

MY TRAVELS AROUND AMERICA

1908 to 1920

English translation of my Grandfather's diary
originally written in old German suterlin script

By Josef Kenyon



Bernhard Rother
1887 - 1973

Im Jahr 1908 im Juni bin ich zum
ersten mal angekommen nach Umanitz,
mit ein falschen Pass bin ich angekommen,
Wie sah ich mich viel Glück das erste mal
dann die Zeiten waren sehr schlecht, In der
Lagerstätte konnten wir keinen Arbeit
bekommen, und mußte auf die Farm
arbeiten, es war gerade im Sommer
es war sehr sehr heiß, es war in der
Anzahl im Jahr Illinois mittel - mit
Zusatz nachfolgenden Monate auf die Farm
gearbeitet da bekam ich Arbeit auf einer
Farm, wir konnten 8 bis 10 Tage in der
Arbeit. Es war ein Monat und
es waren nicht besser, da wir nicht mehr
besser konnten, bin ich im mein Traum auf
Februar mein abzugeben nach dem
und kam am 17 Februar für ab im die
Glaubwürdigkeit sich das was verloren sein
wieder für was. Mein alle beschreibung

BERNHARD ROTHER

1. My grandfathers memoirs

This is a reproduction of his original writings that was written in old [sütterlin](#) German, no young person can read this style but fortunately my aunt Marianne could and was able to translate into modern German then computer generated English then re-written into readable English. Some of the places he visited cannot be found due to him writing from memory and maybe not getting the spelling correctly, these are in red. Explanations are in brackets (*and italic*).

In June 1908 I first travelled to America with someone else's passport, I was 20 years old. (*reason for false passport not given or who's it belonged to, presume he could not obtain one before setting off*) we did not have much luck the first time because jobs was hard to find, especially in the mines so we had to work on the farms my friend and I, it was midsummer and very hot, it was in north America in the state of Illinois Midwest. We did eventually get a job in the mines but it was only three days a week. Months later the situation did not improve so my friend and I left in early February back to Germany arriving on the 17th, my parents was glad to see the prodigal son return.



On returning to Germany I resumed my old job in the local colliery. On October 6th 1909 I was called up for military duties and served in the second sailor division on the ship SMS Westfalen from 1909 to 1912.

(*this ship was first commissioned in 1909 then taken over by the British after the first world war and scrapped in 1924*)

After I got demobbed, I travelled a lot, then I emigrated to America, from Ellis island New York I travelled to Galveston in Texas and arrived 6th January 1913, I worked in Texas for four month but the pay was poor and I could not speak the language at that point so I had to make do with what I could get.

From Texas I went Wisconsin for I had read in a paper that they needed a lot of workers as lumber jacks and other jobs, I also read that you could buy land very cheaply, so for two and half days I went by train to get there.

The workplace was 14 English miles from the railroad and the camp was in the middle of a forest made up of log cabins. The felling and sawing of trees was unfamiliar work to me but soon got used to it and the food was good. After a time it got boring with little to do except card games and a little music, the other workers was saying that the harvest season is starting and the pay is very good, so I let myself to be talked into it and after two months me and another German left.

From here we went to Duluth, it was the nearest city and got a train to Minnesota, the next state, we got work quickly but it was too boring for me, we had to sleep eight men in a caravan but the food was good, after three weeks I packed my bag and left alone, I travelled to Bemidji, the nearest city in Minnesota and got work in nearby fruit groves, but that was not to last, the mosquitoes didn't leave you alone and a bite brought you out in big lumps, anyone who has worked in a mosquito area will know what I mean.

After a month or so I travelled back to Duluth and there was some free transport to Wilson in north Dakota for some railway work. While working Here I met a German who had taken up government land five years before, but sold it because he was alone and did not want

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After a month or so I travelled back to Duluth and there was some free transport to Wilson in north Dakota for some railway work. While working Here I met a German who had taken up government land five years before, but sold it because he was alone and did not want

to marry and be tied. We both worked together and he told me about this area. He said if I had a feel for farming I could get some government land, I think I could be a farmer and said I would like to see the land.

So we both set off to see the land available, we found some good land that lay south west of Wilson in North Dakota, eighteen miles from Wilson and one mile from the great Mississippi river and eight miles from the new railway, at that time they were still building the railway so there was plenty of work. I liked the land we was looking at and the land cost me fifteen dollars for 160 acres and still had claim to another 160 acres of land with the condition that the land doesn't belong to me until after three years and in that time I had to make so many acres arable each year and put up a wooden shack that's liveable, there was not many trees in the area just prairie grass that had spines and when ripe would fall and spread. So when the three years was up I asked two of my neighbours to testify that I had fulfilled my commitment and the land was mine to do with it as I wish, to sell or keep.

So I stayed there for a few more weeks more, I dug a deep ditch around my shack and built a fence in case of a prairie fire that was not uncommon, so my house would be safe. I took my belongings to a friend nearby, said goodbye to my house and took the train south, I went south because the harvest season is six weeks earlier, I jumped the freight train to the south, I gave the guard a dollar and he let me stay on.

Two days later I arrived in Aberdeen South Dakota, the harvest had just begun here so I got work immediately and got five dollars a day and good food, when the harvest was over I travelled north where the harvest was just starting. Finally autumn came and the nights became very cold, some farmers had caravans but others only tents, by October it was snowing already so before we could do any threshing in the mornings we had to sweep the machines down with brushes, by eight or nine o'clock it got warm and then I had to remove my thick coat as it got too warm, by November we could not work some days due to bad weather, so a few of us thought we would be better off pulling up sticks and moving on.

We took the freight train to Sommet Montana, one stop before Glaser Park, there was some work here, also here lived the Blackfoot Indians, and we witnessed the lives and activities of the Indians, but we had to give up the jobs here due to the cold and we only had tents to sleep in and could get no rest or sleep, so we travelled through Idaho to Spokane Washington. There was plenty of work here in the forest and I wanted to go back to work, but the others said we are better off going south, the weather is better and they also pay more.

So we set off and the further south we travelled the worse the weather got, when we arrived in Oregon, we stayed in Portland Oregon for several days and then travelled on to California, but it rained every day and the work was badly organised, you could not get a job for love or money, we had some bad days here.

I separated myself from the main group and travelled to a city now called San Francisco in California, for days I walked the streets asking for work, but there was none, I got depressed because my money would only last today and tomorrow.

It was this day an American soldier stopped me and asked if I would to join the army, I had no work, no money so I said ok. He led me to a medical officer and was examined, I was immediately accepted and they then took me to a boat and sailed to an island, here the barracks was surrounded by water.

A few days later I got my uniform and was a soldier, in the mornings we had drill and training and had afternoons off. The food was good and the wrinkles in stomach was

disappearing, We had already celebrated Christmas and we celebrated the new year 1914, we got very good food and had a happy day in the new year. ,

On the sixth of January we got orders to be shipped out to the Philippines, Ho I thought, this is not for me, we had been paid on the fifth so with a friend we took a small boat to a quite side of the island and rowed back to San Francisco. When it was dark we bought some civilian clothes and took the packages to a hotel, there we got changed, put the uniforms in a bin and moved to a different hotel for the night.

The next morning we left for the railway station being very careful, thinking the army might be on to us but luck was on our side and we took a train to Ogden California, there we tried to find work but non to be found. My colleague, who was Austrian, lost his courage, I tried to cheer him up and said we just need to go to an area with work, but he said he would rather go back and face the music with the military. So we parted, he went back to San Francisco and I took a different route.

For the next few days I walked and arrived in a town called Stickles, there was many factories here and was accepted in one factory as a plumbers mate, I worked with a master plumber called Rudolf, he was born in Germany, it was here that I first ate Italian food and it was very good. I had been working here for two months and feeling better I quit the job and travelled to Sacramento in California, but on arriving in the city, I saw a very sad affair, for fifteen thousand people had come to the city to beg for food in gold land America but was met by police wielding truncheons and the fire brigade firing the water cannons and they where driven to the other side of the river, very sad in rich America to see people starving in the streets. I bought some food for a few dollars and gave it to some people but it was only a little, so I thought, best get out of here, you did not feel like a human being here.

I heard they needed workers in Goldfact's, (*not sure what this was, a farm?*) so I travelled there, I got a job there and the food was good but I did not like the sleeping arrangement, it was a large tent for both night and day shift workers and no where to put your belongings and was told theft was a problem, I thought that if my belongings was stolen then having to buy new then stolen again I am no better off, so I did not start work there, just finished my lunch and left.

I had been walking for an hour or so and came across another man walking, we talked and I found that he too was a German and from Hannover, by evening we cooked something and slept in the open, we both had blankets so we put them together and hoped it would not rain, had a good night sleep. The next morning we brewed coffee with bread and butter and then started walking, we followed the railway and by afternoon we arrived in the Blue Canyon, had some food and a rest, from blue canyon to Kentucky the railway was covered with a wooden tunnel as the railway went through the mountains and the tunnel kept the snow off as it snowed very deep around here. My colleague said it would take four to five hours to walk through, so we made a cabbage meal to fortify ourselves and set off walking through the tunnel, we walked for five hours and got stuck in the tunnel so we made camp and finished our cabbage. In the morning we walked 30 English miles and at six o'clock we arrived in Kentucky, we could not sleep outside for the weather was bad so we booked a room for we needed a good nights sleep. In the morning we had a good breakfast then I said to my colleague that we should take a freight train, we only have to pay the guard a small bribe, but he said he was not jumping a freight train and I said I am not walking, so I gave him a few dollars and paid the hotel, he thanked me and shook hands and we parted. I stayed another day in Kentucky and met up with an Indian, in the evening we took a freight train to Reno Nevada and stayed while Sunday, in the evening we was going to

jump the freight train but as a train coming the opposite way a stranger tried to jump off the train and fell under the wheels and was killed outright, we were frightened that the police would take some action against us so came back and booked into a hotel, in the morning we bought a ticket and took a passenger train Winnemucca, here we tried for work and heard of a ranch that was hiring, but that was eight days away and we were still in Winnemucca. The Indian was already spent up so I kept him afloat with food and sleep but my money was also dwindling.

Then we got work in Jungo, forty miles from here as shopkeepers. At 12 o'clock we arrived at Jungo and slept in the station until morning, the place consisted of railway station and a hotel, then it turned out that they needed a shepherd, as my Indian friend had done this before he was hired.

I also got some work on the Gum river about 30 miles from Jungo, I then got a lift from a carter that had sixteen horses and two carts full of food, the journey took two days, we had a lot of hardship along the way, it was the middle of March and the snow in the mountains was beginning to melt and the road was very soft, we only saw mountains and different shrubs around one meter high, the houses were fifteen miles apart. We also saw a lot of cowboys that rode behind the cow herds and the shepherds that guarded the sheep for in the mountains there was plenty of food for the animals. I then reached the Muller and Lux ranch.

The rancher I was with had fenced in thousands of acres of land, it was my job to ride around the fence and repair any damage. I liked the wild west life very well, The ranchers or rather the peasants lived mainly from the live stock, the water that came from the mountains was channelled into many irrigation channels to allow things to grow in the desert. I had already spent several months in the wilderness but I was very uneasy that the military might be after me and took the decision to emigrate to Canada English Dominion.

I packed my bags and said goodbye to the ranch, the trip to Canada cost me a lot of money travelling through many states, From Winnemucca Nevada to Salt lake city, through Wyoming state, Montana state and passing the borders of Alberta state of Canada to Edmonton. I did not like this area, there was no work and no government so I abandoned the idea of staying here, from here I had a bad time travelling for months knocking on doors for food, sometimes I did some work for food, with my rucksack and bed on my back. So after a few months I got work in Babcock Wisconsin in early July, I was back in America in time for the hay making season which lasted eight weeks, when finished this job, I travelled to Minneapolis, Minnesota and to Grand Forks Dakota following the harvest season, I had been working in Grand Forks for a few weeks when I heard that the war had broken out.

I was in town when I heard from other Germans that the consul was asking for reservists to contact him so I immediately contacted him in Saint Paul Minnesota.

The next day we set off to New York to get a ship back to Germany, but when we got there we learned that British and French ships were in the Harbor and were searching every ship that sailed out making it impossible to leave, now we were in trouble, trying to get work was impossible and the little help we got from the consulate was not enough to live on. As an experienced sailor, I got signed onto a ship saying I was from Switzerland. The seafaring lasted until spring 1915.

Then for sometime I was selling papers and magazines that came from Germany, such as "Die Wocken" " Berliner Tageblatt" "die Wahre Jacob" and "Simplicissimus", the business was worth while until the British searched all ships coming into America and threw all German papers, books and magazines into the water.

So I went back to sea until September 1916, I was four times to the British island of Barbados taking coal, and on three occasions the British boarded and searched our ships on the high seas but I escaped each time, due to been American ships and they did not search too thorough.

From New York I was sent to the copper mines in Michigan, the mines there where seven thousand feet deep and very hot, there I worked until the beginning of February. From there I travelled to Stanton Illinois, I had many acquaintances from my home town of Herne living here, there was four of us from Herne that emigrated to America and Stanton was our first stay (*A third of the population in Stanton today have German ancestor y*) a friend from Sodingen in Herne got me a job in the mines but soon after I went with him towards the border, America was close to been at war with Germany so I did not feel safe here any more as all Germans would be interviewed and I would be found out as a deserter. I travelled to San Antonio in Texas, from there it was not too far from the Mexican border, but in town I met some Germans who said just stay out of Mexico, so then I travelled to El Paso and approached the consulate there and they said just stay out of Mexico, so if that is the case I had best stay in America, so I travelled to Miami Arizona to the large copper mines there. I had been in Miami only one day when war broke out between America and Germany, As a German I could not get a job there.

So I travelled back to El Paso, on the way I met a man who wanted to pan for gold, he said that if we went to the mountains looking for gold we are out of the way and hear nothing of the war, so in El Paso we bought some equipment then travelled to New Mexico, he said there was a lot of gold in the area, so we bought two little donkeys, a tent, blankets and food for two months. Once we where in the area we went to work, digging in various places, we found a few grains of gold but it was not worth the effort, after we had been digging for several weeks the American patrols started passing near us, the whole thing was getting a bit ridiculous with the Americans close by and my colleague who had a lot of money and was drunk all the time so I lost interest, I told him that I was going to work in the copper mines and you can stay here and I will catch up with you later, he agreed so I left immediately for El Paso. On leaving El Paso station I was stopped by an American officer and asked my name and nationality, I gave him the correct answers, then asked where I was staying, I said the green tree hotel, as soon as I arrived at the hotel two detectives arrived and questioned me, I thought this is getting a bit heavy, they have my real name and if they look it up they will know I am a deserter from the American army, My only salvation is Mexico.

THE ESCAPE TO MEXICO

The borders were densely occupied by soldiers, the river Rio Grande formed the border between America and Mexico and the only way across was with the bridge, you could walk but many used the electric tram that crossed over, so I boarded the tram and went over the bridge, half way across some officers came onto the tram and checked some of the passports, they passed me and said nothing, the officers left and we continued in the tram into Mexico.

I was glad that was over and went immediately to the German consul, he said to me you will have to take the train south, you cannot stay here near the border. I was in the state of Chihuahua and traveled south to the city of Chihuahua, on leaving the train I reported to the consul there, he said the only job available was to repair rifles for the Mexican military authorities, so there I was employed. Every ten days we got paid and had an eight hour working day. I have been working for the Mexicans for five months and I have experienced

a lot, at this time the Mexican revolution had been going for nine years, there was two factions, the Carranza soldiers that mainly controlled the railroad and the Villa soldiers that was mainly in the hills. One Saturday the alarm was sounded and we had to protect the factory, we jumped into the trenches that surrounded the factory and was there from Saturday until Monday, I was with six other Germans, and we were saying amongst us why should we risk our lives for the Mexican, they don't like us, always calling us Gringo's, which is an insulting word for the Americans, but really they were against all whites with either Gringo or Blanco. By Monday the Villa army had returned to the mountains so we went back to work.

Me and another German decided we would like to go to the Sonora region, so we asked the Major if he would release us from our duties and he agreed.

The state of Sonora is separated from the Chihuahua state by a large mountain range, we thought that by going around the mountains from El Paso to Douglas, it would be easier than going over the mountains, but we did not succeed, we were caught by an American patrol in El Paso and imprisoned there. I gave them the name of "Karl Probst" instead of my real name in the hope of avoiding detection, they photographed me several times but did not recognise me. The food here was bad, we were detained here with eighteen other Germans. My colleague was released after five weeks and was sent back to Mexico, on a Saturday in the sixth week they told me to get ready and was taking me to fort Bliss on the Mexican border, I thought that I had been recognised, When I got to the officers canteen, he told me they was sending me back to Mexico and was taken to the border crossing in El Paso, I was glad to be back in Mexico.

I met up with my friend again in Ciudad Juarez and we where pleased to be together again. So we talked on the best way to go from here so the only way to Sonora is over the mountains, we got a little help from the consul then set off, I said to my colleague that we should buy a water bag, no said my friend, I have spoken to people and there is a water stations every ten kilometres. After a while we ran out of water and for two days in very high temperature we had no water at all for all the stations had been destroyed by the revolutionist, tired and thirsty in the high sun we put our shirts over some bushes for shade, my friend urinated into a bottle and drank it, I did the same but did not like to drink it, I said there must be something so threw the bottle down, maybe a cactus that hold water but I found nothing and had to drink the slurry I had thrown down. Then we saw fifty meters away, a predator was looking at us, I had seen such an animal in the Zoo but out here in the lonely desert it was frightening, it must have followed me when looking for water but seeing two of us, it turned and walked away, my friend said it was a mountain lion, it had a tiger like head, yellow skin and long tail, close event . We lay for several hours under the bush and in the evening it started to get cool and decided we must walk in the cool night to get out of this sandy desert. So we walked for hours, the mosquitoes buzzed around us and bit us many times. I said if there is mosquitoes there should be water, we did come across a muddy patch so we got some handkerchiefs to filter the sludge and got a bit of dirty water but we were glad of what we got.

By morning, the sun came up but now there was no trees or shrubs to take any shelter, we had walked for several hours along side a rail track we had been following when we came across a van that had been shot up, we got underneath the van to get some shade and rest, after a few hours we saw a black dot in the distance, as it got larger we realised it was a train, we got up and waved our shirts and the train came to a halt, we were lucky as a train only came this way once every two or three weeks.

The Mexicans gave us food and water, we also found that they carried their own engineers to repair damaged track or bridges from the Villa revolutionist, it was surprising the train ran at all.

The train took us to Casa Grande, here we stayed for a few days, there was a lot of Muslims living here, they had come from many different nations, the land here was very fertile and there was large fruit groves, there used to be thousands of cows and horses grazing the land but there was only one or two now.

We stayed for a few days in Casa Grande then got ourselves ready to continue walking, after eleven hours of walking we arrived at a place called Colonia Juarez, it was a paradise here because there plenty of fruit here to eat, we stayed here for two days and enjoyed the beautiful fruits that was available. Most of the inhabitants here were Muslims and some of the men had four to six women.

So after a good rest we moved on again carrying packs of fruit, after several hours we reached a distillery, here we got some schnapps and food, the liquor they made here was good, the Mexicans called it Mescal. It was noon and we wanted to carry on, the locals said stay tonight, the next place is too far to reach today, but we set off regardless.

By the time we reached a forest, it was dark and difficult to see where we was going and it started to rain, so we camped under under the trees, it was cold and so we crawled together like snails.

In the morning we moved on again, soon we came across some corn fields, also a small house, the house was uninhabited so we made a fire there made a meal, we then saw a rattlesnake, the head was out side of the door and the body still inside, I took a thick stick and held the snake tight so it could not move, my friend then went round the house and broke the snakes head, we finished our meal and rested in front of the fire as we were very cold last night.

We set off walking for a few hours and reached San Pedro, a small village of around twelve family houses, we stayed a day there then moved on.

The next town was Don Carveza, we had to go over some high mountains to get there, on the way the road dwindle down to a very narrow path and was difficult to know if we were going the right way or not. We mainly followed old donkey tracks until we reached Don Cerveza, there was two gold mines, one dormant and the other worked by ten Mexicans and one china man. We made a meal here and slept overnight. Our next place was Wasdrak, again we had to go over the high mountains, we were lucky to miss the thunder and lightning as we were at the top of the mountain and above the clouds, walked until around six o clock and reached Wasdrak, before we could enter the place we had to cross a river, the water came up to chest. A Swede who lived there welcomed us and gave us shelter, we made a wood fire and dried our clothes, repaired our shoes then laid down to sleep.

In the morning we set off again and after a few hours we reached Bisbee, we went to a store and got something to eat then moved on. Late afternoon we arrived in Sankt Helena and was very tired, a Mexican approached us and asked where we wanted to go in English, thinking we were Americans, we told him we are Germans and seeking accommodations for the night, he took us to his house and gave us food and bed for the night, we were very happy to have a bed for the first time in many days.

In the morning we set off to Tigree, the people here gave us some nachos and frijoles as sustenance along the way, we walked from morning until noon and we came across some Mexicans with mules, they were sat around a fire and cooking, we sat with them and had

coffee and cheese, it was very good. We continued our journey over the mountains and when it became dark we had difficulties finding our way, we came across some more Mexicans around a fire and we asked if we could join them to get warm, they said yes and gave us some coffee.

At first light we set off walking to Tigree and arrived at 10.00, the pass from Sankt Helena to Tigree was the most difficult pass, it was very steep and the path narrow, you had to keep leaning to the mountain side as if you fell off the path you would not be able to stop rolling down the mountain. We went through a valley and over another mountain, from this mountain we could see Tigree, when we arrived there we asked the American copper and gold mining company about work, they could not offer us any work but gave us several meals and a bed for the night.

The next morning we continued until we reached the Sonora railway, we stayed the night here in a village and talked to some Mexicans, they told us that there is a German who is a steward of a large estate, maybe he can offer them work. So the next morning we went to him, he was very friendly and said he could give us work but the pay is very low and you deserve better, he gave us five dollars to travel down to Nackasari to see if we can get work in the copper mines there and maybe get more money, if not come back and I will have a word with the boss and see if he can offer you more.

In the afternoon we arrived at Nackasari but could not get any work. Some Germans who lived here told us to go to Cumpas, there is a German there with a small business who might be able to give us work.

In the morning we set off walking and after two days reached Cumpas, the German there who ran the mines welcomed us as guests and gave us some work. After three weeks an American came to examine the copper and I got into conversation with him. The problem was that there was only a few beds and the American had my bed and I had to sleep on some old sacks. I told the German that I wanted to leave, he tried to persuade me to stay but I told him no, so he gave me 25 dollars and I said goodbye and left alone.

I travelled to Agua Prieta on the Mexican American border, from here I heard that a strike had broken out in the copper mines on the far side of Miami Arazona, the police took a lot of miners from their homes, put them on a freight train and unloaded them 200 miles away, some of the people came across the border to Agua Prieta and was supported by the Mexican government, the where Mexican and American miners.

I stayed here for a few days then travelled to Weimas in Senora, here was a German sailing ship and I talked to the sailors, one told me he was leaving for Kaheme the next morning, there lives a German who has a large farm and could find me some work also. We left the next day, the train we were travelling on was full of soldiers who was expecting an attack from the Yaqui Indians, but the journey went well and we arrived at Cajeme. The farm was about fifteen miles from Cajeme, I was there a week when the Mexican soldiers rode up and said the Yaqui Indians were coming so they started to arm us, the owner had heard that I had experience in gun repairs and got me to test all the rifles, I got thirty rifles finished but several were useless. Several days passed but the Yaqui Indians did not come, the soldiers then told us that the Indians had retreated so we went back to our work. After a month or so I got into an argument with some of the sailors here, they were getting drunk and noisy all night and after a hard day I wanted rest, so I approached them to keep quiet but told me I was boring but I got angry and the most intelligent one backed down so in the morning I could start work again.

But I thought why should I waste my time arguing with these people, so I packed my bags and left. My destination was Mazatlan in the Sonora district Mexico.

Again I did not stay long as there was no work here, I was supported a little by the consul here but it was all a bit stupid so I travelled back to Cajeme. There I joined up with the Mexican army again, we were to be shipped out to Rio Colorado, but before I left I went to the German consul. He asked where I had come from, I said I was in Mazatlan for a few days but worked on a landowners farm near Cajeme, yes he said, the Yaqui Indians attacked Mazatlan and a hundred Mexican soldiers was killed and thirty Indians. The Yaqui then fled to Cajeme, the farm I was at, everything was ready to defend themselves, the owner told the workers if they wished to stay is ok but if you want to go, go now, The sailors that I had quarrelled with did not want to stay there so with four Germans and one American they went to Cajeme, on the way there was a German that warned them that the Yaqui was nearby but they did nothing and carried on, the German then hid and saw the Yaqui take the others by surprise and they were slaughtered, when the Indians left the German left his Hiding place and went back to the farm to report it, next day they found them all dead by the roadside, Yes I told the consul I was lucky be and because two days before I had walked this same road from Cajeme to Esperanza.

I said goodbye to the consul and went back to the regiment, where I had been hired, we travelled to San Luis on the Rio Colorado on the American border, we loaded two boats and sailed to a place called **Wiemas**, it took two and half days, when we arrived we were billeted in small huts. My intention was not to stay here because there was plenty of cotton Work across the river. So I talked to the major and told him I wanted to go and work and I don't think the soldiers life is for me in the long run. The next day I was taken by boat to the other side of the river, The Mexicans there could not agree which way I should go and hours later I was still in the office, it was already dark so rather try and go back over the river, I found a place to sleep for the night.

The next morning I set off without help of the Mexicans, after a while I came across a house and the owner gave me food and water then showed me the correct way to the cotton fields, on the way I passed a Mexican guard post, they were friendly and gave me food and water and showed me the correct road to the village.

On arriving at the village I was hired, but it was not to last for the old hand cotton pickers earned up to six dollars were as been the new boy only got two to three dollars. The cotton harvest lasted until February/March time, then the new cotton plants were planted out in April/May time. I contacted and talked to several Germans nearby to learn how to clean and separate the plants, from then on I earned eight to ten dollars a day.

It got very hot here, we got up at three in the morning had a little breakfast then to work, by ten o'clock we came back, had some lunch and then layed down in the shade, started work again later in the afternoon until dark. By July the heat was becoming unbearable.

I quit the job and travelled north to Mexicali on the American border, here I stayed for several days. One afternoon whilst sitting outside on a bench I experienced an earthquake for the first time, the houses began to shake, the electric wires was torn down and cars bounced on their own from one side of the road to the other, the earthquake lasted a few days. After it calmed down I bought three little donkeys and packed them with provisions. I then walked for three days to a town called **Betatsche**, here I stayed for a day.

I then set off into the mountains, it took me several days walking to reach Real De Castillo in the mountains. The area here was very beautiful, there was high mountains and fertile valleys with thousands of cows grazing here, there was also an old gold mine and fields and people have been panning for gold here for fifty years. I made camp by the old mine besides a small stream, I stayed here for a few month's, my main pastimes was to pan for gold, hunting and searching for honey.

By the time October came, I was running low on provisions so I broke camp and walked for two days to Ensenada by the Pacific coast. In Ensenada lived a German consul who owned a large piece of land that he allowed other Germans to work the land for themselves and just took a small percentage at harvest time, he was more interested in his trade with horses and equipment. So me and another German went into the country side where this land was to a house there, we was supposed to clean the house up for some Germans to follow later, we had been there for four days and no one came so we went back to Ensenada. There we learned that the consul had been arrested and conscripted into help build a submarine base for the Americans and the English.

After a few days when our plans was not going to work, myself and two others set off to San Felipe on the other coast, we had five donkeys with provisions, the way took me back to real de Castillo, it took two days to reach there, then another day to **Tornedat**, from here the paths where unclear, we followed a narrow path until we reached a large ditch, I jumped over the ditch but I could not find another path, I said to the others there was another path a mile back, so let's make camp here and I will see were the other path leads to, I walked back to the other path followed it for a short while when I saw, fifty yards in front of me, a mountain lion, my hair was standing on end, I had no weapons with me so quickly went back to my colleagues and told them about the mountain lion and cannot go that way without weapons, but they said that a Mexican had passed this way and showed us the correct way. The next morning we set off and in the evening we reached a cow ranch and stayed there overnight.

The next morning we continued and at six in the afternoon we reached **Tornetad**, this was a village of ten families, we stayed here for several days to recover, the area was very beautiful with high mountains and fertile valleys. After a week in **Tornetad** we was ready to set off walking again, this time we took a Mexican with us as a guide to show us the water holes, it was forty miles from here to San Felipe and the way was like a desert, we walked a full day and reached the first water hole, we made camp and lit fires, watered the donkeys and tied them to a tree, we slept in the open air. In the morning we moved on and when we stopped for a midday break, the Mexican said he wanted to go back now, he said to stay on the path to the second water hole and then the third on the white mountain then keep to the right path, you could see it from here, we gave our guide ten dollars and he left. We walked through the desert until we reached the second water hole, we lit a fire and fed and watered the donkeys and kept them close to us around the fire in case of bandits, the donkeys was very restless all night with every howl from the wild animals of the desert the donkeys jumped and brayed, so we sat around the fire, weapons in hand looking all the time over the desert.

When dawn broke we had breakfast, watered the donkeys and walked on, by evening we had reached the third water hole, we made camp and unloaded the donkeys, we made a big fire but did not get much sleep for the howling of the wild life did not let the donkeys rest.

In the morning we broke camp and walked on keeping to the left, we passed a path with cart tracks going right, but we kept going left, soon we ran out of path and made camp, there was no water here but we had enough for two days, the donkeys can go two days without water. From our camp there was a hill, I said I would go to the top of the hill to try to get some bearings, from the top I could see a blue stripe of a river, we was going the wrong way, I turned to return to camp but was dark already and soon lost my way, then in the distance I saw a glimmer from the camp fire, so we had a quite night.

Next morning we walked back to the second water hole, gave the donkeys a good rest and water, the next day we walked to the third hole again for a night then the following day we set off this time keeping right and followed some cart tracks, by evening we camped, no

water here but some green bean on a tree for the donkeys. Early next morning we left and reached San Felipe by noon. There was two tents here with two Mexicans who greeted us warmly, they had been here for a few weeks with only fish to eat, so we gave them some provisions of ours and we stayed here for a few days to recover.

After five days we prepared to leave for the next stop of Grewell Maine, it was a distance of fifty miles with no drinking water, only salt water, many people have died of thirst and gone mad on this way. Recently a that had come from Guaymas to San Felipe, the captian of the ship told a group of people it was only fifteen miles to La Pumpe, the people who was mainly Indian died of thirst along the way. As we traveled this way we came across quite a few human remains. We only walked at night time when it was cool and rested in shade through the day to save water.

After two days we came to the **Grewel maine** works but was closed down, there was only two men there to guard the place, they greeted us kindly and we stayed here for a week, one of us shot a buck and we had good meat. Soon we wanted to be on the move so five of us, two Mexicans and three Germans. We had travelled fifteen miles from **Grewel Maine** when we could go no further for the Rio Colorado delta had flooded and we had to return to **Grewel Maine**.

We had been here for two days when one of the guards says he will drive his car to the town of Major, he took the two Mexicans and one of us, the poor sod had lost part of his foot with walking and could walk no more. So the car set off and we followed with the donkeys, we walked for two days and reached Major, the village had ten families. I stayed for two days then set off to Mexicali with my two donkeys. The other two stayed in Major as they wanted to get a ship to Guamas.

I had been in Mexicali for a few days when my friends arrived, they had given up the idea of sailing south because one of their wives was sick here in Mexicali.

I sold my donkeys and camping equipment and tried to get work, but things was looking bad as no one wanted to hire Germans, after a few weeks I did get some work with an Irish man, we had to cut down some trees and dig up the roots in the Forrest nearby, we earned a nice bit of money which was shared between three of us.

When we had finished the contract we travelled back to Mexicali, there we heard that the war was over, there was great rejoicing on the other side of the border over the victory they had won. I stayed in Mexicali for a few more days then I took a boat from **La Pumpe** to **Wiemas**, in **Wiemas** I stayed several days, the German that travelled with me from Mexicali continued travelling to the south of Mexico.

I took a train north to Nogales Sonora on the Mexican American border, on the american side there was plenty of copper mines and I wanted some work, so at night time I tried to cross the border but was seized by the border patrol and arrested. For fourteen days they had me locked up then they sent me back to Mexico.

So from Nogales I travelled to **Kaminer** Sonora, there was plenty of mines here but I could not get a job anywhere, so from here I walked to Agua Prieta, I was told not to go there but I would not let myself be talked out of it.

On arriving at Agua Prieta I booked into a hotel and had a meal in the restaurant. After dinner I went into the billiard room and watched them play and listened to the music, then a Mexican approached me and asked where had I come from and where was I going, I told him I was going to Tampico. From there I was going to get a ship back to Germany. Soon after another Mexican came to me and asked for me to go outside with him, when we were outside he asked me many questions then led me to the police station. I gave my name and was searched for weapons, then I was locked up in a cell. At around eleven in the evening two American joined me in the cell, it was cold and we walked round the cell to try and keep warm, in the morning we had something to eat and an officer took me to the

hotel I was booked into and collected my belongings and the woollen blankets and led me back to the station and this night the two Americans shared my blankets. We slept a few hours when suddenly they came into the cell and said get up your wagon has arrived. We were loaded onto a truck with soldiers with bayonets on either side of us. The truck drove and released in the morning, a fellow prisoner gave me a few dollars across the border into America and was met by American officers, the other two that came with me were native Americans with German parents, they had deserted from the army and was immediately returned to their regiment.

I was interrogated but told them I was German and trying to go back, I said I was in the army but taken prisoner. I was locked up in a cell on the ground floor, it was a sad Christmas in 1918, the food was very bad, we were fed twice a day but inedible, Christmas day we were fed three times, still bad. It was new year 1919 so I asked the supervisor to release me or intern me because this is not right. I was there six weeks when one evening at around ten, the sheriff came and told me I was free to go, I said where should I go tonight, I had no money, I had used it up in the six weeks here, the overseer said I could stay the night, I was released in the morning, a fellow prisoner gave me a few dollars, I repaired my shoes and shaved my beard off as I looked like an orang utan.

In the afternoon I jumped a freight train to El Paso, it took a good day to get there, on arriving in El Paso I tried to get work but all I got was working in a sanatorium and serve meals to the patients and wash dishes and clean up in general. I was here only two weeks and left, it was only seven dollars a week and you had to work every day from early morning to late evening.

My destination I was Ranger in Texas, they had found oil there and there was plenty work, but from El Paso to Ranger Texas was nearly seven hundred miles. On Sunday evening I jumped onto the water tender of a train and travelled through the night, once when the train stopped the guard chased me off the train, but I climbed back in between the carriages and lay down on the roof of a passenger car, so I travelled like this for several hours until dawn, I got off in a small town, washed and cleaned my clothes, rented a room, had a good meal and slept until noon. I wanted to jump another freight train but there wasn't one until six next morning, so when the passenger train left at midnight I jumped onto the back of it but was caught by a plain clothes police man, I was arrested with four others and locked up for the night, we were released next morning and had to walk to the next town.

From the next town I jumped a freight train that took me to Ranger, here they had found plenty of oil and work was plentiful, I got work with the pipe layers, they were laying pipes across Texas so we dug trenches, a big machine screwed the twelve inch pipes together then laid in the trench then covered as it was very hot in Texas and the pipes had to be kept cool. The state of Texas is as big as the former Germany and is the largest state in the USA. The land here is used mainly for agriculture and here you can see thousands of cows and horses grazing in the prairies.

I stayed in Texas for several months because the work was plentiful and the food was good, I got three dollars a day and food, we slept in tents and there was a lot of rattlesnakes here but they had plenty of pigs running around, rattlesnakes keep away from pigs. There was nothing to do in the wilderness and rarely saw a house, in the evening there was card games but I kept away as I wanted money for my way home.

After I had stopped working in Ranger I travelled down to New Orleans, the trip took a few days, here is a large seaport and ships of all nations came here. I tried to get work on a ship but as a German I was only allowed to work on coastal ships because the peace agreement was not yet complete and they would not issue me with a passport.

I was told a bit further north there is a fishing port where work is available, so I travelled there and got signed onto a fishing boat.

I was on the boat only a few days as some of the other sailors where of French descents and had been in the war, they made it difficult for me.

I got work on a dock boat, I stayed on this boat for a few weeks but did not like the coastal sailing so I quit and went inland.

I jumped the freight train to Mobil then to St. Louis Missouri. It took me three days, in St. Louis I bought new items and travelled to Stanton Missouri, I had worked in the mines here in 1917 before America joined the war, and here was my friends from the Herne area in Westphalia, when I arrived there after over two years my did not at first recognise me as I was very brown from my Mexican venture. They where very pleased to see me, I first had a rest as I had travelled from Noble to St. Louis in on freight train full of banana and spent my trip in a cool box.

After a few days I asked for my old job in the colliery where I had worked two years ago, the offered me work but only two days a week, I told my friend Heinrich it is not worth starting, better if I went to the wheat harvest in Kansas, he said good idea I will go with you. So after a few days we left for Kansas city, stayed for a day then travelled further south to the farm lands. But the harvest had not started yet and there was no work, with little money we slept in freight car the got a little work with a bit of ploughing a corn field after a few days the harvest started so we both got work, we earned five dollars a day in the harvest but not many meals and the drinking water was bad. We was only four weeks into the harvest and we was ill with the bad water but then my friends wife sent him a letter saying that the work in the mines had improved and the farmers was paying more, so we travelled back to Stanton.

On arriving back we was very disappointed as the situation had not improved, because my friend lived in the area, got a job on a farm quickly but no luck for me. I did not want to go back to the harvest and got my longing to be back at sea. After a long stay in Stanton I left for New York. On arriving I tried many places but could only get work washing dishes in a hotel, I did this for a few weeks when I got a job on a boat of 500 tons, I was on my own monitoring the cargo and responsible for the inventory. A boring position so I left and got a position on dock boat, I was with this boat a few weeks when the company transferred me to a larger ship.

The ship was in Philadelphia, so we travelled by rail to Philadelphia and steamed back to New York, the ship was used as a troop ship in the war and had been handed back to the company and we sailed into a shipyard to be converted back to a cargo ship.

On arriving in the shipyard all the men was laid off except three of us that where experienced sailors. We worked shifts to look after the ship while in dock, we worked 12 hours on and 24 hours off, we got \$150 a month. I slept and ate at the sailors misson in Hoboken, the ship was in Brooklyn at the Eriebesen shipyard, to get there I had to use a boat or the subway, I stayed here for several months until February 1920, I then got the opportunity to sign on to a Swedish ship. I steamed to Sweden, from there via Sassnitz, Berlin, Hanover, Dortmund and arrived back in Herne on 17th February.

NOTES

my grand father does not mention his farm, did he sell it while back in Stanton, if he did how much did he get, I don't think it would be a lot, certainly not as much as the rumours said. I think writing from notes he had made a lot of the place names in Mexico are either wrong spelling or don't exist any more as a lot of places were only temporary but we can still trace his vast movements across this wild country.

