



NEW BRAUNFELS WOOLEN MILL COMAL STEAM LAUNDRY

GERMAN IMMIGRANTS AUGUST TOLLE AND DR. THEODOR KOESTER PURCHASED LOTS 271 AND 272 IN 1864 AND BUILT A LARGE TWO-STORY BUILDING 100 FEET LONG AND 60 FEET WIDE USING HEWN TRUNKS OF CEDAR. THE BUILDING WAS BUILT AS A BRANDY DISTILLERY AND TO MANUFACTURE MEDICINALS. IN 1868, THE BUILDING WAS SOLD TO THE NEW BRAUNFELS WOOLEN MILL MANUFACTURING COMPANY. THE FACTORY UTILIZED THE COMAL RIVER WATER FOR STEAM POWER INSTALLING A BOILER, CHIMNEY AND WARNING BELL. THE COMPANY WAS SUCCESSFUL, BUT LACKING A TRADEMARK, CLOSED BECAUSE OTHER MANUFACTURERS USED THE NAME AND PRODUCED INFERIOR PRODUCTS.

IN 1901, GERMAN IMMIGRANTS FRANZ AND ANNA (MIELKE) POPP BOUGHT THE PROPERTY AND CONVERTED THE BUILDING TO THE COMAL STEAM LAUNDRY. IT WAS THE FIRST LAUNDRY IN NEW BRAUNFELS AND CAPITALIZED ON THE TURN OF THE CENTURY DESIRE FOR CLEANLINESS AND REDUCING THE LABORIOUS TASK FOR CITIZENS TO WASH THEIR CLOTHES. AFTER FRANZ RETIRED IN 1913, THE LAUNDRY WAS RUN BY ANNA AND HER CHILDREN, EMMA, MARTHA, ROSA AND BRUNO. DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION, EMMA OPERATED THE LAUNDRY AND ALSO WORKED AS A COOK AT THE PHOENIX CAFÉ TO SUPPORT HER CHILDREN. IN 1934, THE LAUNDRY CLOSED DUE TO A KEROSENE STOVE FIRE THAT RESULTED IN ANNA'S DEATH. THE BUILDING THAT HAD BEEN A NEW BRAUNFELS LANDMARK FOR SO MANY YEARS WAS RAZED IN 1954. THE POPP FAMILY STILL OWNED THE PROPERTY IN THE EARLY 21ST CENTURY. ALTHOUGH ALL THAT REMAINS OF THE BUILDING IS THE OLD BELL, ROCK FOUNDATION AND PART OF THE CHIMNEY, IT SERVES AS A REMINDER OF BUSINESS INGENUITY UTILIZING THE COMAL RIVER.

New Braunfels Woolen Mill – Comal Steam Laundry

I. CONTEXT

Among the initial lots surveyed in the establishment of the town of New Braunfels in 1845, Lots 271 and 272 served as the site for diverse and important businesses from the mid-1860s to the 1920s. It began the year that the Civil War ended. Dr. Theodor Koester and Augustus Tolle and other entrepreneurs conducted a number of businesses on the property. While not destined for much success, the initial structure that was built led to a group of entrepreneurs to purchase the properties and begin the "The New Braunfels Woolen Mill Manufacturing Company." It also appears to be one of the first, if not the first, business in New Braunfels to usher in the benefits of the industrial revolution – machinery using steam power instead of water power (i.e., via water mills). The Woolen Mill achieved fame throughout Texas and much of the U.S. Unfortunately, while successful for a number of years, it eventually failed due to other woolen mills reportedly outside of Texas using its highly reputable but un-trademarked name for their own financial gain. Within a few years after it closed, another individual, Franz Popp, who arrived in New Braunfels as a farmer, ventured into a business that would have been relatively new to Texas and the first in the county of Comal. Utilizing the steam power equipment left from the Woolen Mill, he began the "Comal Steam Laundry."

II. OVERVIEW:

a. Background

Soon after Prince Carl Solms and the German immigrant settlers arrived at the Comal Springs and the Guadalupe River in March 1845, he had the area surveyed for the start of the town to be called New Braunfels. Town lots and streets were mapped out and were made available for building of homes and businesses. Two of those lots, numbers 271 and 272, on the corner of Comal and Garden Streets and on the bank of the Comal River (Figures 1 & 2), would see very diverse and important businesses conducted there over the next eighty years.

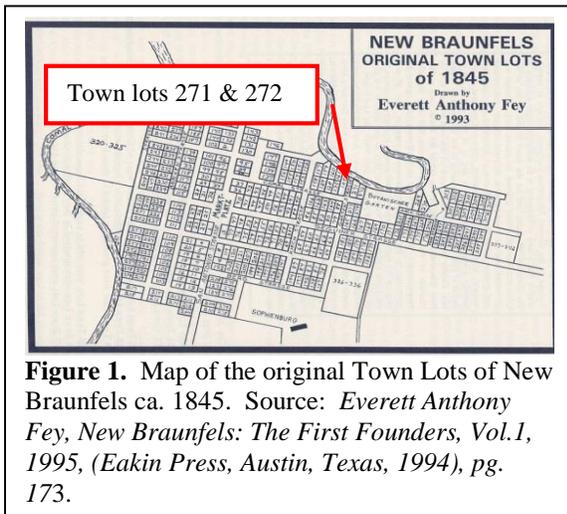


Figure 1. Map of the original Town Lots of New Braunfels ca. 1845. Source: *Everett Anthony Fey, New Braunfels: The First Founders, Vol.1, 1995, (Eakin Press, Austin, Texas, 1994), pg. 173.*

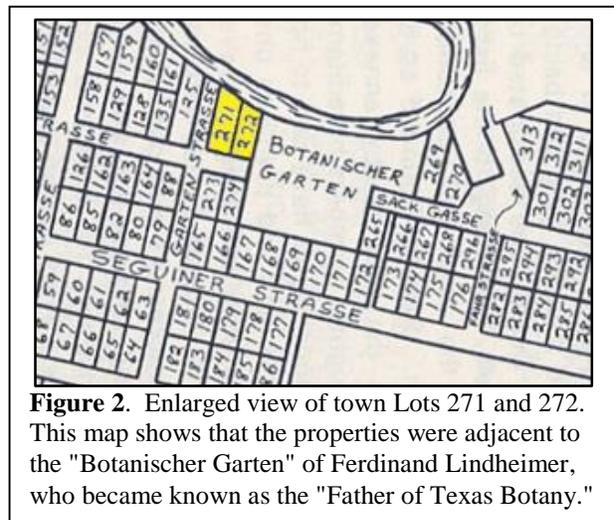


Figure 2. Enlarged view of town Lots 271 and 272. This map shows that the properties were adjacent to the "Botanischer Garten" of Ferdinand Lindheimer, who became known as the "Father of Texas Botany."

The town of New Braunfels first began to develop on *Seguiner Strasse* (now "Seguin Avenue") and *San Antonio Strasse* (Street), which were the main thoroughfares through the city, crossing at the *Marktplatz* (now "Main Plaza"). By the late 1840s and 1850s, New Braunfels began to build momentum with more property away from the main streets being developed.

Courthouse records reflect that the two lots were first owned in 1848. Lot 271 was purchased by John Torrey and H. Gerwin for \$15, while lot 272 went to Gustav Dressel, who had already arrived in Texas in 1838 and was an agent for the "German Emigration Company." Afterwards, the two properties changed ownership numerous times until 1863 and 1865 when the two properties were purchased by August Tolle and Dr. Theodor Koester. Dr. Koester was a physician who had served as "Colonial Doctor" on the "Colonial Council" headed by Prince

Solms during the initial voyage and eventual founding of New Braunfels. Dr. Koester appears to have been an interesting person and his enterprises went beyond medicine. Dr. Ferdinand von Roemer, in his detailed perceptions and descriptions of his visit to Texas (1845-1849), specifically remarked that he came upon a small house with three shingles, "Apothecary," "Dr. K," [Dr. Koester] and "Bakery." Dr. Roemer did not find the combination of physician and apothecary strange, but felt certain that the house must also house a "Baker" who sold baked products. To Dr. Roemer's surprise, that was not the case, as Dr. K ran all three businesses from his home. Dr. Roemer added, "Nothing could prevent one and the same person from discharging the duties of several professions, since in all of North America freedom of trade exists and no kind of obligation for artisans to join a guild, has

crossed the Atlantic" [emphasis added]. August Tolle was a "druggist" who initially lived in the same household as Dr. Koester. Figure 3 is an early advertisement by Koester & Tolle.

b. The Distillery/Brewery

Soon after the purchase of lots 271 and 272 by Dr. Koester and Tolle, a building was constructed on the property. There are differing reports regarding the size, but it was comparatively large and impressive at that time in New Braunfels. The following [translated] newspaper account in 1902 provides an interesting description of the building:

"The structure of the stately old building, which looks like a strong castle rising up above the town, is hewn trunks of cedar that grew on the neighboring hills. The building has two floors, about 100 feet long and 60 feet wide. The land, on which it

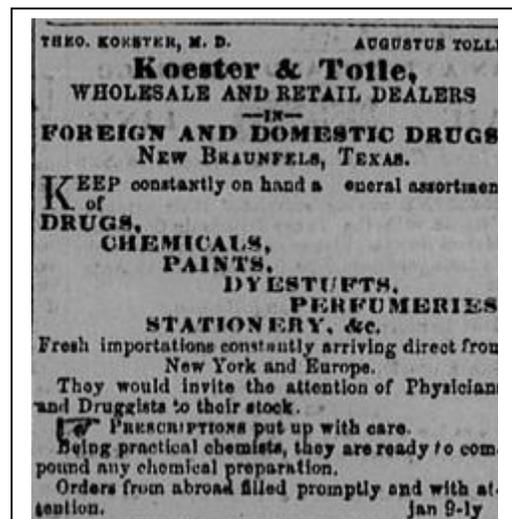


Figure 3. Koester & Tolle advertisement before beginning business on Lots 271 & 272 (1860). Source: *The San Antonio Ledger and Texan*. (San Antonio, Tex.), Vol. 9, No. 47, Ed. 1 Saturday, May 26, 1860.

stands, contains at least two acres. Doors and windows are tall and wide and the premises are, therefore, light and airy. The building was built around July 1854 *[Based on the date that the lots were purchased, by Koester and Tolle, this is likely a misprint and should read 1864 or 1865].* **Dr. Theodor Köester had it built with the intention to have a distillery for smooth brandy from corn, grapes, etc., produced in the Guadalupe Valley. This company proved not to be as rewarding as they expected, and the building stood empty for many years."**

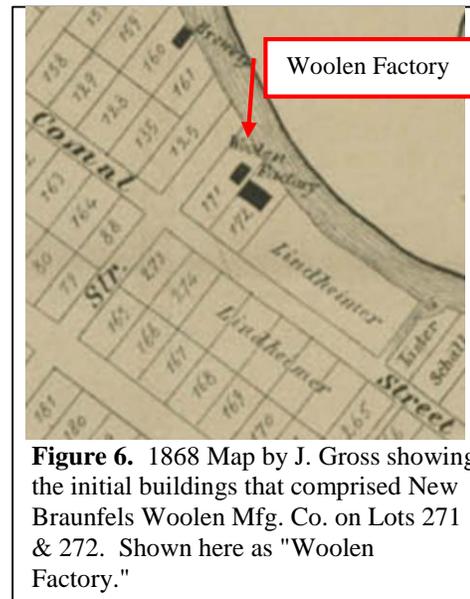
Figure 4 reflects an advertisement (1864) by Dr. Koester and his partner, Augustus Tolle, for "Drugs, Chemicals, &c [etc.]," and "Pure Strong Alcohol" from their distillery. Dr. Koester also ventured into the woolen mill business after the Civil War in 1865 by purchasing a wool-carding machine from England. In fact, he ventured into manufacturing a number of different products, not particularly related to one another including a sawmill, planing mill (finishing mill), a flourmill, with the distillery in a small basement. Ultimately, their diverse business ventures at this site were not the success they had hoped for, and in January 4, 1868, the property was sold to a newly established company called the New Braunfels Woolen Mill Manufacturing Company.

upon favorably by the New Braunfels citizens, so they used steam power.

Franz Moureau was the first president of the New Braunfels Woolen Mill and Otto Groos, the first secretary. Thomas J. Peterman, A. Lange, Theodore Koester, and Mrs. A. Moureau were members of the Board. The first head of the institution was George H. Judson. In addition to the property and the building(s), the purchase included their contents, keeping what it could use, (e.g., the woolen milling equipment), and selling the rest, such as the brewery equipment. In August of 1867, it was determined that a larger boiler should be installed separate from the main building and that a large chimney would be required,

probably due to an increase in steam power from a larger steam engine. The chimney was completed in the spring of 1868 and, along with the building itself, became a landmark of New Braunfels. A belfry with a bell was also placed atop the building. It is very likely that the bell served several purposes. First, it may have been used to start and end the workday as well as break

for lunch. Second, it could be used to summon help due to an emergency if rung at an unusual time of day or night. Lastly, it may have been used for celebratory reasons such as Independence Day or New Years. Figure 6 (above) is the earliest map that shows the location of two building of the Woolen Factory in 1868. Figures 7 - 10 (below) clearly reflect the main structure and its prominence on the New Braunfels landscape.



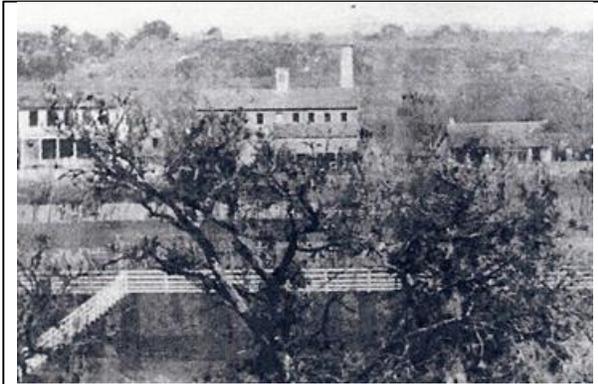


Figure 7. 1873 photo of Woolen Mill in 1873. Source: *New Braunfels Sophienburg Museum & Archives*. Original photo donated by David W. Hartmann June 6, 2014.

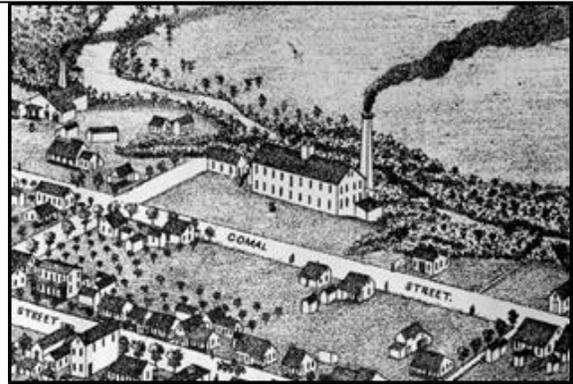


Figure 8. 1881 "Bird's eye" view from part of a sketch of New Braunfels. Source: *Oscar Haas, History of New Braunfels and Comal County, Texas, 1844-1946*. Original 1968, reprint 1983.

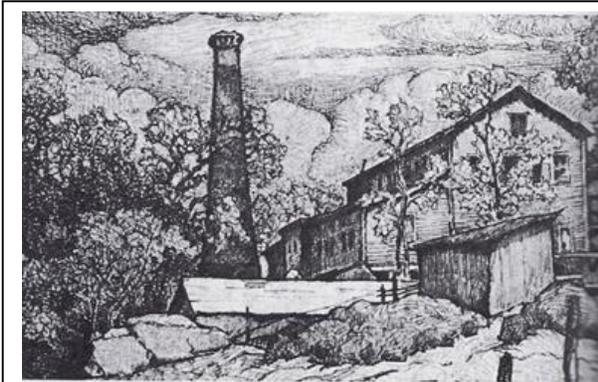


Figure 9. Undated sketch of New Braunfels Woolen Mfg. Co. from back of buildings. Source: *Oscar Haas, History of New Braunfels and Comal County, Texas, 1844-1946*.



Figure 10. Early un-dated photo of Woolen Mill, viewed from the corner of Garden and Comal Streets (i.e., toward the East). Note: Two or more individuals at top of stairs. Source: *Lynn Norvell & Debbie Elliott (Property owners & great-granddaughters of Franz & Anna Popp)*.

In addition to what Koester had already installed for his attempt at a small woolen mill, the new company contracted for additional woolen mill machinery from L. L. Brown of Corpus Christi to include installation. To ensure enough firewood for the large boiler, 656 acres on the Guadalupe River were purchased for \$600.

The Woolen Mill was a success from the start with initial orders coming in by March 1868.

As the success of the company grew, its production accomplishments were often noted in Texas newspapers. So, too, did the reputation of the quality of their products as it began to receive recognition at competitions at fairs, even outside of Texas such as in Louisiana in 1870. (Figure 11) A portion of a Sanborn map from 1885 reflects what the operations looked like inside the Woolen Mill. (Figure 12), Figure 13 is a typical "carder" of that period.

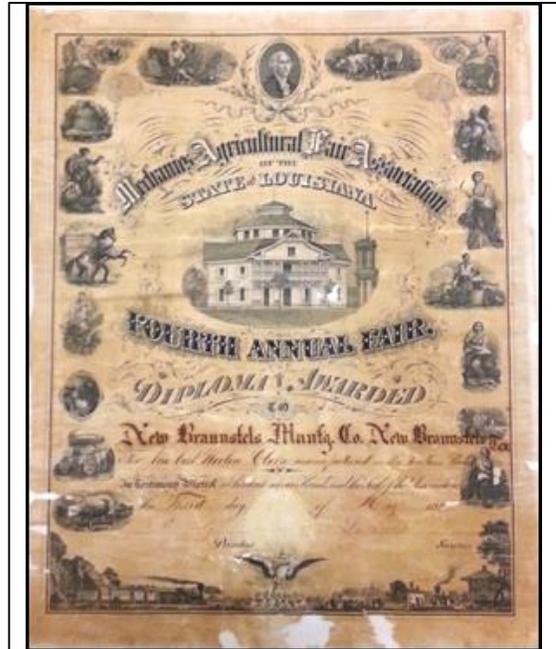


Figure 11. Mechanics Agricultural Fair Association of the State of Louisiana, Fourth Annual Fair, Diploma Awarded to New Braunfels Mfg. Co. New Braunfels, Tex." Awarded 1870. Source: F. E. Giesecke Collection, 1867-1887.

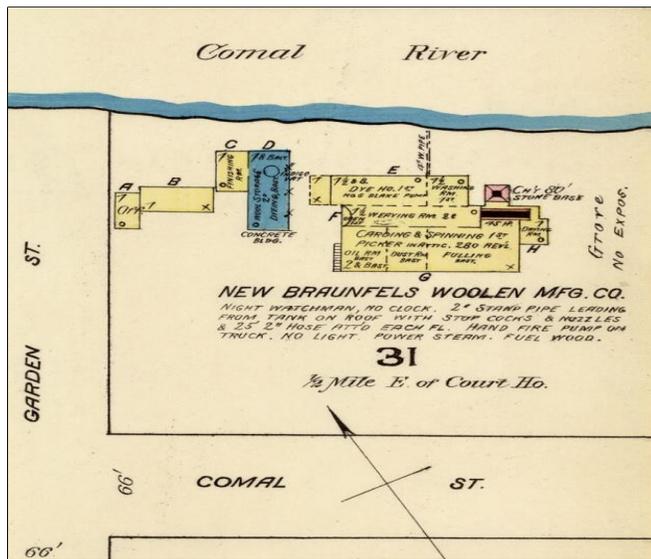


Figure 12. 1885 Sanborn Insurance map reflecting the design & make-up of the New Braunfels Woolen Mfg. Co. KEY: Yellow is wood frame, Red is brick, Blue is concrete. Black is steam boiler. Note outside stairs on left side (west) of large building & a number of other buildings exist with the larger building.

Figure 13. An example of a 19th century mechanical "Carder" such as may have been used at the Woolen Mill. "Carding" is a mechanical process that disentangles, cleans, and intermixes cotton or woolen fibers to produce a continuous web or sliver suitable for subsequent processing. Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carding> .



In a 1902 newspaper interview with Adolph Giesecke, a former Board member, he stated, **"Our factory could furnish about 300 yards cloth per day. We bought each year over 100,000 pounds of fine wool. Twenty-eight regular employees operated the machinery; Moreover there were always a number of people engaged in chopping wood and riding whose wages were \$1.50 to \$3:00 per day for each employee."**

Unfortunately, the company did not trademark their name, and unscrupulous manufacturers, in other parts of the U.S. began to manufacture poorer quality products using the "New Braunfels Woolen Manufacturing Company" name. Business began to quickly decline, and although the company filed suit and won, it was too late due to the negative reputation already received.

d. The Comal Steam Laundry

The buildings lay dormant until February 1901 when Franz Popp purchased the two lots and buildings from Julius Giesecke. Franz Popp had an unprecedented new industry in store for New Braunfels and the surrounding areas, its first steam laundry.

As society changed, during the late 1800s to the early 1900s, the Victorian ethic began to emphasize cleanliness. This appears to have been the boon period for "steam laundries" in not only Britain, but also the United States, including the western states. In addition to the desire for cleanliness, there were other reasons for the birth of steam laundries. For many, doing laundry was not simply washing clothes. Washing was a multi-step process, clothes had to be "... wrung out, dried, starched, and ironed." In addition, it may also involve "...two days of exhausting

labor" even for a single family. In addition, you also had to have sufficient water, from either plumbing, or hauling water from a well, a creek, etc. to accomplish the washing.

The term "steam laundry" was in popular usage by the late 1850s and appears to be the term used for heating the water for the laundry, more than just for operating the equipment although it did both. This was leading-edge industrial revolution technology especially for New Braunfels at that time, as they had had various types of mills, including sawmills, but this was a new industry. The initial, as well as larger, customers would have likely included hotels, schools, hospitals, barbershops, and others that may have required significant loads of laundry, some of which would have required ironing as well. The smaller, but more numerous customers would have been "bachelor bundles" and large families. The Comal Steam Laundry began operations in 1902. It was reported, that Mr. Popp even had a butter and cheese factory set up in it, again showing the ingenuity of the early entrepreneurs to diversify. Later he added a "wood yard with delivery at any time."

Popp and his wife Anna (Mielke) Popp were immigrants arriving in New York in the mid-1880s from Prussia. The U.S. census for 1900 reflects Franz Popp as a farmer. It is uncertain where Popp may have gained any prior experience in the steam laundry business or why he chose to open a steam laundry. He may have worked in a steam laundry prior to his immigration or after he arrived in New York before moving to Texas. Although there may have been a steam laundry in San Antonio, that would have been quite a distance at the time and having their own steam laundry in New Braunfels would have been a new experience and convenience for many of its citizens.

Figures 14 - 16, Sanborn Insurance Maps (1907, 1912, & 1922), reflect the steam laundry location with a few changes (e.g., water tower on east side and upper porch added in front.)

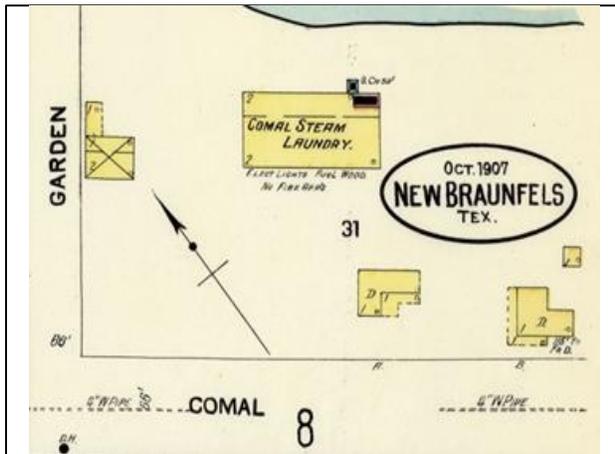


Figure 14. 1907 View of Comal Steam Laundry, October 1907, Sanborn Insurance map of New Braunfels, TX. The chimney can be seen next to the "boiler" (shown in black).

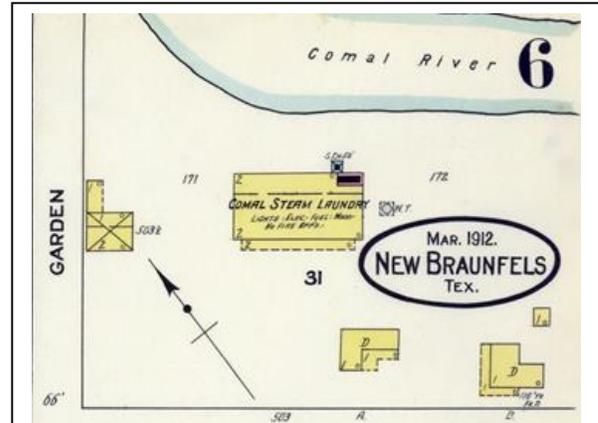


Figure 15. View of Comal Steam Laundry, March 1912 Sanborn Insurance map of New Braunfels, TX. A front porch & balcony is shown. A water tower added at the east end. NOTE: The lots were mislabeled.

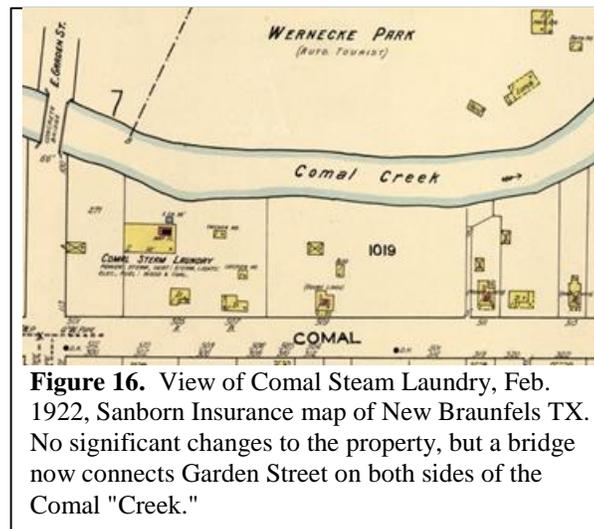


Figure 16. View of Comal Steam Laundry, Feb. 1922, Sanborn Insurance map of New Braunfels TX. No significant changes to the property, but a bridge now connects Garden Street on both sides of the Comal "Creek."

Even after purchasing the properties and needed equipment, there would be the challenge of gaining the confidence of prospective customers. During the late 1800s and early 1900s, turning your laundry over to someone, indeed a business, who is to wash your laundry with clothes from many others would have been unknown by many, if not most of New Braunfels citizens. As elsewhere, initial customers of steam laundries had to be convinced that their laundry would not

only be washed, dried, etc., but also returned to them safely. An article in the Neu Braunfelser Zeitung in January 1903 aided in removing doubts from many potential customers about a large laundry. A reporter took a tour throughout the laundry, describing the procedure to include how the clothes were identified, the processes of washing, drying, and folding, and ensuring that it all went back to the right customers again. The following is a *[translated]* description of the laundry process highlighting the Neu Braunfelser Zeitung article:

"On Friday afternoon, a reporter of the Neu Braunfelser Zeitung paid a quick visit to tour the "Comal Steam Laundry" and found the proprietor, Mr. F. Popp, busy sliding the branches of an entire tree under the huge steam boiler

[T]he content of each laundry packet is carefully printed on the form that is provided by the Laundry Wagon Driver as well as the name and badge of the customer and entered in a book. Then, the contents of all the packages are sorted with care. First, the laundry goes into a large, cylindrical washing machine which is run by steam power, and which rotates forward and backward. The cleaned laundry is then placed in a cylindrical, perforated centrifugal container, which moves within a larger container making 3,500 to 4,000 revolutions per minute. This frees the laundry of most of its moisture. Laundry that is not straightened is ironed. The starched laundry is hung on racks, which are pushed on steel rails in the heated steam drying room, which dries them in a few minutes. Collar, cuffs, and shirts are ironed by a gasoline generated heated machine. The finished laundry is again sorted, compared with the lists, packed, and delivered to the customer. Everything goes like clockwork and the recently installed large steam ironing machine works excellently and allows family laundering to be cheaper than can be done at home. Due to the impeccable work that comes from the "Comal Steam Laundry" and the

very moderate prices wins over any clientele resistance, and the continued existence of the institution, which initially had to contend with all sorts of adversities, is now secured."

The figures 17 & 18 below reflect a typical layout (workflow) for steam laundry and type of equipment used for that period.

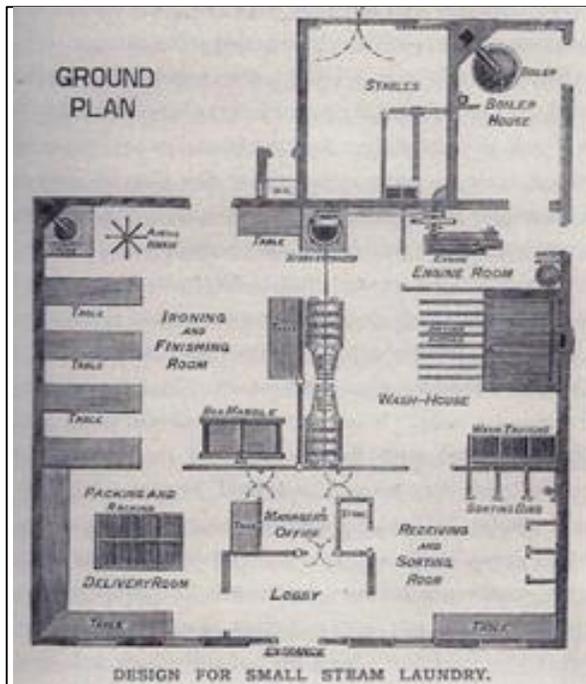


Figure 17. Typical design for small steam laundry.
Source: Arwen P. Mohun, *Steam Laundries*, pg.65.

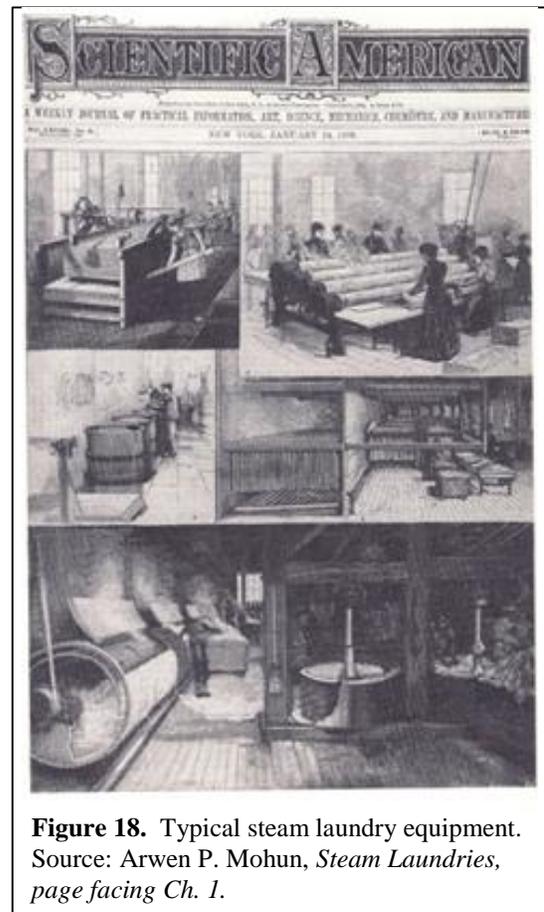


Figure 18. Typical steam laundry equipment.
Source: Arwen P. Mohun, *Steam Laundries*, page facing Ch. 1.

Comal Steam Laundry advertisements in figures 19 -21.

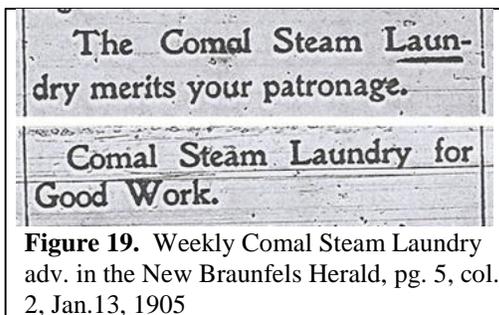


Figure 19. Weekly Comal Steam Laundry adv. in the New Braunfels Herald, pg. 5, col. 2, Jan. 13, 1905

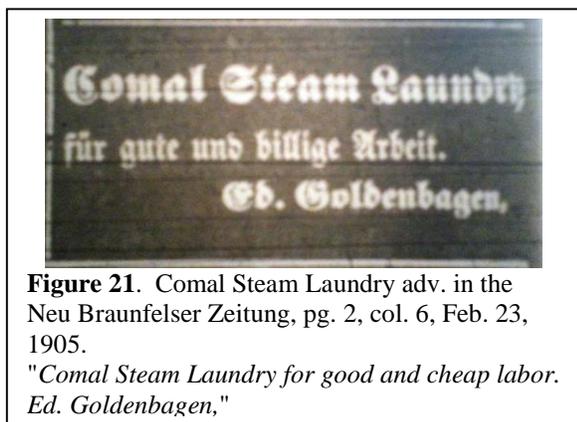


Figure 21. Comal Steam Laundry adv. in the Neu Braunfelser Zeitung, pg. 2, col. 6, Feb. 23, 1905.
"Comal Steam Laundry for good and cheap labor. Ed. Goldenbagen,"



Figure 20 Comal Steam Laundry adv. "The Comal Steam Laundry and Towel Supply Company - Furnishes elegant toilet Cabinets, with large, polished mirrors, and sees [supplies] it regularly with soap, comb, brush, and clean towels for \$ 1.00 per month. Let us you show such a Cabinet."

It is not known how many people were employed at the Steam Laundry, but it would have required a reasonable size staff to achieve all of the chores described above (See figure 22 for what appears to be those responsible for pick-up, delivery, and receiving of laundry.) For many years the family was significantly involved, alongside with others, as the Comal County census of 1920 shows wife, Anna Popp, and two of the daughters, Martha and Rose, as laborers at the laundry. Franz's occupation is shown as "Laundryman," although his death certificate of 1938 reflects he retired in 1913. His retirement, about the age of 54, was likely due to poor health. According to Franz's great-granddaughters, Lynn Norvell & Debbie Elliott, they recalled that Popp's daughter, Emma Popp, had to take over the managing of the laundry. From the letterhead (figure 23), it is also clear the whole family participated in the management and work to be done. The Comal County Steam Laundry continued serving New Braunfels and the surrounding community until the mid or latter 1920s when they are no longer listed in the New Braunfels Directory.



Figure 22. Comal Steam Laundry shown with unidentified individuals. Individual dressed in white shirt, hat, & tie may be Franz Popp. Others are "drivers" & other workers. The drivers would pick up and deliver as well as label the laundry. Note that a porch & balcony have been added to building. A stairway has also been added under the porch up to the balcony. A worker is on the roof. These changes likely were added after purchase of the building from New Braunfels Woolen Mfg. Co. Source: *Lynn Norvell & Debbie Elliott (Property owners & great-granddaughters of Franz & Anna Popp).*

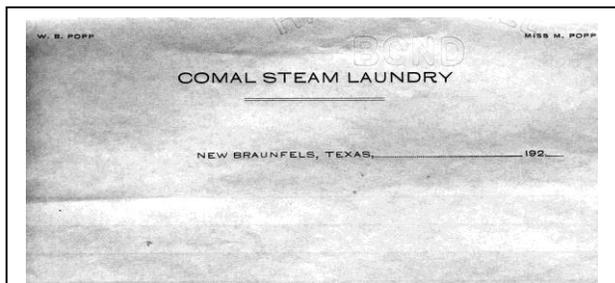


Figure 23 1920's Comal Steam Laundry letterhead showing the names of W.B. (Walter Bruno) Popp & M. (Martha) Popp the oldest children of Franz & Anna Popp.

After the Laundry closed, tragedy struck in March 16, 1934 when a fire occurred in the building from a kerosene stove. At the time, the building was occupied by Franz and Anna Popp, as well as her daughter, Emma Doeppenschmidt's, family. Anna tried unsuccessfully to subdue the fire.

Unfortunately, it was too much for her, and she died a few days later from the effects of the burns and smoke inhalation and the



Figure 24. Undated photo reflecting the Comal County Steam mills without the iconic chimney or belfry. Note also that building is leaning significantly. Source: Lynn Norvell & Debbie Elliott (*Property owners & great-granddaughters of Franz & Anna Popp*).

effects on her heart. Franz Popp died a few years later, in 1938. The building continued to stand until it was finally razed in 1954. Photos reflect that prior to its demise; the landmark chimney and the belfry, which housed the bell, were removed from the building. (Figure 24).

Fortunately, the bell remained in the family.

The properties (Lots 271 and 272) have been in the descendants of the Popp family for the last 113 years. Currently, the properties are owned by Lynn Ethridge Norvell and Debbie Ethridge Elliott, who are the great-granddaughters of Franz and Anna (Mielke) Popp, who established the Comal Steam Laundry. Franz and Anna's daughter, Emma, is described by Lynn and Debbie as a compassionate, hardworking woman who vowed to keep the steam laundry running after the death of her first husband Charles Doeppenschmidt. During the Depression, not only did Emma work at the laundry, but she also was the cook at the Phoenix Saloon in New Braunfels, where her husband, Charles Doeppenschmidt, was proprietor. Lynn and Debbie said their grandmother was always helping people and shared a story about Emma, who was often observed giving sandwiches and an apple to workers, although she did not have enough for herself. One of Emma's children was Thelma Doeppenschmidt Ethridge, who was the mother of

Lynn and Debbie. The granddaughters, who have built family homes on the property site, have ensured what remains of the historic structure is preserved, that includes part of the chimney and partial wall structure bases. They have also kept the bell, which was saved from the steam laundry building when it was razed, and have it mounted on a stone structure located at the front facing Comal Street. Lynn and Debbie are sponsoring the marker in appreciation of the Popp Family including Franz, Anna, Emma, and Thelma.

Figures 25 and 26 are additional family photos provided by Lynn Norvell and Debbie Elliot.

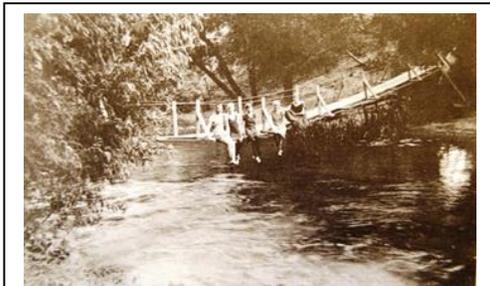


Figure 25 .Undated photo of suspension bridge behind Comal Steam Laundry building (right) built by Franz Popp & friend, before the permanent bridge extending Garden St. across Comal River. Emma Popp & other family members on bridge. Source: *Lynn Norvell and Debbie Elliott*



Figure 26. Undated photo of Emma Popp Doeppenschmidt Krause, grandmother of Lynn Norvell and Debbie Elliott. Old "Comal Steam Laundry" in background. Source: *Lynn Norvell and Debbie Elliott*

Figures 27- 32 reflect the historic lots as they appear in 2014.



Figure 27. Google map view of lots 271 & 272 on corner of Comal and Garden Sts. Remnants of main building on lot 272 (Woolen Mill, Steam laundry) in red.



Figure 28. View from Comal Street. Foundation of main building on lot 272 is located behind this house. Bell salvaged from building is in front yard.



Figure 29. Original bell from building sits prominently in front of historic property.



Figure 30. View of back of lot 272. Significant part of chimney and base of main building has been preserved.



Figure 31. Significant part of the chimney still stands and reflects the excellent masonry work. Outer walls are still perfectly straight & square.



Figure 32. Close up of masonry work on chimney.

III. HISTORICAL/CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE:

New Braunfels became a successful city due to the ingenuity of its citizens and use of the natural resources. The German immigrants came to Texas for its many freedoms offered, one being the lack of obligation to join a guild, which was required in Germany. This freedom led to entrepreneurs developing diverse businesses. Koester and Tolle displayed this diversification by

having multiple businesses in the building they built on the Comal. Although unsuccessful in their attempts at establishing sustaining businesses on the site, they built a substantial building that would stand and house successful businesses in the future.

The New Braunfels Woolen Mill was very successful in its lifetime, utilizing the nearby river for steam power and capitalizing on the wool and cotton industry of the area. Power for the steam boilers was provided by an abundance of cedar in the area useful for burning. The product was quality and the building that Koester and Tolle built was adapted and utilized for this successful venture.

Franz and Anna Popp, also immigrants from Germany at a different time in history, displayed the desire to develop a business that was important to New Braunfels at the time. The emphasis on cleanliness of the early 1900s and the tedious task of “home laundry” led them to establish the Comal Steam Laundry. It was a family business built on a good reputation and hard work. The Popp’s adapted the old building to their uses once again utilizing the Comal River, technology and establishing a successful business. During the depression, when luxuries were few, the Popp children also worked outside of the business to provide for their families.

The building was a substantial structure for over 100 years, being identified as a landmark by travelers to the city. The building is gone but part of the boiler chimney and foundation exist. The bell, representing the technology of the time, has survived and is on display at the site.

New Braunfels is still a successful city built on the foundations of business ingenuity, use of natural resources, use of innovative technology, work ethic, and family established by the immigrants.

IV. DOCUMENTATION

Narrative prepared by Cindy and John Coers.