

A HISTORY OF COMAL COUNTY

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A HISTORY OF COMAL COUNTY

THESIS

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By

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. BACKGROUND FOR THE FOUNDING OF NEW BRAUNFELS . . .	1
II. PRINCE SOLMS PURCHASED THE COMAL TRACT	9
III. EARLY DAYS IN THE COLONY	13
IV. COMMUNITIES NEAR NEW BRAUNFELS	22
V. SCHOOLS	25
VI. THE NEWSPAPERS PUBLISHED IN COMAL COUNTY . . .	37
VII. COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE COUNTY AND WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD	44
VIII. CHURCHES	61
IX. INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTY	71
BIBLIOGRAPHY	81

CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND FOR THE FOUNDING OF NEW BRAUNFELS

Comal County, which derived its name from the beautiful Comal¹ River, was created by the first legislature of the State of Texas, March 24, 1846,² at which time the City of New Braunfels, its county seat, was also incorporated. It had formerly been a precinct of Bexar County with Georg Kirchner as County Commissioner, and Arnold Henckel as Justice of the Peace.³ The county court met in its first session, August 7, 1846, with Conrad Seabaugh as County Clerk, and M. A. Dooley as Chief Justice.⁴

The history of the county began in Mexico and Europe, for the area was included by the government of Mexico in the Bexar land district of Texas, and Texas was attached to the State of Coahuila. November 10, 1831, the government of Coahuila and Texas granted to Juan Martin de Veramendi, a citizen of San Antonio de Bexar, by deed of concession "two leagues of

¹The word Comal is from the Indian term Comalli. The Mexicans used it to designate a griddle of iron or copper on which tortillas were baked. The name was probably applied to the stream in 1721 by the Aguayo Expedition.

²H. P. N. Gammel, The Laws of Texas, Vol. 2, p. 1319.

³Hermann Seele, A Short Sketch of Comal County, Texas, p. 4. This pamphlet of eleven unnumbered pages was written by Mr. Seele in answer to inquiries about the town. It was printed in 1885 by the Neu Braunfelser Zeitung. Hereinafter referred to as A Short Sketch.

⁴Comal County Commissioners Court Minutes, Vol. A, p. 1. Hereinafter referred to as Minutes, with appropriate volume name.

land, more or less," and referred to the land thus granted as the Comal Tract.⁵ Byrd Lockhart, a surveyor, surveyed the tract and made a map of it in December, 1831.⁶ Juan Veramendi, certain that his claim had been established, left the tract for the Indians to use as a hunting ground.

In Europe, early in the nineteenth century the social,⁷ economic,⁸ and political⁹ discontent of the German people caused them to plan to colonize Texas. On April 20, 1842, at Biebrich on the Rhine, a group of German counts and princes met and organized a society¹⁰ to establish a colony in Texas. Prince Victor of Leiningen and Count Joseph of Boos-Waldeck were sent to Texas as representatives of the organization. Prince Leiningen accomplished nothing for the society, and Boos-Waldeck bought a league of land in Fayette County and established Nassau Farm.¹¹

When they returned to Germany, January, 1844, Boos-Waldeck reported to the association against large scale emigration to Texas, since it would require too large a financial outlay, and he severed his connection with the society when it accepted the suggestion of Prince Leiningen to embark on a large-scale emigration program. Some of the other members also dropped out of the society and reorganization became necessary.¹² On March 25,

⁵Comal County Deed Record, Vol. E, p. 114.

⁶Ibid., p. 119.

⁷Rudolph Biesele, The History of German Settlements in Texas, 1831-1861, pp. 1-3.

⁸Ibid., p. 7.

⁹Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 66.

¹¹Ibid., p. 67.

¹²Ibid., p. 68.

1844, the Society for the Protection of German Immigrants in Texas was formed to carry out the suggestion of Leiningen.¹³ Prince Carl of Solms Braunfels was appointed commissioner general by the society's committee of directors, April 20, 1844, and Alexander Bourgeois,¹⁴ a Frenchman, was appointed colonial director. Bourgeois, who had added d'Orvanne to his name, had held a land grant in Texas. He hoped to renew this grant and let the society colonize it.

Prince Solms and d'Orvanne landed at Galveston, July 1, 1844. They went to Houston and Nassau Farm to prepare for the colony that was to be established before the close of the year,¹⁵ but on August 28, 1844, d'Orvanne announced that he had been dismissed¹⁶ by the society, and on December 14, the society announced that it had nothing else to do with d'Orvanne, whose land grant had been forfeited.¹⁷

Meanwhile, on June 26, 1844, Henry Fisher, consul of Texas for Bremen, had associated himself with the Society for the Protection of German Immigrants in Texas.¹⁸ Fisher, with his companion, Burchard Miller, had received a land grant, between the Llano and Colorado Rivers, on June 7, 1842, from Sam Houston, President of the Republic of Texas. Fisher had received a renewal of the contract, September 1, 1843,¹⁹ and sold an interest in the Fisher and Miller colonization contract to the society.²⁰

¹³Ibidele, op. cit., p. 69. ¹⁴Ibid., p. 71.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 74.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 75.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 76.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 81.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 76-7.

²⁰Ibid., p. 82.

Prince Solms spent the summer and early fall getting acquainted with Texas. He learned that the Fisher grant was not suitable for colonization. August 26, 1844, he reported to the directors that he had met Colonel Hays, the surveyor, who had confirmed the belief that the Fisher grant was too far from the coast, and too inaccessible for the first colonists to settle there. Prince Solms also told the directors that he believed the grant was too far from the Rio Grande to develop trade with Mexico. He stated that the immigrants must settle farther south and urged that steps be taken to extend the grant southward.²¹

Prince Solms requested the directors to send him an assistant because distances in Texas were too great for one man to do an efficient job. He

²¹Original Berichte des Prinzen Carl zu Solms Braunfels Bezueglich der Gruendung von New Braunfels, Texas, 1844-1845, p. 47. The volume contains documents pertaining to the colonial administration of the Society for the Protection of German Immigrants in Texas. It was presented to the City of New Braunfels, November 2, 1908, by Mr. Wilhelm Seekatz, Sr., who, according to his granddaughter, Miss Suzanna Naegelin, had received it from friends in Braunfels, Germany, with whom he corresponded regularly. Mr. Seekatz was one of the first settlers of New Braunfels. The City of New Braunfels donated the volume to the Sophienburg Museum, when it was built.

The documents in the volume are transcripts, in German script, of records written by Dr. de Witt, by Henry F. Fisher, and Prince Carl of Solms Braunfels. The documents written by Prince Solms are divided into eleven separate reports: #I, dated June 15, 1844, at Nassau Farm; #II, written August 20, 1844, at San Antonio de Bexar; #III, dated August 26, 1844, at San Antonio de Bexar; #IV, September 20, 1844, at Nassau Farm; #V, written October 25, 1844, at Galveston; #VI, dated December 23, 1844, at Port Lavaca, #VII, written January 1, 1845, at Port Lavaca, with a postscript of January 5, 1845, in Camp at Agua Dulce; #VIII, dated February 8, 1845, and the postscript thereto, February 12, 1845, at Galveston; #IX, written March 5, 1845, in Camp on McCoy Creek; #X, dated March 27, 1845, in Camp on Comal Creek; #XI, April 30, 1845, at the Sophienburg.

Originally the documents had no page numbers. They now bear large, penciled numerals. The pagination, of references from these records, is based on the penciled numerals. Only the reports of Prince Solms will be used in this paper and will hereinafter be referred to as Solms, with appropriate pagination.

felt that neither the Americans nor the Mexicans could be trusted to carry out instructions, so he could not use them as assistants.²² He also asked that a capable man be sent over at an early date to relieve him for a few months. He would return to Germany to give a verbal report on conditions in Texas and to propose many changes in the general colonization program.²³

The most immediate problem was the delay of Henry Fisher, who finally arrived in Galveston, October 20, 1844, where Prince Solms was anxiously awaiting him. They discussed the supplies for the immigrants. Mr. Fisher had bought some goods in New York and New Orleans, but many necessities were not provided. It was decided that the additional supplies should be purchased in New Orleans through the Galveston firm, E. Kauffmann and Company, and delivered directly to Matagorda Bay.²⁴ Headquarters for Prince Solms should be at this bay, until he could reach a permanent location.²⁵

Since he still needed land for the first settlement, he explored the Guadalupe Valley in company with Henry Fisher. They met Major Hays,²⁶ who happened to be in the valley with some of his troops. Together they journeyed to the Fisher grant to determine the exact location thereof.²⁷ While on this trip, Prince Solms decided to take the immigrants to the interior by way of Victoria, Gonzales, and Seguin.

²²Solms, op. cit., p. 42. ²³Ibid., p. 69.

²⁴Ibid., p. 56. ²⁵Ibid., p. 58.

²⁶Prince Solms did not identify Major Hays in his report. In all probability he was speaking of John Coffin Hays, a slender young Tennessean, who had come to Texas in 1837, and who had become a member of the Texas Rangers. He held the rank of Major at the age of twenty-one.

²⁷Solms, op. cit., p. 57.

It was also on this trip that he learned of the wonderful place, rumored to consist of four leagues and located at the "fountains," on the way between San Antonio de Bexar and Austin. He was told that this land was good farm land, that it had cedar and oak forests, and power-producing water.²⁸ Prince Solms immediately determined to buy the land, if possible, but before he could proceed to San Antonio to learn more about the land, he had to return to the coast to provide a camp site for the immigrants, who would arrive in December.

November 22, 1844, upon arrival at Port Lavaca, he made plans to examine the entrance to Lavaca Bay, for he wished to find a suitable landing place for the immigrants. He wanted a place with good water and a short route to the interior.²⁹ When he found such a place, he called it Indian Point, which was later known as Indianola and Carlshafen, and he designated it as the place where the vessels should land. He planned to return to Galveston, where he expected to find the first immigrant ship.

Prince Solms made the trip to Galveston with Henry Fisher. Enroute they were caught in a heavy north storm and sailed four days and nights. They arrived in Galveston, December 2,³⁰ where Prince Solms visited Mr. D. H. Klerner, a Galveston business man, whom he had appointed agent for the society.³¹ He learned, to his surprise, that one of the immigrant ships had left Galveston for Matagorda Bay the night before. This displeased Solms. He believed he had instructed the agent to send the boats to Port

²⁸Solms, op. cit., p. 65. ²⁹Ibid., p. 62.

³⁰Ibid., p. 63. ³¹Ibid., p. 56.

Lavaca only upon specific instructions from himself. In order to fulfill his duties to the immigrants, Prince Solms took to the sea again the next day. He sailed on the American revenue cutter, Alert, but due to high seas, Captain Simpton ordered the boat to port. Prince Solms was forced to wait until December 9, to again attempt to reach the immigrants.³²

He arrived at Port Lavaca on the evening of December 11, 1844. He found the immigrants, who had arrived on the John Dethart, in camp two miles from the point of landing. The camp was sheltered by a small live oak forest, which furnished firewood, and a hundred yards distant a fresh water spring furnished an ample water supply.

The next day Prince Solms moved his headquarters to the camp site. He was pleased that the immigrants were well, but displeased with the camp site because he believed it too low. He searched for another camp site and on December 16, while visiting Indian Point again, decided to move the camp there. He reached an agreement for its use with the owner, a Mr. White,³³ and named the new port Carlshafen.³⁴ Here he built a depot and several houses for the society, and made plans to build way stations for ox teams. These stations were to be named Leiningen and Castell for members of the society and were to be located between the coast and the "fountains."³⁵

Religious services were conducted in camp by the protestant minister,³⁶

³²Solms, op. cit., p. 63.

³³Ibid., p. 64.

³⁴Ibid., p. 66.

³⁵Ibid., p. 67.

³⁶Ibid., p. 68.

the Reverend Louis C. Ervendberg. He had moved from Illinois to Houston, in 1839, and had there established a German Protestant Church,³⁷ and had now accepted an offer from Prince Solms to serve the colonists as spiritual leader. Under his direction Holy Communion was celebrated on Christmas Day. Mass was not celebrated in camp because Prince Solms had been unable to obtain the services of a priest, although he had forwarded funds for travel fare for Father Alexander, whom the Superior of the Redemptorists, Baltimore, Maryland, had recommended as leader for the colonists of the Roman Catholic faith.³⁸

Restlessness and dissatisfaction were evident in camp early in 1845. Prince Solms realized the need for land on which to settle permanently, therefore, he determined to move to the interior, without building way stations, and to buy the land at the "fountains," between San Antonio and Austin.³⁹

³⁷Hermann Seele, Die Cypresse und Gesammelte Schriften, p. 103. This 179-page book is a collection of stories Mr. Seele wrote at different times. It was published by the Neu Braunfelser Zeitung, in 1936, and is hereinafter referred to as Die Cypresse.

³⁸Solms, op. cit., p. 68. ³⁹Ibid., p. 65.

CHAPTER II

PRINCE SOLMS PURCHASED THE COMAL TRACT

Prince Solms arrived in San Antonio on March 10, 1845, and learned that the wonderful land at the "fountains" was the property of the heirs of Juan Martin de Veramendi, and that it was known as the Comal Tract.¹ He was soon in conference with Marcos A. Veramendi and Rafael C. Garza, the son and son-in-law of the deceased Juan Veramendi, about purchasing the land.²

On March 14, 1845, Prince Solms, as trustee of the Association for the Protection of German Emigrants in Texas,³ entered into an agreement with Rafael C. Garza and his wife, Maria Antonia Veramendi Garza, of the County of Bexar, in the Republic of Texas, for the purchase of Mrs. Garza's share of the Juan Veramendi lands. These lands were within the County of Bexar, on the southwestern waters of the Guadalupe River, and did not exceed one equal undivided fourth part of the two league Veramendi Tract.

It was agreed that the purchase price was to be one thousand one hundred eleven dollars, of which five hundred dollars was paid in cash by Prince

¹Original Berichte des Prinzen Carl zu Solms Braunfels Bezueglich der Gruendung von New Braunfels, Texas, 1844-1845, p. 91. Hereinafter referred to as Solms.

²Comal County Deed Record, Vol. E, p. 114. Hereinafter called Deed Record.

³Inaccurate translation for Verein zum Schutze deutscher Einwanderer in Texas. More commonly known as the Society for the Protection of German Immigrants in Texas.

Solms. The payment of the additional six hundred eleven dollars was conditional.⁴ Baron de Bastrop claimed that the Comal Tract was included in his land grant,⁵ and therefore, a law suit would be instituted to clear the Veramendi title, and if the suit terminated in favor of the Garzas, the heirs of Veramendi, then Prince Solms would pay the six hundred eleven dollars, plus the cost of counsel for the law suit,⁶ which finally terminated, April 25, 1879, in favor of the citizens of New Braunfels, when the United States Circuit Court rendered its decision.⁷

The portion of the land belonging to Jose Veramendi and Teresa Veramendi, minor heirs of Juan Veramendi, was also promised to Prince Solms, but not until May 8, 1845, was it transferred⁸ by order of the Probate Court of Bexar County for the consideration of eight hundred dollars.⁹ Since this portion of the land was also involved in the suit at law, Prince Solms had agreed to pay the fees of the counsellors, Devine and Anderson, attorneys of San Antonio, Texas.¹⁰

The land commenced at a point where the Nacogdoches road crossed the Guadalupe River, at a pile of rocks and ran up with the bends of the river 7510 varas,¹¹ thence out to prairie, South 53 degrees West 10700 varas to a stake, thence South 70 degrees West 3300 varas to a

⁴Deed Record, Vol. E, p. 114.

⁵Seele, Die Cypresse, pp. 97-8.

⁶Deed Record, Vol. E, p. 120.

⁷Seele, A Short Sketch, p. 7.

⁸Deed Record, Vol. E, p. 114.

⁹Ibid., p. 117.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 116.

¹¹The vara is an old Spanish land measure. It is equivalent to 33 1/3 inches.

stake and from thence in direct line South 27 degrees East 3500 varas to the road leading from San Antonio to Nacogdoches, where stake was placed and from thence with the general course and windings of the said road leading to Nacogdoches.¹²

The deed for the transaction was delivered for registration, May 9, 1845, at the County Clerk's Office, San Antonio, Texas, and duly recorded in Book C, Number 2, on pages 97, 98, 99, 100, and 101, Record of Deeds, County of Bexar, by Thomas H. O. S. Addicks, Clerk.¹³

Upon completion of the agreement with Marcos A. Veramendi and Rafael C. Garza, Prince Solms set out to view the land he had bought. He rode to Seguin, where on March 17,¹⁴ he was joined by D. Nicolaus Zink, who had been appointed engineer for the colony,¹⁵ and Jean von Coll, the bookkeeper for the emigrants,¹⁶ who were accompanied by thirteen members of the military company, which Prince Solms had organized, January 5, while in camp at Agua Dulce or Chocolate Creek,¹⁷ the place to which he had moved the immigrants from Carlshafen. Prince Solms and his party traveled six miles beyond Seguin, to some springs along the Guadalupe, where they pitched camp for the night. During the night, to the surprise of the group, a Texas norther blew in and continued to blow for more than a week.

The next day Prince Solms crossed the Guadalupe at the point where the military road from Nacogdoches to San Antonio crossed the stream. He found

¹²Deed Record, Vol. E, p. 117. ¹³Ibid., p. 118.

¹⁴Solms, op. cit., p. 91.

¹⁵Seele, Die Cypresse, p. 113.

¹⁶Solms, op. cit., p. 70.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 73.

that the Guadalupe had high banks and that the water rushed over the rocks in high waves. Immediately adjacent to the place of crossing, Prince Solms found the land he had purchased for the society and which later became the core of Comal County.¹⁸ It was a wilderness, and although he traveled along the stream for five miles in an attempt to reach the "fountains" or springs, he failed to find them.

On the morning of the nineteenth, two Americans, who had been bear hunting, came to the camp of Solms and took him to the springs without difficulty. He spent the rest of the day riding through the region to acquaint himself with the terrain. He found mountains with a wide plateau stretching behind them, and he saw signs of Indian encampments everywhere, but these did not make him unhappy, for he believed that as soon as old world culture would be brought into the region the Indian would stay away. He visualized the section, near the Comal Springs, as an industrial region, which would be developed immediately, and he believed that the noise of the mills would frighten the Indian so he would leave forever.

Prince Solms saw that the land he had bought was crossed by the Comal River, which had a fertile prairie on its right bank and an open space stretching to the dominant highland area. On the left bank of the Comal stretched a rich, forest covered bottom land, which extended toward the cedar, oak, and elm covered hills. These hills Prince Solms believed formed a backbone similar to the Black Forest of Germany.¹⁹

¹⁸Solms, op. cit., p. 91.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 92.

CHAPTER III

EARLY DAYS IN THE COLONY

The immigrant wagons traveled slowly but steadily inland. When they reached the east bank of the Guadalupe, the stream was swollen from recent rains, therefore, a camp site was found and the tents pitched for an encampment. By Good Friday, March 21, 1845, the flood waters had receded sufficiently to make passage to the west bank possible,¹ and George Ullrich, a German-Texan, skilfully drove the first immigrant wagon across the stream.² Prince Solms had supplied a pulley, and this, attached to the tongue of the wagon, served as a safety device.

Once across the stream, Ullrich, followed by other drivers, drove to a high cliff of the Comal Creek, where a new encampment was laid out and maintained until homes had been erected. This camp was called Zinkenburg,³ in honor of the engineer, and became a part of the city as soon as it was laid out. Shortly, pallisades were constructed on three sides of the camp for protection; the fourth side was deemed safe since it was a steep, high

¹Original Berichte des Prinzen Carl zu Solms Braunfels Bezueglich der Gruendung von New Braunfels, Texas, 1844-1845, p. 92. Hereinafter Solms.

²Neu Braunfelser Zeitung, Jan. 12, 1838, p. 3, c. 3. Hereinafter called Zeitung.

³Kalender-Jahrbuch der Neu Braunfelser Zeitung fuer 1924, p. 54. This book is one of a series of 64-page calendars published by the Zeitung. The thirty-sixth edition appeared in 1943, and because of paper shortages during World War II none have been issued since. Hereinafter referred to as Kalender 1924.

cliff. Before a week had passed, thirty-one immigrant wagons had arrived at Zinckenburg, and the other half of the immigrants were expected to arrive any day.⁴

While the colonists were encamped at Zinckenburg, some Lipan Indians, among them Chief Castro, came to visit Prince Solms and offered their friendship to the colonists. The Lipan Chief drank wine and ate German cookies, while Prince Solms smoked the peace pipe with his visitor. Later, when the colonists met these Indians or a hawk-eyed, black-headed Delaware tribesman in the forest, they waved a friendly hand and the Indian quickly disappeared;⁵ but to insure their safety the colonists organized a military company of riflemen and one of artillery. They kept a sentry on the alert at the entrance to Zinckenburg, both day and night. Fortunately, the Indians never attacked the settlement, although in October, 1845, two citizens of the community, Captain F. Wrede, and his companion, Oscar Claren, lost their lives to the Indians near Manchaca Springs, while they were enroute from Austin to New Braunfels.⁶

While the settlers arranged the stockade, Prince Solms continued to explore the countryside. He decided to locate the citadel on the dominant cliff of the area, and named this hill the Vereinsberg.⁷ It was southeast of the camp and had a profuse growth of elm trees. Prince Solms gave

⁴Solms, op. cit., p. 93.

⁵Kalender 1924, pp. 54-5.

⁶Seele, A Short Sketch, p. 4.

⁷Solms, op. cit., p. 92.

orders for the construction of the fort, and also directed Mr. Zink to survey the land immediately and lay out the town below the Vereinsberg.⁸ After the town had been laid out the citizens drew lots for the half-acre plots of ground that the society gave to each head of a family and to each young man over seventeen years of age. The area surrounding the town was laid out into ten acre farms for which the citizens also drew lots.⁹

New problems arose as soon as the lottery had been held. Some citizens were dissatisfied with the land they received because they expected the 320 acres per family and 160 acres per unmarried man, which had been promised them, if they settled on the Fisher grant. These sold their small holdings for a song and blamed Prince Solms for their hardships.¹⁰ Others believed they should find farms and manors awaiting them, without having to produce them out of the wilderness. Such individuals complained that they would have stayed in Europe, if they had realized they would have to work in America.¹¹ Those people who were willing to work were anxious to cut timber for their homes, for the cool, moist March weather made them desire more shelter than the tents provided;¹² yet Prince Solms was impatient to have the society buildings erected before construction of private dwellings began. The matter of clearing land for garden plots and fields was also essential. Many of the pioneers realized that food would be scarce the next winter, and if sweet potatoes and corn were not

⁸Solms, op. cit., p. 93.

⁹Ibid., p. 94.

¹⁰Kalender 1924, p. 55.

¹¹Ibid., p. 49.

¹²Solms, op. cit., p. 93.

planted before the season was too far advanced, they could not be harvested in the fall. In spite of the anxiety to start their homes and farms, the fort, which was merely a log cabin, was started. The cornerstone was laid with much pomp and ceremony, April 28, 1845, and Prince Solms named the fort, "Sophienburg," in honor of Lady Sophia, his sweetheart, and to the town he gave the name "New Braunfels," in commemoration of his native home, Braunfels, Germany.¹³

Prince Solms issued his last official report, April 30. He had learned that John O. Meusebach, the newly appointed commissioner general, who would replace him, had arrived in New Orleans and he expected him in New Braunfels shortly. He complained to the society that the magazine was so poorly constructed that it was only an inferior barracks with a leaky roof. The constant rains had spoiled four wagon loads of cornmeal that were stored in it. He also complained that the society would sustain great expense due to the inefficiency of the colonists. He reported that Meusebach's letter had been postmarked in New Orleans, April 6, therefore, he planned to leave the settlement, May 15, for Boston, Massachusetts, to take passage on June 15, for Europe.¹⁴

It is easy to understand that life in Texas had some unpleasantness for Prince Solms. First, some colonists were disappointed with the small land grants, second, a few scoundrels were in the group and caused much trouble, third, still others, particularly the better element, realized that Prince Solms wished to make the colony dependent on Germany. They

¹³Solms, op. cit., p. 94.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 95.

knew that he opposed annexation of Texas to the United States, whereas they cherished the opportunity to be free citizens of the United States. These citizens probably offended their leader, April 28, 1845, and thus hastened his departure from Texas. While Prince Solms raised the flag of Austria at the Sophienburg, the patriots raised the stars and stripes, on a flagpole, in the town below.¹⁵

With the arrival of John O. Meusebach, the morale of the settlers improved. Although the society failed to send enough supplies general conditions were better. Those citizens, who had sufficient funds, could always get plenty to eat at the restaurant of a Mrs. Holekamp or at that of "der dicken Madame," for there was plenty of game - venison, turkey, ducks, and snipe were always available to the good hunter. Those who had little money and failed to bag the game¹⁶ had more trouble to feed themselves. Yet they were able to catch fish in the Comal and Guadalupe, crab or crayfish in the Comal Creek, and a kind of clam in the Guadalupe. Water cress and "purslane" were available for salads, mustang grapes for preserves, jellies, and wine. Other wild fruits, such as, persimmons, plums, cherries, agaritas, and the pear or fruit of the cactus, could be used for preserves or eaten fresh. Naturally the immigrants had to get acquainted with these products before they could use them.¹⁷

The housing problem, like the food problem, was solved fairly early. The first log house in town was built by the Reverend L. C. Ervendberg,

¹⁵Kalender 1924, p. 56.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 49.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 50-1.

while the first farm house to be completed belonged to Adolph Wedemeyer,¹⁸ The immigrants who arrived in May, like Hermann Seele and his friend, Heinrich Herbst,¹⁹ and all those who arrived in July, were given town lots,²⁰ on which they built houses. By Christmas, some of the late arrivals and most of the original settlers had completed their homes and were enjoying the light and warmth of their own hearth.²¹

In 1846, there was retrogression as well as improvement in the colony, for the War with Mexico caused many of the immigrants, who arrived in the spring of the year, to be stranded at the coast for lack of transportation. While in the coast region, due to the poor housing, inadequate food and water supplies, they contracted diseases, which they brought with them to New Braunfels, where they became a burden to the old settlers. They caused the colony to look like a vast hospital, full of the sick and dying, and in a few instances caused original settlers to become ill. During these trying months, the society entirely discontinued rationing provisions, and some families suffered from lack of a balanced diet. It was not unusual for the town to have three burials per day.²²

However, by March, 1847, conditions had improved and the following citizens of Comal County, nine of them merchants or officers of the Verein,

¹⁸Seele, A Short Sketch, p. 4.

¹⁹Zeitung, May 22, 1895, p. 1, c. 6.

²⁰Seele, A Short Sketch, p. 4.

²¹Zeitung, May 22, 1895, p. 1, c. 6.

²²Seele, A Short Sketch, p. 5.

the rest government officials, artisans, and farmers, published a statement in the Galveston Weekly News to tell about the improved conditions:²³

Adolph Wedemeyer
 Christof Luentzel
 Max Luentzel
 August Forke
 Julius Kellner
 F. W. Specht
 Theodore Koester, M. D.
 Ludwig Mittendorf
 Julius Rennert
 F. H. Seele
 L. C. Ervendberg, clergyman²⁴
 Von Iwonski
 E. W. Thomae
 Arnold Count Henckel
 F. Dotter
 Henry Hesler
 J. L. Henne
 E. von Hartz
 John R. Wien
 Moses Campbell
 W. R. Weiss
 Isaac Scott
 W. Seekatz

(The family later dropped the final "e." This particular Mr. Seekatz secured the copies of Prince Solms's reports to the Society for the Protection of German Immigrants.)

K. W. Day
 Fried. Heidemeyer
 W. Remer, M.D.
 Felix A. V. Bluscher
 Theodore Sterzing
 E. Kriewiez v. Zypry
 O. H. Carstediek
 Ferdinand Lindheimer²⁵

They mentioned that their purpose in publishing a signed statement

²³Viktor Bracht, Texas in 1848, p. 92. The book was translated from the German by Charles Frank Schmidt, Professor of History, Blinn Memorial College, Brenham, Texas, copyright 1931, Naylor Printing Company, San Antonio, Texas.

²⁴Ibid., p. 94.

²⁵Ibid., p. 95.

was to give immigrants, who wished to join the New Braunfels settlement, a chance to carry out their plans.²⁶ They urged such immigrants not to remain in the lowlands of the state, where the climate was unsuitable for Europeans. They stressed that the prosperity of the community impressed one, when the fact, that the town had been in existence such a short time, was taken into consideration. The extension of streets and the replacement of the log huts by more durable and more comfortable homes were evidence of improvement. Many homes were surrounded by beautiful, well kept gardens. Numerous new houses were being built each month in town and on the farms adjacent to the town.

There was a demand for mechanics and artisans of all kinds. These were earning good salaries and many more than were available could find employment in the community, without impairing the chances of all for a comfortable living. New Braunfels offered provisions of all kinds for sale. They were of high quality and cheaper than in most other parts of America. Even the products that were transported from the coast to the interior were cheap as compared to the prices paid for articles of home production and the wage scale for artisans. The community had seven or eight stores that were owned by respectable merchants, therefore, scarcity of provisions, such as had occurred two years earlier, was not possible.

Health and sanitary conditions were favorable in the community.²⁷ Two experienced physicians and two pharmacists were available, and therefore, the sick could expect better medical attention than in any other

²⁶Bracht, Texas in 1848, pp. 92-3. ²⁷Ibid., p. 93.

Texas town of equal size. There were also several bakeries that furnished good bread and a brewery that furnished beer.

By 1847, the land values in the region had increased to two or three dollars per acre, and since the land was very fertile it was easily put under cultivation. More important than the fertility of the soil, was the location of the settlement on the road from Austin to San Antonio, which made New Braunfels a ready market for all kinds of produce, and a desirable place to live.

The subdivision of a league of land near New Braunfels, formerly the property of Albert C. Horton, Lieutenant-Governor of Texas, 1845-7, for homesites, was another sign of growth and prosperity. The best evidence to refute envious and distorted tales about the conditions of the colony was the fact that a considerable number of Americans and old Texans had recently settled in the neighborhood.²⁸

The fortunes of the community had increased, by 1850, to include a ferry across the Guadalupe, which could not be crossed without one during flood tide.²⁹ One was astounded that the town had neat shops of artisans, and many stores and homes, when the fact, that it was only five years old, was recalled.³⁰

²⁸Bracht, Texas in 1848, p. 94.

²⁹Jahrbuch der Neu Braunfelser Zeitung fuer 1936, p. 26. This is one of the series of 64-page booklets published by the Zeitung, but called Jahrbuch rather than Kalender or Kalender-Jahrbuch. The word Kalender was dropped in 1925 and all calendars, 1925-43, inclusive, if used as references in this paper will hereinafter be referred to as Jahrbuch with the appropriate date.

³⁰Ibid., p. 27.

CHAPTER IV

COMMUNITIES NEAR NEW BRAUNFELS

The settlement opened on the Horton League, 1846-7, became known as Hortontown,¹ in honor of the original owner. It extended along the east bank of the Guadalupe and soon became a prosperous community, however, at the time it was being settled the land was a part of Guadalupe County rather than Comal County. Like the pioneers in New Braunfels, the Hortontowners believed in culture and soon erected a frame church, and a school-house of limestone blocks.

As time passed the citizens of Hortontown became aware of their distance from Seguin, the county seat of Guadalupe County, and the difficulties they encountered when called for jury service. They also realized their nearness to New Braunfels and the trade advantages open to them there, so they called a meeting, November, 1855, in which Mr. J. Voelcker, one of their group, was chosen to carry a petition to Austin to request annexation to Comal County.²

This wish was granted in 1858, when the legislature of Texas transferred Hortontown and Neighborsville, also a Guadalupe County settlement near New Braunfels, to Comal County, and took part of the northern portion of Comal County to create Blanco County. New Braunfels citizens

¹Hermann Seele, A Short Sketch, p. 6.

²Zeitung, Nov. 23, 1855, p. 2, c. 4.

³Jahrbuch 1939, p. 64.

Shortly before settlers moved into the Hortontown community, others had moved west of town up the valley of Comal Creek, and those who were just arriving from Europe purchased lots on the east bank of the Comal River, where Rafael C. Garza laid out Comal Town.⁴ At approximately the same time farms were being laid out at Waco Springs, and at Mission Valley,⁵ with the Spiess, Wetzel, Krueger, Groos, Lohl, and Meine families settling at the former, and the families of L. Kessler, J. Brecher, H. Dietz, Bremer, Kappmeyer, Foerster, Walzem, Boehm, Mueller, Startz, and Kendall starting ranches at the latter.

In Danville, at the eight mile creek, such families as the Schuette, Grothaus, Riefkohl, and Klaus opened farms, while a few miles away J. H. Bremer, and the Schaefer, Hierholzer, Wenzel, and Jonas families established themselves. In 1849, the merchants, Ferguson and Kessler, arranged a farm at Marienthal, and soon thereafter Pault moved to Jacobsthal. Along the upper waters of the Cibolo Creek farms were being settled by Schulmeier, Pieper, Voges, Rompel, Vogel, and Wehe brothers, Foerster, and Koch; while in 1847, Sisterdale was started by N. Zirk and the Holekamp family. By 1850, it extended its boundary lines to include the farms of Behr, Degener, Dr. Kapp, Carstange, Rhodius, Dr. Runge, Kuechler Nenperts and others.

After the C. Bremer family settled at Buffalo Spring in 1848, some other settlers moved up along the west bank of the Guadalupe. Among these settlers were the Kunz, Tausch, Alsens, and Kleinhans families, while still further up the river the families of Smith, Calhoun, Artzt, Bose,

⁴Seele, A Short Sketch, p. 5.

⁵Ibid., p. 6.

Coers, and Heffter settled.

B. Smithson was the first settler in Smithson's Valley, but he was soon joined by H. Busch, C. Kuehn, Groenecke, Gass, Spangenberg, Loeffler, Hillert, Seegers, and C. Ohlrich; while the Demijohn Bend became the home of the Pantermuehl and C. Baetge families. At a still greater distance from New Braunfels, along the west bank of the Guadalupe lived Elmendorf, Gabriel Remmler, Scherz, and Esser. At Honey Creek, Hans von Specht settled on the west bank, while James Henderson and Jowers settled on the east bank about 1850; and the first German to move to Spring Branch in 1852, was Diedrich Knibbe. Later he was joined by C. Kriegner, V. Horne, and Peter Imhof, and nearer to the new road to Fredericksburg, the L. Willke family settled. The road was of great interest to the Comal County citizens since it had been laid out by the county before the north portion of the county was cut off to make Blanco⁶ and Kendall Counties.

Before Blanco and Kendall Counties were created, settlements had been started on the Little Blanco and Curry's Creek, where Judge W. C. Jones established himself, and at Rebecca Creek, where C. Elbel lived on the east bank of the creek and Sattler, Fischer, and Engel on the west bank.⁷

⁶Zeitung, Apr. 4, 1886, p. 4, c. 2. ⁷Ibid., p. 4, c. 3.

CHAPTER V

SCHOOLS

The pioneers believed in education and wasted no time in organizing a school for their children. In less than five months after their arrival at New Braunfels, they opened the first German-English school west of the Colorado. They engaged Mr. Hermann Seele, a local citizen, as teacher. He opened the school soon after six o'clock in the morning, August 11, 1845. On his way to the school grounds, he stopped at the home of Pastor Ervendberg to discuss the plans for the morning, because the school was sponsored by the German Protestant Church, and classes were conducted under the same grove of trees that the services of the church were held on Sundays.

When Mr. Seele arrived at the school grounds, he was greeted by the fifteen children who were to be the pupils.¹ After greeting the children, he started classes. He was pleased with their ability and attentiveness. He instructed them enthusiastically in arithmetic, reading, and observation or perception. In the reading class the pupils used whatever German readers they had brought from the old country, and Webster's spelling book for their English reading. The arithmetic class consisted mostly of mental arithmetic because only a few slates had withstood the ocean journey and the trip inland. The children, who were fortunate enough to have a slate, made crayons from blue clay, which they cut from the cliffs along the Comal

¹Hermann Seele, Die Cypresse, p. 56.

and Guadalupe Rivers. A heavy plank laid across piles, which were driven into the ground, served the older pupils as desk to write at or as a bench to sit on, as the occasion presented itself.

At eight o'clock, or after the children had been in school two hours, they enjoyed a recess. They tumbled on the grass or played "hide and go-seek." They satisfied their hardy appetites by eating fresh cornbread with cold beefsteak and as a titbit, they gathered some of the fruit from nearby trees - the little red cheeked cherries, and the yellow mealy Mexican berries.

After recess classes were resumed. The surrounding countryside offered subject matter for the class in observation. When the sun got high in the sky, the pupils and teacher moved to a shadier spot and sat in a circle in the grass to continue the lessons.² The hours passed hurriedly and the class in observation closed with a poem, which was in one of the readers, and which the children memorized quickly:

O wie herrlich, o wie schoen
Ist es in die Schule gehn!

At ten o'clock the children were dismissed for the day. The teacher walked with them toward the pastor's home to leave his report, and then hurried home to cook his noon meal.

The school days that followed were sometimes interrupted by the arrival of wagon trains from the coast with food and other necessities. When these articles were rationed to the citizens, school dismissed for the day so the children could go to the commissary to get the rations their parents were

²Seele, Die Cypresse, p. 58.

entitled to. The teacher, who was a young bachelor, also had to get his provisions³ because his salary for teaching consisted partly of tuition, fifty cents per pupil per month and paid by the patrons, and partly of rations from the society. The latter were equivalent to eight dollars per month.⁴

More exciting than the interruptions caused by the arrival of the wagon trains, were those occasioned by the calves suckling the cows in the pasture, after several families were able to have milch cows. When this happened the children were permitted to leave school to drive the calves home and pen them.⁵ This disturbance came to an end with the completion of the church for the school was then moved into the building.

The commissioners court agreed, February 20, 1849, to have the four leagues of school land, that the county was entitled to, surveyed.⁶ After many delays, Andrew Bell Burlison, a surveyor from Travis County, was engaged in May, 1852,⁷ to survey three and one-half leagues of land, with water and timber, and one-half league within the county.⁸ By September, 1853, the necessary patents for the land were obtained.⁹

As the county school land was being acquired, the citizens of New Braunfels began to discuss the possibility of securing a progressive city school. On February 17, 1853, at the city council meeting a committee

³Seele, Die Cypresse, p. 58. ⁴Ibid., p. 56.

⁵Ibid., pp. 58-9.

⁶Comal County Commissioners Court Minutes, Vol. A, p. 51. Hereinafter called Minutes.

⁷Ibid., p. 165.

⁸Ibid., p. 168.

⁹Ibid., p. 246.

was selected to draw up a plan for a school and present it at the next city council meeting. This committee consisted of Conrad Seabaugh, Julius Eggeling, and J. W. Ferguson, all members of the council. A plan was presented to the council at its next meeting but action was deferred until April 4, when in regular city council meeting the proposed plan was revised and adopted. Five citizens were chosen by secret ballot to serve as trustees.

The school plan was handed to Mr. Ervendberg, a trustee, for further revision.¹⁰ All members of the board were present at the first session, May 9, 1853. Mr. F. Moureau served as secretary, and L. C. Ervendberg, presided. The revised constitution was read and adopted.¹¹ Since it was believed one hundred dollars per year would be furnished by the state treasury, it was agreed to charge a monthly tuition of twenty-five to fifty cents per pupil. A committee was appointed to find out how much money could be raised by private subscription.¹²

When the board met again, July 11, 1853, it found that it could expect to have seven hundred ninety-seven dollars and fifty cents available for the school year and planned to engage two teachers. The applicants for the teaching positions were required to pass examinations given by the board of education;¹³ and accordingly, Mr. Heinrich Guenther and Mr. Adolf

¹⁰Jahrbuch 1943, p. 48.

¹¹Zeitung, May 13, 1853, p. 2, c. 2.

¹²Ibid., May 20, 1853, p. 2, c. 2.

¹³Ibid., July 22, 1853, p. 1, c. 6.

Schlameus were certified to teach the upper and the lower grades respectively. School opened October 3. Each teacher had to subdivide his group because more than sixty children of different ages registered for classes. The weekly schedule announced for the lower grades in both German and English was:

- 9 hours reading and writing
- 6 hours arithmetic
- 2 hours nature study
- 4 hours geography and history
- 1 hour story telling
- 1 hour grammar
- 2 hours singing

For the higher grades the schedule included:

- 4 hours grammar
- 2 hours practice in composition or theme writing
- 2 hours reading and translation
- 5 hours English
- 3 hours arithmetic
- 2 hours art
- 2 hours singing¹⁴

By December the schools were well organized. The citizens were elated because Comal County received two hundred ninety dollars from the state, and with the subscriptions from the city government and private citizens, this gave them over eight hundred dollars to conduct the school. They also rejoiced that four years hence the State of Texas would probably have the best school fund in the union.¹⁵

The thoughtful citizens believed it would be possible to interest other families to come to live in the community, if New Braunfels had good

¹⁴Zeitung, Sept. 23, 1853, p. 2, c. 3.

¹⁵Ibid., Dec. 16, 1853, p. 2, c. 6.

schools. They also believed that a good school would provide culture that would be a blessing to the growth and development of the United States.¹⁶ The desirability of having a German teacher for the lower grades was discussed. Since the young children did not understand the English language, it was decided to hire a German teacher for them, but to hire an English teacher for the older pupils. The reason for this was that individuals of German descent rarely pronounce and enunciate English correctly, and since English is the mother tongue of the United States, it was deemed essential to have the children taught that language by the best teacher that could be provided.¹⁷

A county board of school commissioners was organized, March 25, 1854, under an act of the legislature of Texas, entitled "An Act to Establish a System of Schools." This board divided the county into four school districts.

District One - The corporation limits of New Braunfels, with the exception of the part of the city lying above and north of the Comal Springs.

District Two - Comal Town, Smithson's Valley, the Waco Springs settlement, and all settlements adjacent to the county road from Comal Town to Smithson's Valley.

District Three - The Vogel settlement, from the county line and southwest limits to the corporation and thence to Cibolo, thence to the old Fredericksburg road, to the corporation limits of New Braunfels. It was to include all settlements between the lines and limits.

District Four - All the remaining part of the county.¹⁸

At the May meeting of the school commissioners, C. B. Patton, chairman of a committee from District Four, presented a report of a meeting

¹⁶Zeitung, Dec. 16, 1853, p. 3, c. 1.

¹⁷Ibid., Mar. 24, 1854, p. 2, c. 6.

¹⁸Minutes, Vol. B, p. 2.

held within the district, which requested that District Four be subdivided. The request was granted and hence the districts were to be known as Four, Five, Six,¹⁹ Seven, and Eight, and the Chief Justice was ordered to call elections for school trustees in each of these districts.

The board of trustees agreed to keep the city school, which had grown rapidly, open twelve months of the year.²⁰ It decided that Mr. Church, one of the teachers, should teach all the English classes. Adolf Schlameus, another teacher, should conduct the reading classes in the two lower grades. He should also teach arithmetic, geography, and history in all grades. The third teacher, Mr. Z. U. Holtz, should teach German penmanship and German reading in the higher grades, and grammar, nature study, singing and art in all the grades. All pupils were to report for the new term, January 2, 1855, at nine o'clock in the morning, to the German Protestant Church, where the classes would again be conducted.²¹

In October, 1855, it was decided that the children should have two months vacation during the year. The two months were to be divided into short vacations of several days and given at different seasons of the year. It was further agreed that each child must pay tuition for each month that the school was in progress, even though the child attended only one or two weeks of a month.²²

The New Braunfels School continued to progress in 1856. The state

¹⁹Minutes, Vol. B, p. 7.

²⁰Zeitung, Dec. 1, 1854, p. 2, c. 1.

²¹Ibid., Dec. 29, 1854, p. 3, c. 5.

²²Ibid., Oct. 12, 1855, p. 3, c. 4.

had passed a law, February 4, which permitted the trustees of each school district to hold an election to tax the patrons a specific sum for school purposes.²³ The court granted the requests of New Braunfels and District Two to assess a tax for school purposes and ordered the tax assessor-collector to collect the tax for the nine months beginning, April 1, 1856, and ending, December 31, 1856.²⁴ The best evidence of progress was the New Braunfels Academy, the first school building of the community, which was dedicated under the direction of J. A. Stashely, one of the trustees, on April 1, 1856.²⁵ In July the trustees announced that no additional pupils could be enrolled in the New Braunfels Academy until, October 1, because the classes were too large.²⁶ The crowded condition lead to the construction of a rock addition, 22' x 44', on the north side of the original building.²⁷

Meanwhile, changes were being made in the school districts within the county. The Waco Springs community and the Smithson's Valley settlers petitioned the commissioners court to be separated from District Two, and to be permitted to set up their own school precincts. These petitions were granted. The new school precincts, District Nine and District Ten, were organized.²⁸

²³Zeitung, Feb. 22, 1856, p. 2, c. 6.

²⁴Minutes, Vol. B, pp. 174-5.

²⁵Zeitung, Apr. 11, 1856, p. 3, c. 2.

²⁶Ibid., Jul. 4, 1856, p. 3, c. 4.

²⁷Ibid., Oct. 31, 1856, p. 4, c. 1.

²⁸Minutes, Vol. B, p. 227.

On February 5, 1858, the legislature of Texas incorporated the New Braunfels Academy for twenty years,²⁹ and March 6, 1879, it renewed the law.³⁰ After the school was incorporated, the commissioners court appointed three school examiners. George W. Kendall,³¹ Hermann Seele, and Ferdinand Lindheimer. On August 17, they appeared in court and took the oath of office as school examiners.³²

By November, 1861, seven school districts in the county had an enrollment of 575 pupils and these were divided in the following manner:

The New Braunfels Academy	311
Comal Creek (Ferdinand Nehls, teacher)	73
Hortontown (J. A. Kypfer, teacher)	61
Cibolo (A. Schlameus, teacher)	29
Comal Town (J. Mergel, teacher)	50
Waco Springs (W. Henk, teacher)	31
Guadalupe Settlement (J. Bose, teacher)	20 ³³

An interesting feature of the Academy was the school examination, as conducted publicly, March 28, and 29, 1867.³⁴ The examinations for the fourth and fifth grades, the two youngest groups of children because grade names were the reverse of the later system, consisted of tests in arithmetic, oral reading in both the English and German language, in speaking English, and singing. The examinations for the third grade included translation from the English language into the German. The second grade was tested in arithmetic, in reading English and German, in translation, in German grammar, and in nature study; while the first grade was tested in mathematics, espe-

²⁹Jahrbuch 1943, p. 58.

³⁰Ibid., p. 57.

³¹Minutes, Vol. C, p. 45.

³²Ibid., p. 63.

³³Ibid., p. 250

³⁴Zeitung, Mar. 15, 1867, p. 3, c. 3.

cially cube root and algebra, in English reading and translation, in geography, in grammar, in physics, and in history in both the English and the German language. On these days, exhibits of calligraphy and drawing were artistically arranged along the walls of the classrooms. On Saturday morning, March 30, the pupils of the three upper grades rendered a program of declamations and songs.³⁵

A mass meeting was called by the trustees of the New Braunfels Academy, June 22, 1873, to discuss the problem brought about by the new school law.³⁶ The law had been passed by the thirteenth legislature and had closed all public free schools, June 1, by withholding funds. The local citizens decided to again conduct the Academy as they had before the public free school was organized by the state.³⁷ The pupils registered on Monday, June 30, and classes started, July 1, with five teachers in charge. The same textbooks were used that had been used in the public free school. Tuition for the pupils was one dollar and twenty-five cents per month for the three advanced groups and one dollar per month for the two lower groups.³⁸

The children were never burdened with the problems of the school. The parents encouraged them to be happy and carefree, and arranged special entertainment for them. Early in the history of New Braunfels, the school sponsored a masquerade during Shrove Tide and a picnic later in the year.³⁹ The masquerade has survived for more than a hundred years but has been

³⁵Zeitung, Apr. 5, 1867, p. 3, c. 2.

³⁶Ibid., Jun. 20, 1873, p. 2, c. 6.

³⁷Ibid., Jun. 27, 1873, p. 2, c. 2.

³⁸Ibid., p. 3, c. 1.

³⁹Ibid., Apr. 3, 1868, p. 3, c. 2.

changed in many respects to make it similar to a May fete, and the picnic has been discontinued as an affair for the whole school and has become an event for special groups, such as, a class or a club.⁴⁰

The citizens of Comal County not only believed in education for their own children but were interested in schools for all children. When Callahan County desired to organize schools, Comal County, which owned school land within Callahan County, resolved through its commissioners court "to give and grant unto the County Judge of Callahan County and his successors in office, for public free school purposes four acres of land...known as part of Survey No. 181."⁴¹ Again, in 1894, when Coleman County petitioned the commissioners court to sell a certain parcel of land to that county for school purposes the court granted the petition. It ordered the land sold for one dollar per acre and authorized the County Judge to execute a deed to said land to the County Judge of Coleman County and his successors in office, for public free school purposes.⁴²

The New Braunfels Schools continued to grow, so in 1884, the Academy was renovated and enlarged.⁴³ A two room brick building was added as a high school and a frame building was rented for school purposes, until a bond election in 1913,⁴⁴ made it possible to erect a new school building. Unfortunately the new building was placed on the site of the old Academy and made it necessary to tear down this historic building.⁴⁵

⁴⁰Facts known to the writer as a citizen of New Braunfels.

⁴¹Minutes, Vol. F, p. 296.

⁴²Ibid., Vol. G, p. 602.

⁴³Seele, A Short Sketch, p. 7.

⁴⁴Minutes of the Board of Trustees, New Braunfels Independent School District, Book A, p. 83.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 147.

Ten years later the citizens of Comal Town or Ward Five petitioned the board of trustees to build a ward school for the elementary grades, because the school was too crowded again.⁴⁶ No definite steps were taken until June, 1924, when an election ordered the board of trustees to issue bonds⁴⁷ to finance a building program. Two ward schools and a cottage for home economics classes were constructed during the spring and summer of 1925,⁴⁸ but when classes moved into them in the fall there were still more children than classrooms. Soon additions were constructed at each ward school, and in 1935, a gymnasium was built on the high school campus, and a new school was built for the Latin-American children. These buildings were constructed with free labor under the Civil Work Administrator.⁴⁹

World War II crowded the schools to overflowing. In New Braunfels new buildings and additions to older buildings will be constructed to better care for the increased enrollment. In the rural districts, consolidation of schools and bus transportation are steps toward improving the educational facilities in those areas.

⁴⁶Minutes of the Board of Trustees, New Braunfels Independent School District, Book B, p. 174.

⁴⁷Ibid., Book D, p. 28.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 56 and 72.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 232.

CHAPTER VI

THE NEWSPAPERS PUBLISHED IN COMAL COUNTY

The Neu Braunfelsler Zeitung, the oldest German language paper published in the state, was issued for the first time November 12, 1852. Plans for a newspaper had been discussed as early as 1851, when Georg Dietz, who was assistant editor of the Neu Yorker Staatszeitung, was visiting in Fredericksburg, Texas. It was believed he would be willing to accept the position of editor for the newspaper, but when this did not materialize, Mr. Lackmann, citizen of San Antonio, moved to New Braunfels, to assume the editorship, however, he died before the Zeitung could be organized.

Early in 1852, a mass meeting was called for the purpose of organizing a stock company to publish a weekly paper. Three citizens of New Braunfels, A. Rossy, Pastor Ervendberg, and Ferdinand J. Lindheimer, applied for the editorship,¹ to which Mr. Lindheimer,² was unanimously elected. The money to purchase a printing press and other materials was raised by subscription and each subscriber received a receipt which served as a share or shares in the company. In July, 1853, a Mr. George M. von Ross, whose identity is not known, was listed as co-editor and owner,³

¹Zeitung, Dec. 15, 1932, p. 17, c. 1. (This was the eightieth anniversary edition and larger than the regular issues.)

²Ferdinand J. Lindheimer had been born at Frankfort-on-the-Main, May 30, 1801, and had come to Texas in the eighteen thirties after having lived in Mexico. There he had raised pineapples and bananas. He served in the War of Independence and later studied botany. In 1844, he joined the Germans under Prince Solms and came with them to New Braunfels, where he married one of the immigrants, and served the community in many ways.

³Zeitung, Dec. 15, 1932, p. 17, c. 1.

but on December 1, 1853, he severed all connection with the paper.⁴ Mr. Lindheimer then bought all outstanding shares and became sole owner of the enterprise.⁵

The Zeitung filled a need not only in Comal County, but also in Gillespie and Medina Counties, where many German-Americans resided. It devoted itself to printing local news items, political news of world interest, and it particularly tried to serve the farm interests by bringing information about plants and soils, so this knowledge might bring economic stability to all western colonists.⁶ Its editor believed the first duty of any newspaper was to report the news frankly and truthfully to the reading public, and, if in so doing, some readers felt that their toes were being stepped on, the publication were probably serving the best public interests. The editor pointed out that the real duty of German immigrants in Texas was to build culture, first, among themselves, and secondly, among their Anglo-American neighbors, by establishing schools, libraries, and newspapers, and by learning to master the arts and to think or reason. Since the German-Americans were slow to take the lead in community enterprise, the Zeitung challenged its subscribers to become aggressive by inviting them to send comments and letters to the newspaper.⁷

Mr. Lindheimer had a proficient helper in the Swedish writer Karl Jonas Ludvig Almquist, who later gained fame as an author, and whose works

⁴Zeitung, Dec. 2, 1853, p. 4, c. 2.

⁵Ibid., Nov. 23, 1877, p. 2, c. 2.

⁶Ibid., Nov. 12, 1852, p. 1, c. 1.

⁷Ibid., Nov. 12, 1852, p. 3, c. 2.

have been translated into the other major languages of Europe. In New Braunfels he was known by the assumed name Gustavi. Early in the twentieth century the University of Stockholm sent professor Dr. J. Gustafson Berg to America to retrace the footsteps of Almquist and especially to investigate his connection with the New Braunfelser Zeitung.⁸

From 1852 until August 16, 1872,⁹ Mr. Lindheimer worked diligently to produce a weekly paper,¹⁰ and that he never failed is almost a miracle, because he was not a printer and had to depend on help to carry out the technicality of printing. He was fortunate to secure the services of Mr. Hermann Schulz, one of the co-owners of the Freie Presse in San Antonio, who finally moved to New Braunfels and thus gave the Zeitung a permanent and an excellent typesetter. This was a great advantage for the continuation of the paper, since German printers were rare in Texas. Furthermore, during the Civil War, when help and paper were difficult to get, Mr. Lindheimer, with the help of his sons, courageously carried on, although the newspaper was reduced to a one sheet issue of small size. It came out in peculiar dress, depending on the paper available; sometimes white tissue paper, necessarily printed on one side only; sometimes green, gray, or yellow in color, and the texture of the paper, thick and rough, like wall-paper rather than regular newsprint, and usually printed on both sides of the sheet. Lindheimer's strong adherence to the Confederacy made him some

⁸Zeitung, Dec. 15, 1932, p. 17, c. 1.

⁹Ibid., Nov. 23, 1877, p. 2, c. 2.

¹⁰Ibid., Nov. 16, 1877, p. 3, c. 2.

personal enemies, but it certainly helped the town and county to go unmolested,¹¹ and his influence may have led other citizens to serve the Confederacy, for in proportion to population Comal County had more volunteers in the service than any other county in the state.¹²

Mr. Anselm Eiband, local citizen, bought the paper in 1872, and continued as editor and owner until his death,¹³ in 1884.¹⁴ He was alert, witty, and very outspoken, and had a keen sense of humor. He was an excellent printer, and never wrote his articles to have them set, but rather set them as he composed them.¹⁵ His local news items, as well as the editorials, had a zest and color that made them more interesting than fiction. His heirs sold the Zeitung, in March 1886, to Mr. Ernst Koebig, who had been business manager and editor since Mr. Eiband's illness and death,¹⁶ and who continued to publish as excellent a newspaper as his predecessors had.

In addition to the regular Thursday edition of the paper, Mr. Koebig published a Sunday edition or Sonntagsblatt der Neu Braunfelser Zeitung with the subtitle: Nachrichten entlang der Guadalupe, which contained mainly news from Hays and Guadalupe Counties.¹⁷ Mr. Koebig was briefly

¹¹Zeitung, Nov. 23, 1877, p. 2, c. 2.

¹²Jahrbuch 1925, p. 49.

¹³Zeitung, Dec. 15, 1932, p. 18, c. 1.

¹⁴Mr. Eiband's tombstone shows the death date: September 21, 1884.

¹⁵Zeitung, Dec. 15, 1932, p. 18, c. 1.

¹⁶Ibid., Mar. 4, 1886, p. 5, c. 1. ¹⁷Ibid., Apr. 23, 1886, p. 1.

followed by Julius Halm and A. G. Startz, local citizens, as owners and editors. Later Ludolph Lafrentz, who was editor of the Deutschtexanischen Monatshefte, was editor.

In the eighteen nineties, the paper was published by the Neu Braunfels Zeitung Publishing Company, which consisted of Captain Julius Giesecke, business manager, who had come to New Braunfels from Washington County, and of McEver Church, printer, and Eugen Kailer, editor. This company produced a paper similar to that which had been the accepted standard of the community.

A constant co-worker to all the early editors was Mr. Hermann Seele, a man of sterling character and surprisingly many accomplishments. He contributed much to the wholesome development of the colony at New Braunfels. Although he was a talented writer and had very definite ideas, he shunned newspaper controversies and always tried to compromise when differences of opinion were voiced. The results of his efforts were a tolerance and cooperation for the best interests of the community, and their influence lasted throughout many years.

In 1899, Mr. Church sold his interest in the business to Captain Giesecke, and Eugen Kailer sold to Mr. G. F. Oheim,¹⁸ while Mr. Benjamin

¹⁸George Frederick Oheim was born, May 7, 1865, in Munich, Germany. At the age of fourteen he came to Texas with an older brother and settled at Harrisburg. He worked as a cowboy and later as foreman in a brass foundry. He told the owner how to improve the foundry according to an article in a German Encyclopedia. The owner remodeled. Shortly thereafter, a new hand decided to use a strong acid solution instead of the usual diluted strength. The hot fumes killed him and injured Mr. Oheim's lungs. When Oheim was able to travel he went to Comal County and accepted a position as teacher in the Honey Creek School, near Anhalt. Four years later he taught the Watson School near New Braunfels. Then he bought an interest in the Zeitung and spent the rest of his life as a publisher.

F. Nebergall, a local citizen, who had worked in the printing office from early youth, also bought an interest in the business. Co-operation and harmony seemed to be the slogan of the new organization, and their teamwork produced a newspaper of highest quality and a business that was a credit to the community.¹⁹

Mr. Giesecke later sold his interest in the business to the two younger men, who continued in the newspaper business until death. They sponsored the eightieth anniversary edition of the paper in December 1932. In it Mr. Oheim wrote that both partners were looking forward to the day when they would send the centennial edition to the press,²⁰ but this wish was not to materialize, for Mr. Oheim died, June 5, 1947, and Mr. Nebergall approximately a year later,²¹ yet the Neu Braunfelser Zeitung continues to be issued as a high class newspaper with Mr. Frederic Oheim, son of G. F. Oheim, as editor.²²

The New Braunfels Herald, an English language newspaper, has been issued at New Braunfels since 1895, when it was founded by T. E. Whitley and Sons, of Austin, Texas. Unfortunately, the early editions of the paper were not preserved and it is impossible to give its history or information about its journalistic style.²³ Early in the twentieth century,

¹⁹Zeitung, Dec. 15, 1932, p. 32, c. 2.

²⁰Ibid., c. 3.

²¹Facts known to the writer through association with the Oheim and Nebergall families.

²²Zeitung, Aug. 10, 1950, p. 5, c. 1.

²³Verbal information from Mr. Charles W. Scruggs, editor of the New Braunfels Herald.

Mr. A. O. Coers, owned and edited the Herald, but in 1914, he sold it to Mr. F. Tausch and Albert Ludwig, local citizens, although Mr. Coers continued as editor and business manager.²⁴ Later Mr. Tausch edited the paper for a number of years before D. O. Bell and Son (Edgar) bought it and served as editor and business manager. In 1929, Mr. Charles W. Scruggs, of San Antonio, Texas, came to New Braunfels to manage and edit the paper, which he bought in March, 1930, and continues to own and edit.²⁵

²⁴Zeitung, Apr. 2, 1914, p. 5, c. 1.

²⁵New Braunfels Herald, Mar. 7, 1930, p. 1.

CHAPTER VII
COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE COUNTY AND
WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD

The immigrants realized immediately that they were practically cut-off from the outside world, for only the road to Seguin, over which they had come to New Braunfels, and the military highway from San Antonio to Nacogdoches linked them with civilization. These, by comparison with roads as they had known them in Europe, were only trails. The pioneers were also aware that ferries and bridges were needed and hoped to build them as soon as roads could be laid out. That these problems were gigantic they appreciated fully, and faced them with fortitude and courage.

In laying out New Braunfels, engineer Zink named the two main streets San Antonio and Seguin, and each led to the road which connected New Braunfels with the town for which it was named. In 1848, the county commissioners court divided the roads into two groups, first class and second class. The first class roads were, the old Nacogdoches road, crossing the Guadalupe near Seele's house, and beginning at the east end of Seguin Street; the road to Seguin and Victoria; the road to San Antonio; the road starting at John Torrey's mill and crossing the Guadalupe above Crawford's farm; and the new road to Fredericksburg; while the second class roads were divided into six road precincts with a roadmaster for each.¹

¹Comal County Commissioners Court Minutes, Vol. A, p. 33. Hereinafter called Minutes.

Each year several rural roads were developed,² and in 1854, a new road to San Antonio was surveyed by F. Grothaus of Danville.³ Two years later, Mr. Lindheimer offered to print the new road law in the Zeitung in the German language and let the commissioners court have one hundred copies of the paper for three dollars and fifty cents, so the roadoverseers, who were not well versed in the English language, could read the law in German. The court accepted the offer and instructed the county clerk to get the hundred copies and to distribute them to the roadoverseers.⁴ The road precincts were revised again in 1860. The City of New Braunfels received jurisdiction over the precincts within the city limits.⁵

Increase in population and the opening of new agricultural communities created a need for more roads. February 16, 1887, the court divided the county into thirty road precincts and named these overseers:

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Fritz Harms | 16. George Fischer |
| 2. Carl Krueger | 17. Heinrich Kraft, Jr. |
| 3. August Wismann | 18. Joseph Halm |
| 4. Theodor Schwab | 19. William Hoffmann |
| 5. Conrad Wenzel | 20. Gustav Dauer |
| 6. Peter Hubertus | 21. I. H. Bose |
| 7. Adolph Jonas | 22. Heinrich Kruse |
| 8. Alex Schwab | 23. August Schulze, Jr. |
| 9. George Heitkamp | 24. Heinrich Warnecke |
| 10. Gustav Bielstein | 25. Fritz Trappe |
| 11. Fritz Kunkel | 26. Oscar Baetge |
| 12. Friederich Heidrich | 27. Otto Pantermuehl |
| 13. Theo. Bose | 28. Carl Scheel |
| 14. August Kruckemeyer | 29. John Schaefer, Jr. |
| 15. Wilhelm Specht | 30. Iwan Wallhoefer ⁶ |

²Minutes, Vol. A, p. 59.

³Ibid., Vol. B, p. 80.

⁴Ibid., p. 226.

⁵Ibid., Vol. C, p. 168.

⁶Ibid., Vol. F, p. 638.

Road and bridge construction required money, therefore, in 1903, the commissioners court availed itself of the opportunity to issue road and bridge bonds under an act of the twenty-eighth legislature,⁷ and continues to use similar measures to finance construction of roads and bridges. In 1912, the court widened Watson Lane,⁸ Timmermann Lane and Wuest Lane⁹ to accommodate automobile traffic.

The State of Texas was also road conscious, and in 1914, constructed the Austin-San Antonio Post Road, a forerunner of Highway 81. Comal County contributed its share, \$39,000.00, in county funds and an additional donation from the citizens, which was deposited in the New Braunfels State Bank, and used when the county funds were exhausted.¹⁰ January 27, 1915, the court accepted the bid of A. M. Clopton, road contractor, to build the Comal County portion of the road.¹¹ After the United States Senior Highway Engineer had issued a statement that all specifications had been met, the court accepted the road, February 28, 1916, and ordered that the contractor be paid.¹²

Heavy traffic between Austin and San Antonio called for constant repair work.¹³ The highway department soon realized that a wider and straighter road were needed to accommodate the traffic with a certain measure of safety. Many minor changes and improvements were made, but not until 1934 was the new concrete highway bridge across the Guadalupe at

⁷Minutes, Vol. I, p. 252.

⁸Ibid., Vol. K, p. 444.

⁹Ibid., p. 568.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 614.

¹¹Ibid., Vol. L, p. 54.

¹²Ibid., p. 209.

¹³Ibid., p. 455.

New Braunfels constructed and the entire highway re-built. Heavy traffic during World War II made constant repair work necessary and while New Braunfels, at its one hundredth birthday anniversary, was linked to neighbors north and south by this super road, the citizens realized that road construction would have to continue indefinitely.

The northern part of the county also needed roads. In May 1921, the road originally designated as the Blanco-Smithson's Valley road, became a part of State Highway 46. The county engaged Joe Caldwell, an engineer, and under his supervision constructed its portion of the road.¹⁴ Reinhard Bremer and Alvin Weber, freeholders, who lived near Blanco, petitioned the court to change the road for the convenience of themselves and the public.¹⁵ The court appointed five citizens, Ed. J. Kuebel, W. H. Adams, Gus. Kretzmeier, Ernst Herbst, and Henry Bender, as a Jury of View, to lay out and describe any change of road, and to make a report of its findings to the court at the next term.¹⁶ This report was reviewed by the court, March 13, and approved. The court ordered that damages be paid Ben R. Smithson, over whose property part of the road would be laid and classified the road as first class. The overseer of the precinct opened and worked the road,¹⁷ and the court visited Ben R. Smithson and obtained his consent to erect a fence across his land, as outlined by the Jury of View.¹⁸

Since funds to complete the highway were insufficient, the court decided to go before the highway commission and agree upon plans to raise

¹⁴Minutes, Vol. M, p. 276.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 347.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 348.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 365.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 369.

funds.¹⁹ After terms were arranged, construction continued with some changes in the plans and specifications, such as the re-location from the intersection on Landa Street and west to the city limits of New Braunfels to a point 1.4 miles west to Klappenbach Hill.²⁰ In 1934, the road was connected with Highway 66 at a point 1.5 miles northwest of New Braunfels, and Comal County and Bexar County jointly built the highway at Bulverde as specified by the State Highway Engineer.²¹

The second class roads were not neglected because of highway construction. A new road connecting Marienthal with the New Braunfels-Fischer Store road was surveyed by Alfred R. Rothe, county surveyor. The commissioners court approved it and ordered it opened and worked by the roadoverseer of precinct three.²² The Sattler or River Road was changed from a third class road to a second class road and opened and worked.²³

Meanwhile, the citizens of New Braunfels were aware of the dust in their streets during hot, dry, summer days and of the mud and slush during the rainy season. They resolved to tarviate San Antonio and Seguin streets and the area around the Main Plaza.²⁴ The program was extended to neighboring areas until all the streets in the business section were paved and most of the streets in the residential section. In 1939, asphalt was put on 16,000 square yards of hard surfaced road at Waco Springs,²⁵ and many county roads have since been similarly treated.

¹⁹Minutes, Vol. M, p. 476.

²⁰Ibid., Vol. N, p. 492.

²¹Ibid., Vol. O, p. 197.

²²Ibid., Vol. N, p. 49.

²³Ibid., p. 91.

²⁴Ibid., Vol. L, p. 380.

²⁵Ibid., Vol. P, p. 211.

The ferries have been discontinued in the county, although they were once an important means for crossing a river. The settlers, who had found it necessary to camp on the east bank of the Guadalupe until its flood waters receded sufficiently to make passage possible, insisted on building a ferry at the mouth of the Comal. When Hortontown, the settlement on the east bank of the Guadalupe developed, their hopes were realized. The commissioners court issued a license, at eight dollars per year, to Justus Kellner, on November 20, 1848, to operate a ferry and specified that charges for ferrying should be:

1 wagon and team	\$1.00
1 man and horse (out of county)	0.20
1 man and horse (in county)	0.10
cattle and horses (per head)	0.10
sheep, goats, hogs (per head)	0.05 ²⁶

In July 1849, James Lamson, a carpenter, was instructed to build a ferryboat, forty-four feet long, and twelve feet wide. The boat was to be of cypress and oak, and when delivered the court would pay two hundred thirty dollars for it.²⁷ It was placed at the mouth of the Comal or at the old ferry place.²⁸ To the 1848 list of charges for ferrying were added:

1 empty wagon, buggy, or carriage	\$0.75
1 footman	0.10
1 extra yolk of oxen or span of horses	0.10 ²⁹

The next year the rates for the night ferriage were set at double the day rates.³⁰ The license tax was increased to twenty-five dollars per

²⁶Minutes, Vol. A, p. 41.

²⁷Ibid., p. 63.

²⁸Ibid., p. 71.

²⁹Ibid., p. 73.

³⁰Ibid., p. 100.

annum and issued to the estate of Justus Kellner in 1853, but Carl Bardenwerper actually operated the ferry and furnished a surety bond of \$1,000.00.³¹

The increase in population by 1858-9, made two ferries desirable. One, at the usual ferry place or the mouth of the Comal; the other, about a mile north of New Braunfels between the premises of Friederich Kretzmeier, a farmer of Hortontown, and land belonging to Gentry and Seabaugh, on the west bank of the Guadalupe.³² The ferry at the Comal was to be operated by Carl Floege instead of Bardenwerper. The county improved the road when a review of the contract with Justus Kellner revealed that the road was a public county road.³³ The second ferry was operated by Mr. Kretzmeier, after he had filed the required bond.³⁴

Two years later, another citizen, Louis Brumme, became the operator of the ferry at the Comal and the license tax was reduced to five dollars per year for each ferry operator. Ferry rates remained the same until 1863. Then the ferry operators were required to place a sign, bearing ferry rates, where all passengers crossing the ferry could read it.³⁶

1 loaded wagon or other vehicle of 4 or 5 yokes of oxen	\$1.25 ³⁷
1 loaded wagon with 3 yokes of oxen	1.00
1 loaded wagon with 2 yokes of oxen	.75
1 loaded wagon with 1 yoke of oxen	.50
1 empty wagon with 1 yoke of oxen	.30
1 empty wagon with 2 yokes of oxen	.40
1 empty wagon with 3 yokes of oxen	.50
1 empty wagon with 4 or 5 yokes of oxen	.75

³¹Minutes, Vol. A, p. 234.

³²Ibid., Vol. C, p. 95.

³³Ibid., p. 88.

³⁴Ibid., p. 95.

³⁵Ibid., p. 196.

³⁶Ibid., p. 258.

³⁷Ibid., p. 257.

1 loaded wagon with 5 or 6 horses or mules	\$1.25
1 loaded wagon with 4 or 5 horses or mules	1.00
1 loaded wagon with 2 or 3 horses or mules	.75
1 loaded wagon with 1 horse	.50
1 wagon or ambulance loaded with passengers and drawn by 4 horses or mules	1.00
1 loaded wagon or carriage with passengers and drawn by 1 to 3 animals	.75
1 empty wagon or other vehicle drawn by 1 horse or mule	.25
1 empty wagon or other vehicle drawn by 2 or 3 animals	.40
1 empty wagon or other vehicle drawn by 4 to 6 animals	.75
1 horse and rider	.10
1 foot passenger	.05
horses, mules, cattle (per head)	.05
sheep, goats, hogs (per head)	.03 ³⁸

In 1870, the Kretzmeier ferry, as the ferry across the Guadalupe north of New Braunfels was known, was operated under the firm name, Brandt and Urban. Adolph Urban, member of the firm, was licensed by the commissioners court as operator.³⁹ The court granted permission to increase the toll charges 50% in case of high water, and stated that four feet above normal was considered high water.⁴⁰

Fritz Schulze, local farmer, took charge of the original ferry at the mouth of the Comal in 1871.⁴¹ Due to Schulze's failure to keep the ferry open, the court ordered, October 26, 1872, that Florence Kreuz, a citizen, have boats ready by February 1, 1873, to operate a ferry.⁴² Mr. Kreuz operated the ferry until July, 1877, when he petitioned the court to permit him to discontinue the ferry.⁴³

Shortly before Mr. Kreuz took over the Comal ferry, Samuel Mather and Otto Groos, residents of the county, petitioned the court to let them es-

³⁸Minutes, Vol. C, p. 258.

³⁹Ibid., Vol. D, p. 196.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 197.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 226.

⁴²Ibid., p. 299.

⁴³Ibid., Vol. E, p. 383.

tablish and furnish a ferry on the Guadalupe, a few hundred yards above the old Kretzmeier ferry. This petition was granted⁴⁴ and a license issued upon payment of the five dollar license fee.⁴⁵

Bridges were soon to take the place of ferries at the various crossings of the Guadalupe, and ferry roads became useless. Finally, in 1922, the court considered and granted a petition of Chas. Eweling, C. W. Welsch, Otto Luersen, Sr., Hugo Schumann, Otto Baetge, O. A. Gruene, Robert Linnartz, H. W. Kraft, and Ed. Preiss, to close up the ferry road, which was the only evidence left of the long discontinued ferry. Thus the once useful ferries became extinct.⁴⁶

The first bridge in the county was built across the Comal approximately where the Clemens dam was later erected, at the foot of Mill Street and leading from New Braunfels to Comal Town.⁴⁷ Action for the bridge started in the City Council of New Braunfels, May, 1853, and Mr. James Ferguson, member of the council, solicited the help of the commissioners court in the undertaking. The court postponed action until after the August election, which pertained to a special tax levy to build a county court house and jail.⁴⁸

While the city council was waiting for the decision of the court, there was much controversy about the location of the bridge, for L. Henne, a prominent merchant, and others, petitioned to have the bridge built at

⁴⁴Minutes, Vol. D, p. 292.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 294.

⁴⁶Ibid., Vol. M, p. 351.

⁴⁷Ibid., Vol. B, p. 78

⁴⁸Ibid., Vol. A, p. 225.

the foot of San Antonio Street,⁴⁹ where the new concrete bridge, built in 1923, is located. A canvass of the citizens for donations to finance the bridge indicated that more were pledging subscriptions for a bridge at the foot of Mill Street than at San Antonio Street.⁵⁰ The commissioners court approved the contract for the bridge, after it had been explained by Mr. Julius Eggeling, Mayor of New Braunfels.⁵¹ This contract called for \$1,485.00 worth of masonry by Mr. G. Gotthard, and \$1,765.00 worth of wood work by carpenter, H. G. Beringer.⁵² The court contributed six hundred dollars, in the form of three one hundred dollar orders on the county treasury, drawn January, 1855,⁵³ and three similar orders dated March 19, 1855, signed by W. A. Andross, Chief Justice of Comal County, and attested by C. Seabaugh, County Clerk.⁵⁴

The high water, during the summer of 1869, made the citizens realize that a higher bridge was needed across the river.⁵⁵ In October, 1871, the county court contributed to such a bridge,⁵⁶ but never profitted thereby. On the night of June 8 to 9, 1872, New Braunfels had a cloudburst, during

⁴⁹Minutes, Vol. B, p. 75.

⁵⁰Zeitung, Dec. 8, 1854, p. 2, c. 1.

⁵¹Minutes, Vol. B, p. 78.

⁵²Zeitung, Jan. 5, 1855, p. 2, c. 3.

⁵³Minutes, Vol. B, p. 79.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 91.

⁵⁵Adele Reszcynski, unpublished letter, dated July 26, 1869. This letter is part of a collection belonging to Mrs. Reszcynski's granddaughter, Mrs. A. H. Henderson.

⁵⁶Minutes, Vol. D, p. 230.

which a little over twelve inches of rain fell, and the bridge washed away. Torrey's mill, with its expensive dam, and several small buildings of the Landa Mills were also washed away, while Dr. Koester's mill suffered much damage.⁵⁷

Undaunted by this misfortune, the citizens went to work with new determination to bridge the stream. This time Mr. Carl Floege, contractor, constructed a bridge. When New Braunfels again experienced a thunderstorm, November 28, 1875, the citizens were concerned about the bridge. When Sunday morning dawned, the streets of the town looked like a sea and everything that had not been securely fastened was floating away. The Comal had risen fifteen feet by Sunday noon and an anxious crowd watched the racing flood, as it carried wood, fence posts, and large trees with it. As the people realized that the bridge was submerged six to eight feet, they wondered whether it would withstand the test. Late Sunday night, after the flood waters had fallen, Mr. Joseph Faust, Mayor of New Braunfels, accompanied by his friends, Otto Rennert, William Kessler, and Anselm Eiband, went back to the bridge site to see what damage had been done. They were grateful when they saw the bridge still standing and the next morning, Mr. Floege stated that it was not "blue Monday" but "bridge Monday."⁵⁸

The inhabitants of the rural areas across the Guadalupe were also anxious to discontinue ferries and build a bridge. Their problem of choice of location was even more complicated, some preferred a bridge at

⁵⁷Zeitung, June 14, 1872, p. 2, c. 4.

⁵⁸Ibid., Nov. 23, 1855, p. 1, c. 6.

New Braunfels, where travel between Austin and San Antonio would be facilitated, but others preferred a bridge above New Braunfels at the Kretzmeier ferry place.⁵⁹ Since the banks of the Guadalupe were steeper than those of the Comal, bridge building was even more costly along the Guadalupe, therefore, it was not until 1885, that any definite action could be taken in the matter.

In May, 1885, the court appropriated road funds to engage an engineer to make plans and specifications for a bridge across the Guadalupe;⁶⁰ whereupon W. R. Freeman, Civil Engineer, was engaged. He located and surveyed a place two hundred yards below the bridge of the International and Great Northern Railway Company, and drew plans and specifications for a bridge. The court accepted these plans, February 13, 1887, and the county judge called for sealed bids to be received by the court until, April 4, 1887. H. B. Fischer, County Judge, Chas. Buehler and Chas. Alves, Commissioners, acquired the right-of-way, for the proposed bridge, from H. Timmermann and A. L. Kessler, freeholders, who owned the land desired for the right-of-way.⁶¹

The bids were opened, April 5, 1887, and King Iron and Bridge Manufacturing Company, of Cleveland, Ohio, were found to be lowest bidder at \$25,600.00. December 27, the court accepted the bridge from the contractor and ordered the balance due the King Company be paid.⁶²

⁵⁹Zeitung, Nov. 23, 1855, p. 1, c. 6.

⁶⁰Minutes, Vol. F, p. 509.

⁶¹Ibid., Vol. G, p. 5.

⁶²Ibid., p. 67.

In 1894, when the City of New Braunfels contemplated building a bridge over the Comal Creek in Seguin Street, the county court decreed that one thousand dollars be contributed to the building fund.⁶³ Ten years later the county awarded a contract to George E. King Bridge Company, Dallas, Texas, at \$12,498.00, to build a bridge at Esser's Crossing on the Guadalupe,⁶⁴ which bridge the court received, December 1, 1904.⁶⁵

Low water bridges were also built. One across the Guadalupe at the Gruene Crossing,⁶⁶ another over the Waco Springs Creek.⁶⁷ Still other low water bridges were built across the Guadalupe, in 1918, at the Krause and Baetge Fords,⁶⁸ another at Spiess Bottom.⁶⁹ In 1920, Bexar County and Comal County jointly built the re-enforced concrete bridge over the Cibolo Creek on the Nacogdoches Road,⁷⁰ and in 1921, across the Cibolo at Bulverde.⁷¹

Preliminary surveys for a new bridge across the Comal Creek in Seguin Street were ordered by the court, April 13, 1925, and Terrell-Bartlett Engineers, Inc., of San Antonio, were engaged to make the survey.⁷² In July, after the survey had been completed, the court petitioned the State Highway Commission for Federal and State Aid to erect a concrete bridge across the Comal Creek,⁷³ which request was granted and the bridge constructed.⁷⁴

⁶³Minutes, Vol. G, p.542.

⁶⁴Ibid., Vol. I, p. 260.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 349.

⁶⁶Ibid., Vol. K, p. 173.

⁶⁷Ibid., Vol. L, p. 81.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 486.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 489.

⁷⁰Ibid., Vol. M, p. 158.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 256.

⁷²Ibid., Vol. N, p. 56.

⁷³Ibid., p. 95.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 97.

In 1934, when Highway 81 was built, the concrete bridge that was constructed across the Guadalupe, approximately five hundred yards below the old steel bridge, gave New Braunfels a new connection with points to the north and south. Many of the hopes and dreams of the first settlers were realized by 1945, the hundredth anniversary of the founding of the town, even, the railroad, of which Prince Solms had visions, had become a reality. In 1876, the first concrete steps toward railroad building had been taken, when the county court set aside three hundred dollars toward bridge construction, both road and railroad, across the Guadalupe.⁷⁵

As early as November 29, 1852, the citizens of Comal County called a railroad meeting in the court house,⁷⁶ and formed two committees to promote railroad construction. The first committee consisted of three members only, Dr. W. Remer, J. F. Torrey, and H. Seele. It was to correspond with the directors of the Houston-San Antonio Railway Association, and the second, and larger committee, consisted of Ferdinand J. Lindheimer, V. Sippel, Dr. W. Remer, L. C. Ervendberg, J. F. Arnold, W. Seekatz, G. Klappenbach, W. A. Andross, D. Murchison, and J. Harms. This group was to acquaint the legislature with the wishes of the citizens.⁷⁷

Again in September, 1875, the citizens held a mass meeting, which chose Mr. A. L. Kessler, president of the body, and Mr. G. F. Groos, secretary. After a lengthy discussion, Mr. H. Seele, explained the danger

⁷⁵Minutes, Vol. E, p. 325.

⁷⁶Zeitung, Nov. 26, 1852, p. 4, c. 2.

⁷⁷Ibid., Dec. 3, 1852, p. 2, c. 4.

New Braunfels would face, if the railroad were to build around the town rather than through it. Thereupon, Mr. William Clemens, Jr., moved that a committee of nine citizens be elected to negotiate with Mr. Pierce, President of the Columbus Railroad. The committee was to offer him the sum of \$75,000.00 payable in bonds, at $7\frac{1}{2}\%$ interest, and dating from the day that a depot had been completed within the radius of one and one-fourth miles from the court house and a train ran regularly through town. The motion carried,⁷⁸ and the committee, which was elected, sent a telegram to Mr. Pierce, who came to New Braunfels in December, but no agreement was reached.⁷⁹ His line built through Marion, rather than through New Braunfels,⁸⁰

The International and Great Northern Railroad Company was reorganized in July, 1879, and then started building a line from Austin to San Antonio.⁸¹ When the surveyors for the line arrived in New Braunfels they asked the mayor whether the citizens would give the right-of-way to the railroad and also twenty acres of land for a depot.⁸² The city raised the \$13,000.00 needed for the right-of-way and depot,⁸³ and the first train to New

⁷⁸Zeitung, Sep. 17, 1875, p. 3, c. 3.

⁷⁹Ibid., Dec. 10, 1875, p. 3, c. 2.

⁸⁰Ibid., June 6, 1879, p. 3, c. 2.

⁸¹Ibid., July 4, 1879, p. 3, c. 3.

⁸²Ibid., Nov. 28, 1879, p. 3, c. 2.

⁸³An unpublished letter of Miss Clara Heilig, who was a young girl of New Braunfels while the railroad was being constructed, gives an account of the excitement in town as the road neared completion. The letter, dated

Braunfels from Palestine arrived, December 1, 1880, and the first train to San Antonio, was run over the line February 16, 1881.⁸⁴

Harry Landa, industrialist, interested the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railway Company to build to New Braunfels, in 1900.⁸⁵ The commissioners court donated the right-of-way over the Comal County Poor Farm to the Katy and authorized the county judge to execute a deed to the railway.⁸⁶ The road was soon built, and with the already established International and Great Northern Railway, gave the community access to products from all parts of the world and a chance to market any local surplus.

The motor-freight lines have been established more recently. They contribute many tons of freight per year to make New Braunfels a busy trade center.

The community has two other important means of communication. It enjoys the services of the Western Union Telegraph Company, which established an office in New Braunfels in 1867, and those of the Bell Telephone

November 24, 1880, and translated from the German language, reads in part: "Last Sunday the locomotive came whistling into town for the first time. All day there were such crowds, one could hardly get through. In the afternoon, when a friend and I arrived at the end of the line, the conductor asked the ladies if they would care to ride the four miles to camp with him. We two, and about twelve others, and just as many men went. The others did not have the courage to go. It was really foolhardy of us to go, for we all stood on a platform, and thus rode over the Guadalupe bridge. It is eighty-five feet high."

⁸⁴Seele, A Short Sketch, p. 7.

⁸⁵Harry Landa, As I Remember, p. 72. This 100-page autobiography was published in 1945, after Mr. Landa had retired from active business. In a large measure it is a story of New Braunfels and all south Texas. It was printed by Carleton Printing Company, San Antonio, Texas.

⁸⁶Minutes, Vol. H, p. 572.

Company, which established a line and office in 1884.⁸⁷ The telephone company has enlarged its services to include Solms,⁸⁸ Bulverde,⁸⁹ Spring Branch,⁹⁰ Hancock,⁹¹ and other rural communities, as well as long distance service to all parts of the world. These services have changed the town from the once isolated wilderness settlement, to a city with world wide communication facilities.

⁸⁷Seele, A Short Sketch, p. 7.

⁸⁸Minutes, Vol. H, p. 209.

⁸⁹Ibid., Vol. K, p. 212.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 325.

⁹¹Ibid., Vol. M, p. 463.

CHAPTER VIII

CHURCHES

The First Protestant Church of New Braunfels, now known as the Evangelical and Reformed Church, is not only the oldest church in Comal County but also the oldest corporation¹ therein. On October 5, 1845, under an act, approved by the Congress of Texas, January 30, 1845, which authorized the appointment of trustees,² the church was incorporated, and the act of incorporation was duly recorded at San Antonio, on November 6, 1845, in the records of deeds for Bexar County, Texas.³ Even before the church was incorporated services were held each Sunday under a grove of elm and hackberry trees at the foot of the Vereinsberg, and these were continued until a building could be constructed.⁴

A simple frame structure was planned to be built on the lot the society had set aside for the Protestant Congregation, and the cornerstone of the building was laid January 8, 1846.⁵ The church was dedicated on

¹Hermann Seele, A Short Sketch of Comal County, Texas, p. 7. Hereinafter called A Short Sketch.

²Kirchenbuch fuer die Deutsch-Protestantische Gemeinde in Neu Braunfels, Comal County, Texas, p. 2. Minute book of the church, hereinafter called Church Book. Its companion volumes will be named for the year a particular volume was started, as 1912, 1925.

³Ibid., p. 3.

⁴Seele, A Short Sketch, p. 4.

⁵Church Book, p. 17.

Palm Sunday, April 5, 1846, but without benches because the congregation did not have funds to provide all the furnishings immediately.⁶

When Pastor Ervendberg tendered his resignation, April 14, 1850,⁷ only one minister applied for the position, namely G. W. Eisenlohr, who later became a noted publisher of Cincinnati, Ohio. He was elected, January, 1851, to serve the New Braunfels Congregation,⁸ but he was unable to arrive until March, so Mr. Hermann Seele conducted the worship services on Sundays.⁹ Soon after the arrival of Reverend Eisenlohr, it was decided to conduct services in Comal Town every two weeks. These services were held on Sunday mornings before services in the New Braunfels Church, for the convenience of the citizens of Comal Town. Services were also held on three holidays, and communion was celebrated twice a year. On the days of communion in the Comal Town Church, Mr. Seele conducted services in the city church,¹⁰ so Pastor Eisenlohr was free to serve communion. Services in Comal Town were continued until 1856, when the Comal Town Congregation joined the city church.¹¹

After six years of faithful service, Reverend G. W. Eisenlohr left New Braunfels for Cincinnati, and the congregation was fortunate to obtain the services of August Wilhelm Schuchard,¹² who continued to serve

⁶Church Book, p. 18.

⁷Ibid., p. 35.

⁸Ibid., p. 54.

⁹Ibid., p. 55.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 58.

¹¹Ibid., p. 60.

¹²The identity of Reverend Schuchard, before his coming to New Braunfels, is not disclosed in any of the records that the writer has investigated.

the congregation until his death, February 29, 1876,¹³ when the Reverend Bernhard Sickel¹⁴ came to lead the church, and conducted the regular German services, but also conducted services in the English language on Sunday afternoons.¹⁵ He was succeeded by Mr. G. Muelder, of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania.¹⁶

Both the interior and the exterior of the church had been improved from year to year, so that the congregation was justly proud, June 27, 1868, when an eight stop pipe organ was dedicated.¹⁷ Mr. C. F. Blum, who had formerly accompanied the hymns on his trombone, became the organist.¹⁸

In November, 1874, definite plans were laid for a rock church, such as had been contemplated for several years, for the members of the congregation had subscribed \$6,000.00 on the petitions for a new building. The building was to be erected on the same lot where the old church stood, facing Seguin Street, and the following building committee was elected: J. Meyer, F. Geue, Hermann Seele, E. Ebensberger, Carl Floege, J. Langkopf, J. P. Triesch.¹⁹ This committee chose J. Langkopf as supervisor of construction, and rough limestone as building material.²⁰ By July

¹³Church Book, p. 110.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 113. (This reference does not indicate where Pastor Sickel came from nor does it reveal where he went when he left New Braunfels.)

¹⁵Zeitung, Dec. 1, 1876, p. 3, c. 2. ¹⁶Ibid., Jan. 24, 1879, p. 3, c. 3.

¹⁷Church Book, p. 102.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 108.

¹⁹Zeitung, Dec. 4, 1874, p. 2, c. 6.

²⁰Church Book, p. 104.

18, 1875, the foundation and lower section of the building were completed, and the cornerstone was publicly laid with a special ceremony. On May 18, 1879, with the former Pastor Eisenlohr as guest speaker, the building was dedicated.²¹

The old frame parsonage was replaced by a two story, yellow brick home, in 1911, and as soon as the Reverend G. Mornhinweg family had moved into the new parsonage, the old one was converted into classrooms for the Sunday School,²² for which purpose it served until 1930, when the congregation built an auditorium, which was dedicated May 11, 1930.²³ In later years it was named Seele Parish House, in honor of Mr. Hermann Seele, the first secretary of the church, and his son, Mr. Harry C. Seele, who served as secretary from May, 1902, until November, 1924.²⁴

When the congregation realized that the young people were losing interest in the church because they did not understand the German language well enough to participate in the services, steps were taken to arrange for services in the English language. Otto C. Bassler, student minister from Eden Theological Seminary, who had done Home Mission Work, was installed on September 25, 1927, as the first minister to conduct exclusively English services. Four years later he resigned his position to go to Highland, Illinois,²⁵ and for the ensuing year the Reverend G. Mornhinweg,

²¹Zeitung, May 16, 1879, p. 3, c. 1.

²²Verbal information from Mrs. G. Mornhinweg, the first occupant of the new parsonage.

²³Church Book 1925, p. 94.

²⁴Ibid., 1912, p. 284.

²⁵Ibid., 1925, p. 115.

who had been German minister of the church since 1899, conducted the services in both languages. In September, 1932, Herman G. Borne, pastor of a small church in Houston, Texas, left that church to become minister in New Braunfels. With the help of Mrs. Borne, he was particularly active in work with the young people.²⁶ In May, 1937, Edwin Berger, minister of Council Bluffs, Iowa, became minister in charge of both German and English services. Mr. Mornhinweg retired as Pastor Emeritus.²⁷

Two sons of the church have entered the ministry. Mr. Richard H. Mornhinweg, elder son of Reverend and Mrs. G. Mornhinweg, was ordained in 1930,²⁸ and Mr. Roland Pantermuehl, son of Mr. and Mrs. Julius Pantermuehl of Route One. His ordination was celebrated July 9, 1939, with the Reverends Herman G. Borne and Edwin Berger participating in the ceremony.²⁹

In 1940, when the church celebrated its ninety-fifth anniversary, it became a part of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, instead of remaining an independent church as it had been from the time of its organization.³⁰ Five years later the centennial was observed although World War II was in progress. The celebration was solemn and dignified.³¹ Throughout the first hundred years of its life the church struggled constantly against financial difficulties, but always with high courage, friendly cooperation, and slow but steady progress.

²⁶Church Book 1925, p. 138.

²⁷Verbal information from Reverend Edwin Berger.

²⁸Church Book 1925, p. 98. ²⁹Ibid., 1935, p. 53.

³⁰Information from copy of letter filed in Church Book.

³¹Church Book 1941, p. 136.

The Catholic Church was not organized immediately because Prince Solms was unable to obtain the services of a priest.³² In March, 1846, Georg Menzel, a missionary, conducted the first services under a live oak tree, near the present SS. Peter and Paul Church, on Castell Avenue.³³ Under this tree a marker, with the following inscription, has been placed:

FOLKLORE SAYS THAT HERE IN THE DAWN OF TEXAS
HISTORY STOOD AN INDIAN VILLAGE IN WHICH
ONE OF THE EARLY MISSIONARIES LINGERED
MANY DAYS; THAT HERE A VISION OF THE CHIEF'S
DAUGHTER FREED THE FIRST GERMAN IN TEXAS.
TRADITION SAYS THAT UNDER THIS TREE MASS
WAS OFFERED BY THE ABBE EMANUEL DOMENECH IN 1849.

TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARKS
ASSOCIATION, JUNE 15, 1917.³⁴

Claudius Dubuis, pastor at Castroville, and known in later years as the Bishop of Texas, came to New Braunfels in 1849, to conduct services, and in September of the same year, Father Emanuel Domenech organized the first church of St. Peter,³⁵ and by the following year a building was constructed on the land the society had donated for that purpose.³⁶

In 1871, the present SS. Peter and Paul Church was built and the Sisters of Divine Providence took over the school of the church. A larger schoolhouse was built in 1900, and in March, 1889, the Reverend J. M. J. Wack, native of Lorraine, became the pastor of the church and served it

³²Original Berichte des Prinzen Carl zu Solms Braunfels Bezueglich der Gruendung von New Braunfels, Texas, 1844-1845, p. 68.

³³Zeitung, Dec. 15, 1932, p. 33, c. 5.

³⁴Inscription on marker in Castell Avenue.

³⁵Robert B. Lucey, Diamond Jubilee 1874-1949, Archdiocese of San Antonio, p. 53.

³⁶Zeitung, Dec. 15, 1932, p. 33, c. 5.

until his death in 1927. While he was minister, the beautiful grotto of Lourdes was erected,³⁷ and largely through his influence several members of the church have entered the priesthood and religious life, Father Columban Wenzel, O. S. B., Msgr. Joseph Jacobi, Reverend J. J. Hildebrand, and Reverend Bruno Hubertus.

In 1928, the Reverend John J. Robling was appointed pastor. He served the church until he retired in 1947. The present pastor, Armand J. Weber, was appointed, June 17, 1947.³⁸

The Methodist Church of New Braunfels was among the first churches to be founded in the community. March 7, 1853, the first quarterly conference for the New Braunfels German Mission was held in the house of Brother J. Hirschleber in Comal Town, with Henry P. Young, missionary, presiding, and Gustavus Elley, local minister, serving as secretary. Five years later, the first building was erected on the east bank of the Guadalupe River, later known as Union Street, in Comal Town. This building served as a house of worship for over fifty years. It may still be seen on Union Street but used as a private residence. A modern church, the Karbach Memorial Church, was erected in 1913, at 570 West San Antonio Street, and a parsonage was added in 1916.³⁹ An educational building was added to the church properties in 1948, and plans have been made for a second educational building and a new sanctuary, so the church will continue to expand with the community.⁴⁰

³⁷Lucey, op. cit., p. 53.

³⁸Ibid., p. 55.

³⁹J. H. E. Willmann, Directory of the Karbach Memorial Methodist Church, p. 13. The pamphlet was published while Mr. Willmann was pastor of the church.

⁴⁰Verbal information from C. F. Naegelin, president of the church board.

The First Baptist Church of New Braunfels had its beginning in 1905, when the San Marcos Association bought a lot at the corner of Seguin and Garden Streets and erected a small chapel. A revival meeting was conducted by the Reverend W. D. Bowen.⁴¹ This led to the organization of a church, which the San Marcos Association and the State Board supported for the next seven years. At the end of that time the San Marcos Association sold the property and the little church was left to survive or perish.

The small congregation continued, although the outlook for Baptist work in New Braunfels was gloomy. In 1922, the State Board again came to the aid of the church. Sunday School and church services were resumed for a few months. These Baptist assemblies were held in the Karbach Memorial Methodist Church of New Braunfels at an hour when its own congregation did not hold services, and they were conducted by students from the San Marcos Academy.

The Reverend Ernest J. Young, general missionary of the State Board, came to New Braunfels, in July, 1923, to re-open the work and six people gathered at a called meeting, which re-established the First Baptist Church. When the State Board agreed to pay the salary of the preacher, Reverend Young remained in New Braunfels. The home of Mr. and Mrs. C. W. Rice, members of the church, served as meeting place until January 13, 1924, when the First Baptist Church rented a small building on South Seguin Avenue for services and Sunday School.

The church started a building program by purchasing a lot on San

⁴¹The source material does not reveal the identity of W. D. Bowen.

Antonio Street. This lot, and a second one, were sold later and a building site bought on Union Street in Comal Town, where a frame building was erected. Shortly after the building had been constructed, the State Board discontinued its aid and the church was without a pastor for several months. Since the organization was in debt for the building, it was impossible to meet the interest on the indebtedness.

The German Baptist Convention then interested itself in the New Braunfels Church and appealed to the State Board to again take up the work. The Reverend A. Becker, secretary of the German Baptist Convention, appealed to R. L. Wittner, student in Baylor University, to take up the work in New Braunfels. Brother Wittner accepted the call and under his guidance the church began to progress.

In 1936, C. A. Todd,⁴² replaced Brother Wittner and under his guidance the church opened the Mill Town Mission, now Calvary Baptist Church. After the death of Brother Todd, September 1, 1941, the church had several pastors who served short terms only. During the early forties the church bought two lots, on Guenther Avenue, as a building site. Shortly thereafter, a residence and three lots, adjoining the Guenther Avenue property, were bought. The residence was used for a pastor's home and the lots were additional building space. A frame building was constructed and used for church as well as Sunday School, until a rock church could be built. The contract for a rock structure was let, August 2, 1948, and on January 8,

⁴²Mr. Todd is not identified in the reference materials except as minister of the First Baptist Church of New Braunfels.

1949, the church was dedicated and apparently its difficulties were over.⁴³

There are also a number of more recently established churches in New Braunfels which are helping to carry on the spiritual work of the community. To this group belong the St. Paul Lutheran Church,⁴⁴ Cross Lutheran Church,⁴⁵ St. John's Episcopal Church,⁴⁶ the Pentecostal Church, the Church of Christ,⁴⁷ the Interdenominational Church,⁴⁸ the First Presbyterian Church, and Our Lady of Perpetual Help.⁴⁹

⁴³Lillian Briggs, History of the First Baptist Church of New Braunfels, Texas. This unpublished history was compiled by Mrs. J. E. (Lillian) Briggs in 1949, for the dedication of the new church.

⁴⁴Zeitung, Jan. 19, 1933, p. 15, c. 3.

⁴⁵New Braunfels Herald, July 25, 1950, p. 6, c. 2.

⁴⁶Ibid., June 30, 1950, p. 7, c. 5. ⁴⁷Ibid., p. 7, c. 3.

⁴⁸Zeitung, July 20, 1950, p. 15, c. 4.

⁴⁹New Braunfels Telephone Directory, Dec. 1949, p. 17.

CHAPTER IX

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTY

The industrial center that Prince Solms envisioned has developed in Comal County, although it took many years and sometimes suffered severe setbacks. The first industry to be developed was a grist and saw mill, which William E. Merriwether, an intelligent and enterprising Virginian, who had moved to New Braunfels,¹ built on a channel that he ordered dug from the lake. The lake had been formed by damming the Comal River across its natural course, just above the present swimming pool in Landa Park. The artificial channel led to the Comal Creek, and served as mill race, which furnished power for the water wheels. This channel and mill were completed sometime in 1847, and the business flourished,² therefore, in 1852, Merriwether built a cotton gin.³

Mrs. Merriwether did not like Texas, so she and her husband left New Braunfels. In 1853, they offered the grist mill and saw mill, the cotton gin and press, the water rights and 20,000 acres of land for sale, either as a whole or subdivided to suit the buyer or buyers.⁴ In 1860, Mr. Joseph Landa,⁵ merchant of New Braunfels, bought the entire property for \$14,000.00,

¹Viktor Bracht, Texas in 1848, p. 97.

²Hermann Seele, A Short Sketch of Comal County, Texas, p. 6.

³Zeitung, Nov. 19, 1852, p. 3, c. 4.

⁴Ibid., May 6, 1853, p. 3, c. 2.

⁵Joseph Landa was born in Kempen, near the city of Breslau, Germany, in 1801. He attended school in Germany and became proficient in the English.

from Mr. Merriwether, who then lived in Shelby County, Tennessee.⁶

Mr. Landa improved the mills and operated them successfully until the Civil War when he had to turn them over to his wife and their faithful servants. He and Judge Devine, of San Antonio, were forced to flee to Mexico, because the secret society, known as the "Golden Circle," considered them abolitionists. Each of these men had owned slaves and upon learning of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation had told the slaves that they were free, although the slaves continued to work for the Landa and Devine families, as paid servants, until their deaths. Both men had been tried by the court and given a short time in which to settle their affairs and leave the country.⁷ Mrs. Landa proved herself a capable business woman and throughout her life continued to assist in the development of Landa Industries. Nature was to slow down progress, for in the summer of 1869, high water

German, Polish, Russian, and Hebrew languages. Since his father dealt in livestock, particularly horses, Joseph's earliest occupation was to ride cavalry mounts before the Russian officers, who were customers of his father. When he learned that his parents wished him to become a Rabbi, he ran away from home. He worked his way to England, and got various jobs along the Liverpool waterfront. He took passage to America, where he arrived in New York and with the help of some of his former European townsmen found a job. When he had sufficient funds, he bought a horse and a spring wagon, which he loaded with all kinds of merchandise, and started his journey to Texas. He sold goods along the way, always replenishing his stock in the large cities enroute. In 1844, Joseph Landa arrived in San Antonio, where he was the second white merchant. After selling his horse and wagon, he rented a small building and conducted a general store. In 1847, he visited New Braunfels on mule back and was so intrigued by the beautiful countryside, especially the Comal River and Springs, that he returned to San Antonio, loaded his belongings on four prairie schooners and moved to New Braunfels. He opened a store at the corner of San Antonio and Castell Streets, where Jacob Schmidt and Son are located in 1950.

⁶Deed Record, Vol. G, p. 133.

⁷Harry Landa, As I Remember, p. 19.

did much damage,⁸ and in June 1872, when a twelve inch rain fell, the mills were damaged again. They were repaired and placed back in operation as soon as possible.⁹

In 1896, when Joseph Landa died, the business was carried on by his wife and their son, Harry. They soon bought all the small river frontage on both sides of the Comal River to procure all the riparian rights. Then they rebuilt the dam across the Comal River to increase the flow of the mill race until they had water power equivalent to 800 Horse Power.¹⁰ By the turn of the century the Landa Power Plant, known as Landa Power and Light Company, was established and augmented the 800 Horse Power water wheel, by two Diesel engines, one large steam engine and two steam turbines, thus increasing the capacity to 7,000 Horse Power.¹¹

This plant furnished power for the flour mill and an oil mill, that had been established, and the surplus was sold to the city for the street lighting system, and to citizens to light private homes. Electric lights illuminated Landa Park, which must be considered as a part of the industrial empire of the Landa's, although it furnished entertainment and relaxation for thousands of paying guests each year. It had been opened at the suggestion of Miss Helen Gould, daughter of Jay Gould, the great railroad

⁸Adele Reszcynski, Unpublished letter, dated July 26, 1869.

⁹Zeitung, June 14, 1872, p. 2, c. 4.

¹⁰Landa, As I Remember, p. 63.

¹¹Ibid., p. 65.

financier, when she visited New Braunfels, in 1897, with Mr. Leroy Trice, general manager of the International and Great Northern Railway.¹² By the spring of 1898, Leroy Trice, in cooperation with Harry Landa, had built a railroad track into the Landa Estate to bring in thousands upon thousands of people for Sunday excursions, church picnics, or Fourth of July celebrations. Mr. Landa had improved the area near the springs. Picnic tables and benches had been constructed and placed in shady spots along the stream. Soft drink stands and a saloon were also built, where cold drinks were sold. A dance hall, which attracted young and old for graceful ballroom dancing, was also included in the park properties; as well as several pavilions, which gave protection from rain or sun, and where local bands performed in concert programs. Patrons could rent a row boat at the boat house, or pay for a ride on the steamboat, which, on special holidays, had an orchestra on deck. In later years, a swimming pool and screened rooms, which could be rented for a night's lodging, were also provided, as well as a cafe and baseball diamond. In 1900, when the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railway built through New Braunfels to San Antonio, it laid a track into Landa Park.¹³ Excursion trains could be seen parked on the tracks almost every day of the week during the summer season.

The death of Mrs. Joseph Landa brought about a change in ownership of the Landa Estate. Her four daughters and son, Harry, were the heirs. Her will stipulated that Harry Landa should be executor of the estate, which

¹²Landa, As I Remember, p. 75.

¹³Ibid., p. 76.

was to be sold ten years after her death. Thus, in accordance with the will, Landa Milling Company, as the estate was known, except the part known as Landa Ranch, was sold to San Antonio capitalists. The industry, which had been started on borrowed capital and which had grown to a one and one-half million dollar enterprise,¹⁴ passed out of the hands of an industrial wizard and out of the life of the community, which had never appreciated fully how vital a part of itself the Landa Milling Company was. Due to mismanagement, the new owners soon allowed the industry to pass into the hands of a receivership, and many families suffered as a result. Some of the former business volume was returned to New Braunfels, only after H. Dittlinger Roller Mills Company bought the flour mill several years later and put it into operation as a feed mill, and the City of New Braunfels bought Landa Park.¹⁵

Shortly after Mr. Meriwether had started the grist and saw mill, another citizen, John F. Torrey, built a grist mill on the river proper,¹⁶ and in 1855, added a sash and blind factory. During the Civil War, the Torrey sash factory and mill burned, and in 1865, Mr. Torrey, joined by Mr. Henry Runge, of Indianola and Victoria, built a cotton factory, which had twenty-one looms.¹⁷ The mill, known as the Comal Manufacturing Company, did good business. In 1867, the owners planned to enlarge it, and

¹⁴Landa, As I Remember, p. 96.

¹⁵Observations of the writer.

¹⁶Seele, A Short Sketch, p. 6.

¹⁷Zeitung, Feb. 20, 1865, p. 4, c. 2.

appointed Mr. Heinrich E. McCulloch, a broker, to sell the shares to raise \$83,000.00 additional capital.¹⁸ Unfortunately, on September 12, 1869, a tornado, which destroyed a portion of the City of New Braunfels, destroyed the cotton mill. It was rebuilt shortly thereafter, only to be carried away by the flood waters of June 8 and 9, 1872,¹⁹ when New Braunfels had a cloudburst of slightly more than twelve inches of rain.²⁰

Dr. Theodore Koester, the physician, whom the society had sent with the immigrants, and a citizen with many interests outside his medical practice, was busy, in 1865, to equip a woolen mill and a sash factory.²¹ This property he sold, in 1867, to the directors of a stock company, which planned to operate a wool factory. The company was known as the New Braunfels Woolen Manufacturing Company, of which Mr. Franz Moureau was the president, Mr. George Weber, treasurer, while G. H. Judson was business manager, and G. W. Hetten served as secretary.²² The company bought new machinery and started operation, April 4, 1868.²³ Many difficulties beset the new enterprise and on June 27, 1870, the company entered into a deed of mortgage with Julius Harms and J. J. Groos, two local citizens,²⁴

¹⁸Zeitung, Nov. 29, 1867, p. 3, c. 1.

¹⁹Seele, A Short Sketch, p. 7.

²⁰Zeitung, Jun. 14, 1872, p. 2, c. 4.

²¹Ibid., Feb. 20, 1865, p. 4, c. 3.

²²Ibid., Mar. 3, 1867, p. 3, c. 2.

²³Ibid., Apr. 10, 1868, p. 3, c. 3.

²⁴Deed Record, Vol. K, p. 267.

Mr. Gustav F. Groos, local citizen, bought the wool factory. In company with him were Mr. Julius Giesecke, of Washington County, and two local citizens, Franz Moureau and Thomas Perryman. They reopened the business as a private enterprise, in 1873,²⁵ and the mill became prosperous. In 1879, it used \$100,000.00 worth of raw wool.²⁶ The owners had failed to register their trade mark and mills in the eastern states imitated the pattern of the local mill, and thus forced it out of business in the eighteen-eighties.²⁷

Breweries were operated in New Braunfels at various times in its history. They were always discontinued after a comparatively short time because the San Antonio breweries could furnish beer at a cheaper price than it could be brewed locally, and after the railroads built through New Braunfels, breweries at more distant points also supplied the community.²⁸

During the Civil War, saltpetre was made in New Braunfels and a sample may still be seen in the Sophienburg Museum. Mr. Wilhelm Seekatz, Sr., one of the original colonists, made the saltpetre at the Comal Springs. These springs have been marked with a stone to commemorate the saltpetre works. Mr. Seekatz produced the product for the Confederate Government by order of Major Reed and Captain Harrison, Commanders of the Nitre and

²⁵Zeitung, Dec. 12, 1873, p. 2, c. 6.

²⁶Ibid., May 16, 1879, p. 3, c. 1.

²⁷Mr. Oscar Haas, native of New Braunfels, who has long interested himself in the history of the community, furnished the information.

²⁸Some years ago a brewery operated within two blocks of the writer's home.

Mining Department of the Western District of Texas, and Mr. Edwin Voelcker, a local druggist, refined it.²⁹

John Torrey's water rights were sold in 1861, to Julius Runge, Leon Blum, H. Kempner, N. Lasker, Galveston merchants, and William Clemens, a New Braunfels merchant and financier. They built a fine dam and wheel chambers, which were to operate a cotton mill, but which was never built. In later years a grist mill was built, which was the beginning of the H. Dittlinger Roller Mills.³⁰ In 1886, the mill was moved to higher ground and enlarged. A modern grain elevator was built in the twentieth century, and after sixty-four years the company still produces fine flour and high grade feeds. The H. Dittlinger Company also started two other industries in the county. The Dittlinger Lime Company, about three miles south of New Braunfels, was sold in 1934, and is operated by the United States Gypsum Company. A rock crusher, that was formerly operated by the company, was merged with the Landa Rock Crusher and several smaller companies. Since 1930, the Servtex Materials Company, as the new rock company is known, has been under the management of personnel drawn mainly from the original Dittlinger Rock Company.³¹

In 1921, interest in cotton manufacture caused New Braunfels to be selected as the most desirable place for the location of a mill. S. M. Ransopher, Director of Trade and Industrial Education at the University

²⁹Miss Oattie Coreth, custodian of the Sophienburg Museum, pointed out the jar of saltpetre on the museum shelf. Its label furnished the information.

³⁰Jahrbuch 1925, p. 48.

³¹Information from Mr. Herbert Liebscher of H. Dittlinger Roller Mills.

of Texas, and a group of Central Texas business men proposed and built the Planters and Merchants Mills, near the International and Great Northern Railroad bridge, on the east bank of the Guadalupe River. The company manufactured Bluebonnet Ginghams.³² Unfortunately, the mills shut down in 1931, because poor management made it impossible for the company to operate at a profit. New Braunfels business men, who realized what hardships the community had suffered when the industries, that the Landa heirs had sold to San Antonio capitalists, went out of business, called a mass meeting. It was decided to reorganize the cotton mill. The New Braunfels Textile Mills were organized, and the new management, plus the local interest in the industry, produced a business that has grown and expanded constantly. In addition to the mill, which makes gingham, chambrays, suitings, and shirtings, the company maintains a retail store, Comal Cottons, Incorporated.

San Antonio citizens were in need of more electric power than they could produce easily in San Antonio, therefore, in the early twenties the San Antonio Public Service Company bought land and water rights from the Landa Estate. They built the first unit of the Comal Power Plant and sold electric ity to the citizens of New Braunfels, Seguin, and Boerne, as well as to San Antonio people. Several years later a second unit was built and operation continued as formerly, until December 1, 1942, when a group of New Braunfels business men organized the New Braunfels Utilities. This organization bought the Comal Power Plant and operate it since that date.

³²New Braunfels Herald, July 8, 1921, p. 1.

In 1941, the Robert E. Pent, Wool Top Manufacturing Company, started operation in New Braunfels. The plant washed and combed wool and sent it to eastern mills to be made into yarn. Several years later the plant was enlarged to include a spinning plant and dye works, and the name was changed to Pioneer Worsted Company. Wool from all parts of the United States and from foreign countries is used to make yarn, which is sold to eastern mills. The chief by-product is lanolin, which is sold to chemical plants.³³

When New Braunfels celebrated the centennial of its incorporation, in 1946, the industrial outlook for the community was bright. In addition to the industries discussed above, there were also two tanneries and a leather goods company in New Braunfels. Two stocking mills were being developed and have since grown into industries of note.

³³Verbal information from reliable members of the firms mentioned.

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