

## Zoch Family Immigration from: A History of Lee County, Texas Vol II

Among the families which have had a significant role in the history of Lee County are the families of the Zoch brothers, Johann and Christian. It can be safely stated that this is one of the largest families in Texas, and most certainly in the Lee County Area. Matthes, the oldest son of Johann, had sixteen children of whom eleven reached old age. Michael, the second youngest son of Johann, remarried after his first wife died and had, according to church records, twenty-three children, some of whom died very young.

The German Zoch family had a firm belief in the separation of church and state and, when the state tried to dominate their church and their beliefs, they sold what they had and came to this country to make a new life for themselves and their descendants. This family's story serves as an indisputable link between the Wendish people of the Old Country, and those of the New World communities of Lee and Fayette County, Texas.

### Johann Zoch and his family

The older of the Zoch brothers was Johann Zoch. In 1867, Johann's oldest son, Matthes Zoch, Matthes wife Maria, and their infant children and a brother of Matthes - probably Johann (John) - came to America. They wrote letters home telling the rest of the family how nice it was and urging them to come also.

Also before the main part of the Johann Zoch family arrived, the oldest daughter, Maria, Maria's husband, Michael Schoppa, and their five children immigrated to Texas in 1868. According to their daughter Anna Theresia Schoppa Zoch, they came on a sailing ship that took one month to cross the ocean. The children were Johann, the oldest, 8 years of age, who died during the voyage and was buried at sea, Maria, Christian, Helene, and Christiana. The Schoppas traveled by foot and ox-drawn wagon to Warda in 1868 and settled on a small farm three miles south and west toward Winchester in a one room log house. They also brought with them Maria's thirteen year old brother, Michael Zoch.

On June 6, 1869 the oldest Zoch son remaining in Germany, Christian Zoch, married Magdalena Grosa in Spreewitz, Prussia (Germany). Approximately three months later, on September 15, 1869, the couple and the members of the Zoch family remaining in Germany boarded the SS Frankfurt at Bremen, Germany destined for New Orleans. There were 352 passengers on this list, among them were the following: Hans (Johann) Zoch, 55 and his wife Anna (Johanna), 54; Christian Zoch, 23 and his wife Magdalena, 22; daughter Johanna Zoch, 19; son George Zoch, 16; Gottlieb Zoch, 9-1/2, possibly a son of Christian. Also listed are Magdalena's sister Marie Doman, 28; Marie's husband, Matthes Domann, 29; and their two children Christian, 4 and Hanna, 11 months.

They faced the same perils that other immigrants faced - seasickness, naturally at the top of the list. The food was monotonous as very little could be taken along. It would either spoil or weight too much. They sustained themselves on a food they called hayduschka, which was a type of pancake made from cornmeal that could be fixed several ways.

After being on the ocean three weeks they landed at New Orleans, Louisiana. According to immigration records at New Orleans, they went through Customs on October 9, 1869. This was a very simple procedure in those days. All that it consisted of was for the Captain of the ship to submit the ship's passenger list to the immigration officials and they were ready to proceed to the next port. According to an article in a Galveston German newspaper written in October 1869, the name of the ship they took was the SS Josephine. From Galveston the Zochs and Domanns traveled to Houston, Texas, on a much smaller ship and from there they traveled by ox-wagon to Lee County, Texas.

The last of Johann's children to immigrate was Traugott. He sailed only a month later, October 18, 1869, came through Galveston, and he married in Serbin in 1872.

When Johann Zoch first saw his son's (Matthes') newly acquired farm, it was such a ticket that he exclaimed 'A mother lion couldn't even find her young.' However, he and his sons went to work and did all the clearing by hand and axe. Log cabins were hastily built out of post oak logs and with split oak shingles. At the beginning they had dirt floors with no windowpanes in the window openings. A heavy cloth was hung over the hole to keep out adverse weather until panes could be bought. When Johann and his family moved into their home, gable ends were not closed-in, nor were the cracks filled. One night a Texas norther blew in and when they awoke in the morning there was two inches of snow on their featherbed.

Before Giddings became a town, sugar, flour and other staples were hauled from Brenham by oxcart. Sugar was bought for \$1.00 a barrel. These items were usually bought when crops were taken to market there.

After homes were built, rails were split for fences. In those days, a man's masculinity was measured by how many rails he could split in a day. The champion rail-splitter earned extra respect in the community. Cattle that had escaped to the wild were caught and tamed. Some were tied down and milked, but often without success.

The social life of these early Texans were 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.

Baptisms were a time of great celebration, often lasting three days. Birthdays were celebrated with a song fest. Weddings always lasted two days and often three. The ceremony was held the first day. Buggies and surreys were decorated with flowers as were the horses' bridles. At first the bride wore a black gown which later was changed to gray and then to white. Those were the days of high-button shoes and long dresses which can be seen on all old wedding pictures. After the ceremony a large reception was held at the home of the bride's parents. In "good" years, wine and home brewed beer were served to the men. The women were served "kimmel wine" which was a punch made of caraway seeds and sugar. The tables were laden with all the available foods of the day. 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 consisted of fried sausage, pickles, bread, butter, cakes, coffee and milk. The wedding cake was made of butter and decorated with candies. It was "stolen" rather than being served. This is relative to the custom of tossing the bridal bouquet. The second day the men played tug-of-war games and also a game called "monkey barrel". Accordions were played and there was so much merrymaking. The shivaree was an outstanding custom. It was made up mostly of young people not invited to the reception. They usually arrived after dark, banging on any noisemaker available. The bridal couple would meet them and invite them in and they would mingle with the other guests.

Feather-picking parties were the "bridge parties" of yesterday. Besides the good food served, and making someone a new pair of pillows, this gave the women a chance to catch up on gossip.

When someone died, the body was kept in the home until burial. Caskets were built of wood by local people. The bottom of the casket was lined with hay or corn husks. On this was placed a cotton sheet and a pillow edged in lace. The casket was painted black with silver clasps and handles. One year of mourning was required for the family. Attending social functions during this time was frowned upon.

Everything was a community affair. They had to work together and help each other in order to survive. Life in the new country would have been unbearable were it not for the other families around with similar problems.

Basic medical supplies in every home were quinine for fever and Alpenkrauter for headache, loss of appetite, fever, backache, and almost every other ailment.

With all the sickness and without modern medicine, they had to have large families to assure themselves at least some heirs. The Zoch family was one of the fortunate families. The offspring of Johann and his wife Anna, and his brother Christian and wife Maria, today number over three thousand. This total includes the ones who married into the Zoch family. They are scattered all over the United States.