

# ENCHANTED ROCK

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 5

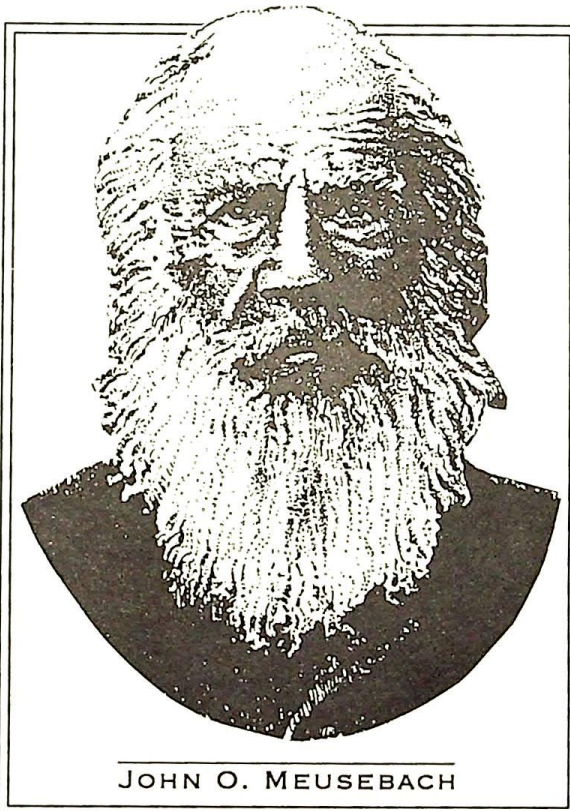
OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1994

## THE NEW PROMISED LAND

*There have been times when desperate people in hopeless situations were rescued by someone who arrives on the scene with the perfect combination of character, ability, and dedication. Such was the fortune of the German immigrants in Texas during the 1840's.*

Baron Otfried Hans Freiherr von Meusebach relinquished his hereditary title when he left Germany en route to Texas. When he arrived in his new homeland in May 1845 he insisted on being known simply as John O. Meusebach. At the age of thirty-three, having left family, friends, and title behind, he was to assume the almost impossible responsibility of commissioner general for the *Mainzer Adelsverein*, the Society for the Protection of German Immigrants in Texas.

Before leaving Germany Meusebach had devoted several years of study to the possibility of immigration, particularly to Texas. Of all materials written about the area, *Texas: the Rise, Progress, and Prospects of the Republic of Texas (1841)*, by William Kennedy, British consul in Galveston was the most influential on Meusebach and the Society as well. Of particular interest to the Society was Kennedy's remarks on the existence of abandoned Spanish silver mines along the Texas frontier. Remarking on the book, Irene Marschall King, granddaughter of Meusebach, wrote in *John O. Meusebach: German Colonizer in Texas (1967)*: "As an



JOHN O. MEUSEBACH

official Kennedy described places with exactitude and authority. The very name of one landmark, Enchanted Rock, added fascination the beckoning land. Meusebach hoped to probe for a scientific explanation of the mysterious sounds that were said to issue at times from the 640 acres of solid granite. He marveled that such an immense outcropping of mountainous rock was located in an area bearing the name "Llano," the Spanish word for "plain." He wanted to know the reason for this contradiction."

The society was founded in March of the previous year by a group of German noblemen advocating immigration to Texas as a solution to the problems of political unrest

and overpopulation facing Germany. The organization soon fell victim to the unscrupulous Texan, Henry Francis Fisher, when it purchased, sight-unseen, an interest in the Fisher-Miller land grant. Located between the Llano and San Saba rivers, the 4-million-acre grant was in the very heartland of the legendary lost Spanish mines.

Fisher knew that the grant was too far from the coast and inhabited by too many Comanche to be  
*See: The New Promised Land, page 8*

# ON SACRED GROUND

Did the Indians really fear Enchanted Rock?

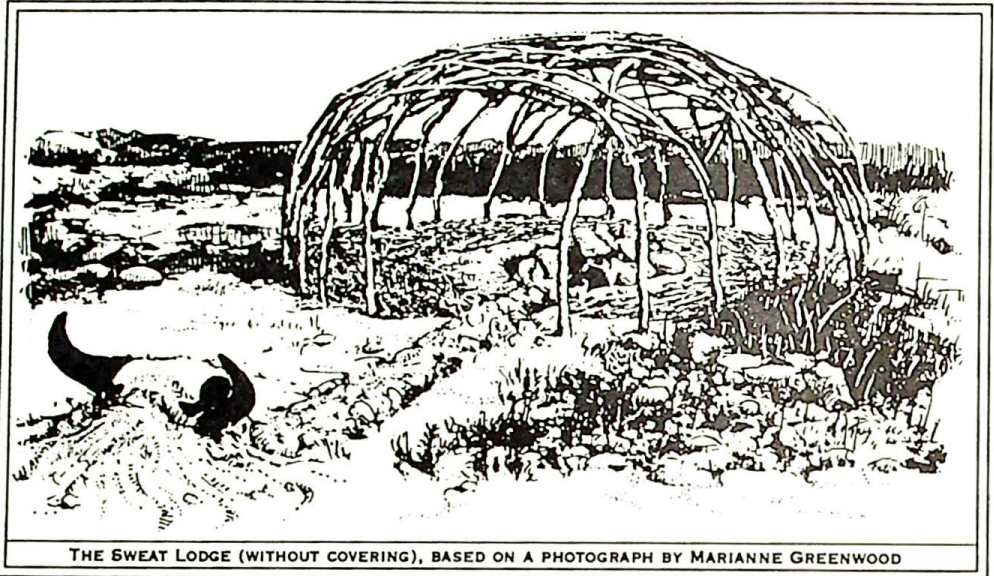
If not, how do we explain the many stories handed down to us making such claims?

**O**f all the stories currently in print regarding Enchanted Rock, the most often repeated goes something like this: "The Indians feared Enchanted Rock and the evil spirits which they believed dwelled there. Consequently, early settlers frequently found safety and refuge on its summit from the pursuit of Indians."

These stories, which didn't appear in print until the 1900's, have been repeated so often they are accepted by newspaper and magazine editors today without question. However, such notions are far from the truth and reveal, if nothing else, a widespread ignorance regarding the traditional beliefs of Native Americans. Enchanted Rock was considered sacred ground among the Indians of Texas. All of the early historical accounts from the Spanish of the 1700s and the Texans of the 1800s have established this fact. None of those accounts mention "evil spirits."

According to the Apache, the Giver of Life saw the lives of The People were in disarray and the social fabric degenerating, so He sent the Gan spirits from the four corners of the Earth to the summit of the sacred mountain to teach The People a better way to live. The Kiowa believed that the Great Spirit sent Gahe, the spirit of the mountain, to give guidance and consolation to their people; Gahe, they believe, lives forever in the mountain's caves. The Comanche, and other Plains tribes would go to the summit of the sacred mountain seeking a vision from the Great Spirit to inspire and teach them the deeper secrets of their path in life. None of these traditions refer to evil spirits on the sacred mountain.

What we do find, that speaks directly to the Indian's reluctance to pursue the early pioneers to the summit of Enchanted Rock is the tradition of the sweat lodge ceremony. Believed by some to be the most ancient of all Indian rites it employs the universal elements of earth, air, fire, and water. This ritual, it should be understood, precedes both the Gan ceremony and the vision quest.



THE SWEAT LODGE (WITHOUT COVERING), BASED ON A PHOTOGRAPH BY MARIANNE GREENWOOD

The basic structure of the sweat lodge is simple: a small dome is built of willow branches; in the center of the lodge frame a pit is dug which will later hold the heated rocks for the ceremony. The dirt from the pit is used to make a path from the entrance (which faces East or West depending on

On the earthen floor covered with sage—the sacred herb—the participants sit around the metaphorical center of the universe. With prayer and song they endure discomfort, often in the extreme, suffering for their faith. In total darkness time and space dissolve.

tradition) to a mound or altar at the end of the path. Just beyond that a firepit is constructed which will heat the rocks. The dome is covered with hides, tarps, or any material which will keep the lodge airtight. A covering for the entrance is made from the same material. Once the stones are heated the participants enter the lodge, either naked or with loincloths. The stones are brought in, a few at a time. Water is poured over the stones and the resulting steam creates the sweat bath which, on the physical level,

removes toxins from the body. If nothing else, Western traditions can accept this aspect of the ritual as fact.

Anyone familiar with the tradition may cringe at this oversimplification. It can be said without exaggeration that Native Americans are profoundly spiritual—even their ceremonies are preceded with ceremonies. Actually, every aspect of the sweat lodge ritual, beginning with the construction of the lodge involves specific prayers, a specified number of willow branches, rocks, and so fourth, all symbolically signifying certain aspects of their ancient traditions. Even the fire to heat the rocks is traditionally constructed with a given number of logs placed in precise alignment to the cardinal directions. Like many Indian rituals, what seems very simple, or even simplistic, is actually profoundly rich in metaphor and meaning. Every act, every object involved in the ceremony, creates an inner-connected web between form and function, physical and metaphysical, to produce a spiritual transformation in the individual.

On the earthen floor covered with sage—the sacred herb—the participants sit around the metaphorical center of the universe. With prayer and song they endure discomfort, often in the extreme, suffering for their faith. In total darkness time and space dissolve. Then, at a point which sometimes seems just this side of eternity, they emerge from the lodge. Weak and wobbly from the experience, crawling like precocious newborns from the womb of mother earth, they emerge, cleansed. Through this ceremony that is at once an act of purification and absolution, the participants stand at the threshold between spirit and matter. Only then are they worthy to ascend the heights to the summit of the sacred mountain. IK

Readers wishing to learn more specific details of the ceremony and its deeper meaning should read *The Sacred Pipe, Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux*, recorded and edited by Joseph Epes Brown (Penguin Books) and *Lame Deer Seeker of Visions* by John Fire/Lame Deer and Richard Erdoes (Simon and Schuster). Also recommended is the article, "The Indian Sweat," written by Andrew Weil, M.D. with photographs by Marianne Greenwood, and published in *American West* magazine, March/April 1982.



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# No Room at the En(chanted Rock)?

## Entertain Other Possibilities:

Camping at Enchanted Rock is a problem for spontaneous people. With campsites filling up months in advance virtually every weekend of the year, you need to plan ahead and pray for suitable weather. If you live in the moment you'll be left out. As the old saying goes: "Fools rush in and get the best seats," or, in this case, campsites.

Well, laid-back of the world, listen up. We can't do anything about the weather but, Crabapple Crossing has just completed their "improvements" and are open for business. In addition to ten shaded campsites along Crabapple Creek with tent pads, picnic tables and fire rings they also have, for the more comfort-minded, ten RV sites with water and electric hook-ups. Pop-up tents and vans are always welcome. Backpackers should know there is no remote camping.

Their facilities also include a modern bath house and restrooms for men and women, complete with hot showers. For those so inclined, they have horseshoe and washer pitching. And just in case you start suffering TV withdrawal they have one inside the store.

Crabapple Crossing, operated by Donna and Ricky Bauman, has been in business for over three years, and just recently expanded their store to include an air-conditioned dining area and shaded patios. Bob and Gini Christian went in partnership with the Bauman's to add the RV park and bath house. For reservations phone: 915/247-4260.

**If you live in the moment you'll be left out. As the old saying goes: "Fools rush in and get the best seats," or in this case, campsites.**

Without a doubt, the campsites will be filling up every weekend before long so... I guess that puts the laid-back-living-in-the-moment folks back

where we started. Of course, with a little resourcefulness they could try calling the KOA camp near Fredericksburg for campsites (210/997-4796), or contact the Dabbs Railroad Hotel in Llano. They're located on the Llano River and permit tent camping there too. Call 915/247-7905 for reservations.

Maybe this next part shouldn't appear in print. 'Cause once a well-kept secret gets out it usually isn't worth keeping after that. But, Robinson City Park in Llano is an excellent riverfront site for RV and tent camping. For further details phone 915/247-5572. While you're in Llano, or if you're just driving through, the Llano Museum is well worth the visit. It's near the north side of the Llano River bridge.

RV camping in the area includes Crabapple Crossing, the KOA camp mentioned above, plus Oakwood RV Park in Fredericksburg, 210/997-9817; and the Roadrunner RV Park in Johnson City, 210/868-7449.

While you're driving around tune in to KFAN Radio, that's 107.9 FM. Give it a listen. We bet you'll like what you hear.

Crabapple Crossing is sponsoring a free talk on the history and legends of Enchanted Rock by Ira Kennedy on Saturday, November 12 at 6 p.m.

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## FROM THE EDITOR

**W**ith this issue and the next we will be following the remarkable exploits of John O. Meusebach, founder of Fredericksburg and the only man in Texas to have successfully signed a lasting treaty of peace with the Comanche—or any other tribe. Those issues will complete Volume One and our first year of publication.

A limited edition of 50 signed and numbered prints (8"x10") featuring the cover art of John O. Meusebach by Ira Kennedy is available from the newsletter. Send \$25 and you will receive your print, postpaid, within seven days. Printed on off-white paper the portrait is perfect for home, office or bed-and-breakfast.

For readers new to this publication, the cover stories are from this editor's previously unpublished, *Illustrated History of Enchanted Rock*. Although the focus of the history is on the Rock, the scope of the history and the newsletter is, like Enchanted Rock's ecosystem, area-wide.

Beginning with the next issue Gail McClanahan-Billings will join our staff as a contributing editor. She brings to the newsletter her considerable expertise in rock climbing and environmental issues. As the newsletter continues to grow, writers will be added to our staff bringing solid backgrounds in a variety of fields, such as geology, botany, biology, backpacking, etc., to the readers and subscribers. In time, the coverage of this publication will cover a wide variety of outdoor adventures in Texas.

## ENCHANTED ROCK NEWSLETTER

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### SUBSCRIBE

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## COMING EVENTS

Ira Kennedy will continue his monthly free talks at Enchanted Rock State Natural Area.

Sat., Oct. 29: Archaeology of Enchanted Rock—8 p.m.

Sat., Nov. 19: History & Legends of ERock—7 p.m.

Sat., Dec. 10: Sacred Geography & ERock—6 p.m.

Ira is available for talks to your group on the history, legends, or archaeology of Enchanted Rock. Call for appointment and rates: 915/247-3067

## CORRECTION

In Vol.1, No. 3, page 6: Column 2, paragraph 2, should read "In 1767, Marques de Rubi, the inspector general..." etc. Not "In 1776, Marques de Rubi," etc. We apologize to our readers for the error.



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**F**or those of you who read this column in the last issue of the ERock newsletter, "TOM" was in regard to Total Quality Management or TQM not TOM, but no matter. I could not help but smile when I read through the newsletter that "...TOM was everywhere..." and to be honest I think I enjoyed it better with the misprint.

This editorial was to be entitled "In a Perfect World," informing you of the cultural and natural resources related to Enchanted Rock State Natural Area. However, I apologize for taking you in a different direction, and I do make the promise to write on resource protection in the coming months. You as park visitors and friends have the right to know more about how park management decisions are addressed and handled.

"The time has come the walrus said to speak of many things..." So begins a poem by Lewis Carroll which many of us heard in our youth. "Of Mice, Men and Leadership" begins in a distant land, in a far away jungle, in a place we

know as Vietnam. The year was 1970. . . that summer a strong family foundation and the secure life surrounding university life gave way to the uncertainties of war and its lessons of leadership. Those real world lessons are now the basis for decision making twenty-four years later. . . These

were the fundamental rules of engagement: 1) That all life is precious. 2) Be true to yourself, and 3) Be true to your men. Please accept the fact that we were a family of boys required to

## OF MICE, MEN, AND LEADERSHIP

become men in a very sort period of time. And that now the word "men" is in reference to all people.

Now I see too often that these simple lessons are challenged by political correctness—not what is right, but rather what best serves individual needs. I watch with a certain amount of detachment to those who have always wanted to lead, are hungry to lead, but lack the tools to lead effectively. The price of poor and/or mediocre leadership effects us all in direct or indirect ways. It is never easy to do what we believe is the right thing to do, but we must try. No one can ask any more of us. In the light of the simple rules of engagement we gain the respect and friendship of our peers. We walk with heads held high, we fear no men, and we are content in our daily lives.

In these simple lessons were born the seeds of the Enchanted Rock doctrine: That park management decisions will be based on the truth of what will be the correct course of action. That we will always give you the best of ourselves. That we will not compromise the integrity of this sacred ground. That we will hold all life forms (of rock & breath) in great respect. And that we will be honest and fair to all who enter this place.

As always enjoy your time spent at Enchanted Rock State Natural Area. The fall season with its color changes and cool winds will soon be upon us. It is just another face in ERock country.

*We will always give you the best of ourselves. We will not compromise the integrity of this sacred ground. We will hold all life forms in great respect.*

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**S**ince the time of the Spanish, San Antonio had been the wellspring of legend regarding the Central Mineral Region. While many adventurers left San Antonio in search of lost Spanish mines, British diplomat William Kennedy visited San Antonio to mine the rich vein of tales regarding the mysterious frontier. Kennedy's book, *Texas*, published in 1841, was so well received in Germany it became a catalyst that shaped the destiny of the Texas frontier. Kennedy's descriptions of the "flower-spangled" landscape, lost mines, and the mysterious landmark Enchanted Rock fueled the imaginations of the German noblemen, who organized a society for Texas immigrants. Although Kennedy clearly noted his reliance on Mexican legend regarding the Spanish mines in the region, the stories had the ring of truth.

In print, in those days, legend carried the weight of fact. Enchanted Rock, the most unusual landmark in the area and the gateway to the land of lost mines was described by Kennedy. "About twenty-five miles from the Colorado, on a northwestern branch of the Piedernales [sic.], is a rock, considered one of the natural curiosities of Texas. It is about two hundred feet high, of an oval form, and half embedded in the soil. It is composed of parti-colored flints, and reflects the sunbeams with great brilliancy. A spring gushing forth near its summit sprinkles its sides with water. Owing, it is supposed, to the presence of some phosphoric substance, it wears an illuminated aspect on dark nights. This rock is held sacred by the Indians, who visit it at stated periods, for the purpose of paying homage to the Great Spirit, after their wild and primitive fashion."

Despite the factual errors—there is no spring on its summit, it is composed of granite, not flint, and there is no phosphoric substance, etc.—the influence of Kennedy's book cannot be underestimated. It was the most comprehensive book on Texas written by a man who had a remarkable grasp on the political and economic issues of the time. All of the observations in Kennedy's work were accepted as truth by many people of the day, and their belief determined their actions. Consequently, Kennedy's book actually shaped the course of Texas history.

# WILLIAM KENNEDY'S TEXAS

"The groundwork for an accurate and comprehensive knowledge about Texas is found in the work of the Englishman Kennedy, for a number of years British consul in Galveston. In addition to a detailed history, there is also an extensive description of all the natural conditions of the country. Careful critical use of all available sources gives this work especial worth. It must be remembered, however, that the author learned to know only a small portion of the country through personal observations and that he had to rely upon reports of other persons, which caused errors and discrepancies to creep in."

—Dr. Ferdinand Roemer (1852)

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# The New Promised Land

continued from page 1

suitable for settlement. Furthermore, in order to make himself and his partner, Burchard Miller, seem important, he claimed they had already put \$60,000 into the project. But as Prince Carl zu Solms-Braunfels, the first commissioner general, wrote in his report of February 8, 1845 to the Society: "Yet every person here, from the President of Texas to the smallest Negro lad, knows that if Messrs. Fisher and Miller both were put under a cotton press, not one dollar, let alone \$60,000, could be pressed out of them both." In a letter dated June 11, 1845, to his successor, Meusebach, the prince stated that Fisher was not worth "the cord it would take to hang him and Miller."

As if the swindle were not complete, Fisher obtained, in addition to the \$11,000 for an interest in the grant, another \$2,360 from the Germans to purchase supplies for the settlers. Virtually all of the money was "misappropriated."

The Society's attempt to settle the grant was stalled in New Braunfels with 439 people waiting and, for the most part, living at the expense of the society. Almost immediately upon assuming his responsibilities as commissioner general, Meusebach

discovered, to his dismay, the Society was virtually bankrupt due to the financial mismanagement of the prince; and that the settlers, after a year of waiting to relocate to the grant, were understandably impatient. Added to those pressures was the fact that, according to the contract with the Republic of Texas, the grant had to be settled by August 1847. If not, all efforts and investments would have been in vain.

With the deadline looming on the horizon, Meusebach pressed forward on the obligation to settle the frontier. In May 1846 he founded the community of Fredericksburg. In November Meusebach was informed in a letter from Germany written by the Executive Secretary of the Society that 4,304 immigrants were on their way to Texas.

If the prospect of even more immigrants wasn't enough to trouble Meusebach, Dr. Shubert, who was appointed by Meusebach as director of the settlement in Fredericksburg heaped on more problems. In Meusebach's own words from *Answer to Interrogatories* (1894) he wrote: "Without my knowledge and authorization the so-called "Doctor Schubert" had raised a company in the latter months of 1846 at Fredericksburg, and with his men and a *cannon!* had started out to be the first one inside of the limits of the grant. He never dared to cross the Llano river, and cowardly returned without a shot fired, making now a report to me that it was impossible to get into the colony, because it was full of hostile Indians. That report could not be allowed to go abroad unrebuked. It would have created despondency amongst the emigrants and the Company..."

Meusebach began making plans to do the impossible—enter the land grant and attempt to treaty for peace with the Comanche. His assessment of the entire situation was clear: "With the buying of that grant the doom of the [immigration] company was sealed," Meusebach wrote. "They did not know what they bought. They undertook to fulfill what was impossible to fulfill. They did not have the means nor the time to fulfill it. Neither of the contracting parties

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Neither of the contracting parties nor their agents had ever seen a particle of the land in question. The territory set aside for settlement was... in the undisturbed possession of hostile Indians. It had to be conquered by force or by treaty.

—John O. Meusebach

1844-1845, in which he noted that "between the Pedernales and the Llano Rivers is the enchanted rock, which can be seen from a great distance...


"As to knowledge of the mountains," he wrote, "most of it is obtained from the Mexicans, who in turn received it from the nomadic Indians. They describe the mountains as rich in ore, especially copper and silver. This statement in confirmed by the old documents drawn up for the leasing of land. . . In spite of the many efforts, they have not as yet been found, nor are they likely to be, except by establishing of colonies in the mountains. This can be done in time, provided there is sufficient protection against the Indians."

At the request of the prince, the Berlin Academy of Sciences sent Dr. Ferdinand von Roemer to Texas in 1845 to evaluate the mineral assets of the grant. Upon his arrival in Galveston, Roemer met with William Kennedy before heading inland. Undoubtedly, the unusual geologic formation of Enchanted Rock, and the rumors of gold and silver mines Kennedy had included in his book were discussed with the geologist, particularly the Lost San Saba Mine which many believed to be located within the grant.

Roemer found the settlement in New Braunfels at the peak of insurrection. On the last day of December, 1846, "a mob numbering about one hundred fifty persons," Roemer wrote, "armed with clubs and pistols came up the hill on which the buildings of the Verein stood. A deputation, composed of several individuals not enjoying the best reputation, went to the home of Herr von Meusebach. The rest contented themselves at first to wait for an answer from the delegation. When it was not forthcoming immediately, they crowded into the house and committed a number of excesses in the anteroom and

nor their agents had ever seen a particle of the land in question. The territory set aside for settlement was more than three hundred miles from the coast, more than one hundred and fifty miles outside of all settlements, and in the undisturbed possession of hostile Indians. The government had promised no aid to take it out of the hands of the Indians. It had to be conquered," Meusebach concluded, "by force or by treaty."

That same year, Prince Solms-Braunfels published his own book, *Texas:*



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uttered loud threats against the life of Herr von Meusebach. In the meantime the negotiations were carried on in the adjoining room. Mr. H. Fischer [sic.], who had arrived from Houston a few days prior to this and from whom the Verin had bought the land, led the negotiations on the part of the deputation... The immediate motive for this insurrection was, however the machinations of a man, [Fisher] who to further his own selfish interests, was greatly concerned in getting rid of Herr von Meusebach..."

Meusebach pacified the rebels agreeing to several demands, one of which included his resignation as soon as a replacement could be found.

On January 14, 1847 a company of men led by

*The New Promised Land, continued on following page.*

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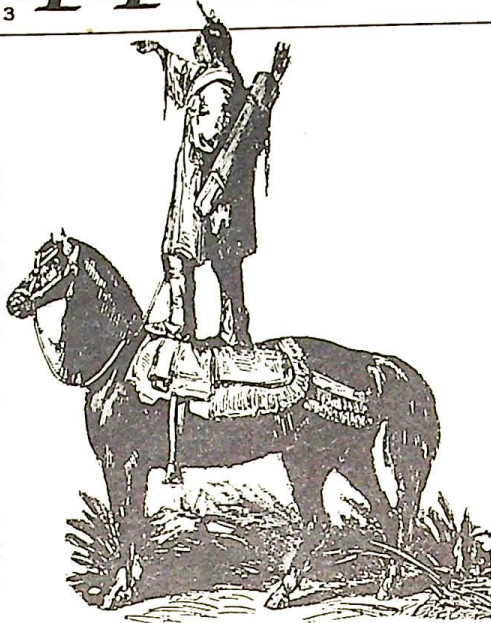
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The New Promised Land, Continued from previous page

Meusebach embarked on their journey to treaty for peace with the Comanche. Suffering ill health, Roemer had to wait to depart for Fredericksburg on January 20, arriving in Fredericksburg five days later.

On February 5, Indian agent Robert S. Neighbors arrived with an urgent message for Meusebach from the Texas Governor Pinckney Henderson. The belated message urged Meusebach not to venture into Comanche territory for fear he would further arouse the already hostile Indians. Seizing the opportunity, Roemer joined

Neighbors in pursuit of the Meusebach expedition.

"As my condition had improved in the meantime," Roemer wrote, "I resolved to make use of this opportunity to see the unknown Indian land on the Llano and San Saba rivers. My preparations were of the simplest kind and were completed within a few hours." With those somewhat off-hand remarks, Roemer embarked on the adventure of a life time. IK

To be continued in the next issue



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