

Pat Morrison, Jan. 2, 1970
14" x 9" Building Medallion Plate
Comal County (Job # 2896)
Location: 421 S. Seguin Street, New Braunfels

2896

DR. THEODORE KOESTER HOME *

CONSTRUCTED 1859 OF CEDAR,
OAK, AND LIMESTONE. HAS BUILT-
IN CABINETS, A DUMB WAITER,
AND SPEAKING TUBES ON EACH
FLOOR. THE VERSATILE KOESTER
(1817-1877) WAS PHYSICIAN TO
GERMAN IMMIGRATION CO. IN
THIS HOUSE HE RAN DOCTOR'S
OFFICE, PHARMACY, AND BAKERY. **

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RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK--1970 ***

* 3/8 " lettering to contrast with text
** 3/8 " lettering
*** 1/4 " lettering

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APPROVED

Truett Latimer

by Bob Watson
2-2-70

The two-story residence of Dr. Theodor Koester at 421 South Seguin St. in New Braunfels was designed in Mediterranean style by German architect W. C. A. Thielepape and built in 1859.

As a colonist under contract of the German Emigration Co., Dr. Koester drew the lot on which it was built soon after the founding of New Braunfels in March 1845.

He had come to Texas in fall 1844 as physician for the emigrants.

A native of Frankfort-am-Main, he was born June 13, 1817, and studied medicine at the Universities of Tübingen, Göttingen, and Würzburg, graduating from the latter in 1841.

Dr. Koester sailed from Germany aboard the "Ferdinand," one of three vessels bringing to Texas the first wave of emigrants -- 392 -- under auspices of the German Emigration Co.

He attended colonists at Carlshafen, their camp on the Gulf Coast, before moving inland to the settlement at New Braunfels. He married Miss Sophie Tolle in August 1846, and his first home on the Seguin St. site was a log house.

Geologist Dr. Ferdinand Roemer described in his "Texas" the Koester home as he saw it on Feb. 8, 1864:

" . . . a small house . . . upon which three shingles hung, bearing the inscriptions 'Apothecary,' 'Dr. Koester,' and 'Bakery.' At first I concluded that the 'Baker' was a boarder with the physician-owner of the house, but my companion informed me that Dr. Koester actually united in his person the professions of apothecary, baker, and physician . . ."

Dr. Koester's versatility extended to community service, and he was one of the town's early industrialists. He was noted for his philanthropies as well.

He was elected a member of the five-man Colonial Council -- governing body of the settlement -- in 1845 and 1846, and to the first New Braunfels City Council, 1847-49.

When title to the land on which New Braunfels was built was challenged in 1852 by heirs of the man from whom it was purchased, Dr. Koester was among five men elected by townspeople to defend them in the suit. The case was decided in their favor by the Texas Supreme Court.

Dr. Koester served as Comal County Judge 1850-54, 1856-58, and 1876 until his death Nov. 4, 1877. (He is buried in New Braunfels Cemetery.)

The physician also was elected to the first board of trustees of the first Comal County Public School District in 1854. (Not to be confused with the New Braunfels Public School District created earlier.)

In the mid-1850's, Dr. Koester built and operated a brandy distillery on the banks of the Comal at Garden St. During the Civil War, the distillery's brass vats were "drafted" by the Confederate government and shipped elsewhere for the manufacture of gunpowder.

Koester sold the building in 1867 to the New Braunfels Woolen Manufacturing Co.

The Texas Paper Manufacturing Co. was formed in 1863 by Dr. Koester and Samuel Mather of Williamson. The firm purchased

the original Holekamp Mill building on the Comal at the foot of Garza St. and produced a rough paper to fill the wartime need.

According to the 1860 census of Comal County, the family of Dr. and Mrs. Koester then consisted of four children, Emma, 12, Elise, 10, Anna, 2, and William three months.

The house now is owned by Mr. and Mrs. David Meckel who are not related to the Koester family. For many years, after the Koester family lived there, the house was owned and occupied by Mrs. Koester's brother August and his family.

