

Castell Settlement

General store 108 and still going

LANDMARKS

By DALE FRY
HIGHLAND LAKES NEWSPAPERS

If you're ever in Castell, located some 18 miles west of Llano, a visit to the old Castell General Store is a must. It's a charming old wooden building that's been around for years and still dispenses all kinds of wares to local citizens, tourists and ranchers.

After a career of hobnobbing with big business in Houston, rubbing shoulders with state politicians and having a say on the local political scene, Randy Leifeste, present leasee of the store and formerly of Horseshoe Bay, began to feel the lure of the quiet life. And so, in 2001, he decided to return to his roots in Castell and to reap the benefits of a simple life on the Llano River.

He leased the old store from owner Dale Vierus in March 2002, opened a feed store in one side and settled in for the long haul.

The Castell General Store is just what its name implies, a real honest-to-goodness general store offering all kinds of stuff: everything from soda pop and packaged treats to canned goods, lunch meats, toiletries, detergents, beer — you name it.

It's also a museum of sorts. An area in this wooden building (with its high wooden ceiling and hanging pull-string light bulbs) displays a variety of original arts and crafts

for sale by local venders. Some bring in early Texas relics such as an iron apple peeler, circa 1898. One woman displays a colorful collection of rocks: geodes and other oddities of the geological world. The list goes on.

In addition to these various and sundry wares, Leifeste has kayaks for rent, offers good stick-to-the-ribs barbecue, slow-cooked to perfection in a cooker located in the yard on one side of the building, and he can point you to fly fishing spot (see page 11).

"I weigh each serving by hand to make sure the customer gets plenty for the price," he says with a grin. "If it feels like more'n a pound, I just go ahead and sell it as a pound."

Where else could you get such neighborly service than at the general store in Castell, population a whopping 13 (eight souls in the "downtown" area and five on the other side of the river via the low-water crossing)?

Theodore Bulcholz built the present Castell General Store in "about" 1898. He later sold it to William Hony, who operated it for several years. Hony sold it to Mr. and Mrs. W.F. Dalchau and their partners, Mr. and Mrs. Amzy Keyser, who named it the Dalchau and Keyser Store. When Keyser died, Dalchau bought his interest and he and his son, Willard, ran it as Dalchau and

Son for many years. After his parents died, Willard kept the business going, changing the name to Dalchau Store.

At some unknown date, the store eventually became known simply as the Castell General Store, a name more fitting its early Texas architecture, and the rustic rural setting in which it has sat for 108 years.

To get there, take CR 152 (Main Street in downtown Llano) west for 18 scenic

miles. The store is on your right. Can't miss it.

Stop in and chat with Randy for a spell; enjoy a relaxing visit to bygone days, enjoy his good barbecue — and don't forget to tell him you want to see his special performing rooster, "Cockadoodle," who reigns over the feed store and is really the star of the whole production. You can reach him at 325-247-4100.

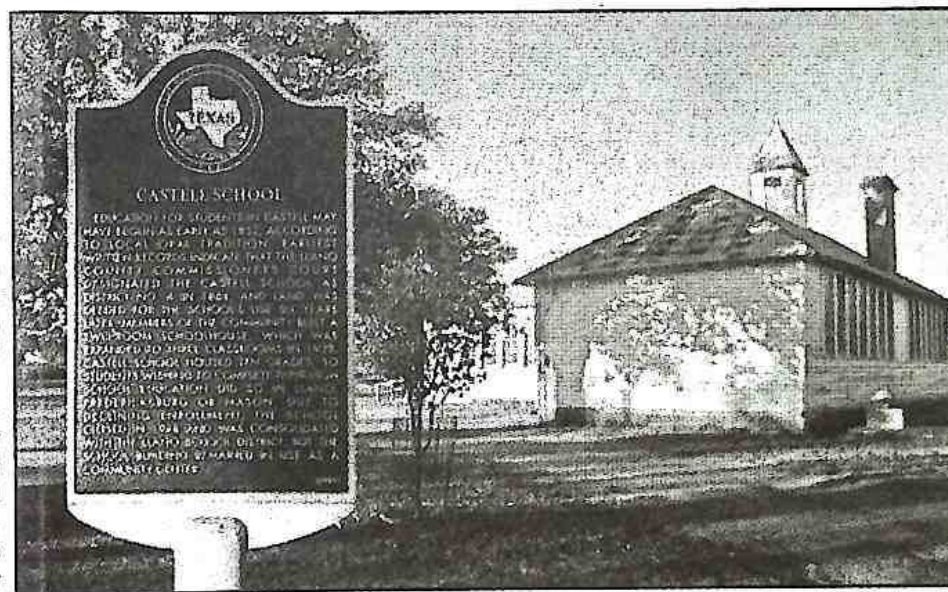


PHOTO BY DALE FRY

The old Castell general store has been around since 1898.

CASTELL COMMUNITY WAS NAMED FOR A GERMAN NOBLEMAN

The early settlement of Castell was made, of course, by German families. These German families lived frugally and they spent days of endless toil, privations, hardships and even at times, hunger and near starvation. Hard work became their creed.

The names Leifeste, Oestrich, Honig, Hoffman, Miller, Durst, Grete, Jordan, Lange, Grenwelge, Kowierschke, Otto, Schmidt, Bauer, Schuessler, Bader, Keyser, Bucchohlz, Bode, Kassel, Donop, Birk, Holtzer, Winkel, Holmig, and others have been closely identified with the Castell section and each family has played an important role in the building of the community.

Only a few of the first dwellings are still standing intact, but quite a few of the old homesteads have been modernized and a descendant lives in each. Many rail cowpens stand, and also miles and miles of carefully made rock fences. There are still a few crumbling log houses around. Inside the modern homes are much of the old fashioned furniture, family photographs, marriage and baptismal certificate in ornate frames, as well as other heirlooms and antiques.

Some of the older comers like Vasterling went back to Fredericksburg and returned later. The land granted to them was allotted on the section, Single men got 160 acres and married men got 320 acres. Ludwig Schneider's land grant was on the Colorado River close to Buchanan Dam, but since he did not want to live so far from his friends, he bought four acres from the Henry Vasterlings and made that his home. The old Schneider homestead a few miles East of Castell owned by the Henry Schneider family still stands and is used as a corn crib and other feed. It was built of logs and is said to be the oldest house still standing in Castell.

The site of the first settlement north of the Llano River, three or four miles east of present Castell is the Leiningen Community, and the Oestreichs were the first settlers in Leiningen. Fritz Oestreich is the father of Christian Oestreich who is said to be the first white child born in Llano County. He was born Aug. 2nd. 1855 at the Old Oestreich homestead. Mrs. Oestreich was a half sister to Ludwig Schneider.

Mr. and Mrs. Oestreich milked many, many cows and became engaged in cheese-making. They milked anywhere from 40 to 75 cows, and since there were no fences, the children minded the cows all day and kept the calves separated from the cows. Milking was a long tedious task and the parents and children always helped, usually storing the milk in the "Spring House" TO KEEP IT COOL. When the cheese was made, it was taken in large quantities by ox wagon to Austin and sold. The trip took fully two weeks. It was always a great joy to get to go along.

Another profitable means of livelihood in the German settlement was making and selling bacon. Hogs were raised on open range in large herds, killed, scraped, dressed and cured and sent by ox wagon to Austin, Georgetown and other places to be sold or traded for needed supplies.

Christian Oestreich Pre-empted 80 acres of land and bought 80 acres from Baders at \$1.00 per acre and paid \$140.00 to get a log house built. He built the first fence on the north side of the river in that section. He at one time sold 320 acres of land for a quart of whiskey. To day the same land has been appraised at \$100.00 an acre.

The late Charles Lehmberg Sr. a well known cattleman and trail driver was the first person to settle on the South side of the Llano River, the town of Castell having had its beginning with the earlier settlements on the North side, several miles east of the present town, at Leiningen, and almost directly across the river where the Laifestes located, a portion of this latter place now being just across the Mason County line. Lehmberg came from Germany and ran the first store and postoffice on the South side of the river at a point about one mile down the river from the present location.

Emil Krevitz is supposed to have had the first postoffice on the North side. Lehmberg traveled to Austin in ox wagon for supplies for his store. A school was conducted at one time in a room of his home. Krevitz bought cattle in the Castell and Llano Community and drove them up the trail. On one occasion, he was driving cattle up the trail and as he was branding cattle up above Mason, a wild horse kicked him in the head ultimately causing his death.

Theodore Baccholtz came to Castell from Fredericksburg in 1881 and bought the Lehmberg store, moving it up the river to the present place. This store was eventually sold to Dalchau and Keyser, and the old store is still standing to-day. Although the store has sold and is closed it holds many memories.

The Llano River at Castell, which is now spanned by a good bridge although others have washed away, was crossed in the early days by fording it in wagons or on horseback just below where the present bridge is located. Many oldtimers tell of the big rises they have seen in the river, and even the younger generations well remember the awful flood of 1935 when all the timber as well as the livestock and bridges were washed away.

A blacksmith shop was always at Castell, Gustav Bogusch operated one on the bank of the river some time. Another early day blacksmith shop eight miles down the river, was that of Gorfried Bader who cut the tree's for his home while his wife gathered sage grass for the roof. He and his wife also had the business of cheese making, and he took his cheese to Galveston and Houston to sell.

Nearly all of these German families were on the verge of starvation for lack of money, while others of means could find nothing in the way of food to buy. Wild game and fish were plentiful, but bread was a great problem. Gardening was unknown. For a time government troops were camped on the Llano River near Castell while cutting wild hay for their horses, and the German Families living close gathered corn off of the ground where the horses had been fed and ground it for use.

A crude mill, described as belonging to Adam Schmidt seems to be typical of those of other settlers. The contraption was nailed to a tree, taking two people to turn it. The little wheel did its best but the meal was very coarse.

In the first years of the early German settlements, it was necessary to travel to Indianola for supplies; five or six wagons

usually made the trip together for protection, and it often took as long as three months to get back home with the much-needed supplies.

After a store was established at Castell, some of the settlers made a living freighting supplies. A typical description of life in the early days for some is this: The father went off to split rails in order to earn money, leaving his family to share as best they could on their meager supplies.

On such case was the Baders and the Steeles. The women agreed they would divide what little bread they had, then both of them would starve together. They gathered tender weeds and cooked them. On one occasion Mrs. Bader became extremely ill as one of the weeds was poisonous.

Families hardpressed for cornmeal for making bread, often used their limited funds to buy whiskey to trade with the soldiers passing or camped nearby for corn. Clothes in those days were of the simplest kind. The oldest residents tell that they wore suits of deer skins. Many an old timer related that they were 12 or 13 years of age before having a pair of real shoes. Ludwig Schneider was a pioneer cobbler in these parts, and Richter who had been an officer in the German Army made the shoes often.

The Indians around Castell area were at first friendly. Some accounts related, the Indians visited and often looked into the little picketfenced school down the river, and even exchanged gifts of food and helped the settlers get established and they were especially helpful in getting settlers across the swollen river. Accounts have it that the early-day ministers would never have been able to get to the other side if it had not been for the Indians. This friendliness is believed to be due to the treaty made with them by Baron John Meusebach.

The fact that they went on the warpath in later years was attributed to the treatment they received at the hands of the white settlers. The Indians came to resent the usurpation of their land by the invading Germans and became angry when they began hunting deer and other wild game, which they thought belonged rightfully to them.

The Whites and friendly Indians traded together for a time. The latter had blankets and trinkets which they would trade to the German Residents for something to eat. They wanted "sweets" more than anything. The Whites began mistreating them and beating them in trades, until the Indians went on the warpath.

The religious life of the pioneers is as much a part of the settlement and is as sacred as any of their family traditions and heritages.

Many of the German emigrants remained true to their Lutheran faith, some were Catholic, but many transferred their faith to the Methodist Church. The first established church at Castell was the Methodist. This church was officially established March 8, 1856, by the late Rev. Charles A. Grote, who in 1852 began making trips from his Church at Fredericksburg to the settlements along the Llano River such as Castell, Lower and Upper Willow Creek and Beaver Creek. Services were at first held in homes or under live oak trees. The first church building was built in 1871.

According to the account^x by Peter Moehling in his "Reiseskitze", a pioneer by the name of ^{Charlie} Jung preached to a small gathering of people under a tree and this was the first religious meeting of any kind.

The Llano circuit was organized March 8, 1856, and church was held under the Leifeste Liveoak tree until 1871 when the people decided to build a church. There were 63 members of the church.

Three men donated ten acres of land on the south side of the river for a church and parsonage. The pickets of which it was built were cut at Fly Gap, about 14 miles north of Castell and hauled by ox teams. The friendly Indians often came and listened to services at this picket church.

The church was eventually torn down, 50 acres of land was bought and used for parsonage and church, and people's Sunday houses grew up and dotted the property---houses of people who lived too far away to go home between services. This too, was changed, and the present church which has also been properly remodeled took its place.

The members did not have money to give for the church, but they gave generously of their time and labor. Ministers' salaries were small. One record shows that the salary was \$9 each quarter.

The first missionary society was organized in this section. People had little money, so they donated cattle to the missionary band. A simple but definite contract governed the management of this herd. The proceeds were put into the missionary fund of the church. The pastor's family was also supplied with milk and butter from this herd. This herd figured in the marking and brands in the county; at any rate, it was the first of its kind in this area. The mark of the herd was a crop, two splits and underbit in the right ear, and the brand was MV, standing for Mission Verein, which is the German of Mission Society.

CASTELL LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Castell Lutheran Church was begun by a minister, Deitrich Rode, who lived at Cherry Springs and who came to Castell once a month and held services in homes, first in one and then another. The first church was built on the north side of the river in the Leiningen settlement. From these early churches came the Love Feasts in which families and loved ones would come together and eat very frugally, if at all, and give praise and thanksgivings.

In the Lutheran early day church, the pastor gave his preaching free. In both churches, the services were originally in German, and until the last decade or so, at least one service per day was in German.

Out of these churches sprang up prayer groups for every age; and men and women did not meet in the same prayer group, and in church the men sat on one side and the women the other.

The religious and economic lives of these people are so much a part of each other that it would be impossible to tell about the one without telling of the other.

Charles Pluenneke was the source of relating how his father, Conrad Pluenneke, a well-loved early day Methodist minister, and a whole colony rebelled against Germany and were forced to choose between leaving the country and being shot. Because of the circumstances which prompted them to leave and the time of their arrival in this country, they were called the "Forty-eighters". Others in this group who subsequently settled in and around Castell were the Leifeste brothers, Peter Hasse, Emil Krevitz, Charles Richter, and Justus Herber.

Krevitz, Pluenneke, and Fritz Leifeste fought in the United States Army in the war with Mexico immediately after coming to this country and then came to Castell.

Because the Bode family settled on Martin Creek, the place became known as Bodeville. The Bodes sold the place to William Honig, but it still carries the same name.

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The story is told about a Mrs. Leifeste who had been visiting on the south side of the river, and when she was ready to go home, the river was on a rise, and she was so homesick that the help of friendly Indians was asked, and they fashioned a boat from a hollow tree trunk; two of the Indians swam by the boat and guided her safely across.

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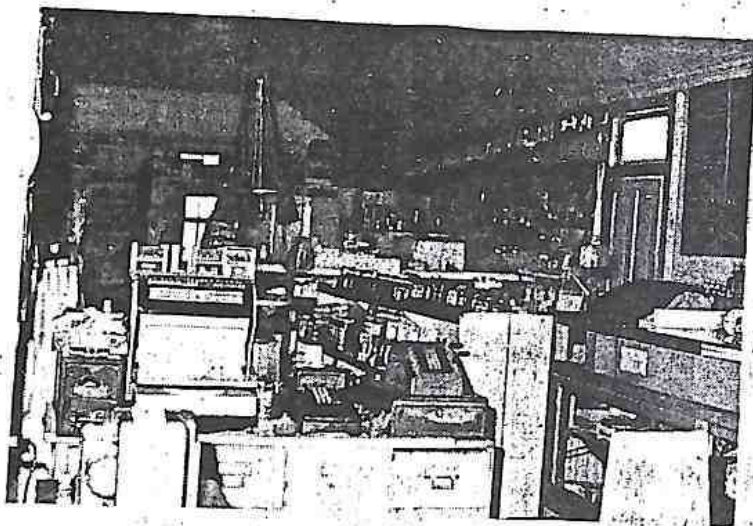
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A retold story about Christian Oestreich was that about 400 friendly Indians camped near his home and the squaws played with him, and one day in ignorance fed him green pecans, and he became deathly sick. Fortunately, the well-known old pioneer doctor, Dr. Herff of San Antonio, happened to be camping with Baron Muesebach and some other German noblemen, and he waited and saved Oestreich's life.

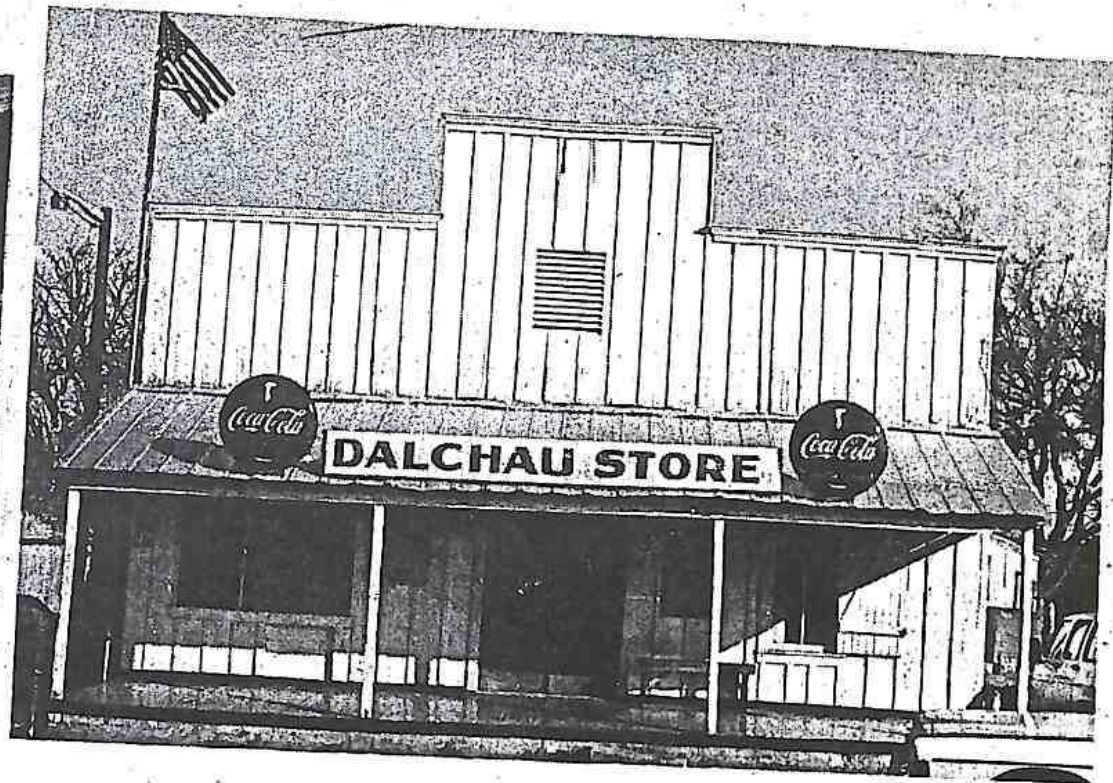
One of the deeds of an unfriendly Indian band in Castell was the capture of Adolph Korn, who at the age of 12 was herding sheep for August Leifeste. The Indians kept him for six years, and traded him to a white man for a barrel of ^{diagonally} crackers. Upon being located in a home on Beaver Creek, he died instantly.

The Story Of A Country Landmark

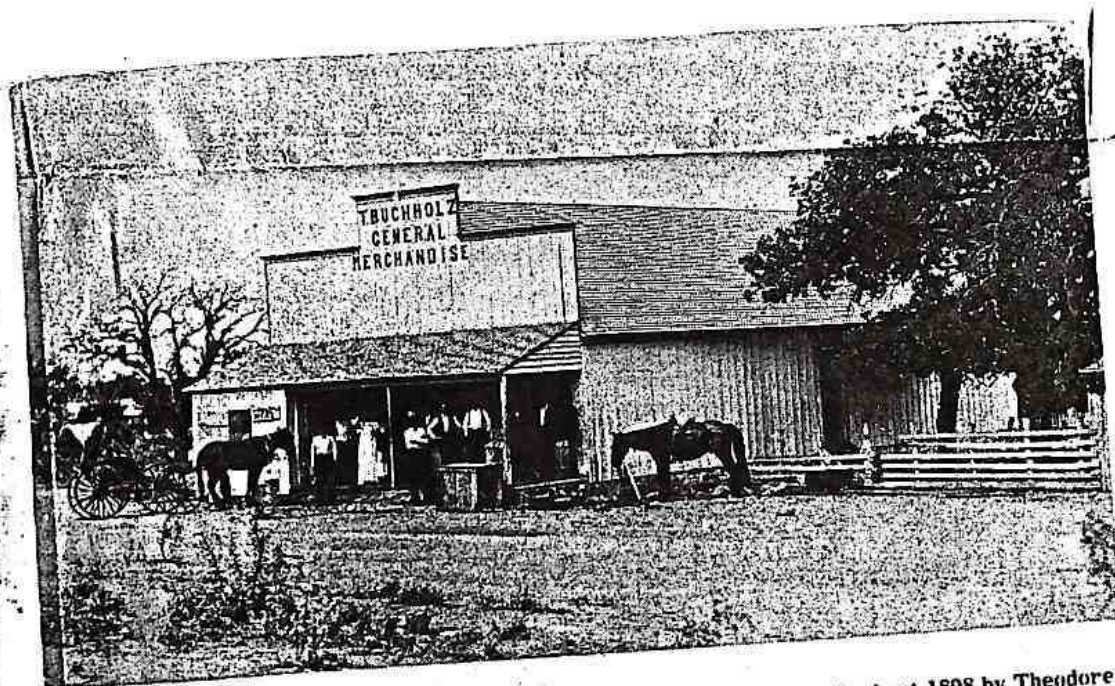
by Eoline Kowierschke



ALMOST ANYTHING needed in the home or on the ranch can be found inside Castell Store: groceries, medicines, hardware, linens, shoes, meat, electrical supplies, jewelry, feed. At one time a modern barber shop with hot and cold running water was located on the premises, and Willard Dalchau once operated a photography business there. Visitors to the store are interested in the samples of barbed wire collected by Chuck Dalchau, Willard's son, which are displayed on the wall inside the store. And although names may change and owners come and go, one thing remains as it always was. The people of Castell still go to Castell Store to get their mail, just like in the beginning.



CASTELL LANDMARK -- The name of Dalchau has been associated with this old store building in Castell for about three-quarters of a century. This summer Mr. and Mrs. Willard Dalchau sold the building and stock to Mr. and Mrs. C.W. Goodwin of Huffman, Texas. The building, which has been through several changes of hands since having been built by Theodore Bucholz, is now known as Castell Store. Willard Dalchau is managing the store until the Goodwins move permanently to Castell, and, says author Eoline Kowierschke, "If and when Willard is not there any more, Castell will not be the same." But she adds, "We welcome the Goodwins and wish them the greatest success. I'm sure in a few years hence we will be able to say, 'Castell wouldn't be the same without the Goodwins.'"



THE OLD BUILDING which houses the present Castell Store was built about 1898 by Theodore Buchholz, who later sold it to William Hony. Hony operated the store for several years and then sold it to Mr. and Mrs. W.F. Dalchau and partners, Mr. and Mrs. Amzy Keyser. During this period, it was known as the Dalchau and Keyser Store. When Keyser died, Dalchau bought his interest and the store was then known as Dalchau Store. Later Dalchau's son Willard went into partnership with his father and the name was changed to Dalchau and Son. After his parents' death, Willard bought their interests and the name of the store reverted to Dalchau Store.

port," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 45 (July 1945). J. V. Haggard, "The Neutral Ground between Louisiana and Texas, 1806-1821," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 28 (October 1945).

HOUSE CREEK. House Creek rises two miles northwest of Copperas Cove in southwestern Coryell County (at 31°08' N, 97°54' W) and runs northeast for twelve miles to its mouth on Cowhouse Creek, fourteen miles south of Gatesville (at 31°13' N, 97°46' W). The stream traverses terrain that varies from steep slopes and benches to local depressions, surfaced by shallow clay and sandy loams that support juniper, live oak, mesquite, and grasses in the creek's upper reaches and water-tolerant hardwoods and conifers in its lower.

HOUSE MOUNTAIN. House Mountain stands eight miles southeast of Castell in southwestern Llano County (at 30°36' N, 98°55' W). Its summit, at an elevation of 1,828 feet above sea level, rises 530 feet above nearby Hickory Creek. The mountain has a large cave, near which many Indian artifacts have been recovered. Area topography varies from flat to rolling to steep terrain, locally dissected and surfaced variously by sandy and clay loams and shallow and stony soils. Vegetation consists primarily of open stands of live oak and mesquite.

HOUSE MOUNTAIN BRANCH. House Mountain Branch rises near the foot of House Mountain, 2½ miles northwest of the town of Prairie Mountain in southwestern Llano County (at 30°35' N, 98°55' W) and runs north for 3½ miles to its mouth on Hickory Creek, 6½ miles southeast of Castell (at 30°38' N, 98°54' W). It traverses an area of the Llano basin characterized by flat terrain with local dissections and surfaced by soils ranging from sandy to clayey loams. Open stands of live oak and mesquite grow in the area.

HOUSE MOUNTAINS. The House Mountains, also known as the Housetop Mountains, are a mountain range eighteen miles southeast of Marathon in Brewster County (centered at 30°10' N, 102°56' W). The range is four miles long and runs from the northwest to the southeast. Its highest peak has an elevation of 5,460 feet above sea level, rising 1,260 feet above U.S. Highway 90, 1½ miles north. Soils in the mountains are mostly deep, fine sandy loams that support hardwood forest, brush, and grasses. The mountains form a long, narrow ridge, resembling the ridge of a roof, for which they were named.

HOUSEN BAYOU. House Bayou rises just west of Bronson in western Sabine County (at 31°21' N, 94°00' W) and runs southeast for twenty-five miles to its mouth on the Toledo Bend Reservoir, four miles southeast of Hemphill (at 31°18' N, 93°48' W). The bayou traverses nearly level to sloping terrain that is heavily wooded, with pine trees predominating.

HOUSE SPARROW. The house sparrow or English sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) is one of the most widespread and abundant birds in the world and has been the subject of hundreds of studies. It occurs as an associate of humans in all 254 counties of Texas. It was first introduced into North America in 1850 at Brooklyn, New York, and J. M. Brown released two pairs at Galveston, Texas, in 1867 and made subsequent releases at intervals until 1872. Between 1880 and 1905 the species spread rapidly throughout the state. Years of the first recorded appearance of the house sparrow in selected cities and towns include Jefferson (1882), Houston (1884), San Saba (1886), Brownsville (1889), Gainesville and Waco (1892), San Angelo (1895), San Antonio (1896), Kerrville (1897), Colorado City (1899), Uvalde and Cotulla (1900), Langtry (1901), Texline and Canadian (1903), and Corpus Christi (1905). Some authorities credit the rapid spread of the house sparrow to roosting birds moving from one city to another in freight cars. Adverse to this idea is the appearance of the species in Rocksprings in 1900 and in Mobeetie in 1901; neither community was served by a railroad.

Selected biological data of the house sparrow include length, six inches; wingspan, nine inches; weight, one ounce. Its call is a cheep, chissis with various grating, twittering, or chirping notes. Its maximum speed of flight is thirty-three miles an hour. It usually spends its entire life in a very small area, but flocks may fly two to three miles from their roosts to feeding sites in grainfields. Foraging flocks and roosts sometimes contain several hundred birds. In some urban areas of Texas, house sparrows may greatly outnumber all other species of birds. Sexual display of house sparrows may begin as early as February and is followed by the building of nests in protected locations. Nests are placed from eight to thirty feet above the ground. Preferred sites are under the eaves of houses, in gutters, holes and crevices in buildings, or in tree cavities. The nest is roofed over and has an entrance hole in the side. The outer layer consists of grass or straw and the inner lining of softer materials, such as feathers, hair, string, fine grasses, or paper. Nests are commonly used year after year. House sparrows are slightly territorial and will defend the area immediately surrounding the nest. Egg laying begins during March and early April and extends through the middle of August. One to six clutches of eggs with one to six eggs a clutch may be laid. The eggs are incubated for ten to sixteen days; both the male and female share this responsibility. The young are naked when hatched but rapidly develop juvenile plumage and are fully feathered when they leave the nest, between the fifteenth and seventeenth days. The juvenile plumage is replaced as a result of a molt that begins four to six weeks after fledging. Thereafter the plumage is renewed annually by a molt that begins near the end of, or immediately following, the breeding season. The height of molt in both juvenile and adult sparrows in northwestern Texas occurs in September.

House sparrows are known to eat more than 830 different foods. Although the diet consists of less than 4 percent animal food, the eating of various species of harmful insects is considered to be beneficial. More insects are taken during the breeding season, when about two-thirds of the diet of the nestlings may consist of animal material. Plant foods eaten include cracked corn, oats, wheat, sorghums, barley, buckwheat, rice, millet, and seeds of such native plants as ragweed, crabgrass, smartweed, pigweed, amaranth, bristlegass, witchgrass, Johnson grass, annual bluegrass, chickweed, and plantain. Cultivated fruits are sporadically damaged by house sparrows, which may also feed on buds, sprouts, and foliage of various fruit trees and garden plants. The feeding habits of house sparrows are, in their totality, considered to be detrimental to the interests of man.

More than forty species of ectoparasites, including mites, ticks, lice, flies, and fleas, have been reported from North American house sparrows. Sparrows are also susceptible to viral, bacterial, protozoan, and fungal diseases as well as infection by flukes, tapeworms, and roundworms. In Hale County, Texas, nestling house sparrows are involved in the amplification of western encephalitis virus, which can be passed to mosquitoes and then to humans.

Storms often kill large numbers of house sparrows. In October 1923 several hundred birds were killed by a hailstorm at Marfa. Predators on adult house sparrows include Cooper's and sharp-shinned hawks, screech owls, northern shrikes, and house cats. Grackles and fish crows are fond of the eggs and the young. The house wren and starling are competitors for nest sites, and both are known to destroy the eggs of the house sparrow. Although house sparrows suffer heavy mortality in their first year of life, there are records of individuals living to the age of eleven years in the wild and twelve years in captivity. House sparrows were initially observed to be very aggressive toward many species of native birds. Although this aggressive tendency is now somewhat abated, house sparrows still compete for nests and nest sites with such birds as martins, swallows, wrens, and bluebirds. House sparrows were originally protected in Texas by an 1883 law that prohibited the killing of any "sparrow." They are not protected today and are generally considered to be a nuisance species that must occasionally be controlled on a local basis. House sparrows can be readily

Gastrell
The count was president of the Society for Protection of German Emigrants, formed in 1844 in Germany and he was one of two representatives sent to Texas to purchase land for colonization. Other early families to settle there were Baders, Honigs, Schneiders, and of course others in later years.

F. Oestreich is the father of Christian Oestreich, who is said to be the first white child born in Llano County. He was born August 2, 1855 at the old Oestreich homestead. Mrs. Oestreich was a half sister to Ludwig Schneider.

Mr. and Mrs. Oestreich milked many, many cows and became engaged in cheese-making. They milked anywhere from 40 to 75 cows, and since there were no fences, the children minded the cows all day and kept the calves separated from the cows. Milking was a long, tedious task and the parents and children always helped, usually storing the milk in the "Spring House" to keep it cool. When the cheese was made, it was taken in large quantities by ox wagon to Austin and sold. The trip took fully two weeks. It was always a great joy to get to go along.

Another profitable means of livelihood in the German settlements was making and selling bacon. Hogs were raised on open range in large herds, killed, scrapped, dressed, and cured and sent by ox wagon to Austin, Georgetown, and other places to be sold or traded for needed supplies.

Christian Oestreich pre-empted 80 acres of land and bought 80 acres from Baders at \$1.00 per acre and paid \$140 to get a log house built. He built the first fence on the north side of the river in that section. He one time sold 320 acres of land for a quart of whiskey. Today the same land has been appraised at \$60 per acre.

CASTELL SETTLEMENT

The early settlement of Castell was made, of course, by German families. These German families lived frugally and they spent days of endless toil, privations, hardships, and even at times, hunger and near starvation. Hard work became their creed.

The names Leifeste, Oestreich, Honig, Hoffman, Miller, Durst, Grote, Jordan, Lange, Grenwelge, Kowierschke, Otto, Schmidt, Schuessler, Bauer, Bader, Keyser, Bucchoiz, Bode, Kassel, Denop, Birk, Holtzer, Winkel, Holmig, and others have been closely identified with the Castell section and each family has played an important role in the building of the community.

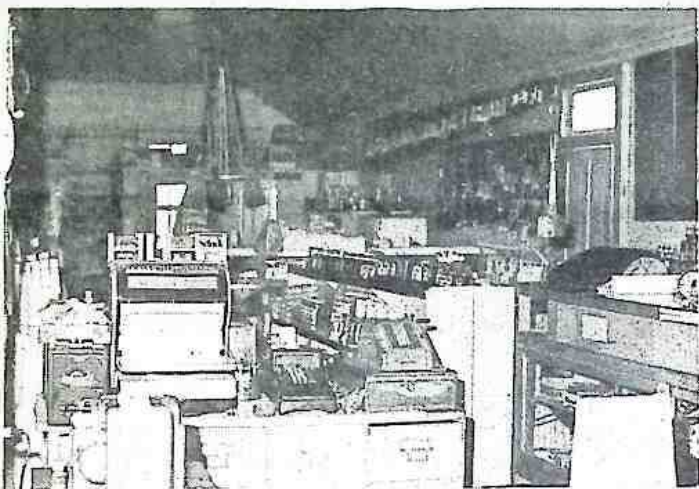
Only a few of the first dwellings are still standing intact, but quite a few of the old homesteads have been modernized and a descendant lives in each. Many split rail cowpens stand, and also miles and miles of carefully made rock fences. There are still a few crumbling log-houses around. Inside the modern homes are much of the old-fashioned furniture, family photographs, marriage and baptismal certificates in ornate frames, as well as other heirlooms and antiques.

Some of the older comers like Vasterlings went back to Fredericksburg and returned later. The land granted to them was allotted on the section. Single men got 160 acres and married men got 320 acres. Ludwig Schneider's land grant was on the Colorado River close to Buchanan Dam, but since he did not want to live so far from his friends, he bought four acres from the Henry Vasterlings and made that his home. The old Schneider homestead a few miles east of Castell owned by the Hendry Schneiders still stands and is used as a corn crib.

The site of the first settlement north of Llano River, three or four miles east of present Castell is the Leiningen Community, named for Count Carl Zu Leiningen, and the Oestreichs were the first settlers in Leiningen.

The Story Of A Country Landmark

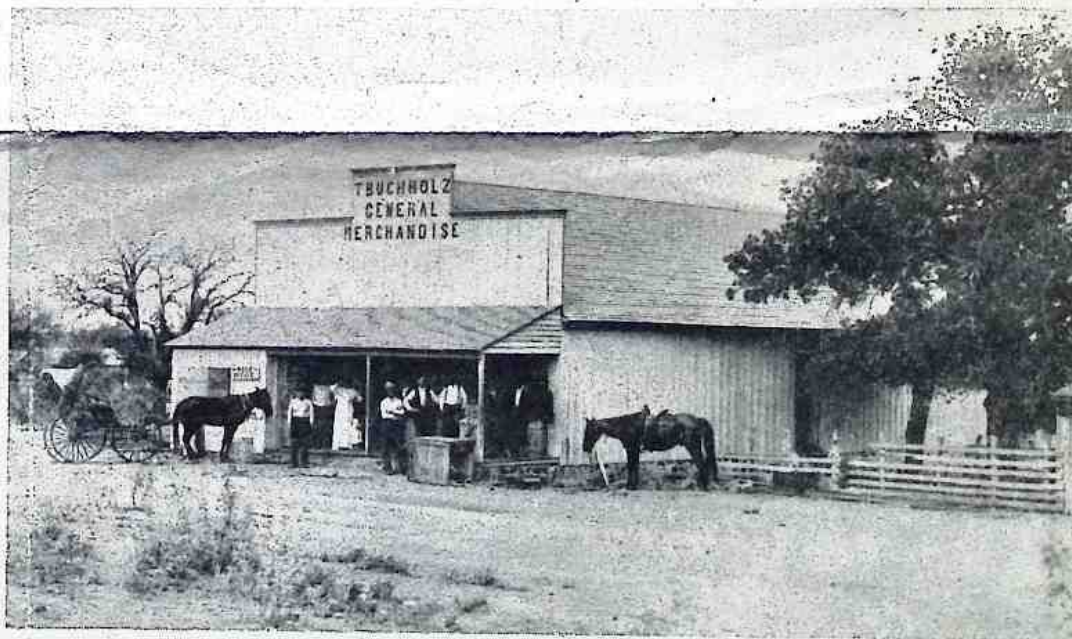
by Eoline Kowierschke



ALMOST ANYTHING needed in the home or on the ranch can be found inside Castell Store: groceries, medicines, hardware, linens, shoes, meat, electrical supplies, jewelry, feed. At one time a modern barber shop with hot and cold running water was located on the premises, and Willard Dalchau once operated a photography business there. Visitors to the store are interested in the samples of barbed wire collected by Chuck Dalchau, Willard's son, which are displayed on the wall inside the store. And although names may change and owners come and go, one thing remains as it always was. The people of Castell still go to Castell Store to get their mail, just like in the beginning.



CASTELL LANDMARK -- The name of Dalchau has been associated with this old store building in Castell for about three-quarters of a century. This summer Mr. and Mrs. Willard Dalchau sold the building and stock to Mr. and Mrs. C.W. Goodwin of Huffman, Texas. The building, which has been through several changes of hands since having been built by Theodore Bucholz, is now known as Castell Store. Willard Dalchau is managing the store until the Goodwins move permanently to Castell, and, says author Eoline Kowierschke, "if and when Willard is not there any more, Castell will not be the same." But she adds, "We welcome the Goodwins and wish them the greatest success. I'm sure in a few years hence we will be able to say, 'Castell wouldn't be the same without the Goodwins.'"



THE OLD BUILDING which houses the present Castell Store was built about 1898 by Theodore Bucholz, who later sold it to William Hony. Hony operated the store for several years and then sold it to Mr. and Mrs. W.F. Dalchau and partners, Mr. and Mrs. Amzy Keyser. During this period, it was known as the Dalchau and Keyser Store. When Keyser died, Dalchau bought his interest and the store was then known as Dalchau Store. Later Dalchau's son Willard went into partnership with his father and the name was changed to Dalchau and Son. After his parents' death, Willard bought their interests and the name of the store reverted to Dalchau Store.

Methodists have met in Castell since 1852

LANDMARKS

By DALE FRY
HIGHLAND LAKES NEWSPAPERS

From July 31 through Aug. 3, 1952, Castell's Trinity United Methodist Church celebrated its centennial. Rev. Charles A. Grote, pastor of the Methodist Episcopal Church-South in Fredericksburg, conducted the first protestant service in the Llano Valley sometime in March, 1852 somewhere on the north bank of the Llano River near the present community of Castell.

It was not until four years later, however, in March, 1856, that Rev. Grote organized the Methodist Episcopal (ME) Church with 65 members from the early settlers in the area, who were mostly of German descent. Fifteen years later, in 1871, after Rev. Grote was formally appointed as pastor of the church, the congregation built a combination parsonage and church building to accommodate the growing congregation. Grote served as pastor until 1874.

Until 1871, Grote had served as a German-Llano Circuit Methodist Pastor, along with five other Methodist ministers. These included Grote-1854 to 1858; C. Pluenneke-1858 to 1859; August Engel-1859 to 1861; J.A. Schaper-1861 to 1865; W.A. Knolle, Assistant-1865; and C. Pleunneke again-1865 to 1869.

The church structure took form in stages.



Castell's Trinity United Methodist Church was renovated in 1951.

STAFF PHOTO BY DALE FRY

In 1880, the first part of the present building rose under the pastorate of Rev. Jacob Kern;

then, in 1891, the church installed a bell in the belltower. Nine years later, in 1900, the congre-

gation made a "T" addition to the building.

A year earlier, in 1899, the church sold the 1871 parsonage and used to money to buy a local residence on 50 acres of land to serve as a better parsonage. Then, in 1908 the church tore this structure down and erected the present parsonage. Years later the congregation, along with the congregation of the First United Methodist Church in Mason, raised \$45,000 and restored the parsonage, keeping its quaint historical features.

In 1951, in preparation for the church's centennial in 1952, the congregation, under the leadership of Pastor C.C. McKinney, thoroughly renovated the historical church building inside and out, then installed a new altar, pulpit and pews.

Today, a visit to the church grounds takes one back many years to the time of the early German settlers in Llano County. Near the church, the original old wooden tabernacle constructed for services "out of doors" in 1915 is still there, and behind it lies the historical wooden schoolhouse. The educational building, built of lumber from the razed 1885 frame church at Hoersterville, is located also near the church. Just beyond these structures lies the Castell Cemetery on RR 2768, one of the oldest in Llano County.

To get there, take RR 152 west of Llano for 18 miles, turn left on RR 2768 and you'll see the church grounds in front of you.

Castell hosts annual barbecue

By Lyn Odom

Twenty miles west of Llano on Hwy. 152 sits a little community called Castell. Established in 1847 by German "free thinkers," Castell remains today as one of the last frontiers of real freedom according to its citizens, a population of no more than 30 people.

Castell proper consists of a general store, post office and the Methodist Church. Still without official government, Castell is a simple, clean, quiet and peaceful place.

Castell does, however, have a community group and volunteer fire department that sponsors an annual fund-raising barbecue. This year's event will begin at 4 p.m., with serving beginning at 6:30 p.m., Saturday, July 29.

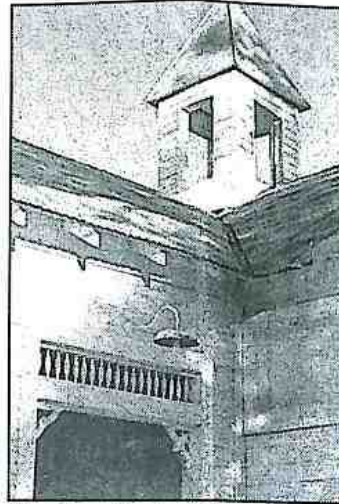
For more than 30 years the little community has been serv-

ing up a great barbecue dinner prepared by local residents. Last year, more than 800 plates were served. There's no price per plate, rather the feast is a "donation appreciated" dinner. Monies collected are used to support the fire department.

The menu this year will consist of beef, pork and sausage accompanied by potato salad and slaw, sliced vegetables, fruits, tea and dessert. Last year, more than 50 different varieties of cake were offered.

Tables and chairs will be set up around the old Castell School House which is currently being renovated. The school was built around 1852 and also served as a place of worship.

The town also installed three historical markers recently. One is commemorating the 17 Texas Rangers buried there; the second notes the history of Castell; and



The Castell school house, once a place of worship too, is currently being restored by the residents of the quiet little town. Courtesy photo

the third is in honor of Castell veterans who served in any war.

Bode Barker and his band will be playing starting around 5 p.m.



Recently installed, this marker in Castell tells the history of the old school house. Courtesy photo

or so, and music will play throughout the evening.

To go plates will be available; and everyone is invited to attend.

The religious life of the pioneers is as much a part of the settlement and is as sacred as any of their family traditions and heritages.

Many of the German emigrants remained true to their Lutheran faith, some were Catholic, but many transferred their faith to the Methodist Church. The first established church at Castell was the Methodist. This church was officially established March 8, 1856, by the late Rev. Charles A. Grote, who in 1852 began making trips from his Church at Fredericksburg to the settlements along the Llano River such as Castell, Lower and Upper Willow Creek and Beaver Creek. Services were at first held in homes or under live oak trees. The first church building was built in 1871.

According to the account by Peter Moehling in his "Reiseskitze", a pioneer by the name of ^{Charlie} Jung preached to a small gathering of people under a tree and this was the first religious meeting of any kind.

The Llano circuit was organized March 8, 1856, and church was held under the Leifeste Liveoak tree until 1871 when the people decided to build a church. There were 63 members of the church.

Three men donated ten acres of land on the south side of the river for a church and parsonage. The pickets of which it was built were cut at Fly Gap, about 14 miles north of Castell and hauled by ox teams. The friendly Indians often came and listened to services at this picket church.

The church was eventually torn down, 50 acres of land was bought and used for parsonage and church, and people's Sunday houses grew up and dotted the property---houses of people who lived too far away to go home between services. This too, was changed, and the present church which has also been properly remodeled took its place.

The members did not have money to give for the church, but they gave generously of their time and labor. Ministers' salaries were small. One record shows that the salary was \$9 each quarter.

The first missionary society was organized in this section. People had little money, so they donated cattle to the missionary band. A simple but definite contract governed the management of this herd. The proceeds were put into the missionary fund of the church. The pastor's family was also supplied with milk and butter from this herd. This herd figured in the marking and brands in the county; at any rate, it was the first of its kind in this area. The mark of the herd was a crop, two splits and underbit in the right ear, and the brand was MV, standing for Mission Verein, which is the German of Mission Society.

CASTELL LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Castell Lutheran Church was begun by a minister, Doitrich Rode, who lived at Cherry Springs and who came to Castell once a month and held services in homes, first in one and then another. The first church was built on the north side of the river in the Leininger settlement. From these early churches came the Love Feasts in which families and loved ones would come together and eat very frugally, if at all, and give praise and thanks, livings.

In the Lutheran early day church, the pastor gave his preaching free. In both churches, the services were originally in German, and until the last decade or so, at least one service per day was in German.

Out of these churches sprang up prayer groups for every age; and men and women did not meet in the same prayer group, and in church the men sat on one side and the women the other.

The religious and economic lives of these people are so much a part of each other that it would be impossible to tell about the one without telling of the other.

Charles Pluenncke was the source of relating how his father, Conrad Pluenncke, a well-loved early day Methodist minister, and a whole colony rebelled against Germany and were forced to choose between leaving the country and being shot. Because of the circumstances which prompted them to leave and the time of their arrival in this country, they were called the "Forty-eighters". Others in this group who subsequently settled in and around Castell were the Leifeste brothers, Peter Hasso, Emil Krevitz, Charles Richter, and Justus Herber.

Krevitz, Pluenncke, and Fritz Leifeste fought in the United States Army in the war with Mexico immediately after coming to this country and then came to Castell.

Because the Bode family settled on Martin Creek, the place became known as Bodeville. The Bodes sold the place to William Honig, but it still carries the same name.

The late Charles Lehmberg Sr., a well-known cattleman and trail driver was the first person to settle on the south side of the Llano River, the town of Castell having had its beginning with the earlier settlements on the North side, several miles east of the present town, at Leiningen, and almost directly across the river where the Leifestes located, a portion of this latter place now being just across the Mason County line.

Lehmberg came from Germany, and ran the first store and postoffice on the south side of the river at a point about one mile down the river from the present location.

A man by the name of Krevitz is supposed to have had the first postoffice on the north side. Lehmberg traveled to Austin in ox wagons for supplies for his store. A school was conducted at one time in a room of his home.

Krevitz bought cattle in the Castell and Llano communities and drove them up the trail. On one occasion, he was driving cattle up the trail and as he was branding cattle up above Mason, a wild horse kicked him in the

head, ultimately causing his death.

Theodore Buccholtz came to Castell from Fredericksburg in 1881 and bought the Lehnberg store, moving it up the river to the present place. This store was eventually sold to Dalchau and Keyser, and is still in existence today under the ownership of Willard Dalchau.

The Llano river at Castell, which is now spanned by a good bridge, although others have washed away, was crossed in the early days by fording it in wagons or on horseback just below where the present bridge is located. Many oldtimers tell of the big rises they have seen in the river, and even the younger generations well remember the awful flood of 1935 when all the timber as well as the livestock and bridge were washed away.

The story is told about a Mrs. Leifeste who had been visiting on the south side of the river, and when she was ready to go home, the river was on a rise, and she was so homesick that the help of friendly Indians was asked, and they fashioned a boat from a hollow tree trunk; two of the Indians swam by the boat and guided her safely across.

A blacksmith shop was always at Castell. Gustav Bogusch operated one on the bank of the river for some time. Another early day blacksmith shop eight miles down the river, was that of Gottfried Bader who cut the tree for his home while his wife gathered sage grass for the roof. He and his wife also had the business of cheese-making, and he took his cheeses to Galveston and Houston to sell.

Nearly all of these German families were on the verge of starvation for lack of money, while others of means could find nothing in the way of food to buy. Wild game and fish were plentiful, but bread was a great problem. Gardening was unknown. For a time government troops were camped on the Llano River near Castell while cutting wild hay for their horses, and the German families living close gathered corn off the ground where the horses had been fed and ground it for use.

A crude mill, described as belonging to Adam Schmidt, seems to be typical of those of other settlers---the contraption was nailed to a tree, taking two people to turn it. The little wheel did its best but the meal was very coarse.

In the first years of the early German settlements, it was necessary to travel to Indianola for supplies; five or six wagons usually made the arduous trip together for protection, and it often took as long as three months to get back home with the much-needed supplies. Two days were required for the trip each way between Castell and Fredericksburg via ox wagon over a rough and dangerous trail, on which Indians were frequently encountered.

After a store was established at Castell, some of the settlers made a living freighting supplies.

A typical description of life in the early days for some is this: the father went off to split rails in order to earn money, leaving his family to share as best they could on their meager supplies.

One such case was the Baders and the Steeles. The women agreed that they would divide what little bread they had and then both of them would starve together. They gathered tender weeds and cooked them. On one occasion Mrs. Bader became extremely ill as one of the weeds was poisonous.

Families hardpressed for cornmeal for making bread, often used their limited funds to buy whiskey to trade with the soldiers passing or camped nearby for corn.

Clothes in those days were of the simplest kind. The older residents tell that they wore suits of deer skins. Many an oldtimer related that ~~before~~ they were 12 or 13 before having a pair of real shoes. Ludwig Schneider was a pioneer cobbler in these parts, and Richter who had been an officer in the German army made the shoes often.

The Indians around the Castell area were at first friendly. Some accounts relate the Indians visited and oft looked into the little picket-fenced school down the river, and even exchanged gifts of food and helped the settlers get established, and they were especially helpful in getting settlers across the swollen river.

Accounts have it that the early-day ministers would never have been able to get to the other side if it had not been for the Indians. This friendliness is believed to be due to the treaty made with them by Baron John Mensebach.

The fact that they went on the warpath in later years was attributed to the treatment they received at the hands of the white settlers. The Indians came to resent the usurpation of their land by the invading Germans and became angry when they began hunting deer and other wild game, which they thought belonged rightfully to them.

The whites and friendly Indians traded together for a time. The latter had blankets and trinkets which they would trade to the German residents for something to eat. They wanted "Sweets" more than anything. The whites began mistreating the Indians and beating them in trades, so the Indians went on the warpath.

A retold story about Christian Oestreich was that about 400 friendly Indians camped near his home and the squaws played with him, and one day in ignorance fed him green peacans, and he became deathly sick. Fortunately, the well-known old pioneer doctor, Dr. Herff of San Antonio, happened to be camping with Baron Mensebach and some other German noblemen, and he waited and saved Oestreich's life.

One of the deeds of an unfriendly Indian band in Castell was the capture of Adolph Korn, who at the age of 12 was herding sheep for August Leifeste. ^{of the} The Indians kept him for six years, and traded him to a white man ^{partly} for a barrel of crackers. Upon being located in a home on Beaver Creek, he died instantly.