

TREYBIG FAMILY TOUR AND REUNION Germany, May 27-June 9, 2000

On November 25, 1845, Nicolaus **Treybig**, his wife Maria Barbara **Plonne**, and their four surviving children of Veilsdorf, Germany, sailed from Antwerp for Texas on the sailing ship Nahant. The family was part of the Adelsverein colonization effort. The weather conditions that fall and winter were so severe that the ship had only sailed as far as the coast of England by March 18, 1846, when it wrecked off the coast of Torbay during a storm. Spending almost two months in England, the passengers were finally picked up by the ship Timoleon on May 5, 1846. After a total journey of nearly nine months, they finally arrived in Galveston on August 8, 1846. There, they were greeted with the news that the Verein effort was experiencing a variety of problems. As a result, Nicolaus, Maria, and children Friedrich, Caroline, Elise, and Bernhardt left the group. They settled first in the Spring area near Houston and later in the Shelby area of Austin County.

Almost 155 years later on May 27, 2000, a group of twenty-one Treybig descendants, eight spouses, and one tour guide flew from Houston for Germany and a family reunion in the ancestral village of Veilsdorf. After an uneventful trip of about nine hours in the relative comfort of tourist class, the group arrived in Frankfurt. There, they were greeted by a small welcoming party of German cousins before continuing by bus. The first week was spent touring parts of southern Germany including Heidelberg, Munich, Neuschwanstein, and the Dachau concentration camp as well as Salzburg, Austria.

On June 1 the Texans were joyfully greeted in Veilsdorf with signs and the waving of German and American flags. During the two days and three nights in the Veilsdorf area, the Texans stayed with the German cousins. The host families were part of the welcoming committee along with other relatives and friends. Many of the Texan cousins had not known each other before the trip. Most had never met any of the German cousins although about twenty of the Germans had attended the 1996 Nicolaus Treybig Family reunion in Shelby.

The day before the reunion was spent touring the Veilsdorf area which is in the southern part of the state of Thuringia. The Thuringian Wald (forest) is the "green heart" of Germany, the country's largest expanse of medium-altitude wooded mountains. The Rennsteig footpath runs for 168 kilometers across several mountains up a thousand meters high. Thuringia was part of East Germany prior to reunification. The village of Veilsdorf is on the Werra River and has about 2,900 inhabitants.

The area tour included visiting the old border between East and West which was only a short distance from Veilsdorf. The caravan of cars made stops in Eisfeld and in Neuhaus to visit its glass factory for a tour and shopping. A German-style Texas bar-b-que at the home of one of the German cousins concluded a full day.

Some members of the group stayed with family near Sonneberg, about twenty miles from

Veilsdorf. They toured that part of Germany and had the opportunity to visit a zoo, a doll museum, a toy factory, the Luther House, St. Peter's Lutheran state church, and the Franciscan monastery and church of Vierzehnheiligen. A shopping expedition was also included.

The reunion was held on Saturday, June 3, with an attendance of about 125. Cousins came from various parts of Germany to join the Texans. The program included German dancers and singers, delicious German desserts and other foods, a raffle of Texas items provided by the Texas cousins, good fellowship, and walks through the village. The Texans furnished flowers for the church of their ancestors where a presentation was made in German. The language barrier prevented the two groups from having completely satisfying conversations. However, enough of the Germans had some English speaking skills to compensate for the few Texans with German speaking skills.

On Sunday, June 4 the Texans left their German cousins at the site where they met them -- the Zur Linde Gasthaus in Veilsdorf. Again there were flags waving -- this time with the Germans waving American flags and the Texans waving German flags. Friendships were made in the three days so there was much hugging as well as some tears as the cousins made their farewells, and the Texans continued toward the northern part of Germany.

The first stop on the second stage of the tour was in Eisenach, the birthplace of Bach. The group visited the Wartburg castle where Martin Luther stayed while he translated the New Testament as well as the Martin Luther House and the Bach House. The group also made a stop in nearby Marksuhl, the home of George **Wassermann**, husband of Caroline Treybig.

They then continued on to Velmeden, Hessisch-Lichtenau, the home of Elise **Heine**, wife of Bernhardt Treybig. In Velmeden they were welcomed by representatives from the area Chamber of Commerce who provided information about the Werra-Meissner region. This region borders the former East Germany. Because few West Germans traveled to East Germany, few tourists visited the Werra-Meissner region during the division of Germany. As a result, this area of West Germany was affected economically. A special effort is now being made to encourage tourism. Two local historians were also present; they contributed additional Heine and **Dippel** records for the Bernhardt family history.

A rainy morning tour included the church built in the early 1400's and a house museum established by a Heine descendant. The village celebrated its 1225th anniversary in August. One final stop was made before the bus left Velmeden. At the local home furnishings store the Texans had the opportunity to buy lace curtains like those they had been seeing in homes and businesses throughout Germany.

The tour then continued toward the port of Hamburg. Stops before and after the visit to Hamburg included Amelinghausen, Hildesheim, Lueneberg, Reinstorf and Gifhorn. Four members of the group have connections with both Reinstorf and Lueneberg through their **Harms** ancestors. Treybig cousins in Gifhorn entertained the Texans with an asparagus luncheon at a

restaurant in near-by Winkel followed by coffee and dessert at the home of one of the cousins. Asparagus is considered a delicacy and, fortunately for the Treybiggs, was in season during their visit.

The final stop for the tour was Feudingen, Bad Laasphe, which was the home of Katherine **Wunderlich**, wife of Friedrich Treybig, and Henry Wunderlich, husband of Fredericka Treybig. The two Wunderlichs were cousins. One of the Wunderlich families still living in Feudingen provided a tour of the area, including their historical home. At this time no relationship has been determined between the Treybig Wunderlich and the host Wunderlich families. Some of Bernhardt's descendants also made a side trip to nearby Oberndorf, Womelsdorf, Birkelbach, and Birkefehl. Their **Knebel** and **Muesse** ancestors came from these villages. A Friedrich descendant had previously made contact with **Gotthardt** relatives in Siegen and was able to spend the day with her newly found cousins.

On Friday, June 9, the tour group left Germany for the ten-hour return flight to Houston. Now they look forward to April 21, 2001, when the Nicolaus Treybig family will celebrate 155 years in Texas. They expect a group of the German cousins to join them for a Texas celebration.

Elise, one of the four children who came to Texas, also died in Texas. Fredericka was born while the family was in the Spring area. Seven additional children had been born to Nicolaus and Maria in Veilsdorf; however, all died in infancy or in childhood. The Friedrich Treybig family was represented on the tour by Dianne Gotthardt **Bridges** and her husband Ron of Fair Oaks Ranch; Kathryn **Alex Hancock** and her husband Harvey of San Antonio; Joyce Treybig **McCulloch**, her daughter Angie McCulloch **Cox**, and her grandson Derek Cox, all of Dallas; Dorothy Treybig **Rotzler** and her daughter Joyce Rotzler **West**, both of Taft; and Jan Treybig of Arlington.

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Caroline Treybig Wassermann's descendants included Elnora Harms **Birkelbach** of Angleton and her daughter Karen Birkelbach **Smith** of Houston; Lillie Harms **Maxwell**, her husband Dale of Plainview, and their daughter Janice Maxwell **Ray** of Amarillo; and Ruth Wassermann **Schultz**, her husband Paul, and their daughter Sara, all of New Baden.

Descendants of Bernhardt Treybig included Bill Treybig and his wife Dorothy of Kerrville; Nancy **Marek Christenberry** and Arliss Treybig of El Campo; Mary **Dorotik** Treybig of Wharton, wife of descendant Lawrence Treybig; Cynthia **Tomchesson** Treybig of Sugar Land, wife of descendant Chris Treybig; Wanza Treybig of Bishop; and Jason **Dunsmore** of New Braunfels. Jason flew over with the group but stayed with the German cousins for several weeks before returning to Texas. Elaine Treybig **Terlinden** of Meerbusch, Germany, also attended the

reunion. Married now to a German, she is originally from Port Lavaca and Houston and is a Bernhardt descendant.

Descendant Sharon **Geise Hutto**, her husband Stan of San Antonio, and her brother Glenn Geise of Houston represented the Fredericka Treybig Wunderlich Family. They did not travel with the group to northern Germany. Instead they remained with German cousins and toured other parts of Germany, including Hetschbach, Schleusingen, Rappelsdorf, and Schmalkalden. These towns are the homes of some of the German cousins. A part of the tour was by train allowing the trio to witness the back roads of the former East Germany with the vacated factories but also to notice the efforts to rebuild the areas. Special sites in and around the towns were the Bertholdsburg castle which sits in the middle of Schleusingen, and the Schloss Wilhelmsburg near Schmalkalden. They also had the opportunity to visit the beautiful Pilgrimage Church of Vierzehnheiligen. The Huttos and Mr. Geise rejoined the group in Feudingen.

Sigrid **Huth** of Burton served as tour guide for the Texas group as well as for the German group which came to Texas for the 1996 reunion. On the way from Munich to Veilsdorf, the bus made a special stop in the medieval walled town of Greiding in central Franconia. As a child Mrs. Huth lived in Greiding for two years following the end of World War II.

The Nicolaus Treybig family held its first reunion in 1940; the annual reunions continued for many years. However, with the deaths of the first generation and lack of interest of many of the younger generations, the reunions ceased in the 1970's. During the Texas Sesquicentennial in 1986 about 550 Treybig, spouses, and friends celebrated the family's 140 years in Texas. Subsequent gatherings were held in 1991 and in 1996, the 150th year celebration.

The first Treybig reunion in Germany was held in 1990 when three of the Texas Treybig's visited their German cousins. Although reunification had not occurred, the borders were open, and the East German family members were able to travel to the West where the reunion was held. Many of the family had lost touch during the control by the communist regime so the 1990 reunion was a special celebration. The three Texans visited again in 1995, and a reunion was then held in the former East Germany near Veilsdorf with more German cousins attending. The 2000 reunion in Germany recognized the 155th year of the Treybig's leaving Germany while the 2001 reunion in Texas will celebrate the 155th year of the family's arrival in Texas.

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