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Alabama in 1848: As Described by Traugott Bromme

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

DURING THE EARLY PART OF THE 1800S, economic problems and political turmoil brought many Europeans to the United States in large numbers. Many came from Germany, and a portion of those immigrants eventually settled in Alabama. One early German immigrant to the United States was Traugott Bromme, who saw in the European exodus a potential for profit and success. Between 1840 and 1866 he prepared and published eight editions, one posthumously, of a travel guide for German emigrants to North America. Bromme's guide included information on all regions of the country, and the pages devoted to Alabama portrayed the state as a beneficial destination for prospective emigrants. Simon Traugott Bromme was born on December 3, 1802, in Anger, near Leipzig, in what would later become Germany.¹ His father was apparently a well-to-do estate owner and Gerichtsschöffe, a legal assistant to the court. Traugott, who had at least four siblings, was orphaned at the age of five. He grew up witnessing, among other pivotal events of the era, Napoleon's

troops marching to Russia in 1812. Richard L. Bland is an archaeologist at the Oregon State Museum of Anthropology, a research division of the University of Oregon Museum of Natural and Cultural History in Eugene. His major interest is Old World–New World connections, as a result of which he translates Russian archaeological monographs on Northeast Asia, as well as some history dealing with Russian America (e.g., A. V. Grinev’s book *The Tlingit Indians in Russian America 1741–1867*, published by the University of Nebraska Press, 2005). He would like to thank his late uncle, H. D. McCutcheon, for giving him a volume of Traugott Bromme, the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin for helpfully providing materials related to Bromme, Nan Copprock-Bland for proofreading the final draft, and the editors of the *Alabama Review*.

1 The nation we know as Germany today was for most of its history a disjointed confederation of states—for example, Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg—governed by princes and other leaders and connected by a common culture and language. These lands were not unified as one nation until 1871. Mary Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany* (London, 1992), 122–25. For ease of reading, however, these states will be referred to as Germany throughout this essay.

Notes and Documents RICHARD L. BLAND ALABAMA IN 1848: AS DESCRIBED BY TRAUGOTTBROMME JANUARY 20 08 49

In 1817, he attended a class at a Leipzig bookshop, an experience that would eventually launch him into the book business. He did not immediately become a writer or publisher; instead, he spent three years studying and traveling, even finding a measure of adventure. In April 1821 Bromme immigrated to the United States and studied medicine. After this he is supposed to have served as a doctor in the “Columbian” service and also spent some time in a Haitian jail.² Bromme’s book career began in 1824. In June of that year he returned to Saxony and settled in Dresden, where he became a partner in Walther’schen Hoffbuchhandlung, which his brother-in-law, the book dealer Johann Gottlieb Wagner, had purchased in the same year. In 1833 Bromme traveled again to the United States, this time to Baltimore (where he possibly had relatives), and took up a partnership in the publishing house of Scheld and Company.³ While in Baltimore he published travel guides, producing eight titles between 1834 and 1837. He appears to have returned to Germany by about 1840, settling in Stuttgart. One lesson that Bromme may have learned in his travels between Germany and America was that many immigrants to America arrived with no prospect of a job and were unable to speak English, the dominant language. He also would have seen that many of the people who were looking for a new start in life were Germans. These émigrés needed information that would let them know what to expect; in response, Bromme wrote a travel guide for German emigrants, which became relatively popular, entitled: *Traugott Bromme’s Hand- und...*

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