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by
Mrs. Edna (Zoch) Lehmann

BIOGRAPHIES OF
CHRISTIAN ZOCH AND MAGDALENA GROSA

Christian Zoch was born December 23, 1846 in Germany. Magdalena Grosa was born September 22, 1846 in Germany. They were united in holy matrimony on June 6, 1869.

Christian and Magdalena Zoch, his parents, four brothers, and two sisters left Newdorf by "Burghammer" (steamship) Sprewitz, Preussen in Germany on September 27, 1869 and landed in Galveston, Texas on October 18, 1869 after being on the ocean twenty-one days. This was approximately three months after they were married and was sometimes referred to as their "honeymoon". (Two brothers, Matthes and Traugott, came to America two years earlier and wrote letters telling the rest of the family how nice it was and urging them to come also.) From Galveston they went to Houston, Texas by a smaller ship. From Houston they traveled to Serbin, Texas by ox-wagon. Also, on this ship were: Magdalena's sister, Maria, Matthes Domann (Maria's husband), and her brother, Christian. After some years, Magdalena's brother, Michael, came to America to visit relatives. He stayed approximately two years before returning to Germany.

The Zoch family had a firm belief in the separation of church and state. When the state tried to dominate their beliefs, they sold what they had, except some personal belongings. They came to this country to make a new life for themselves and their descendants.

Very little is known about the actual voyage; however, they faced the same perils that other immigrants faced. Seasickness naturally was on the top of the list, and the food was monotonous, as very little could be taken along. It was either spoiled or weighed too much. They sustained themselves with a food they called "hayduschka", which was a type of pancake made from cornmeal or grits that could be prepared several different ways.

Christian and Magdalena Zoch settled on a tract of land belonging to Casparik, approximately three miles northwest of Warda, Texas. They lived in a one room log cabin. The cabin had one door, no windows, and a dirt floor. Anna, their first child, was born here.

Soon after their arrival, they joined the St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, at Serbin, Texas, seven miles northwest from where they lived. The family went to church with Christian leading the horse they rode. They put Christ as the head of their house, believing in the words, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Matt: 6:33.

When the Zochs first came to this area, much work needed to be done. Land was cleared by hand and axe, and logs were cut for cabins which were hastily built.

The cabin walls were of post oak logs and hand split oak shingles were used for the roofs. At the beginning they had dirt floors, some had no window openings, others had window openings without glass panes.

Both above and underground cisterns were installed to supply water for domestic use. At first they cooked over open fire. Later wood cook stoves and wood heaters were bought; some installed fire places. Kerosene was used in lamps and lanterns for light.

After the homes were built, rails were split from oak trees and were used for fences. Ponds, called "tanks", were dug to supply water for the animals. Besides some of the essential things in the home, they soon obtained such as horses, wagons, cows, hogs, chickens, ducks, geese and turkeys.

Christian Zoch, a farmer, soon began his farming. Much farming was done by hand and hoe. Hand sideblades, sickles and reap hooks were used to cut hay. Later, horse drawn mowing machines and rakes were used, so were pitch forks. Slides were much used for on-th-farm hauling. The plowing was done with walking implements, such as turning plows, sweep-stalks, then hand planted and covered with a double shovel and wood harrow. Most of the tools and implements were homemade. Since 1890, walking planters and cultivators were used. Later, riding mowers and rakes were used.

The main field crop was cotton, which was hand picked, taken to the gins with wagons and then sold for cash. Some corn was planted, mainly for the animals and poultry. They planted sugar cane for homemade molasses and raised bees for honey.

Sugar, flour, and other staples were hauled from Brenham by ox-cart or horse drawn wagons. Sugar and flour were bought in barrel lots. A barrel of sugar weighed 350 pounds. These items were usually bought when crops were taken to the market there.

The railroad was built through Lee County in the early seventies, and Giddings became a town (1871 - 1872). This then became their main shopping center. They raised their own vegetables, such as, Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes, cabbage, cucumbers, and melons. Sourkraut and dill pickles were usually made in large quantities, such as in a barrel or large stone jars. Also, smaller jars were used for canning. All cooking and baking was homemade. Fruits in the orchard consisted mainly of peaches, pears, figs, and plums. They were eaten fresh and were used for canning jelly, jam, and preserves.

Cows' milk was used for drinking, cooking, and baking. Homemade butter, cottage, and cooked cheese were some of their favorites.

Hog butchering was a neighborly affair with everyone pitching in to help. Several different kinds of sausages were made, such as liver-wurst, meisewurst (which had cornmeal in it), blutwurst (blood sausage), cooked hoghead, and raw sausage. Bacon, ham, and bones were soaked in salt brine several days and then smoked, using oak bark. This was done during the winter months when the weather was cold.

During the summer months, they belonged to the "beef club". Each week, usually on Friday or Saturday, a cow or a steer was contributed by one of the members for slaughter. The meat was divided among the club members, who picked up their portion of meat at a designated place. This procedure was followed until each member contributed a cow or steer and then the rotation started again. The butcher was paid per pound by each member for slaughtering, dividing the meat in portions, and keeping records.

During the early days the characteristic dress was a two-piece affair consisting of a long, full skirt and a dressing sacque, which was a jacket-like blouse with a peplum. The girls wore the same style of dress. The headdress was the sunbonnet, which was made of heavy durable material for everyday wear and of better material for going to

church. In the summer, the girls and young married women wore white muslin sunbonnets trimmed with ruffles, while the older women wore sunbonnets made of black silk. They wore high button shoes for going to church. Homemade sabots (sandals), which were wooden-soles with leather tops, were worn by men, women, and children for everyday. Men usually had two tailored suits, which were made at home. One was a regular suit and the coat of the other had long tails, which was worn mostly to festive occasions. Cylinder hats and above ankle shoes was the fashion worn by men.

Laundering was done by rubbing the clothes on a wash board, then boiled in a large cast iron pot out-doors, using homemade soap, rinsed in clean water to which a little blueing was added and hung on the line to dry. Sunday clothes were ironed with cast irons, which were heated on coals or on the cookstove.

Basic medical supplies in every home were quinine (for fever), calamine (for sluggishness), alpenkrauter (for loss of appetite) and turpentine (for cuts, colds and backache).

Christian Zoch bought 193 3/4 acres of unimproved land, warranty deed dated January 6, 1875, from John Wuensche and his wife, Ernestine Wuensche, for \$1,200.00 in coin out of the Calvin Chany Survey, Lee County Texas. (This land Christian and Magdalena Zoch sold to August Kasper for \$1,325.00 warranty deed dated October 18, 1887.) Located approximately 4 miles west to southwest of Giddings, in the community often referred to as "Bull-Frog". This community was named after two creeks (the big and little Bull-Frog creeks), which crossed this land.

With the help from other people, a house was soon built. It had one bedroom approximately 16 x 16 feet with a narrow kitchen and dining area approximately 8 feet wide and the length of the bedroom on the north side, on the south side a small storage room and an open porch. It had few doors and windows. The walls and floor were of board lumber. The roof was of wood shingles.

Much work needed to be done to improve their livelihood. Cisterns were installed, a smoke house was built, land was cleared for field and garden, etc. Later, Christian built a log crib and another log storage building (both are still standing today in 1972).

They experienced joy and sorrow in their lives. It was at this place that Magdalena, August (who lived approximately five months), Maria (lived only thirteen hours), John, Emma, and Emil were born. Most of the babies were delivered by midwives.

They baptized their children in early youth in the church. If there was any doubt in the parents' mind as to whether or not the baby would survive, the pastor was called immediately to perform the baptismal rites. When the pastor was not available, the father performed the rites. They usually had many sponsors, sometimes as many as twelve.

Anna received her education in the St. Paul's Lutheran Parochial School at Serbin. Magdalena and John received their education in the parochial schools at Serbin and Winchester. During the early eighties, Gerhardt Kilian taught as many as seventy to eighty children in three languages: Wendish, German, and English.

Anna and Magdalena were confirmed in the Lutheran faith in the Wendish Language in the St. Paul's Lutheran Church at Serbin. Emma and Emil received their education in the parochial school at Winchester. John, Emma and Emil were confirmed in the Lutheran faith in the German language in St. Michael's Lutheran Church at Winchester.

The social life of these early Texans was very limited because of the language barrier. Since most of the Zoch family spoke only Wendish, they were quite isolated from the rest of the community. Most of their customs were brought from the homeland.

Weddings were a merry fest and often lasted two or three days. At first, the bride and her girl attendants rode horseback to the ceremony, which was performed in the church, usually on Sunday. The groom, his attendants and the rest of the people walked. Later they all rode in buggies and surries which were decorated with native flowers. The horses' bridles were also decorated. At first the bride wore a long black gown, which later was changed to gray, and then to white. The headdress of the bridal veil was adorned with available flowers. The bride usually had a retinue of eight to ten bridesmaids, who wore the same color dress as the bride and floral headdress.

The braska (bestman), who was a young married relative of the groom, entered the church first, followed by the bride and groom. Then came the two swunkas (maid of matron). The one swunka was a married relative of the bride and the other was a married relative of the groom. The swunkas were followed by the bridesmaids and an equal number of groomsmen who wore flowers and pink or red ribbons in their coat lapels. The father and mother, during the early days never attended the ceremony, because they were too busy with the wedding preparations. The collection laid on the altar by the groomsmen were the stipends for the minister and the organist.

After the wedding ceremony there was a rush to reach the destination of the wedding festivities, which was usually at the home of the bride's parents. The rush often was halted abruptly by groups of young children who roped off the road. The children would not let down the rope until the wedding guests would give them nickles or other small coins.

After the wedding party arrived at the bride's home, the pastor and the parochial school teacher led the assembled guests in a religious song which invoked the Lord's blessing. With The Lord Begin Thy Task was the most favorite of all hymns. In later years, the best man led the assembled guests with a song and praying of the Lord's Prayer. Then the wedding feast was served which usually consisted of roasted beef, pork, sausage, noodles, potatoes, sourkraut, pickles, bread, coffee cake, cookies, and coffee. The bridal couple and the attendants ate at the first table, after which the other people were served. The bride and groom had to sit at the table during all of the meal shifts until midnight. The dinner was followed by an evening meal and at midnight there was the customary meal of pickled herring and potato salad. The bride's swunka sat next to her and the groom's swunka next to him during all the meals. The bride's swunka was expected to bring a wedding cake, while the groom's swunka brought two candle holders and the candles which burned on the wedding table.

The wedding cake was made of butter, coated with white icing and decorated with various sized of candy hearts on which writings such as, "I Love You", "Good Girl", "Kiss Me", "You're Mine", etc. were found.

During the evening meal someone pulled off one of the bride's shoes. This shoe was passed around for a collection. The money was given to the bride as a wedding gift. A second collection was taken for the cook who was said to have burned her apron. Another collection was taken to the glory of God for a church purpose.

At midnight the flowers and the veil were taken away from the bride. After this, the bridal couple was free to mingle among the guests.

The braska was in charge of serving the refreshments. It was his duty to invite the guests to the table and to say grace. He and his helpers served drinks during the entire wedding celebration. Wine and beer were served to the men. The women were served kimmel whiskey, which was a punch made of caraway seeds and sugar. Later years ginger pop was also served to the women. Lemonade was served to the children.

The shiveree was an outstanding custom. It was made up mostly of young people not invited to the reception. They usually arrived after dark or at midnight, banging on any noisemaker available. Sweeps, saws and ox bells were usually used. Sometimes they were invited to come in by the bridal couple and then mingled with the guests.

People stayed up all night to celebrate. The newlyweds, instead of leaving on a honeymoon, were required to serve breakfast to the wedding guests the next morning, which usually consisted of fried sausage, pickles, bread, butter, cakes, coffee, and milk.

The second day the men played tug-of-war, leap frog, and also a game called "monkey barrel". Accordians were played and there was much merry making.

Birthdays and wedding anniversaries were celebrated with song fest and christian fellowship. Some of their favorite hymns were, Now Thank We All Our God, The Lord Hath Helped Me Hitherto, Praise To The Lord, and The Almighty. Then the pastor usually had a devotion and then lunch was served.

Quilting and feather-stripping parties were enjoyed by the women. Besides the hospitality and good food served by the hostess, they enjoyed the christian fellowship.

Christmas was a jolly time especially for the children. The school children enjoyed participating in the Christmas Eve Service. At home the Christmas Tree was decorated with candles, ornaments, apples, candy, and decorated cookies. There were gifts for everyone under the tree.

Easter was another happy time. The Easter eggs were reddish-brown in color with eggs shell-colored designs. Hot beeswax, a diamond-shaped quill and dye made from boiled dark red onion skins were the necessary materials. The designs were inscribed on the eggs with a quill which was dipped from time to time in hot beeswax. The eggs were then stored in a cool place until the following day when they were boiled in the onion skin dye which had to be cold before the boiling process. After the eggs had the desired color, they were taken out and rubbed with grease.

The children assisted their parents with most of the work and were kept quite busy. They also had their enjoyments; some of them were going hiking into the woods where they found and enjoyed eating wild berries such as dewberries, huckleberries, blackhorse, and mulberries. Plumbs, grapes, persimmons, pecans, and hickory nuts grew wild and were also enjoyed. Their swings were grapevines, found growing near the creek.

When someone died, the family purchased a coffin. The body was dressed by local people and kept in the home until burial. Simple funeral rites were held at the home before the procession went to the church. The coffin was hauled by a wagon which was followed by the mourners and friends. After the funeral services in church, the body was taken to the cemetery. The last rites were held at the grave before burial. Local men dug and closed the grave.

In 1887, Christian Zoch bought 146 acres of improved land from George L. Waitman for which he paid \$2,500.00, located approximately one and a half miles northwest of Winchester, Texas in Fayette County. They moved to this place in the fall of 1887.

The house had an entrance hall 8' x 16', two bedrooms 16' x 16' each, one on each side of the hall, a front porch 8' x 8' on the east side. To the west was a room 8' x 14' and a hall 8' x 26'. The dining room, 14' x 16', was on the west side of the hall and a kitchen 10' x 14' was west of the dining room.

As soon as possible, they joined the St. Michael's Lutheran Church at Winchester. Being devote Christians, they attended church regularly. Christian served as Elder of this congregation. He served on the building committee for the present church, which was built in 1906.

They were prosperous to the extent that later they were able to buy three additional tracts of land.

Disaster also struck their home. Their house was destroyed by fire in August, 1921. A house was soon built at the same location. It had an entrance hall 10' x 16', two bedrooms 16' x 16' each, one on each side of the hall. The front porch 8' x 14' was on the east side, a kitchen 10' x 19' and a back porch 10' x 23' on the west side.

Magdalena died January 27, 1922. After her death, Christian felt lonely and did not want to live alone. It was decided that his son, Emil, and his family come and live with him. Additional rooms were added to the house to accommodate the family.

Christian died June 27, 1924. Funeral rites were held for both in the St. Michael's Lutheran Church and burial was in the St. Michael's Lutheran Cemetery.

When our forefathers left their beloved homes in Germany, little did they realize that their desire for religious freedom would have such an impact on our lives today. The area where they came from is now under Russian control. Let us therefore be thankful for the courageous moves of our forefathers who were interested in preserving the religious freedom we now enjoy. All praise to God who reigns above.

Written by Mrs. Edna (Zach) Lehmann