

THE TEXAS POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY JOURNAL

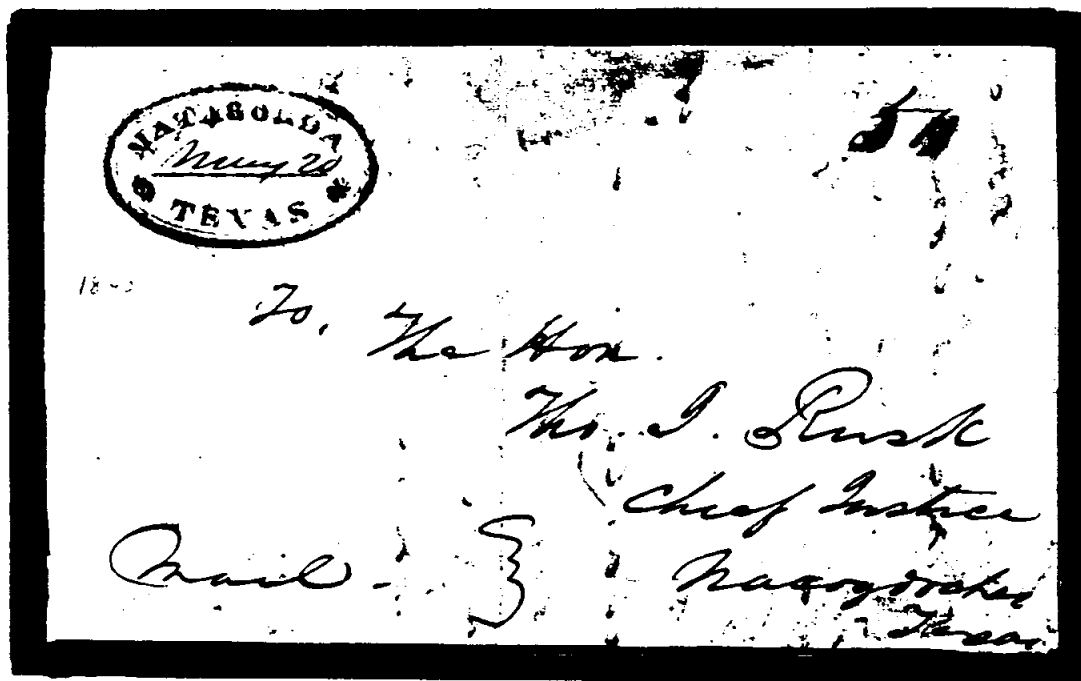


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Illustrated on the front page is a fine strike of a Matagorda oval postmark, used May 20, 1840 on a folded letter to Nacogdoches. It post-paid the 1840 Republic of Texas rate of 50¢ for a single letter traveling 150 to more than 200 miles. In 1838 a bi-weekly service had been ordered from Galveston to Matagorda and Texana via Velasco and Quintana. Appearing at nearly the same time as this route there were three oval postmarks. The oval, black, 18.5 x 36.0mm postmarks originated in the towns of Galveston, Matagorda, and Quintana.

THE TEXAS POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Dues \$10 per year payable to Secretary-Treasurer

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Thanks for electing (drafting) me as the new President of the T.P.H.S. As you will note above, we also have a new Secretary-Treasurer Karl Gebert, and John Germann continues as Vice-President.

Bill Emery and Jim Alexander deserve a round of applause for the great job they have done during the last few years, as President and Secretary-Treasurer. Jim has processed all the new membership applications and has handled the financial affairs quite adequately. Bill, in addition to serving as President has also been the Editor of the Journal. He has continued to do a superb job of putting out some interesting and informative issues - 4 times a year.

I'm sure all members join me in a loud "Thank You" to both Jim and Bill. Hear! Hear!

And some good news. Bill is continuing as Journal Editor. We're not losing his expertise nor devotion for editing the Journal in the future. Hurrah!

As President, I'd like to ask all members what changes if any, they would like to have take place in the functioning of the T.P.H.S. Our latest membership list showed we had 110 individual and institutional members. I'm told this is down a bit from previous years. We seem to have had a stable but not increasing membership over the years. Is this OK or should we try to recruit more members? If so, how should we go about it?

Financially, we are doing very well. As of January 1st, the T.P.H.S. bank account had over \$1,000. in it. Looks like we could afford some projects. What kind should they be?

What suggestions do you have to strengthen or make T.P.H.S. a better Society. I'd be pleased to hear from you and get your ideas about the T.P.H.S.

DANIEL RUGGLES
by R. H. Stever

Daniel Ruggles was a young U. S. Army officer who arrived in Texas near the beginning of the Mexican War.

Ruggles was a native of Massachusetts. He was born at Barre on January 31, 1810 and received his early education in that state. Two of his relatives were Revolutionary War soldiers. In 1829, at the age of nineteen, Daniel Ruggles was appointed to the United States Military Academy. He graduated 34th in his class in 1833 and was breveted a second lieutenant in the 5th infantry. He received the full commission on February 18, 1836 and was promoted to first lieutenant on July 7, 1838. Ruggles saw service in Florida during the Seminole War of 1839 - 1840. Sometime between his service in Florida and the Mexican War he married into a wealthy Virginia family from Fredericksburg, Virginia.

The Corpus Christi Gazette of Thursday, February 5, 1846 published a list of officers of the U. S. Army on duty with the "Army of Occupation" at Corpus Christi and St. Joseph's Island, Texas. Major categories of this list consist of: general staff, light artillery, second regiment of dragoons, first brigade, second brigade and third brigade. The second brigade was comprised of the 5th and 7th infantry regiments. Lt. Daniel Ruggles is listed as one of six first-lieutenants in the 5th infantry. This list, incidentally, contains at least ten officers who had Texas forts named after them and reads like a "who's who" of Civil War generals.

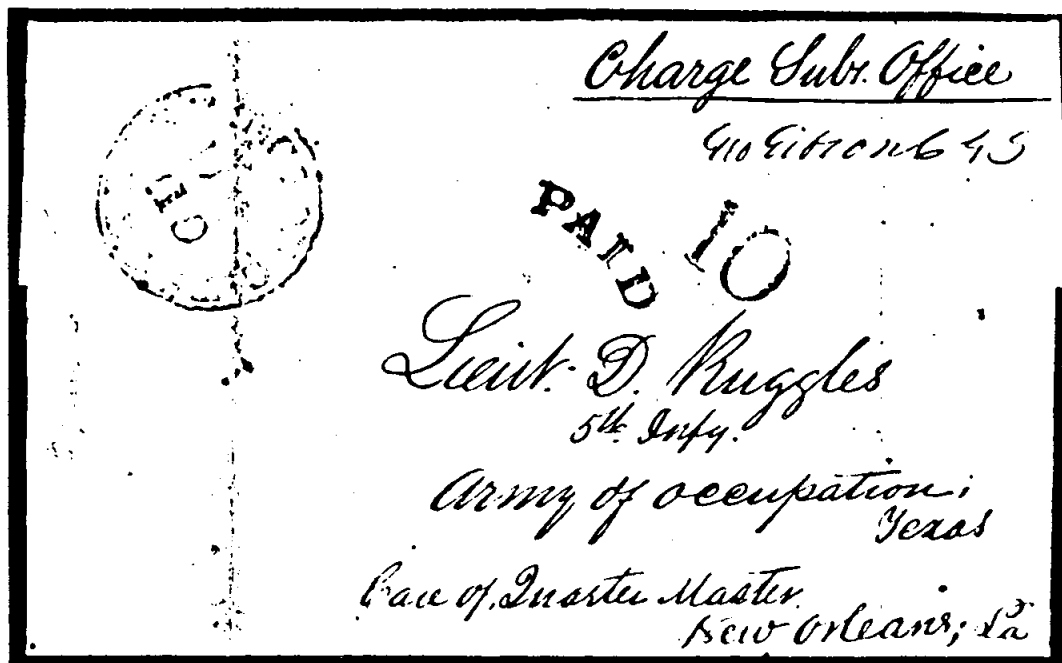


Figure 1. May 1846 letter to Lt. Ruggles from Gen. George Gibson, Commissioner General of Subsistence, concerning "provision returns".

Figure 1 is a folded letter posted at Washington, D.C. on May 19, 1846 addressed to "Lieut. D. Ruggles 5th Infy, Army of Occupation, Texas". The Washington CDS, curved "Paid" and "10" are in red ink. The letter is franked by (General) Geo. Gibson, CGS and routed in care of the Quartermaster at New Orleans. Ruggles docketed the letter on the reverse "R. Point Isabel June 6, 1846". Shortly after receiving this letter, on June 18, 1846, he was promoted to Captain.

During the Mexican War, Captain Ruggles participated early on in the Northern Campaign under General Zachary Taylor. However, when General Winfield Scott requisitioned nearly half of Taylor's battle-hardened Troops for the impending landing at Vera Cruz, Ruggles unit joined Scott's command. Ruggles subsequently saw a great deal of action and distinguished himself

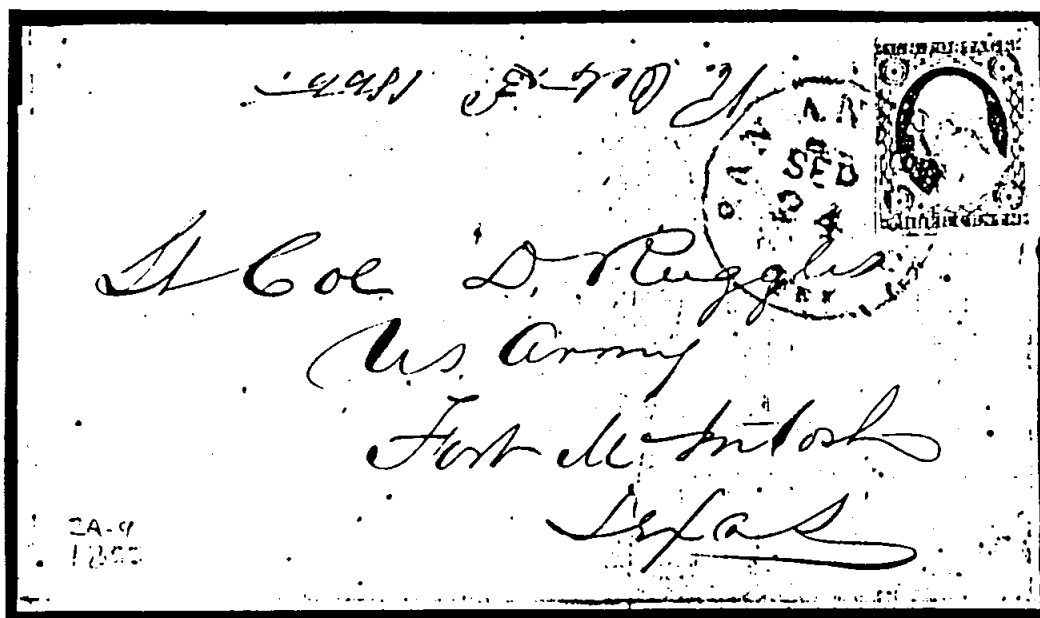


Figure 2. 1855 letter to Lt. Col. Ruggles at Fort McIntosh (Laredo).

at Contreras and Churubusco after which he was breveted a Major on August 20, 1847 for gallant and meritorious conduct. Shortly thereafter Ruggles participated in the storming of Chapultepec and was breveted a Lieutenant Colonel on Sept 13th.

After the war Ruggles possibly reverted back to his pre-war regular army grade of Captain or he may have retained his brevet rank as indicated by Figure 2. This letter was written Sept. 9, 1855 and hand carried to San Antonio, where its 3-cent 1851 stamp was cancelled on Sept. 24th. Lt. Col. Ruggles noted receipt (at Fort McIntosh) on October 3rd.

Prior to the Civil War the Army was relatively small, with relatively few officers and relatively little opportunity for advancement. Routine garrison duty was dull. But the outbreak of the Civil War changed that for Daniel Ruggles and the entire officer corps of the U. S. Army.

Probably because he was married to a Virginian, Ruggles cast his lot with the Confederacy. On May 7, 1861 he resigned his commission in the United States Army and was immediately commissioned a Major in charge of the Department of Fredericksburg. His job was to recruit troops and form them into battalions and regiments for the Confederate Army. On August 9, 1861 Daniel Ruggles was commissioned a Brigadier-General after being responsible for forwarding large numbers of troops to Beauregard's forces at Manassas. Apparently the Confederate high command thought Ruggles' talents lay in organizing combat ready units and supply depots and carrying out other administrative duties.

He requested a field command and was placed in charge of the First Brigade which moved to Corinth, Mississippi in early 1862. He saw considerable heavy action at Shiloh. During the retreat from Shiloh, Ruggles commanded the Confederate defenses at Corinth. When Grant heard about it, he remarked "If Ruggles is in command at Corinth, now is the time to attack". Grant's uncharitable opinion of Ruggles apparently coincided with the latter's commanders. Throughout the remainder of the war Ruggles duties were primarily organizational and administrative with only temporary field commands in late 1862 and early 1864. He spent ten months from April 1863 to February 1864 on Courts of Inquiry, Courts Martials and inspection tours. Much of 1864 was spent organizing mounted combat units for service under General Nathan Bedford Forrest.

Ruggles, at fifty-one, was considerably older than most Civil War Commanders at the outbreak of war. He was a heavily



Figure 3. Libby Prison in an August 1863 photograph. Source: Dr. Daniel C. Warren article, 1972 Congress Book.

bearded, tall, portly man who was never really given an opportunity to show his abilities as a field commander, possibly due to lack of faith on the part of his superiors.

Finally, on March 30, 1865 General Ruggles was named Commissary General of Prisoners for those prisoners held east of the Mississippi. His "office" was undoubtedly at Libby Prison in the Confederate capital, Richmond. (Figure 3) The Commandant of this infamous prison was Major Thomas P. Turner, a former West Point Cadet. When Richmond fell on April 3, 1865 Major Turner, probably fearing retribution by his former captives, fled to Mexico.

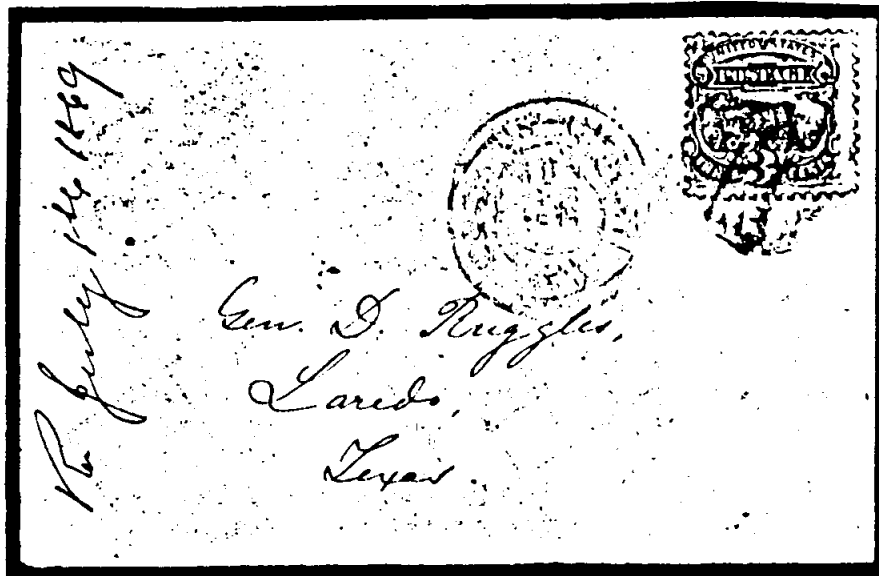


Figure 4. Post-Civil War letter to "Gen." Ruggles at Laredo. Mailed at Corpus Christi on June 28, 1869 with transit via post route #8527 arriving Laredo July 1st.

It is possible that Ruggles also fled to Mexico although one report says he was paroled in Fredericksburg, Virginia in early May, 1865. Certainly he was familiar with the area from his previous service in Mexico and Texas and it would be a natural destination. Figure 4 shows a letter addressed to Gen. D. Ruggles, Laredo, Texas in 1869. A green double circle Corpus Christi CDS was double struck on June 28, 1869. Ruggles dutifully noted receipt on July 1st. One can speculate that the former Confederate General was living in Nuevo Laredo and picking up his mail in Laredo.

Daniel Ruggles is known to have managed a ranch in Texas for four years in the late 1870's. However, he spent the rest of his life on his farm in Fredericksburg, Virginia and died there on June 1, 1897 at the age of eighty eight. He is buried at Fredericksburg, having remained estranged from his family in Massachusetts since his decision to side with the Confederacy.

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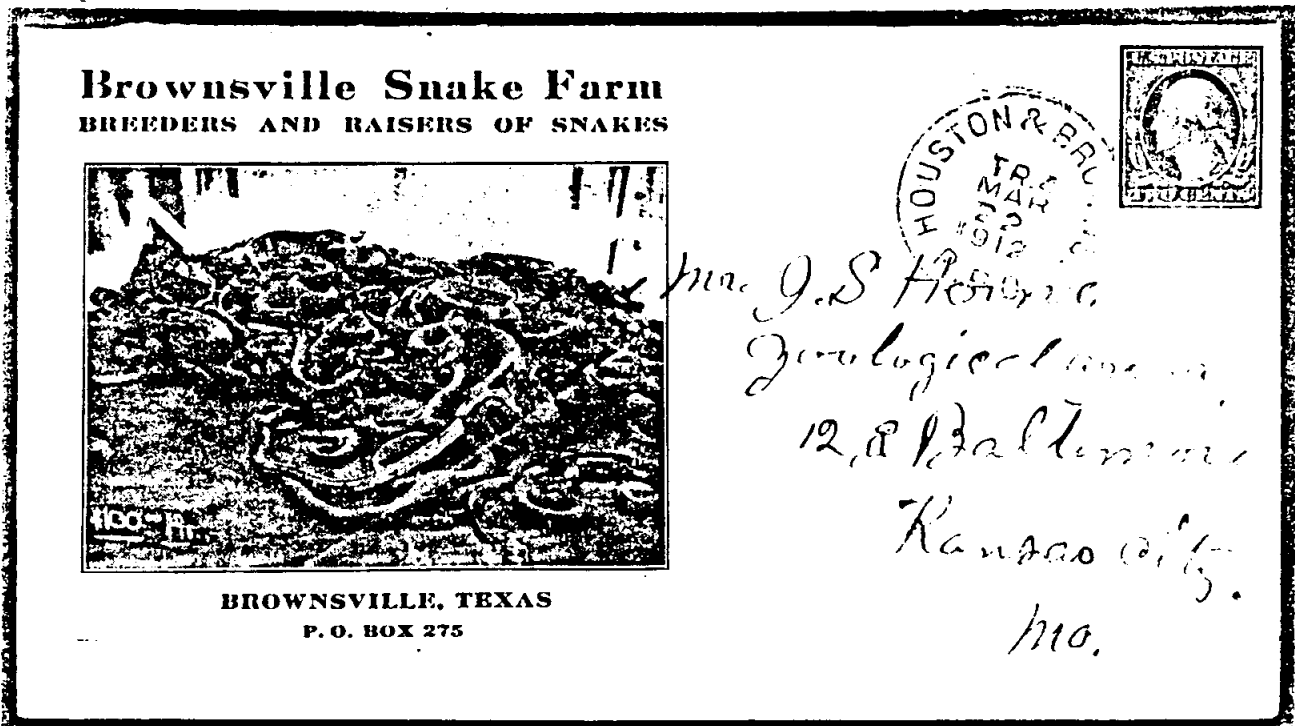
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THE BEST TEXAS ILLUSTRATED COVER CONTEST

By a majority of the T.P.H.S. members who voted in the first
Best Texas Illustrated Cover Contest the Brownsville Snake Farm shown
below was the winner, It is a cover submitted by R. H. Stever.

A second contest will be conducted as soon as eight more illus-
trated Texas covers are submitted to your editor.



SERBIN, TEXAS

By Romaine Flanagin

They were called the "Wends of Texas", and they came to the New World seeking religious freedom and to establish a colony. Originating in Germany, they were made up of remnants of old Slavic elements in that country. Sometimes they called themselves Serbs, Sorbs, or Lusatian Serbs. Although 150,000 of them remain in Germany, they are slowly being absorbed by their German neighbors.

The Wends who came to Texas are one of two large colonies in the world; the other is located in Australia. Led by Pastor John Kilian, who was legal advisor, doctor and teacher for his people, they came to America because a decree by the Prussian government united their Lutheran Church with the Reformed Church. They refused to accept the merger, and their only alternative was to emigrate. On December 16, 1854, the Wends landed in Galveston; 73 of the 558 who began the journey had died of cholera. They settled in Bastrop County and named their community Serbin. Later Serbin became part of Lee County.

They were thrifty, hard-working people and most of them had money enough to buy land and build houses. A church was built; it is about the only building in Serbin that stands to this day. Their community thrived until about 1871. Giddings became the more important town because of its railroad connection, and Serbin declined.

Through the years the old Wendish culture and language gradually yielded to the German. The Slavic language was used for the last time in an official way in 1914. Persons of Wendish descent are to be found all over Texas, but most of them are in Lee, Fayette, Williamson, Coryell and Bell Counties, especially at Serbin, Warda, Giddings, Manheim, Loebau, Lincoln, LaGrange, Thorndale and Walburg.

Serbin, Texas, was a postoffice from August 17, 1860, until December 31, 1909. The postmaster in 1901 was Gus R. Miertschin. The illustration shown in Figure 1 is addressed to John Schautschick, Esq. one of the patrons of Miertschin's postoffice.

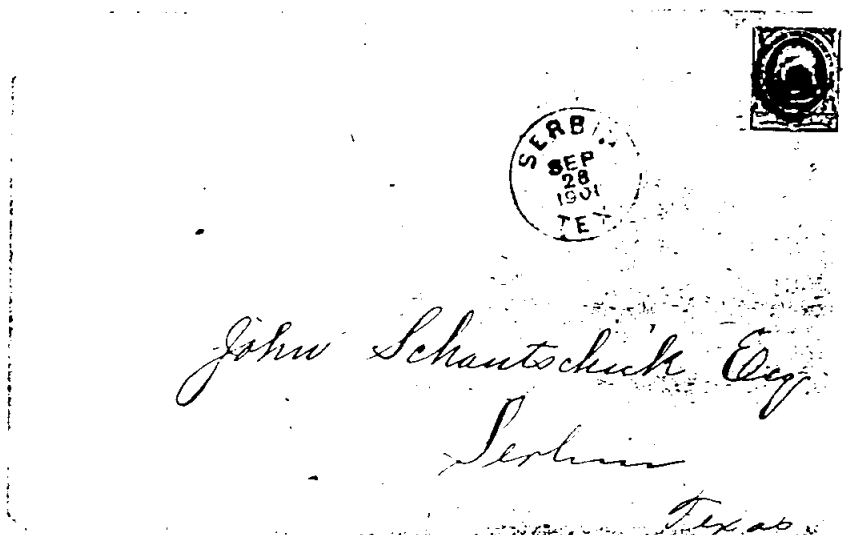


Figure 1

The content of the message sent is as follows:

"Dear Sir:

I have noticed that your name is not among the patrons of my office who subscribe for the Houston Post.

At this season the market reports alone are worth, to almost everyone, more than the price of subscription, and besides the Post is recognized as the leading newspaper of Texas.

It gives all the news condensed and readable twice-a-week, besides special articles, stories and interesting reading matter for young and old. It is mailed every Monday and Thursday morning, and the news contained is not picked up indiscriminately, but is carefully prepared with a view to giving as nearly as possible all that has occurred since the previous issue.

You can get the Semi-weekly Post 3 months for 25¢; 6 months for 50¢; or 1 year for \$1.00.

I should like very much to send in your name for at least a three months' trial subscription, and feel sure you will be more than pleased with the paper. Hand or send me this card with the amount named and I will have the paper started at once.

Respectfully,
Gus R. Miertschin, Postmaster"

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AUCTION RESULTS

TPHS MAIL SALE NO. 6
HAMMER PRICES REALIZED

LOT #	PRICE	LOT #	PRICE	LOT #	PRICE	LOT #	PRICE
4	3.00	21	5.00	39	2.00	67	2.00
6	3.00	22	2.00	42	25.00	68	5.00
7	2.00	23	20.00	43	6.00	69	10.00
8	2.00	24	12.00	46	3.00	70	9.00
11	1.00	25	3.00	47	3.00	73	14.00
12	9.00	26	10.00	48	6.00	74	15.00
14	6.00	27	15.00	53	1.00	75	25.00
15	7.00	28	6.00	54	2.00	76	10.00
16	6.00	30	2.00	61	7.00	77	2.00
17	4.00	31	53.00	62	12.00	79	2.00
18	2.00	34	10.00	63	5.00		
		36	8.00	64	2.00		

SUMMARY OF SALE: The sale was closed on Dec. 23. 45 lots were sold. The total hammer price was \$360.00.

We solicit material for future sales. The bidding for good material is spirited. Why not turn some of your material that is duplicated or no longer of interest to you?

AN 1852 EMIGRANTS LETTER DESCRIBES LIFE ON THE TEXAS COAST

By William H. P. Emery

As I have indicated in previous articles for The Texas Postal History Journal, letters often give closeup and personal impressions that are lost in the writing of history books. I believe this is the case with this 1852 letter from Matagorda, Texas. The letter written by a young German emigrant to his mother and relatives, is addressed to a publication called, The Intelligenz-Comptoir. Such letters were often reprinted in German newspapers of the time, to encourage emigration in settlements being established in Texas.

Before presenting the letter, it seems appropriate to briefly present the postal history details relating to the rates charged and the routing of the cover shown in Figure 1.

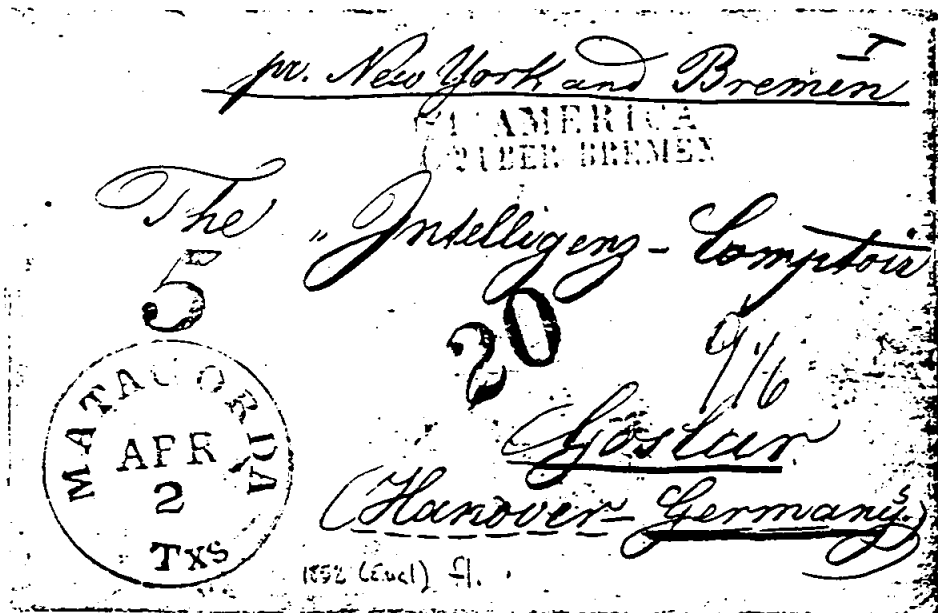


Figure 1

It is a Bremen Closed Mail cover originating at Matagorda, TxS. April 2, (1852) and delivered at Goslar, Germany shortly after May 3rd. The circular, black postmark from Matagorda, TxS. is 33mm. in diameter. Directly above the postmark is a printed "5", indicating post payment of 5¢ to New York. At New York the exchange office stamped the cover with a black, printed "20" to debit the Bremen exchange office 20¢. In Bremen a two line red handstamp was applied to debit Hanover 7 1/2 gutegroschens. Finally, upon arrival in Goslar, it was manuscript marked 9 1/6 ggr. due. The cover was carried to Liverpool and Bremen aboard the Collins Line steamship "Atlantic". This steamship left New York April 17th and arrived in Bremen May 3rd, 1852.

The contents of the letter are as follows:

"Only now, after I have gone through for two years long every imaginable unpleasantness, partly through sickness, monkey fever and that yellow fever; partly through strong farm labor, only now have I won out. My motto is now - Hurrah for Texas! I really couldn't write sooner. Otherwise I would have done so. Of course, I know how glad you are to have a couple of lines from your big boy. I couldn't bring myself to write you however, and produce nothing but songs of lamentation.

I came to Texas, a trip here from New York of four weeks, on a splendid American three master. At the beginning everything went well. We sailed past Key West, saw the island of Cuba, of which the capitol city is Havana, and I have never yet seen anything more splendid than the West Indian Islands. The island groups with heavenly eternally green mountains emerging out of the infinite ocean, like gigantic colossus. It is no wonder that Columbus when he discovered these islands, considered them as the Continent of America. From these islands there stretches a sandbar 50-60 meters wide into the sea. At times there is only ten foot of water above them, so that only shallower ships can cross the bars. Our ship was unloaded, and then we sailed straight for the bar. As a precaution the anchors were loosened and the boats cut loose. In the morning while drinking coffee - I shall never forget it - the ship made a bang - as if the whole gigantic building was about to disperse in ruins - we had hit bottom. The passengers stood on the deck with disstressed faces. Only the Captain and an old German sailor, both of whom were standing at the steering rudder, remained themselves. The Captain looked toward the tops of his masts and fortunately the ship was steady enough to withstand the impact. If the bottom had not been sound, this ship would have inevitably broken up.

When we landed later without difficulty at Indianola in Texas, a mostly German city, I still had about two dollars. These were consumed in two days, for everything is very expensive. Then I went with a farmer who lived on Chocolate Creek and worked for him six months for board and cloths. I next wandered through endless prairies up along the Lavaca River where I found work in the business of cotton cultivation. I was always sick and had to work always just for medicine and doctors. These are the two most expensive articles in this country.

I became acquainted with a farmer by the name of Seymons who persuaded me to move with him to San Antonio, an old Mexican City, where he intended to settle. He was single and we intended to work and live together. I agreed. We went with our wagon pulled by four oxen, first to Port Lavaca in order to purchase groceries for the trip. Because I hear there is a print shop here, I go into it out of boredom, and since I am now quite competent in the English language, I asked the owner for work. I got work at this place for six months - everything free - twelve dollars (20 RF) a month. I stayed for only two and one half, and acquired the necessary clothes. Then I went on from there to Matagorda.

After I had worked in Matagorda for only eight days, I accepted a job delivering alone, the newspaper Colorado Tribune, which appears here weekly. With the job I received free laundry plus \$24 (40 RF) per month.

Clothes here are very expensive - 1 cotton shirt costs two dollars. The other clothes items are in proportion. I bought only the necessary things to make a proper appearance.

other

Today my boss fired the/employee, an American. He apparently preferred me. The order here is work hard. I can of course work, and indeed like to. Compared to previous work I have done and jobs I have held, I have to say I am indeed lucky in my present position.

My plan is to stay here a year, make some money - then come to Germany. Home counts above everything else.

An alternative plan might have me staying here one half year, then going to South America. Perhaps to the Isthmus near California. There the prices are better than here. If I find a good engagement there, I'll stay and not think of coming to Germany until I have something proper in my pocket.

I should like a letter from my dear relatives but am not at all able to command this, since I don't know for certain whether I shall still be here in the time it takes for a letter to arrive. Dear Mother how big may Marie have become? Edward, the old "Nationalist" is I hope now quite well. I don't worry about Wilhelm. He understands his job and is good at it. Otto will follow him. Our unfortunate Henreitta was the best. May Marie be similar to her in her actions. None will be equal to her. "Give merit its own". Dear Elise is I hope well, along with Otto, Hermann, and Karl and Grandmother. I know that if she is still alive she is also healthy. Tell Edward, I shall bring, if I come back, a little letter press along, on which printing of not larger than half a sheet is done. They are made of iron and cost here only 35 - 40 dollars.

Everything here is republic, complete republic, and yet a model order prevails here. The worst thing here in Texas is the Indians. I saw several prisoners that were such. They often come in like lighting on their horses, plunder, drive off the cattle, murder and burn. Where they reach now it is not so bad. Still we hear and see often enough where they have carried on.

The snakes are particularly dangerous in this area. Further there are many alligators in the little in-places of deep rivers. Sometimes these alligators are more than 18 ft. long. These monsters lurk along the bank until cattle come to drink and they can draw calves, pigs, indeed even cows down with them into the water. There are also many wolves which are smaller than German ones and not so dangerous. I rode out one day to bring the cattle home and not further than one quarter mile from the farm came upon five wolves that remained calmly sitting in the path. I rode around them; they didn't move.

I have also seen a panther along the Lavaca River. It had killed a colt and when the foot prints were surveyed by the farmers they were able to trace the panther to where the cat had hidden the colt under the leaves. Not far away the tracks stopped and the panther sat in the branches of a nearby tree. All three of the farmers who had been tracking him fired their weapons at the same time and the panther fell from his hiding place. I saw him the same day he was killed when he was brought into town.

We have practically no fruit here; an apple costs five cents (20g.) The best fruit that is available is the wild grape that grows on every river along with many splendid nuts. There are some quite small, red apples - Spanish ones - which grow like weeds - similar to nettles.

But now to end. Be assured, dear mother, that I am now getting on quite well. I wish that you are the same.

From your

always respectful and loving son

Agniacus