

OLD FARM HOUSE

SETTLED BY MARTIN WIELAND

DESSAU

1854

Martin Wieland was born in Dessau, Germany, May 6, 1825. In 1854, at the age of twenty nine he emigrated to America, accompanied by Mr. Andrew Krueger and Mr. Gottlieb Schwarzkopf. They landed in Galveston and came directly to Travis County, where they settled at a point about twelve miles north of Austin. Later they named this community Dessau in memory of their homeland.

I remember that Mr. Martin Wieland, Jr. told me his father came to this country to get away from a harsh step-father. During the Civil War he wrote his Mother that he was hauling cotton to Mexico in two ox-wagons. His Step-father answered with the accusation that he was sure Martin didn't have one yoke of oxen, much less two. From that time on Martin did not communicate with his German family.

These three new comers lived in improvised quarters until each had built his one room. Mr. Krueger built his about a mile north of the Herman Krueger farm on the west side of Cameron Road. The Schwarzkopf room is now a part of the R. L. Smith home, and the Wieland room is the pride and joy of Old House Farm.

Martin Wieland lived in a tent while his room was under construction. The three friends helped one another. While the mortar was drying between the rocks in Martin's walls, he'd lend the other two a hand. It seems they had other help occasionally, too.

The three rooms were almost identical. Like the other two, Martin built his of nearby fieldstone plastered over. The room was 18 by 20 feet; the walls, about 18 inches thick. There were only one door with old rim lock and one window, both on the south side. Fewer openings meant to Mr. Wieland a stronger wall and greater protection. A capacious fireplace with stone hearth cooked his food and kept him warm. Slightly over 11 feet above the floor ten large cedar beams, cut from trees on Bull Creek, reached from wall to wall with no attic floor above. It is said that Martin kept his hay on these beams.

In the west wall on both sides of the chimney are port holes, so placed that one could straddle a beam and handle a gun. The local Indians camped on Walnut Creek were friendly, but the outlaws were troublesome. According to Mr. Albert Neans, as many as five families spent the night in the Wieland room when the Indians from Indian Territory went to the

Coast for the winter and back North in the spring. And the outlaws and hostile Indians shot back at this fortress-room. The west outside wall is marked with nearly a hundred bullet holes, which have been plastered over. The plaster is now a different color from the original plaster of the wall.

Martin Wieland apparently started the construction of this first room shortly after his arrival in 1854 or perhaps early in 1855.

By 1873 Martin must have prospered for he added two large rooms on the East, a kitchen on the North, a cellar under the North-east room and a bedroom and floored attic upstairs. The attic, over the original room, was floored with 2 x 12 boards resting on the cedar beams. After his marriage Mrs. Wieland complained of the dust drifting down between the attic floor boards to the room beneath. It was at this time that he covered those beautiful beams with a beaded Victorian ceiling board, which he painted white. One rainy afternoon while the present owners were working in the original room, Mr. Martin Wieland, Jr. told them that his mother said there were large cedar beams behind that ceiling board. A step ladder materialized quickly, a piece of ceiling board was

stripped off, and there in all its pristine glory plus a coat of whitewash was a beam.

All of this addition was built of cut-stone hauled by oxen from either Cedar Park or Jollyville. A limestone corner block on the south wall attests to the builder and date as follows:

Martin Wieland

1873

Joseph Rohrmiller

Builder

All nails used in these early rooms and in the out houses were the old cut square nails.

Mr. Rohrmiller was not only a builder but an artist. Witness the cozy, low-ceiling kitchen with rock hearth all across the west side, the chair rails in all the rooms, the alter-like simplicity of the plastered mantel in the old room, the beautiful wooden mantel in the southeast bed room, the gallery, with its hand-hewn cedar posts and cedar flooring which ran all the way across the south side, and the excellent proportions of the whole exterior, which caused Wayman Adams, the artist, to say when he first glimpsed the east side, "How beautiful! The house grows out of the hill."

Martin had a comfortable, beautiful home to offer his bride when on March 28, 1877 he married Mrs. Lou Blumentritt, nee Caroline Bastian, a widow with two children, Fritz and Johanna.

In 1911 Martin again enlarged the house by adding a wooden room at the southwest corner of the original room and swinging the porch around to follow the east side of the new room. Mr. Rohrmiller must either have been dead or not consulted by the carpenter for this addition is not in keeping with the fancily turned Victorian posts of that part of the gallery have been replaced with plain cedar. Only one of the hand-hewn posts of the 1873 gallery is left.

Just north of the house the original barn, presumably of logs with rock floor, burned in 1894. Minnie Wieland (Nehring), then a young lady, frantically pumped water from the underground rain water cistern at the corner of the kitchen until the fire singed her eye brows and hair, but water poured on the roof helped to save the house.

Martin Wieland bought land as he could accumulate the money. His first purchase was eleven acres, on which the house now stands. During the day he cut

hay. At night he took it by ox cart to sell to the Army, quartered in Austin where the State Hospital is now. His oxen knew the way so he got his night's sleep on top of the hay. Home again, he cut more hay and bought more land, all of which he fenced with cedar rails brought from the hills. On one of these trips home with rails Martin fell under the wagon, one wheel of which ran over him, breaking several ribs and his hip. He recovered without benefit of doctors or traction, but he limped the rest of his days.

As his money accumulated, Martin also built sheds, barns, etc. In addition to the barn that burned, one just west of the house, too far gone for restoration, was torn down by the present owners. Surviving are the old mule barn, small shed and room, privy, blacksmith shop, smoke house, and large barn east of the house, all showing the pleasing lines of Martin's good taste.

West of the blacksmith shop was a large pig pen enclosed with a cedar stockade fence. Mr. Martin Wieland, Jr. came by one day, just as a part of that fence was being torn down to include the area in the house yard. " You not taking down that fence, "

he begged. " Why there have been pigs in that pen for over ninety years. " Most of the fence is still there but no pigs.

About 50 years ago an iron cannon ball was found on little Harris Creek, which runs through the farm. Around 1939 Warren Wieland, son of Martin Jr. and Richard Carlson found a mastodon tooth on the south side of this same creek. The place is covered with small fossils.

No history of this farm is complete without the tragic story of neighbor Schwarzkopf, who plied his trowel with such high hopes both at his room and Martin's. He had used blasting powder gotten from the Army to blast out rocks in his construction work. In some way the powder got wet and, when it became dry, it exploded, killing Mr. Schwarzkopf. He had no relatives in this country. So when Mr. Embre Warren Smith bought the place, he had to send the papers to Germany for signatures of his heirs, Mr. Schwarzkopf* was buried in the field west of the Smith house.

* The deed from Germany records the name of Gottlieb Schwarzkopf.

NOTE. Information has been graciously provided by decendants and friends of the Wieland family. Among these being Mr. and Mrs. Martin Wieland, Jr., Mr. Henry Wieland, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Schoen, Mr. and Mrs. Bruno Schoen, Mr. Albert Neans, Mr. and Mrs. Clemens Wieland, Mrs. Alma Fleischer, Mrs. Selma Nauert, Miss Etta B. Smith, Miss Ella Smith, and Mrs. Ruth Barran.

REMINISCENCES

of Martin Wieland, Jr.

As Told to Walter E. Long

Martin Wieland was a very religious man. He join his neighbors in prayer meetings, first at one home, then at another until a Lutheran pastor was engaged to preach where the little Dessau church is now. He let nothing keep him from attending church.

He honored the " Lord's Prayer " all the way through and so brought his religion into his every day life. When he had wheat threshed, he stood right there to see that no one stepped on a grain of wheat, for that would be wrong.

He always stood on the side of the right. He would not hurt anybody's feelings in any way. He raised his wife's two children by her first husband as, his own, but he would not adopt them and change their name to Wieland because changing their name to Wieland would take away honor due their father. So they remained Blumentritt, although when he passed away they were treated equally with his five children.

Martin did not believe in banks. He sold feed, cattle, and horses. One day he turned over \$500.00 to his wife and told her to put it up in the room over the cellar as you go upstairs. Now he kept his nails

and other things here. She dropped the money into a keg of nails. Some one came along and poured more nails into the keg. A year or later, when he wanted to use some of that money, it was gone. He said he would forgive the thieves, that, if they needed money so bad, he hoped they used it in a good way. A long time afterwards when nails were needed for building something, the nails were dumped out, and with the nails came the \$500.00. Then Martin prayed the Good Lord to forgive him for accusing someone of taking it.

After Martin Wieland's death, Grandma Wieland sold some cotton in Round Rock. Martin, Jr. took it over for her in wagon, while she drove in her buggy. There was a tall colored man standing by when the bank paid her for the cotton, and she put the money in her purse. Martin, Jr. told his mother, " You shouldn't put that money in your purse with that man watching you. "

That night Grandma was churning in the kitchen, her daughter Alma was ironing, and Henry, much younger than Martin, Jr. was asleep. Suddenly there was a shot. Alma though she saw the bullet fly past her. It didn't take them long to get Henry out of bed.

" That negro is coming after my money, " Grandma said. She grabbed her purse, and they ran down to

Dessau Store crawling through barb wire fences on the way. A telephone call to Austin brought the sheriff and blood hounds, but they didn't find any thief.

Henry had blood on his forehead from crawling through the fence. The men said, " Oh you got shot! " And Henry said No, he didn't get shot.

Grandma had bought a gallon jug of molasses in Round Rock, shaken it up on the drive home, set it in the hot kitchen, and after a little while, out popped the stopper, landing by the cellar door. That was the shot.