

### Latin Farmers

Paul and Frederick and George were fraternity brothers—clean-cut, fun-loving, hard-working, healthy youths beset by the problems so dear to feature-writers and blest with a wide-ranging curiosity and social concern.

Paul, the son of a judge at the county seat, spent his earliest years with grand-parents in a rural community since his mother had died soon after his birth. This made adjustments difficult when he returned to a family he hardly knew. Being exceptionally big and strong for his fifteen years, he enlisted in the army and was soon promoted to corporal and decorated for valor. Even 'though wounded in battle, he seriously considered an army career but soon tired of the dull routine in peace time and, with only minimum preparation, entered college to study law.

Frederick and George were sons of a minister in a small town. In addition to his pastoral duties their father tended his garden and orchard, kept bees and educated his nine children at home. There was nothing perfunctory about this education as it included a thorough grounding in classical as well as modern languages and literature, science, mathematics, religion, history and, for fun and curiosity, geography. The story is that whenever George could escape the rigors of irregular verbs or quadratic equations he could be found at the work bench in the wood shed indulging a creative urge to make useful objects of beauty and originality. At eighteen Frederick, rugged and energetic with dark, fiery eyes, entered college a year after Paul. He was "an extreme optimist whose faith in human nature and in the possibilities of progress

could never be shaken". The next year George joined them. Tall and lean, blonde and blue-eyed, with a <sup>chronic</sup> cough, he has "inclined to pessimism and biting sarcasm". Both enrolled in Divinity School because that had the lowest tuition but it still was impossible for a preacher to keep two boys in college when there were seven other children to launch on careers. Accordingly Frederick received permission to take final exams early and was ordained before his twentieth birthday. In 1819 he became curate in Niedergemünden, a back-water somewhat north of Frankfort.

The aftermath of Napoleon's wars of megalomania and territorial aggrandizement differed little from aftermaths of wars to end war or to make the world safe for democracy. Baby boom, economic readjustment, new introspections brought about by war's upheavals---all caused nights of worry to the "old guard" and their secret police and nights of endless discussion and impractical dreaming to the students. During the war the Duke of Saxe-Weimar had founded the Burschenschaft, a fraternity whose objective was to foster "patriotism and christian conduct". Chapters proliferated in the german universities where their character ranged from social clubs to debating societies. When "patriotism and christian conduct" came to be fostered by the authorities with a vigor worthy of Senator McCarthy a radical wing of the fraternity called "the Blacks" went underground. Among the activists in this group at the University of Giessen were Paul's older brothers Adolph, who spent two years in prison for writing poetry and other such seditious activities, and Carl whose superior mobility barely kept him out of similar german, swiss, and french facilities. Carl then became the first professor of German at Harvard but lost that post through the vehemence of his abolitionist agitation. From Harvard he went to Lexington to take up a new career as Unitarian Minister and to take a spirited part in the discussions of Emerson, Thoreau and the other Transcendentalists.

Thus it was that his older brothers introduced first Paul, then his friend Frederick, and finally George to the most progressive groups at Giessen, including "the Blacks", and to pen-pals in Europe and America.

Disillusioned by the bloodshed and devastation which had preceded Waterloo as much as by the repression which followed it, these heirs to the Enlightenment pursued the ideal of freedom in its broadest terms. The more every freedom---religious, intellectual, economic---was suppressed by Metternich and his reactionary colleagues at the Congress of Vienna, the more the grand designs of these closet radicals flowered. They were convinced that the only hope of restoring moral greatness to Germany lay in establishing a German republic on foreign soil, flourishing through diligence and honest labor, thereby setting an example and inspiration to the decadent Fatherland. Through voracious reading, lengthy correspondence and nocturnal discussions they explored the intellectual, political, and religious climate of far away places as well as the fauna, flora, farming possibilities and the disposition of the inhabitants. They studied the successes and failures of previous colonies: hardship long before prosperity at Plymouth, desperate privation at Jamestown, success of the Rappites. It is not recorded that the Celibacy of the Shakers was considered an option. Their thoughts kept returning to the American frontier and the best information available in Giessen pointed to the territory of Arkansas. Here, indeed, was a land of hills and forests and plentiful water that would be reminiscent in every natural way of their beloved but philosophically impossible homeland. The vision that took shape in their minds and focused their thoughts began with a colony of five hundred "honorable and free-thinking people" to be increased annually by waves of their fellows until their achievements and their population would qualify them for admission to the Union.

Even dreams so glorious and so engrossing seldom survive the transition

from the abstractions of academe to the harsh realities of the establishment. After graduating cum laude, Paul became a successful lawyer with a distinguished practice and soon married Marie, the younger sister of Frederick and George. Frederick succeeded to his father's "living" as lutheran pastor, married, begat a family, sadly lost his wife and presently married another. George was ordained, became chaplain at the fashionable spa of Bad Homburg and married a beautiful heiress. Here were three attractive, healthy and sociable young men, embarked on promising careers in familiar and comfortable surroundings, with wives who kept house and bore children. On Sundays they dined with in-laws, on Saturdays they went to the club, and everyday they discussed the iniquities of the government pay-rollers and the inefficiency of the postal service. Even 'though the excitement of their youthful dreams never left them this little idyll might have had a trite and simple ending but for the impact of another man unknown to them at that time, whose life we must now digress to trace.

Gottfr ed Duden was a concerned and compassionate Justice of the Peace in Mulheim near Cologne. He came to believe that the crimes he was required to prosecute were the result of poverty caused by over-population---a blight which he believed might be cured by emigration. To prepare himself for investigating the possibility of german settlement in the United States he took a course in medicine after which he and a companion sailed to America. Landing in Baltimore, they bought a horse and wagon and headed for St. Louis. There he met Nathan Boone, the son of Daniel Boone, who was a government surveyor well qualified to show him the countryside. Who can resist land at \$1.25 per acre? Not a man from over-crowded Europe looking for Lebensraum. So Duden bought a beautiful hill-top, built a log-cabin and laid out a small farm in the german pattern. A cook was hired from St. Louis and a local man came to

do the field work.

After two years of this bucolic life Duden returned to Germany, having observed most of the problems likely to confront an immigrant. He immediately wrote, and published at his own expense, his "Report of a Journey to the Western States of North America". Romantic idealism flavored but did not distort his observations of life on the frontier. Later it was noted that he was a spectator rather than a participant and "didn't realize that many tasks performed with such apparent ease by the sturdy backwoodsman were, in reality, extremely difficult unless one had been trained for such duties from early youth". However, he told of rattlesnakes as well as of the abundance of birds and creatures of the forest, of the wealth of opportunities for the financially secure as well as for the strong but penniless.

The Report was published in 1829 and was an immediate best seller. Its literary qualities appealed particularly to educated groups among whom it stimulated discussion and speculation for years, to say nothing of immediate individual emigration. Coming, as it did, just three years after George Canning boasted to the British parliament that he had "called the New World into existence to redress the balance of the Old" it gave an added impetus to the urge to revitalize a moribund Europe by lessons learned in a free land.

The flame of earlier dreams of the former fraternity brothers was rekindled to a new brilliance by this book. Meetings with Duden and more correspondence with american friends followed until, finally, their plans seemed complete, although a specific destination was still lacking. In 1833 the die was cast with the publication of "A Call and Explanation Regarding Large Scale Emigration from Germany to the Free States of North America" which announced the formation of the Giessener Auswanderungsgesellschaft (The Giessen Emigration Society). The response was immediate and gratifying and soon required a second printing. When five hundred "honorable and free-thinking people" had joined the list was

closed. Duden's contention that "a peaceful community, such as the American is able to provide for himself so quickly, could be founded for the purpose of making it the center of culture for the Germans in America just as the British have done" seemed within their grasp.

After fifteen years with "the placid German philistines" Paul and Frederick said goodbye forever to family and friends and all that was familiar and, as Hollywood would have it, sailed into the sunset. Paul led the first group of two hundred to Missouri<sup>rather than Arkansas</sup>---Duden's siren song could have taught new verses to Lorelei---by way of New Orleans. The trip was marked by tragedy starting with the death at sea of his infant son, followed by a cholera epidemic as they headed up the Mississippi. Paul was stricken in Paducah and, while he lay helpless, his two hundred "honorable and free-thinking" settlers disbanded, dividing among themselves a rather disproportionate share of the funds of the venture. They did leave the iron cash box. Three months later when Frederick met the second group in Bremen for embarkation it was found that the ship which they had chartered had not yet returned from America. A somewhat acerbic discussion with the ship brokers resulted in all three hundred being quartered in a warehouse on an island in the Weser and living on ships rations. There being no sign of their ship in four weeks, they chartered the Medora, a good, sea-worthy American ship with almost inedible food, and got to Baltimore in a mere seven weeks. Unaccustomed to the intense heat of summer in Maryland, they immediately hired horses and wagons---one for every two families---for the trek over the Alleghenies to Wheeling. Since his driver was invariably drunk before breaking camp in the morning Frederick had to mount the lead horse and drive the team. On their way down the Ohio by ship from Wheeling they tied up briefly at Cincinnati and there a stranger standing on the wharf introduced himself as Baron von Beck recently come from Missouri. He told

Frederick of his brother-in-law's misfortunes and suggested by-passing St. Louis to go directly to the farm which he, von Beck, had sold Paul next to the Duden farm. This they did. Frederick purchased a neighboring hundred acres and the sixty families he had led scattered about the lower Missouri river area.

Three years later George, his wife having died in child-birth, decided to join his brothers and, to that end, purchased the farm between them. The day before leaving Germany for good he married Charlotte Dorothea Jacobine Fredericka Wilhelmina Georgette. He must have looked like a bigamist in the church registry.

The pen may be mightier than the sword but is no more easily beaten into plough-shares. How did a lawyer, a preacher turned journalist, and a lutheran turned unitarian chaplain, all in their mid or late thirties, tame the wilderness? By abandoning their agreement that half of every day would be spent in physical toil and half in intellectual pursuits. None of the three had any knowledge of or experience in farming. When trees had to be felled and split into fence rails three days' labor, two broken axes, and six blistered hands yielded not a single rail. On the following day the help and teaching of american neighbors, born with frontier skills if not with a knowledge of the classics, saw fifty rails piled up and another test passed by these sylvan neophytes. In the same way amused but generous farmers helped them learn "to plow, to cultivate and reap, to butcher hogs and make sausage, to weave baskets and to make cigars---in short, everything necessary, first to stay alive, and then to improve the quality of life".

Soon after his arrival George, the most mechanical of the three, reasoned that the trees being cut to clear fields presented an economic opportunity. A creek running through these fields was soon dammed to provide power and all

the apparatus for a saw-mill was improvised. George began to dream of replacing log cabins with ranch houses and stocking the weir with fish. Unfortunately the creek diminished to a trickle which suggested seeking profits in other endeavors. Next he turned to a trade not usually included in the theological curriculum: he became an expert gun-smith, making beautiful and highly-prized hunting rifles (of which one is now in the St. Louis Museum). While he was in his workshop anyway, making all his own tools, he invented apple-peelers and corers and other contrivances to ease work in the kitchen and on the farm. To the distress of his practical relatives these were never patented but given to whoever needed them.

A pursuit traditionally held to be more congenial to men of the cloth was viticulture which was undertaken with enthusiasm. When it was discovered that the soil and climate of northeastern Missouri was so suitable. Cuttings were procured from France and the Rhineland and New England, the greatest success coming from grafting european varieties onto concord stock, thus outwitting the local grape louse. This had all the charm of a research project plus the added charm of a modest financial success. Typically, George planted the vines and Frederick wrote the book about it.

Writing soon became Frederick's most compulsive avocation. Whether to protect his privacy or to pique curiosity or to permit writing on a wide variety of subjects, he adopted the pen-name "Far West" and was soon able to match in english his prolixity in german. Articles ranged from translations to short biographies to tracts on moral philosophy and self-improvement, never forgetting continuing education which, in such a raw environment, became a cradle-to-grave necessity.

George's daughter later recalled that she learned to read german at four and english at six after which she was enrolled in the one-room public school a mile away. The lonely walk through the woods required crossing a wide creek



in which boulders had been strewn in place of a bridge. The stones, spaced at a man's pace, with water mocassins swirling "merrily around them" encouraged care in skipping across. School was taught by a cadaverous young man who came on his donkey to spend half of his week in this district. He was almost always suffering from malaria so was either shivering with chills or asleep on the trestle table. This left the youngsters to improvise spelling or arithmetic matches when not engaged in their favorite spectator sport of hog-watching. The hog-wallow was located under the school house and, since nails were scarce, the floorboards were only loosely laid in place. When the boars vied for the favors of a sow the fighting got furious. Planks were suddenly raised high with tremendous grunting and snorting to the vociferous delight of the school children. After school came chores such as picking camomile and elderberry blossoms to be dried for medicine and gathering eggs which seemed most frequently to have been laid under corn-cribs or other sheds where big, black snakes hid waiting to suck the eggs.

On Saturdays the students and most of the alumni of the little school met in Frederick's study, a wattle and daub addition to his log cabin, for a more serious attack on the classics. Latin, Hebrew, and Greek provided the warm-up for science, mathematics and memorizing long passages of Schiller. Shakespeare came later since theatre was recreation.

When their uncle, Paul, took the older boys hunting on Sunday afternoons he usually asked "Doggerel or Hexameter"? Whichever they chose became the only form of communication for the rest of the day.

Sunday morning found the settlers gathering in the same little school house to hear George preach a simple, non-sectarian, german service, "never bound to the letter of orthodox religion". On Sunday evenings the school's backless benches were packed with settlers from miles around to hear George and Frederick alternate in lecturing on religion. After a few years Frederick

decided this exercise was unnecessary as he became convinced that his hearers had been "sufficiently enlightened as to the true character of religion and man's proper place in the world". George's inquiring mind, however, forced him to continue these discourses on the character and source of religion, just as it had previously led him through the by-ways of Transcendentalism to Unitarian beliefs.

Life in a new land was by no means all work and no play. As the families gathered around their evening fires the men regaled them with stories of past adventures or read aloud while the women sewed or knitted. Sometimes the three families got together for an evening of singing accompanied by flute, violin, or concertina. Occasionally passing families heading west in their covered wagons were invited to stop for a rest and they contributed stories or news. When dances were given, the log cabins were cleared out and white sand was strewn on the floor to help the ladies glide and twirl through the quadrilles. One memorable event was a great hunt which George arranged for all the settlers and planters of the area---english-speaking and german-speaking, slave-owners and abolitionists. A proper supper was served with ample cider to loosen tongues for the inevitable speeches (mostly political but well-spiced with humor). After a few hour's rest the men rode off to hunt deer and wild turkeys and other game, not returning until dusk.

Often included on such occasions were educated, aristocratic, germans---barons, counts, engineers, artists---in whom Duden's alluring report of this Eldorado had awakened romantic dreams of returning to nature while perhaps turning a profit in land speculation. Some came for adventure, like Baron von Martels who was challenged to a duel for repulsing a friendly greeting from a mere tailor. He failed to keep that appointment but, as he made his way further west, he did die by the sword. He was scalped. Another cultivated

non-cultivator of noble birth died by the roadside, begging. One who settled down in the vicinity and raised a family was Baron von Bock. He purchased land and laid out the town of Dutzow which he named after his estate in Pomerania. Here was a man so sociable and so accustomed to civilized and elegant surroundings that, before building a house or barn for himself, he built a log club house which he filled with billiard and card tables, a piano and, in Frederick's opinion, "a poorly selected library". With kindly derision Frederick dubbed these gentleman land-owners "Latin Farmers", never guessing that, long after most of them were gone and forgotten, the name would stick to him and his brothers.

Paul and Frederick and George remained the prototypical Latin Farmers. While maintaining and developing their farms and vinyards according to the latest available information, they took an increasing interest in public affairs. Paul undertook the publication of a small newspaper. Frederick kept on writing voluminously for periodical, both local and foreign, while George aired his convictions in his Sunday lectures. They resisted all attempts to involve them in organizing congregations or building churches as freedom from religion was as compelling a reason for emigrating as freedom of religion had been. Schools, on the other hand aroused their keen interest. 'Though all three differed on how to achieve it, the abolition of slavery was their greatest objective and constant concern. They were tireless participants in the "underground railway", and all had sons in the union army. Frederick's writing, naturally, led him to politics in which he finally found his true vocation: In '54 he campaigned for Fremont; in '60 he was a delegate to the Republican convention in Chicago where he worked for the nomination of Lincoln. In '61 he was elected to the Missouri Senate. At age seventy-seven the old activist led a demonstration protesting the nomination of Grant for a third term.

In 1859 Frederick was asked to return to Germany to encourage more emigration to America. After twenty-five years he visited family and looked up old school-mates who received him with conflicting emotions, convinced as they were that "order is the first obligation of citizenship" and knowing that Authority was looking over their shoulder. He found no reason to extend his visit. George's return after his second wife died leaving him to bring up three children, was even shorter but more productive. In 1848, a year of turmoil and ferment, red carpets were not being rolled out for returning liberals. In three days he found, courted, and married a minister's daughter, added the words "and wife" to his passport and immediately returned. So delighted was she with the free air and open spaces of what was still considered "the west" that she imported her two sisters at once.

Paul died of typhoid after only ten years in the new world. George died at seventy-seven just as he was fulfilling a life-long ambition to learn painting. Frederick died at eighty-two in his favorite orchard, pruning-shears in hand. In spite of the difficulties of emigration, the dispersion of the "honorable and free-thinking" colonists, the difficulty of learning new skills and new habits of life to survive on the frontier, none of the three Latin Farmers ever had the slightest doubt of the success of their venture. They had chosen freedom instead of security and they had no regrets.

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