

Sophia and Otto are Nick's great, great grandparents

# BRAVING THE UNKNOWN

*Otto Hegar and Sophie Hessig Come to Texas in 1846*



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## PREFACE

Very little was known about our immigrant ancestors Otto Hegar and Sophie Hessig Hegar except the few vital statistics stated on the Hegar Family Tree printed in the early 1900's in Germany and sent to heads of Hegar families in Texas. Present generations knew nothing of Sophie's background other than the fact that her father was a clergyman in Michelstadt. So it was a challenge to see just what could be found about these families both here and in Germany. It has been a real labor of love, and each new discovery has been a thrill. Unfortunately, the greatest handicap was the fact that I started a good many years too late. The "old-timers" who could have been of tremendous help in adding information and "color" to my story were gone. Most of my information had to be obtained through library, court house, and archives research. Only a precious few stories were handed down through relatives. That is the saddest statement to be made and the lesson to be learned from my experience. Cousins, take note. Write down the things that happen in your family's trip through life. They may not seem important or especially interesting at the time but many years from now you will be glad you took the time to do this. The world is changing so fast. Your grandchildren will no doubt find your experiences quaint and unusual.

Life in early Texas was indeed an unusual experience. How I wish we knew more about the things that our ancestors did and thought. I have tried to place them in this certain place at this certain time and tell what life must have been like then. I have collected as many documents and photographs as possible for illustration. Meagre though it is, I hope it will serve as a stimulant for you to think back on those early days and appreciate the heritage that is ours.

There are many blank areas. I will continue to research.

But, in the meantime, I thought it best to compile all known facts at this time. I hope the information is accurate. If there are errors or omissions, I regret them. If anyone can add to this genealogy I would be most grateful to hear from you and will in turn share the information with all interested parties.

I appreciate all the help and encouragement I received from family members.

*Frances*

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NOTE: Sophie Hessig's name on church records in Michelstadt was spelled with an "e" at the end, but it was pronounced as our "a". Therefore, in Texas it was Anglicized and came to be spelled as "Sophia". I have changed the spelling in the story to conform with this practice when appropriate except when shown otherwise on records.

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## BRAVING THE UNKNOWN

OTTO HEGAR AND SOPHIE HESSIG COME TO TEXAS IN 1846

The year was 1845. The Republic of Texas had just been recognized as a state, the twenty-eighth state, by the official signing of the Document of Recognition by President Andrew Jackson. Sam Houston and Thomas J. Rush were elected the first U.S. Senators from Texas. J. Pinckney Henderson was governor. The Lone Star Flag of the Republic of Texas was replaced by the Star Spangled Banner of the United States of America, which was the fifth flag to wave over Texas. Thousands of settlers were coming here mainly from the southern states but also from foreign countries, notably Germany. "Western fever" was in the air.

Half-way around the world in Germany people were being enticed by immigration agents who pictured life in "the great state of Texas in the great Union of the States" as full of opportunities in its huge area of underdeveloped lands. The land was fertile, the climate mild, they said. With hard work a man could make his fortune. These advertisements sounded very attractive in the Germany of the 1840's, where there was much poverty, taxes were oppressive, and the population was too large to be supported by the resources of the land. Young men, unless they inherited their father's business or land, had no place to go. Even those who had struggled through a university in those difficult years ended up earning a scant living. And all young men were subject to lengthy compulsory military service. There was much unrest in the yet-to-be united Germany during the 1840's and it was setting the stage for the Revolution of 1848.

It was not a pretty picture and it is easy to see why a

young man would want to strike out for a new life in a new world as 25 year old George Christian Friedrich Otto Hegar of Darmstadt, Hessen, Germany did in the year 1846, leaving behind his parents, Johann August and Maria Caroline Stutzer Hegar, and seven brothers and sisters.

The reasons that Otto Hegar, in particular, decided to immigrate are not clear. He came from a professional family, his father being a Health Official of the area, so in all probability his family was not in dire financial straits. He was an educated man, probably university trained, but perhaps he was not following in the path that his family wished. For a number of generations the Hegars had been in the Civil Service connected with the ruling family of Hessen. Mainly they had been in the medical field. On the other hand, his mother's family, the Stutzers, had served in the military for many generations. Perhaps there was a strong family influence for him to go in one of those directions. Or perhaps he was a political activist in the university or elsewhere and felt pressure to leave the country. His letter for specific information on immigration during August or September might indicate that he needed or wanted to leave Germany as soon as possible. It could be that he did not wish to serve in the military at all and this was his opportunity to abandon that responsibility as many of his countrymen were trying to do. Also, no doubt, there was an element of adventure in the immigration.

Any one or more of these reasons may have stimulated Otto to leave his native land. We do know, however, that he was not a farmer, had no experience whatsoever in farming, so it is surprising that he would undertake a new life as a farmer in such an undeveloped area as Texas and remain in that environment the remainder of his life. He did not seem to have any ambition to better his lot in spite of his obvious

intellect and education. This remains the mystery of Otto Hegar.

But strike out for Texas Otto did. Along with a friend, Dr. Christian Linck of Darmstadt, he headed for the port of Antwerp and sailed from there on the three-masted ship "Colchis" on September 1, 1846 under the command of Captain Knight.

As most other immigrants to Texas had done, he signed a contract for "The Protection of German Immigrants in Texas" with the Adelsverein, an organization of princes and noblemen endeavoring to promote German colonization in Texas. Upon depositing a certain amount of money (\$120 for every single man, \$240 for every married man) the immigrant was assured of transportation to the colony lands, a grant of land (single man 320 acres, married man 640 acres) and ample provisions, clothing, and farming implements, housing, etc. to care for him until the first crop had been made and harvested.

Unfortunately, as we shall see later, this contract did little more than supply transportation for Otto to the port of entry, Galveston.

If the "Colchis" was similar to other ships sailing from Antwerp in those days, passengers had to provide their own food. They were advised to take a store of provisions for about three months, including bread, crackers, rice, beans, potatoes, coffee, sugar, smoked or salted meat, dried fruit, beer, and lemons especially to help improve the drinking water when it became stale. As Otto was unmarried, one wonders if he prepared his own meals.

Passengers were required to provide their own bedding and straw mattresses and could have luggage which took up a space of only about three feet long, three feet high and two feet wide. A locked box was recommended.



It was also recommended that the immigrants take along serviceable clothing, bedding, fishing tackle, hunting gear, ropes, whetstones, grindstones, some tools, garden implements, seeds, indispensable kitchen utensils, mirror, and some small decoration for the house which could afford happy reminders of the home they left behind. Just what Otto brought along on the trip is not known. Family members today have no recollection of hearing about any item that was brought from Germany.

Conditions on board ship coming over were not pleasant for the 167 passengers and crew members who were living in cramped, crowded quarters. It was cold, windy, noisy, dirty, and smelly. There was much seasickness, and food spoiled after a few weeks, some of it becoming alive with vermin. Sometimes the ship would sail only 4 miles in one day because of the lack of wind. However, as there were no specific incidents recorded for this voyage, it can be assumed that it was considered normal for the times. There was no mutiny when the passengers became hungry, no fire, no shipwreck, no severe storms, no mass sickness and subsequent deaths as were recorded on other voyages during this period.

The most significant thing that happened on the voyage from our family's point of view is the meeting of Otto Hegar and Sophie Wilhelmine Hessig from Michelstadt, Hessen, Germany. She was traveling with members of her family: older sister Charlotte with husband Ernst Weigand (Weygand) of Beerfelden, Hessen and two or three of their children, Alfred, Emelie, and possibly Edward whose birthplace is sometimes given on later U.S. Censuses as Germany, sometimes Texas. Perhaps he was born on the ocean voyage! As passenger records show Ernst Weigand traveling with a party of nine it is not known who the others might have been. They were unnamed. Brother Albert Hessig was also on board. He later

married a fellow passenger on the "Colchis", Christine Gleissner, who was traveling with a large number of her family and who later settled in the same area as the Weigands and Otto Hegar. Alfred, however, died in 1852.

Sophie was 17 years old, dark-haired, petite, and energetic, judging from characteristics later in life. Otto must have seen in her the potential for a wife and helpmate in meeting the challenges of his new life. When considering marriage in early Texas, domestic qualities and virtues were more essential than an education, beauty, or social graces. German women were especially coveted because of their hard-working characteristics compared to "American" women who were considered lazy by comparison. Also, in Texas there were few single women at all!

Sophie said later in life that she and Otto could never have married had they stayed in Germany because they were from different backgrounds. A member of the professional community would never have married someone from the clergy in those days of class consciousness.

Sophie's mother had died in 1841. Some family members say there was an indication that Sophie's health may not have been good and perhaps it was thought that Texas would be better for her than the cold damp climate of Germany. But regardless of reasons, immigrate she did, and after 59 days at sea the "Colchis" arrived at Galveston on October 30, 1846. As our ancestors approached the shore, one wonders what their thoughts and expectations were.

It is not known exactly what happened during the next year. After the ship docked at Galveston, which was the best and most frequented port in Texas in 1846, the immigrants may have been a bit uneasy. Galveston was a small town of wooden buildings which looked to the Europeans who were used

to sturdy stone buildings like a town of fragile paper toys. The island was flat and almost treeless and was swarming with immigrants and cunning people who were taking advantage of them. Between 1844 and 1847 the Adelsverein alone had brought 7200 immigrants to Texas on about 60 ships before it went bankrupt in 1847. It was said that in 1846 there were more Germans in Galveston and Houston than Americans!

The facilities here were limited, so most people, if possible, stayed only until transportation could be provided to the interior, where they were told, health conditions would be greatly improved. Galveston's climate was unpredictable, storms were common, and disease was rampant, mainly dysentery and yellow fever. The death rate was high. There had been a terrible epidemic there the previous winter. It was caused by a disease called "petechial fever" (now called cerebro-spinal meningitis or scurvy accompanied by dysentery). Winter, however, was the best time to arrive here because the mosquitos had disappeared and yellow fever had somewhat subsided.

The war between the U.S. and Mexico for the possession of Texas had begun in May 1846 and this affected the plans of many settlers. Transportation to the interior was difficult to come by as most of the teamsters were offered higher wages by the U.S. Government to transport Army supplies. Many immigrants were stranded at Galveston and Indianola. Perhaps Otto Hegar stayed at the Washington, William Tell, or Tremont Hotels for awhile, or perhaps he camped out with his new-found friends, as many of the Germans did. In all probability he did not tarry long here but headed for Houston as soon as he could either book passage on a river boat up the Buffalo Bayou, which was the only expeditious transportation, or secure a way via wagon or stage coach. Travel by land, however, was difficult at this time of year as the heavy rains

made the trails called roads almost impassable.

There is no reason to believe that Otto knew the Weigand-Hessig families before his overseas voyage. But he obviously stayed with them after his arrival in Texas. His friend Dr. Christian Linck went on to Philadelphia at some point, probably early, and Otto cast his lot with his new friends.

Probably hearing of the mismanagement by the Adelsverein leaving many immigrants stranded, sick, and dying, and of the Indian problems farther west, Otto and his friends abandoned plans to follow through with the German Society. Instead of going to New Braunfels or Fredericksburg via Indianola, they decided to head in another direction via Houston.

It is not known how long they remained in Houston, if at all. Next to Galveston, Houston was the largest and most progressive city in the state, but quite rustic compared to European towns. It was alternately a dusty or muddy, bustling place. It had a population of 4000 with many stores, a large cotton gin, iron foundry, steam saw mill, 3 flour mills, various craft shops, several schools, and 4 churches. Drunkenness, gambling, crimes, and vice were rampant. It was enough to repel newcomers of a more civilized bent and encourage them to head elsewhere as soon as possible. But it was the place to purchase the much-needed supplies even though the prices were sometimes outrageous. A good horse and a good rifle were absolute necessities in this wilderness country.

So on the travelers went. One can only speculate how they came to settle in the northwest corner of Harris County, which became part of Grimes in 1848 and later Waller County in 1873. Immigrants were especially warned to be cautious in their land dealings and to be alert for crooks ready to take advantage of them. Did they just travel so far and

stop and decide that was the place? Did they explore the area ahead of making a decision on their final destination? Or did they know of other Germans who had previously settled in this area and decided to join them? An affirmative answer to the last question seems most likely.

Traveling from Houston to that northwest corner of Harris County was probably not easy. In that section of the country roads were just dirt pathways sometimes marked by notches on trees. There might be stumps left in pathways insuring a jolt here and there. "Plumbing the tract", the Texas term for tracing a road, was a slow and tedious operation, and it was difficult to get information on directions. In those days, a trip from Houston to Washington, for example, might take 7 days in good weather if the roads were passable. It would take twice that long in bad weather. Camping gear had to be taken so overnight camps could be set up. Sometimes only 6-8 miles per day would be traveled. If streams were flooded it was necessary to wait until the water subsided so a crossing could be made as there were no bridges. Wagons might sink 1-2 feet in the mud in bad spots and frequently had to be unloaded in order to be freed from the mud.

As there were no railroads at that time, only a wagon, stage, or horse was used for transportation. Of course, traveling by foot was not unusual for short distances. In all probability since a number of families were traveling together, the group either bought or hired wagons to carry themselves and their supplies to their destinations.

The route Otto Hegar, the Weigands, Hessigs, Gleissners, Schutz, and perhaps other German immigrants from the "Colchis" traveled to northwest Harris County is unknown. The most likely route was probably one of the oldest stage coach and wagon roads running through this area known as the Houston-Anderson Road established in 1834. It crossed the northwest

Harris corner at New Kentucky, fording Three Mile Creek, Brushy Creek, and Walnut Creek, heading for Anderson. But it was the region around Spring and ThreeMile Creeks that these immigrants stopped and eventually bought property.

The first definite record made after Otto's arrival in Texas was the record in Harris County on November 16, 1847 of his marriage to Sophie. It is not known where they lived before they bought property.

In 1850 Otto, 27 years old, was recorded on the U.S. Census in Grimes County, Texas. In his household were his wife Sophia, 22, and his brother William, 26. It has not been determined when or how William came to Texas, but we do know that he did not come with Otto as his name was not on the "Colchis" passenger list. Soon thereafter William married Mina (initials on gravestone are R.F.W.) Bender and no doubt moved to his own place.

On the 29th of October, 1850, Otto appeared before Joseph P. Portis, Commissioner appointed by the Governor of Texas, to secure the lands to which he was entitled under the German Immigration Company Contract. As a married man he received a certificate for 640 acres in Sections 292 and 327 in Hudson's District #9. which lay in the area of present day Concho County near San Angelo. Since this was well known to be Commanche Indian territory, it is not surprising that Otto chose not to settle in that isolated part of Texas. Instead he sold his share for \$25 on March 21, 1854!

Most of the people aboard the "Colchis" were granted land in Giddings District #3 nearer Harris County. One wonders why Otto's and Ernst Weigand's land grants were in Hudson's #9, so far away. It may be that they signed on later than the others.

Otto purchased 280½ acres of land (Deed Book 2, p.650,

Grimes County) from his brother William in 1853 but sold it to J.S.McClellen in 1860. The purchase on which Otto and Sophia had their main homestead and raised their family was the one made from Ellis Jones and wife on December 7, 1859 (Deed Book 2, pp654-656) of 77½ acres of land. This piece of property is presently owned by the family of Effie Hegar Tucker, daughter of Otto's youngest son, Otto George. Whether a house already existed when the property was purchased or the Hegars had one built is not known, but old-timers referred to it as "the old house in the woods". This land was part of the old Samuel McCurley Survey. McCurley and Samuel C. Neil were among the first settlers in the Republic of Texas who received large grants of land in this area.

Although there are no records of Otto's and Sophia's life in early Texas, we can imagine that it would follow the general life-style described by other pioneers in letters, diaries, and books.

Life here in 1847 and the years thereafter was not easy. The farther one came inland from the coastal cities, the less civilized life became. The settlers had to be able to adapt to many unexpected situations. They had to be energetic, resourceful, thrifty, not afraid to put in many hours of hard work, and willing to endure many hardships. It was said that whoever did not work in Texas would not harvest. But gradually most of these difficulties eased up and the people later looked back on their experiences with a feeling of pride and satisfaction.

This was mainly a country of young people. Approximately 80% of the male population was under 40 years of age and 86% of the females were under 40. Most were honest, generous, hospitable, sincere, hardworking individuals, and most were farmers.

In the settling of a place, as well as cultivation, it was highly advantageous for the German immigrants to secure the supervision and help of an American or a German who had been in the country for a while. Crops, soil, and weather were all different from what they had been used to at home. A great deal of adjustment was necessary. This particular land had been settled earlier, mainly by Anglo-Americans, many from Stephen F. Austin's original colony, although many immigrants from Germany came in about the time Otto arrived. Germans, especially, liked to stay close to each other. They were tradition-bound and preferred to cling to their old-world manners and customs, as far as possible.

As Otto and Sophia had come to Texas as single people, they probably brought nothing in the way of household furnishings. When they married and set up housekeeping, their furniture probably had to be made by hand locally or purchased in Houston. Unfortunately, none of these early pieces is known to exist today. Effie and Alma, granddaughters, remembered a large four-poster bed which had been Sophia's. Otto George had told his daughter Alma that she had been born in this same bed and same room that he had been born in many years previously. Maye, daughter of Alfred, owns a small butter dish said to have been brought from the old country by Sophia. But nothing else is known of those early furnishings and that early house. In fact, the exact location of the house is in dispute.

Provisions were scarce, even after the Civil War. There were plenty of fish from Spring and Three Mile Creeks and much game, but ammunition was hard to get. Nevertheless, being able to hunt and bear arms was considered a privilege since in Europe that right was reserved for only the nobility and gentry.

Wild berries, plums, and grapes were plentiful and nuts



abounded. Pecans, hickory, and black walnuts could be found throughout the area. Corn, sweet potatoes, squash, peas, beans, turnips, and cabbage grew well here although some of these vegetables were not what the Germans were used to. Corn being a main crop, corn meal was used almost exclusively for bread. Wheat flour was a luxury. Even sugar was scarce until sugar cane was introduced.

As Otto was not from a farming family, he had little background in the basics of farming to begin with. He cultivated his land, which had probably been cleared previously, with the help of his sons or white labor. He did not have a large plantation and possessed no slaves. Oxen were usually used for pulling the plows and all planting was done by hand. The immigrants were warned to protect themselves against the hot Texas sun which they were unused to, so little work could be done during mid-day in the summertime. His property was quite wooded and what was not cultivated for crops was left to pasture land for raising cattle on a small scale. Pastures in the area were luxuriant and with the mild climate, the cattle could graze outside all year. They required little care.

The women were kept busy in the house. Besides the usual cleaning, washing, ironing, cooking, and helping with some of the outside chores, they had the responsibility for making lye soap, spinning, weaving, making clothes for the family, caring for the sick, and of course, caring for and teaching the children. One old lady remarked that early Texas was "A Heaven for men and dogs but a Hell for women and oxen!" And, too, many women missed the convenience of their former homes and the families left behind. Fortunately, Otto had a brother and family, and Sophia had her sister Charlotte's family nearby. Also their younger sister Auguste had come to Texas in 1854 and had married August Hillegeist,

a neighbor. But he had been killed in a tragic explosion while working at a powder mill on Spring Creek during the Civil War in 1863. She was left with 3 children and later married William Reuter, and then Fritz Grusendorf. She lived for a time in Schulenberg and died in Lexington, Tx in 1895,

By 1860 Otto and Sophia had August Friedrich, age 3 and Alfred Carl, age 1 year. Nearby William and Mina had Elizabeth, age 8, and Caroline Mathilde, a few months old.

The Civil War started in 1861, and although Texas was considered a slave state, most Germans opposed both slavery and ~~secession~~ prior to that time. Few, if any, were slave holders and this opposition set them at odds with the majority of the population. However, as the struggle developed between the states in 1861-65, many Germans living in Grimes and nearby Harris County volunteered for service and became excellent soldiers, including the Hegar brothers.

Otto enlisted on August 28, 1863, when he was 43 years old. He was promoted to 5th SGT. on November 1 and served in the Quartermaster Division, Company D, 4th Regiment Infantry, Texas State Troops at Camp San Jacinto near Huntsville. He served until January 29, 1864 when he was released because of myopia(near-sightedness).

A daughter, Julia Emma, had been born to the Hegars on December 21, 1861, and just before Otto's enlistment Otto George had been born on August 24, 1863.

The period after the Civil War was an even more difficult time for everyone. The government had undergone many changes. No person could vote until he had taken the Oath of Allegiance to the United States. And although Otto had served his adopted country during the war, he was not a citizen then and did not

get around to becoming naturalized until October 2, 1878 in Waller County.

There are few records of the family following the Civil War. They are not even listed on the 1870 Census. They probably spent their time working long hours to eke out an existence, as others were doing. Agriculture Records of 1860 and 1880 show the extent of their property.

The boys no doubt helped with the chores, but Alfred seemed to be the only one who accepted farming as a lifetime occupation. Julia Emma died in 1877 and according to family members, Sophia's health was not good. It was young Otto's responsibility to work close to the house in the event his mother needed help.

Neither Otto nor Sophia spoke English, although they did understand the spoken word. One wonders why they did not learn the language of their adopted country as they were both educated, Otto quite extensively. That may account for his not trying to advance himself in a field other than farming. Otto is known to have been an avid reader. He frequently received books from Germany and exchanged these for others belonging to nearby German friends and relatives. Neighbors reported seeing him traveling by horseback with his saddle bags filled with books. Reading among the people in this isolated area was not a common practice.

While the children spoke only German at home, they were sent to Enoch McPherson's school where they learned English, writing in beautiful penmanship, reading, and some "numbers" (arithmetic). Mr. McPherson was an educated man of Scottish ancestry from Indiana who first taught a small number of pupils at his and others' homes but later taught in a small crude building which the families of the community had built. This schoolhouse bore his name. It was located in the area known as the Springer Community, later called the Hegar Com-

munity.

Shortly before 1880 oldest son August left home to live with the Weigand family because it is believed he had difficulties with his father who appeared to be a severe taskmaster. It might also have been due to the fact that he wanted to earn some money on his own, or/and he wanted to live closed to his cousin Louis, son of William, with whom he always retained a close relationship, or -- he had an interest in a special young lady living near the Weigands, Katherine "Kate" Bauer.

The two cousins were fun-loving and did many things together, including marrying sisters at a double ceremony on December 23, 1880, Louis marrying Mary Bauer. The Henry Bauer family had immigrated from Germany to Massachusetts where the girls were born and had then come to Texas after the Civil War. They lived on the Hockley prairie.

August and Kate lived for a while in a small house near her parents but later acquired more property on which they built a new home about 1895. August did some farming but his main emphasis was in ranching, He and Kate continued to live here until they were both in their 80's, taking care of each other. August had helped organize the first banks in Tomball and Waller as well as the first telephone company in Tomball before Southwestern Bell.

Alfred Carl married Hellen Florence Loyd on September 9, 1882. Hellen was the daughter of John Isaac Loyd and his wife Tabbitha Martin who came to Montgomery County from Dale County, Alabama in 1872. Both of them, as well as their parents and grandparents had been born in North Carolina. The John Isaac family first settled near Willis but later bought property near the present-day Montgomery-Waller County

lines. Alfred and Hellen probably met at school and evidently carried on quite a long courtship as evidenced by a romantic poem Alfred wrote to her on Valentine's Day, 1880, which still exists today. They bought property close to her father's place in Montgomery County from William F. Randall in 1884, on which stood a sturdy house believed to have been built prior to the Civil War. It was here that Hellen and Alfred lived for over 40 years raising their family. In 1928 they moved to Houston where they spent their last years.

Alfred spent his entire life mainly as a farmer, raising crops for sale as well as growing food and livestock for his family's needs. However, on the side, he acted as a Notary Public and helped his neighbors in many ways. Although his formal education was limited, he continued to expand his learning by reading as much as he could get access to, and neighbors therefore respected him and called upon him for advice for everything from treating snake-bite to dispensing legal advice to growing the latest developed vegetables to treating a sick person when no doctor was available.

George Christian Friedrich Otto Hegar died on November 9, 1885. No evidence exists which would indicate the state of his health or the cause of his death. He was buried next to his daughter Julia Emma in the small enclosure which is now incorporated into the present Hegar Family Cemetery. This is believed to be near the original homestead but not on the family property. Reason for this location is not known. This early burial ground was enclosed by an ornate wrought-iron fence which was typical of the times. Beautiful gravestones marked each grave. Inscriptions thereon were carved in German.

Young Otto was the only son remaining at home, where

he continued to live even after his marriage to Fannie Alice Page on January 20, 1887. Alice was the daughter of James Jackson "Jack" Page and Elizabeth Page, cousins born in North Carolina but who later moved to Florida. They came on to Texas in 1871 and lived in the Harvester Community near Hegar.

Alice spoke no German, Sophia spoke no English, but somehow they worked out an amicable arrangement in operating the household. Their harmony was facilitated by the fact that Alice was a very easy-going, congenial person.

Later on the old homestead was dismantled. Part of it, called "Grandma's room" was moved to a more convenient spot near what is now the Springer-Macedonia Church and a new house was added to it. Grandchildren recall it resembled the present house of Frank Hegar, descendant of William, on Hegar Road. The road passed nearby and it was here that young Otto ran his general store and post office, in addition to doing some farming on the side. This area came to be known as the Hegar Community and was an important meeting place for nearby residents. Otto and Alice continued to operate the store and post office until 1908 when they moved to Tomball. His and his customers' repeated crop failures made him seek a new way to provide for his family. The railroad had run a new line from Houston to Dallas through Tomball, and a round-house had been built there. Otto decided to invest in a hotel which was built and named Hegar Hotel, but was sold a few years later. He became Postmaster and remained in that position many years, with Alice as his Assistant. He also served as Mayor of Tomball from 1938-44. They were both very active in civic and church activities throughout their lives. They lived their last years with their daughter, Effie Tucker, in Galveston.

As Sophia's father and some of her grandfathers for a number of generations back had been clergymen (it being customary in Germany in those days for children of clergymen to marry children of other clergymen) she maintained her faith while in Texas as much as was possible. In the earliest days there was no church nearby, and precious few circuit preachers available to spread the word of God to people in those isolated communities. There was a German Lutheran Church in Rose Hill, near Tomball, organized about 1852, but it was about 12-13 miles from her home and travel that far by horse and buggy was not easy. She was not a frequent attendant but church records show her serving as sponsor to a number of children's baptisms during the 1870-1890 period.

Later when the Macedonia United Methodist Church was organized in 1892 by a visiting Circuit Rider named W.C. Bracewell, she became an active member. The first services were held in the old McPherson School but a small building was soon erected by men of the community. This was located near her home and she participated in many of its activities. It is remembered that she helped organize the children's May Day Celebration one year. She and the children decorated the grounds and church with flowers for the special program in which the children gave "Readings".

Sophia continued to live with Otto and Alice in the Hegar Community until her death on April 13, 1904. Even though she suffered from a crippling ailment (arthritis? stroke?) and walked humped-over with a little skipping motion, she continued to do her bit in maintaining the household. Grandchildren remember that she cooked and swept the floors until the end. Others remember her sitting in her rocking chair trying to draw a picture of Otto as she had no photographs to remember him by. None exist so it is difficult to imagine what her Otto looked like. However, inasmuch as

August and Alfred resemble each other, and Otto George was darker and resembled his mother more, one can assume that the two older boys looked more like their father. August had red hair as a young man which is a characteristic of present-day Hegars in Germany. Whether the elder Otto was tall or short is not known. Unfortunately, we have photographs of Sophia only in her later years after time and toil and poor health had taken their toll.

Thus ended the life of Sophie Wilhelmine Hessig Hegar. She was laid to rest beside her husband, daughter, and a number of grandchildren who had preceded her in death. A beautiful marble stone marks her grave.

Sophia and Otto had left their homeland in 1846, without a doubt, seeking a better life for themselves. Little did they know the challenges that they would have to face. It had been a hard struggle. But they had overcome the obstacles, raised their family as best they knew how in this different, difficult environment, and their children, in turn, did their best to be good citizens, honest, hard-working people. And so the generations go on and on.

No male heirs exist in the Otto Hegar line today, but a number have descended from the William Hegar family. Ranchers, teachers, engineers, ministers, store-keepers, accountants, carpenters, homemakers, etc.-- the Hegar-Hessig blood added to the richness of all of our lives. We wish we could know more about our ancestors and their early Texas experiences. But what we do know convinces us that they were a noble, hearty lot, and we are proud to be their descendants.