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The early names for the Fedor community were Bluff Creek, Moab, and West Yegua (YEHwah). Yegua is the Spanish name for mare and became the name for a creek. The name change to Fedor began when August Polnick, an early Wendish settler, decided to move to Thorndale, and in 1882 sold his store to a Jewish immigrant from Germany, Fedor Soder. Soder, having previously owned a store with a post office in Serbin, was presumably aware of the importance of a post office for attracting business, and in 1883 obtained approval for mail service to be housed in his new store.

The postal station was named Fedor. The first Wend to migrate to the area was Andreas Melde, obtaining land at Bluff Creek three miles from West Yegua, in 1855. The most significant step, however, in making it a Wendish settlement came on December 2, 1869 when George Boback, also Wendish, (see Newsletter October 2002) began, purchasing blocks of land until he owned approximately 3,000 acres. Boback then sold off smaller parcels to other Wends on time payments.

Most of the early Fedor settlers were Saxon Wends and in addition to Melde and Boback there were such names as Biar, Pillack, Dube, Urban, Moerbe, Symmank, Wuensche, Handrick, Zschech, and Falke. As citizens of Saxony, these Wends had not suffered from the religious dictates of the Prussian king and his forced union of the Lutheran and Calvinist faiths. And while many of the Prussian Wends formed independent congregations, the Saxon Wends remained in the Saxon state church. Even so, they also were critical of their state church. They blamed the clergy for not adhering to sound doctrine and also their failure to instill piety in the members. In Texas many of these Saxons formed the nucleus of those dissatisfied with Pastor Kilian's approach to ministry and formed a separate congregation in Serbin which they called St. Peter. By 1867 the discontentment was smoothed over and the Saxons rejoined the mother congregation. To some extent the self-identity which the Saxons possessed as a result of their European heritage coupled with the Serbin congregational

controversy, encouraged them, when searching for more farmland, to select land in proximity to likeminded people.

The distance from Serbin was approximately twenty miles - a considerable trek for Sunday services, and it was only a matter of time until the Lutherans on the Yegua would be numerous enough to support their own pastor. Finally, by 1870, about twenty families had; settled there and they organized Trinity congregation. John Pallmer, a Wend who had become the pastor of the revived St. Peter's congregation in Serbin, served as Fedor's pastor.

In 1872 Boback sold fifty acres to the congregation for \$5.00 and Jacob Moerbe, who previously had purchased a piece of land from Boback, sold them the acre where the church was built. The deed conveying the Boback land to the congregation contained the provision that the congregation would forfeit the land if it strayed from the doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran church. The deed was written in English, however the deity was not spelled G-o-d, but G-o-t-t. Gott forbid that the congregation would forsake Lutheran doctrine.

German was the primary language of the new congregation, but the Saxon Wends did not favor eliminating the Wendish language. As long as a Wendish-speaking pastor was available, Wendish was used, primarily during the communion services.

(For more information on the congregation see "Trinity Lutheran Church Fedor, Texas, 1870-1995," a definitive booklet produced for the 125th anniversary.)

In 1883 a tragedy struck the Fedor congregation and community in the form of a double murder. The murder in turn was followed by more violence which became national news and is now part of the history of the "Wild West." It is significant for those of us who are interested in the Wendish heritage because it illustrates another facet in the life of our ancestors. We think of the primitive conditions they endured and hard work they performed, but Texas was not an Eden, and they did not escape from fear of violence by leaving Europe, with its wars, behind them.

This issue will carry a brief history of the violence. In the subsequent issue we will have a story that flowed out of the tragedy. It is a story of compassion, friendship, and a young woman's coming of age.

The murder took place at 8:15 on the evening of Friday, November 23, 1883. Instead of operating the store himself, Fedor Soder hired two men to do it. Twenty-nine year-old Carl O. Keuffel, a former resident of Galveston, was responsible for the store. His clerk, Erwin Wilhelm Mros, was twenty-three years old and a Wend who had migrated in 1882. Two robbers entered the store near closing time and shot them both. The victims were buried in the Trinity cemetery two days later on November 25, in two separate but adjoining graves.

The roots of the Mros family are found at Jetscheba near Commerau, but Johann, Wilhelm's father, had made the transition to the city of Bautzen. The Mros family was related to Johann Zschech who migrated to Texas with his family in 1870 and settled in the West Yegua area in 1875. This information helps explain why Wilhelm decided to migrate to Texas and how he found his way to Fedor.

Just as Keuffel was closing the store, the robbers entered the store and demanded the money. Keuffel complied with the robbers' demands and handed over the money, an unknown amount, but estimated to be somewhere between \$15 and \$73. The robbers, however, shot Keuffel in the face at such a close range as to leave powder burns, and then shot Mros in the heart. An early report stated that a boy named Schneider was also in the store, but he was able to escape through the back door. The next morning a posse found some tracks leading toward Lexington, but no one was captured.

Tracking down the criminals was a monumental task. The area nearby was wooded, the terrain was hilly and known for some geological formations the residents call "the Knobs." Also, many people in the area lived on the edge of the law, stealing horses and cattle or killing someone's cattle and taking the hides. The men were armed and the rumor had it that when they killed anyone they filed a notch on the handle of their pistol. The outlaws were called "Notch-cutters."

The violence at Fedor soon begat more violence. While the investigation of the Fedor murders continued in the attempt to apprehend the criminals, Deputy Sheriff, Isaac "Bose" Heffington was also shot to death on December 3, 1883 in McDade. It was dark and no one witnessed the crime. Jeff Fitzpatrick was the prime suspect but he escaped from the area, supposedly assisted by Haywood Beatty.

Partially in response to the Heffington assassination and partially to curtail the lawlessness associated with the Notch-cutters, the leading citizens of McDade organized themselves into a vigilance committee. To reduce crime they became murderers themselves, and on Christmas Eve forty-some masked men went to the saloon, collected three men, one of whom was accused of stealing horses, and took them out of town and hanged them. The three victims were Thad McLemore, Wright McLemore and Henry Pfeiffer. Although the vigilantes hid their identities, six relatives of the three victims suspected local businessmen and rode into McDade on Christmas morning. In later testimony one of the six claimed he had come to town to purchase cartridges so he could shoot some hogs, and another stated he came to town to exchange some boots and buy medicine for an ailing child. Most people, however, believed that the purpose was to intimidate or kill two of the prominent businessmen. Threats and cursing led to a gunfight during which more than sixty shots were fired and after which three men lay dead - two of the relatives and one citizen who was running to the aid of the businessmen.

The next day, Governor John Ireland called out two units of the state militia, the Brenham Grays and Hempstead's Johnson Guards. Both units assembled quickly and boarded trains for McDade. Other than bodies laid out in the market house, the community was quiet, and the peace-keepers returned home.

The only person arrested for the Fedor murders was William Mundine. Earlier, in 1874 he had been found guilty for unlawfully carrying a pistol and was fined \$25, and some sources claim that he and not Fitzpatrick murdered Heffington. Mundine's trial for robbery and the murder of Keuffel was held in Giddings on March 22, 1884. Newspapers never

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followed up with reports on Schneider, the survivor of the Fedor killings, but a person listed in the court records as a witness for the subsequent trial of the Mros killing was named August Schneider. Much to the chagrin of the general population, Mundine was found not guilty. One observer believed that the prosecution's evidence had been irrefutable, but that the judge's instructions were such that made conviction difficult. The observer also noted that there was not a single German on the Jury.

The irate citizens were calmed only by the fact that Mundine was returned to jail and would soon stand trial for the murder of Mrs. The district attorney, however, refused to prosecute Mundine a second time, presumably because he had no new evidence, and on May 5, 1886, the judge dismissed the case. Mundine went free until April 1899 when he was shot and killed by the Lexington constable, Cige Heffington.