

Texas Historical Commission Staff (DP), 7/4/74;
Mrs. May Bourgeois, 7/31/74;
Historical Commission Staff (DP), 8/1/74

Official Texas Historical Building Marker w/o post
and for wood siding (fachwerk underneath)
Comal County (Order #4032)

Location: 240 Kowald Lane,
New Braunfels

THE BRASCHLER HOUSE*

BUILT IN 1854 BY THE REV. HENRY
BRASCHLER(b.1818 IN SWITZERLAND),
WHO CAME TO TEXAS IN 1848 AND
SERVED AS PASTOR OF NEARBY ST.
MARTIN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH, 1852-57.
OF CALICHE AND CEDAR FACHWERK,
HOUSE WAS LATER ENLARGED AND,
ACCORDING TO TRADITION, BECAME A
STAGE STOP ON BASTROP ROAD. IN ITS
FAMILY BURIAL PLOT IS GRAVE OF
MAREN HANDER(b.1805 IN DENMARK),
GREAT-GRANDMOTHER OF ETHEL GEUE
AND MAY BOURGEOIS, WHO BOUGHT
THE HOUSE IN 1970 AND RESTORED IT.**
RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK-1974***

4032

FILE COPY-DO NOT REMOVE

*1/2" lettering
**3/8" lettering
***1/4" lettering

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AUG 5 1974

SOUTHWELL GREEN
TEXAS HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

APPROVED
Truett Latimer
by Bob Watson
8-5-74

From A CENTENNIAL STORY
of THE LUTHERAN CHURCH in TEXAS, 1851-1951

Section One, the Church was planted, 1851-1876

4032

by H.C. Zieshe, Pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church
Taylor, Texas
South Texas Printing Co., Seguin, Texas; copyright 1951, H.C. Zieshe

BIOGRAPHY of J.H. Braschler

Pastor Braschler was born in Switzerland in 1818 and was educated at the University of Bern. Prior to his coming to Texas he was a teacher somewhere in that country. He came to America in 1848, but whether he came directly to Texas or came by way of eastern and northern states we do not know. Only this we know - on the voyage he lost all of his possessions in a shipwreck.

He appears upon the scene of our interest as a candidate of theology - that is, as an unordained pastor - in the Spring Creek settlement which was twenty-five miles northwest of Houston. The community is known as Rose Hill today, near Tom Ball. He seems to have been associated with Pastor Caspar Braun of Houston. It is even possible that Pastor Braun secured him for the settlement in that community and coached him in his studies and work.

He was with Pastor Braun when the five St. Chrischona men arrived from Galveston on Saturday evening, November 8, 1851. He was present and participated in the organization of the First Evangelical Lutheran Synod in Texas on the following Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday; but instead of returning to his congregation at Spring Creek, he announced that he would have to find a more remunerative occupation, so that he might replace the loss he suffered at sea. One of the newly-arrived men, Pastor J.G. Ehinger, remained to continue the work at Spring Creek.

How did this venture in the world of business or labor work out? Or was he so successful that when his economic damage was repaired he was constrained by heart and conscience to return to his first professional love? Be that one way or the other, we know that when the Synod met for its second convention at Victoria in May 1852, he was present and requested that his license as pastor be renewed. The request was granted. At the close of the convention he went with Pastor Kleis to become his successor at Neighborsville - Hortontown.

It was not an easy field that he was entering even though for two years it had been under the care of so energetic a man as Pastor Kleis. But with patience and steadfast purpose he accomplished the goal. As the records of the congregation show, he served during the first year as "teacher and pastor" under a contract. When the members failed to organize a congregation in the annual meeting in August 1853, the contract was renewed. Then finally in the third year on August 13, 1854, a formal congregational organization under a constitution was set up by unanimous vote. Of deeper interest and importance are the following excerpts:

" The name of our congregation is and shall remain Evangelical^{ical} Lutheran Saint Martin's Congregation. It embraces both settlements, Neighborsville and Hortontown.

" We acknowledge the doctrinal Lutheran Confession and lay special stress on the Augsburg Confession as the great symbol of the Reformation.

" Before assuming office, the pastor must present a certificate of ordination or a license to the Church Council. These papers must show that he is a member of the First Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Texas or of a Lutheran Synod in one of the other states of the Union."

4032

In the Spring of that year, 1854, he attended the Fourth Convention of the Synod at Castroville. In those days it was the rule that the men who were licensed to serve a congregation had to renew their application for a license each year. Such an application was accompanied by several written sermons, a written report on some assigned subject, and a diary of the year's activities. In the minutes of the Castroville Convention, we read, "The papers of candidate H. Braschler and - - - - were before the Ministerium. They were examined. Those of Brother Braschler were not only satisfactory but they exceed our expectations. It is therefore agreed that he be ordained without further examination." On that same Monday evening without further examination he was ordained on May 2 in the closing service of the Convention.

At the Fifth Convention held at Fredericksburg in the Spring of 1855, he was elected to serve as President pro tempore since the President was unable to attend. The same Convention elected him to serve as treasurer for the following year. In the President's annual report to the Convention of 1858, we read "On September 9 announced that he was relinquishing his post and that after October 8 he would be departing for the Northern states." Another Conference says, "Under date of January 25 Brother Braschler informed me that he had found an appointment in McKeesport, Pennsylvania." He also requested that he be given a release from membership in our Synod. I supplied him with the same." This statement is corroborated in the handwriting of his successor in the record of Saint Martin's Church at Neighborsville, "On the 27th of September 1857, on the 16th Sunday after Trinity, Pastor Heinrich Braschler delivered his farewell sermon."

Our final glimpse of the Brother we glean from the annals of the Pittsburgh Lutheran Synod. He was licensed in 1858, supplied the McKeesport German Church, and was removed to Indiana in 1859." It is said that he served a congregation near Evansville.

HISTORY OF HOUSE AT 240 KOWALD LANE, NEW BRAUNFELS

4032

- 1 -

The land on which the house is situated is part of the original land grant from the Mexican Government to Citizen Antonio Maria Eznaurizar, made on November 10, 1831 in the town of Gonzales. An interesting sidelight is the fact that it was James Bowie who, as attorney, applied for the grant in behalf of Eznaurizar. On December 3, 1834, Eznaurizar sold to Peter Harmony and he, on January 12, 1836, sold to Miguel Garcia. Garcia, along with others, partitioned the land to several persons. Among them was Jacob de Cordova who, on April 3, 1849, for his services in surveying the land, received 1/6 of the land which included tracts No.2 and No.3.

On January 30, 1856, de Cordova sold to Henry (or Heinrich) Braschler " 77 $\frac{1}{2}$ acres of land known as the back half of survey No.3 of the Eznaurizar grant on which the said Braschler is now living agreeably to a plan of the same made by Charles W. Pressler which is of record in the County Clerk's office at Seguin, Guadalupe County, which plan reference is made and is declared part and parcel of this conveyance together with all and singular the right members, improvements hereditaments and appurtenances to the same belonging or in any wise incident or appertaining and the reversions and remainders rents, issues and profits thereof." 1

Special emphasis is given to the above transfer of land because it establishes approximately when the house was built. It will be noted in the resumé of the Reverend Braschler's life that he was pastor of the Hortontown Lutheran Church from 1852 to 1857. On October 25, 1853, he married Louise Hermann. It can be assumed that shortly after his marriage, or even before, he prepared a house for his bride. Though he bought the land only in 1856, he was already living on it, in the house which either he or de Cordova built. For these reasons, Mr. Oscar Haas joins me in placing the date of construction of the house at sometime in 1854. 2

When Braschler left Hortontown to go to Pennsylvania he sold the house and land to David Else on June 9, 1857. Else in turn sold to Christoph W. Isensee on August 17, 1860. From Isensee the property went on December 10, 1900, to August Bartels who sold it on December 28, 1937, to Caroline Henk. Mrs. Henk then transferred it to Monroe Henk on October 25, 1949. Monroe Henk sold the house, located on one and a half acre of land, to my sister, Mrs. Ethel Hander Geue, and myself on August 4, 1970.

- 2 -

Oscar Haas in a letter to my sister, Mrs. Geue, dated Sept. 16, 1970, judged that the house was built in 1856, the year de Cordova sold to Braschler. Since then new proof, given above, has caused him to revise this date to 1854.

The house, most certainly, was built as a home for Reverend Braschler and his wife. It was also part of the German Verein colonization of the area adjacent to New Braunfels called Hortontown-Neighborsville. It may possibly have been on the route of one of the local stagecoach trails because Mr. Norman Bremer says: "all the oldtimers say it was a stagecoach stop on the route from Bastrop."³ In that connection we note also that on January 8, 1853 de Cordova conveyed to the St. Martin's Lutheran Church Lot No.16 in Neighborsville "two acres of land for use as a church site."⁴ This would put the parsonage in the same vicinity as the church.

Though no records have been found it is very probable that Henry Braschler himself had the house built and supervised its planning since it was built for his use. Braschler was born in Switzerland in 1818 and came to Texas in 1848, having lost all of his possessions in a shipwreck. For a while he was an unordained pastor in the Spring Creek settlement near Houston. On November 10, 1851 he participated in the organization in Houston of the First Evangelical Lutheran Synod in Texas. He was one of seven ministers who met for this purpose. He then worked for a while at some type of remunerative occupation in order to recoup his losses at sea. In May 1852 he again participated in the Synod at its second convention which was held in Victoria. From there he went with Pastor Kleis⁵ to become Kleis' successor at Neighborsville-Hortontown. He served there in the Evangelical Lutheran St. Martin's Congregation from 1852 to 1857. In 1853 he married Louise Hermann of New Braunfels. At the fifth convention of the Synod held at Fredericksburg in the spring of 1855 he was elected to serve as president pro-tempore. The same convention elected him treasurer for the following year. In the fall of 1857 he left Texas and went to a pastorate in McKeesport, Pa. He delivered his final sermon at St. Martin's church on September 27, 1857. After serving the McKeesport German church for a year he went to a congregation near Evansville, Indiana. There is no further word of him and his death date is unknown, but the New Braunfels Zeitung of November 4, 1915, reports that he is buried in Heinrich Isensee's Platz.

Following Braschler in the house were David Else, Christoph Isensee, and August Bartels, all farmers.

Architect and contractor probably were Braschler and de Cordova, possibly with help from members of the Congregation.

As originally built the house certainly consisted of the two front rooms, or perhaps only of the one large room which is now

the living room. There is a slight architectural difference in the molding of the two front doors. Probably within a few years the house was enlarged to its present size of five rooms. This difference of time may be seen in the two types of outside siding. It is a one-story house with an attic room which is unfinished. Each room has an opening for heating by a wood stove. All interior walls are of fachwerk construction except the wooden partition between the present kitchen and the back bedroom. Rough-cut cedar beams are exposed in the ceiling of the bathroom and hall, but in the living room these have been covered with plaster. A well was dug in back of the original two rooms; it was soon incorporated inside the house and is located in the present kitchen. It has been boarded up to enclose an electric pump which supplies water for household use. As soon as city water is available we plan to remove the pump and expose the old well.

The main material on the outside is wood siding. The roof is of tin or "Terne", and there are two chimneys serving four rooms. The foundation is of large, hand-cut native white stone, and the front and side steps are of the same stone. There is a back porch with floor of swept earth, and a front porch which runs the width of the house. The roof of the front porch is supported by six hand-cut posts. We added the crossbars which originally must have been there. Only one small barn remains along with a small out-house.

- 7 -

Though the climate does not require such solid walls, fachwerk was the construction method used since this was the way houses were built in Germany where many of the residents of Neighborville-Hortontown came from. Because all transportation was by means of wagons in 1854 the settlers used available materials in the region: native stone for the foundation, cedar beams for framework, and a mixture of caliche and straw to fill in between the structural beams. Plaster inside and wood siding outside were used to finish the walls.

- 8 -

This is a family residence. It was build to be durable, to hold warmth in the winter and to catch the prevailing breeze during the hot summers. As noted above, the type of construction reflects the ethnic origin of the ones who build it. The materials used are those available in the community.

- 9 -

The building has never been moved, and after the first few years no additions or changes have been made to the house. We have added one small partition to the long bathroom in order to form a hall for passage from the living room to the kitchen.

The house has been restored from a state of neglect. It had been rented to a succession of laborers and Mexicans, some of whom took care of it and others who abused it. When purchased by my sister and me it was inhabited by a junk dealer who had his merchandise all over the acre and a half of land, and in the house itself. All of this has been cleared, the house repainted inside and out, glass replaced in the small windowpanes,⁷ electricity rewired and plumbing redone. Mrs. May Hander Bourgeois will use it as a vacation house or a domicile.

- 11 -

PICTURE OF THE HOUSE AT 240 KOWALD LANE

Mr. and Mrs. Christoph Eeinrich Isensee in front of the house as it was around 1890. (Mrs. Brunhilde Isensee³ Kowald provided this picture of her grandparents).

Item No. 12 is not applicable.

4032

From the beginning the house was a dwelling place for families, and it has continued as such to the present time. As noted above, it may have been a stagecoach stop at one time. The availability of cool water from the old well plus the fact it was possibly the last stopping place before the river-crossing lends credence to this belief.

We feel this structure is worthy of commemoration for the following reasons:

- 1) It is a good example of fachwerk construction, a method used by the early German Verein settlers in colonizing the New Braunfels area.
- 2) It was the home of the second Lutheran minister to the Hortontown Lutheran Church called St. Martin's.
- 3) It is a good example of a farmhouse of the middle of the 19th century.
- 4) The family burial plot back of the old barn is the last resting place of the great grandmother⁸ of the present owner. This immigrant from Christianfeld, Denmark, Maren Schmidt Hander (1805-1856) had asked to be buried on her pastor's land and her wish was granted. Reverend Braschler's mother-in-law is also buried there.⁹ Braschler himself may be buried here.¹⁰

NOTES

1. Recorded in Vol. 69, pp. 160-161, Comal County Deed Records.
2. See two letters from Oscar Haas enclosed herewith.
3. Interview with Mr. Bremer, July 4, 1973.
4. Comal County Deeds T, 253.
5. variously spelled Gleis, Kleis, and Kleitz.
6. Interview with Mr. Bill Dillon of New Braunfels.
7. About 10 of the windowpanes are the original handmade glass panes.
8. See letter from Wm. Hander to his son, Emil, enclosed herewith.
9. Ibid.
10. Eine Kleine Chronic der Martin's Kirche Gemeinde
(reprint enclosed herewith)

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Bremer, Norman: New Braufels, Texas (Wednesday, July 4, 1973)

Dillen, W.: Church Hill Road, New Braunfels, Texas
(June 25, 1972)

Haas, Oscar: 329 E. Zink, New Braunfels (September 17, 1973)

Henk, Monroe: Freiheit Road, New Braunfels, Texas
(March 2, 1970; March 15, 1972; September 17, 1973)

Kowald, Mrs. Brunhilde Isensee: 391 Magazine St. New Braunfels,
Texas (June 24, 1972; July 16, 1971; September
17, 1973)

AUTHORS OF THIS HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

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76109

Bourgeois, Mrs. May Hander: 2070 Southgate Blvd. Houston,
Texas 77025

OSCAR HAAS

329 East Zink
New Braunfels, Texas 78130
August 18, 1973

To Mrs. May Bourgeois, and

To whom it may concern:

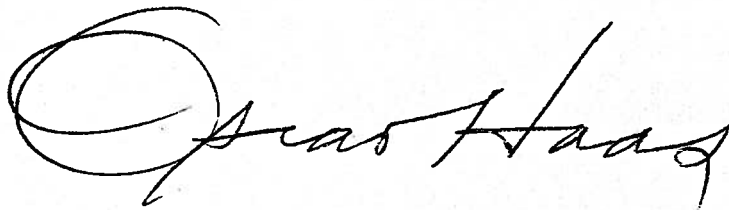
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Here's how I am going to vote on age of the home which I understand you and your sister purchased from Monroe Henk.

I am going to vote that at least some part of the home was begun in the year of 1854 since the Rev. Heinrich Braschler, who was pastor of the St. Martin's Lutheran Church at Hortontown 1852 to 1857, married Louise Hermann on October 31 1853

It is reasonable to suppose that he built a dwelling house for his bride soon thereafter.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Oscar Haas". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name "Oscar Haas".

4032

2070 Southgate Blvd.
Houston, Texas 77025
July 31, 1974

Mr. Bob Watson, Director of Programs
Texas Historical Commission
Box 12276, Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Mr. Watson:

I have received your copy of the text of the historical marker for the Braschler Home at 240 Kowald Lane in New Braunfels, and think it is a well-phrased account of the historical and architectural worth of the place. However, since it mentions the names of my sister and myself as restorers, I feel it would be in order to include the fact of the burial place of our great grandmother, Maren Hander (b. 1805 in Denmark).

It was our search for her grave which led us through county court records to the Braschler house, to our purchase of it, and to our decision to restore it. Indeed the house was in such a state of disrepair that we realized its worth only after we had purchased the land.

I enclose herewith a revised version which, I think, is consistent with the space requirements for the text and which includes this additional information.

If this personal reference is not consistent with your policy I will be glad to approve the text as received in your letter of July 26.

Sincerely yours,

May H. Bourgeois

(Mrs.) May H. Bourgeois

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AUG 1 1974

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

2070 Southgate Blvd.
Houston, Texas 77025
Monday, November 19, 1973

Mr. Bob Watson
Director of Programs
Texas Historical Commission
Box 12276, Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Mr. Watson:

Mr C.W. Heitkamp has asked me to reply to your letter of November 6, 1973 in which you stated acceptance of my application for a historical marker for the Reverend Henry Braschler Home at 240 Kowald Lane in New Braunfels.

You asked for the date when we expected restoration to be completed. We hope this will be in the early spring of 1974, perhaps even in February or March. This will depend on our contractor and the weather. Also we shall not be able to tear down the boards enclosing the old hand-dug well in the kitchen until another source of water is secured, either city water or a new well.

We are pleased that our house has been accepted for a historical marker and shall do our best to keep its historical and ethnic character intact.

Sincerely,

May H. Bourgeois

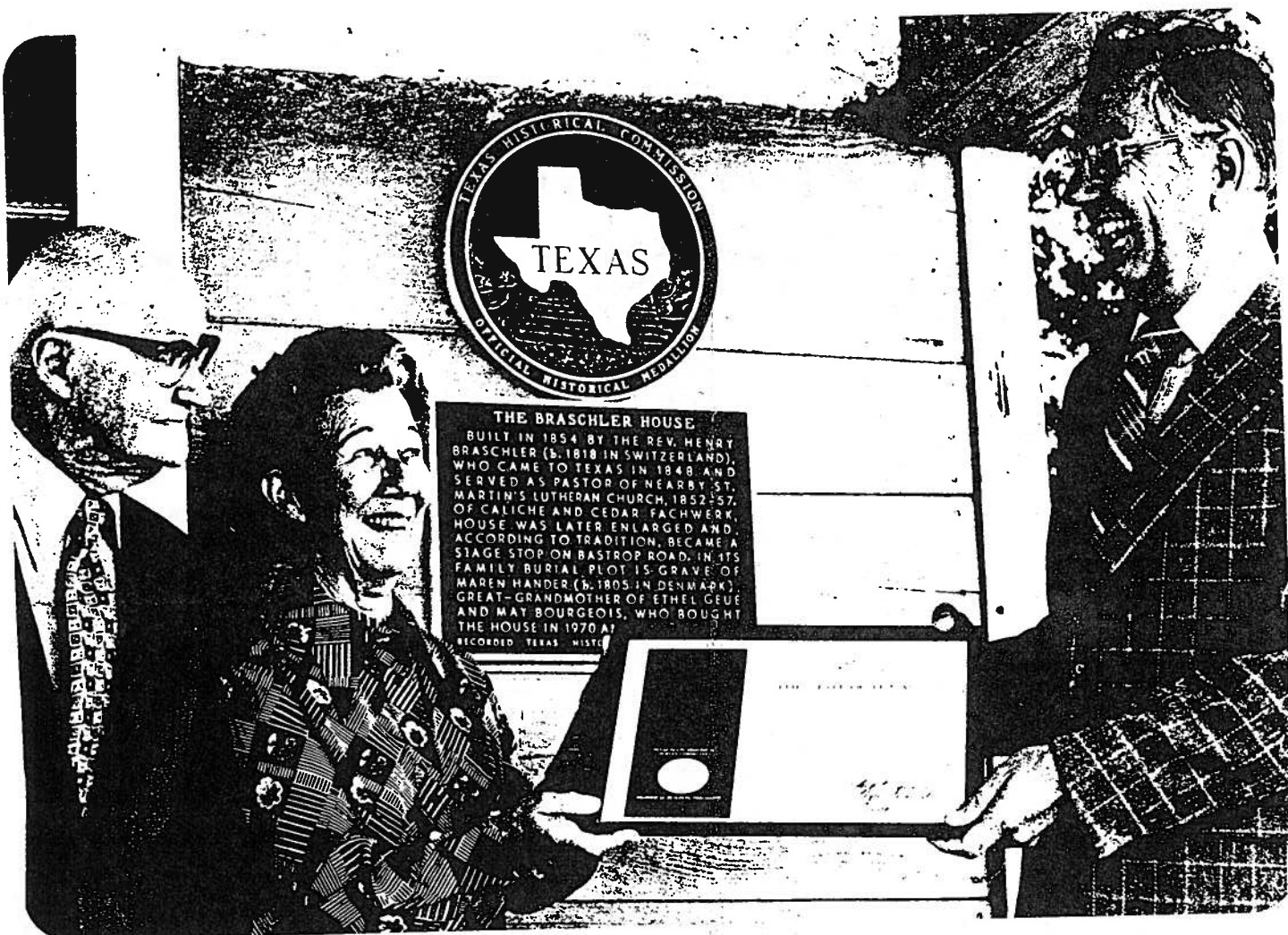
(Mrs.) May H. Bourgeois

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NOV 21 1973

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Historical Marker

As Oscar Haas, unofficial county historian, looks on as Walter Heitkamp, right presents certificate to Mrs. M. H. Bourgeois of Houston signifying that the Henry Braschler home at 240 Kowald Lane has been granted Texas Historical Commission recognition. Heitkamp is chairman of the Comal County Historical Survey Committee, which recommended the designation. (Photo by Frances Bridges)

Braschler Home Gets Medallion

A home believed to be 120 years old received a Texas Historical Commission official historical medallion in ceremonies Saturday afternoon presided over by Walter Heitkamp, chairman of the Comal County Historical Survey Committee.

Present for the designation were Mrs. M. H. Bourgeois of Houston, who is the present owner along with her daughter, June, and Oscar Haas, unofficial county historian, and many others.

Located at 240 Kowald Lane on land which is part of the land grant from the Mexican government to Citizen Eznaurizar made in 1831. It was partitioned in 1849 and Jacob de Cordova received the part where the house is located.

Cordova sold the land, with all improvements, to Henry Braschler on Jan. 30, 1856. It is believed that the house, which is of fachwerk construction, had been built around 1854 and that Rev. Braschler bought it as a home for his bride, Louise Hermann, whom he married in 1853.

The Braschlers lived there until 1857 when he accepted a call to a pastorate in McKeesport, Pa. He had served as pastor at Hortontown for five years.

Braschler was the second pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran St. Martin's Church at Neighborsville-Hortontown.

The New Braunfelser Zeitung of Nov. 4, 1915 in a report on his life says that he is buried in 'Heinrich Isensee's Platz.' Heinrich Christoph Isensee, a farmer, owned the property from 1860 to 1900. The Platz mentioned is the Braschler

family cemetery in back of the old house.

Buried there also are Louise Braschler's mother and the oldest child of her brother, Friedrich Hermann, and Friedrich Hermann's mother-in-law Maren Schmidt Handler, who was Mrs. Bourgeois's great-grandmother. His grave is one reason for her interest in the old house.

Old-timers say that at one time the house was a stagecoach stop.

Mrs. Bourgeois and her daughter are completing the restoration of the home.





