

# Manifold Problems On Arrival

Kurt Klotzbach of Dortmund, editor of one of West Germany's largest newspapers, visited in Fredericksburg several years ago, and was interested in the history of early settlers who came here from Germany.

He discovered a letter in the Dortmund City Archives and translated it, sending a copy to the Fredericksburg Standard. The letter is reprinted here, almost in its entirety, because it gives such a revealing light into the life of the colonists who settled Fredericksburg 125 years ago, the hardships they faced, the problems they overcame, and of the faith and confidence they had in the future of this land.

Mr. Klotzbach, in his brief remarks concerning the writer of the letter has this to say about him:

"Karl Koehler and his wife, Charlotte, nee Jaeger, and their children, Karl, Charlotte and Edward, came to Galveston on the ship Johann Delhardt in 1845. This letter was written to a friend in Dortmund, Germany. I found it in the Dortmund City Archives when I searched for further Westphalians who immigrated to Texas 120 years ago.

"Koehler was a bookbinder by profession, lived in Kreuzburg (Sachsen-Weimar), but worked for some time in Dortmund, Westphalia, probably at the Wochenblatt fuer die Stadt und den Kreis Dortmund that printed part of his letter in August 1846."

Koehler's letter follows:

Galveston, February 1846.

Dear Friend:  
If I should follow my intention to write you only from my place of destination (Fredericksburg) I guess you would receive this letter very late in summer for our trip goes so slowly that we are still staying at our landing place after eighteen weeks. Therefore I can't help writing to you now so you will quiet down at our fate.

Since 23 December 1845 we have been quartered here after a very lucky voyage. From Bremen, Germany, we went by steamboat to Brete where the Johann Delhardt with which we were to make the voyage lay in the roads.

On October 7 we went on board of the brig JOHANN DEIHARDT (under Capt. Luedering in Bremen. On Oct. 9 we set sail and stayed in Bremer Haven up to the 11th October when the Captain and Dr. Hille (Secretary of the Verein der deutschen Einwanderer in Texas) arrived. Our ship was a

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für die

## Stadt und den Kreis Dortmund.

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### Beilage zum 10. August 1846.

Der Friedrich Blöding, au Spörbe ist als Gemeindevorsteher für den Amtsbezirk Göbbe ange-  
stellt und in dieser Eigenschaft verehrt worden.  
Dortmund, den 10. August 1846.

Der Landrat  
Pissgerim.

### Neuere Nachrichten aus Texas.

Galveston, im Februar 1846.

Berehrter Freund!  
(Schluß)

Galveston, wo ich mich jetzt aufhalte, liegt nicht am Meer und ist nur wenige Fuß über dem Meeresspiegel erhaben. Die Stadt ist sehr reichhaltig gebaut mit breiten Straßen, aber ohne Pfaffen. Der Pfaffen sind aus freiherrlichen Städten aufgeführt und mit Dörfern befreit; selbst das Dach hat dreifache Pfeiler, weil es nicht fallen soll, daß der Sturm die Giebeln bis auf die Spitze der Fenster treibt, was er in der vorigen Woche der Fall war. So das Haus ist ein Kaulhaus, denn hier lebt alle vom Handel, und man findet überall die reichlichen Warenlager, die an Eingang von besten europäischen nichts nachgeben. Waffhäuser, groß und klein, gibt es in Dörfern, ein gemeinlich gefälliges Leben, wie bei uns, ist aber darin nicht zu finden. Alles geht, kommt und läßt sich, ohne sich um den anderen zu bekümmern; von Komplikationen und Duldungen weiß man nichts. Jeder hat sich dem anderen gleich und vertritt gleiche Pflichten.

Der Gouverneur ist außerordentlich höflich und gefällig; ich habe so viele Beweise davon er-

**KOEHLER'S LETTER**, as it appeared in part, in the Dortmund Wochenblatt in German in their issue of August 15, 1846. The English translation of Kurt Klotzbach, Dortmund newspaper editor, for the Fredericksburg Standard is published almost in its entirety in this issue.

small one, but very solidly built and a quick sailing boat. It was partly copperplated and well furnished.

Altogether we were 137 passengers, lying in the between-decks and five in the cabin. We Kreuzburgers got permission from Captain Luedering to divide our quarters into a special compartment where we were very well accommodated as only 26 persons belonged to our Kreuzburg group. The ship's crew consisted of Captain Luedering, a very upright man, the steersman, and seven sailors, all merry people who always avoided insulting any of the passengers.

None of the sailors ever got a single drop of brandy during the voyage because the Captain belonged to a temperance society. On October 11 we started from Bremer Haven and reached the North Sea the next day. A gale was blowing and nearly all the passengers got seasick within the next two hours, but I remained immune.

It took us five days to cross the North Sea, then we passed the channel between France and England. Here

fahren, daß ich es nicht genug rühnen kann. Selbst von der niedrigen Staffe der Pfaffen und Wirtinnen muß ich dieses sagen, deren Voss bei uns auszuweichen wird. Gute Pfaffen Dörfer haben es selten so gut, wie ein Pfaffe bei seinem Herrn, non kann er oft mit ein Sammler gleich behandelt wird. Die Zahl der Schwärzen ist hier sehr groß; man sieht den ganzen Tag viele derselben zu Pferde, mit großen Schritten unter dem Hime, im lauten Schall von Trommeln, um die Aufmerksamkeit ihrer Herren zu ziehen, um die Befehle zu befolgen. Dies triebt ober fährt, ist der Weg auch noch so fern. Ein guter Glaube wird oft mit 1000 Schaltern begabli.

Die Jünglingen befinden hier in 1 Dollar

we had rather a bad wind and very often we sailed quite close to the English shore. On Oct. 21 we entered the Atlantic Ocean. From here on our voyage became rather monotonous. Until West India we met only three ships, a Spanish one that lost her right course and that was shown the right way by our Captain, a North American ship that lay alongside our's and the American Captain had a long talk with our Captain, and an English battleship. On November 21 we reached West India (Indies) and the next day St. Domingo (Haiti) which coast was surrounded by high mountains.

On November 23 we saw Cuba as we passed it closely. Here we were becalmed and forced to stay at the same spot for three days. At the same time it was so hot that we scarcely could bear it below the deck. Finally our voyage went on and we were much delighted to spot land. We believed that it was Galveston. A thick peaasoup fog spread down so we could not make out anything. The Captain had to drop anchor. At-

ter two days the sky cleared up and we saw St. Louis, the west end of the Isle of Galveston.

Now our voyage went on quickly and on December 7 Galveston was in front of us. Until Dec. 12 we had to wait for the pilot, finally he came. We sailed towards the port where we were caught by a sandbank shortly afterwards. Fortunately the weather was calm and with the help of some Galveston sailors we got loose after some trouble at night and a short time later we entered harbor. Two years ago the English ship VICTORIA sank on the same sandbank; all the passengers were rescued, but all the freight and baggage were lost.

Galveston was so overcrowded by immigrants that the "Verein" did not know where to accommodate us. Until December 23 we had to stay on board. On this day we could leave thanks to providence and our brave Captain. He was worthy of consideration as there is a great difference between ship captains. Most of them are brutal and rough and I could name some ships the captains of which bear a bad reputation. Among all ships of the "Verein" the JOHANN DEINHARDT is above all praise respecting food and treatment of the German immigrants. The captain helped untriflingly all sick passengers with his ship's dispensary. So it happened that nobody died on our ship whilst on our convoy ship, EBERHARDT, five persons died.

In Galveston we were all accommodated in a storehouse where you could not stand it despite your best intentions. In two small departments 137 persons were pressed with bag and baggage. You hardly could stand, not to mention how to lie down. So I and some others packed our things and moved out again. I got a lodging at a German restaurantkeeper's until I had rented quarters. The nice fellow did not want any money for food and accommodation. At the time being I am still in the first rented lodging where we are very well accommodated.

But in the storehouses of the "Verein" they have to lead a life than many cannot bear. Insufficient shelter against frequent rain and the icy northwind cause yellow fever and dysentery and he who is able looks out for a better lodging at his own expense.

There are now some 3000 immigrants here and in Indian Point (now Indianola), the next town on the coast, nearly there are about 2000 lying under tents. How the "Verein" thinks to support such a mass of people until they are able to help themselves puzzles me. Many of us worry about our support in the first year.

From here the immigrants will be taken, by turns, to Labaca (Lavaca) Bay by little ships and have to remain in Indianola until everybody

gets his turn of transport.

From 80 to 100 covered wagons with 700 to 800 persons start at one time to the colony. Those who have to be left behind have to wait until the wagons return, and it generally takes six to eight weeks on one way of 45 German miles. These slow transports caused great loss to the colonist who had to spend the money whilst they were waiting for the wagons. If we had started immediately after our arrival we would already have been at the place of our destination. It seems the "Verein" has made more promises than they can keep despite their best intentions. But they had not reckoned with such a mass of immigrants. 8000 Germans and 10,000 Americans, as well as other nations, demand a lot of their livelihood.

We cannot reckon on a harvest this year. The sowing must be done in February, but instead of that we are wasting our time in idleness. Sixty men were intended to go ahead to the new colony of Fredericksburg as ploughmen. I, too, had been registered. But on the point of going they told us that we had to leave our families behind, and each of us had to pay for his food himself. So we all declined.

Prices for food have increased considerably and if it goes on in this way, the "Verein" will fall on evil times as they have to supply the immigrants with food until they get to the colony. Where we shall get it then only the Lord knows. Here we have ample food. Daily I receive four pounds of fresh meat and some additional food. Bread we have to buy ourselves as we have to take care of wood, ligh, etc. All these things are rather expensive.

For about four weeks the foreman of Baron Iwansky (Spitzgarben) lived with us. He ordered his brother to go ahead to New Braunfels. Last summer he settled there with 500 acres. This gentleman gave us exact information of the situation in this part of the country. That part of land purchased by the "Verein" belongs to the most fertile and nearly all kinds of European fruit grow very well there. The land, a "pasture in waves," can easily be cultivated and all plants and fruit grow of themselves. A diligent family are in a position to secure their living free from care. For idlers, nevertheless, there will not be any favorable conditions, and Spitzgarben assured us that "no other sickness has spread more among the colonists than the fever of idleness and brandy."

As long as the German farmer has still something to the "Verein's" credit, he demands and demands and scarcely his money he tears his hair and insults the "Verein." That is generally the reason that most of the settlers in the colony of New Braunfels are hostile towards the "Ver-

ein" for the latter neither can nor will accept their shameless claims. Ingratitude is the way of the world!

But there are also honorable exceptions. I have met colonists who succeeded in life and who talk of their fatherland with great love. These people have always encouraged us that we would be successful, too, if we will be diligent and persevering.

The foreman Spitzgarben, a former Prussian Lieutenant of the Hussars, was so kind to let me know about the letter he had written to his family members. He advised his brothers to come over still this year as there would not be any better land in the world than Texas, but that one could surely foresee that immigrants who would only arrive in the course of next year or later would have to pay a lot of money for the land they would now get without payment. "He who waits until everything has been put straight, will be late."

The hardships of a long journey and voyage will pass away quickly. We do not think any longer of those hardship sand our whole family has completely recovered from the trip. I myself feel all the better for the journey. The land trip which we are now going to start, we shall undertake in fine weather. Winter soon will be over and spring is the finest season here during the whole year. Our town of destination is Fredericksburg, a region that is said leaves nothing to be desired with respect to loveliness and fertility, but has not been cultivated yet and is situated about 65 German miles from Galveston.

Please warn all immigrants of the silly idea to take domestics or laborers on their own cost to Texas. A servant and a maidservant who I hired in Germany have long since been off and away.

And don't bring goods instead of cash money to Texas. You can't sell them here except for a loss, because all things abound here—tools of all kinds are of a quality and perfection we don't find them in Germany.

Everybody should provide himself in Germany with clothing and shoes, especially men should buy durable leather trousers and boots which you urgently need here. Actually, you should bring all things with you which you need for farm work. A good German plough is equivalent to a dozen American ploughs which are no good. A saddle costs \$25 to \$30 and nearly all leather goods are so expensive you are hardly able to pay for them.

Among craftsmen, first of all, cabinet makers find work and earn a lot of money. Among the immigrants are about 40 who work in Galveston, cartwrights, blacksmiths, saddlers, carpenters and tanners. He who has the money to establish a brick

works, distillery or brewery, can work up to a rich man within a couple of years, but he would do well to bring all iron and copper containers and pots with him from Europe.

Nobody should be discouraged about the danger of a voyage. We experienced two big storms in the West Indies, but our ship, was a good one and even when everything was at sixes and sevens, we joked up to HIM and trusted in HIM who always had guided us and showed us the right path.

There is no reason to fear the Comanche Indians. A man of determination who never voluntarily exposes himself to a danger need not be afraid of them. The colonists live with them in good neighborhood and the Indians fear them more than vice versa.

Galveston where we are now staying is situated closely to the ocean and only a few feet above sea level. The houses are built of light, cut logs and timbered with boards, even the roofs have wooden tiles (shingles). All houses have been erected on 2 to 3 feet high pates for it often happens that the storm drives the floods to the middle of the isle as it was the case only last week. Each house is a store, and nearly everybody lives on trade. Everywhere you find stocks of goods in abundance which are not inferior to those in modern Europe.

There are a great many restaurants and saloons, but what you do not find here is a social and comfortable life as you do in Germany. All people come, go, and make a lot of noise, without taking care of their neighbors. Courteous compliments and hat-lifting are unknown. Everybody puts himself on a par with his fellowmen and demands the same respect.

The Americans are very polite and obliging people. I have a lot of proof so that I cannot praise them highly enough. Even of the low class of negroes and mulattoes I have to say this. You may believe that their fate by far is not so bad as it is said in our country. European servants scarcely have so good a time as a negro spends with his master who treats him very often like a family member. There are a lot of negroes here, the whole day you see them riding on horseback, carrying baskets under their arms and galloping through the town to do the shopping for their master. All people ride on horseback or on carts and wagons, even if they have only to cover a short distance. A good slave often is paid for with 1000 Thaler.

In the roads you see by day and night horses, pigs and dogs rambling; scarcely will you find any stables. The whole isle serves as pasture for the herds of cattle, intended to be slaughtered. Without fattening they slaughter them, generally 40 to 50 oxen per week. For ten cents you can buy four pounds of meat which has a slight taste of game.

All things are very expensive here and have fixed prices. The Americans don't like to bargain. In small restaurants a supper costs a quarter of a dollar, in big restaurants a half dollar; a bottle of beer 10 to 20 cents. Wine is of good quality, a bottle of "hock" (Rhine Wine) costs 10 cents, brandy is also expensive and very strong.

Tobacco is cheap, one pound 10 cents, cigars are rather expensive. American's seldom smoke tobacco, they prefer chewing tobacco. As sober as most Americans are at home, in the saloons they become drunkards. There are a great many saloons here.

For five cents you get a well-prepared breakfast or supper. Soup Americans do not like. Potatoes and meat are their favorite dishes. Meat mostly is served undressed with each meal. The waiter is very bad for there is not any other than rainwater. The Americans here mix it with brandy. Very often I have been longing for a good glass of German beer or water. Instead of beer I drank tea every evening and am quite okay with it.

Galveston was built up only ten years ago. Before this time the whole isle was waste and void. Now the town has 400 to 500 houses and about 5600 inhabitants and is constantly increasing in number. Just now they are building 40 more houses and the work lasts the whole year through. There is a big fame and go. About 25 to 30 ships are always berthed in the harbor. Four steam-boats regularly go to Houston New Orleans, and other towns during a week. The ship traffic is increasing. Last year they counted 31 immigrant ships. Unfortunately there is still one missing that put to sea from Bremen at the beginning of November. Up to now they have not received any message. (Klotzbach's note: probably this was the Mahant which was wrecked by a severe storm on the English coast.)

The weather is very mild. If there is no northwind, it is as warm as in summer in Germany, but as soon as the sun sets it becomes cold. Torrents of rain we have gotten now and they are very much appreciated for a barrel of water costs from 75c to \$1 in summer. In the gardens roses are in bloom, lettuce and radishes are to be had in a fresh state during the entire winter, but vegetables are rather expensive. For 10c you can only get as many potatoes as you need for salad. Oranges and bitter oranges (was the referent to lemons?) are abundant and my children get them as a present very often. Police or authorities you don't see here, but that the police don't sleep we have experienced very often. Short work is made of criminals and the delinquents will be punished on the spot.

At last I will tell you of our own matters. Up to now

we have not—thank God—fallen ill. We like Texas very much although I have no work to do. I went to much trouble to find a job as a bookbinder. Last week I was offered one, but I was paid so poorly that I have lost all liking to continue my profession. All merchants deal in bound books of all kinds. Therefore I can hardly earn anything. Among this mass of immigrants it is very difficult to find a job at all. The daily wages have been reduced by this circumstance and many of us can't get work despite their best intentions.

With less than \$100 a family cannot undertake the trip from Galveston to the colony on their own cost. This week finally we shall get our turn, but probably have to stay still some time in Indianola. Fortunately now you can bear it under the tents. I have bought a tent for \$4.50, a corn mill which is very necessary for \$6, and a corn pot for \$1.50. Prices for draught animals have increased enormously. One pair of draught oxen cost \$40 to \$60, while mustang horses are to be had for \$6 to \$10.

For many colonists it will be impossible during the first years to buy draught animals provided they undertake a long trip to get them. He who can afford it, may bring a light cart with him. They will charge you \$100 for a bad cart here.

At the beginning of this year Texas has been admitted into the United States of North America. All immigrants who arrived here before 1st January, 1846, immediately got their citizenship. So did I. Those who arrive later will receive their citizenship only after five years.

I must not omit the following remark: immigrants should not believe that they would need only enough money to get to Bremen and not for the further journey. This is a great error. A family need at least \$100 until they arrive at the colony. The long stay in the seaports, the buying of all the necessary things you don't think of at home and the long trip by wagon train requires a lot of money so that not much will be left.

He who has little children has to be prepared for many hardships. In the same way it is not advisable for old people to emigrate provided they have grown children who can work for them.

Girls keen on marrying go off like wild-fire, provided they have not yet been "decorated by some gray hair."

As to the seasickness I remained immune. I wonder if I now will get instead of seasickness the so-called "American sickness," a severe fever after which the entire skins seem to peel. But I feel as merry as a grig (a gay, lively person), and far better in the New than in the Old World and up to now I have not regretted to have sought after a new Fatherland. Very soon one becomes accustomed to new habits.

Our hope is the consoling star that shines ahead on our way through Texas.  
Sincerely,  
Karl Koehler.