

Prairie Points

Prairie Points

A CIVIL WAR SANCTUARY



By Jan Frazier

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PRAIRIE POINTS
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DEDICATION AND INTRODUCTION

I'd like to dedicate this book to all of my Dully relatives, living both here in America and also in Germany and Australia. We have had some wonderful reunions both in Germany and in America since I found the first Dullys (accidentally, I might add) ten years ago in Wilgartswiesen, Germany.

The story of that first meeting is both interesting and hilarious. Having done genealogy for some years and having stumbled upon my grandfather Christian Pollman's side of my mother's family in Hummersen, I decided to make a trip to Wilgartswiesen to see where the Dullys (my grandmother's side of my mother's family) originated and to view the church where my great-grandparents had been married.

Two of my friends (they were doing genealogy, too) and I arrived in the village in the late afternoon, and could see the church—which sat atop a hill—for miles outside of Wilgartswiesen. Locating the only hotel in the village, my friends made themselves

comfy while I made the trek up the old stone steps to the church, only to find it locked. Having visited many churches and cathedrals throughout Europe, I felt sure that this church was no different than other churches in Europe—the pastor’s house had to be nearby.

Walking back down the hill in a different direction, I located the pastor’s house. He was young and inviting, plus he spoke English well. He asked me to come into his office, and we talked about the Dullys. I inquired if I could borrow the keys to get into the church, and to my astonishment, he handed me a conglomeration of keys that numbered at least twenty.

“Oh, no, please, just give me the key to the church,” I pleaded. I felt that I’d be taking the key to every important building—bank, courthouse, jail, outhouse—in all Wilgartswiesen.

“No, no, it’s okay. We are all Christians” was his reply.

Really? How do you know that? I thought. Sheepishly, I let the massive accumulation of keys drop into my purse, saying that I’d return them in the morning. I might add here that the pastor’s wife seemed to let out a sigh of relief the next morning when I strolled up the walk with the keys!

That evening my friends and I went to a nearby restaurant to eat. Having problems with translation of the menu, I asked a man—Eric—sitting next to us to help out. He ended up joining us, and I asked him if he knew any Dullys.

“Oh, *ja*, I know Joachim Dully,” Eric replied. “He won’t be at home, though, because he sells tires all over Europe. Normally, he’s on the road.”

Elated that Eric knew a Dully, I was equally saddened by the news that Joachim wouldn't be at home. We chatted throughout dinner—Eric's English was quite good—and finally he decided to call Joachim's house with the off-chance that he'd be home. Sure enough, he was! He was supposed to have been in Italy, but the trip had been cancelled, and Joachim came directly to the restaurant.

I spread my massive amount of genealogy papers—which I had kept in my purse ever since entering the outskirts of Wilgartswiesen—on the table in anticipation of Joachim's arrival. A short, blonde-haired, blue-eyed man bearing a large grin entered the restaurant and came straight to our table. He listened intently, picked up the phone to call his dad for verification, and soon proclaimed that we were cousins! I was ecstatic. I had located the Dullys.

The next day, Joachim and his father took us up to the village of Hofstatten in the mountains where the first Dullys originally had settled. They had made the ten-mile trek each Sunday to Wilgartswiesen to church. We visited the cemetery in Hofstatten where I snapped dozens of pictures of Dully graves. What a day and what a find in locating Joachim!

Several years went by, and I received an email from Dr. Werner Gertberg, who was in the midst of a genealogy search for Dullys. Already knowing Joachim's father, Werner had gone to Wilgartswiesen in search of more Dullys, and Joachim had given him my name and email. Little did I know at the time that together Werner and I would locate dozens of Dullys both in Germany and America.

Prairie Points

We have had multiple reunions in both countries, and I have learned to know and love so many fantastic Dully relatives. My life has been so enriched, and it all started with that massive cumulation of keys.

If you'd like to read the incredible story of finding the Pollman family in the village of Hummersen, it is included in my book, *European Roots and Beyond*. It's another crazy adventure.

Enjoy reading the historical fiction about the Dully family as they arrive in the New World just as the Civil War is beginning.

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I

Elm Grove, Illinois

SPRING 1860

I sat on the front porch of our modest home in Elm Grove, Illinois, looking out at the unending multi-colored carpet of prairie land and wildflowers. As spring struggled to encompass the earth after a gruesome winter, the tall grass assumed a yellow hue—resembling young wheat—and was interspersed with tiny flowers of violets and strawberry-blossoms. It was as if God chose this landscape to soften and nourish our souls, and as the wind was distributed over the ornamented prairie, I closed my eyes and let the beauty refine my imagination.

“Elizabeth, is everything okay?”

“Oh, fine, Anna,” I replied, pulling my cloak closer around my shoulders. “It’s beautiful, isn’t it, sister? The prairie, I mean. The colors and the waving of the grass. It reminds me of the waves on an ocean.”

My younger sister—now nine—nodded. “Remember last year when we had just arrived in this country, we’d play hide-and-seek. We’d sit down in the grass, and it would take forever to find each other. It would totally engulf our small bodies. Usually, I’d give up because the task of finding you was impossible.”

I smiled. “Yes, the prairie was so foreign, just like everything else in the New World. We’d curl up together in bed at night and cry for our homeland. Even though our family was here, I wanted to go ‘home.’ So much has happened in that year.”

“Life has been topsy-turvy,” Anna laughed, using a new American phrase that she had just recently learned.

We Dullys had left Germany mid-February 1859 when the wind was still icy, and the skies bore a dark carpet of snow clouds. We landed in New York City’s harbor on April 16, 1859, after a stormy 90-day voyage across the Atlantic. It wasn’t bad enough that the angry sea had tossed us into oblivion with seasickness, but many of the passengers on board the sailing vessel *Mercury* had suffered from smallpox. Upon arrival in the New World, the ship with its passengers was quarantined due to the danger of the spread of the disease. Even though none of the seven of us—my parents, Maria, Anna, Peter, Heinrich, and me—had, by the grace of God, been infected, we were still compelled to stay on the ship. After enduring the arduous journey, we were



Statue of Liberty, our first view of the New World.

more than anxious to enter the city. Finally, with the three-week infectious period over, we attempted to make our way into *Kleindeutschland*—Little Germany—in the center of New York City.

We were already familiar with the term *Kleindeutschland* from the letters sent by my brother, Michael, in 1858. He and his

fiancé, Magdalena Wagemann, came to “prepare the way,” so to speak, for the rest of us Dullys. Magdalena’s family—her parents, brother and two sisters—had made the trek as well, so when we came the following year, a path had already been laid.

However, by the time we landed in New York City, our relatives were in the Midwest, and we were in New York City for a couple of days before a boat would take us to Chicago and then down the Illinois River to Pekin. There were tearful reunions for Italian, Irish, and German families who got off the ship, but many of the immigrants who arrived in the New World were alone with no relatives to greet them.

Father kept us close to him as we maneuvered around a crowd of ruffians lurking on the street, eyeing the newcomers.

“Stay very close together,” Father whispered. “Don’t wander off or look confused. We need to look as if we know where we’re going, and walk straight towards that dry goods store over there called Macy’s. From there we’ll find *Kleindeutschland*.”

A barefoot, dark-skinned boy tugged at Anna’s skirt, and Father pulled her towards him, brushing the boy aside.

“Keep walking, Anna,” Father insisted.

We got to Macy’s and turned into an alley. Father seemed to know where we were going; however, we all drew back from the stink of rotten vegetables and body odor. The smell was horrendous, and I started to cover my nose when Father whispered to continue and look as if nothing were wrong. With tears in my eyes, I glanced at Mother who nodded in agreement. We all stumbled on, attempting a look of normalcy.

Then a man appeared out of nowhere, displaying a false smile and saying something to us in English. The only thing that I heard was, “cheap, very cheap.” Maybe he was talking about a room for rent.

“No, thank you,” Father answered in the only English that I presumed he knew. However, the man followed us, staying close to us girls until Father saw a policeman and waved his arm to summon him. The man quickly disappeared around the corner, and Father simply tipped his hat as a “thank you” to the officer.

“Look at the beautiful sunset, Liz,” Anna whispered, interrupting my thoughts of those initial days in the New World. I was actually glad to have those memories thwarted. Yes, the sky was sprayed with a myriad of pinks, reds, and oranges as the ball of fire descended behind the carpet of flowers and grass. The last rays reflected the raindrops still on the ground after a brief spring shower. During this seam between day and night, the earth grew still and peaceful, readying itself for sleep and silence.

“You know, whenever the sun sets or rises or when I look at the bright moon in the midnight sky, I think that seven hours earlier in Germany they have already seen this exact sight.” I paused, thinking. “Do you do that, Anna?”

“I did last year when we first came. I do it less now, though. This is home now, and I think less and less about what is happening in Wilgartswiesen.”

“I still think about our village sometimes,” I replied. “I think of what my friend, Elise, must be doing now. She just turned nine on Thursday of last week.”

I had turned ten last month, and Maria was fifteen. We were the two oldest, with Anna, nine, Peter eight, and Heinrich seven. We all had dark hair and eyes, similar to our father's, except for Anna who had light hair and hazel eyes, resembling our Mother's. Michael was the oldest and was now 20 and had been married a year. Our parents—Christoph and Katharina—had been shocked when Michael had decided to come to the New World. I remember the night that he told them as if it were yesterday, and my thoughts drifted back to that evening when we sat by the fire in our cottage in Wilgartswiesen.

“Michael, please sit down so we can discuss this as a family,” I heard my father say to his oldest son as he pulled a chair closer to the fire. “You’re rushing into something that you know nothing about. Going to the New World . . . well, it’s not something that you decide overnight.”

“We didn’t just decide this, Father,” Michael replied as he stuffed his hands into his pockets. His dark eyes shown in the light of the fire. “Magdalena and I have been discussing it for nearly a year now. We have dreams, Father, which we can’t achieve here in Germany.”

Magdalena remained near the door where she had been standing since she and Michael entered the house. She was stiff, and with her brown hair pulled back severely and tied at the nape of her neck, she looked stoic. She and Michael had been engaged for a year now, and their plans to be married were being interrupted by Michael’s summons to join the military.

“So much has happened in the past ten years—taxes have increased drastically, the government continues with strict, unbelievable regulations, churches are being unified against the will of the people, and our freedom is limited. On top of all of that, I’m being forced into a government militia in which I don’t believe, and Magdalena and I are going to leave.” Michael’s voice was adamant, and Father again beckoned him to have a seat.

Having overheard the discussion, Mother entered the room, her face pale and drawn.

“Please, Michael and Magdalena, sit near the fire, and I’ll get us all a cup of coffee. Elizabeth, fetch some cups and saucers, please, dear,” Mother said as she poured water to heat.

I was used to being mother’s kitchen helper, so, dutifully, I scrambled to retrieve the cups, saucers, and utensils.

“We have a plan,” Michael continued as they both sat. I watched Magdalena as she pulled close to my brother, her face set but her eyes moist with tears.

“Magdalena and I will marry once we have reached the New World. It will be better to have been married there than here in Germany. I’ll get a job, and we’ll establish a home during that first year. We’ll send for all of you then.”

“What?” my mother exclaimed. “Are you insane, Michael? Leave Germany?”

“Mother, listen to me. We’ve discussed this already with Magdalena’s family. They are going to go with us when we leave. Magdalena’s brother, Jakob, will soon be summoned for military

duty. The other boys will be called as they reach military age, and they all want to start anew in the New World.”

My parents were silent, both entrenched in their own silent thoughts.

Finally, my mother whispered, “Johann, Catherina, and their children are all going with you?”

Michael nodded. “Yes. It will be difficult, but the decision has been made. Once we have everything established, we’ll let you know. It will give you time to figure out finances, and perhaps we can send money as well.” Michael paused. “Father, do you know that nearly one million Germans have left for the New World in the last ten years? One million. Not all of them can be wrong.” Michael paused again to let that thought settle. He continued. “Immigrants have sent word back to Germany that the New World is incredible. Men are working the mines, cultivating new farms or renovating old ones, founding cities and towns, building shops, factories, and stores. In short, the country is alive with industry, and hopes for the future look bright and promising.”

Father’s eyes searched Mother’s face, but her eyes were downcast. She could focus on no one. As the water boiled, she rose to finish making the coffee.

Finally, Father responded. “We’ll talk about it, Michael. Go forward with your plans, son. I know that God will go with you on this journey.”

“Elizabeth? You’re day dreaming again?” Anna asked as she once more pulled me from my reverie.

I was famous for letting a pause in a conversation lead me into a world of thoughts or carefree dreams.

“I was asking if Elise was still in Wilgartswiesen. I know they were talking about moving,” Anna said.

“Oh, sorry. Guess I *was* daydreaming. No, she and her family moved to Frankfurt for her father’s work. He’s now a clerk in a bank in Frankfurt. Elise thinks that it’s too big of a city and longs to be home in Wilgartswiesen. I told her that she needs to come live with us. Elm Grove is just the right size,” I said with a smile.

“It really is. I’m still not sure how Michael picked out such perfect surroundings. I know he said that he had read that Illinois was a lot like Germany,” Anna said.

“How so?” I asked. “The climate?”

“Well, yes, but the land is also equivalent to Germany’s land—rich and good for farming. I’m just not sure how he picked out little Elm Grove. Maybe because it’s nestled between Tremont and Pekin, both a little bigger than Elm Grove, and we can get necessities easily. Plus, Pekin is right on the Illinois River and is a great river port. The best part is that so many Germans have settled here. We could probably get by without learning English,” Anna inserted with a smile.

“I love learning the new language, though,” I replied. “It’s a challenge, and you know how I love challenges. Anyway, we need it in school.”

“That’s about the only place we really need it, though,” my younger sister inserted. “I’ve noticed that the owners of the grocery stores in Pekin are all from Germany. German is spoken; the

signs are in German; even the merchandise has German writing on the labels. Do you think that that will change eventually?”

“Don’t know. We’ll have to wait and see. Changes occur when we least expect them,” I answered.

Change—if only we knew the changes that would transpire in the next five years. Within six months, Abraham Lincoln would be elected our sixteenth President. More importantly, he would be the first Republican in the nation who represented a party that opposed the spread of slavery. Little did we know how this anti-slavery concept would drastically affect the lives of the Dully family. And equally crucial, we didn’t know that directly on the horizon our nation would face a war like no other that America had seen—the War Between the States. In less than a year, we would be in the midst of a Civil War.

To use Anna’s newly acquired word—our lives would become topsy-turvy.

2

Our First Year In America

SUMMER 1860

We had come to America for the same reason that a million other Germans had come—for freedom, both religious and governmental. We wanted the chance to grow and further our opportunities; plus, we were told that land was cheap and that jobs were plentiful.

Tazewell County, centrally located in Illinois, was a melting pot of immigrants—especially Germans. Located on the rolling banks of the Illinois River, Pekin and Peoria had busy import and export trades, thus offering jobs to Germans from various

occupations—bakers, furniture makers, boat manufacturers, inn keepers, brewers, blacksmiths, barbers, grocery store owners, shoe makers, and even doctors. Because of the number of people pouring into the cities, housing was in short supply, and carpenters, bricklayers, and painters were in demand, and many Germans found their niche in some of these professions. It was amazing, but even Germans without skills found jobs as cooks, maids, gardeners, or day laborers.

Magdalena's parents, three brothers, and sister, though, moved further north to be closer to Magdalena's father's brother, George. George had come to the New World ten years earlier and was a well-established banker near Chicago. Johann and Catherina made the decision to make their home on Lake Michigan near Chicago, and Johann was fortunate enough to get a job in the same bank as his brother. The separation was difficult for Magdalena at the beginning, but her life was with Michael now, and central Illinois—specifically Elm Grove—was soon the place she thought of as “home.”

For all of us Dullys, our life was on the farm. We had been rural people in Germany, and we were rural people in America. Even so, life had been difficult for my parents in Germany, so I believe that they did not see the challenge of the New World as I saw it. To me, my parents' work in the fields and on the farm was a never-ending, grueling job, but they accomplished everything without a word of complaint. They were both attuned to the fact that in order to succeed, they faced a life of hard work and toil—clearing the land, planting the crops, and putting up

a new kind of American fence—rail fences. They wanted their children to have opportunities that they never had, so a struggle was inevitable. I saw life as insanely busy for my parents, and in the early days, we only attended school during the winter months and spent spring and summer in the fields with our folks. Children learned early in life that diligent work was the key to getting ahead in the New World.

During the cold nights, we would sit around the warm, glowing fire. We girls would knit or crochet and would attempt to join into the conversation with the males. Often, we would ask our parents to tell us a story from bygone days. We still loved to hear of life in Germany with its old-world customs and traditions.

One night, Mother told us about her life at the tender age of ten.

“Have I ever told you about my time as a ‘bond servant?’” she asked.

“A ‘bond servant?’” Maria asked. “What is that, Mother?”

“Well, it was a common custom in the early 1800’s. I was given to a rich innkeeper in the nearby village of Hofstatten,” Mother stated. “Money in advance from a rich person would guarantee that a son or daughter was bound to them for a year, learning skills and how to appreciate hard work. Normally, the child would live with the ‘master,’ and would get a few days off each month to return home to see her family. Such was the case with me.”

“Wait, you mean that you didn’t live with your parents but with a stranger?” Anna inquired.

“Well, yes, I guess you could say that. It wasn’t a mean or awful thing to do, Anna. It was a custom and helped bring in extra money. We had very little, you see,” Mother inserted.

“Let her continue, Anna,” Peter stated.

“Well, one of my duties was to help in the inn’s kitchen, and, of course, scrubbing the floor was essential. Unfortunately, the water was normally cold, especially in the winter, and I remember well that many times my fingers became frost bitten not only because of the cold water but also because of the unheated room,” my mother stated. She paused to think for a moment.

“I lost my fingernails during one of the coldest months during my first months of employment, but the innkeeper saw no reason for that to interfere with my work. From then on, I took special precaution to dry my hands at the fire as often as possible when the innkeeper was busy elsewhere.”

“Just a minute,” Anna interrupted, again. “You mean that the innkeeper didn’t care that you had lost your fingernails?”

“I was just an ordinary child to him and not really important. I was an employee, Anna. I know that this is difficult to comprehend, but that was life, darling. But let me continue because I had other tasks,” Mother stated. “Polishing boots for the people staying at the inn was another duty, and that was always done at night when everyone had gone to bed. I remember that that was a delightful task because the inn was still, and I would sit in the candlelight on the stairs and work.” Mother hesitated before continuing.

“Unfortunately, that was not my only nightly job.” Mother’s eyes were downcast, and even though we were young and innocent, we were old enough to fear the worst.

“Mother, you don’t have to tell us unpleasant things,” Peter quickly inserted.

“No, no, it’s fine. It wasn’t really an unpleasant job—just a little scary for a child. You see, I would be sent into the forest after dusk to hunt sticks for the fuel in the inn. I would bundle them carefully, tie them, and then balance them on my head to make the trek back to the inn. I must have looked foolish, but this was the easiest way to get them back to the inn.

“People would often see me doing this, and one day a funeral director from Wilgartswiesen saw me. He got a bright idea and asked me if I thought I could balance caskets on my head. Of course, I had no idea, but he asked my ‘master’ if he could ‘borrow’ me from time to time. I ended up retrieving the caskets in Hofstatten, and then I’d carry them on my head down to Wilgartswiesen—a ten-mile journey.”

“You’re making this up,” Anna said with a gleeful smile.

“No, it’s true. Cross my heart.”

We all laughed at the vision of Mother carrying caskets on her head. Unheard of!

The New World was just that to us immigrants—new and sometimes even funny. Farming utensils were new and unusual; homes, language, and food were all new and unique to us. Corn was one of the most important new and extraordinary foods for us. It changed our lives! We had never had corn before, and by

fall we children had our first taste of corn-on-the-cob, dousing it with butter and stuffing ourselves night after night. However, that was just the beginning—corn chowder, corn fritters, johnny-cakes, mush, corn pudding, tortillas, popcorn, and my favorite—cornbread. It was sweet, succulent, and piping hot. I drenched it with butter and strawberry jam, and, in my estimation, it was better than any German or American dessert.

We didn't realize it then, but we were about to experience the biggest change in American history since the American Revolution. A hundred years earlier, the colonists had rejected English dominance, and the Patriots fought the British—it was the start of the American Revolution which freed the colonists, and America was established. Likewise, with upcoming political, governmental, presidential, and revolutionary events, we were on the cusp of turmoil in America; the first spark of the Civil War was about to be lit.

My father and Michael had both been very interested in the political progress in Germany, so when Michael moved to the New World, he immediately became involved in learning about America's political system. He educated my father when we arrived, so on nights that Michael and Magdalena joined us for dinner, politics became a common topic, just as it had been in Germany.

"I don't understand John Calhoun's ideas for the States, Michael. What is he proposing?" Father asked one night during

a discussion about the U.S. Constitution, which was still a new concept for all of us.

“Who is Calhoun?” I asked, knowing little about politics.

“John Calhoun is a politician from South Carolina who defends slavery,” Father inserted.

“You mean he agrees with having slavery?” I questioned.

Father nodded as Michael continued.

“Calhoun and others believe that the States have the right to act independently from the federal government and not accept all federal acts,” Michael replied and then paused to think. “Calhoun believes that States should have the right to nullify federal acts that they believe are unconstitutional. It is leading to thoughts of secession from the Union in the southern states.”

“What is secession?” I asked as I listened intently to the conversation.

“Withdrawal of the States from the federal government,” Michael replied.

“It’s a dangerous concept, isn’t it, Michael?” Father asked.

“From what I understand about it, yes, it is. However, that’s not the only problem right now. There’s also the Abolition Movement,” Michael said. He stopped and seemed unwilling to continue. “Perhaps we can talk about this in private, Father. There are things that I want to discuss with you. It’s a rather delicate topic for dinner discussion right now. Maybe in a few weeks we can talk about this topic with the family.”

Father nodded and for the time being, the topic came to a halt.

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The fall of 1860 rolled around, and the Presidential election was in full swing. Again, political discussion at the table was inevitable. Abraham Lincoln, John Breckinridge, John Bell, and Stephan Douglas were the main topics of conversation.

Having an *elected* President was, of course, new to us. It was astounding that the common male was able to vote and

elect a leader. We felt proud to live in Illinois where Abe Lincoln had grown up, and Lincoln had been a familiar figure in the Tazewell County Courthouse during his days as a lawyer. Because of Lincoln's stance on anti-slavery, Michael and my father were advocates for Mr. Lincoln.

In the month leading up to the election of November 6, 1860, Michael and Father had spent long hours alone in the barn or elsewhere—we hadn't been privy to their whereabouts or conversations during many of the evening hours.

Unbeknownst to the rest of the family, since Michael's arrival in the New World, he had actually been involved with the anti-slavery movement. After hearing details, Father wanted to become a part of this important movement. With Father's permission, Michael gathered all of us into the parlor one evening soon after the election of our new President to give us details of recent happenings.

"Mother, you may think that this is information not to be shared with the children, but I assure you that they need to hear. Father and I—plus Magdalena—are involved in ending a situation which has ravaged America since the 1600's. Slavery."

Michael waited for a reaction from Mother but rather got one from my younger sister, Anna. "What's slavery?" she asked, almost stumbling over the unfamiliar word.

"It's the un-Christian belief that Whites are better than the Blacks, and that we have the permission to do with them as we wish. Some Whites work the Blacks to death, beat them, keep them captive, and . . ."

“That’s enough, Michael. The children get the idea,” Mother warned. “Go ahead.”

“The North has been trying to abolish the slave laws, and the South has been fighting us. The primary reason is that the South needs slaves to pick cotton and tobacco, and with the invention of the cotton gin and the demand for these products back in the Old World, the slaves have become of even greater importance,” Michael stated.

“I’m confused,” inserted Maria. “I thought I heard Anabelle Kellogg say that her mother had a Black servant in their family. Someone who did kitchen work.”

“Yes, Maria,” Michael replied. “There are Northerners who have Blacks who work for them. It’s really not like in the South, though.”

“How so?” asked Maria.

“Well, many slaves in the South live in dirt huts; families can be broken up because of the sale of slaves; Black slaves can be beaten; and oftentimes slaves are considered inhuman. Of course, those conditions are not always like that in the South. There are kind people who treat the slaves well, just as in the North. And then there are Northerners who don’t treat the Black servants with kindness. However, the hatred that goes on is what the anti-slavery and Abolition Movement is all about in a nutshell,” Michael concluded.

“What has all of this got to do with us, Michael?” Mother asked rather impatiently.

“The North decided in the early 1800’s to try to help the slaves. They invented what is called ‘The Underground Railroad’

to transport slaves from the South into freedom.” Michael paused, thinking before continuing. “It’s not a true railroad, so let me explain. The means of transportation is usually not really a railroad at all but rather covered wagons, horses, carriages, boats, or farm wagons. If by wagon, the fugitive will hide in it, and the person helping the slave escape will devise an excuse for travel.”

Mother had a confused look on her face.

“Let me give you an example, Mother. One might need to take a wagon into town to sell vegetables or tools. Using the vegetables or tools as a cover, the agent transporting the fugitive would go north to the next ‘station,’ thus, getting the slave closer to freedom up north.”

“You’re involved in this illegal work, Michael, and now you, Chris, are involved as well?” Mother exclaimed. “It *is* illegal, isn’t it?”

“Yes,” Father replied, hesitantly. “It’s illegal, but it’s work to save the Blacks from the drudgery of being slaves.” Father thought for a while before continuing, obviously searching for the right words. “We are Christians, Katharina, and no one is better than another person in God’s eyes. As I see it, it is God’s work that we’re doing.”

Mother was silent. Finally, she commented, “There are other Christians who are not doing this work. I’m sure of that. Not everyone in the church is helping the Black slaves.”

“Yes, this is true. Many people are closing their eyes to what is happening to the slaves. However, Michael and I have decided that we can’t. God has called us to help, and you and the children must be made aware of what we are doing.”

“There have been bitter debates about slavery, its abolition, and the rights of fugitives, and this has given way to an extreme separation of the North and the South.” Michael had picked up the conversation where Father had left off. “Abraham Lincoln is against slavery, and we believe that there is going to be an uprising from the South now that he is President. The need to continue to move Black slaves to the North to freedom is still necessary. The Underground Railroad’s work is needed; in fact, it’s needed right here in Tazewell County.”

Michael hesitated for a moment and then concluded. “And Father and I can’t say ‘no’ to God. He has called us to do His work.”