



# Rise of Industrial America, 1876-1900

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## Immigration to the United States, 1851-1900

### German Immigrants in Texas

*Excerpts from three oral interviews appear below. German immigrants in Texas are among the topics covered in each interview. According to these interviews, what reasons did Germans have for settling in Texas? What experiences did German immigrants have in Texas? How do German immigrants in Texas contrast with other immigrants you know about in other places in the United States?*

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#### Mrs. Lucinda Permien Holze

"I was born in the year 1857 in Mechlenburg Germany. My father, Ludwig Permien, emigrated to America in the year 1871. He settled at the town of Fredericksburg, Texas. When he was located he sent for my folks in the year 1873. By this time he had become a naturalized American citizen. The war between the states was over and the worst of the reconstruction days were past. But there were still some Indians in the western part of the state where we came.

"The country was mostly a stock and ranch country, but in between the hills there was timber and so they raised their grain in these valleys. When they took their stock and produce to the markets they went to San Antonio, Austin and Brownsville. There was lots of Mexicans near our town and the German settlers employed them to clear the brush from the land they put in cultivation and to help herd the cattle. There were a very few slaves at this time in Gillespie. The settlers lived in log cabins and the schools and churches also were the log houses. . . .

"In 1884 my husband brought his family to the German settlement near what is now Perry, Texas. We owned a little store and he was post--master at a little place called Stamps. It was at this place that we had our experience with robbers, one afternoon as we were ready to close the store, two men rode up on horse-back, came in and asked for tobacco. As my husband turned to get it, they drew a gun on him and told him to give them all the money he had.

"At the same time the other one turned to me and told me that if I made a noise that he would shoot me, then he turned to help the man who held the gun on my husband, rob the cash drawer and safe. When he did this I ran to a neighbor's and gave the alarm, but when the neighbor got there they had the money and were gone. We never did recover of our money or find the robbers.

"I will not attempt to give you the story of the German settlement at Perry, but there was a young man from Germany by the name of Von Holwegg who was among the colony that Mr Schlimbach brought over. This young Holwegg accumulated a large amount of property and made Mr Otto Rau his overseer. Mr Rau also was one of the first ones to come over from Germany with this colony. My son Louis married his daughter and after Mr Rau died he took charge of this property and is the agent yet. . . .

"Yes; I can give you a little of the history of the early days of some of the German communities in Texas before the Civil War came, as handed down to the descendants of those who were among the first settlers. It is said that in the spring of 1846 the first train for Fredericksburg, consisting of twenty wagons and some two-wheel Mexican carts, left the town of New Braunfels for the new settlement on the Pedernales. There were about 120 men, women and children in this train, accompanied by eight of the soldiers furnished by the "Society for the Protection of German Immigrants in Texas."

"After a trip lasting sixteen days they arrived at the future town of Fredericksburg. It is worthy of note that the meat for the first meal to them in this new location was bear meat. John Schmidt, one of the military soldiers shot a bear on the banks of the Pedernales river. . . .

"It is a matter of record that the first school in Fredericksburg was organized by the "Society for the Protection of German Immigrants in Texas. John Leyendecker held the school in the church building. When the first city school was organized in 1856 August Siemerling was chosen as the teacher. By 1860 there were ten schools in the settlement around Fredericksburg and an enrollment of 260 pupils. In 1860 the number of white people in the country was around twenty-seven hundred, thirty-three slaves and thirty-eight people in business."

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#### Mr. George Ogden

"After becoming tired of the ranch life I went to work for the Star mail route which handled the mail for Texas, New Mexico, Utah and Colorado. My route was in Texas where I helped to harvest the wild grass and to put the hay up at the stage stops which was kept to feed [te?] horses which was driven to the old Concordia stage. These coaches [di?] not have springs but the bodies of the coach were hung to the running gear by leather straps of several ply's thickness, and for that day and time these coaches were great luxury with their railing which ran around the top for the baggage, with the drivers seat on top. There was always a detail of two soldiers who rode with the driver for his protection against robbers and Indians. The coach was pulled by from four to six horses and always driven in a lope. Many a silent monument to these old stage lines are written in the blood of those brave stage drivers and their passengers, for even in this late day at the dawn of the railroads the stage robbery was a common occurrence.

"In this work of stocking the stations with feed-stuff, my work began at Fredericksburg and we worked in the direction of El Paso. This took as thro' Loyal Valley, Fort Mason, Kickapoo Springs, Concho and Fort Stockton. In harvesting this hay we were supplied with ten regular soldiers for guards who kept a watch for robbers or Indians while we worked. We bought some wheat from some Germans at Loyal Valley to place at the stage stops, as the wild grass had died out from a drouth. In many places there were from 16 to 20 men working and we used [sme?] grammar grass, this grass was very hard to cut so we used hoes instead of the sickles and mower's. There were many Indian mounds in this section.

"We had some trouble with the Indians here. They would hide in the brush and chase those who went into the town, among them was a young man who out-ran them, but the men in the saloons made fun of him, and called him a coward, this resulted in a shooting and the young man who has escaped from the Indian's was killed. I saw this man killed.

"While we were putting this wheat up for the stage stops, there were German families here and they too, were putting theirs up. While they were working they kept their guns lying close by to be ready for the Indians as they were very bad that summer making raids on the settlements. About two weeks later while we were at Kickapoo Spring we met a band of Indians, but saw them in the time to form a corral in a circle around our stock. The Indians circled around this corral of wagons, but as they found no opening they galloped away. After trying to find an opening several times. When we reached Kickapoo Springs we camped in the stone house with the corral around it. . . .

"When the International and Great Northern railroad came thro' this section and passed thro' our community they named it Otto, after one of the pioneer German emigrants . . . . To the east of Otto was what was known as the Mettina settlement. This was where Von Molwegg bought 3200 acres of land and settled German immigrants on it, selling it to them on time. He made a number of trips back and forth to the old country and would bring some with him on each trip, among them was his body guard in Germany to whom he gave a nice tract of land in this settlement."

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#### Charles L. Weibush

"Not all the German immigrants who came to Texas during the thirties remained in Houston and Galveston, their first stop. Some went into the interior and laid the basis for a number of German settlements in Austin, Fayette, and Colorado counties. From these settlements in turn other settlements were founded in the forties and fifties in the counties just named as well as in Victoria, De Witt, and Washington counties.

"My father was one of the immigrants who settled in Washington County in the fifties, to be exact, it was the spring of 1855. He lived at this place a few years and learned to speak the American language. After this he secured a job as stage driver. For several years he drove the stage from Washington to Waco. This took him over the road in Falls county known as the Waco, Marlin road. . . .

"When we moved here in 1879, all the land east of the H T C. railroad was range land, Bill and Green Barnes had large cattle herds and Titsworth and Corning had large sheep ranches. On what was then known as the black prairie near by there were only two German families who came in 1878. This was east of the present town of Perry.

"A small number of German families were living in the timber land west of the town of Perry on what was known as the post oak country. They all settled on what was known as Big Sandy Creek, in the Brazos bottom. In those early days it did not rain on the prairie like it did in the bottom. The names of the settlers that were here when we came are as follows. (That is, their last names). . . .

"In the fall of 1873 Fritz von Schlimbach moved here from Germany and bought his first tract of land and started what is known as the Schlimbach boom. He was a Methodist minister and preached in Waco from about 1884 or 5 too 1876 or 77. Then he and his family returned to Germany for a while. . . .

"When Mr Schlimbach came from Germany on his first trip, he brought about 25 people with him, they were mostly young men. After those young men had made enough money to send for them, they sent for their sweethearts and married them and this increased the number of families of his settlement. He started the land boom and it was raised from \$2.50 an acre to \$8.00 or \$10.00.

"In connection with the building of his house I might mention the fact that while it was being built he and his family stayed at the home of my parents. They had to stretch a few tents to make room for us all, and at the far end of our farm there was a rambling old house where the young men who came with Mr Schlimbach from Germany stayed while his house was being built. They slept and did their own cooking at this house.

"Soon after Mr Schlimbach finished building his house he started buying land and improving it together with all kinds of farming implements. Within the next few years [?] made a number of trips to Germany and on his return he always brought more people with him. But there were a few of the young men who became homesick and returned to Germany."

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