



The Life and Times of a German Methodist Circuit Rider on the Frontier of Texas

Robert Lamar Feuge PhD

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In the fourth decade of the 19th century, the highly structured German society and its economy were crumbling. Caught between powerful opposing impulses to either modernize or revert to the lavish court system of the 18th century, a stalemate was created and the nation floundered. In the chaos that ensued, citizens of Germany feared for the future of their country. While facing unprecedented overpopulation, oppressive taxes, and high unemployment, they began to seek alternatives. One of their options was emigration and many left the country in a headlong rush for what they believed was a utopian setting in Texas. In the emigration mania that ensued, organizations arose that overtly promised to shepherd the emigrants safely to landgrants in Texas while covertly intending to make a profit. Generally, those emigration companies lacked experience and competence at colonizing in a foreign land. Through extensive advertising, they promised far more than they could deliver. Conrad Pluenneke, his wife, and three generations of the family were among the Germans who reluctantly decided to emigrate. Pulled by a boyhood desire to own large tracts of land and pushed by deteriorating economic conditions in the Fatherland, Conrad Pluenneke chose to emigrate with the Adelsverein, a group of Royalty with no colonization experience. Crossing the Atlantic proved to be disastrous for the Pluenneke family. In Karlshafen, a staging area for colonization, life gets even more brutal and the four remaining members of the family become separated. They learn that the Adelsverein is bankrupt and unable to meet its obligations. Conrad marches off to war and returns to karlshafen where he finds that he is now alone in a new country and without resources. He is forced to face life. Wanting a better life, he is seemingly led to make four important decisions that completely changed his life. Conrad Pluenneke's life on the Texas frontier spanned four of the most consequential decades of American and Texas history. He not only lived through those decades but actively participated in them. Want to know how his life turned out? Read the story.

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