

Christian Fredrich Bergmann

13 April 1817 – 24 November 1888

By John H. Benedict

ORIGIN

Christian Friedrich Bergmann was born on 13 April 1817 in Ebersbach, Germany, a small village near Dresden, which was in the Kingdom of Saxony at that time. Today it is part of united Germany. I believe he grew up in this village with his siblings, mother, father, and relatives. Christian was the oldest son of Johann Christoph Bergmann, a farmer, as recorded in Ebersbach Lutheran Community documents. Just before his 25 birthday he married Johanna Christiane Luise (or Louise) Dressler on 6 April 1842. In the marriage records Johanna was listed as the only daughter of Christian Friedrich Dressler, a citizen and weaver of Oberdorf, Germany. Christian was also listed as a weaver in Oberdorf. You can guess how they may have met, perhaps thru her father? Johanna was born on 19 December 1817 in Saxony, Germany. They had three sons recorded as born in Ebersbach, Christian Friedrich, Jr., Karl (or Carl or Charles) Heinrich, and Christoph Wilhelm. We can assume the Christian Sr. and Johann family were living in Ebersbach after their marriage, because their children were born and baptized there based on the Lutheran Community records for Ebersbach.

TRAVEL TO TEXAS

Christian Bergmann and his family emigrated to Texas on 10 August 1854, based on notes on their birth certificate records. At this time Christian was 37, his wife was 36, and his three sons, Christian Jr., Karl, and Christoph, were 12, 9, and 5 years old, respectively. As far as I can determine they left all other family in Germany. They first traveled overland to the port city of Bremerhaven, Germany where they boarded the brig Minna, which left Bremerhaven on 19 August 1854 and sailed to Galveston, Texas. Interestingly, the childless captain of the Minna took a great liking to the Bergmann's youngest son, Christoph, and offered to buy him! Of course, Christian and Johanna would not sell him.



*Bergmann Estate in Ebersbach, Saxony Germany, where Christian Friederich Sr. grew up, circa 1870's.
Photo courtesy of Helga Mittrach.*

When the ship arrived in Galveston, the passengers could not disembark due to an outbreak of Yellow Fever, so the Bergmann family transferred to a steamer bound for Indianola, Texas, arriving there 6 November 1854. From there they traveled overland, on a wagon pulled by 5 mules finally arriving at their destination, San Antonio, Texas on 18 November 1854. They traveled with other Germans during the entire journey, as 1854 was one of the greatest years in history for German emigration to America. Two other ships sailed from Bremerhaven with German emigrants two weeks after theirs and arrived in Galveston the same day as the Minna with the Bergmann family. San Antonio had a large German emigrant population in 1854.

PROFILE

In San Antonio the Bergmann family stayed with the Opitz from Lobau, Germany until they found a place to rent. Christian worked odd jobs such as mowing prairie hay, slaughtering pigs, grafting trees, and laying brick while his wife worked as a laundress, doing washing and ironing. Their sons attended school at a monastery and the oldest worked on a farm. A Lutheran priest arrived so they could again attend protestant church services. In December 1856 Christian purchased 320 acres on land on the Guadalupe River just east of what is now in the Waterstone Subdivision on the east side of FM 3351 and the northside of Edge Falls Road. The crossing of



*Christian Friederich Bergmann Sr.
Courtesy of Patrick Heath Public
Library, Dietert Historic Archives,
Boerne, Texas*



*Johanna Louise (Luise)
Bergmann. Courtesy of Patrick
Heath Public Library, Dietert
Historic Archives, Boerne,
Texas.*

the Guadalupe River at the south east corner of their property became known as the "Bergmann Crossing."

In the 1850's and 60's San Antonio was a dangerous frontier town where shootings and stabbings were common. Christian states in a letter to his father (3 Dec. 1856), "*For here a human life does not count more than the life of a dog in Germany.... especially if it concerns the lost life of a German or Irishman.*" Christian and his family wrote many letters to their friends and family in Germany and shared these hardships and successes. Seventeen of the letters have been translated and made available to the public (See Ruth Cape).

In a letter to his grandfather, 12 June 1857, Christian tells of a gang of robbers in San Antonio and how they were dealt with *“A secret society formed whose members go after them and wherever they find any of the gang members they hang them right away from a tree or shoot them to death, like they did in mid-May. Back then, they were shot to death in the street, among them a gang leader. The 11th of this month, 11 men were hanged, 7 from a tree [in the city?] and 3 from a tree a few miles from the city, and one, who admitted to everything, from a tree right outside of the city.”*

By 1858 the Bergmann family had moved and was living on their new homestead on the Guadalupe River. There were two houses and some stone fence on the property when Christian purchased it. He built a new house sometime during the Civil War, and by 1866, Christian had finished it and they had moved in. It was a simple log and stone cabin.

The new home was laid out as a traditional dog trot cabin. Part of the foundation can still be seen on a bluff above the Guadalupe River. The family was very hard work, farming and ranching are difficult occupations especially with hand equipment and animal powered machinery. The vagaries of weather such as freezes and droughts, animal diseases and crop pests, at times greatly reduced their success in these endeavors. They raised chickens, ducks, geese, hogs, sheep, cattle, oxen, and horses; and grew vegetables, peaches, tobacco, corn, grain, and cotton. To raise extra money Christian made cedar shingles which he sold along with cedar posts in San Antonio. Christian tells in a letter to his family in Germany, that he had built a shingle splitting machine for \$94 dollars and made 16,000 shingles to sell. He guessed they were worth about \$110. However, before the shingles could be sold it rain for 4 days, causing the Guadalupe river to rise 53 feet and sweep away all the shingles and the machine. The flood also swept away perhaps 2,000 fence posts, the water reached his kitchen and terrified his wife, and a large cypress tree floating down river destroyed his stone smoke house.

Christian was a strong supporter of the Union during the Civil War, hiding soldiers on his property who had deserted the Confederate Army, many of whom were coerced sons of German families. Surprisingly, Christian's oldest son claimed confederate army service in the 1910 US Census, and his son Karl's obituary states *“that during the civil war he served for and held faith with the South”* (see Frank Wilson Kiel) although he was “conscripted.” Karl was wounded three times. Frequently sons of German families joined the Confederate Army to reduce persecution of their families for supporting the Union. Despite their possible differences, the family worked together farming and ranching all their lives.

Christian Sr. was a thoughtful person and provided leadership in his German community, serving as a Kendall County Commissioner from 5 July 1869 to 8 May 1870. His name is on many legal documents like wills and marriages licenses. He was also a member of the local Stock Raising Club that began about 1874, called the Germania Farmer Verein in about 1875, and included members from the nearby Anhalt Community just a few miles east of his farm in Comal County. Initially the Farmer Verein met in homes of the members including the Christian Bergmann home, then in about 1879 a meeting place was built that became the Farmer Hall and also the Anhalt Dance Hall—it became one of the larger dance halls in Texas. It is still used today and has a Texas Historical Commission, Historic Marker. Christian Sr., C.F. Jr, and Christoph, were founding members of this Stock Raising Club, included among the original 36 charter members in 1875, and among the 50 charter members of the renamed and reorganized Germania Farmer Verein in 1976. In the first organization, Christian Sr. was elected 1st Vice-

President, and C.F. Jr. was on the committee to write the Constitution for the reorganized Verein, which was written and adopted on the same day, 6 June 1876. In March of that year Christian Sr. was named 2nd Vice-President and C.F. Jr. was named to the Finance committee. In February of 1877, C.F. Jr. became the Treasurer. The most serious issues the Verein dealt with in the 1870's were cattle rustling, branding, and providing for needy widows and children in the community.

Christian Bergman Sr. died on 24 November 1888, at the age of 71. His wife died almost 14 years later on 17 January 1902. The US Census records list Johanna as living on the Bergmann homestead in 1900. Her son, Christian Friederich Jr. is also on the old family homestead living with his family. Their home is just a short walk away from Johanna's home. In fact, her son's home is still standing and currently occupied. It has had a few additions. On 2 December 1888 the Germania Farmer Verein wrote a wonderful testimonial to Christian Sr. character, "We have lost in him [Christian F. Bergmann Sr.] a valued member, a true friend and an open, honest character. We are deeply saddened by the loss and will faithfully keep alive his memory." His grave and tombstone are located on a high bluff above the Guadalupe River on his beloved homestead. His wife has her tombstone next to his. The cemetery is just a few hundred steps down river from their former home. Remnants of their home's foundation and some of the old stone walls and spring house still can be seen in the subdivision.

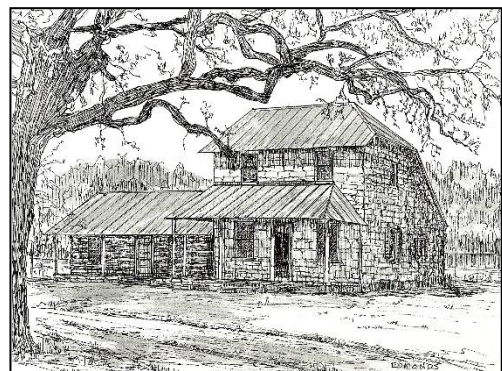


Headstones of Christian Friederich Bergmann Sr. and his wife Johanna Luise Bergmann located on the old Bergmann homestead, now Waterstone on the Guadalupe, Subdivision. Photo circa 2019, courtesy of the author.

CHILDREN OF CHRISTIAN FREDRICH BERGMANN AND JOHANNA CHRISTIANE LUISE DRESSLER

Christian Friedrich Bergmann Jr., b. 20 August 1842, Ebersbach, Saxony, Germany, m. 25 December 1865, Comal County, TX, to Johanna Carolina Menzel, b. 14 April 1846, Germany. Christian died 15 June 1919, Kendall County, TX. Johanna died 29 December 1931, in Boerne, Kendall County TX. Christian Jr. inherited his father's ranch and over time purchased adjoining property, increasing the Bergmann ranch to over 1300 acres, occupying most of what is today the Waterstone Subdivision.

Karl (Carl or Charles) Heinrich Bergmann, b. 19 September 1845, Ebersbach, Saxony, Germany, m. married 26 May 1867, Comfort, Kendall County, TX, to Emilie "Emma" Schladoer, b. 11 July 1846, Prussia, d.



Drawing of the Christian Friederich Bergmann Jr. home circa 1970. The log cabin portion was built circa 1871, the stone portion later. Drawing courtesy of Bettie Edmonds.

11 April 1880 in Comfort, Kendall County, TX. Karl m. again on 4 December 1881, Boerne, Kendall County, TX, to Pauline Vogt, b. 30 November 1836, Boerne, Kendall County, TX. Karl died 21 November 1938, in Boerne, Kendall County, TX. His second wife, Pauline, died 27 January 1934, in Boerne Kendall County, TX.

Christoph Wilhelm Bergmann, b. 7 April 1849, Ebersbach, Saxony, Germany, m. 3 September 1871 in Boerne, Kendall County, TX, to Anna Marie Reinhard, b. 4 April 1852, New Braunfels, Comal County, TX. Christoph died 18 May 1917, in Comfort, Kendall County, TX. Anna died 17 October 1911, in Boerne, Kendall County, TX.

SOURCES

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