

Letter from Georg Carl Willrich to his Daughter

April 15 - 1850.

Beloved Children -

I was mighty pleased over the arrival of the little Granddaughter, whom we all love dearly, and though we cannot see her little face with our own eyes, we can make a mental picture of her looks and, according to the individual taste of each one of us, think she's absolutely adorable.

As far as we are concerned, we have had to fight many hardships and much distress during the past year. These, however, have all been happily overcome and we now look forward to better times with great confidence, especially as we are all well and vigorous and delight in country life and the work it brings with it.

Carl is earning many a nice dollar with his freight driving, and I plant tobacco and grow young fruit trees and excellent grapevines, the cuttings of which sell well here and bring a very good price. Last summer my grapes were exceedingly good (my first crop), and I acquired quite a reputation and find it impossible to fill all the orders for this fall for cuttings I made from my vines last spring, having already sold all of them, about 500, in advance, for 25¢ apiece. This past spring I have increased my old grapevines, 12 of them, to 50 - and intend to continue doing so from year to year, so as to have more and more grapevine wood from which to make new cuttings, and by next year I'll be able to dispose of several thousand cuttings.

At the same time I will bear in mind to plant more and more grapevines and then if I have more grapes than I can sell in the neighboring little town of La Grange, I'll start making wine, for I own a fine large cellar in which I can easily store at least 50 hogshead of wine.

By the middle of March of this year my old grapevines were in full bloom and I hope again to harvest very fine and considerably more grapes than last year. So far I am the only one in these parts, i.e. within several miles in circumference, who owns European vines of excellent quality. I have 6 different kinds, of which 3 are of especially good quality, the cuttings of which I am reserving for myself to try and enlarge my own grape arbors. The other vines also bear very good grapes, at least far better than those you have, and only future years will show which kind will produce the best wine.

At present I'm busy planting tobacco, which grows so abundant here that you can cut it 3 or 4 times. Now that I have the genuine Havana seed I shall raise an excellent tobacco without a doubt, and next Fall I'll send a roll of several 100 lbs. to you, my dear August, because I know you enjoy smoking a pipe of good tobacco, and when your dear Gretchen fills a pipe with this tobacco she will, in a way, be touching her father's hand, for each and every one of the tobacco leaves went through his.

The Havana tobacco, by the way, has the peculiarity of not being good to smoke

during the first year, for it is very strong. However, after storing it for furthering maturing, it is excellent. If you could suggest a house in Bremen or Hamburg where I can send the tobacco, that would please me very much; otherwise I'll leave it to the shipper in Galveston to see that it reaches you.

Perhaps I shall also send you, if I can possibly lay hands on them, some acorns to plant, which grow in Oregon. These oak trees, which furnish wonderful building lumber, grow to an enormous height and circumference and bear acorns, the size of a small hen egg and are excellent for fattening of hogs. These trees thrive well in a cold climate, but for luxuriant growth want good soil, moist vegetable meadow ground, the kind you have in your area.

While I'm sitting here writing, little Otto is standing at his little sister Louise's cradle, rocking it; though with some resentment. She's a darling little child, so bright and plump and a joy to all of us. She's the plaything of the entire family and goes from arm to arm. Even Carl has taken a great fancy to her and when he's with us lets her dance in his arms several times during the day and shows her our tall oak trees and the blossoms on the peach trees - some of which already have peaches the size of a walnut - over which the little one expresses lively astonishment by clapping her hands and kicking her little feet.

Little Otto is growing and developing marvelously and he and his sister Anna are quite a help in the household. When the latter rides to the mill, two English miles away, Otto accompanies her, sitting in back of his sister on the flour and meal sacks, quite sure he is doing so for her protection.

Little Anna is a wonderful and quite a wild little horsewoman, galloping on her pony, a very tame and well trained horse, across hill and dale and over stumps and boulders without an escort, so that we can send her several miles in any direction on errands and to deliver messages, without the least concern or worry on our part. She assists her mother in the kitchen and helps me in the garden, and altogether is a very capable, bright and industrious child.

Little Otto on the other hand, though also a good and most adorable youngster, so far has shown little desire for physical labor when given a job to do, although for his years he shows remarkable skill and untiring eagerness in cultivating a small plot in our garden given him to till all by himself. However, he insists upon doing it his own way absolutely, which leads me to believe that republican principles, the love for freedom, have already taken root in him and he seemingly is determined to live his own way and doesn't intend to take orders given by others.

As for the education of our children, that has, until recently, been a source of great anxiety and concern, but this also, though incidentally just within the past few days, has been removed. On the 9th of this month (April 1850) the settlement here organized a church-school council. The reason for this was that an Evangelical and Lutheran Congregation, long in existence in Lexington, Carolina, has recently decided to take an interest in their fellow-believers scattered all over Texas. For this purpose it has sent several young clergymen, who have received their education in the Carolina seminary, to Texas to begin establishing Lutheran congregations in schools for the children. One of these Missionaries was here a few days ago, and with his assistance a school board was formed, the 2nd Parish school board here in Texas.

In the autumn of this year we are going to build a schoolhouse, and then, some

time later, a church. Until the latter will be completed several years may go by, and so divine services on Sunday no doubt will be held in our home, because of its being the roomiest in the entire settlement.

After being relieved of this chief concern, over which we'd been prone to worry a great deal, we now are leading quite a happy and contented life, so that we no longer mind the many privations formerly unknown to us.

By next year our horned cattle stock will have increased to 100 head; then I can, by the breeding of 30 head, yearly sell about 50, steers and cows of from 4 to 5 years, at the local price of \$10.00 per head. As the breeding increases from year to year, I will have more cattle to take to the markets, and after that we can surround ourselves with more comforts and also do more for the children.

As we aren't sure whether my brother-in-law Otto is still in Panow, we have enclosed a letter to him with yours; please see to it, my dear August, that it reaches him promptly. We have asked him, in our letter, to come and at the same time bring our little Julius to us. Assist them in their voyage to Texas as much as you possibly can and we will gladly reimburse you.

And now farewell, dear children. May the Heavenly Father keep and protect you, and remember lovingly

Your distant old father,
George Willrich

Remember us, please, to all our relatives and friends.

Translation of letter written in 1850 by our Grandfather, Georg Willrich, at Mt. Eliza, Bluff, Fayette County, Texas, to his daughter Gretchen and her husband, August Keuffel, in Lüneburg, Germany. Minnie Groos Wilkens, July 1952.