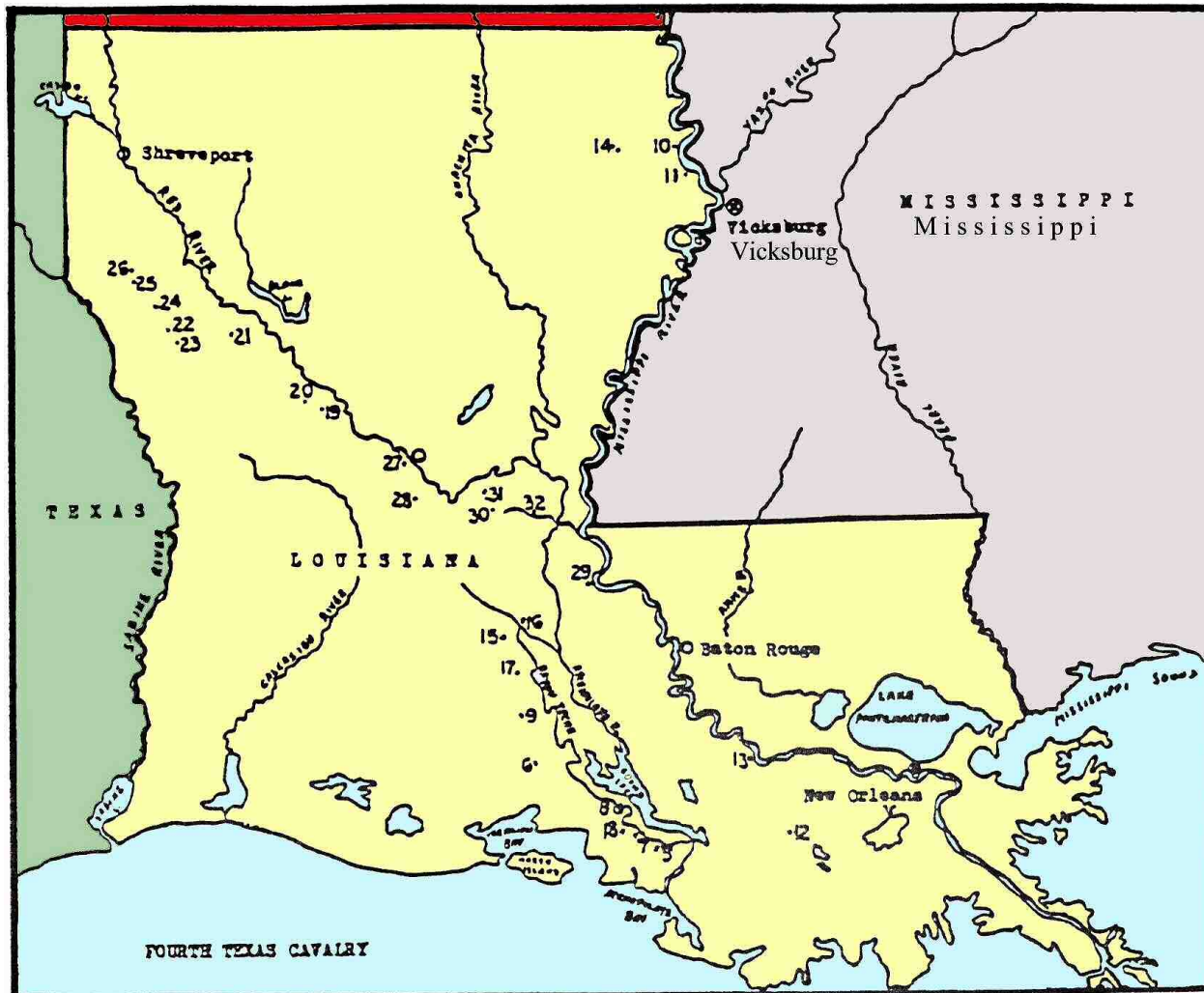
The war came along just as his family was getting established on their Darrs Creek farm in Bell County and his children were small. The German settlers in Texas had no interest in slaves, but the younger men had to either be conscripted or depart to live in Mexico or Central America. At the age of 31, Otto and his brother Bernhard went to Austin County and enlisted on July 1, 1862, at Roeder's Mill in Company G of the Fourth Texas Cavalry Regiment under Captain Julius Giesecke. Company G had many Germans from Austin and Fayette Counties.

Otto was in the supply group as a cook, which did not require killing anyone. He had some opportunities for advancement, but he rejected them in order to remain a private. The company always had a washtub full of beans flavored with pork, and sometimes the pork had "skippers" (little worms that curl up and jump) in it. Some foods bothered his stomach, so his brother Bernhard helped with his diet. At one station, the Army had a house filled with bacon for "reserve food." Grease dripped from the floor to the ground. Although he was a cook, he never got to see that bacon.

The Fourth Texas Regiment was organized with 175 men in 1861 at La Grange and operated until April 1862 in New Mexico. They regrouped on November 6, 1862, after an extended furlough, with 12 new men including Otto and Bernhard Mackensen and Hermann von Roeder. The new recruits also had had furloughs while waiting and returned home more than once. "The brigade assisted in the recapture of Galveston on Jan. 1, 1863, then was ordered into western Louisiana with the Trans-Mississippi Army." The swampy conditions caused many hardships. The brigade "fought with distinction in the First Teche Campaign during the spring of 1863." In April 1863, Giesecke was captured, then escaped in Virginia to return to his post.

## ENGAGEMENTS BY FOURTH TEXAS CAVALRY

<b>Operations in Western Louisiana:</b>	Mar 9 to May 14, 1863
Fort Bisland (5), Bayou Teche (6), Centreville (7)	Apr 12-13, 1863
Irish Bend, LA (8)	Apr 14, 1863
Bayou Vermillion (9)	Apr 17, 1863
Milliken's Bend (10), Young's Point (11)	Jun 7, 1863
LaFourche Crossing (12)	Jun 20-21, 1863
Cox's Plantation, Donaldsonville (13)	Jul 12-13, 1863
Bayou Floyd (14)	Aug 24, 1863
<b>Operations in Western Louisiana and Teche Country:</b>	Oct 3-Nov 30, 1863
Opelousas (15) and Barre Landing (16)	Oct 21, 1863
Grand Coteau, Buzzard's Prairie (17)	Nov 3, 1863
<b>Operations against Banks' Red River Campaign:</b>	Mar 10-May 22, 1864
Operations at Franklin, LA (18)	Mar 14-26, 1864
Monett's Ferry (19) and Cloutiersville (20)	Mar 29-30, 1864
Crump's Hill, Piney Woods, LA (21)	Apr 2, 1864
Wilson's Farm (22) near Pleasant Hill (23)	Apr 8, 1864
Battle, Sabine Crossroads (25), Mansfield (26)	Apr 8, 1864
Pleasant Hill (23)	Apr 9, 1864
Cloutiersville, LA (20)	Apr 22-24, 1864
Monett's Ferry (Cane River Crossing) (19)	Apr 23, 1864
Alexandria, LA (27)	May 2-9, 1864
Graham's Plantation	May 5, 1864
Bayou La Mourie (28)	May 6, 1864
Against retreat from Alexandria (27) to Morganza (29)	May 13-20, 1864
Mansura (30), Belle Prairie, Marksville (31)	May 16, 1864
Yellow Bayou (32), Bayou de Glaze, Old Oaks, LA	May 18, 1864
Disbanded near Crockett, TX	March 4, 1865



On April 8, Otto's son Bernhard was born in Bell County, but we don't know when he found out about that. On June 7, 1863, the brigade was engaged in action at Milliken's Bend and Young's Point, a little upriver from Vicksburg. In late June, the brigade was in action at Donaldsonville, Louisiana, located on the south bank of the Mississippi River midway between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. It was here on June 28, 1863, that Otto and Bernhard were captured by the Union Army. The record says that they did not report in at the evening muster.

When Vicksburg surrendered on July 4th, Otto and Bernhard were already being shipped by sailboat in chains to Virginia. During the voyage the ship encountered a severe storm in the Atlantic. Otto had been a sailor and realized that the ship's inexperienced crew needed help to control the ship in the storm, so he offered his services. He helped with securing the sails and with steering the ship through the storm, then was put back in chains. Otto and Bernhard were sent to Camp Lee near Richmond, Virginia, where on July 19, 1863, they were released in an exchange of prisoners. They then walked all the way to Texas, a distance of 1500 miles. Their route probably followed the Tennessee River through Alabama and crossed Mississippi because Otto talked about both states. When they got to the Mississippi River, they made a raft and started across. Near the middle, a northern gunboat came into view and started shooting at them. Quickly, they took off their clothes, slipped into the water and swam almost submerged to the western shore. They came to a house where a woman gave them some old clothes. The brigade was then in East Texas, and Otto was recorded "present" in December 1863. Then in February of 1864 the muster recorded him as "absent without leave." There is no explanation. Could he have been denied a leave, forcing him to take his own leave? It was not uncommon for Southern volunteers to take off for a week or two to check on their families.

"In the spring of 1864, the brigade (now called "Green's Brigade" for Col. Thomas Green) helped defeat another Union advance toward Texas in the Bank's Red River Campaign (from the Diary of Julius Giesecke). Later he noted that Company G was sent "to Arkansas with Gen. Price's army and held till near the end of the war." This concurs with Otto's description of "freezing in the swamps of Arkansas" that winter. Meanwhile, the South was losing the war and some of the men started abandoning the army. On February 5, 1865, Otto is recorded as "absent without leave, Bell County, Texas," so he must have left for good at that time. Giesecke reports that on March 4, 1865,



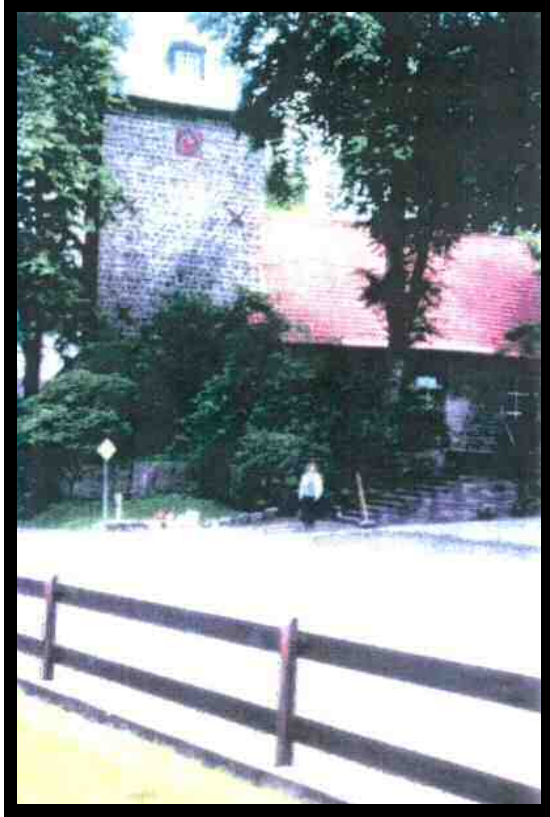
many of the brigade "revolted and went home" near Crockett, Texas. When Otto and Bernhard arrived at home near Holland, they had full-grown beards and were wearing the old borrowed clothes, a sorry looking pair.

The National Archives says, "Confederate soldiers in service at the time of surrender did not receive discharge certificates, but were given paroles, and these paroles became the property of the soldier." We are not aware that he had a parole. In 1901, the government finally granted a pension for Confederate Veterans who were disabled and/or destitute. Otto never applied for a pension.

Otto went to several reunions of Company G. From pictures, we know he was at La Grange in 1915 and at New Braunfels in 1928. He eventually became the second last survivor of Green's Brigade. (Revised 4-2-96)



**1915 Confederate Reunion in La Grange, Texas**  
**Company G, Fourth Texas Cavalry**  
**#1 Hermann Von Roeder**  
**#2 Captain Julius Giesecke**  
**#3 State Sen. Albert Schlick**



The church which Great-great-grandfather Mackensen's contributions helped build.



Englehardt – Great-great-grandfather's tombstone by the backdoor of the church – June 1987.

Great-grandfather's house was across the street.



The original house, which burned, looked something like this.

Paintings on the back ceiling of the church.



## *Sole Survivors of Texas Civil War Company*



**Left to right: Otto Mackensen, Capt. Julius Giesecke and Sam Amsler. 1928**

NEW BRAUNFELS, Texas, Sept. 24.—Their combined ages totaling 272 years, Capt. Julius Giesecke, 89, of New Braunfels; Otto Mackenson, 97, of Houston, and Sam Amsler, 87, of McGregor, are the sole survivors of Company G, Fourth Regiment, of the Texas Mounted Volunteers that took part in the Civil War.

Speaking of his military career, Captain Giesecke, who is the father of Prof. F. E. Giesecke, of the faculty of the Texas A. & M. College, said:

"Our regiment was mustered into the service of the Confederate States near San Antonio in September, 1861. It constituted the first regiment of Sibley's brigade, and later of Thomas Green's brigade, to which belonged also the Fifth and Seventh Regiment of Texas Mounted Volunteers.

"The first campaign of this brigade was in New Mexico, where we had three victorious

engagements on rather a small scale, and yet we returned from New Mexico in July, 1862 totally stripped of everything we had. We were then furloughed long enough to remount and equip ourselves. Our regiment was reorganized in Brazos County and made ready to participate in the retaking of Galveston on Jan. 1, 1863. From there we were ordered to Louisiana, where he met General Banks, first expedition to Texas at Franklin and sent him back to New Orleans after hard fighting and a doubtful outcome. In this engagement I, with many other officers and men, was taken prisoner and I was held in New Orleans several months and then, with seventy-one other officers, was to be transferred on a small inland steamer, the Maple Leaf, to Fort Delaware for safe keeping to the end of the war. After leaving Fortress Monroe, we overpowered the guard on the ship and forced the captain to change his course and to effect a landing thirty miles below Cape Henry

lighthouse, where fifty-two of us left the ship and went ashore in North Carolina. After a hard chase and terrible hardships for eleven days, all of us reached our lines. The next day we were taken by train to Richmond, Va., and from there we rejoined our several commands.

"About March 20, 1864, we were ordered to meet General Banks' second expedition to Texas near Mansfield, La., and after sending him back to New Orleans we started to Arkansas with General Price's army and were held there till near the end of the war."

