

FROM HANOVER TO CALAVERAS COUNTY An 1858 Journey by Steamship, Railroad, and Riverboat

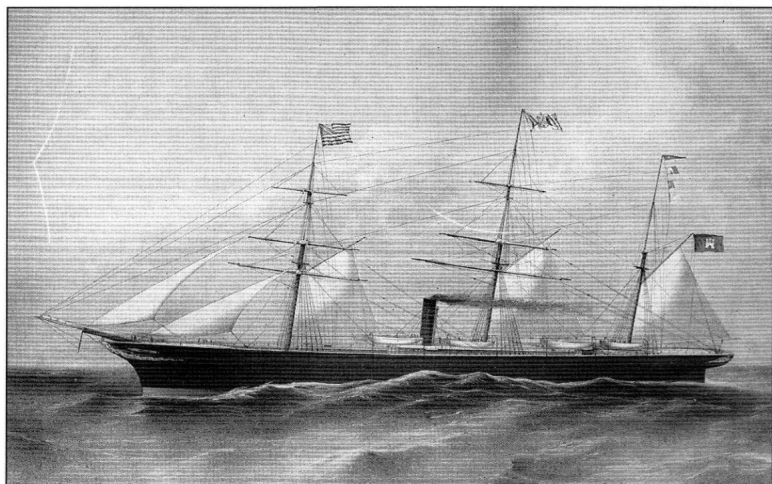
by Mary Alice Sanguinetti

Amelia Meinecke Shepherd, my great-aunt, was eighty-eight that July day in 1954, when she recalled her parents' journey from Hamburg to New York nearly a century earlier, and her nephew, Henry Meinecke Sanguinetti, recorded her words with his reel-to-reel tape recorder. She died three years later, but we can still listen to the story of her parents' voyage from Hamburg to New York City. "They went on a steamer and you know if they had left Germany the week before, that steamer burned on the ocean and everybody was lost..." she began. "Uncle Fritz was married the first Sunday and the following Sunday Papa was married and then they all went together on the same ship and that ship, they had a terrible storm at sea, and well they lost a lot of baggage and stuff, but when they finally landed—and they didn't have anything but cold potatoes to eat for a day—then when they landed in New York...they took up a collection among the passengers and they bought the captain a beautiful loving cup, silver I guess it was."¹

Her brief story fascinated me when I heard the audio tape in 1995. From what port did the Meineckes leave? What was the name of



Edward and Marie Meinecke, circa 1860. Photo courtesy of the author's cousins, Tom and Helen Shepherd.



Painting of the *Borussia*, the ship that carried the Meinecke party to the United States. The ship gained fame in later years for serving in the Crimean War. Painting reproduced by permission from the Mariners' Museum.

their ship? How did they get from New York to Calaveras County? When I was ten, my aunt, Doris Sanguinetti Linneman, shared my great-grandmother's Kringle recipe with us and said that Marie Meinecke had brought the recipe with her when she came around the Horn. We still make Kringle, rich cookies covered with ground nuts, sugar and cinnamon, every Christmas, but I now know that my great-grandparents did not come around the Horn. Elsewhere in the recording Amelia Shepherd tells us that her father, Edward Meinecke, had already been to Calaveras County and purchased the ranch near Vallecito to which he was returning in 1858 with his bride, twenty-eight-year-old Joanna Marie Bartells Meinecke. My uncle also interviewed Amelia's sister-in-law, Dorothea Twisselman Meinecke; she said that the party arrived in Vallecito on Christmas Eve 1858.² My next clue about the Meineckes' journey came from the Native Daughters of the Golden West. Amelia Shepherd provided information about her father for their "California Pioneer Project," listing the *John L. Stephens* as the ship on which he traveled. This ship, owned by the Pacific Mail Steamship Company from 1852 until 1863, and named after the president of the Panama Railroad Company, transported people and mail between Panama and San Francisco in the 1850s.³

However, the *John L. Stephens* was the Meineckes' third steamer on the two-month journey from Hanover to Calaveras County. Since the trip from Panama to San Francisco took about two

weeks and the *Alta California* newspaper notes the arrival of the *John L. Stephens* on December 1, 1858, the Meineckes had to have arrived in New York by early November. Their names are not in any published indices of ships' passengers lists, but I quickly found them in the microfilm of New York ship passengers' lists for October and November 1858. The *Borussia* of the Hamburg America Line arrived on November 1, 1858. The first name on the second page of the *Borussia's* passengers' list is Ed Meinecke. He is followed by Maria, his wife, Fritz, his brother, Sophia, the wife of Fritz, and nine more passengers who apparently belonged to the same party.

Ed and Fritz are listed as belonging to the United States which may explain why they are not indexed in Glazier and Filby's *Germans to America: Lists of Passengers Arriving at U.S. Ports*.

The *Borussia's* arrival is also noted in the November 1, 1858 *New York Times* which reported that after passing Cape Race the ship, under Captain Trautmann, had encountered "a heavy hurricane from E.N.E.; lay to for 30 hours; lost a suit of sails" but had entered New York harbor with the same number of passengers as when it left Southampton—one person had died and there was one birth on board.⁴

For brothers Georg Friedrich Meinecke, known as Fritz, and Wierich Gustav Edward Meinecke, known as Ed, this was their second Atlantic crossing. Their first trip had been ten years earlier, aboard the barque *Wieland*. The *Wieland* sailed from Bremen and arrived in New York City on November 14, 1848. F. and Ed Meinecke appear on the first page of the passengers' list for that ship, with Hanover as the "Country to which they severally belong" and "Wisconsin" as the "Country in which they intend to become inhabitants." Both gave farmer as their occupation.

In 1849 Fritz joined a party of sixty-five men with thirteen wagons which set off from Wisconsin for California and reached Placerville in October of that year. After a couple of years in California he returned to the east by way of Nicaragua. He was joined by his brother Edward and together with E. Lodtmann, another Hanoverian immigrant,

they brought 150 heifers and milk cows from Wisconsin to California, spending the winter in Salt Lake City.⁵ Fritz and Ed spent the next few years in Calaveras County and in August 1855 Edward paid \$500 for his ranch. The sale included two ploughs, two sets of harnesses, one wagon and various other farming tools. During these years Fritz established a dairy in Murphys. Fritz and Ed had spent ten years exploring opportunities in the United States and had become established in Calaveras County before they returned to Hanover to marry in the summer of 1858.

Fritz and Ed were the youngest of Georg Friedrich Ludwig and Margaret Allmers Meinecke's six children. No written records have been left to tell us why they left Hanover but family tradition is that their mother did not want them to become soldiers. It was a time of unrest and revolution throughout the German speaking states as well as Europe in general. According to Amelia Shepherd, Fritz and Edward's mother "didn't want her sons to be under that rule there. You know how they were. Oh, she hated it. They were fighting then all the time in Germany...In order to save her boys from doing that she sent them to America."⁶ As the two youngest sons, Fritz and Edward may also have lacked prospects in Hanover. Amelia Shepard said her father, Ed, worked as a clerk in a dry goods store for a while after he reached the United States. In 1848 many German immigrants were settling in Wisconsin, which became a state in May of that year. The Erie Canal and the Great Lakes provided a relatively easy route to Milwaukee. According to his citizenship certificate Fritz first filed his intention to become a citizen in the Circuit Court in Milwaukee County, Wisconsin in the spring of 1849.

Their father, Georg Friedrich Ludwig Meinecke, who had fought against Napoleon at Waterloo was a forester and was descended from a long line of foresters in Axstedt, Hanover, east of the Weser River. Their mother, Margaret Allmers was first cousin to Wierich Allmers, the father of a popular nineteenth-century German poet, Hermann Allmers. Margaret was widowed when Edward was only three, but according to Edward's daughter, Amelia Shepherd, she saw that her children were well educated. Edward was "educated in French and English and German" and

"spoke fluently and he didn't speak with an accent either."⁷ Fritz attended forestry school and "He had learned to read English before his emigration but could not speak it."⁸ The poet, Hermann Allmers was two years older than Fritz; he and Fritz were taught in the Allmers' Rechtenfleth home. When they were ten and twelve, a new tutor, Heinrich Wilhelm von Rönn, who later married Fritz and Edward's older sister, Elise, proved to be a particularly stimulating teacher. Hermann Allmers recalled that he

was a man of thorough knowledge and presented most stimulating lectures, whatever the topic would be. Most exciting were his geographic and physics lectures, however he could make interesting also the languages be it the old or the new ones. However, particularly his lectures on ancient history were flourishing and fascinating, in fact, they often were thrilling. Until then I had heard yet hardly a word about Greece and Rome...I am not able to tell how deep and mighty that all touched my young feeling. Now all my enthusiasm and dreams were suddenly directed towards Greece and Rome; my not so much interested schoolmates were caught, too, and I tried to warm up even the rest of the youth of the village to my beloved heroes.

The rough virtue and heroism of the Spartan people were our ultimate standard; and as earlier in the ancient German period now we again practised hardening and suffering pain and troublesomeness. All the underclothes were removed even be it cold, in fact till deeply into autumn we bathed in the outside, once I did not eat any bite for two days in order that I was inured to be hungry; and in order to become insensible to pain, we deeply plunged into our flesh by darning-needles and awls. One schoolmate, Fritz Meinecke, a real splendid fellow—he is now farmer in California—did cold-bloodedly cut his name into his arm such that it strongly bled and then he rubbed gunpowder into the injury due to the fact that it should be for ever. Of course, with delight I ate ancient Spartan blood soup, or in German Schwarzsauer (blacksour).⁹

Even as a youth Fritz Meinecke looked for adventure.

Fritz was thirty-five and Ed thirty two when they returned to Hanover to marry. Fritz married twenty-six-year-old Sophie Hayssen on October 8, in Rodenkirchen, near the Weser River and Ed married twenty-eight-year-old Joanna Marie Bartels on October 11 in Altenbruch near the mouth of the Elbe river. Fritz and Sophie may have known each other through her second cousin Ferdinand Hayssen who traveled with Fritz and Ed in the United States. Joanna Marie Bartels was born in Holstein but her family left her native village long before she and Ed became engaged. We do not know how they became acquainted.

A few days later, on October 15, Fritz and Edward Meinecke, accompanied by their brides, Sophia and Marie, and other relatives and friends, left Hamburg on the *Borussia*. Included in the Meinecke party were Fritz and Ed's niece and nephew, nineteen-year-old Meta and seventeen-year-old Fritz von Rönn who were the children of their sister Elise and Heinrich Wilhelm von Rönn, Sophie's younger brother Wilhelm Hayssen, her cousin, Ferdinand Hayssen, and Christian Meinecke who may have been another nephew. Sophie Hayssen Meinecke wrote her first letter home when the *Borussia*, which carried 466 passengers, stopped at Southampton, England, a couple days later. Sophie's letters during the journey and in her new home were preserved by her family and provide a personal view of the two month-long journey to California and impressions of her new home.

From Southampton, Sophie wrote "The steam-boat stays twenty-four hours near Southampton... It took us two-and-a-half days to get here and the weather was so wonderful and the sea so calm that it was a pleasure to stay on deck. No one of our group got seasick, only some of the other passengers... The meals are quite good. There are very many passengers and I think that the ship is full... Dearest mother, you have to understand that writing is almost impossible as here in the cabin a lively conversation is going on. First we could not see the British coast because of the fog but now the sun is shining and we have a lovely view. Tomorrow at noon the journey continues. Our captain and all of the officers seem to be very friendly and helpful to all of the passengers."¹⁰

During the ten years since Fritz and Ed made their first journey to the United States there had been significant advances in transportation. In 1848 there were no regularly scheduled steamships from Germany and the railroad across the Isthmus of Panama was yet to be built. Steamship travel across the stormy Atlantic Ocean was introduced in the first half of the nineteenth century with the first regular service beginning in 1840 between Halifax, Nova Scotia and Liverpool, England. In 1847 a group of Hamburg merchants started the Hamburg-America Line, also known as HAPAG (for Hamburg-Americkanische Packetfahrt-action-Gesellschaft), to provide regular service between Hamburg and North America, with four German-built wooden sailing ships. In 1854 the Hamburg America Line decided to acquire two large screw steamers in order to compete with the Inman Line of Bremen and with England. These two iron ships, the *Hammonia* and the *Borussia* were built by Caird & Co. of Greenock Scotland and each had a carrying capacity of 1000 tons and a service speed of twelve knots. They were called screw steamers because a screw propeller replaced the paddle wheel of the first steamships. The *Hammonia* and *Borussia* were soon supplemented by the slightly larger *Austria* and the *Saxonia*. Like other early steamships the *Borussia* had a full suit of sails, ready in case of problems with the engine. These ships have been described as looking "like sailing ships but with a funnel."

When Amelia Shepherd said "if they had left Germany the week before, that steamer burned on the ocean and everybody was lost..." she was probably referring to the *Austria* which had departed from Hamburg on September 4, 1858, on her second voyage to New York. On September 12 a fire, accidentally started in the emigrant quarters, proved disastrous. The entire ship was so quickly aflame that only one lifeboat was safely launched; the survivors were picked up at 5 PM by a French barque which saw the smoke. Only sixty-one lives were saved out of the 538 passengers and crew.

From its beginning in 1847 the Hamburg America Line provided a high level of service and reliability. On the *Borussia* first class passengers enjoyed "red satin, gold embellished furniture and landscape drawings" in their bedrooms and the second class accommodation was "no less convenient and

comfortable.” The Hamburg-America line attracted passengers by providing “sanitary conditions, and courteous treatment, safety and speed, frequency and regularity.” Sophie Hayssen Meinecke wrote that they were traveling “second cabin.” On the *Borussia* even steerage was better than on many other ships since “the steerage passengers had a room that was an unusual eight-feet high with fans for ventilation.”¹¹

The *Borussia* entered rough water soon after leaving England and many passengers became seasick. Arriving in New York city Sophie wrote about the Atlantic crossing:

After we passed England the sea became so troubled and heavy that the ship turned on a side position. A lot of passengers got seasick. It is a strange feeling when you are tossed from one side to the other and you are not able to walk or stand up straight. The people staggered around like drunks. The sea became rougher and looked beautiful. Finally it was very stormy but we didn't feel it because we moved along with the storm. All the while the air was so pleasant that you could always be on deck. My beloved, you wouldn't believe that I was the only lady on board who was not seasick.

I don't understand why I was the lucky one...Marie and Meta were only sick for a few days and our gentlemen stayed fine. I haven't experienced it but I can now imagine what it is like to be seasick. Some passengers were seasick the whole time on board and the ones who had it for a short time looked very pale and hollow-eyed. But they recovered very fast as soon as it was gone.

Until the twenty-fifth we had almost always a good passage. But we felt the fall season quite often. It was foggy and cold and sometimes a rough wind blew. The movement of the ship was always the same. It was extremely uncomfortable. We weren't able to eat, dress or sleep decently because of the pitching and the tossing. Anyway, life on a ship gets very boring and someone who hasn't experienced it hasn't got any

idea of it. You once in a while have a conversation with one of the other passengers but that is only for some moments...

Suddenly in the evening of the twenty-fifth there was a terrible storm, which threw us off course. We went to bed but sleeping was impossible as the ship often roared so much we thought that it would smash into pieces. The next morning nothing had changed and we went on deck to look at the sea. Days before I often tried to imagine what a storm was like but I could not believe such a rough sea was possible. It was something so great and beautiful, impossible to describe. We enjoyed the view only for a short time when suddenly a huge wave splashed on deck which made us dizzy for some moments. Fritz and I stood next to each other and got totally wet. We went into our cabin to change our clothes but it was not possible for one hour. There was also water in there and it took a long time to get dry. We got over this shock soon but I didn't have the courage to go on deck again. It got worse so even our gentlemen had to stay under deck.

In the afternoon the waves tossed away the rudder house and the water came into both cabins. In the first cabin, tables and benches were damaged and all things got wet. In the second cabin it wasn't that bad. In the evening all rooms were cleaned and dry. During the



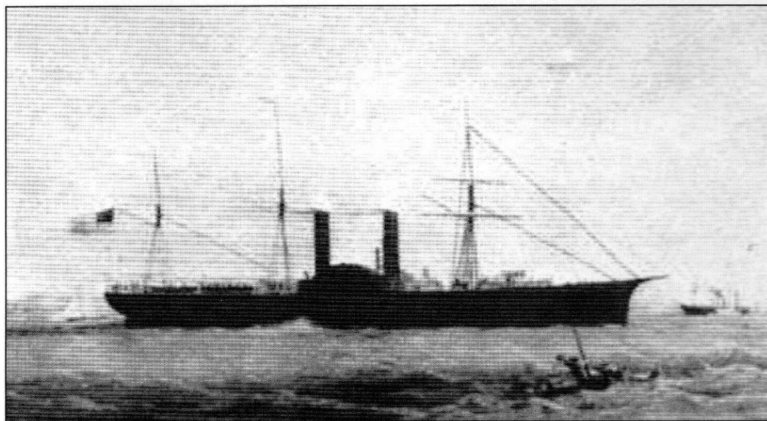
Castle Garden, later Battery Park, circa 1880. When the Meinecke party entered the United States, Castle Garden in New York served as the immigrant entry station. Photo reproduced by permission from Mystic Seaport, Steamships and Immigration Vessels Collection, Image #1999.175.848.

next night the storm calmed down and in the morning it was quiet. The day after the weather was brilliant and all people got vivacious again. Everything was brought on deck to get dry and at night everyone slept well.

*Everything of my belongings is okay. But what you wear on such a journey is ruined, so better not wear anything good. Anyway, we had a very favorable passage. Fritz, Eduard and Ferdinand told us later that they had never experienced such a storm. Neither had the captain in the last twelve years. You might not believe it, but I never was scared and felt as fine as possible on a ship. But I am very glad that this passage is over. The next one is said to be much more comfortable.*¹²

Reaching New York on November 1, 1858, the Meineckes would have disembarked at Castle Garden immigration depot near the southern tip of Manhattan. A former fort, Castle Garden had been designated as an immigrant station in 1855. Since Edward and Fritz, as well as Ferdinand Hayssen, had been in the United States previously they could guide the rest of the party and avoid those who took advantage of newly arrived immigrants.

They found New York very noisy but the early November weather was beautiful, as were the houses. Sophie described the long streets filled with carts which looked like omnibuses. They visited a theater one night and also a delicatessen and a race course. Sophie liked the delicatessen but was not impressed by the race course. After a week they were on their way to California.



The United States Mail Steamship Company ship the *Illinois*, which served the route from New York to Aspinwall (the Panama isthmus).

Photo circa 1851, courtesy internet image.

The fastest route from New York to California was by way of Panama. In the years between 1852 and 1867 from 15,000 and 20,000 passengers traveled to California by this route annually. Two steamship companies, the United States Mail Steamship Company and the Pacific Mail Steamship Company provided regular service on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of North America. On the Isthmus of Panama a railroad linked Aspinwall (now Colon) on the Atlantic side and Panama City on the Pacific side. The rail trip took about four hours so that passengers could leave their southbound ship on the Atlantic side in the morning and board a northbound ship on the Pacific side in the evening. Steamer fares fluctuated widely but travelers might expect to pay \$200 for first class, \$175 for second class and \$100 stercage for the entire trip. The railroad fare was \$25.¹³

By 1858 a particular type of steamship, called the "Panamá type" took care of traffic to and from Panama. These ships were similar to sound and river steamers with side paddle wheels and extensive deck houses and promenade decks. From New York to Aspinwall, the Meineckes probably traveled on the *Illinois*, a wooden side-wheel steamer with two decks and berths for 480 passengers. This steamship was one of several operated by the United States Mail Steamship Company, which provided regular service between New York and Aspinwall. According to the *New York Times* the *Illinois* departed from New York on Sunday, November 7.

The weather was mild although rainy on this Atlantic voyage. Arriving in Aspinwall on November fifteenth the travelers expected to continue the journey immediately by railway across the Isthmus. However when they went ashore they were told there would be a delay. Heavy rain from a storm that began on November 14 and lasted for three days had caused flooding over the railroad and the travelers were detained in Aspinwall. Passengers from the *Illinois* finally boarded the railroad on November 17, 1858. Built between 1849 and 1855 the broad-gauge railroad track stretched forty-seven miles on pilings over swamps and through mountain passes, running along Navy Bay, past Gatun and ascending the river.

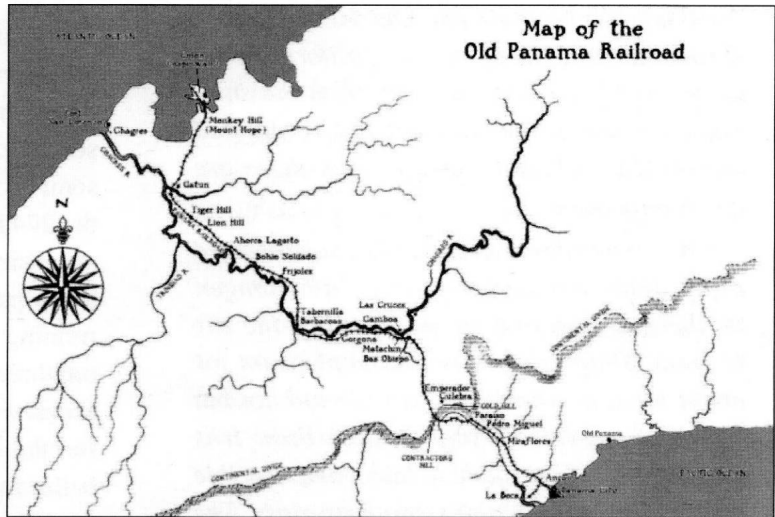
With the railroad what had once been an uncomfortable journey of many days by canoe and mule, was accomplished in four hours. From the *John L. Stephens* Sophie wrote,

On the seventh of November we left New York. The steamer is more beautiful and bigger than the Borussia. The ship was booked up. Mainly by Americans and only a few German families. The equipment and the furniture on this ship is American of course, as well as the meals. In the morning we get beefsteak and fish as well as many strange foods with our tea and coffee. Although I am not very choosy with food I was not able to eat it. But the beefsteak tasted good if it wasn't as tough as leather.

In the morning at 7 o'clock we had to eat as much as possible because lunch was at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. And then they served again so many strange meals. I don't like the American way of cooking and I was glad to see that our gentlemen don't like it either.

We had a nice journey, always wonderful mild air but every day rain, which made us stay often under deck. A few days after we left New York we couldn't see the coast any more but on the fifteenth we were able to see land again. You could see mountains all covered with green in the distance which looked beautiful. In the evening of the fifteenth we berthed at Aspinwall. Here starts the railway crossing the Isthmus to Panama [City]. Next morning all passengers went ashore expecting to continue the journey. But here they told us that we have to stay for twenty-four hours because a few days ago there was a storm which damaged the railway.

That was very uncomfortable; the place was very small and could not give shelter to all of the passengers. Moreover a lot of people arrived from Havana who all wanted to go on the same steamboat like us to California. The accommodation was very bad and very expensive. But it was pleasant that the winter started there already and it wasn't too hot. We visited Aspinwall, which is a very small



Map of the Panama Railroad route. Courtesy internet image.

and unimportant place. The region is fertile but not very interesting. One can see nice little woods with wonderful tropic plants and fruits. The ground is swampy and not suitable for cultivation. The natives seem to be a little civilized, they wear clothes. They like to wear bright colors, which give an individual contrast to their dark skin...

The following morning at 8 o'clock we continued our journey crossing the Isthmus to Panama [City], a very interesting trip of four hours. The train was not very fast so we had enough time to look at the landscape. The wilderness is as beautiful as can be. The mountains are covered with beautiful, tropical plants up to the top. They eyes never get tired as there is always quite a variety of things to see. Smaller or higher mountains, closer to Panama [City] more rocks, once in a while grass-covered spots with Spanish cattle, cows, oxen and horses grazing on them. Near to these spots are some small, friendly looking wooden houses. The region is not much inhabited. Mainly next to the railway and that by the natives whose small and poor looking huts look out of the bushes...

Up to Panama [City] the landscape stays the same. I can't describe the beautiful plants we have seen so far. You can see a lot of them in Germany in greenhouses but even if they have taken great pains the plants don't grow like they do here.

When we reached Panama [City] a little steamboat brought us to our California one, so we could see the town only from the ship. The town looks very ancient but is situated nicely. On both sides of the town there are green mountains...

We stayed some days at the coastline and enjoyed the wonderful view a little longer. In the morning and in the evening the air is great. Only at noon is it is unpleasant for about three or four hours, a little too hot but it is still possible to stay on deck then. It is unbelievable how such a huge and terrible sea can be so calm and smooth as glass. The name "Pacific Ocean" is justified. I have never seen something more beautiful than the sunrise, the sunset and the rising of the moon on this ocean...

Although you could not see any waves, the ship was pitching and tossing and some passengers got seasick. To me, this last journey on the Pacific Ocean was the best. But it wouldn't have been that pleasant during an earlier time of the year. During the passage from New York to Aspinwall I always felt sick, had no appetite, could not sleep and felt strange like I didn't in all of the other time. But on this last part of the journey I felt fine and it wasn't so boring because I often saw the coast.

This steamer is bigger and more nicely furnished than the last one. Twelve hundred people found quarters on the steamer, which I couldn't believe when I first saw them. But you can pack a whole bunch of people on such a ship. A lot of ladies traveled to California, most of them Americans. I have to get used to them first because they don't make a good impression. They behave free and easy and seem to be very fond of their dress. They change their clothes every moment and wear large crinolines as well as their little two-year-old children. All of them, the upper as well as the lower class are very elegant. My judgment about the American ladies might be hard, some of them are said to be nice but I haven't met one I liked yet. The Germans stick together and as we are a little community we don't need others.¹⁴

The *John L. Stephens*, one of four steamers of superior size, and speed, was part of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company's fleet which provided regular service between Panama and San Francisco with semi-monthly sailings from each port. Built of wood the 274 by 41 foot, 1995 ton steamship was about the same size as the *Borussia* but carried nearly twice as many passengers. The steamer boasted hot and cold running water and comfortable accommodations on three decks. "Luxuries more common in later times were not unknown on the Panamá steamers, for the *John L. Stephens*, built in 1852, provided baths for her passengers and was equipped with a primitive system of mechanical ventilation...The steerage passengers slept in cleared spaces below and forward, having no staterooms."¹⁵ W.F. Lapidge commanded the steamer which left Panama at 11:00 PM on November 17, 1858. On November twenty-third the ship stopped at Acapulco, Mexico to pick up coal, departing at 7:30 that evening. It reached San Francisco on December 1.

On Thursday, December 2, 1858, *The Daily Alta California* announced the arrival of the *John L. Stephens* in San Francisco. The weather had been pleasant throughout the voyage with northerly winds and passengers were in excellent health. The *Alta California* printed the names of over two-hundred first class passengers followed by a note that there were also 689 passengers in steerage. While the Meinecke name does not appear among the first class passengers, three names on the list do seem to match the *Borussia* list—"Miss Vonn Ronn, F. Hayson and W. Hayson" The *Alta California's* report concluded with "On board the steamer *J.L. Stephens*, a boy saved from the wreck of the *Austria* named Samuel Hess, going to his brother Harris Hess, supposed to live in Stanislaus county. His friends can find him on application to Forbes Babcock."

After a few days in San Francisco the party continued on to Stockton. In 1858 the California Steam Navigation's steamboats for Stockton left the Jackson Street Wharf in San Francisco at 4:00 every afternoon. The 127 mile trip up the San Joaquin River brought travelers to Stockton the following morning. Sophie and Marie spent a couple of weeks in a German hotel in Stockton while Fritz and Edward traveled to Vallecito to find a house. While in Stockton Marie and Sophie looked for furniture for their homes but were disappointed with what

they found. Sophie wrote to her mother, "We did not get any piece of furniture we like. Everything is very badly crafted and so clumsy that you don't want to buy it, but we had no choice. Fritz and E. were very astonished but in former times they did not care about something like that. Marie and I are often unhappy about it and we console each other that we hopefully get used to it."¹⁶ Stockton was home to many German immigrants, including Fritz's friend E. Lodtmann who had started a cigar store there in 1850 and also operated a truck garden, selling watermelons, muskmelons, cucumbers and various other garden produce in Stockton.¹⁷ After two months aboard ships and in hotels Sophie was longing for a permanent home. She wrote that the German hotel where they stayed was nice but she was worried about the expense. It was a particularly cold winter—colder than any of the past eight—with snow even in Murphys and Vallecito. Fritz and Edward eventually found a little house with a garden which Edward wished to buy and on December 20 they all moved to Vallecito.

During the 1850s Vallecito was a bustling mining community with a population which reached 4000. The presence of a Wells Fargo station there from 1853 until 1883 is evidence of Vallecito's importance as a gold-producing and commercial center. German immigrants lived throughout Calaveras County; in the 1850 census they composed fourteen percent of the county's population. In Mokelumne Hill, A. Wagner published *Die Staats-Zeitung*, a German language newspaper, from 1854 until 1858. The 1860 census shows many German immigrant families living in Vallecito township. When Eduard Vischer, a German traveler, made a trip through the mining regions in the spring of 1859 he observed that "In Vallecito flower-festooned doors and windows gave evidence of the coming song festival of the Germans."¹⁸

Edward purchased the house in Vallecito and all of the Meineckes stayed there until the middle of March. On March 2, 1859, Sophie wrote,

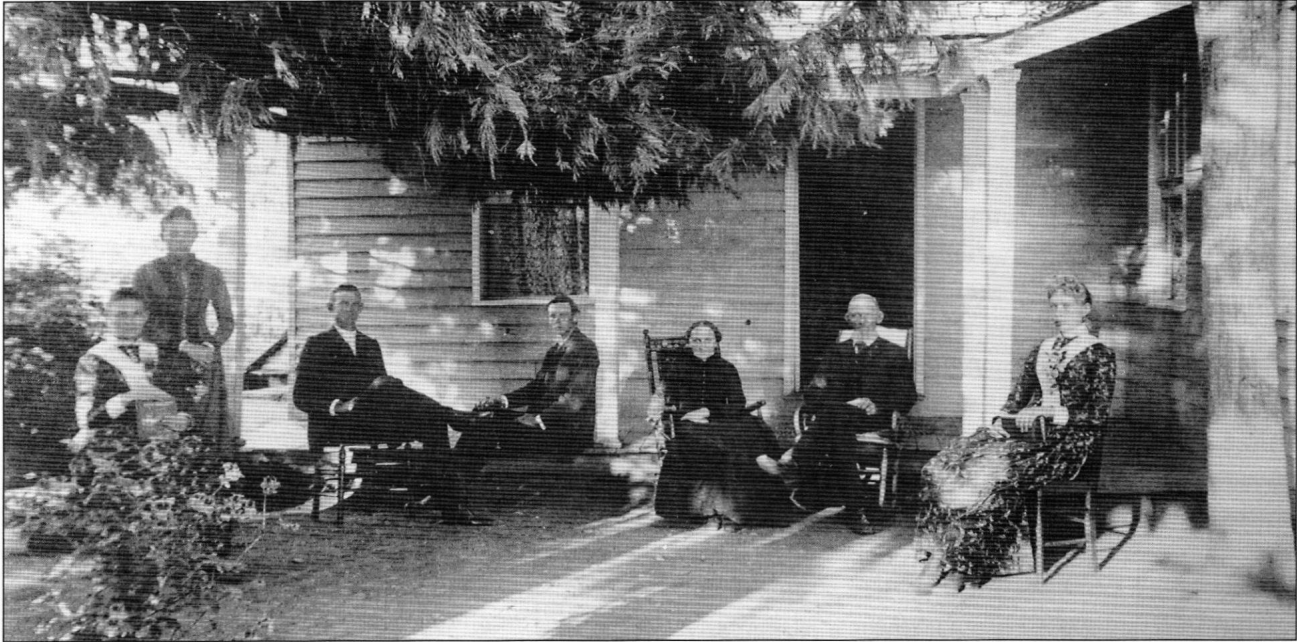
Fritz bought sixteen cows which are almost still calves on his fourteen days trip. Some of the old ones and almost all of the new ones are milked, but they give right now not so much milk because the fodder is very bad. It will be better in a few weeks as spring is coming. All people say that it is wonderful

here in spring and I am really looking forward to it. In January we planted peas and potatoes and sowed many vegetable seeds and most of it is coming up.

I would like to have a huge garden bed for all vegetables we need but Fritz told me that is out of the question as we have no water piping. It would be troublesome and everything would be ruined without water. I can only plant the first vegetables like salad, some pot-herbs and flowers. It is cheaper to buy the vegetables. Fritz is preparing a small piece of land for me but I think it will be too late when it is ready because in May it is not raining so much here. The seeds from Wiemken are very good and he made a good choice with the flower seeds. I think they will come out and we will sow them soon. This year we will have our vegetables from the garden of my brother-in-law. We can buy many things in California but I am glad to have brought my own seed with me, although I cannot sow at the moment.¹⁹

Fritz was building a house in Murphys, where he operated his dairy, but work was slow because of the rainy weather. It rained nearly every day and although the air was fresh it was difficult to go anywhere because the roads were too muddy for wagons. Sophie noted that most families ate fresh meat three times a day, however ham was seldom available and had too much salt in it. Fritz traveled each day to Murphys where some of his cows were being milked.

In the middle of March the house in Murphys was completed and Sophie and Fritz moved there on March 19. Sophie wrote that the four miles from Vallecito to Murphys was not far but the elevation gain made the trip tiring. By this time she was three months pregnant. Sophie was pleased with her white house and the veranda surrounding it. The small stove in the kitchen allowed her to bake and cook successfully. In the summer they would take the stove outside because of the heat; this was a common practice. The house had two bedrooms, and a parlor which were high enough to afford a lovely view. They had a green carpet with gray stripes and a picture of Sophie's parents was hung over the sofa. Sophie was making butter and selling the extra buttermilk for twenty-five to thirty-seven cents a gallon. Fresh milk sold quickly for fifty cents a gallon.²⁰



The Meinecke family in the garden of their Vallecito home, circa 1890. Left to right, Meta, Mamie, Fred, Ed (children of Ed and Marie); W G Edward, Marie and Amelia. Photo courtesy of the author.

The long journey from Germany was over and Edward and Marie, and Fritz and Sophie were settled in Vallecito and Murphys. By the end of the 1850s the early mining camps had either disappeared or been transformed into small towns inhabited by families, with schools and churches. However, they could still be devastated by fire. In August 1859 both Vallecito and Murphys were largely destroyed by fire.

The Vallecito fire, on August 12, started in the center of town at Madame Balzance's store. It came close enough to Edward and Marie's house to burn the fence around the garden. Neighbors had helped Marie, who was six months pregnant, move everything out of the house but at the last minute the wind changed directions and the house was spared.²¹

The Murphy's fire, just eight days later, on Sunday afternoon, August 20, started at the Magnolia Saloon and may have been deliberately started by a Mexican woman in revenge for harsh treatment. The fire caused \$100,000 in damage but Fritz Meinecke's dairy was not among the businesses that were destroyed. Sophie had given birth to her first child, Hayo Ferdinand, just five days earlier.²²

Fritz and Sophie did not remain long in Calaveras County. In November Fritz had the opportunity to purchase a farm about four miles from Stockton from Ernst Lodtmann. At this time mining was declining in Calaveras County and the economy was improving in the San Joaquin Valley. They were

living on the new farm in San Joaquin County in August 1860 when the census was taken. After that Fritz operated a ferry, later known as the Meinecke and Taylor Ferry, on the Stanislaus River, about ten miles northwest of Modesto for a few years. Using the money from the ferry he purchased land about six miles south of Oakdale in Stanislaus County. Eventually Fritz owned and ranched about 800 acres here and the family was quite prosperous. Four of their eight children reached adulthood but none of them ever married.²³

Edward and Marie remained in Vallecito and Edward's niece, Meta von Rönn stayed with them until her marriage sometime in the 1860s. According to the 1860 agricultural census Edward owned seventy acres of improved land and twenty-five acres of unimproved land and the farm was worth \$1500. The livestock were worth \$800. Edward raised cattle until the floods of 1861-1862 when he lost forty head. After that he turned to agriculture and eventually had one of the most valuable peach orchards in the area. They raised seven children there; Amelia Meinecke Shepherd, born in 1866, was the middle child and lived until 1957. The youngest, named Marie after her mother, but called Mamie, graduated from Stockton Business College and Normal Institute in 1893 and taught in Calaveras County schools for seven years before she married another Vallecito native, Henry Victor Sanguinetti who became my grandfather.

Each generation passes stories on to the next. The *Austria*, which burned at sea, left the month before the Meineckes sailed rather than one week before as Amelia Meinecke Shepherd recalled. The storm during which Ed and Marie Meinecke had only raw potatoes to eat for an entire day was a thirty-six hour hurricane—the worst that Captain Trautmann had experienced in twelve years. Research into the Meineckes' journey revealed three ocean going steamships on which they traveled during their two month journey. Although details may be lost over time, these stores serve as guides when we explore our history.

Acknowledgements

This paper could not have been written without the help of many people. There is room to name only a few here. The audio tapes which my late uncle, Henry Meinecke Sanguinetti, sent me in 1996 were the inspiration for my research. The late Lorraine Kennedy of the Calaveras County Archives augmented what I learned from the audio tapes. In 2002, Marv Hayssen, a genealogist in Waukesha, Wisconsin, told me of Sophie Hayssen Meinecke's letters, which her family in Germany had preserved, and sent me summaries of the letters in English. Marv's cousins in Germany, Almut and Wilhelm Große-Nobis, found Friedrich Meinecke mentioned in a book about Hermann Allmers. Another cousin, Annette Schäfer has translated several of Sophie's long letters. Dr. Walter D. Kamphoefner at Texas A & M University informed me of the typed transcripts of these letters which are in the archives in Gotha and Dr. Helbich of the University of Bochum helped me to acquire photocopies of them.

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Las Calaveras is grateful for the contribution of this article by Mary Alice Sanguinetti of Seattle, Washington. She has documented much of her Calaveras County pioneer family's history. For additional information about the Meinecke family, please see her previous contribution to *Las Calaveras* from October 2000.

- ¹Amelia Meinecke Shepherd, interview by Henry Meinecke Sanguinetti, 28 July 1954, transcript, personal collection of the author.
- ²Dora Twisselman Meinecke, interview by Henry Meinecke Sanguinetti, July 1954, transcript, personal collection of the author.
- ³Kemble, John Haskell. *The Panama Route to the Pacific Coast, 1848-1869* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), 88-89.
- ⁴*New York Times*, 1 November 1858.
- ⁵*History of Stanislaus county, California...* (San Francisco: Elliott & Moor, Pub, 1881), 166-167; *A Volume of Memoirs and Genealogy of Representative Citizens of Northern California...* (Chicago: Standard Genealogical Publishing Company, 1901), 657-658.
- ⁶Amelia Meinecke Shepherd, interview by Henry Meinecke Sanguinetti, 28 July 1954, transcript, personal collection of the author.
- ⁷*Ibid.*
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- ⁹Hermann Allmers. *Sein Leben und Dichten mit Benutzung seines Nachlasses* dargestellt von Theodor Siebs. Mittler und Sohn 1982, 2. Aufl. Herausgegeben von H.E. Hansen und G. Schlectriem, Erstauflage 1915, found and translated by Almut und Wilhelm Große-Nobis.
- ¹⁰Sophie Hayssen Meinecke, Southampton, to Thale Catherine Hayssen, 17 October 1858, translated by Annette Schäfer
- ¹¹Fox, Stephen. *Transatlantic: Samuel Cunard, Isambard Brunel, and the Great Atlantic Steamships* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003); Seiler, Otto J. *Bridge Across the Atlantic: The Story of Hapag - Lloyd's North American Liner Services* (Herford: Verlag E.S. Mittler & Sohn GmbH, 1983), 14, 22; Sophie Hayssen Meinecke, Southampton, to Thale Catherine Hayssen, 17 October 1858, translated by Annette Schäfer.
- ¹²Sophie Hayssen Meinecke, New York City, to her family, 31 October 1858, translated by Annette Schäfer.
- ¹³*The Panamá Route to the Pacific Coast, 1848-1869*, 9-11.
- ¹⁴Sophie Hayssen Meinecke, John L. Stephens, to her family, 30 November 1858, translated by Annette Schäfer.
- ¹⁵*The Panamá Route to the Pacific Coast*, 7-8.
- ¹⁶Sophie Hayssen Meinecke, Stockton, to Thale Catherine Rebecca Hayssen, 18 December, 1858, translated by Annette Schäfer.
- ¹⁷*History of Stanislaus County...*, 167.
- ¹⁸Eduard Vischer, translated from the German by Ruth Frey Axe, "A Trip to the Mining Regions in the Spring of 1859 'Californischer Staats-Kalender' in Leap Year AD 1860. Part 2" *Quarterly of the California Historical Society* 11 (December 1932).
- ¹⁹Sophie Hayssen Meinecke, Vallecito, to Heyo and Thale Catherine Hayssen, 2 March 1859, translated by Annette Schäfer.
- ²⁰Sophie Hayssen Meinecke, Murphys, to her family, 2 April 1859, typed transcript, Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Gotha, Germany.
- ²¹Wilhelm Hayssen, Murphys, to Hinrich Hayssen, 1 September 1859, typed transcript, Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Gotha, Germany.
- ²²*Vallecito History* (Vallecito, California, 1974), 12; Wood, Richard Coke, *Murphys, Queen of the Sierra* (Angels Camp, California: Calaveras Californian, 1948), 23; Wilhelm Hayssen, Murphys, to Hinrich Hayssen, 1 September 1859, typed transcript, Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Gotha, Germany.
- ²³Wilhelm Hayssen, Murphys, to Hinrich Hayssen, 30 November 1859, typed transcript, Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Gotha, Germany; *History of Stanislaus County, California*, 166-167; *A Volume of Memoirs and Genealogy of Representative Citizens of Northern California*, 657-658.

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The Society operates the Calaveras County Museum which is open daily from 10:00 to 4:00 in the historic County courthouse located at 30 Main Street in San Andreas.

The Society's office is located in historic San Andreas, the Calaveras County seat. Visitors are always welcome to stop by the office for assistance with research, and are encouraged to visit the museum while in the area. The office is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 to 4:00, and the telephone number is (209) 754-1058, or contact us at: CCHS@goldrush.com.

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