The Malcontents of the Old World: German Revolutionaries in Early Texas (1842-1865)

by

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1839  January: Austin founded as Texas’ capital.

1841  December: The Austin ‘Archive War’.

1842  April: The Adelsverein is established near Mainz.

1844  July: Prince Solms arrives in Texas as Commissioner-General of the Adelsverein.


1846  May: Fredericksburg founded.

1848  February: Revolution sparks in France. March: Revolution spreads to the German states, including Altenburg. June: Adolph Douai arrested for the first time.

1852  May: Douai arrives in Texas.

1854  January: Frederick Law Olmsted arrives in Texas and meets Douai. May: Meeting of the San Antonio convention of Germans.

1855  February: The San Antonio Zeitung calls for a free state of West Texas.

1856  May: The Zeitung is shut down and Douai leaves Texas for the Northeast.

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Introduction

In early March, 1861, the small German settled town of Round Top, Texas discovered it would soon be at war. Though the town had strongly voted against secession the month before, news of the Civil War nonetheless caused a flurry of excitement. As the people read of the recently adjourned secession convention in Austin and began their daily routine, a striking figure rode into the town square. Peter Carl von Rosenberg, Round Top’s oldest German immigrant at ninety years of age, dressed himself in the tattered Prussian Uhlan cavalryman’s uniform which he had worn during his service in the Napoleonic Wars. Von Rosenberg rode through the streets of the little town, and “called upon the young men of the place to enlist in the Confederate army and to remember how their fathers had dared to do and die in the old land in 1813, when their country was threatened by invasion.”¹ All four of his sons soon followed their father’s advice and joined up. One saw action at the Siege of Vicksburg and two fought at Calcasieu Pass, where they received citations for valor.²

Round Top’s resident kavallerist combines a fascinatingly incongruent set of ideologies into one figure: Confederate secessionism, early German nationalism, militant patriotism, and a little Francophobia thrown in for good measure.

Von Rosenberg’s recruitment drive is an apt reminder of how overwhelmingly complex were the political and social issues of the Civil War. The controversial and unresolved questions raised by slavery, state’s rights, nullification, and even the

² James C. Kearney, "German Loyalty During the Civil War," in The Civil War in Texas: Changing Interpretations After 150 Years, ed. Dr. Beverly Tomek and James Smallwood (Victoria, TX 2011), 5.
inherent differences between the North and the South have plagued the United States since its very founding. These tensions became unbearable to some after the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860. The sharply divided nation had decided in the North’s favor by perfectly constitutional means, but the South would not stand for what some went so far as to call “the Revolution of 1860,” which slaveholders foresaw as the first stage towards eventual emancipation.\(^3\) In place of Federalism and Whiggery, the secessionists sought to establish a hierarchical conservatism, based on white supremacy and “the proclaimed virtues of ‘small government’.”\(^4\) In von Rosenberg’s adopted home region of Central Texas, the matter is further confused thanks to a unique context which straddles these important questions: the controversial presence of major German immigrant communities with an entirely foreign ideological framework.

As happened all across Texas, and indeed across the rest of the United States, a tension that had been mounting for decades was being released in Round Top. As the townspeople weighed their allegiances that day, in truth they were being asked to resolve in a matter of hours some of the seemingly unanswerable questions that had plagued their community since its founding. Secession was ultimately as much an issue of identity for the Germans of Texas as anything else. After all, what part of the world could they claim to represent? Their homeland of Germany did not yet exist as a unified state, Texas had been an independent nation for only a brief eleven years, annexation into the United States had been in effect for only sixteen, and the nascent

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\(^4\) Ibid., 779.
Confederacy was still only a country on paper. Furthermore, at this key moment the German community itself was not a homogenous block. The town of Round Top had been formed by multiple, distinct waves of immigrants, with settlers coming from nearly every German principality, Protestant and Catholic alike. In other words, this Texas German community was an equally intriguing and complicated one which was not ready to choose sides at this crucial historical moment. For these reasons, there is no single interpretive framework which can satisfactorily examine their political and social principles. The eclectic nature of the German community is a crucial element to understanding its most definitive characterizations.

This thesis will argue that the traditional understanding of the German immigrants as supporters of the Union is reflective of the political beliefs of only a small minority group. Despite the story of von Rosenberg, German immigrants in this period are generally believed to have been uniformly abolitionist and anti-secessionist. This widespread, blanket assumption of pro-Union sentiment has led to many misconceptions and misinterpretations amongst both contemporaries and historians. In fact, in the decade leading up to the Civil War, many English language newspapers in Texas, and the American settlers who read them, believed all the Germans to be “damned Dutch abolitionists,” a dangerous, if woefully ignorant, charge in that period.\(^5\) It is undoubtedly correct that the Germans owned fewer slaves than their American counterparts: in 1850, only 9% of German-born Texans owned slaves, compared to 59% of Southern-born whites.\(^6\) Also, as some German


\(^{6}\) Ibid.
intellectuals did criticize slavery, there was just enough evidence to pigeonhole all Germans as abolitionists. That characterization has pervaded all accounts, historical or otherwise, of America’s nineteenth century German immigrants. To give one notable example, the immensely popular novelist of the late-nineteenth century most well-known for his works based in the Old West, Karl May, employed the liberal stereotype repeatedly. In his first Winnetou volume, one German immigrant to America is depicted as a “contrite former university instructor” who is condemned “for his allegiance to the Enlightenment, for having robbed people of their faith, and for having not even regarded the king as sacred.” Even today, the abolitionist stereotype of the German settler is still referenced in popular culture. Quentin Tarantino’s Django Unchained features a German bounty hunter named Dr. Schulz (played by Christoph Waltz), who travels the ante-bellum Deep South freeing slaves and killing their former masters. Undoubtedly these characters draw on a deeply engrained perception of contemporary Germans as left leaning opponents of the repressive Southern status quo. Studying the validity of this portrayal is difficult considering the topic’s complex history.

Unfortunately, there is no satisfactory historiographic explanation of the community’s supposed liberal tendencies. Perhaps the most influential text on the subject of the Texas Germans is Terry Jordan’s German Seed in Texas Soil, first published in 1966. Jordan’s work is cited in practically all subsequent histories, a

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9 Jordan, *German Seed in Texas Soil*. 
few of which offer only passing reference as if giving some sort of obligatory homage. As a geographer, Jordan presents a careful, numbers-driven study of the community drawing on census data, agricultural outputs, and price records. In a different work that draws on the same evidence, he states that the apparent liberalism of the German immigrants is based on “myths, or stereotypes” which have pervaded our understanding of their beliefs. Jordan takes a measured approach to this issue, suggesting that these stereotypes have a basis in fact but are not definitive. This conclusion has subsequently set up two important branches of discussion which are deeply intertwined: whether the stereotype of the liberal German has a historic basis in truth, and the subsequent history of the stereotype itself.

The former topic, which concerns the Unionist and abolitionist tendencies of the German Texans, has been extensively studied. Here the liberal label does have a basis in fact, once again taking into account that the German settlers of Texas tended to own significantly fewer slaves than their American counterparts. That trend was first noted by Frederick Law Olmsted, ardent abolitionist, journalist, and later one of the primary architects of New York’s Central Park. In the 1850’s, Olmsted traveled to Texas at the behest of Northern newspapers. His writings were later published as Journey Through Texas, a collection which is often relied upon as an important primary work. Olmsted repeatedly declared that the German immigrants were universally opposed to slavery, making him a key source on the topic. However, his abolitionist agenda is rarely taken into account. Olmsted’s writings were abolitionist

propaganda which consciously used the German community as a model alternative to the South’s slave economy. Without that context, many subsequent works have misinterpreted his characterizations of the Germans. For example, Gilbert Benjamin’s *The Germans in Texas*, another foundational secondary text, depends heavily on Olmsted’s testimony without consideration of his agenda.\(^\text{12}\) Dismissal of Olmsted’s political biases can also be found in his most influential biography, Laura Roper’s *FLO*, though Justin Martin’s more recent *Genius of Place* is thankfully more critical in that area.\(^\text{13,14}\)

Some historians have looked beyond Olmsted’s experiences to find other indications of the community’s political beliefs. Glen Lich’s essay “Goethe on the Guadalupe” suggests that the Romantic intellectual tradition of Germany presupposed any attraction to slavery amongst the immigrants.\(^\text{15}\) Alternatively, Dale Baum’s *The Shattering of Texas Unionism* emphasizes the fact that in the state-wide referendum on secession held in February 1861, most German counties favored staying in the Union by a large margin, voting against the opinion of a majority of the state’s population.\(^\text{16}\) Furthermore, German loyalty to the Confederacy was so suspect during the Civil War that martial law was declared in some counties to discourage and root

out Unionism, a story emphasized in Mary O’Rear’s *Reckoning at the River*. These theories are not mutually exclusive, but individually they are not convincing.

Ultimately, the historiography of this subject is confused and disjointed because of its intensely incongruent complexities—feudalism and capitalism, nationalism and secessionism, Southern pride and German identity.

American imperialism can be found at the root of many of these conflicts, which had wide implications for immigrant groups. Partisan deliberations over the wisdom of expansionism provoked subsequent debates about the future of slavery. Western territorial growth in places like Texas also strengthened the position of pro-slavery factions, while the inclusion of ‘free’ states did just the opposite. Thanks to ideological differences, the Democrats tended to support expansion much more than the Whigs, which “provoked bitter dissent within the national polity.”

Minority immigrant groups such as the Germans found themselves in the middle of this conflict as Nativist and economic anxieties grew more and more intense. The problem of slavery was therefore a fundamentally defining issue of their presence in newly acquired territories such as Texas. The complex nature of these topics makes it difficult to parse through the history of the German immigrants to understand even the most basic facts.

Despite the myriad hypotheses concerning their liberal tendencies, historians have only recently taken note of the diverse immigrant waves which actually made up

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the German community. The first major group of immigrants (sometimes called ‘the Grays’) mostly arrived in the early 1840’s through the patronage of European immigration companies, most notably the Adelsverein. As will be demonstrated in Chapter I, the aristocratic leaders of this organization exercised a systematic policy of self-segregation which sequestered their colonies away from pre-existing American settlements. The main Adelsverein settlements of Fredericksburg and New Braunfels were therefore established in Texas’ largely unsettled Hill Country. The colonial leaders, such as Prince Solms and John Meusebach, hoped this would allow the Germans to maintain their unique cultural heritage, so that their identity would not be subsumed into that of the encompassing American society. The independence of German Texas was so strong that Meusebach even negotiated treaties with nearby Comanche tribes against the advice of the American dominated state government. This policy of isolation therefore led to a sort of social and political neutrality which detached the first wave of immigrants from the rest of Texas’ society. They did not publicly participate in debates about slavery or abolitionism, as these were considered to be issues outside of their realm of concern. Therefore we cannot look to the first immigrants as the source of the liberal stereotype.

Chapter II will consider the second important wave of German immigrants (‘the Greens’ or more commonly ‘the Forty-Eighters’), who differed greatly from their predecessors. This group was composed of highly politicized refugees, generally socialists, fleeing from persecution in the wake of the failed 1848 Revolutions. This small but vocal minority had a disproportionate role in public discourse in the years leading up to the Civil War that created the stereotype of the abolitionist German
immigrant. The most complete work on this subject is Mischa Honeck’s *We Are the Revolutionists*, which explains this minority group’s impact.\(^\text{19}\) After their arrival, these liberal ‘Forty-Eighters’ were immediately caught in a series of contentious, sometimes violent disputes with both the American settlers (particularly the intolerant Know-Nothing nativists) and their more reclusive and conservative fellow Germans. For example, in May of 1854, the first German Texan political convention took place in San Antonio, ostensibly for the purposes of creating unified voting blocks for local offices and other such uncontroversial tasks.\(^\text{20}\) However, a minority faction of Forty-Eighters managed to tack on a last minute resolution that denounced slavery, which even went so far as to vaguely invite federal intervention to end its injustices. This resolution instigated a massive series of debates in the German and English newspapers which “caused many a rift between Germans in Texas and widened the gulf between the ‘Germans’ and the ‘Americans’.”\(^\text{21}\) The presence of the Forty-Eighters produced a confusing assortment of contradictory political and social views amongst the German community, a complexity that explains the muddled historiography.

The topic of slavery, the most contentious and divisive political issue in the decade leading up to the Civil War, had a particular salience to the revolutionary ideals of the Greens which contrasted heavily with the neutrality of the Grays. One Forty-Eighter named Adolph Douai founded the radical *San Antonio Zeitung*, a


\(^{21}\) Ibid.
newspaper which at one point explicitly called for the creation of a ‘free’ German state of West Texas.\(^{22}\) This stance, and Douai’s conspiratorial relationship with abolitionist Northerners such as Frederick Law Olmsted, prompted a violent backlash fanned by the American newspapers which ultimately led to his expulsion from the state. The dynamics introduced by men like Douai, who interrupted the community’s quiet policy of self-segregation, are commonly ignored in studies of the Texas Germans. Most histories do not take into account the unique impact that each successive wave of immigrants had on the community’s relationship to issues like slavery. Instead, the first settlers of the early 1840’s are often lumped together with the more political and vocal immigrants that came after. For this reason, the liberal political beliefs of the minority Greens have come to represent those all Texas Germans.

Finally, Chapter III will examine the ways in which the experiences of the Civil War solidified the fringe beliefs of the Forty-Eighters into the identity of the whole community. The Confederate military did not trust the Texas Germans, who they almost universally considered to be Unionists. That perception of disloyalty was in reference to the highly public debates instigated by the Forty-Eighters in the 1850’s. Also, voting patterns in the secession referendum clearly had a role in each individual community’s perceived loyalty to the Confederacy. German areas which voted in favor of secession, particularly New Braunfels, were heavily influenced by local newspapermen who explicitly sought to disassociate their communities from

\(^{22}\) In the mid-nineteenth century, the term ‘West Texas’ did not have the same vernacular meaning that it holds today. Most sources from that time apply the term to what is now colloquially referred to as ‘Central Texas’. As the Western portion of the state had not yet been settled, the Hill Country was generally viewed as embodying the Westerly most frontier.
charges of radicalism. Elsewhere, Confederate distrust burst into violent oppression in the summer of 1862. Martial law was declared in Fredericksburg’s Gillespie County in response to spurious rumors of an imminent German insurrection. Taken together with the community’s already marginal status as an ethnic and linguistic minority, this legal sanction invited a series of murders and lynchings at the hands Confederate soldiers. Tensions quickly escalated, leading a small group of German liberals (mostly Forty-Eighters), to attempt to flee for Mexico. They were hunted down and killed after a short skirmish, an event remembered as the ‘Massacre of the Nueces.’ These experiences solidified the perception of the Germans as an enemy of the Confederacy, a perception which has its historical antecedent in the beliefs of the Forty-Eighters.

This is the backdrop of von Rosenberg’s remarkable ride through Round Top. His equestrian soap boxing is already fascinating for its use of broad strokes to address all the minute and complex issues of the Civil War with which we are all familiar. But von Rosenberg’s pro-Confederate recruitment drive was also possibly meant as an overt challenge to the only other vocal political entity in the community, the pro-Union Forty-Eighters. The tension between the two groups became largely irrelevant after the Civil War, when Germans came to see themselves as principled survivors of a period of persecution. Yet Von Rosenberg reminds us that even a community as small as German Texas can exhibit deep complexities that should not be reduced to simple stereotypes.
Chapter I: A Purity of Purpose

The first Germans to arrive in Central Texas in the 1840’s intentionally excluded themselves from participation in the region’s politics and culture. The Grays were themselves a multifaceted group; some came seeking economic advancement, some came with utopian ideals, and others were more simply enraptured by the lure of the American west. But as a community, upon their arrival in Texas they did not involve themselves in the affairs of their neighboring American settlers generally through the direction of immigration companies. The early leaders of the largest and most important immigration society, the Adelsverein, are largely responsible for that trend. The major population centers they founded were explicitly intended to be separate from pre-existing settlements, in order to maintain cultural independence and cohesion. Towns like Fredericksburg and New Braunfels were uniquely German by design, even though their separation from American settlements made their early years difficult and dangerous. This proclivity for self-segregation suited the Americans perfectly fine, who normally bucked against the presence of foreigners in their midst. Conflict between the two groups was therefore minimal during the first decade or so because the German settlers did not involve themselves in controversy. Even the unsanctioned establishment of an Adelsverein slave plantation did not invite the debate one would expect from an allegedly abolitionist group. The community’s quiet neutrality in its early years contrasts greatly with the discordant debates of the 1850’s caused by the arrival of the revolutionary Forty-Eighters.
Early German Immigration

The first German immigrants trickled into Texas along with the early waves of Americans in the 1820’s and 30’s. Before Texas gained its independence in 1836, the Mexican government offered generous incentives for foreigners to settle the vast and disparate lands it had inherited from the Spanish. Fearing territorial encroachment from the British, French, Americans, and from Native Nations, the Mexican government issued land grants to *empresarios* (literally ‘entrepreneurs’) just as the Spanish had done for decades. These colonial leaders were responsible for settling tracts of land and for ensuring local loyalty to the Mexican government. In this position, these men were important figures in Texas’ early settlement. Eventually some of these figures, such as Stephen F. Austin and Sterling C. Robertson, would also form the backbone of the Texas Revolution’s military and civic leadership. From early on, the *empresarios* were overwhelmingly American; indeed only one, Martín de León, was Mexican born. Yet counted among their numbers were two Germans, Joseph Velein and Robert Lestwich.\(^2^3\) Though the settlements they founded were almost entirely American, it is important to note the early presence of German colonial leaders in Texas’ settlement. These colonial leaders formed the basis of what would eventually become the Gray faction.

However, German immigration did not begin in earnest until the establishment of several important colonization societies after Texas gained its independence from Mexico. Most of these proved to be spectacular failures both

administratively and financially, but they still helped approximately 115,000 Germans immigrate to Texas by 1846.\textsuperscript{24} Chief among these societies was the so-called ‘Society for the Protection of German Immigrants in Texas’, popularly known as the \textit{Adelsverein} (or ‘Nobility Society’).\textsuperscript{25} Ostensibly, this cabal of German aristocrats was motivated to settle Germans in Texas by a strange combination of communitarian and mercantile fantasies, but in reality most of its members saw it as an investment scheme of sorts. In its first two years alone, between 1842 and 1844, this group was responsible for the settlement of around 10,000 Germans who were expected to provide resources to their

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure1.png}
\caption{The Western German Settlements in Texas in the Nineteenth Century. Taken from \textit{German Seed in Texas Soil}, by Terry G. Jordan.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 1.
\textsuperscript{25} “The Adelsverein” and “The Society” are herein used interchangeably to refer to the same organization. \textit{Adelsverein} is a problematic term, as there were many societies of German noblemen of note during this time. But considering its popularity in the literature, it will still be used here.
homeland and act as a new and exclusive overseas market. Several of the largest and most important German population centers in Texas, such as the towns of Fredericksburg and New Braunfels, were originally established through the investment of the Adelsverein. Its policies would have a huge impact on the political disposition of the Gray faction, which historians have often ignored in deference to the influence of later immigrant waves.

The early years for most of these German settlements were difficult. The immigration companies did not tend to concern themselves with the well-being of the colonists after they had been settled, and generally displayed a stunning level of incompetence. The Adelsverein was poorly funded, mismanaged by grossly incompetent aristocrats, and was frequently duped by local land speculators. Potential immigrants paid $120 (married men paid $240) and agreed to develop at least 15 acres for a period of no less than three years. In return, the Society would give them the land, free transportation to Texas, a log house, and credit through the second harvest after their arrival. These fairly remarkable colonial subsidies would be funded by the nobles themselves and from the fees collected from the immigrants. On paper, this scheme does seem to be fairly well thought out, but things went wrong almost immediately. The land that the Society purchased, some 1.5 million acres, came from a duplicitous grant agent named Henry Francis Fischer (himself German-born, somewhat ironically). Neither the Adelsverein nobles nor their representatives

27 Lawrence Goodwyn, Coming to Terms: The German Hill Country of Texas (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1991), 22.
28 Fischer’s name is sometimes spelled as Fisher, particularly in American documents. The former will be used here.
had visited this land at the time it was acquired. Fischer’s land proved to be inaccessible and entirely unsuitable for agriculture.

**Prince Solms and John Meusebach**

Much of the responsibility for this and other such blunders rests on the shoulders of the society’s commissioner general, Prince Carl of Solms-Braunfels. His aristocratic background and lack of leadership experience would prove disastrous for the immigrants who trusted him. On a scouting trip to the area in 1845, after the deal with Fischer had been concluded, Prince Solms happily reported back to his fellow investors that the land they had purchased was perfectly fertile, filled as it was with tall grasses “as high as stirrups.”²⁹ The Society’s first immigrants arrived soon after and were the first to discover what Solms had failed to notice. These grasses, which covered nearly all of the Hill Country where their grant was located, concealed a very thin layer of deceptively rich topsoil that had been formed over hundreds of years. Below the soil lay an impossibly rocky limestone plateau (today known as the Edwards plateau) that would defy all agricultural efforts. After the first Adelsverein settlers cut the grasses and attempted to plow their new land, the inch thick soil was quickly washed away by the first rains, leaving nothing to farm on.³⁰ These immigrants, who had expected to apply Northern European agricultural techniques to their new farms in Texas, would have very little to scrape by on in their early years.

²⁹ Prince Carl zu Solms-Braunfels, 1844-1845.
³⁰ Goodwyn, *Coming to Terms: The German Hill Country of Texas*, 22.
For the rest of the century, the first wave of German immigrants in Central Texas that Solms left behind struggled to make a profit on subsistence agriculture. As a result, these immigrants tended to rely heavily on family labor and owned far less land than their American counterparts.\(^\text{31}\) This is perhaps the most convincing reason for their systematic avoidance of slavery; the land was simply not rich enough to support any more mouths or to raise the capital needed to purchase slaves. Therefore it can be argued that the Grays, the first major wave of German immigrants in Central Texas, avoided slavery for economic rather than ideological reasons. Yet the narrative is not as simple as this, as many other complex dynamics came together to produce the commonly held historic understanding of the Germans and their supposedly systematic avoidance of slavery.

Prince Solms had sunk both a large fortune and the lives of thousands of his countrymen into land that could, weather cooperating, only support an oasis economy. The Fredericksburg colony in particular faced considerable hardships early on before changes in the Adelsverein leadership precipitated reform. That town’s settlement came at the beginning of a rather bad drought which killed hundreds of its first citizens.\(^\text{32}\) In fact, the colony would have been abandoned after its first year had one particularly observant immigrant named Jacob Kuechler not realized that the biannual cycle of drought and rain was about to end through studying the tree rings of the surrounding live oaks.\(^\text{33}\) Yet these initial setbacks, seemingly mitigated only by pure luck, did not discourage Solms, who took his self-appointed role as the lone

\(^{31}\) Ibid., 25.
\(^{32}\) Gish and Spuler, *Eagle in the New World*, 40.
\(^{33}\) Ibid.
aristocrat in a wild land very seriously. In a report back to the Society, he explained away the obstacles and hardships that he and the earliest settlers had faced through the gallant assurance that “I endured, as is becoming a German gentleman…” Many years later, one of Solms’ earliest immigrants, Rosa Kleberg, recalled that the Prince refused even to eat at the same table as others, bluntly writing that “he impressed me as a conceited fool.” In this sense, Solms’ noble trappings were perhaps not well suited for his role as a latter day German empresario. He stayed in Texas for several more months, spending enough time in New Braunfels (which he named for himself) to deposit a picture of his wife in the cornerstone of the Sophienberg fortress (which he named for her). Yet eventually the burdens of handling the colony’s finances began to catch up with him, as he resigned as commissioner-general later that year and requested a

![Figure 2: Portrait of Prince Solms, unknown artist. Courtesy of the Dolph Briscoe Center.](image)

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34 Solms-Braunfels.
35 Rosa Kleberg, “Some of My Early Experiences in Texas,” *Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association* 1, 2 (1898): 172.
36 Irene Marschall King, *John O. Meusebach: German Colonizer in Texas* (Austin, TX: The University of Texas, 1967), 57.
replacement. His successor was John O. Meusebach, another Adelsverein noble who proved more than capable of cleaning up some of the mess that Solms had left behind.

Meusebach possessed the grounded presence of mind that Solms lacked. Immediately upon his arrival, he reorganized the society’s finances, directed new immigrants to more manageable tracts of land, and even had the time to bail Solms from debtor’s prison in Galveston (the Prince had attempted to flee back to Germany rather than face the Society’s American creditors).\(^\text{37}\) Meusebach even swore off his old titles of nobility when he became commissioner-general to make himself more approachable and to declare a certain democrat intent.\(^\text{38}\) His interest in Texas derived from diverse sources, from an intricate liberal political philosophy to a sincere interest with in area’s geology and wildlife (in particular, his writings indicate a scientific fascination with the hill country’s vast granite outcropping known as Enchanted Rock).\(^\text{39}\) By comparison, Prince Solms had never shown an interest in the region beyond its ability to host profitable colonies. When he arrived, Meusebach corrected “an unusually accommodating attitude” amongst the Adelsverein leaders, who had been signing notes of credit left and right rather than confronting the dreary financial truth that they were going bankrupt. Though he had predicted that the Society would go under before he had even left Germany, he chose to keep these problems a secret for some time, to preserve the colonist’s spirit and faith in their leaders.\(^\text{40}\)

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\(^{37}\) Ibid., 56.
\(^{38}\) Ibid., 42.
\(^{39}\) Ibid., 32.
\(^{40}\) Robert Penniger, *Fredericksburg, Texas... The First Fifty Years*, trans. C. L. Wisseman (Fredericksburg, TX: Fredericksburg Publishing Co., 1896), 23.
Still, despite Solms’ comparative shortcomings as an administrator, at least one of his more eccentric policies managed to cast an important legacy on the colonies that he left behind, which is essential to understanding the political disposition of the Grays. While first traveling from the coast to the Society’s land grants around New Braunfels to take up his new position, Meusebach wondered aloud why there were no centers of population along the route. Meusebach had made the reasonable assumption that there should be American colonies in the area, considering how well settled much of Eastern and Central Texas was at that point. An agent of the Society accompanying him on the trip, Ludwig Wilke, matter-of-factly explained that Prince Solms had “deliberately chosen to avoid American settlements [as] he wanted his people to remain German and not to mingle with Americans.” Wilke’s casual comment was likely a stunning revelation to Meusebach, for without the support of the already established American communities, the German centers of population would have an even harder time establishing themselves. But Meusebach would quickly see the value in Solms’ segregationist policy, albeit for very different reasons.

This arrangement of intentional segregation is fundamental to understanding the first wave of German immigrants and their social order. After its adoption as formal policy by Solms, segregation would heavily influence German settlement

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41 King, *John O. Meusebach: German Colonizer in Texas*, 54.
patterns and interactions with other colonial groups for the remainder of the century, particularly in the controversial realm of slavery. Self-segregation was fundamentally crucial to Solms. In fact the infertile grassland that he purchased from Fischer was really the Society’s second choice, as the 4,000 acres they had already bought in Fayette County were deemed too close to pre-existing American towns for the Germans to preserve their ethnic identity.\(^4^2\) Put plainly, this cultural objective was valued above the basic success of the colonies on even a subsistence level. For this reason, Fredericksburg and New Braunfels were established much further out into unsettled lands than any American colonial leaders would have dared.

It is important to note that there was no single, systematic reason for the self-segregationist policy. Glen Lich has argued that the leaders of the first wave of Germans were “utopian idealists for the most part” who were “motivated by the ethical ideal of starting a model society, not only for themselves, but also for their fellow men.”\(^4^3\) In this sense, this separatist stricture, which did in fact allow the Germans to maintain their unique heritage for several generations, was an important aspect of that utopian idealism. But it should be remembered that few members of the Adelsverein held the same, uniform principles, and that their various motivations must be understood in terms of a European context. Many of these nobles were, after all, more interested in making money than in applying some utopian scheme onto a new land. For his part, Prince Solms had believed in the implausible dream that Texas would someday become a German imperial holding, and for this reason thought it

\(^{42}\) Lich, “Goethe on the Guadalupe,” 38.
\(^{43}\) Ibid., 39.
necessary for his people to be kept separate from the existing, non-German settlements.\textsuperscript{44} Solms lacked even a basic trust in the Americans in Texas, an attitude which was likely reinforced after his time spent in debtor’s prison. Solms’ aristocratic pride was likely a factor as well. If he could not even share a dinner table with his fellow Germans, then perhaps he could not stand to share a whole town with ‘foreign’ Americans.

Upon arriving in New Braunfels, Meusebach also advanced the policy of self-segregation, though for more idealistic reasons than Prince Solms. Meusebach saw the potential for a very different, more reactionary narrative in his people’s settlement of Texas. Back in Germany, Meusebach and his liberal family (particularly his brother) had been increasingly concerned with the tides of fervent nationalism rising in the early 1840’s. Prince Metternich’s ideological emphasis on the power of the state over personal liberty was a particularly worrisome trend as applied in the German regions, as it implied a future where political unification would mean tyranny for the individual. Fearing this line of thinking, Meusebach engrossed himself in the writings of the political activist Karl von Rotteck. Rotteck once famously wrote in response to the authoritarian advocates of German unity that “I do not desire [national] unity without [political] liberty, and I prefer liberty without unity to unity without liberty.”\textsuperscript{45} As applied by Meusebach to the colonial context of Texas, such a passionate inclination for liberty over nationalistic fervor led to a suspicion of the ever-impending prospect of annexation by the United States. Therefore, Meusebach

\textsuperscript{44} King, \textit{John O. Meusebach: German Colonizer in Texas}, 51.
concluded that the best way to maintain the political independence and liberties of the German settlers was by preserving their cultural unity. This is why Meusebach left for the nascent Republic of Texas, a land where he believed “each man daily won his freedom anew” through hard work and determination. Likewise, the German immigrants as a whole could win their freedom through triumphant exertion, resisting the centralizing influences of outside political forces. Therefore, Meusebach’s almost utopian concept of German settlement in Texas led to a desire to create an exclusively defined community, to ensure that such an idealistic model was achieved through a purity of purpose.

The dichotomy presented by these two early leaders is essential to understanding the formation of the self-segregationist policy. Solms provided an ideological agenda of segregation that appealed to the settlers, divorced as they were from the affirming environment of their homeland. He conveyed an image of noble confidence throughout his time in Texas that held great appeal, even going so far as to begin the construction of a German-style castle in New Braunfels (the previously mentioned Sophienberg fortress), made from Central Texas limestone. Meusebach followed through with a realist’s understanding of the settlers’ predicament that ultimately saved the lives of thousands. As most colonists did not understand his very academically inspired love for his new position, many accounts generally treat him as a drier (though more effective) leader, lacking as he did the aristocratic trappings of Prince Solms. Yet taken together, the dual influence of Meusebach and Solms led to

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46 King, *John O. Meusebach: German Colonizer in Texas*, 42.
47 Ibid., 57.
the adoption of a unique settler pattern for German Texas, which can be best characterized by its self-segregationist tendency.

The less educated colonists that actually made up the bulk of these settlements seemed to have sincerely appreciated the chance to live in a secluded community that preserved their values. Many of the first German immigrants came from poor agricultural backgrounds, and were thus familiar with nucleated agricultural villages. The prospect of being separated from such closely-knit and interdependent communities must have been worrisome, particularly in a foreign land. To be distributed throughout American or Hispanic communities that did not resemble their quasi-feudal villages would have therefore been difficult. Furthermore, the permanency of separation “enabled the immigrants to stamp on the Central Texas landscape whatever visible aspects of their European cultural heritage they retained after their arrival.” For example, an Englishman traveling in the area in the 1870’s went so far as to call New Braunfels a “town so quaint and foreign-like that you seem to be looking upon a village of the Rhine Valley…” as if the basic placement and layout of the settlement was planned to mimic a German hamlet. By all other accounts, New Braunfels has only barely ever resembled a German hamlet at any point in its history, but even just the perception of a Germanic identity being expressed so strongly is itself intriguing. Such a commonly understood projection of

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48 Jean T. Hannaford, “The Cultural Impact of European Settlement in Central Texas in the Nineteenth Century” (The University of Texas at Austin, 1970), 100.
49 Ibid.
German identity could not have been possible in the context of a pre-existing settlement founded by or in coordination with American colonists.

The personal role that Solms and Meusebach played in the divergent self-segregationist approach adopted by the Germans was significant. Indeed, the German immigrants trusted Prince Solms on a fundamental level even years after his departure, possibly because of the aristocratic image he had tried so hard to project. In a later recollection of Fredericksburg’s earliest years, Robert Penniger somewhat surprisingly recalled that “[Solms’] energy and faithful performance of duty cannot be questioned…”51 Yet elsewhere Penniger seemingly contradicts himself, writing that “without Meusebach’s vigorous and sane efforts the colonization project… would undoubtedly have collapsed, and who knows what would have happened to the German colonists.”52 It is almost as if Penniger felt an obligation to recognize some achievement in Solms’ work, while later admitting the truth that it was only Meusebach’s reforms that saved the colony from the Prince’s incompetence. The immense influence of the Adelsverein nobles created the uniform secluded settlement pattern that defined the foundational identities of Fredericksburg and New Braunfels for years.

American settlements, such as the close, newly founded capital of Austin, were not constrained by any similar pattern of seclusion. Austin was developed explicitly to be the new Republic’s seat of government. The area, known at that time as Waterloo, was chosen in 1839 at the direction of Governor Mirabeau B. Lamar and

51 Penniger, Fredericksburg, Texas... The First Fifty Years, 20.
52 Ibid., 23.
a congressional commission for its central and easily defensible location and for its natural beauty. The commission also concluded that future trade routes would eventually intersect there, and thus connect the capital to both Matamoros and Santa Fe. Therefore only at this site could “a truly national city… be reared up.”

Temporary government buildings were built, though for many years the new town was normally empty when the legislature was not in session. Nonetheless, Austin’s founding clearly contained an intentional effort to integrate the settlement into the broader context of the state. It was, after all, named after the state’s most revered empresario, the so-called ‘Father of Texas.’ The early citizens of Austin worked hard to maintain their city’s place as Texas’ political center, at one point even taking up arms to defend its status. Famously, the decision to found the capital in such a remote area was the cause of great annoyance for Sam Houston, the commander of the Revolution’s military. In 1841, Houston went so far as to send armed Rangers to steal the government’s official papers in the middle of the night and bring them to his own eponymous city, to effectively make it the state’s capital. In this ‘Archive War,’ Houston’s Rangers were caught only thanks to a tavern owner named Mrs. Eberly, who fired a cannon to awake Austin’s militia. As the closest major American settlement to the German towns, it is clear that such an adamant desire to foster Austin’s central position in Texas’ society contrasts greatly with the comparatively detached founding of Fredericksburg and New Braunfels.

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53 Sam A. Suhler, "Stephen F. Austin and the City of Austin: An Anomaly," The Southwestern Historical Quarterly 69, no. 3 (1966): 275-76.
54 Ibid., 276.
The Effects of Self-Segregation

The very present and physical separation that these two men imposed on their communities was indirectly accompanied by political and social separations that affected the first wave’s relationship with slavery. For example, because of their distance from Texas’ established American farmers, the Germans were forced to research and implement their own agricultural techniques. As a result, they adopted several recently invented labor-saving devices, such as mechanical reapers and thresher, before any of the surrounding American communities.56 Whereas American settlers preferred the use of slaves to solve similar labor problems, the Germans instead found their own solutions because of their policy of separation. Such fundamental differences between the Germans and the Americans were exaggerated by areas even as basic as education. In fact, the Germans did not even teach their children English for several generations. Carl Widén recalled that a University of Texas student from Fredericksburg, matriculating around the year 1900, attempted to satisfy a foreign language requirement by studying English.57 An entirely new dialect known as ‘Texas German’ developed over the course of the nineteenth century, which would remain the region’s primary language until the First World War.58 These are

56 Jordan, Geman Seed in Texas Soil, 113.
57 Hannaford, "The Cultural Impact of European Setlement in Central Texas in the Nineteenth Century," 159.
fundamental, long lasting differences that impacted the community’s relationship with the rest of Texas’ society for decades.

Self-segregation also significantly slowed the expansion of new German settlements in the late 1840’s, as greater conflict with various Comanche tribes accompanied further movement west. Most Comanche tribes viewed Texas as an area that could be subjected to “systematic stock-and-slave raiding and tribute extortion”, as they had for centuries.\(^{59}\) That approach created friction between the tribes and the more vulnerable and less well-established of the American and European settlements. As pioneers and ranchers in Texas began to put territorial pressure on the horse and buffalo herds that these tribes depended on, violence often broke out over scarce resources.\(^{60}\) Therefore for the Germans, reaching a peaceful agreement with the Comanche was essential if their independence from the American settlements was to remain strong. Early on, Governor Henderson (the state of Texas’ first governor) even explicitly advised against the Germans advancing further west, fearing that encounters with the Comanche could incite greater conflict with American settlers as well.\(^{61}\) But Meusebach ignored this warning, going so far as to personally lead a diplomatic and surveying mission into Comanche territory in 1847. A treaty was signed with local tribal leaders, who agreed to leave the German colonies alone in exchange for $3,000 in gifts.\(^{62}\) No surviving Comanche sources record the visit, but the meeting apparently earned Meusebach great respect amongst the tribesmen, as

\(^{60}\) Ibid., 298.
\(^{62}\) Ibid., 186.
well as the nickname *El Sol Colorado*, on account of his large red beard.\textsuperscript{63} The treaty successfully established a period of peace between the local tribes and the Germans that lasted until the Civil War. It was not negotiated with the sanction of Texas’ government, nor did it include provisions providing for the safety of American settlers.\textsuperscript{64} So complete was this segregation that Meusebach operated as if he led his own independent country within the very core of Texas, only a few hundred miles away from its capital in Austin.

The Germans’ policy of segregation also served the neighboring Anglo-American settlers quite well, particularly the highly vocal Nativists who normally saw little room for ‘foreign’ elements in the region. The Americans that spent time near the Germans and their settlements had little reason to single them out as particularly troublesome. Olmsted relates a conversation with an American living outside of New Braunfels who had nothing bad to say about the Germans, calling them “very honest and trustworthy in their dealings.”\textsuperscript{65} But even in the early years, before subsequent waves of more politicized Germans arrived, their very presence could have easily drawn suspicion from those less familiar with their polite isolationism. Yet the Grays stayed away from any issue that could inflame their neighbors, intentionally or not, because of the separation between their settlements. After the more vocal Greens arrived, this would change dramatically. But by comparison to that later, more vitriolic period in the 1850’s, the 1840’s saw little public controversy between the American and German colonists.

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 187.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 186.
\textsuperscript{65} Olmsted, *Journey through Texas, or a Saddle Trip on the Southwestern Frontier*, 139.
Ultimately the self-segregationist tendency would preclude the participation of the Germans in Texas’ early politics in any meaningful way. As previously stated, there was no formal effort to organize the German vote, or to get German candidates into office until the 1854 San Antonio convention. Despite Meusebach’s belief in the power of the vote and the importance of exercising individual liberties, the temptation simply to shy away from the divisive issues faced by the American settlers appears to have been too powerful. When a public, state-wide vote was held to accept or reject the terms of annexation into the United States in 1845, no election was held in New Braunfels.\textsuperscript{66} In the Presidential election of 1848, only 120 votes were cast in New Braunfels (overwhelmingly for the Democratic ticket), out of a population of several thousand.\textsuperscript{67} Even Olmsted concluded that the Germans at this time did not participate in politics to the extent that their station warranted.\textsuperscript{68} The high ideals that had inspired Meusebach and some of the other learned Adelsverein leaders fell away upon arrival in Texas, inapplicable as they were in the highly local context of the segregated settlements.

\textbf{Slavery and the Nassau Planation}

The Germans’ relationship with slavery was far more complex than the current scholarship suggests. As previously mentioned, there were of course many Grays who owned slaves. The largest German slave owner in the 1840’s was in fact

\textsuperscript{66}Biesele, \textit{The History of the German Settlements in Texas 1831-1861}, 193.
\textsuperscript{67}Ibid., 135.
\textsuperscript{68}Olmsted, \textit{Journey through Texas, or a Saddle Trip on the Southwestern Frontier}, xxiii.
the Adelsverein itself, which at its height had twenty-five slaves at an experimental plantation outside Round Top.69 The most complete history of this settlement is James Kearney’s excellent Nassau Plantation, which very definitively describes its history as a German owned slave estate. According to Kearney, the Nassau plantation was a sincere and explicit attempt on the part of certain Adelsverein members to use slave labor as a profitable business model. Its founder, Count Boos-Waldeck, was convinced that the plantation model would give the German immigrants in Texas the highest chance to succeed and thrive, and that it would yield “a solid return in hard currency for its owners.”70 Not even within the Gray faction was there uniform agreement on the issue of slavery, as other Adelsverein leaders such as Meusebach and Prince Solms clearly disagreed that the plantation model offered the highest chance of success. Solms even recommended that the Nassau Plantation be sold in 1845, as he had little sympathy for its potential to integrate the Germans with American settlers through the common thread of slavery.71 He was instead focused on the establishment of subsistence farms connected by small towns, intentionally founded away from existing American settlements.

The Nassau plantation is a fascinating anomaly. Boos-Waldeck had his own vision of what Texas could mean to German immigrants, which was very different from that of Solms or Meusebach. Though he worked as an agent for the Adelsverein, he acted unilaterally in establishing this plantation, deviating from instructions that explicitly disallowed the purchase of slaves or the establishment of a slave plantation.

71 Ibid., 89.
with the Society’s resources. As he was concluding the land deal, Boos-Waldeck wrote a lengthy report back to his fellow nobles in Germany to justify his actions in ignoring that policy. His report represents a “hierarchical, aristocratic vision for Texas,” in which noblemen and artisans could spearhead a program of German colonization. He concluded his statement by scolding any aristocrat who was unwilling to rebuild their family fortunes and prestige through hard work in the new lands available to them. This is a very feudal mindset which considers the exploitation of slaves to be not only permissible, but a moral necessity for attaining higher social status. After sending this report, Boos-Waldeck purchased eleven slaves in New Orleans for $6,000 and proceeded to Texas to begin his plantation.

Up to this point, the Nassau plantation was the only major effort on the part of the Germans to establish themselves as slave holders. Still, it was not a particularly controversial establishment amongst the Germans, and it seems to have had little effect on the opinions of American settlers. Though Solms criticized its purpose and function, he still frequently used the plantation manor as a base of operations during his brief time in Texas, sleeping only a hundred yards from the slave’s quarters. The lack of controversy surrounding Boos-Waldeck’s provocative support of slavery was a result of the hands off, segregationist approach that was adopted by the first wave of German immigrants. Very little contact was being made with American settlers at this time, near Round Top or their other population centers, and the Germans themselves

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72 Ibid., 36.
73 Graf von Josef Boos-Waldeck, 1842.
74 Ibid.
76 Ibid., 82.
very rarely discussed politics or slavery publicly. As will be discussed, the later
immigrants who arrived after 1848 were much more vocal and willing to engage their
countrymen and American neighbors in controversy. Too often, the distinction
between the two is not made, which leads to much confusion in relevant historical
accounts.

Even Kearney has difficulty separating the context of the early and later
waves of immigrants. In his introduction, he writes that “the path to successful
assimilation for Germans of this period led unavoidably through the minefield of
slavery,” essentially claiming that it was slavery that prevented the Germans from
fully participating in Texas’ society and politics.77 But for the Grays, slavery was not
a fundamentally divisive issue. The Nassau plantation was founded in 1843 and sold,
after half a decade of unprofitable mismanagement, in July of 1848.78 So almost the
entirety of its existence occurred within only the context of the Grays, the first, self-
secluded wave of German immigrants. The segregationist policy of Solms and
Meusebach, itself partially responsible for the Germans’ attitudes towards slavery,
was instead the driving force in their assimilation (or lack thereof).

This is not to say that slavery was not a hugely important topic in Texas at the
time. Immigrants from the United States had carried slavery as a key issue since their
arrival; some of the first laws established by the earliest American colonists were
designed to protect the institution of slavery, in defiance of Mexican federal policy.79

77 Ibid., 3.
78 Ibid., 34.
79 Randolph B. Campbell, William S. Pugsley, and Marilyn P. Duncan, eds., The Laws of Slavery in
Texas: Historical Documents and Essays (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2010), 3.
That tension in fact helped lead to the Texas Revolution (1835-1836), as many Anglo settlers were concerned that Mexico would begin to enforce its abolitionist laws north of the Rio Grande. For this reason, the Constitution of the Republic of Texas (written during the war, only a few days before the fall of the Alamo) specifically and explicitly sanctioned the continuation of slavery in the new nation.\textsuperscript{80} The Republic’s legislature even categorized slaves as legally equivalent to physical property “in a law in 1839 exempting homesteads from forced sale under execution to pay debts,” thereby directly equating human chattel with land.\textsuperscript{81} This demonstrates the extent to which slavery was an important issue in Texas at this time, related as it was to Lockean principles of private property and individual ownership. Only thirty years after the Revolution, a majority of Texas’ voters were willing to once again go to war to protect slavery, this time against their own countrymen.

Conclusion

The “minefield of slavery,” as Kearney puts it, would eventually become very important to the Germans and their relationship with the rest of Texas society. But this development did not come until the 1850’s, during and after the arrival of the radical Forty-Eighters. Historiographically, the distinction between the two main waves of immigrants has become blurred, which has obscured the fact that a majority of the Germans were separated from Texas’ society by choice. For a variety of reasons, the Grays were clearly an insular community that did not engage in debates

\textsuperscript{80} “Constitution of the Republic of Texas,” (1836), Article I, Section IX.
\textsuperscript{81} The Laws of Slavery in Texas: Historical Documents and Essays, 4.
about major social and political issues by choice. Slavery, and the intense political
debates that surrounded it, did come to define an important aspect of German identity,
but not to the extent many authors have assumed. A closer study of the Forty-Eighters
and their political context will make the differences and similarities between the two
groups more clear. With that, a better understanding of the German immigrant
community as a whole can be reached.
Chapter II: Courageous Agitation

The relatively small number of Germans who came to Texas in the wake of the 1848 revolutions had a disproportionately large impact on the perceived abolitionist identity of the German immigrants as a whole. Unlike their predecessors the Grays, the Forty-Eighters (again, also known as the Greens) were highly politicized, vocal proponents of liberal reform. Most of them were trained academicians, socialists, or left-wing activists who fought and protested for German unity, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and other such reforms back in Europe. Though their uprisings were normally not coordinated across the various states, everywhere they explicitly denounced Germany’s old autocratic power structures. The revolutions were ultimately unsuccessful, and in many places only strengthened the position of the conservatives. The failure of their movement subsequently forced many of the revolutionaries into exile across the globe.

In Texas, this radical diaspora applied their liberal European ideology to the American issue of slavery. The Forty-Eighters vocally advocated for the end of slavery on behalf of the German community as a whole, ignorant of its self-segregationist tendencies. One Forty-Eighter in particular named Adolf Douai stirred up so much controversy in the state’s press that the American community in Texas irrevocably began to identify all of the Germans with the political beliefs of a revolutionary minority. His paper, the San Antonio Zeitung, enjoyed financial and logistical support from Northerners like Frederick Law Olmsted, which made his radical politics even more suspect. The Zeitung influenced the delegates of the 1854 San Antonio Convention to adopt a non-representative abolitionist stance, which
subsequently connected the Germans to charges of radicalism in several rival American newspapers. Douai and Olmsted also proposed to establish a free state of ‘West Texas,’ even going so far as to sketch out a coordinated slave rebellion. When it was made public, this plan forced Douai into exile once again, as neither the American nor German settlers could tolerate his radicalism. But his legacy in Texas lived on, as the controversy surrounding the Zeitung irrevocably tied the politics of 1848 to the identity of the whole German community.

**Origins of the Revolutions of 1848**

Though the continental-wide revolutions of 1848 arose from a confusing assortment of factors and conditions, the origins of the movement can in many ways be historically traced back to the French Revolution of 1789. With each turn of France’s confusing constitutional wheel in the 19th century- from the Napoleonic era to the Third Republic- came frequent references to that Enlightenment crusade. The working classes of Paris were largely made up of revolutionary or military veterans who remembered the glorious strife of years past. Even as late as the 1840’s, “Frenchmen in all walks of life confounded in nostalgic aspiration for Empire and revolution.”[^82] Works like Mignet’s *History of the French Revolution* (1826), Thiers’ *History of the Consulate* (1845), and Lamartine’s *History of the Girondins* (1847) were very popular at the time amongst the well-educated, many of whom began to see

the events of 1789 as fundamental to French historic identity.\textsuperscript{83} Liberty, equality, and fraternity were still familiar phrases to even the working poor, who were themselves caught in a somewhat paradoxical desire for both the return of the ‘tri-colour’ (Republicanism) and the ‘little corporal’ (Dictatorship).\textsuperscript{84} The swinging pendulum of France’s governance permitted both sentiments to remain prominent in the country’s memory simultaneously. These complex political and historic dynamics make the revolutions of 1848 difficult to quickly summarize (in France and Europe in general), but demonstrate a desire to reconnect with France’s radical enlightenment past.

As the forces of industrialization and nationalism began to creep across the continent in the middle of the century, the revolutionary sentiments of 1789 were adopted in a totally new context. Most of the French peasant class (which made up approximately 68% of the population, and which had little chance to participate in government) struggled during the mechanization of the agricultural and textile industries, which caused substantial losses in secondary income streams and a widespread incursion of debts.\textsuperscript{85} The French peasant on the eve of 1848 already felt like a victim of progress- this was not aided by France’s financial crisis of 1846 and a series of bad harvests. By comparison, Britain’s even half-hearted attempts at reforming labor and electoral laws seemed to be an envious ‘model’.\textsuperscript{86} A liberal-minded change in the status quo therefore became more and more attractive to greater segments of the population. When King Louis Philippe banned political gatherings (most famously the Campagne de Banquets), angry crowds gathered in the streets of

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 53.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 73-74.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 75.
Paris on February 22nd, 1848. Barricades were constructed, and the King abdicated as the liberal opposition gathered to form a provisional government which would become known as the Second Republic. News of the events in Paris spread quickly, and had a profound effect in Germany.

The Revolutions in Germany

Germany’s recent history made it particularly susceptible to parallel upheavals. The German states at this time were of course not united into one nation (true unification wouldn’t come until 1871 under Bismarck’s leadership), and in fact had been in a sort of limbo since the end of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806. The intervening German Confederation, established after the Congress of Vienna in 1815, was nothing more than a loose association of 39 states and principalities which vaguely sought to establish economic coordination. Without a strong overarching body to ensure mutual cooperation, the rivalry between the two major states of Prussia and Austria came to dominate inter-German politics. The competitive attitude that existed between these two powers, which can be traced at least as far back as the Seven Year’s War (1756-1763), saw each vying for dominance in the vacuum left when Napoleon dissolved the Holy Roman Empire. This intense rivalry, which would eventually lead to military conflict in the 1860’s, indicates that “[Prussia and Austria’s] own self-interest not only outweighed common imperial interests, but also ignored the new patriotic impetus which had emerged within literary and philosophic
circles.”  

This rivalry prevented any substantive move towards German unification for decades, as neither power was willing to concede authority to the other or to the Confederation. Meanwhile, the other, smaller states were caught between Prussia and Austria’s struggle for dominance. Political reformers throughout the German-speaking regions realized that it was becoming increasingly difficult to achieve substantive progress in this stalemate. Middle class reformers who hoped to see a unified Germany in their lifetimes, particularly those who wished to modernize and liberalize the autocratic governments of the states and achieve greater political freedoms, were therefore forced to bottle up their ambitions for much of the first half of the century.

The Constitution of the German Confederation itself characterized the type of anachronistic, pseudo-feudal form of government which so irritated Germany’s leftist reformers. This document was written after protracted debates at the Conference of Vienna in 1815, where “most of the assembled diplomats thought in terms of eighteenth century absolutism,” in an effort to restore a pre-revolutionary order to Europe. As a result, the constitution “exclusively recognized the crowned heads of [Germany’s] thirty-eight individual states as sovereign representatives of the people, ignoring any concept of liberalism or patriotic nationalism.” Prussia, Austria, and even the rulers of the smaller German states found this arrangement perfectly agreeable, as it precluded the formation of a new democratic nation-state which could subordinate their absolutist authority. This explicit rejection of the liberal aspirations

88 Ibid., 15.
89 Ibid., 16.
of the French Revolution and the Enlightenment more generally alienated the
disenfranchised workers and simultaneously angered the emerging educated middle
class. Decades later, after watching events unfold in France, both groups joined
together in Germany in the spring and summer of 1848 to implement reform.

However, the revolution failed to achieve sustained, widespread cooperation
between members of the educated liberal elite and the oppressed working classes they
hoped to ‘liberate’. Infighting allowed the conservatives in power to bide their time
and let the two elements stew in their idealistic politicking. A similar pattern emerged
throughout each of the German states which suffered popular unrest in 1848. Initially,
the protests were at least superficially well received by the autocratic governments.
For example, in Berlin, Frederick William IV verbally yielded to the demands of a
crowd of protestors who had swarmed and barricaded the city. The King agreed to
pass sweeping social and political reforms including the abolition of state censorship
and the formation of a national assembly- he even went so far as to wear the
revolutionary tricolor of black, red, and gold (today’s flag of Germany) in public.90
Yet the moral authority of these promises slowly eroded over time, as the liberal
reformers elected to the Prussian Parliament accomplished little thanks to their
quarrelsome bickering.91 The Prussian Constitution, adopted after lengthy debate in
December, offered few real changes as King William inserted heavily monarchist
provisions. The Parliament was dissolved to make way for a neutered bicameral
legislature which was subservient to the monarchy.92 This Constitution remained in

90 Sigmann, 1848: The Romantic and Democratic Revolutions in Europe, 258.
91 Ibid., 268.
92 Ibid.
effect for more than half a century, until the official dissolution of the Prussian kingdom in 1918. Therefore in the end, the 1848 revolutions in Prussia only served to formalize the monarchy’s power. Most of the other movements of 1848, from Paris to Vienna, also only managed to legitimize the autocracies that they had fought so hard to overthrow.

The revolutions also weakened the reformist opposition. The failure of these movements instigated a mass exodus of their liberal proponents from across Europe. A widely circulated German political cartoon entitled shows a large Prussian figure using a broom to sweep Phrygian capped revolutionists out of Germany towards the Atlantic, while a Napoleon lookalike does the same in France.\footnote{Ferdinand Schröder, 	extit{Panorama of Europe in August 1849}, 1849. Düsseldorfer Monatshefte.}

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{panorama.png}
\caption{“Panorama of Europe in August 1849,” Ferdinand Schröder. Courtesy of the Nuremberg National Museum.}
\end{figure}
crackdowns forced some individuals and their families into overt legal exile, while others left their homes in continental Europe for fear of persecution (this is the same emigration that famously forced Marx into exile in London and Garibaldi to New York). Still others left their homes because of a sense of immense disappointment, after so much promised change had not come to fruition. The historian Carl Wittke writes that,

When Western Europe exploded into revolution in 1848, all the liberal forces west of Russia hailed the occasion as the beginning of a new springtime… and the bright new dawn after a long night of reaction. When that springtime ended in a killing frost, political refugees scattered to the far corners of the Western world.94

Therefore the attitude that many of these political refugees held as they left their homes was one of political persecution and oppression. They fled for any place where their liberal, revolutionary ideologies would be even vaguely tolerated, including Switzerland, Great Britain, South America, and the United States in particular.95

Upon their arrival in these new regions, the ideologically based circumstances of their departure would fundamentally define their political beliefs. Time and time again, these Forty-Eighters caused friction in their adopted homelands by applying their liberal philosophies to foreign contexts.

95 Honeck, We Are the Revolutionists: German-Speaking Immigrants and American Abolitionists after 1848, 16.
Adolf Douai and Revolution of Altenburg

One of the educated middle class reformers who would eventually find his way to Texas was Adolph Douai. As a result of his political experiences in Europe, Douai would become one of Texas’ most prominent and vocal abolitionist Forty-Eighters. His blustering rhetoric and radicalism would have a profound impact on the German immigrant community, though not the impact he intended. Born in the small Duchy of Altenburg (present day Thuringia) in 1819 to a poor family, he earned several degrees at the Universities of Leipzig and Jenna. That pedigree launched his career as a teacher and education reformer (he is perhaps best remembered today for bringing kindergartens to the American school system).

Douai’s radically socialist political views, which later had a huge impact on the German community in Texas, made him an almost archetypal Forty-Eighter. It is certainly true that his upbringing and education to some degree inspired his leftist politics, but Douai’s early professional years as a private tutor in Russia turned him from a left leaning liberal into an ardent socialist. There, the highly visible mistreatment of the serfs made him sensitive to the plight of the working classes more generally for the rest of his life. In an unpublished autobiography, he relates his disgust with the Tsarist government’s harsh crackdown of a serf uprising in Livonia that he personally witnessed, and the sympathy he felt during a great famine in 1844. After five and a half years of such experiences, he eventually left Russia, writing that “I could not enjoy a comfortable existence in a parasitic environment, a

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culture in which the most cruel exploitation of labor of nine-tenth of the people by the one-tenth consisting of despots and revelers in luxury.”\textsuperscript{97} After the failure of the revolutions in Germany a few years later and his forced emigration to Texas, Douai would view American slavery as an extension of this very same antiquated European feudal order that so revolted him. He writes that in Russia, “I learned to hate despotism and exploitation and curse it with a resentment perhaps all the more because at the same time I was enjoying such a good life.”\textsuperscript{98} Such class consciousness and sympathetic rhetoric would not be out of place in the works of a contemporary ‘radical’ American abolitionist.

Douai’s time in Russia radicalized his politics, so when he returned to Germany in 1846, he became a devoted socialist dedicated in particular to liberal education reform. He founded a series of schools and continued to teach privately, but his real calling came in 1848. He claims he “took part in the political movement of 1848 principally for the purpose of promoting educational development…”, as he believed that a good pedagogue must also be a political reformer and a social

\textsuperscript{97} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{98} Ibid., 29.
As part of the spearhead of the revolution in Altenburg, he and his socialist friends organized protests and speeches in March and April, and continued their revolutionary efforts even after the parallel movements in Vienna and Berlin were met with violence. Eventually, the Altenburg protests fizzled out as it became clear that the new Duke, Georg Frederick, did not actually intend to implement any real reforms despite his early promises. Instead, the Duke issued orders for the arrest of Douai along with the other socialist and Marxist leaders on the 18th of June. As most of these men were elected members of the *Landtag* (state diet), these arrests nearly instigated a city-wide riot before the Duke finally backed down and agreed to adopt a new constitution. Several weeks later, before that liberal constitution could be written, a Saxon army invited by the Duke arrived to disband the *Landtag* and the citizen guard. Douai was arrested soon afterwards. He claims to have romantically given himself up in front of a crowd of neighbors to avoid bloodshed, but realistically it seems that the Saxon army was too large to overcome through direct force anyway. The revolution in Altenburg ended in a whimper as had so many of the other 1848 movements throughout Europe.

### American Attitudes towards the Revolutions of 1848

Initially, many important figures in the United States were highly supportive of the Forty-Eighters on common ideological grounds, a connection that the

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99 Ibid., 38.
100 Ibid., 41.
101 Ibid., 44.
revolutionaries tried hard to cultivate. Protestors in Vienna and Berlin flew the Stars and Stripes alongside the French and German tricolors, and “‘Germany must become a free state like America’ was a slogan widely used in pamphlets of that period, testifying that the legacies of 1776… and 1789 served as a major source of inspiration…”\textsuperscript{102} The American ambassador in Bremen, Dudley Mann, somewhat smugly declared that Germans had “unfolded the flag of right” with their anti-autocratic revolutions.\textsuperscript{103} James Buchanan, then the Secretary of State, promised diplomatic support, as he claimed that Americans would not be “indifferent spectators to the progress of liberty throughout the world.”\textsuperscript{104} These are surprisingly strong words from someone so influential, particularly considering the fact that they were written with purely ideological motives. It is clear that Buchanan and other prominent Americans felt a sincere connection between the struggles of the European reformers and America’s own revolutionary past.

Yet the most vocal international support would specifically come from American abolitionists. On May 9th, 1848 the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society passed a resolution applauding the revolutions in Europe, simultaneously expressing hope that the first Republic to “proclaim the equality of man” would not also become the world’s last holdout of oppression.\textsuperscript{105} Charles Sumner, the famed antislavery lawyer and orator from Massachusetts who would later become one of the

\textsuperscript{102} Honeck, \textit{We Are the Revolutionists: German-Speaking Immigrants and American Abolitionists after 1848}, 14.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{105} Honeck, \textit{We Are the Revolutionists: German-Speaking Immigrants and American Abolitionists after 1848}, 15.
most prominent Radical Republicans during the Civil War, explicitly drew a connection between the European revolutions and American abolitionism. In a letter to his brother George dated November 26th 1850, Sumner wrote that “our movement here is part of the great liberal movement of Europe,” connecting Northern agitation over the Fugitive Slave Act with the frustrating failures of 1848. These sentiments go a step further than merely relating the two movements; they conflate the suffering of American slaves with that of the oppressed peoples of Europe. As the lens through which these American abolitionists saw world affairs, slavery fundamentally colored their understanding of European politics. Likewise, the political oppression experienced by the Forty-Eighters in Europe led to a certain empathy for American slaves and tendency to support the abolitionist cause. Considering his experiences in Russia and in Altenburg, Adolf Douai is a prime example of this trend. The masses of revolutionary immigrants who were about to arrive in the United States, including Douai and his family, would show how similar the reciprocal beliefs of the Forty-Eighters and American abolitionists actually were.

Though connections with the abolitionists would remain strong, as soon as it became apparent that the revolutions in Europe were failing, most other American observers quickly became disenchanted. By the fall of 1848, figures like James Buchanan suddenly became quiet on the subject of American support. After Louis Napoleon gained power in France by outmaneuvering his liberal opponents, Edward Everett famously wrote to a friend that Napoleon’s nephew could never become a

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107 Honeck, *We Are the Revolutionists: German-Speaking Immigrants and American Abolitionists after 1848*, 15.
French George Washington, as such a role was “either beyond his strength or above his virtue.” Likewise, Harvard professor George Ticknor concluded that republics “cannot grow on the soil of Europe… There is no nourishment for them in the present conditions or past history of the nations there.” Remarks such as these managed to simultaneously impart a unique position upon the United States and its revolutionary past while admonishing the childishness of Europe’s aborted attempts at imitation.

These comments also reveal a racially motivated xenophobia that was becoming common in the United States in the mid nineteenth century, even outside of academia. Nativism, “a mind-set best described as a collective suspicion of foreign-born people, became especially virulent” as more and more immigrants began to arrive in the United States. The Nativists believed that political rights should be granted only to those who were sufficiently patriotic and rational (i.e., native-born white American males), otherwise class conflict and societal collapse would follow. In a period of industrialization and rapid territorial growth across the North American continent, this was a particularly prescient fear as European immigrants throughout the country composed much of the labor force, especially in regions where slavery was illegal. To the Know-Nothings and other Nativist organizations, the most dangerous of these newcomers were “immigrant peasants, unskilled laborers, and

110 Honeck, We Are the Revolutionists: German-Speaking Immigrants and American Abolitionists after 1848, 16.
craft workers with the wrong acculturation and political experience.”\textsuperscript{111} Specifically, the radical Europeans who had recently participated in the recent, ominously threatening revolutions. One of the most prominent Know-Nothings, Thomas Whitney, singled out the German Forty-Eighters for their un-American political beliefs, warning that their “Red Republicanism… would paralyze industry, and render both life and property insecure.” To him, the Forty-Eighters were the “malcontents of the Old World, who hate monarchy, not because it is monarchy, but because it is restraint. They are such men as stood by the side of Robespierre.”\textsuperscript{112} Whitney and his fellow Nativists did not believe that the Revolutions of 1848 exhibited the pure republican idealism of the American Revolution. Rather, they pessimistically believed that this leftist movement had more in common with the violent radicalism of the French Revolution. That radicalism represented a danger to Whitney’s vision of the United States, specifically the ability of white Americans to rule over other races, including African slaves.

The popular appeal of Nativism in Texas and the United States as a whole ultimately came from its fundamentally exclusive nature, an appeal it had in common with attitudes towards the institution of slavery. Poor and middle class Anglo-Americans were quick to see that racially motivated restrictions on minorities would defend their “political preeminence, economic security, and social respectability.”\textsuperscript{113} Anti-immigrant and pro-slavery campaigns both pledged to their Anglo-American supporters that they would “protect [their] interests by subordinating a putatively

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 469.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 476.
dangerous sector of the laboring population, defined as alien to the real nation.”114

These exclusionary attitudes explain, in part, why sentiments in support of both ideologies were very common in Texas, where populations of foreign immigrants and slaves outnumbered American-born settlers in some areas. The conflation of the two groups (slaves and immigrants) would come to fundamentally define the attitude of Texas’ American-born settlers towards the German immigrant communities. The politically ‘radical’ Forty-Eighters, whose activities would foster this connection, were unaware of these dynamics upon their arrival.

Douai and Texas

Adolph Douai’s emigration to Texas was motivated by both reactionary persecution and a desire on his part to transplant the ideals of the failed revolution onto a new land. After the Altenburg revolution failed in the summer of 1848, he spent some two months in prison without being allowed to see his defense counsel, facing charges never made known to him. During his imprisonment, he read helplessly of the revolution’s parallel failures in Hungary, Vienna, and Berlin, “in short, the rapid progress of the reactional element.”115 Meanwhile the nobility of Altenburg swayed most of the farmers away from the remaining revolutionists with minor reforms to feudal land laws, reducing the socialists to only a handful of seats in the recently weakened Landtag. After his release, what remained of Douai’s revolutionary movement was forced to “witness the passage of all kinds of

114 Ibid.
reactionary laws” which “gradually [restricted] the agitation and [made] reforms impossible.” Soon, the new reactionary government strangled his last attempts at education reform and even his livelihood. His schools were closed down, and within a year he was not allowed to tutor private subjects. He also claims at this time to have been under constant surveillance by the local police. However he held out for several more years, by his own reckoning becoming one of the last revolutionaries still in the Duchy or not in prison (though he did spend another nine months in jail in 1850). Finally, Douai decided to immigrate to Texas in 1852 with his family to escape this sustained persecution.

Texas appealed to Douai for a number of reasons. He had heard from family members that the Northern states were already awash in European political refugees, and that there were established German colonies in Texas. He was of course correct on both counts- German immigration to the United States picked up significantly during this time. In total, more than a million German speakers arrived in the United States between 1848 and 1860. However, only a minority of this number were genuine political refugees as most were uneducated members of the working class. Further, it is unclear precisely how many of these ex-revolutionaries ended up settling in Texas. Douai claims to have been only one of a dozen Forty-Eighters in the whole state in 1852, which would make their population a small minority indeed. The already established Grays overwhelmingly outnumbered them by many orders of

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116 Ibid., 53.
117 Ibid., 54.
118 Honeck, *We Are the Revolutionists: German-Speaking Immigrants and American Abolitionists after 1848*, 17.
magnitude. Furthermore, the new state’s position as an unsettled region where any future could be made possible made Texas more attractive than the crowded cities of the Northeast. Douai explicitly claims to have been sick of “Europe and civilization” and believed that in Texas he and his children could become farmers and “rational tillers of the soil.”121 Such an intellectually based, physiocratic understanding of his immigration experience correctly indicates that he would not leave his political beliefs behind in Germany.

The context of the arrival of the Forty-Eighters in Texas was very different from that of the previous German immigrants. At first glance, Adolf Douai’s desire to become a “rational tiller” seems similar to John Meusebach’s stated reason for immigrating to Texas written some ten years earlier: that in a land such as this “each man daily won his freedom anew” through hard work and determination.122 The difference between the two men and the immigrant waves they represent is that Douai and the Forty-Eighters arrived in a revolutionary context, having been persecuted from their homes and forced to re-plant their lives and their beliefs in a new land. Meusebach by comparison had the luxury of choice. His new life in Texas was not a forced restriction of his principles, but rather a release of sorts (Meusebach also was not an avowed socialist revolutionary like Douai). As Douai and his family set sail from Bremen, their ship happened to pass an American vessel waving the Stars and Stripes, a sight which supposedly filled his eyes with tears as it was an apt reminder that “we now were to look into the future and to lock the door on the past.”123 Despite

121 Ibid., 60.
122 King, John O. Meusebach: German Colonizer in Texas, 42.
this sentiment, Douai would not stop his political rabble-rousing upon arriving in Texas in 1852.

Many Forty-Eighters other than Douai were attracted to Texas for similar reasons. Importantly, the American South as a whole did not tend to attract masses of European immigrants in the ante-bellum years, as compared to the large urban centers of the Northeast. Some scholars have attributed this avoidance of the South to the presence of slavery, claiming that some vague abolitionist tendency must have affected the settlement pattern. Yet Germans “settled in large numbers in Brazil and Missouri, in addition to Texas, where the institution was legal.” The areas that attracted the Germans (both Gray and Green) contained desirable, otherwise unoccupied lands. The Forty-Eighters could also depend on the fact that these areas already had German population centers. Furthermore, many of the Grays (John Meusebach for example) were prolific letter writers, and news of their successful colonial efforts was well known in Germany in the 1840’s and 50’s.

Therefore slavery does not seem to have been an initial mitigating factor for most of these immigrants, even for Douai. In fact, when explaining his reasons for choosing Texas, he does not mention slavery at all. Instead, he discusses the warm climate, the presence of other Germans, his desire for his children to be “wholly free,” and the “smattering if [sic] romance” inherent in Texas’ image. It is odd that someone as politically motivated as Douai would not consider such a fundamental condition as the presence of thousands and thousands of slaves neighboring his

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125 Ibid., 111.
prospective new home. It is possible that he was initially ignorant of the injustices being committed in a place that he had already idealized in his head. At the very least, he does not seem to have comprehended the ways in which his very presence, as a revolutionary foreigner, would be fundamentally unwelcome to Texas’ vocal Nativist population. No matter what, his radical beliefs would not allow him, nor his liberal compatriots, to remain quiet for long.

The German community that Douai found upon his arrival had changed in only a few important ways since its founding approximately ten years earlier. In central Texas, the populations of the main settlements of Fredericksburg and New Braunfels had stabilized and grown after several years of perilous agricultural trial-and-error. After experimenting with corn, potato, and tobacco, most German farmers had turned to cotton like many of their American counterparts. In 1854, Olmsted noted that of the Germans near San Felipe “all cultivated cotton, and some had very extensive fields of excellent promise.”\(^\text{127}\) Taking into account Olmsted’s predilection for over-exaggerations, this is an impressive shift towards a labor intensive cash crop. There is data to back up Olmsted’s claim- Texas’ 1850 census records indicate that a much higher proportion of German farmers grew cotton (64\%) on some or all of their property, as compared to Southern-born whites (41\%).\(^\text{128}\) In many places, the poor soils of the Edwards plateau still allowed for only basic subsistence agriculture, but in the expanded outer regions of Texas Germany, profitable agriculture became possible. As a labor intensive crop that even now is historically associated with slave

\(^{127}\) Olmsted, *Journey through Texas, or a Saddle Trip on the Southwestern Frontier*, 358.

labor, this shift would prove important in the decade leading up to the Civil War as Germans would increasingly see their economic prosperity tied to that of American slave owners.

Furthermore, the *Adelsverein* (the influential immigration company that founded Fredericksburg and New Braunfels) had long since gone bankrupt, and with it went any traces of the community’s aristocratic origin. Prince Solms was gone, by now serving as a cavalry officer in Austria, and even John Meusebach had resigned his position as General-Commissioner before the society officially dissolved (though he was elected to Texas’ state senate in 1851). This breakdown of the last vestiges of European aristocratic rule made room for “an expanding and increasingly heterogeneous immigrant society.”

In other words, this shift created breathing space in the community for the Forty-Eighters to express their revolutionary beliefs.

After journeying across the Atlantic in 1852, Douai and his family made their way inland from the German-founded port of Indianola. Traveling with other German families, their wagon journey towards Central Texas was not an easy one. Though initially well supplied, very few of the Americans they met on the road were even remotely friendly. After being caught in a late night thunderstorm and a subsequent flood outside of Seguin, the families could not find even temporary shelter. Douai categorically writes that “the German immigration was obnoxious” to the American settlers and that “the fear of communicable diseases was so thoroughly based among them that the greatest inhumanity is no longer wondered at.” Indeed, at one farm the

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129 Honeck, *We Are the Revolutionists: German-Speaking Immigrants and American Abolitionists after 1848*, 39.
owner “never even called away the dogs which surrounded us,” and instead allowed the group to be chased off after being attacked and bitten.\footnote{Douai, "Autobiography of Dr. Adolf Douai," 90.} Far from the egalitarian paradise he had hoped to find, Texas was proving to be just as hostile to Douai as his homeland. These farmers, some of the first Americans he encountered, seem to have been Nativist in at least practice (the Know-Nothing party had not yet officially expanded into Texas at this time, but many of its core messages were already being embraced, apparently). Facing this kind of discrimination, it seems that in Texas there were both racial and political components to Douai’s persecution. His family and their fellow immigrants were treated upon their arrival in New Braunfels (at that time a city of around 1,500) by German doctors. So relieved were they to find a friendly, all German community that the family settled there for some time.

Yet the Forty-Eighters were not fully welcomed by the earlier German settlers. One Gray named Franz Kettner, who briefly lived in New Braunfels at the same time as Douai, alludes to the tension brought by the ex-revolutionaries in a letter to his family back in Europe dated August 27th, 1850. Kettner tells his parents that a group of “awful bureaucrats” who “find themselves better off with a pen than behind a plow” have recently arrived in town.\footnote{Charles Kettner, ed. The Kettner Letters: A Firsthand Account of a German Immigrant in the Texas Hill Country (1850-1875) (Wilmington, DE: Comanche Creek Press, 2008), 21.} Though Kettner himself never explicitly clarifies that these “bureaucrats” are the Forty-Eighters, the timing of his letter and the simultaneous arrival of the Greens (minus Douai himself, who was at the time of this letter still lingering in an Altenburg jail cell) suggests that the two groups are one and the same. Furthermore, Kettner’s letter also references the relative political calm
that was being disturbed by these new arrivals. In contrast with this group’s “partisan bellyaching,” he claims that the original immigrants (the Grays) “always have dealings with reasonable and unaffected people,” implying that the new arrivals are in comparison the cause of some sort of fractious trouble.\textsuperscript{132} Kettner, like many of his fellow Grays, did not hold strong political beliefs. Other than several strong expressions of American patriotism, this is practically the only mention of politics in all of Kettner’s correspondence home, which (though the record is likely incomplete) stretches from 1850 to 1874. He resented the vocal partisanship of the Forty-Eighters because it presented such a heavy contrast to that neutrality.

\textbf{The San Antonio Zeitung}

Douai seems to have realized that he was no farmer before he ever even touched a plow, making Kettner’s impression of the Forty-Eighters seem all the more accurate. He instead founded the town’s first school and began to make a comfortable life for his family, teaching as he had in Germany and Russia (though he tried to place blame on his bad gallbladder for not allowing him to work the long strenuous hours of a gentleman farmer).\textsuperscript{133} He also became involved in the founding of the town’s first paper, the \textit{Neu Braunfelser Zeitung}, but was quickly forced out because of his radicalism by the Gray editor, Dr. Ferdinand Lindheimer.\textsuperscript{134} Soon after, his school began facing competition from the local Catholic priest, who started teaching

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{133} Douai, "Autobiography of Dr. Adolf Douai," 102.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid.
the town’s non-Protestant children as soon as Douai taught them to read. Having reached multiple professional dead ends, he eventually moved to San Antonio in 1853 to find better work. There he was chosen to edit and publish a proposed German-language newspaper being started by the area’s modest German community. Before the local investors committed the money needed to purchase a printing press, he was asked to reveal the nature and policy of the new paper. As he was unsure of their political beliefs, Douai was at first coy, responding vaguely that under his guidance the paper would “follow social-democratic ideals.” When asked who he would have voted for in the 1852 presidential election had he been a citizen, he settled on the Democrat, Franklin Pierce, who he considered “a friend of the working man,” not explaining that he disliked both candidates for their pro-slavery attitudes.\footnote{Ibid., 108-09.} The assembled investors approved and committed the needed money. Little did they know the true nature of Douai’s radicalism, which would eventually seep its way into print. This is how a radically abolitionist, German-language newspaper came into operation in San Antonio, Texas in the 1850’s.

Douai’s willful ignorance of the Gray community permitted him to use his paper, the \textit{San Antonio Zeitung}, to misleadingly represent the will of the German community as a whole. The Forty-Eighters were an extreme minority of the total German community; although the populations of Fredericksburg and New Braunfels numbered in the thousands by this time, once again Douai himself believed that there were only around a dozen of his ex-revolutionary compatriots living in all of Texas.
when he arrived.\textsuperscript{136} There is an almost patronizing tone to Douai’s take on this dynamic, as he asks “how could this small contingent act as a leavening agent for the great masses of farmers and ex-soldiers which had been subjected to such sad experiences by the \textit{[Adelsverein]}?\textsuperscript{137} He therefore took it upon himself to guide the German community as a whole, to speak for his countrymen in matters which they had so far disregarded. His new paper was the perfect tool to disseminate his beliefs.

The \textit{Zeitung} would become hugely influential and controversial amongst the German community of Texas for its unprecedented political views. For his part, Douai saw his publication as an opportunity to advance his political beliefs with the same revolutionary spirit he had shown in Germany. He considered Texas’ early German immigrants, the Grays, to be “a reactionary and ignorant lot” who “had not even enjoyed good schooling.”\textsuperscript{138} These words, particularly “reactionary,” mirror those he used to describe his anti-revolutionary opponents during the upheaval in Altenburg. Recall that, by in large, the Grays were poor members of the peasant and farming classes who had come to Texas seeking new opportunities under the leadership of aristocrats and princes. By comparison, Douai and his newly arrived compatriots were university educated and ideologically motivated. He judged the \textit{Adelsverein} harshly, being unable to look past Prince Solms’ admittedly gross incompetence in exposing the first wave of immigrants to starvation and disease.\textsuperscript{139} Not once does he mention the secluded nature of the \textit{Adelsverein} settlements, or the political neutrality the Grays tended to exhibit. He does not seem to have understood

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 110.  
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid.
the self-segregationist attitude that had pervaded the earlier settlements, instead viewing their neutrality as ignorance. Therefore Douai’s disdain for Solms and the aristocratic order which he represented blinded him to the entire context of the Grays, which made the establishment of a politically radical newspaper purporting to represent them all the more permissible.

Although the Zeitung did not initially approach the topic of slavery in its early issues, abolitionism soon became its central topic after he and the other Forty-Eighters began to organize themselves with the help of Northern abolitionists. For the first year or so of its existence (the first edition was printed on July 1st, 1853), the paper was actually surprisingly non-political. Douai’s autobiography briefly states that “in the beginning nothing was said of slavery,” though it is not clear at first why he or his like-minded contributors would hold back. As the paper was mostly directed towards the German immigrant community in and around San Antonio, Douai likely saw the value of keeping a low profile in this insular community while the publication got off the ground. There was also a minor scandal that arose after the inaugural issue was published which may have distracted his efforts; the paper’s first typesetter quit over a wage dispute and publicly accused Douai of being an enemy of labor. He seems to have taken the accusation quite personally, especially given his history as an agitator for worker’s rights. Perhaps most importantly, the paper’s stockholders (most, if not all of whom were Grays), may not have approved of an

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140 Ibid., 113.
141 Ibid.
overtly divisive political agenda. Whatever the case may be, Douai’s discretion did not last long.

**Frederick Law Olmsted and the Compromise of 1850**

In early 1854, Douai first came into contact with the architect and abolitionist Frederick Law Olmsted, who would help the Forty-Eighters begin their intrusion into Texas’ slavery politics. Olmsted would eventually achieve lasting fame for his landscape architecture, but that renown was still several years away in 1853. When he and Douai first met, Olmsted was a little known ‘scientific farmer’ and journalist who got a lucky break with a big story. Olmsted was at this time taking an investigative trip through much of the South with his brother at the behest of the *New York Daily Times* (the progenitor of today’s *New York Times*). The *Times*, desperate for coverage of the South in a period when slavery dominated America’s discourse, paid him $10 for each dispatch he wired back North.142 His experiences were later collected and published into three books: *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States*, *A Journey Through Texas*, and *A Journey in the Back Country in the Winter of 1853-1854*. The middle text, as an ‘outsider’s’ perspective, is a widely cited source of information on the Texas Germans.

However, the true purpose of Olmsted’s trip is not at all clear as, despite various attempts to state otherwise, his dispatches were written with an abolitionist agenda in mind. Olmsted was not a radical abolitionist at the start of the trip, as he

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142 Martin, *Genius of Place: The Life of Frederick Law Olmsted*, 78.
held the moderate view that slavery should be ended gradually on the South’s terms. That opinion would change by the time he arrived in Texas. Olmsted got the job at the *Times* through the recommendation of an abolitionist friend named Charley Brace, who happened to know the paper’s founder, Henry Raymond. Brace had spent years attempting to convince Olmsted that gradual emancipation was not a satisfactory means of freeing the South’s slaves. Though gradualism was a common stance in the North, it was unacceptable to the more radical Brace, who desired the immediate manumission of all slaves. The abolitionist fire may have run in his family, as his father was once Harriet Beecher Stowe’s favorite school teacher.\(^{143}\) Brace recommended Olmsted to Raymond in the hopes that his journalist friend would be “shaken out of his gradualist stance” by the experience.\(^{144}\) Raymond did not even bother interviewing Olmsted for more than five minutes, so desperate was the young paper for coverage of the South and its peculiar institution in the wake of the controversial Compromise of 1850, the true impetus of Olmsted’s trip.

The Compromise of 1850 was a source of endless contention for both abolitionists and slave holders, which made it ripe material for investigative journalism for both Olmsted and Douai. After the massive territorial gains of the Mexican-American War (1846-1848), questions arose about how the new regions would fit into the delicate balance between slave and free states. Among other measures, Congress’ solution to the issue admitted California to the Union as a free state on the condition that the Utah and New Mexico territories be allowed to vote

\(^{143}\) Ibid., 76.
\(^{144}\) Ibid., 77.
whether to admit slavery through the policy of popular sovereignty. As a concession to the South, the Fugitive Slave Law, “the most explosive part of the compromise,” allowed escaped slaves in the North to be re-captured with near impunity. In the end, the Compromise failed to satisfy either side and “virtually assured that violence would eventually erupt.” The Times hoped that first hand coverage of these issues would earn the vulnerable paper new readers in the cutthroat arena of New York journalism. The fact that Olmsted was himself a farmer at this time was icing on the cake, as it was hoped that he would have an even better understanding of the South’s agrarian society. The fundamental impetus of Olmsted’s journey was therefore rooted in slavery politics and Northern abolitionism.

Olmsted’s writings further indicate that his trip through the South was inspired by the controversy surrounding the Compromise of 1850, with the goal of

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146 Martin, Genius of Place: The Life of Frederick Law Olmsted, 75.
147 Ibid.
148 Ibid., 78.
garnering support for abolitionism. In the ‘Note by the Editor’ at the beginning of A Journey Through Texas, Olmsted’s brother first states that the pair’s motive for undertaking the trip was “the hope of invigorating weakened lungs by the elastic power of a winter’s saddle and tent-life.” Interestingly, the ‘illness’ pretext also appears in Douai’s autobiography: he writes that Olmsted and his brother “made a horseback trip through Texas for [his brother’s] health,” not once mentioning any political or investigative agenda. The end of the editor’s note explicitly attempts to dispel the notion that the Olmsteds undertook the trip for political reasons. It says that “the notes upon slavery in the volume are incidental, but the extraordinary effect upon federal policy produced by fluctuation in the local market, where ownership in forced labor is the principal investment, imparts to observations within these new limits a peculiar interest.” “Federal policy” seems to be an allusion to the Compromise of 1850, and “fluctuation in the local market” could be reference to the delicate balance between slave and free states. Put plainly, the Olmsteds would have their readers believe that this was a simple travel narrative that merely touched upon slavery, not a politically motivated abolitionist tract. Yet the fact remains that the trip was funded by a Northern newspaper at the behest of an abolitionist. Furthermore, Brace’s hope that the trip would change Olmsted’s view on slavery turned out to be correct- by the time he reached Texas, he had seen enough of its injustices to conclude that immediate manumission was the only morally correct course of action. All of these factors indicate that Olmsted’s trip was motivated to grow pro-abolitionist sentiment.

149 Olmsted, Journey through Texas, or a Saddle Trip on the Southwestern Frontier, v.
151 Olmsted, Journey through Texas, or a Saddle Trip on the Southwestern Frontier, v.
152 Martin, Genius of Place: The Life of Frederick Law Olmsted, 86.
It goes without saying that the *Times* did not commit money merely to rehabilitate the lungs of a reporter’s sibling.

Help From the North

The German Forty-Eighters and Northern abolitionists shared a set of complementary abolitionist beliefs that would lead to active cooperation. That alliance between these two seemingly dissimilar groups was best exemplified in the relationship between Douai and Olmsted. It goes without saying that the two factions clearly shared the principle that “society had a responsibility to uplift the lower classes,” albeit through different means.¹⁵³ Douai and the other Forty-Eighters saw slavery as an extension of the old European feudal order which they had fought so hard to overcome in their revolutions. In particular, the slaves of Texas reminded Douai of the serfs of Russia, whose mistreatment had inspired much of his far left politics.¹⁵⁴ This experience is actually one that may have been shared by Olmsted, who visited Central Europe in 1851 while on his honeymoon, “where he observed the causes and effects of 1848” which “broadened his identification with liberal reform and democratic nation building.”¹⁵⁵ For these exact reasons the Forty-Eighters saw slavery as a political and moral evil that had to be uprooted. Recall also the attitude of persecution felt by the Forty-Eighters as they arrived in the United States, which may

¹⁵³ Honeck, *We Are the Revolutionists: German-Speaking Immigrants and American Abolitionists after 1848*, 43.
¹⁵⁵ Honeck, *We Are the Revolutionists: German-Speaking Immigrants and American Abolitionists after 1848*, 40.
have inspired something akin to a need for revenge against the conservative oppressors of the world.

Meanwhile, Northern abolitionists had of course come to the same conclusions. It should be noted that at no point was the American abolitionism movement united under one common approach. The term ‘abolitionist’ can simultaneously be applied to a whole range of political activists who sought the manumission of slaves for a variety of reasons. Though Olmsted found the endless exploitation of America’s slaves to be “repugnant,” others (such as members of the American Colonization Society) saw the presence of Africans as a threat to the country’s racial purity. But most abolitionists shared the belief that the institution of slavery was an outdated one that was sapping America’s strength from the inside. This labor-based criticism of slavery held that the South’s dependence on forced labor was holding it back as “the golden rule of the Southern gentry was not to work at all, to be able to live without working.” Olmsted argued that this attitude placed the South out of touch with the rest of the country, as it violated “the ethics of self-advancement and social improvement.” The conflation of free and labor “sounded so appealing and yet was so undefined, there is little wonder that it was used as a rallying call by both American and foreign born antislavery activists.” Charlie Brace, the abolitionist who had instigated Olmsted’s trip to the South, called for his readers to purchase only free labor cotton, writing that “the many handed, industrious

156 Olmsted, Journey through Texas, or a Saddle Trip on the Southwestern Frontier, 182.
157 Honeck, We Are the Revolutionists: German-Speaking Immigrants and American Abolitionists after 1848, 47.
158 Ibid.
159 Ibid.
free labour of German families is found cheaper, and of course far cleaner and more thorough than slave labour.”¹⁶⁰ As both groups saw slavery as a labor issue, Douai’s German Forty-Eighters and Olmsted’s Northern abolitionists saw much common cause.

The friendship that subsequently formed between Douai and Olmsted was in fact a full-fledged partnership, intent on ending slavery in Texas through public debate and popular agitation. The two first got to know each other on the journey to attend at a small gathering of the Forty-Eighters in Sisterdale, Texas in early 1854.¹⁶¹ This meeting is the first time that Douai explicitly mentioned the existence of a conspiracy on his part to unleash a ‘free state’ campaign in Texas, using the power of his press. Olmsted was clearly an active participant in this scheming, putting to rest any notion that his presence in Texas was purely relegated to research purposes. But first, on the road from San Antonio, they found they had much in common. They both worked in the media, had experience in socialist politics, Olmsted spoke a little German, and in this way “each found pleasure in each other’s erudition.”¹⁶² Perhaps most importantly, Olmsted saw promise in the Zeitung, saying that it “contained more news of matters of general interest than all the American Texan papers combined.”¹⁶³ These similarities paved the way for the formation of their conspiracy and friendship. The two would in fact become great compatriots, corresponding and working with

¹⁶⁰ Charlie Brace, National Anti-Slavery Standard, April 4 1854.
¹⁶² Honeck, We Are the Revolutionists: German-Speaking Immigrants and American Abolitionists after 1848, 43.
¹⁶³ Olmsted, Journey through Texas, or a Saddle Trip on the Southwestern Frontier, 187-88.
one another to accomplish their abolitionist goals for many years after Olmsted returned to New York. Tracks

At the actual meeting in Sisterdale, the two men outlined a seditious plot to rid Texas of slavery once and for all. In fact, they colluded and conspired together just as if Olmsted was an old revolutionary compatriot of Douai’s from Altenburg. Olmsted does not give a thorough account of the meeting itself, except to say that he and the Germans drank and smoked and sang “student songs.” Fortunately, Douai recorded the conspiratorial details. The meeting was attended by at least four other Greens, and conversation revolved around the ongoing Kansas Border War and what it meant for abolitionism in Texas. In Kansas, pro-slavery and anti-slavery leaders were inviting waves of their followers to settle the territory and drown out the votes of the other side. This was triggering both violence and bad press, prompting Olmsted to propose that manumission could be achieved in Texas through a cleaner route. He suggested to the Germans that they use the media to advocate for a separate free state of West Texas, an area at that time settled mostly by Mexicans and Germans and largely devoid of slaves. Olmsted promised that he would use his connections with Northern abolitionists to muster support for the movement when the time came. Douai was immediately inspired by this idea, especially after he realized that the chain of German colonies in Central Texas would form a strong Eastern border with the rest of the state. He writes that,

164 Martin, Genius of Place: The Life of Frederick Law Olmsted, 100.
166 Ibid. Recall that the contemporary term ‘West Texas’ today refers to Central Texas.
167 Marilyn McAdams Sibley, Lone Stars and State Gazettes: Texas Newspapers before the Civil War (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1983), 233.
We were not only impregnable behind the Colorado River, but we also could train and arm the fleeing negroes and advance from one river defense line to another; from the Colorado to the Brazos to the Trinity to the Sabine. We would with support of the North roll back slavery to Louisiana and even further to the East.\footnote{Douai, "Autobiography of Dr. Adolf Douai," 114.}

In Douai’s mind, this plan was a blueprint for a war that would bring about the end of slavery across all of the South, using German veterans and farmers as the backbone of a revolutionary slave army. He further recorded that Olmsted “promised me active support when it came time to actively agitate for a free state in West Texas… In the meantime it was necessary for the Germans to keep their mouths shut, and abide their time.”\footnote{Ibid.} This explains in part why the Zeitung was fairly neutral in tone for the early part of its existence. All that was left was to wait until the right moment, when the media campaign would be most effective.

Until that moment came, Douai had an almost conspiratorial understanding of the German community’s relationship with slavery. As discussed, there is no one reason for the Gray’s systematic avoidance of forced labor, but factors include land use, economics, ideology, and class dynamics. Still, despite the minimal presence of slaves, the Grays fully tolerated the presence of human bondage in their communities. They did not speak out against slave owners, and none of their leaders ever suggested that German Texas should be a ‘free’ region. Douai saw this quiet neutrality as a betrayal of everything that he believed the German people should stand for. In his autobiography, he claims that back in 1846 (well before his arrival), the American slave holders essentially blackmailed the German colonists into supporting Texas’ admission to the United States as a slave state, threatening to deny them citizenship if
they did otherwise. He claims that the German colonists agreed, “partly through fear and partly through desperation since their princes had left them in the lurch… and had exposed them to the most cruel suffering.”\(^{170}\) There is no other source or record which references such a conspiracy- it is in fact totally farfetched. It seems that Douai simply could not live with the fact that his countrymen were tolerant of slavery. As he did not understand that the German community’s avoidance of this controversial issue was intentional, this narrative seems to be the best explanation he could come up with. This willful ignorance of the segregationist policies of the Grays made probable his conspiracy to use the Germans as soldiers against the slave owners. Capital

**The San Antonio Convention of 1854**

The Forty-Eighter conspiracy was launched in the spring of 1854, after the national occurrence of state-wide German political conventions. The increased popularity and influence of these conventions signaled to Douai and Olmsted that the time for action had come. The *Bund Frier Maenner* (League of Free Men) was first organized by German immigrants in Louisville, Kentucky just before the two made their first acquaintance. The League intended to coordinate the political strength of German-American immigrants by holding state conventions in areas with significant German populations. The national founders did not intend the state conventions to adopt any specific platform, they merely sought to politically organize each German

\(^{170}\) Ibid., 111.
community.\textsuperscript{171} In the summer of 1853 such conventions were held in Wisconsin, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, and Kentucky, leaving Texas as one of the last unorganized German population centers in the country.\textsuperscript{172} The platform adopted at the Kentucky convention was the only one to denounce slavery, and for this reason it appealed greatly to Douai and his co-conspirators.

The Texas chapter of the \textit{Bund Frier Maenner} represented the first phase of Douai’s plan to establish a free German state on Texas soil. Called \textit{Der Freie Verein} (The Free Society), the Texas chapter was founded by a group of Forty-Eighters in Sisterdale in November 1853, just before the meeting with Olmsted. The convention was planned to take place in San Antonio on May 14\textsuperscript{th} and 15\textsuperscript{th}, 1854, as most of the German delegates would be gathered there anyway to participate in the second annual Texas \textit{Saengerfest} (an unrelated singing festival).\textsuperscript{173} The Free Society’s founders, most notably Dr. Ernst Kapp, were good friends of Douai’s, though there is no documentary evidence which demonstrates any direct collusion.\textsuperscript{174} Douai jumped at the chance to support the movement. On March 25, as the convention loomed, the \textit{San Antonio Zeitung} published the abolitionist Louisville platform in full to disseminate its message to the delegates.\textsuperscript{175} Over the next month, nearly every edition of his paper contained editorial content explicitly calling for the adoption of the Louisville platform. Notably, Dr. Ferdinand Lindheimer’s more conservative \textit{Neu

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\textsuperscript{171} Rudolph Leopold Biesele, ”The Texas State Convention of Germans in 1854,” \textit{The Southwestern Historical Quarterly} 33, no. 4 (1930): 248.

\textsuperscript{172} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{173} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{174} Sibley, \textit{Lone Stars and State Gazettes: Texas Newspapers before the Civil War}, 233.

Braunfelser Zeitung (the paper that Douai helped found, but was excluded from due to his radicalism) never printed the Louisville platform, publishing only an anonymous discussion of its ideas in April. Even before the convention was being held, Douai was using his paper’s influence to advance his abolitionism as the overarching opinion of the whole German Texas community.

The outcome of the San Antonio convention demonstrates the surprising influence that Douai’s paper managed to exert over the delegates. The meeting was attended by several hundred representatives from nearly every Texas German community, including Douai. After two days of debate, the assembled Germans adopted a tri-partite platform covering political, social, and religious topics. Most of the positions adopted were unremarkable, including a demand for direct election of U.S. senators, repeal of temperance laws, and adherence to the Monroe Doctrine. But buried in the middle of the platform was something inflammatory, something that would change the reputation of the Texas Germans forever. Article II Section 2 states simply that,

Slavery is an evil, the abolition of which is a requirement of democratic principles, but as it affects only single states, we desire that the federal government abstain from all interference in the question of slavery, but that, if a state resolves upon the abolition of evil, such state may claim the assistance of the general government for the purpose of carrying out such a resolve.

The meeting’s minutes, as later reported in Douai’s paper, record that this passage instigated heavy debate for most of the afternoon of the 14th. It seems that a small,
radicalized faction of delegates led by the Free Society (i.e. the Forty-Eighters who organized the convention) inserted the anti-slavery provision, which was allowed to pass by the majority because such a statement had already been made in the Louisville platform.\(^{180}\) In other words, the Gray delegates assumed that such a statement would not be controversial if it had already been made elsewhere by other German Americans (a fact they were familiar with because it had been extensively covered by Douai’s paper). Douai and his fellow Forty-Eighters won a major victory in San Antonio through a little luck and the power of the press.

**The Reactionaries**

The San Antonio platform sparked controversy almost immediately and was largely responsible for creating a popular conception in Texas that all Germans were anti-slavery. As soon as the slavery plank was made public, prominent members of the German community realized how inflammatory it was, and became the first to disown it. The Gray *Neu Braunfelser Zeitung* published such a disavowal on May 26\(^{th}\). The anonymous correspondent who signed himself ‘R’ (theorized by some to be Alexander Rossy of New Braunfels) found the convention’s slavery article to be “impolitic, since it was impossible to abolish slavery at any time in the near future,” even going so far as to claim that the Germans shared an economic identity of interest with slave holders because of each community’s dependence on the cotton trade.\(^{181}\) He also attempted to distance his town from the convention by claiming that New

\(^{180}\) Ibid.
\(^{181}\) “The Texas State Convention of Germans in 1854,” 256.
Braunfels had not sent a “regularly chosen candidate” to the convention, which was false. Ferdinand Lindheimer, the *Neu Braunfelser Zeitung*’s editor and personal enemy of Douai, also denounced the convention. Douai bitterly recorded that “Mr. Lindheimer… placed himself openly on the side of the slaveholders. Over the next several months, German newspapers in Houston and Comaltown published similar protests. Most of these articles attempted to illustrate that the German community could not afford to alienate Texas’ Anglo population by adopting such a controversial stance. This was a perceptive point (especially for a group of people who had already tried so hard to keep to themselves) for two reasons in particular: the xenophobic Know-Nothing movement was just beginning to gain ground in Texas, and the infamous Missouri-Kansas Border War was demonstrating that innocent civilians could easily be swept up into violent debates far outside of their control. For these reasons, Douai and Olmsted grossly miscalculated when they imagined that the Germans would passionately rise up and abolish slavery. Instead, the Grays adopted a reactive stance against their own countrymen, to disassociate themselves from any possible charge of radicalism.

Despite the best efforts of the Grays, coverage of the San Antonio convention in American papers was already creating the impression in Texas that all Germans opposed slavery. The American population came to learn of the San Antonio platform slowly, most likely because it was first published only in German. But by the end of the summer, Austin newspapers like the *Texas State Times* were beginning to state for

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182 Ibid.
the first time that all German immigrants supported abolitionism.\textsuperscript{185} Of particular interest to the American papers was the brief portion of the San Antonio platform which vaguely invited Federal intervention to protect a state’s abolishment of slavery.\textsuperscript{186} This discussion arrived just after the Know-Nothings did, whose organization and rapid growth in Texas may actually be attributable to Douai’s notoriously vocal endorsement of the San Antonio platform.\textsuperscript{187} Douai himself stated that the Americans “all considered the Germans unanimously against slavery” and that “soon all Anglo-Americans in San Antonio joined [the Know-Nothing] order” due to the public controversy surrounding his coverage of the San Antonio platform.\textsuperscript{188} The American papers, none of which could abide abolitionism, began to see a dichotomy between the Germans and the Know-Nothings as conflict flared up. John Ford and John Marshall, rival Austin editors of the most read English newspapers in Texas, played up this opposition for political reasons. Ford saw the Germans as foreign boogeymen whose presence could be used to increase Know-Nothing membership, while Marshall (a Democrat opposed to the growth of the Know-Nothing faction) saw them as tragic ideologues who needed protection.\textsuperscript{189} This debate did not take into account the ardent condemnations of the San Antonio platform made by most of the German community, possibly due to the language barrier but more likely because casting the Germans as abolitionist was politically convenient for both newspapermen.

\textsuperscript{185} Sibley, \textit{Lone Stars and State Gazettes: Texas Newspapers before the Civil War}, 234.
\textsuperscript{186} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{187} Ibid., 234.
\textsuperscript{188} Douai, “Autobiography of Dr. Adolf Douai,” 114, 15.
Douai’s attempt to capitalize on the convention’s platform cost him his paper and almost his life. Ignoring the German opposition, the *San Antonio Zeitung* published a constant stream of abolitionist pieces for the duration of the summer of 1854. It was the only ante-bellum newspaper in Texas, German or otherwise, to do so. Feeling uneasy about the sudden radicalism in the face of Know-Nothing rhetoric, the paper’s German investors decided to sell out and wash their hands of the ordeal. If avoiding conflict was their goal, they were right to do so; leaders of the Texas Know-Nothing party publically threatened Douai with violence on numerous occasions. He even claims that a band of twelve Americans once rode into town and threatened to lynch him and tip his press into the San Antonio River. Only the intervention of the town’s mayor saved him and his family. Despite the violence, Douai managed to purchase the paper himself, but only after he sold his house and borrowed hundreds from his friends and the Olmsted brothers. His paper continued for a while longer and actually managed some success thanks to further assistance from the North. Olmsted wrote articles in the *New York Tribune* and the *Hartford Courant*, supporting the otherwise non-existent German abolitionist movement and encouraging likeminded settlers to move to Texas. He also found several prominent subscribers for Douai, including Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry Ward Beecher. This was the assistance he had promised Douai in Sisterdale, meant to gain momentum for the establishment of a free state.

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191 Ibid., 117.
192 Honeck, *We Are the Revolutionists: German-Speaking Immigrants and American Abolitionists after 1848*, 44.
Ultimately, the controversy in the American papers and pressure from the Know-Nothings made the Sisterdale plan even more impossible to implement than it realistically had been in the first place. Unafraid of the continued threats, Douai redoubled his efforts and published an article on February 10, 1855 in both German and English, for the first time explicitly calling for the creation of a free state of West Texas.\(^{193}\) This stand brought his paper to an end. His last partners quit, subscribers cancelled, and no businesses could be found to advertise. He fell deeper into debt over the course of the next year, finding once again that his radicalism was too much for his fellow countrymen to handle. Douai claims that the “slave-friendly postmasters” stopped delivering his papers at all, and that his fellow Forty-Eighter co-conspirators from the Sisterdale meeting abandoned him out of self-interest.\(^{194}\) German representatives in the legislature were so eager to distance him from their constituents that they included Douai on a list of abolitionists to be driven from the state.\(^{195}\) He sold his press to a political rival and left Texas on May 10th, 1856 with his wife and six children. The *Neu Braunfelser Zeitung*, the rival Gray paper which worked so hard to distance the German community from Douai and his abolitionism, is still in publication to this day.\(^{196}\) When he left Texas, Douai no longer held a passionate admiration for the state or its people, writing that “romance is cheap in a land where there are large rivers but little water… where even domesticated animals

\(^{195}\) Sibley, *Lone Stars and State Gazettes: Texas Newspapers before the Civil War*, 236.  
\(^{196}\) The digital edition of the *New Braunfels Herald Zeitung*, today published in English, can be found at [http://herald-zeitung.com/](http://herald-zeitung.com/).
and many humans are half or entirely wild."¹⁹⁷ He moved to Boston, where he once again took up teaching.

There is a touching footnote to Douai’s story, though. After the end of the Civil War and the emancipation of the country’s slaves, he received a copy of a newspaper “which somewhat redeemed his Texas experience.”¹⁹⁸ The paper’s first article read, in part,

This newspaper, the first to be founded in Texas by Negroes, was printed on the same press which Dr. Adolf Douai founded in San Antonio in 1853 in order to combat slavery. It will be a great satisfaction to him that the freed slaves of Texas gratefully remember his dangerous and courageous agitation in their behalf.¹⁹⁹

Conclusion

Before the arrival of the Forty-Eighters, the German community was deliberately uninvolved in any of the big political issues of the time. After the failure of the Revolutions of 1848, the exiles who arrived in Texas failed to take into account this nuanced tendency towards self-segregation. Instead, Forty-Eighters such as Adolph Douai saw the community’s neutrality as both a weakness and as an opportunity to once again instigate revolutionary change. Douai’s paper, with the help and advice of Olmsted, heavily influenced the 1854 San Antonio convention to adopt an abolitionist stance. Subsequent American media coverage, fueled by the competing biases of rival editors in Austin, extrapolated this to mean that all Germans were universally abolitionist. Douai’s subsequent attempts to create a free German state

¹⁹⁸ Sibley, Lone Stars and State Gazettes: Texas Newspapers before the Civil War, 237.
with the distant help of Olmsted ended in total failure. His countrymen, having seen what the slavery debates had done to places like Kansas, instead attempted to distance themselves however they could from charges of radicalism. Even his fellow Forty-Eighters washed their hands of him.

But the damage had been done. No more could the Germans hide in their Hill Country villages behind policies of neutrality. Instead, the neighboring Americans adopted the assumption that all Germans were ardent abolitionists. When the Civil War came only few years later, that assumption cast doubt on the loyalty of the German community, leading to violence and oppression.
Chapter III: Inoffensive Victims

The association of the German community with abolitionism was ultimately cemented by Texas’ experience during the Civil War. Though the expansion of American settlements and the actions of the Forty-Eighters made it increasingly difficult to stay isolated from state and national politics, the German community as a whole continued its quiet neutrality through the rest of the 1850’s. As loyalty became increasingly important to adherents of the Southern cause, the community still attempted to disassociate itself from any radical elements that could bring unwanted attention, but the unforeseen strains of the Civil War made that increasingly impossible. After Texas seceded from the Union, the German community’s abolitionist reputation (as formed in the years before the war through the actions of men like Adolf Douai) attracted reservations on the part of the new Confederate government.

This suspicion led to a mutual escalation of tensions, as the Americans in Texas increasingly began to distrust the Germans and vice-versa. With the imposition of hugely unpopular draft laws, some members of the German community actively began to oppose Confederate authority. Martial law was declared in certain areas, and occupying Rebel militia forces terrorized with a heavy hand. Some German groups even began to flee Texas to escape the crackdowns. When members of the Union Loyal League attempted to reach Mexico, they were attacked by a pursuing Confederate column. This led to the infamous ‘Battle of the Nueces,’ in which Confederate forces brutally massacred a number of Germans. These difficult experiences, all occurring during times of economic privation and intensified pro-
Union sentiments in the German community, solidified the image of the Germans as something unique from Southern culture more generally. After the struggles of the war, Texas German identity was intricately tied to the legacy of the Forty-Eighters as liberal Unionism was adopted ex-post facto as an aspect of the entire community’s beliefs.

**Secessionism in Texas**

Secessionism in Texas represents a complex and often troubling movement, one that was fundamentally concerned with the preservation of the slave economy and, subsequently, the sociopolitical future of the state itself. As settlements expanded in Texas, many of its citizens began to identify their state as being a part of the American South, as a sibling of the historic slave states to its east such as Louisiana and Mississippi. The common factors of slavery, geography, the cotton trade, climate, and shared migrant populations made these associations seem all the more familiar. In fact, in 1860, less than one quarter of Texans had lived in the state before annexation in 1846; the majority of these immigrants came from elsewhere in the American South. This was therefore a population of immigrants that was not present during the Mexican period or the Revolution, with very little sense of what it meant to be ‘Texan’. ‘Southern’ was a more accurate, if vague, description for many of the majority American population. The other sections of Texas’ society, such as the Germans and the Mexicans (to say nothing of the still mostly independent Native

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Nations), all had their own agendas and values separate from this Southern identity.\footnote{201} This mixture of ethnicity and origin bred diversity in thoughts and interests, making every issue surrounding the Civil War even more complicated and nuanced.

Texas followed suit when the other southern slave states began seceding in early 1861. This series of events was prompted in part by the election of Abraham Lincoln the previous November. Slavery was undeniably at the source of this movement in Texas as in the rest of the seceding states. Perceived grievances on the part of slave owners were pushed past the tipping point by Lincoln’s election, which fostered a sense that they had little control over national affairs. The \textit{Texas State Gazette}, run by John Marshall, the Austin based Know-Nothing critic of Adolf Douai, repeatedly illustrated for its readers the effects Lincoln’s presidency would have in the state, neatly summarizing what would soon become the main arguments in favor of secession. A November 17$^{th}$, 1860 editorial claimed that soon “the negroes would of course be set free, and like all emancipated African slaves would prey, an idle, filthy, vicious, and worthless class, upon the industrious white population.” In conclusion, it claimed that, “We are all vitally interested in defending and maintaining slavery. It cannot be destroyed without ruining and dishonoring every cotton State materially, morally, socially, and politically.”\footnote{202} Above all, slavery tied Texas to the rest of the South, its only apparent kin in the United States. This alliance had grown stronger in the period since annexation, as the North began to represent a common political and social enemy.\footnote{203} Likewise, the German community was also to

\footnote{201}Ibid.  
\footnote{203}Secession and the Union in Texas, 21.
some extent dependent on the economic wellbeing of the slave states, as a plurality of the German farmers were invested in the cotton trade by this time. These shifting fears and interests changed Texas’ politics in very rapid order and laid the ground for secession.

Caught in the middle of this shift was Texas’ governor and ‘founding father’, Sam Houston. Much like the Germans, Houston was pulled in several directions when talk of secession arose in Texas. This trend of split loyalties was later interpreted by many (particularly slave owners and Confederates) as sincere support for Unionism, though the truth was far more complicated. On the one hand Houston himself was a slave owner, yet he steadfastly refused to support secession as he believed in loyalty to Texas and to its prosperity. Specifically, he took into account the disastrous effect war would have on the South, calling Southern support for war with the North “tragically irrational.” Unlike in most of the Southern states, Texas held a public referendum at the behest of Governor Houston to validate the actions of the special session of the legislature which had called for secession. He hoped the vote would delay secession efforts, and that the state-wide referendum would bear out some modicum of Union support. But the February 23, 1861 vote went 46,188 to 15,149 in favor of secession. When officials of the state government were asked to give an oath of loyalty to the Confederacy in front of the capitol in Austin on March 16th,

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204 Jordan, Geman Seed in Texas Soil, 67.
205 Buenger, Secession and the Union in Texas, 8.
206 Anna Irene Sandbo, "Beginnings of the Secession Movement in Texas, and the First Session of the Secession Convention" (The University of Texas, 1913), 107.
207 Baum, The Shattering of Texas Unionism: Politics in the Lone Star State During the Civil War Era, 42.
Houston refused to stand, effectively resigning from office. As his family was moving out of the governor’s mansion in the following days, he twice refused Lincoln’s personal offers to accept command of a Federal army to keep Texas in the Union. Houston spent the remaining two years of his life in quiet seclusion, his reputation temporarily tarnished by his lack of enthusiasm for the Confederate cause.

The suspicions cast on Houston are comparable to those leveled against the Germans. Various individuals and groups in Civil War Texas were measured and judged in terms of “the time at which they did accept secession, and by the tenacity for their feelings for secession.” Mistrusted at this time because of the highly public debates of the 1850’s concerning abolitionism, the Germans had little chance to ‘prove’ their loyalties to Texas and to the South, if they so desired. For this reason, the former commissioner-general of the Adelsverein and one of the most important leaders in the community, John Meusebach, preemptively retired from the state senate, “to contemplate the natural order on his farm.” To make matters worse, the Germans by in large voted against secession in most counties in which they held a majority. There is of course no single reason for this trend, with most communities taking into account factors as diverse as loyalty to the Union or to Texas, abolitionism, the health of the cotton trade, consideration of the interests of their neighbors, and even the fear that the Confederate military would be unable to protect the western communities from native attacks. Through the course of the war that

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208 Ibid., 85.
212 Buenger, *Secession and the Union in Texas*, 81.
followed, the nuanced motives that informed support for Unionism or for secessionism were paved over to the point that the slightest perception of disloyalty was met harshly.

**The Secession Vote**

The results of the secession referendum in Fredericksburg and New Braunfels were influenced in large part by the local news media. The latter town was alone amongst major centers of German population in its support for secessionism in the referendum. The disparity is attributable to Adolf Douai’s old nemesis, Ferdinand Lindheimer of the *Neu Braunfelser Zeitung*. Lindheimer’s stance on secession was a fatalist and pragmatic one. He anticipated that the referendum would pass overwhelmingly and decided that the Germans would best be off supporting the winning side rather than face uncomfortable allegations of disloyalty. In a January 11, 1861 editorial entitled “Considering the current state of affairs, what should the Germans in Texas do?” he urged support of the secession movement, writing,

> Especially in the cities of our state a portion of the German population has decided in favor of the path of the Union, a ruinous path for the South. They have thereby placed the Germans as a whole in a bad light, and have, as a consequence, caused the German population to appear to many Americans as not very reliable.  

Lindheimer was mindful of the precarious position the Germans occupied in part because of Douai’s experiences in the previous decade. Recall that Douai, personal

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acquaintance and the editor of one of the only other German papers in Texas, had almost been killed a number of times before being run out of the state entirely.

That display of violence against Douai had undoubtedly been a huge lesson for Lindheimer, who had seen first-hand the worrisome American reactions to the positions of abolitionists and Unionists. The state’s German newspapermen were once more reminded of Douai’s experiences only six days before Lindheimer published the above article. Ferdinand Flake, the editor of Galveston’s *Die Union*, had lamented South Carolina’s secession in print. For this, his press was destroyed by an angry American mob on January 5th. Flake had considered the likelihood of violent reprisal against his paper so likely that he had already set up a duplicate press in his home. It seems possible that a fear of similar reprisals, so common that they were literally predictable in at least one case, inspired Lindheimer to adopt an explicitly pro-secession stance less than a week later to protect both himself and his community. In comparison to Flake and the other German editors, Lindheimer had a history of working very hard to dissuade the perception of radicalism amongst the German community throughout the previous decade. Recall that Lindheimer had forced Douai to leave the *Neu Braunfelser Zeitung* because of his radical politics. At the root of Lindheimer’s desire to conform to popular opinion was the experience of Douai, whose extremism had brought the first wave of American distrust upon the German community.

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215 Ibid.
Lindheimer’s paper overwhelmingly succeeded in swinging public opinion in New Braunfels in favor of secession, which spared the town the later persecutions faced by its German neighbors. Though marked by some instances of intimidation and fraud, the secession referendum is generally believed to have been fair, even considering the low standards of the time.\(^{217}\) The results in New Braunfels’ Comal County overwhelmingly supported the measure: 239 votes (88%) favored secession and only 33 (12%) opposed. By comparison, Fredericksburg’s Gillespie County cast 16 votes (4%) in favor and 398 (96%) in opposition.\(^{218}\) The media undoubtedly played a massive role in creating this disparity. Lindheimer’s paper, the only one in New Braunfels, held a true news monopoly. Even if they had wanted to get their hands on an American paper, most of the townspeople would not have been able to read English anyway. By comparison, Fredericksburg had no single major newspaper, and circulation of the *Neu Braunfelser Zeitung* was generally limited to the area around its eponymous town.

Furthermore, Lindheimer’s influence in New Braunfels was growing at this exact moment. John Meusebach’s Goethe-like retirement to natural contemplation several years before had left a vacuum of influence in the community which Lindheimer filled through the power of his newspaper. The two men were actually close associates, as they enjoyed a common interest in botany. Meusebach even named one of his discoveries *Lindheimera Texana*, commonly known as the Texas Yellowstar flower, in honor of his friend.\(^{219}\) When Meusebach returned to New


\(^{218}\) Buenger, "Secession and the Texas German Community: Editor Lindheimer Vs. Editor Flake," 396.

\(^{219}\) King, *John O. Meusebach: German Colonizer in Texas*, 141.
Braunfels after retiring from the legislature, Lindheimer was eager to hear about the goings on in Austin. He was disappointed to learn that “liberal ideas fared little better at mid-century… than [in Germany] in the thirties,” when the two had emigrated.\textsuperscript{220} The insider information Meusebach passed along may have been the original basis of Lindheimer’s belief that secession was inevitable, or at the very least it likely informed his practical understanding of how American politics worked at the state level.

Additionally, Lindheimer already had a history of directing the voting pattern of Comal County since at least the presidential election of 1860. In that election, Lindheimer’s once again pragmatic support for the state’s frontrunner, the Southern Democrat John Breckenridge, influenced the town to vote for his candidate over John Bell of the Constitutional Union party by a margin of nine to one, with not a single vote cast for Lincoln or Douglas.\textsuperscript{221} In Fredericksburg, the vote was significantly more split, with Bell winning by a slim margin.\textsuperscript{222} Lindheimer’s paper therefore seems to have been a major influencing factor on elections in Comal County and in its support for the secession referendum. As a result, the Germans of New Braunfels were “sheltered from Confederate atrocities and persecutions committed during the war…” specifically because of their overwhelming support for secession in the referendum.\textsuperscript{223} In other words, Lindheimer’s strategy worked. His town did not suffer

\textsuperscript{220} Ibid., 149.
\textsuperscript{221} Goyne, \textit{Lone Star and Double Eagle: Civil War Letters of a German-Texas Family}, 16.
\textsuperscript{222} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{223} Baum, “Pinpointing Apparent Fraud in the 1861 Texas Secession Referendum,” 71.
as Fredericksburg did because he managed to disassociate the local community from the legacy of Adolf Douai and the other Forty-Eighters.

**Fears of Abolitionists and Unionists**

Lindheimer’s efforts to keep New Braunfels safe from accusations of disloyalty were well informed, as war hysteria sewed distrust everywhere in Texas from the very beginning of the conflict. Even in 1861, Texans were somewhat irrationally preoccupied with worries about “potential Yankee invasions of their state,” years before the South’s untenable strategic situation turned that fantasy into reality. After all, fears of the North and its far reaching Federal government had been stewing in the minds of Southerners for generations. Open war only exacerbated this fear, but because there were no Northern armies to threaten Texas in 1861, suspicions quickly turned to loyalists within the state itself. For example, flimsy treason trials became common in San Antonio right after the secession vote. Some ‘traitors’ were charged with “having something to say on all passing events” or creating “discontent and dissatisfaction.” Convictions were very high in these cases as due process was essentially nonexistent. One judge found a man guilty of being a “Black Republican,” on the mere rationalization that “the proof in this case is so clear and explicit that …it is not thought necessary to recite particular occasions or acts.”

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224 O'Rear, "Reckoning at the River: Unionists and Secessionists on the Nueces, August 10, 1862," 87.
225 Ibid., 91.
226 Ibid.
A frenzy of persecution had come to Texas, one that needed to find enemies wherever it could.

Suspicions of the state’s few Unionists were tied to anxieties of slave rebellion, the specter of which had haunted the South for generations. In the summer of 1860, a string of suspicious fires popped up across the state, rumored to have been set by radical abolitionists. One particularly costly fire in Dallas was blamed on “certain abolitionist preachers who had been expelled from the country several years before.”227 These enemies of the South were supposedly planning to instigate a slave revolt by “[demoralizing] by fire and assassination the whole of Northern Texas.”228 Subsequently, weapons and some quantities of poison were apparently found in the possession of a group of slaves near Waxahachie, who were promptly lynched.229 Outside of inflammatory newspaper reports, there is no evidence that any of these fires were caused by acts of arson, politically motivated or otherwise. But the perceived connections between the activities of abolitionists and the possibility of slave rebellions were clearly well established, even if they were baseless. The rumors of arson engendered a hatred of Northern abolitionists and inspired the formation of vigilance committees for protection against slave revolts.230 Such concerns for the public’s safety were fanned by the American papers. The Texas State Gazette reprinted the Houston Telegraph’s coverage of the fires specifically to illustrate bipartisan concern for the issue. That article boldly declared that,

228 Ibid.
229 Ibid., 65.
230 Ibid., 66.
When not only our cherished institutions are attacked, but more when the very torch is set to our dwellings, the knife to the throat of our citizens, and our wives and daughters parceled out to terrible outrages of these hellish miscreants; when this is done… it is time to send the alarm throughout the length of the land. It is time for men to buckle their armor. It is time for all true men to come together, and in the name of the people put to death and drive out every man who is not a friend of our institutions!231

In reality, Texas Unionists made no serious attempts to organize themselves at this time either politically or militarily.232 There is certainly no evidence that they planned to coordinate a slave revolt in 1860. Rather, the fears of arson were provoked by “what Southerners perceived as the North’s embrace of John Brown.”233 The looming conflict of the Civil War, less than twelve months away, was beginning to put a serious strain on the position of those in Texas suspected of harboring Northern sympathies.

Other than the browbeaten American Unionists, the next most convenient vector for expressing preoccupations about a Northern fifth column was the foreign German element which was already associated with abolitionism. Likely caught up in the rumors of militant abolitionists being spread in the press, the Confederate military was overzealous in its efforts to root out Unionism in ‘suspected’ German towns and settlements like Fredericksburg. Recall of course that large numbers of Germans eagerly volunteered to fight for the South in these early months.234 The old Prussian Uhlan of Round Top, von Rosenberg, undertook his colorful recruiting drive at this

232 Baum, The Shattering of Texas Unionism: Politics in the Lone Star State During the Civil War Era, 84.
234 O’Rear, “Reckoning at the River: Unionists and Secessionists on the Nueces, August 10, 1862,” 87.
time. Despite stories such as his, the Confederate higher ups tended to see the worst in the Germans because of the general impression that they supported the North. When Confederate General Ben McCulloch marched into San Antonio to accept the surrender of the Union garrison, he quickly received complaints from the local secessionists about the presence of German Unionists. Likewise, General Hamilton P. Bee declared martial law in Fredericksburg’s Gillespie County in April of 1862, in part because he was “ignorant of the German language and suspicious of the foreign born.” As the conflict progressed, Confederate officers such as these men gained greater authority over the state’s civilian government, putting the Germans in a precarious position.

Confederate oppression, fueled by the stereotype of the liberal German, defined the war years for much of Central Texas. In a personal history of Fredericksburg written several decades after the war, B.J. Weinheimer, Sr. recalled flatly that “all those who lived in Gillespie County and nearby from 1860 to 1864 look back in horror to those terrible times.” He describes several atrocities committed by Confederate soldiers, including the lynching of one man who was taken from his home in the middle of the night and prominently hung on a tree outside of town. Weinheimer considered acts such as this to be inspired by an inaccurate reputation of the Germans as Northern sympathizers. He writes that, from the start of the war,
This entire region came into disrepute, because all Germans were said to be unionists and the preconceived notion was spread that all able-bodied men would join the union forces at the first opportunity. Since [the Americans] harbored a grudge against the Germans anyway, these developments gave them a good opportunity to vent their ill will…

The “preconceived notion” of Unionism that Weinheimer cites originated from the activities of the Forty-Eighters. Their vocal and memorable legacy turned xenophobia into active persecution. The pressures of the war highlighted and accentuated the features that made the Germans different, particularly the minority opinions of intense abolitionism that had been propagated and debated in American papers for years.

Even Confederate soldiers recognized the unfair hand that was dealt to the Germans during the war. R.H. Williams, a Partisan Ranger in Texas’ 33rd cavalry regiment, was one of the soldiers sent to ‘pacify’ German Texas in 1862. His war time recollections are not the dashing, daring type so often found in contemporary autobiographies, as most of his time seems to have been wasted chasing phantom Unionist couriers back and forth across the state on the orders of cagey superiors. Williams contrasted the harsh Confederate treatment of the Germans with that afforded to the “well-known Abolitionists in San Antonio,” American-born settlers who, according to him, went the whole war unmolested by the authorities. This concretely shows that the Germans were being singled out for persecution even though there was little actual evidence of their disloyalty. Williams does not mention the prominent show trials of suspected Unionists and the media’s rabble rousing

\[240\] Ibid., 49-50.
\[241\] R.H. Williams, With the Border Ruffians; Memories of the Far West, 1852-1868 (London: John Murray, 1907), 231.
\[242\] Ibid., 237.
about abolitionist arsonists, but the abolitionists of San Antonio were not subjected to the violent scrutiny afforded to the Germans.

The American abolitionists of San Antonio never gave the Confederate military any reason to invite steady or violent persecution, demonstrating how Lindheimer’s strategy to placate the secessionists and protect New Braunfels came to fruition. The show trials of early 1861 had undoubtedly sent a message to all the Unionists remaining in the state, who demonstrated a preference to conform rather than be persecuted. The English language newspapers explicitly called for such conformity: in March 1862, the editor of the Texas State Gazette wrote:

> We do not think there is an American in our midst who is not now with us. Even the Malgrowthers and the ‘I told you so’s,’ have bushed their croakings and have gone to work to aid an [sic] assist by word or deed our gallant soldiery. There may be, but we do not believe it, a few freesoil dregs in our midst; if so… we greatly mistake the sentiments of our citizens if they are not dealt with as traitors deserve to be.243

American abolitionists in Texas faced very public scrutiny, which pressured them to serve their state by keeping their pre-war political beliefs quiet. By no means were they a trusted section of the population, but threats such as these seem to have been redundant, effective, or both considering the lack of any serious organizing on the part of Unionists during the war. As a result, American abolitionists in Texas were not systematically mistreated by the Confederate government during the conflict. In much the same way, New Braunfels was spared the worst of Confederate oppression thanks to Lindheimer’s particularly prescient fears of retaliation. New Braunfels was

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the only major exception to the systematic oppression of Texas’ German communities during the war.

**Confederate Rule in Fredericksburg**

In comparison even to the American Unionists of San Antonio, the Germans of Fredericksburg were a vulnerable population and a convenient scapegoat in the eyes of the Confederate military. R.H. Williams, the partisan ranger, was under the command of Captain James Duff, an American-born thug whose questionable criminal record was not properly investigated “in the haste of war.”

Duff was appointed provost-marshal of Gillespie County by General Bee and Governor Francis Lubbock, a position designed to enforce that county’s state of martial law instituted by Bee.

Martial law was deemed necessary because of spurious reports which claimed that a German insurrection, apparently some 1,500 strong, was imminent. Duff’s regiment subsequently arrived in Fredericksburg on May 30th 1862. As provost-marshal of Gillespie County, Duff was more than willing to carry out the proclamation of martial law, which stated that, “all orders issued by the provost-marshal in the execution of their duties shall be promptly obeyed. Any disobedience of summons emanating from them, shall be dealt with summarily.”

On the same day that Duff arrived in Fredericksburg, that local declaration was augmented by a

244 Frank W. Heintzen, "Fredericksburg, Texas During the Civil War and Reconstruction" (Graduate, St. Mary's University of San Antonio, 1944), 21. Duff’s name is sometimes recorded as ‘Dunn.’ The former is used by his subordinate, Williams, and will be used here.

245 Ibid.

similar state-wide order of martial law issued by Brigadier General Paul Hébert, the commanding general of the Western District of Texas and Bee’s commanding officer. Hébert’s declaration was controversial. Instigated by unrelated protests against the Confederate conscription laws, it expanded Duff’s powers in Fredericksburg by suspending *habeas corpus*. This was the legal basis for the severe treatment of the Germans on the part of the Confederate military.

Under Duff’s command, Williams witnessed first-hand what he himself believed to be the unjust persecution of the Germans. The Partisan Rangers began taking oaths of loyalty from the community as soon as they arrived in Fredericksburg, which Williams referred to as accomplishing “no earthly good.” It was believed that these oaths, and the presence of a Confederate militia brigade, would address the rumor of German bushwhackers. Williams had serious doubts about the accuracy of this gossip, expressing frustration that the Confederate military leaders had so readily “swallowed it whole.” He was of course correct: no force of German resistance even remotely resembling that size existed at any part during the war. Nonetheless, Captain Duff gave the townspeople three days to take the oath, but many did not, “probably because they were more occupied with procuring a living, and protecting their families from Indian raids, than with politics. Possibly, too, many of them never heard of [Duff] and his proclamation until they were arrested.” Nonetheless, on the third day, Duff sent two wagon parties to gather the families of those who had not

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248 Ibid., 192.
249 Williams, *With the Border Ruffians; Memories of the Far West, 1852-1868*, 232.
250 Ibid., 235.
251 Ibid., 237.
taken the oath. His soldiers returned with four or five men, along with eight women and their children.\textsuperscript{252} The women and children were confined to the Fredericksburg jail, and the men were taken to Duff’s camp outside of town. The next morning they were quietly taken away and hanged outside of the camp.\textsuperscript{253} Another man suspected of harboring Unionist sympathies was judged innocent by Dunn for lack of evidence. Yet the following day, his body was found hanging in the woods nearby, his throat cut clean across.\textsuperscript{254} All in all, Duff is believed to have been responsible for the murder of between 20 and 50 people throughout the course of the war.\textsuperscript{255}

These injustices were caused by a combination of the German community’s suspicious foreignness and the radical legacy of the Forty-Eighters. Williams, for his part, was horrified. He wrote that “these people were not taken with arms in their hands, there was no force of the enemy in the country, and we had no similar acts to revenge.” Lacking any legal, moral, or military justification for the company’s actions, he gave two explanations for the murderous enthusiasm of Duff and the other partisan rangers: first, he supposed that they enjoyed killing for killing’s sake; and second, that Duff and his men sought to prove their loyalty with the state authorities to “enrich themselves by further pickings and stealing from the public purse.”\textsuperscript{256} These are plausible explanations, but Williams does not seem to comprehend the

\textsuperscript{252} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{253} Ibid., 258.
\textsuperscript{254} Ibid., 258-59. It is unclear whether or not this is the lynching described by Weinheimer. Many of Duff’s reported atrocities take a similar form.
\textsuperscript{255} Heintzen, “Fredericksburg, Texas During the Civil War and Reconstruction,” 25.
\textsuperscript{256} Williams, With the Border Ruffians; Memories of the Far West, 1852-1868, 259. To his credit, Williams is very forthright about the murders his comrades committed. His recollections were published half a century later, so his account likely differs with Civil War era perceptions of the Germans because it enjoys the benefit of outraged hindsight. There is no evidence that Williams himself participated in these crimes, but it is somewhat worrisome how virtuously he depicts himself.
specificity of the persecutions, as no other county in Texas was the target of a similar systematic terror campaign. It is hard to imagine Duff and his men would be allowed to run rampant in the streets Austin, harassing and killing as they pleased. The Germans of Fredericksburg had little representation in the Confederate government or military, especially after Meusebach left the state Senate, and they were exposed on the western fringe of settled territory. They were an alien group inside a society that was fighting a war to defend its unique cultural and economic institutions. Furthermore, they were suspected for no concrete reason other than the general impression that all Germans were abolitionists, one that had been formed in previous years on the basis of a minority’s political beliefs.

**Jacob Kuechler and the Union Loyal League**

Confederate attempts to establish ‘order’ in Fredericksburg only led to greater conflict with the remaining German liberals. A month before the arrival of Duff and his men, the Confederate government passed a nationwide general draft order on April 16th, which put the German Unionists in a difficult situation. The Unionists originally hoped they could avoid fighting against their conscience by serving as outriders and scouts around their own communities. That way they could protect their homes and families and serve the Confederacy without fighting the North. They got their chance when Comanche incursions grew more and more threatening in the wake of the Federal troop withdrawal the year before.257 A brigade from Fredericksburg

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257 O’Rear, "Reckoning at the River: Unionists and Secessionists on the Nueces, August 10, 1862," 92.
was raised by Jacob Kuechler, a Green, to defend the German community from these raids, with the blessing of Confederate Brigadier-General Robert Beckham (no connection to Colonel Robert Beckham, famed subordinate of J.E.B. Stuart).\textsuperscript{258} Likely unbeknownst to Beckham, Kuechler’s militia was also associated with the “Union Loyal League,” a semi-secret organization of German Unionists seeking to protect their homes and families from the incursions of both the Comanche and the Confederates.\textsuperscript{259} Kuechler allowed only fellow German Unionists to join his brigade, a gesture which was (and still is) interpreted to have been a sign of rebellious intent.\textsuperscript{260} For this, the unit was quickly shut down by Confederate authorities and Duff was sent in to put pressure on the local Unionists. Kuechler’s brigade was the source of the rumors of the 1,500 strong German insurrection; nobody seems to have much cared that it had originally been formed with the blessing of a Confederate General.

Kuechler’s brigade did not represent a real threat to the Confederacy. When Duff arrived in Fredericksburg to shut down the all-Unionist brigade and force oaths out of the townspeople, Williams records that most people who got wind of the requirement complied, “though some cleared out and took to the mountains rather than perjure themselves.”\textsuperscript{261} Other sources have recorded the names of the most notable German Unionists who fled, including Kuechler, Sheriff Braubach, E.W. Dobbler, and F. Lochte.\textsuperscript{262} Williams did not find fleeing to be a particularly heinous

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{258} Ibid.
\bibitem{259} Stanley S. McGowen, "Battle or Massacre?: The Incident on the Nueces, August 10, 1862," \textit{The Southwestern Historical Quarterly} 104, no. 1 (2000): 68.
\bibitem{260} O'Rear, "Reckoning at the River: Unionists and Secessionists on the Nueces, August 10, 1862," 92.
\bibitem{261} Williams, \textit{With the Border Ruffians: Memories of the Far West, 1852-1868}, 232.
\bibitem{262} Heintzen, "Fredericksburg, Texas During the Civil War and Reconstruction," 21-22.
\end{thebibliography}
or dangerous offense, certainly not enough to corroborate “one-tenth part of this yarn” about German “bushwhackers.”

But Duff pursued these four men with vigor, and actually managed to arrest the latter three over the course of the summer.

Kuechler made good his escape into the Hill Country, to the continued annoyance of Duff. Many of the young men who had joined his unit followed.

During this period, the trials of Braubach, Dobbler, and Lochte turned up testimony which _ex post facto_ cemented the view of Kuechler as a militant pro-Unionist. Frederic Fresenius, a Gray, testified that considering the makeup of the unit, the young men of the town surely aimed “to join [Kuechler’s brigade] and when the Yankees come they would lay down their arms.”

The testimony given at these trials, which is weak at best, is the only proof that Kuechler intended to raise his brigade in rebellion to Confederate rule. An alternative explanation for Kuechler’s ‘Unionist only’ recruitment rule is simply that there was no room reserved for those who did not seek conscientious objection because the whole purpose of the unit was to protect German liberals from serving in the Confederate military against the North.

The suspicions that Confederate authorities held about Kuechler were not primarily based on a tangible fear of German insurrection, but rather the political legacy of the Forty-Eighters. Captain Duff referred to Kuechler as, “a man of great influence; a German enthusiast in politics and a dangerous man in the community.”

This description is remarkably similar to those applied to Douai by the Know-

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263 Williams, _With the Border Ruffians: Memories of the Far West, 1852-1868_, 235.
264 Heintzen, “Fredericksburg, Texas During the Civil War and Reconstruction,” 22.
265 O’Rear, “Reckoning at the River: Unionists and Secessionists on the Nueces, August 10, 1862,” 92.
267 Heintzen, “Fredericksburg, Texas During the Civil War and Reconstruction,” 23.
Nothings some ten years earlier. After all, Kuechler was a well-known leftist who had left Germany in anticipation of the failure of the coming 1848 movement. 268 Though he arrived in Texas in 1846, and was therefore not a Forty-Eighter in a chronological sense of the term, he undoubtedly shared the political beliefs of the radicals that soon followed him. In 1848 Kuechler helped found the Bettina colony, a planned communist utopia on the banks of the Llano River. 269 Years later, when Kuechler raised the all-Unionist brigade to defend Fredericksburg from Comanche raids, he was considered dangerous not because he posed a serious threat, but because of the radical history with which he was associated. Charles Nimitz, a prominent Confederate Captain in Fredericksburg and a Gray (also the grandfather of the Second World War’s famed Admiral Chester Nimitz) exclaimed with some alarm at the trial of the three captured Unionists that, “it is customary when [companies] are to be raised to give notice. When [Kuechler’s] company was raised none could find it out, except those who were to join it, and persons who made inquiries, were told falsehoods as to the time and place of meeting.” 270 It is at first strange that even a fellow German held serious doubts about Kuechler’s intentions. But the ideological differences between Nimitz and Kuechler were vast. One was a moderate Gray who enlisted in the Confederate Army, and the other was a newcomer whose personal history was defined by a belief in revolutionary communism. Around a dozen other Grays testified, showing that the political refugees were not a fully integrated

268 Baum, The Shattering of Texas Unionism: Politics in the Lone Star State During the Civil War Era, 209.
269 Gish and Spuler, Eagle in the New World, 39-40. After the failure of the Bettina colony, Kuechler became one of the early residents of Fredericksburg. He was the settler, mentioned in Chapter I, who predicted the end of an almost disastrous drought based on a study of tree rings.
270 O’Rear, “Reckoning at the River: Unionists and Secessionists on the Nueces, August 10, 1862,” 92.
minority of the town. The ideological gap between the two immigrant waves was still large in 1862, so large that one was testifying against the other in Confederate kangaroo courts.

Some historians have questioned the veracity of the stories surrounding Duff’s war crimes, and the intentions of the Union Loyal League. Stanley McGowen argues that Duff’s infamy originated not from fact, but from “Unionists and their descendants around Fredericksburg, who attempted to portray the [victims] as defenseless farmers.”271 He expresses derision for the nickname the townspeople gave Duff, “the Butcher of Fredericksburg,” saying that Duff’s reputation originated from “false reports.” He also cites the formation of Kuechler’s all-Unionist brigade and the deception and misinformation surrounding the Loyalist League as evidence that the Confederate military was justified in its suspicions of the Germans.272 Admittedly, calling Duff a butcher is perhaps a little melodramatic, in that it constructs an oft-repeated and selective narrative of victimhood. And, as Nimitz pointed out in his testimony, there was something suspicious about the pseudo militarization of the Unionists. But numerous sources on either side attest to the truth of the atrocities, including R.H. Williams and B.J. Weinheimer. Furthermore, the state of martial law which gave these actions a legal basis was personally rescinded in September by Confederate President Jefferson Davis, in “an extraordinary rebuff.”273 Davis tersely informed General Hébert that the proclamation had been “unwarranted and illegal,” implying that he believed Captain Duff’s excesses to be war crimes.274 Finally,

271 McGowen, "Battle or Massacre?: The Incident on the Nueces, August 10, 1862." 75.
272 Ibid., 73.
274 Ibid.
McGowen does not take into account the reputation of the Forty-Eighters, which in part caused the German community to be unfairly targeted in the first place. McGowen’s interpretation focuses on the ways in which Duff’s image as a tyrant was magnified in the town’s memory after the experiences of the war. There is likely some truth to that trend. But more important is the fact that Duff’s transgressions created a memory of antagonism between the Germans and the Confederates. That antagonism cemented the abolitionist and Unionist tendencies of the Forty-Eighters as the identity of the whole community.

**The Flight to Mexico**

Far from subduing the German Unionists, military oppression only motivated them to take action. At first, terribly frightened by the atrocities recently committed in Fredericksburg, they had to play it safe. The advisory board of the Union Loyal League, the organization of German Unionists who supported Kuechler’s short-lived brigade, quickly met in response to Duff’s reign of terror.\(^{275}\) Under the leadership of Ferdinand (Fritz) Tegener, they decided to disband themselves on July 20\(^{th}\) after hearing that the Confederate military had declared Gillespie, Kendall, Kerr, Edwards, and Kimble counties to be in open rebellion.\(^{276}\) It is worth noting that New Braunfels’ Comal County was not included in this list. The League’s dissolution was in accordance with their policy of taking only “such actions as might peaceably… protect their families… and to secure members from being disturbed and compelled

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\(^{275}\) Heintzen, "Fredericksburg, Texas During the Civil War and Reconstruction," 26.

to bear arms against the Union.”

In a parallel effort to avoid further escalation of the conflict, Governor Lubbock soon declared a thirty-day grace period, during which any Unionist unwilling to take an oath of loyalty would be allowed to leave the state. This was a blessing to Tegener and the other German Unionists, who saw it both as an opportunity to escape Duff’s reign of terror and a means of leaving the South to join the Northern army.

However, the German Unionists did not realize the high degree of independence that the Confederate military enjoyed in Texas, and the little control that the civilian government of Lubbock exercised over it. After all, General Hébert’s May 30th declaration of martial law (still in force at this time) had in practice given the military near total control of the internal affairs of the state. Unaware that this dynamic would allow Duff to ignore Lubbock’s thirty-day grace period, Tegener departed the Hill Country on August 1st with a group of around sixty men, including Kuechler, on an expedition to reach the North via Mexico. They took a leisurely pace and did not post a rear guard, believing both that Lubbock’s proclamation sheltered them and that Duff could not catch up to them anyway. But tragically, according to the recollections of one of Tegener’s men, an informant betrayed them to Duff soon after their departure. Outraged, Duff sent a detachment of around one hundred soldiers to pursue, made up of his own men and those of other Confederate militia.

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277 O’Rear, “Reckoning at the River: Unionists and Secessionists on the Nueces, August 10, 1862,” 93.
278 Ibid.
279 Ibid.
280 Williams and Sansom, Massacre on the Nueces River; Story of a Civil War Tragedy., 26.
units. Duff stayed behind in Fredericksburg, appointing his subordinate, Lieutenant Colin McRae, to lead the column.

The ensuing confrontation has been variously described as either the Battle of the Nueces or the Massacre of the Nueces. McRae and the other Rebels, R.H. Williams among them, caught up to the Germans on the west branch of the Nueces River near Fort Clark, only a few dozen miles from the Rio Grande. 281 Williams gives a surprisingly detailed account of the attack, which is supported by the recollections of John Sansom, who was accompanying the Germans. McRae surrounded the German camp in the middle of the night, hoping to effect a quick victory through a show of force. But the scene quickly turned to utter mayhem after a jumpy Partisan fired early, sending the German camp into a buzz “like a swarm of bees.” 282 An intense skirmish broke out which lasted until dawn, by which time the German survivors had either surrendered or fled in small groups. 283 Firing from cover into the close formation of Germans, the Confederates had little trouble routing their foes. Fritz Tegener, badly wounded, and Jacob Kuechler both escaped in the confusion and quickly made their way to the border. 284 When he entered the Unionist camp in the morning, Williams saw dozens dead and around twenty wounded. 285 The Confederate casualties included two dead and eighteen wounded. 286

281 O'Rear, "Reckoning at the River: Unionists and Secessionists on the Nueces, August 10, 1862," 94.
282 Williams, With the Border Ruffians; Memories of the Far West, 1852-1868, 246.
283 Ibid., 248.
284 O'Rear, "Reckoning at the River: Unionists and Secessionists on the Nueces, August 10, 1862," 97.
285 Williams, With the Border Ruffians; Memories of the Far West, 1852-1868, 248.
There was a quiet prelude to the crime that followed the battle. The Confederates milled around and cooked breakfast, caring for all the wounded as best they could, as they had not brought along a doctor. Lieutenant McRae was one of the wounded, so command of the Rebels temporarily fell to Second Lieutenant Edwin Lilly, another protégé of Duff’s and a veteran of the Fredericksburg occupation.\footnote{O’Rear, "Reckoning at the River: Unionists and Secessionists on the Nueces, August 10, 1862," 95.} Williams described Lilly, who he calls by his nickname ‘Luck,’ as “an unscrupulous rascal who would cheat his own father- if he could.”\footnote{Williams, With the Border Ruffians; Memories of the Far West, 1852-1868, 244.} At some point in the afternoon, Lilly ordered the wounded Germans to be moved away from the camp on the pretext that they would be placed in better shade. Williams heard the sound of gunfire soon after. Assuming it was an attack on the camp, he grabbed his rifle and rushed over, only to find that Luck and his men had murdered the wounded.\footnote{Ibid., 249.} Their bodies were left there to rot on the banks of the river, while the Confederate dead were buried nearby.\footnote{Ibid., 251.} The German remains stayed there for three years until the families of the dead returned to the site of the battle to recover the bones of their sons, six months after Lee’s surrender.\footnote{O’Rear, "Reckoning at the River: Unionists and Secessionists on the Nueces, August 10, 1862," 98.}

Undoubtedly, the precedent of taking no prisoners that Duff had implemented the months before was partially responsible for the massacre. Williams once again supposes that Lilly and the others who took part wanted to prove their “zeal and devotion to the Southern cause” to gain popularity “with the authorities in San Antonio.”\footnote{Williams, With the Border Ruffians; Memories of the Far West, 1852-1868, 250.} General Hébert, the top Confederate authority in San Antonio, made the
massacre possible by declaring martial law that summer. That declaration gave a legal basis for the violent persecution of Texas’ Unionists, which was amplified in the German communities because of the popular conception of the Germans as liberals with Northern sympathies. This is how the Nueces Massacre must be understood, in terms of the broader perception of the Germans during the Civil War as derived from the political beliefs of a minority.

On August 10, 1866, the German community gathered in Comfort, TX to dedicate a monument to those who died on the banks of the Nueces exactly four years earlier. Representatives of every major German community, including both Fredericksburg and New Braunfels, were present. It is the only monument to Unionists erected on the soil of the former Confederacy.\(^{293}\) One side of the limestone memorial records the names of those who died in the battle and the ensuing massacre. The lonely inscription on the other side evokes the cause they died for: *Treu der Union.*

**Conclusion**

The Germans were not enemies of the Confederacy until they were categorized as such. Popular perceptions of loyalty were clearly important in the early part of the Civil War, when the whole state was preparing for conflict. The Germans were at a distinct disadvantage when it came to the question of allegiance, because the American press had already labeled them as Northern sympathizers. ‘Pro-

Unionist’ and ‘anti-slavery’ were not accurate labels to attach to the vast majority of Germans. These characterizations came instead from the political activities of the Forty-Eighters in the decade before. Ignorant of that dynamic, the Confederate military took the charges of disloyalty too far, instigating the backlash they had sought to prevent. The Grays, as indicated by the efforts of Ferdinand Lindheimer, were willing to go far to disassociate themselves from charges of radicalism. After the prosecution of Douai some years before, not even the Forty-Eighters were initially willing to militarily challenge the Confederacy. But Captain Duff’s reign of terror created a memory of antagonism between the Germans and the Confederates. Subsequently, the Civil War brought the two immigrant waves together in the minds of all of Texans. That is how the political identity of the Forty-Eighters became associated with the community as a whole.
Conclusion

On December 28th, 1963, Lyndon Johnson entertained his first state visit since becoming President the previous month. The Chancellor of West Germany, Ludwig Erhard, was not treated to a lavish dinner in the White House, but instead enjoyed a barbecue outside of Fredericksburg. Johnson’s ancestral ranch was located nearby, which made the town a convenient center of hospitality for the Chancellor. The mayor gave a speech in German, urging Erhard to bring the town’s greetings back to “the homeland of our forefathers.” Erhard was surprised when the pastor of the local church led a round of German hymns; the pastor explained that the hymns were never sung in English. At the barbecue, German potato salad was served alongside Texas coleslaw from the side of a large chuck wagon. It was an unusual event for everyone involved, particularly the press, who had grown used to the Kennedy administration’s less folksy approach to diplomacy.

Today Fredericksburg still very much retains its German heritage, though its history is beginning to fade from direct memory. Tourists from Austin and San Antonio enjoy walking along Main Street, peering into beer gardens, and eating sausages. Though the town’s history is clearly visible, most people experience it in a commercialized context. During both of the World Wars, the Germans were once again suspected for their loyalties. Public displays of German culture were temporarily made illegal in 1917 (including the teaching of German in schools), and most remaining German language newspapers did not survive the 1940’s. War time

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backlashes such as these were not unfamiliar to the community. As a result, by the
time of Chancellor Erhard’s visit the number of Texas German speakers had dropped
to around 70,000, down from the 110,000 estimated at the turn of the century.295
Today, that number is only around 10,000. It has been projected that Texas German,
as a distinct dialect, will become extinct within the next thirty years thanks to
demographic changes.296 Self-segregation, at once so strong that it fostered the
creation of a new dialect, has clearly not survived into the twenty-first century.

As discussion of Texas Germany becomes increasingly confided to academic
works, so must the history of the community’s identity itself. The conflict of the Civil
War was particularly acute in most areas of German Central Texas, making it a sort of
watershed period. Before, the community was highly separated from the nearby
American settlements. Most of the prominent German leaders explicitly tried to
sustain that independence throughout the 1840’s and 50’s, particularly in response to
the vocal politicking of the minority Forty-Eighters. But during the War, the anti-
slavery attitudes of the Forty-Eighters were cemented in the minds of the
Confederates as a general disposition of disloyalty. The subsequent violence showed
just how vulnerable the German community was. As a result, histories of the
Germans have tended to cover the charges of radicalism without considering their
antecedents in the preceding decades. The characterizations of the Germans as anti-
slavery and pro-Unionist can clearly be traced from Europe in 1848 to the banks of

295 Boas, The Life and Death of Texas German, 70.
296 Ibid., 74.
the Nueces River in 1862. In a place like Texas, where regional pride is cherished so highly, study of the Germans cannot lapse into recitations of antiquated stereotypes.
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