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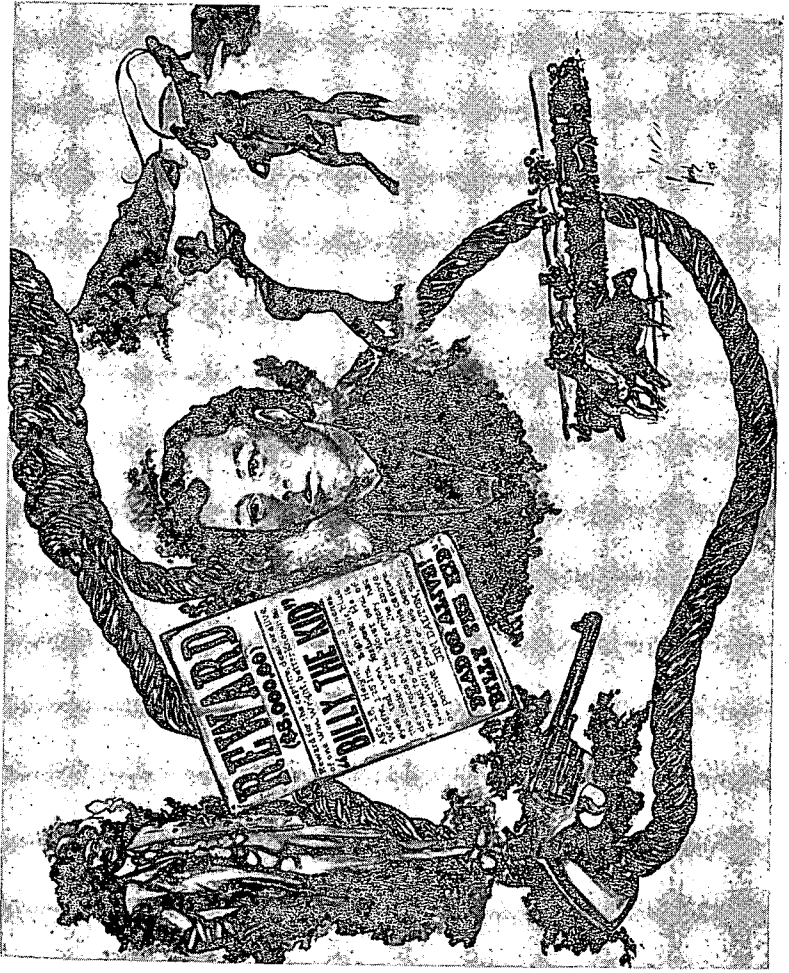
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A NEW MEXICO PIONEER OF THE 1880's

By LILLIE GERHARDT ANDERSON *

MY FATHER, Frederick Gerhardt, became a New Mexico pioneer in April of 1882. And, as other New Mexico pioneers, who in their strivings for a livelihood, contributed to the building of our glorious State, so my father also contributed his bit.

He was born in Friesenheim, Baden, Germany on November 11, 1835, the youngest of twenty children—ten half brothers, seven real brothers, and two sisters.

It was inevitable that in such a large family some of the members would scarcely know one another, but the amazing fact was, that of his seventeen brothers, his oldest half-brother, George Gerhardt, was the brother whom he knew best.

George also made his home in Friesenheim, where he held an important office in the Dukedom of Baden; and the youngest of his three sons, Alfried, was my father's pal and University classmate.

Becoming dissatisfied with the many government restrictions of his native land, Frederick decided to embark for the "Land of the Free" and landed in New York City in 1852.

Educated at the University of Karlsruhe, Germany, where he had studied the supplementary languages French and Latin, he was now in the United States unable to speak his new country's language. His knowledge of Latin, how-

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ever, proved of great value to him in this dire dilemma. He had brought with him a Latin Bible, so he now procured an English copy and, by comparing the two, made his initial venture into the intricacies of the English tongue.

After gaining sufficient mastery of the new language to enable him to obtain employment, he got work in a silk factory; later he went to Massachusetts, and then to New Jersey, continuing all the while to work in textile factories.

When wanderlust again seized him, it carried him to Texas. This was about the year 1860. And it was while clerking in a store in San Antonio, that he first met his future wife, Sophie Louisa Duelm, also a native of Germany, and the youngest of eight children, who had come with her family from Hagen, Waldeck, Germany when she was but nine years old. The family had landed in Galveston, Texas in 1855, and had settled in San Antonio.

Soon Civil War clouds began to loom ominously in the sky. Frederick's sympathies were with the Union, but he was rejected as a soldier on account of an eye injury to his right eye, sustained when he was but three years old while he and another small boy, having found some live caps, were innocently exploding them by striking them with stones.

Rejected for the army, Frederick decided to remain in the South. In making this decision, he did not foresee that he would eventually be conscripted by the Confederacy and forced to drive supply teams, bringing supplies from Mexico.

Later, he traveled with General Robert E. Lee's army, cooking for the General and his staff officers.

This close association with General Lee developed into a warm friendship, so that when four decades later he was requested to suggest a name for a new grandson, he replied without hesitation, "Lee." Thus it came about that the grandson of a loyal hearted Northerner bears the name of a famous Southern general.

Immediately following the close of the Civil War, Frederick Gerhardt was united in marriage with Sophie Louisa Duelm in San Antonio, Texas, on March 4, 1865. Destiny

had performed her miracle of bringing these two across oceans from their native country, to meet and unite in their adopted land.

For many years after his marriage, father held various city and county offices. He taught school in a German settlement for two years, and for a time owned and operated a farm.

In the spring of 1882, he came with his family to New Mexico, after learning from his mother, Mary, in Germany that his brother John was living out here. (His mother's lovely German letters came but once a year, as the postage on a single letter was 50 cents).

At that time the nearest railroad from Texas came around through Kansas City, and terminated at Las Vegas, from which city the family traveled by wagon to the Pecos River, about twenty miles northwest of Fort Sumner.

Here adjoining his brother's ranch, father filed his homestead of 160 acres—all the government land allowed at that time. His claim had a natural spring, providing water for house use, and river front with public domain for raising stock.

To make an immediate beginning in the sheep industry, he took a flock on shares from his brother, John, thereby earning at the end of a year a certain percentage of the sheep in payment for their care.

John had come to America with Frederick in 1852, but they had separated in New York City, and had not in the thirty years elapsed seen or heard of each other.

Two other brothers had come to America during the intervening years, but both had remained in the East: Jacob in New York, and Joseph in Massachusetts.

Another brother bore the name Ludwig; but there were three brothers whose names I do not know. The sisters were Carolina and Anna Mari. (As all brothers do, father spoke oftener of his sisters than of his brothers).

It was Anna Mari who, when their mother became too feeble to write, wrote the yearly German letter to father. Father had saved all the letters from his mother and sister,

but years later, while his desk was in storage, vandals broke in and scattered his papers and letters. When the depredation was discovered, only three letters were legible. These were from his sister, and had not been written in consecutive years.

About the middle 1880's, some of father's friends living in Las Vegas re-visited Germany, and went to see father's half-brother, George, who was then in his 90th year. After he was well past 91 years, a letter came for father, informing him of George's passing.

John had enlisted in the United States Army in New York, and had been sent to New Mexico in 1860, during the Indian conflict. Subsequently, he served as a male nurse, with the Army Medical Corps, for the duration of the Civil War, in New Mexico.

John's home stood about a mile distant from father's new home. His land had many good springs, and he grew a nice fruit orchard, and always raised a good vegetable garden, of which he was proud. He enjoyed his home, which he had named Cedar Springs, for the natural springs, and the dwarf cedar trees that dotted his land. At this time he had a family of six children. He was engaged in the sheep industry, and also had a small herd of cattle.

(The ranch has now long been owned and operated by strangers. Of the large family, only two are living in New Mexico).

A short distance up the Pecos River, Pablo (Paul) Beaubien, son of the famous Carlos Beaubien of frontier days, and land grant fame, was operating John's irrigated farm, and raising sheep. He later moved to Fort Sumner.

About four miles to the southeast, on the Alamogordo (stout Cottonwood) Creek, Captain J. C. Clancy, a retired English sea captain, was engaged in sheep raising. He had come to New Mexico about 1870. His first sheep had been the long haired Old Mexico breed, which he had not liked, and which he finally drove to California and traded there for sheep-with-good-wool; these he again drove back, consuming two years in the long journey to and from California.

His home, patterned after an old English castle, and which visitors to the Territory marveled about, and some mistook for an Indian fortress on account of its towers, was not built until 1886. (My father knew when the captain had it built. Before this time he had, as many other pioneers, lived in a dugout). Until the 1880's it had been almost impossible to obtain building materials.

Captain Clancy was a most delightful conversationalist. While captain of his ship, he had touched at almost every important world seaport. This enabled him to bring information of the wide world to the early settlers.

A few miles north of the Clancy ranch, lived the Jasper De Graftenried family, with their three sons and two daughters. They raised both cattle and sheep. Their strange cattle brand X, was named for its counterpart, Camp Stool.

Yes, there was a little schoolhouse—not red, but of gray sandstone—in which a certain Mrs. Mitchell held despotic sway.

In father's family, an older sister held daily school for the younger children. She taught German, reading and writing, along with the English lessons.

After living for seven years on the Pecos River, father moved with his family in 1889 to the Las Truchas Creek, about twenty miles northeast of Fort Sumner. Here he filed what at that time was known as pre-emption.

In that day of free grazing land, the large cattle companies dug wells and erected windmills at strategic watering places for their stock. The Fort Sumner Cattle Company had such a well, mill, and a one-roomed adobe building to house a maintenance man where my father filed his claim.

The Cattle Company had not owned the land, and had relinquished the improvements, which were very convenient for use by the two Gerhardt sons, Herman and Carl, in building the new home. Until it was ready for occupancy, the other members of the family stayed in the home of the only close neighbor, Joe De Oliveira, who lived three miles north in the same valley.

With Spanish helpers, who understood the making of

adobes, a Spanish-Indian styled house soon took form. Herman did all necessary carpenter work.

This home stood near the center of an ample valley, traversed from northeast to southwest by the Las Truchas (trout) Creek, and rimmed on the north and east by the breaks of the Plains.

The family learned, soon after moving to the creek, that "Truchas" was a misnomer. After several weeks of observation, the supposed trout were discovered growing legs, feet and tails. Their bodies were slender; they were not tadpoles, but were salamanders in their aquatic larval state. Soon after they began to disappear from the water, black, yellow-spotted adult salamanders were found in the damp soil of shady places. Evidently the creek had been named by explorers who had not remained long enough to observe the development of their trout.

Neighbors were fewer here, and lived at greater distances, than they had on the Pecos. There was no school house, either red or gray. Sister Paulina continued her daily classes in our home. I was still too small for studies, but enjoyed slipping into the schoolroom to observe the others at their lessons. If a lesson in geography happened to be in progress, for my benefit I'd soon hear, "Name the capital of Arkansas." My hand would "go up" and I'd answer delightedly, "Little Rock." Then, having exhausted the extent of my knowledge, I'd slip out again to play.

On the new ranch, with the help of his two sons, father continued in the sheep raising industry. The vast Llano Estacado (Staked Plains) afforded lush summer grazing for the sheep, while their foothills and canyons provided good winter shelter. Grass grew two feet high. In the valley, it was harvested in the fall for winter hay for the horses and the milk cows, but on the plains it sometimes produced devastating prairie fires, from a carelessly tossed burning match. These fires could be seen from a distance of a hundred miles. The terrible grass fire of December, 1894, which started on the New Mexico plains, and raced with the wind into the

Texas Panhandle, where it burned the southern half of the vast XIT Ranch, was an awesome and frightening spectacle.

In dealing with Spanish sheep herders, father had found it necessary to add Spanish to his list of acquired languages. Both sons, also, learned to speak Spanish, and the older girls acquired enough of the tongue to understand what supplies were needed when the camp cook came in to replenish his larder, or to receive the freight brought by Spanish freighters when father and the boys happened to be away from home.

The wool and pelts from the sheep were sent by freight wagons to Las Vegas, where they were sold to the large wholesale stores, Gross, Blackwell, and Ilfeld, and supplies loaded for the ranch, for the return trip of 120 miles, which often required two weeks, as most of the Spanish freighters drove burro teams, or poorly fed horses.

The sheep for market were sold on the premises to sheep buyers who, after acquiring a large herd, drove them to Dodge City, or Wichita, Kansas, from which points they were shipped to Kansas City.

Through the years, father had continued his subscription to his Texas newspaper. Each issue carried, in addition to the news, several chapters of a serial German love story, which father read aloud to mother in the evenings while she was occupied in hand sewing for the family. It was for the heroine of one of these novels that I was named. To this incident, I have always attributed my romantic nature.

Father and mother always spoke German at home when there were no English speaking visitors present.

We had few German visitors. Some of the early storekeepers at Fort Sumner were Germans, and sometimes visited in our home. And I always delighted in hearing Mr. Albert Strauss speaking German with mother. He was the founder of the © (called Circle S) Ranch, about thirty miles southwest of the present town of Tucumcari, and was the brother of the elder Mrs. Kohn, early New Mexico pioneer. He was an interesting talker, and as he traveled a great deal

over the state, could give us news of some of our other friends.

Ours was a reading family. In those early days, the *Ladies' Home Journal* was a masterpiece of information and inspiration. Before I was four years old, sister Paulina read aloud to us from its inspirational columns. I recall vividly, thinking to myself, "Oh! If I could only write like that!"

There was usually one of Ella Wheeler Wilcox's beautiful poems in each copy, which our sister also read to us. In addition, the boys read *The Youth's Companion*.

When I was about seven years old, this precious sister read aloud to us in the evenings from Charles Dickens' works. I enjoyed his stories immensely, and wept for dear little Oliver Twist.

This custom of reading aloud was continued during our summer vacations at home, even after we began going away to school. At least three of us would change about reading several chapters from a good book during the afternoon rest hour. In this way we read Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. It was triple fun with three to laugh about his idiotical adventures.

In the winter of 1895, father and mother re-visited their old home in Texas, where mother's relatives, and many former friends of both, welcomed them. Before this time, the Fort Worth and Denver railroad had built through Amarillo, Texas, enabling them to board the train there, and giving them a much more direct route than when they came to New Mexico, thirteen years earlier.

Politically, father was a staunch Republican, as were most of the early day ranchers, who realized the necessity of a firm tariff on wool, pelts, and hides, if they were to survive in business. The chief political issues of that day were a high tariff, or free trade.

The sheepmen suffered real hardships during Grover Cleveland's free trade administration in the early 90's, when the country became flooded with cheap Australian wool, and the home product dropped to 3 cts. a lb. This caused a great drop in the price of sheep, also.

Father had been a member of the Lutheran Church in Germany where, with his trained tenor voice, he sang in the church choir. In Texas, he again affiliated with the Lutheran Church, where mother was also a member.

After coming to New Mexico, on the few occasions when he was in Las Vegas over a Sunday, his clear voice, to the delight of his friends, would be heard coming from a back pew of the First Presbyterian Church, singing Martin Luther's *Ein Feste Burg* (Fortress) and other hymns in German.

By the middle 90's, the elder son Herman had married Emma Whitmore, daughter of the very early (1849) New Mexico pioneer, James Whitmore, and had started his own sheep ranch in the lower part of the valley.

In 1898, father purchased a herd of good grade cattle, and his son, Carl, assisted him in managing the ranch, gradually selling the sheep and buying more cattle; thus finally changing the valley into a cattle ranch.

Father's first cattle brand was TK (called TK bar). Later he had this brand cancelled and used XTK.

Many people have been deeply impressed by the marvel of our country's "Four Corners" where four of our states join at their corners; but we experienced no less a marvel in our Las Truchas, New Mexico, home, where we lived in four counties without moving; first in San Miguel County, then Guadalupe, then Leonard Wood, and lastly in Quay.

Leonard Wood County was short-lived. It had been created to get the court house and county seat for Santa Rosa from Puerto de Luna, where they had been before Santa Rosa came into existence. This accomplished, the name was again changed to Guadalupe.

With the completion of the Santa Fe Railroad's "Belen Cut-off" in 1907, and the consequent flocking in of dry land farmers, who filed every available 160 acres of land, a "death blow" was dealt to free grazing and stock raising as it had existed up to that time.

When my father told the first comers that they couldn't possibly make a living on one fourth section of land, and that

many of them wouldn't be able to get wells of drinking water on their dry claims, they still felt that they could do both. They said to him, "Since the country has just been opened for settlement, we want a piece of free land too."

They couldn't believe my father when he told them that the country had been open for settlement for fifty years. They were so firmly convinced in their belief that they began re-naming hills and valleys that had been named for decades. Our Lone Mesa became Mt. Alice, for Alice Roosevelt, Teddy Roosevelt's daughter, and the Las Truchas Valley became Gerhardt Valley. The mesa reverted to its earlier name, after drought forced most of the new settlers to abandon their claims, but the valley retained the new name, because the Gerhardt family had lived there for so many years. It is now recognized over most of the State as Gerhardt Valley.

Father's prophecy of a dearth of water proved true. When the new settlers came to live on their homesteads, they soon began coming in wagons loaded with empty barrels to haul drinking water from our well.

We had a good well, but the added drain was too great. Soon there was not enough water for our cattle and garden. Scarcity of water and the limited grazing room soon forced Carl to lease pasture near Santa Rosa for the cattle.

The family continued to live on the ranch, where father now spent most of his time raising a good garden.

Carl finally sold the cattle and bought irrigated land at Fort Sumner, which he developed into alfalfa farms and a nice fruit orchard.

Herman had read the "Handwriting on the Wall," so when the first locaters began to bring people from the railroad, at Taiban and Fort Sumner, to locate claims for them, he sold his sheep and moved to Tucumcari, where he went into the abstract business, in the fall of 1908.

For a time he served as County Road Superintendent. Eventually, he was elected County Treasurer for Quay County for four years. He also served for a number of years as City Treasurer of Tucumcari.

By the time the Federal Government in Washington,

D. C., came to a realization of the plight of the dry farmers trying to eke out a living on their pocket-handkerchief sized parcels of land, and passed the 320 acre homestead law, most of the farmers were gone.

The few who remained were those who had been able to get water wells. The families stayed on the land, with a milk cow, chickens, and a small garden plot, while the husbands, or sons went away to earn wages. These now filed abandoned claims, adjoining their original filing, or bought relinquishments. In time they acquired sufficient land to become stockmen-farmers, and now own modern homes and cars.

Carl had not used his filing right, nor had sister Clara, who had been teaching school, so both now filed 320 acres of abandoned and relinquished land adjoining the home ranch. Eventually, Carl fenced all the family owned land, and leased it for pasture.

By 1909, we were receiving our mail addressed to Harris, New Mexico. A combination Post Office and country store had been established about two miles northeast of our home. The mail service came overland from Tucumcari, servicing several country Post Offices on the Plains.

A pavilion, with a cedar brush covering, had been erected midway between Harris and our home, where Sunday School and Church services were held. The pavilion was also used for group singing.

By the middle of June 1914, the family began getting mail at Taft, four miles west of our home, where in addition to a Post Office and store a school house had been erected. The Harris Post Office was discontinued.

After a few terms of school, buses began taking the children to school in Fort Sumner, and the new school building was left vacant. The Post Office too was discontinued after a few years. The sparse settlers, now owning cars, drove to Fort Sumner for their mail.

The many members of father's large family, although they occasionally visited other states, made their permanent homes in New Mexico. The eldest daughter moved to California, when the youngest of her family begged her to make

a home for her in Los Angeles while she attended the University. She remained in California for a few years after her daughter's graduation, but eventually returned to New Mexico, and again made her home in Tucumcari; so that her stay in California became merely an interlude.

Some of the grandchildren are scattered far from the home state, while many still reside in the Land of Enchantment.

The grandchildren of the Gerhardt name—Herman's children—are represented by Alvin W., a mining engineer in Arizona, Earl A., part owner and manager of a silk hose factory in Virginia, Herbert J., architect, and Herman F., automobile salesman, both of California, and Emma Gerhardt Rorick, a former high school commercial teacher, a Lieut. Wave in World War II, and now a Government worker at China Lake, California.

Carl was married in 1917 to Nettie Catherine Brown, of Fort Sumner, daughter of a Methodist minister. They had one child, Nettie Bernice Gerhardt, a former Tucumcari junior high school teacher, now Mrs. Neal C. Koll, who owns and operates the home ranch in Gerhardt Valley.

The other grandchildren, all successful in their respective work, live in Tucumcari, Clovis, ranch near Taiban, Albuquerque, Santa Rosa, Topeka, Kansas, and in Amarillo and El Paso, Texas.

One grandson (our son, T/Sgt. Felix Lorin) was sent to Hahn, Germany, with a Bomber Group last August. That is not far from my father's old home. He works in a supply department now, and is overseas for a three year term. His wife and little son went to Germany by ship from New York City to join him in November.

This is our son's second stay in Germany. In World War II, he was an aerial gunner on a B-24 Liberator Bomber, which was shot down near Bordeaux, France. Seconds before the bomber crashed in flames, the ten crew members parachuted, but seven of them had been wounded. Except for a tiny splinter of shrapnel that penetrated his eyelid and blinded his eye for a week, Felix was unhurt, but his para-

chute landed him in a tree from which he could not extricate himself. Frenchmen, alert for our flyers, watched him parachute, and came to his rescue. They also gave him clothes. His electrified flying suit was in shreds.

In trying to get back to his Base in England, Felix was captured by the Nazis and held for sixteen months in six different prison camps. He spent the first winter in Stalag Luft VI., built on the narrow neck of East Prussia, on the Baltic Sea. When he was liberated by Patton's 3d Army, on April 29, 1945, he was in a prisoner of war camp near Munich. He got home on July 12, 1945. In spite of months of hospitalization, and more months in prisoner of war camps (with the unceasing prayers of their families at home), all of Felix's fellow crewmen, except one, returned after the war.

Felix was stationed for eight months on Okinawa in 1947, and in 1950 he spent eight months on an Air Base in England. He saw most of the United States while in training, before being sent overseas on a bomber in the fall of 1943.

With the newer, faster transportation facilities, the grandchildren have traveled widely in the United States, and some have seen parts of Canada, Mexico, and Cuba. Thus they have shown their heritage of father's adventurous spirit.

Father was a kindly man who brought friendliness and melody to the silent prairies. He sang as he drove about the ranch, usually in the company of some of the children. Mother was sometimes along too.

At Christmas time, father lead the family in singing beautiful German hymns, as they gathered about the Christmas tree—always a huge cedar that almost touched the ceiling. He also lead in appropriate hymns at Easter, and at Thanksgiving time.

He had a deep appreciation of Nature, and was especially awed by the magnificent star constellations. He would pour forth his admiration in song on lovely starlit nights.

He delighted in Halley's Comet, when it made its reappearance in 1910, and watched it every night as long as it

was visible. It had been seen while he was a baby, and he'd been told about it.

He sang his farewell to Earth in the beautiful German hymn *Die Heimat Der Seele* (The Home of the Soul) two days before his death, which occurred on October 21, 1914, at the age of 79 years, at his ranch home, where he lies at rest in the family cemetery.
