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**Review of *Texas Wanderlust: The Adventures of Dutch Wurzbach*
By Douglas V. Meed**

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Texas Wanderlust: The Adventures of Dutch Wurzbach. By Douglas V. Meed. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1997. Photographs, notes, bibliography, index, xiii + 210 pp. \$29.95 cloth, \$12.95 paper.

Eight-year-old Emil Frederick "Dutch" Wurzbach arrived with his family in Galveston in early 1846 as one of the hundreds of German immigrants who sailed to Texas that year. He spent his childhood in central Texas, first at Fredericksburg, then in Austin, and finally on a farm outside Austin. At the age of eleven Wurzbach began a series of frontier jobs, largely with the army, herding livestock or working as a teamster supplying the scattered frontier posts south and west of San Antonio; he also served a brief stint in the Texas Rangers. He encountered legendary frontiersmen, fought Comanches and Apaches, and generally bounced from one adventure to another in Texas, New Mexico, and northern Mexico, with an occasional foray into the Northern Plains. In April 1862 he enlisted in a unit of the 31st Texas Cavalry for service in the Confederate army, spending his war years in Arkansas and Louisiana, and participating in the Red River Campaign of 1864.

Douglas V. Meed, the great grandson of Dutch Wurzbach, based this study on his ancestor's memoirs, "fleshed out" from more conventional sources. The result is an uneven account of life on the southwestern frontier from the mid-1840s through the Civil War. At its best Meed's book provides vivid details of a young frontier freight driver's experiences

in the middle of the nineteenth century. The Civil War chapters are also impressive in detailing the exploits of Texas troops in the trans-Mississippi campaigns, though providing little information about Wurzbach's activities.

It is easy to criticize *Texas Wanderlust* for what it is not. First, Meed has not written a traditional biography offering any detailed analysis of the forces that motivated Wurzbach's career and life decisions. Indeed, Meed rarely probes Wurzbach's psychology; instead, he describes his subject simply as a "wild" young man who quickly grew restless in civilization and was driven by a search for adventure. Nor is the book an introspective memoir of the sort one might expect from a political leader, military commander, or successful entrepreneur. It is, instead, a factual rendering of the particulars of the early life and experiences of a fairly ordinary German-Texan on the mid-nineteenth century frontier, and this is its value. It gives us a rare glimpse into the life of an unexceptional young man who worked as a contract teamster for the US army, fought Indians, searched for fortune in northern Mexico, and served as an enlisted man in the less-glamorous western campaigns of the Civil War. For bringing this segment of frontier experience to life, Meed deserves credit.

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