

Wild Cat Spring
April 24, 1842

Dear Mother,

Over a year has elapsed since I last wrote, and you have not complained about my tardiness. Twice I started a letter to you, but the interruption of unforeseen events did not allow me to finish. I had intended to come to Germany in February but, because of several adversities, especially the devaluation of the Texas paper money, I was unable to get together the necessary money for the trip.

Since my last writing in February a year ago, I received letters the beginning of August from Baumann and an enclosure from Julien, the beginning of January from you, the next one received was Amalien's, and finally in February, I received one from merchant Delius in Versmold with the information of your order to him to place a deposit for me of \$400 through the commercial house of Schmidt and Corp. in New Orleans. This motherly care, which although I would not solicit, and which should out my needs, I acknowledge with childlike gratitude.

I will now tell you how things have gone with during this time. On March 15 of last year after I had just leased a field, I came down with an intermittent fever, not exactly dangerous, which lasted until the middle of May and prevented all work. When my strength returned again, planting time was overwith. With great effort, I obtained some 2000 tobacco plants, whereof I harvested some 500 pounds of tobacco. As a result of two months of neglect, my corn yielded only a half crop. I traded my only horse for sheep, which are seldom expensive to raise and extraordinarily profitable, but dogs I had never seen, attacked them and tore them to pieces; the remainder fled into the woods, and I could not find them again. Such misfortunes have not beaten me in that the return of my health has given me strength of body and cheerfulness of spirit. In August when I received Baumann's and Julien's letters, my resolve from your support as in Deutschland ripened, and if need be I would ask my brother-in-law, Schieffer, for a small loan. I had seen that being fully alone among strangers could not be for me, and at last had myself a girl and resolved that of all importance, I make her my wife. The girl was poor as I, and without support from Germany I could not think of providing for a marriage, and yet I was old enough and did not want to wait for better prospects.

The difficulty is to obtain the necessary travel money; horses, cows, and things like that sell for very little cash money, although the row of tobacco that bears cigars would. I resolved, therefore, to make cigars for the market and to go to Houston. I had estimated in February the project would have brought altogether some \$150. My plan failed, and I had to make a decision to tentatively remain here. Hardly had I on February 1 arrived from Houston back in Cat Spring, when to my greatest joy, I received the notice from Delius that he had placed on deposit for me per your instructions \$400 at Schmidt and Company in New Orleans. I wrote immediately to Schmidt and Company that I wished the money transferred to a good bank in Houston; fell in love with Caroline von Roeder, the 18-year-old daughter of our patriot here, bought me a beautiful piece of land, made a contract on account with a builder for the necessary structure, and made all the preparations to be married soon.

Suddenly on March 7, we were notified through a messenger of the news that a supposed significant Mexican army was making a forward thrust on the city of San Antonio/Bexar on the occupied west border some 200 English miles from us, would take us over, and volunteers were needed to rush to the scene. The same day, we brought home our best horses on the prairie, set our muskets, got our riding clothes, provided ourselves with food, and rode early on the following

morning toward the threatened area. There were our five Germans from Cat Spring; our troop increased itself fast through which from all sides riders came rushing to the scene with their boxes, who, without participation of any authority or officers, but each on his own incentive, something commonly used here. Four days after we were on the so-called ar scene, the Mexicans, the number amounting only 800 to 1000 men, already had two days earlier fallen back from San Antonio to the unoccupied prairies of the West, and would not strike again. When our supplies began to play out, we turned back home, this quite useless activity having cost us more than 14 days.

When we were long back home situated in freedom, we saw groups of riders coming from the outlying regions of West Texas next to that taken over, who drew the universal opinion (from a reported approximately 80,000 souls) of a cry for revenge against the Mexicans and the Government now, and the talk is that we must push forward to the capital of Mexico and take it before full freedom will come. I am very calm in the face of all these outcries, for I do not believe that a serious, decisive war will come between the Mexicans and Texans, for both sides are too weak and divided to arm themselves. If one reads the full accounts of the American newspapers, many imagine themselves to hold the facts and all the ideas.

When I arrived back home at Cat Spring from this small deviation, I began the development of my new farm, which lays on Mill Creek four miles from Cat Spring. It was nearly three months since I'd written and not had an answer from Schmidt and Co., and the lack of money hindered me in outfitting, and I decided to go to New Orleans myself; a merchant there who had befriended me had already loaned me the necessary travel money. The cost of the trip is not freely insignificant, but I am compelled this offer to accept. I will write more to you from New Orleans and want to depart the day after tomorrow.
New Orleans, May 8, 1842

Schmidt and Co. Had not received my letter, thus their silence. They prepared to pay the \$400 not in silver but only in banknotes. Delius' writing to Schmidt of the \$400 was for Spanish taler. The difference in interest between silver and bank notes is substantial; silver now has 6 percent premiums. I, therefore, lost \$24. If you will instruct Herr Delius not to forget to reimburse the worth of \$400.

Again, dear Mother, I say to you my heartiest thanks for this unexpected help. I will now marry in from 2 to 3 months. My bride is a strong, healthy girl, in spirit and mind, which in Texas shows in all the work which is expected in the wife of a farmer. I do not doubt that I will have a happy life with her.

I have bought from Louis Kleberg, with a promissory not for \$120, due to be paid early next year, a piece of superior land of 177 acres. I bought a very good and spacious ouse, which was already largely completed, for \$140 from a German in Cat Spring, having paid \$80 direct and \$60 due early next year; it will cost around \$200 to be completed but will be the best and most spacious house in the whole surrounding area. It is of four corner square timbers, which exactly pass each other, 18 feet in the square. The main room, a bedroom, is 10 feet broad and 18 feet long on the one side, off the other side is a gallery (shade roof) (American porch) with a roof of 10 by 18 feet. I was lucky to buy and have the adjacent buildings moved from an abandoned farm not far away for a ridiculous price. I needed only to pull them down and drag them to my place. I have kept my best horse; I have bought a yoke of oxen for \$46. I now have 18 head of cattle, including 6 milk cows with their calves. As soon as I get back to Cat Spring, I want to buy six additional good cows and calves. Because my pigs were fed quite incorrectly for two years, I

only have 4.

A harvest of sorts in the coming summer is not possible; the development of my farm will take my whole time. Early in the next year, after enclosing the fields and reclamation of the land, it will be ready. I will never attempt a large amount of cultivation; corn for my needs and some tobacco for sale will be my main products. My intent is mainly to be a stock raiser, tentatively beef stock, which brings roughly 40 percent capital interest. Should I be able to acquire a herd of some hundred sheep, I would be very lucky. The profit from that is over 100 percent, the wool not included. On counts on a mother sheep (ewe) to have three young in 2 years.

Now, dear Mother, I have a great request of you. Allowing for some comforts around me (although not of the European concept), I still need \$400. I have projected that if you would send me yet \$400, I will pay off my land and my house early next year totaling \$180, which I have contracted. The recently received \$400 goes for the detailed estimates for the limited domestic and farm equipment. My bride, of course, has a right of \$400 Prussian Cour for a dowery out of the Sack Family Foundation in Silesia; this money is but far away yet. I have a notarial record of our engagement, another of which my prospective father-in-law has and which will be sent to the Sack Foundation. As soon as my wedding occurs, the marriage certificate will be sent. The local foundation will be notified that my brother-in-law, Reuter, is the nominated authority to carry these documents.

Should my brother-in-law, Schieffer, loan me from his profits over 3 or 4 years around \$1000, it would be of significant help. I can offer him no certainty, and I say casually that only in the severest need, such as those as the result of my previous struggles, could I become a bad credit risk; Schieffer certainly has no doubts about my validity.

There now is an established Bremen business office in Galveston, Texas, under the name of Kaufmann et Comp, and through the Bremen office of J.A. Graeser, you will receive this letter. I believe also, that this is a safer way for sending correspondence between us. Should Delius consign future moneys to me, it would be best for me through the above-mentioned office with a directive for it to be in silver.

Since my previous letter from Cat Spring, no one in the surrounding area has died, and many children have been born. Theodore Sack had a girl in March last year, and in April this year, a second; Rosa Kleberg bore, after three previous daughters, finally a son last year in October. Louise Kleberg and Caroline von Roeder (born Ernst, widowed from Louis von Roeder, since last summer married again with Albrecht von Roeder) look forward daily towards their confinements. The storm of well being is flourishing in Cat Spring. Last summer, a theologian Ervenberg from Herford immigrated here from Illinois, where he had been a preacher. Twelve children, who up to now were yet heathen, the oldest of whom was 6 years old, were baptized all at once.

I had believed my stay here in New Orleans would last longer, and I would undertake the answering of Baumann's, Julien's, and Amalien's letters, but the time will be too short here; perhaps I will have some time in Galveston to write them a few lines if I have the opportunity. I learned that the departure of the boat upon which I will return to Galveston has been delayed a half day; thus I make use of the time to write to you, dear Mother. You must excuse my writing which is very confused, for my head is full from remembering all the directions given me by others to take care of their purchases from the many shops.

The anger, which momentarily dominates North America entirely, will naturally be very disadvantageous to Texas. Hardly no one in Europe has an idea of the money shortage here.

Texas has but itself to blame for the most part. The consumption of imported products and commodities through only the slightest authorization is up to now unbelievably great. Only in the past few years have things begun to work such as exporting a quantity of cotton. Now, the beautiful land is beginning to take shape. The old fields are being enlarged and better tilled, showing the results of active hard work. The seasons this year were so extraordinarily favorable that one can with certainty look forward to the richest harvest. The export of cotton in the previous year was considerably up proportionately, and this year will increase more than twice, and Texas will soon establish affluence.

The necessities of the farmers are most negligible. Meat, vegetables, and things like that he grows himself. Clothing is very low priced, and because of the mild climate, it needs to be only very lightweight. The main expenses of the already outfitted farmer are for sugar and coffee, the latter of which is very good, strong and often three or four times a day. Delivery prices are almost nothing.

I have such a free, unconstrained life here that I would find it difficult to get used to European activity again. I would like to make a trip to visit you, which for the moment is undoable; whether I can at some other time, I will have to see. It pains me very much that Louis' health is not yet better. I do not believe that he will be content in Germany, but it is doubtful that he would come here. Should he come, I would give him a most brotherly reception. Now, dear Mother, I ask for your blessing for my approaching marriage and for whatever help you can give me. Greetings to my brothers and sisters.

Your son,
Ferdinand Engelking