



Immigrant Ship Of The Lee County Wends

The sailing vessel "Ben Nevis" shown in conjunction with this article is the ship in which the first Wendish settlers of Serbin sailed across the Atlantic Ocean 122 years ago.

This group, led by Rev. Johan Kilian, numbered over 500 persons and they sailed from Liverpool, England on Sept. 26 and landed 80 days later on Dec. 14, 1854 at Galveston, Texas.

From Galveston which then had a population of a little over 4,000, they traveled through Houston and settled on the land they purchased at Serbin. Seventy-three persons died on the trip.

The "Ben Nevis" was a ship rigged packed ship and was built in St. John, New Brunswick, Canada in 1852 by James Smith. She had three decks and a figure of a Highlandman adorned the head. The ship was 167 feet long, 34 feet wide and had a depth of 27 feet with a registered tonnage of 1,347.

The master on this voyage was William Herron and the "Ben Nevis" was owned by William Herron, 12 shares, and David Jardine, 52 shares, British merchants of Liverpool. In 1887, the "Ben Nevis" was sold to a French firm and thereafter operated under the French flag. Her final disposition is unknown. In her later years she was used as a coal transport ship.

Originally the "Ben Nevis" was fitted out in 1852 for use in the England to Australia route to carry immigrants to the gold rush then in progress in Australia. The Wends refused to sail from Hamburg in two other smaller vessels obtained for them and went to Liverpool where the larger "Ben Nevis" was chartered for the trip to Texas.
