

THE PALIMPSEST

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In Search of Freedom

In the decade following the Revolution of 1848 thousands of dissatisfied Germans migrated to America to escape the economic, religious, political, and social oppression of the Fatherland and gain the precious freedom offered them in America. Of the 106,081 foreign-born recorded in Iowa in the Census of 1860, fully one-third (38,555) had come from the following German states:

Austria	2,709	Nassau	210
Bavaria	3,150	Prussia	7,797
Baden	2,701	Wurtemberg	1,581
Hesse	2,017	Unspecified	18,390

It took great courage for these immigrants to forsake their homeland and friends and embark in a small sailing vessel on the long voyage across the storm-tossed Atlantic. Life in the steerage was frequently an unforgettable nightmare; even those more fortunate who traveled first or second class did not soon forget their perilous trip.

The diary of Charlotte von Hein (who, as

Lotte, the girl friend of Marie, the wife of Peter N. Lau, set out from Hamburg aboard the *John Hermann* in 1853 for America) reveals the hardships of a trans-Atlantic crossing by sailing vessel. In the party of eight besides Lotte, were the children of Peter and Marie Lau — Dietrich, the oldest son; Gretchen, the oldest daughter; Fritz, four years old; and Wilhelm, but two years old. Herman, the bachelor brother of Marie, completed the party of Germans from Brunsbüttel, a thriving little town in Holstein near the mouth of the Elbe River.

The Lau family followed close on the heels of Henry Kohrs, who had arrived in Davenport in March, 1853. Lotte came across with the Laus to marry her fiance, Herman von Hertzberg, who had preceded her. Lotte and Herman were married shortly after her arrival in Davenport. They settled in Stockton, Minnesota, a few miles west of Winona, where five children — Adolph, Robert, Ewald, Rudolph, and a baby that died in infancy — were born to their union. When Herman died, Lotte married Peter Boysen, a Winona boat builder, by whom she had six children — two boys who died in infancy, and Cecelia, Charlotte, Oscar, and Anna Matilda Boysen. Lotte's account of the trip across the Atlantic was the common experience of thousands of German immigrants, as well as other foreign groups, who braved the hardships and perils of the arduous ocean voyage

in order to find a new home in Iowa. The third, fourth, and fifth generations of these pioneer immigrants form an important and valuable cross-section of the people of Iowa today.

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