

PART II

CHAPTER ONE WHY THEY CAME

German immigration to America began about 1830. At times it seemed to native Americans that half of Germany was on its way across the ocean. These Germans settled mostly in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri. What brought them was not persecution or the quest of religious freedom but a desire for better living conditions at a time of general discontent and hopelessness in their own country. The population of Germany grew much faster after the Napoleonic Wars than the means of its support and unemployment increased. Government debts and the extravagance of the nobility placed unbearable burdens on the people. The German desire for a home of his own is very strong and he feels very keenly the four great hazards of human life: unemployment, sickness, disability, and old age.

We are chiefly interested in the great flow of immigration which came to St. Charles, Warren, and Franklin Counties in Missouri. This immigration was due largely to the efforts of Gottfried Duden who had come here in 1824 to see if it was suitable for settlement by his countrymen. He returned to Germany and published a glowing description of what he had found. In fascinating language he told of the possibility of obtaining comfortable homesteads or even acquiring large estates for those of means. He told of an agreeable climate, an abundant water supply and the availability of timber for building and fuel. This report aroused such great interest that by 1830-31 the first settlers began arriving.

Perhaps the greatest number of these immigrants came from Westphalia and Hannover, but other regions were also represented. The subjects of this book came from Hesse-Darmstadt. Pastor Frederick Muench, a graduate of the University of Giessen, had been appointed pastor of his father's former charge at Nieder-Gemunden in Hesse-Darmstadt. He became the master mind of the Giessen Emigration Society and chose members of the newly-formed society from among his congregation. The emigrants he recruited were mostly of the better educated classes who probably felt more keenly the political oppression and the added annoying pressure of the state church. A pamphlet the society issued for recruiting emigrants stated that its purpose was to establish a settlement west of the Mississippi which would become a part of the union, where things distinctly German would predominate.

In the same year that it was organized the Giessen Society migrated to the United States. It arrived in two divisions totaling about 500 persons. One of these groups, led by Paul Follenius, came by way of New Orleans and the Mississippi River. They arrived at New Orleans on June 3, 1834 on the ship Olbers. The second group, led by Frederick Muench, left the outer port of Bremen and arrived at the port of Baltimore on July 24, 1834.

Although the purpose of this society was to settle a colony both its divisions began breaking up before reaching Missouri, and when they arrived in St. Louis the society completely fell apart. This deterioration of the Giessen Society was due, at least partially, to the religious differentiation that began to appear within it. Frederick Muench and his original followers were Rationalists in their beliefs, but this single religious affiliation gave way in time to Orthodox Christian, German

Methodist, Lutheran, and Evangelical denominations.

The former members of the Giessen Society settled in Missouri, primarily in the western part of the St. Charles County and eastern part of Warren County. Henry (Johann Heinrich) Becker was a member of this society and the first of our subjects to come to America. A John (Johannes) Bunding came with the society and settled in St. Louis. No descendants have been found. He was an uncle of the Frederick Bunding who is a subject of this book. The Goebel family, mentioned in the ship list which follows, was not from Nieder-Gemunden but is included because Gert Goebel later married one of Henry Becker's daughters. The Goebel family settled in Franklin County and the Muench family in Warren County.

After the second German revolution of 1848, followed by counter-revolutions, a new wave of political exiles fled from Germany which continued for half a century. This new wave included the rest of our subjects - three more Beckers, a Stroh, and a Bunding. Certainly reports from their relatives, who had arrived some thirty years earlier, had a great influence on their decision to come.

Following is a partial ship list of passengers, members of the Giessen Society who arrived in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1834. The complete list would be too lengthy so only the names of those concerned in this book are listed:

Partial list of alien passengers on board the ship *Medora* which arrived at the Port of Baltimore July 24, 1834 from Bremen. David Griffith, Master.

Names	Age	Place of Birth	Country	To what	Occupation	Description	
			from whence they come	nation they belong			
Heinrich Becker	36	Nieder-Gemunden	Hesse	Hesse	Farmer	Dark	5.8
Juliana Becker	40	"	"	"	"	"	5.5
Christina Becker	15	"	"	"	"	"	4.5
Catharina Becker	11.6	"	"	"	"	"	4
Carolina Becker	10	"	"	"	"	Light	3.7
Carl Becker	7	"	"	"	"	"	
Juliana Becker	5	"	"	"	"	"	
Elizabeth Becker	2	"	"	"	"	"	
Johannes Bunding	18	"	"	"	Farmer	Dark	5.3
Frederick Muench	35	"	"	"	Clergyman	Light	5.8
Louise Muench	21	Lich	"	"	"	"	5.6
Eleonore Muench	37	Nieder-Gemunden	"	"	"	"	
Pauline Muench	7	"	"	"	"	"	
Adolph Muench	5.6	"	"	"	"	"	
Richard Muench	.6	"	"	"	"	"	
David Goebel	46	Grafenthal	Saxony	Saxony	Professor of Mathematics	Dark	5.6
Henriette Goebel	46	Sonnenfeld	"	"	"	"	5.6
Gerhard Goebel	18	Coburg	"	"	"	Light	5.6
Hilda Goebel	14	"	"	"	"	Dark	5.6
Gisa Goebel	6.6	"	"	"	"	"	

There was a total of 197 passengers on the ship of which about 152 were Giessen Society members. One child died, and one child was born on the passage.