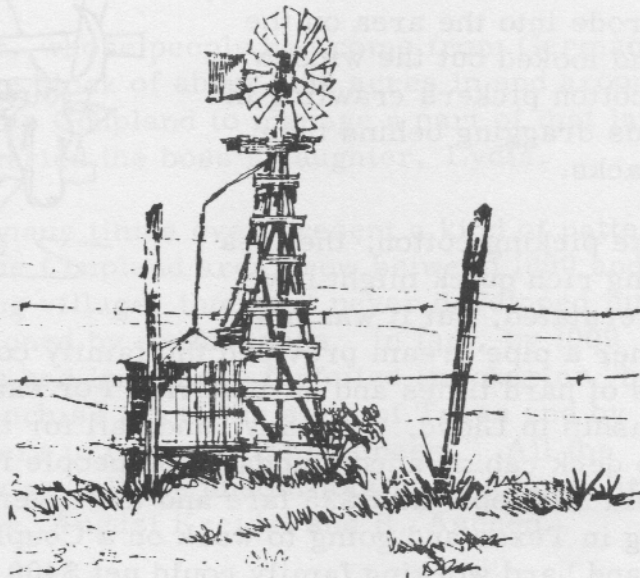


## GEH MÜT INS TEXAS

As Coupland, according to its founders, was the future city of promise, so Texas was viewed as the land of promise flowing with milk and honey to a new breed of homesteaders who were now moving to Texas by the thousands from Germany and Switzerland. "GEH MÜT INS TEXAS" was the popular slogan heard on street corners all over Germany and other European countries. By this time (1880s) the wild longhorns on the seas of grass had been all but depleted. The windmill and the barbed wire fence introduced a new method of agriculture. The large blocks of land around Coupland were even further subdivided to accommodate the new agricultural style and the new people who were moving in.

These immigrants were hard workers and a hardy people. They had to be to survive the monumental tasks which confronted them. Mesquite and cactus had to be grubbed out by hand. Rattlesnakes and coyotes were a constant concern. The heat in the summer time was oppressive to people who had come from a cold climate. The land had to be turned over for the first time by ox-drawn ploughs. During all this travail their native language, German, became a kind of glue that held these people together in a close-knit and morale-boosting community of which the new city of Coupland became the center.

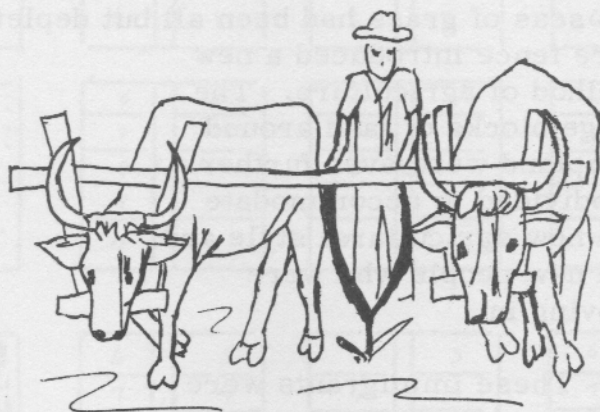


These persons left the familiar old world and ventured forth into the unknown new world for many and varied reasons. By far the most common motive for the change was disenchantment with the regimentation and growing militarism of society in their homeland and especially the policy of compulsory military training for the youth. The Heilkeckers, Zucknicks, Heinskes, Foersters and many other Coupland families remember this as the main incentive for their forebearers' journey to America.

Another motive that brought some families here was the dream of getting rich quick or at least of bettering their lot. For example,

Mrs. Erdmann wrote her brothers in Germany the Greinerts, glowing reports of opportunities in the Coupland area. The children, she said, would not have to attend school as much as they were compelled to attend in Germany and could help the family with work like picking cotton. The German word Mrs. Greinert used for cotton, BAUMVOLLEN, was literally translated "tree wool".

Since all the Greinert children enjoyed climbing trees, the letters from Texas set them to dreaming of sailing to Texas to climb trees to pick cotton. They were in for a real shock when they finally rode into the area on the train and looked out the window to see cotton pickers crawling in the fields dragging behind them large sacks.



Like picking cotton, the idea of getting rich quick might have been overstated, but it was not altogether a pipe dream provided the family could take the prerequisite courses of hard times and hard work. For example, a family could board a steamship in Lloyd, Germany, and sail for three weeks to Galveston. The top deck cabins accommodated 50 people for \$50 each. The middle deck held 30 people at a \$35 fare and the lower deck was for freight. After arriving in Texas and going to work on a Coupland farm for a year, a thrifty and hard working family could net \$400 with which they could start buying their own place.

The Matetzschk family came over for still another reason. The father, a blacksmith, had asthma and his German doctor recommended Texas climate for his health. His first season in Texas he worked at a gin near Coupland. Then he borrowed money at 9% interest to buy an 80 acre farm near Type.

Elizabeth Ging came to the United States because of a law in Switzerland that required poor widows to turn their children over to the state to be placed on farms of persons of better means. To avoid this law and to keep her family together she moved to Coupland. A childhood friend, Jacob Wernli, had already moved to Illinois. When he learned that Mrs. Ging was now a widow living in Texas, he moved to Coupland and they were married.