

Coming of age



Ida Marie Flach Norman

December 16, 1894 -- August 5, 1987

Ida Marie Flach was the granddaughter of Christoph Flach and Antonie Kapp, and Otto Brinkmann and Marie Osche.

All Texas Hill Country founding

The eyes, the merest hint of a forthcoming smile, the laced-collar dress is

modest, rather demure, for the formal studio portrait. Who was this young woman on the brink of adulthood? I sense a quiet intelligence and depth. I yearned to know all that was not captured in this one-click of a seemingly self-possessed German American fraeulein. How did her life develop?

And so, the search for the story of Ida Marie Flach Norman began.

She lived her last forty-plus years in a house she designed and was built in 1940 on the original Christoph Flach homesite, an idyllic site selected to

settle and raise the Flach family on the high ridge just off Cypress Creek in Comfort. Property recently purchased includes this house. Ida died in 1987 at the age of 92 and the house had not been lived in as a primary residence since then. By closing, the family had removed the majority of items but not all, and we have all been there, a point you just can't take any more, or dig through any more boxes, particularly from a house lived in for so long. Left were a few boxes of items in closets and the basement, water damaged from the 1978 flood that devastated Comfort. The items were from family homes and moved to Ida's house, which was higher in elevation. In loading it up to take to the dump, we saw a few things that piqued our interest: hankies, sheet music, schoolbooks, a few old letters, much of it from an era long ago, before 1940. Every time we started to throw things away, something stopped us. Instead we started researching ways to remove mold and mildew from fabric, from paper, from books. We began cleaning and restoring, finding eight distinct ways [noted in Appendix] to remove mold spores and musty smells! While it was a time-consuming process, and the books aren't ready to go into a library, we accomplished enough to browse and read without sneezing.

Mostly what this did was whet my appetite to learn more. And I did this in a number of ways: census records, Comfort Heritage Foundation and Genealogical Society of Kendall County archives, living decedents and publicly sourced information in addition to the realia from the home.

Ida's Life

Ida was born on December 16, 1894, her father Rudolph was the youngest of the Christoph Flach boys and the bookkeeper at the Paul Ingenhuett General Store. Ida's mother, Antonie, was the oldest of the Brinkmann girls. Antonie's father, Otto Brinkmann, required that before Antonie was permitted to marry Rudolph, he must provide a home for his new bride that he owned, not rented, not mortgaged. No small feat then or now! Ida had one older sister Katy and a younger brother Ernst K. (Ernest or EK), born in 1893 and 1896, respectively. Some will recognize EK as the "Ranchman" from the 1973 book A Yankee in German-America written by Vera Flach, his wife. Katy served as Comfort's Postmaster for a period of time and one will often see her notary stamp on county documents. At age 5, the census identified Ida as not speaking English. The family only spoke German in those early years. Even well into their older years, whenever Ida, her sister Katy and their Mother were together, they spoke primarily German. By age 15, census records show English as Ida's native language. The 1920 census records state that Ida is 25 with no job. By the 1930 census, she is married to Frank Norman, an immigrant from Lithuania, and living in Chicago with one daughter. Her occupation is recorded as homemaker. Lithuania is in the Baltic region of Europe bordering the Baltic Sea and south of Scandinavia. The name Norman evolved from terms meaning "men from the North". The 1940 census has Ida back in Texas, with husband Frank, two daughters and occupation *still* says homemaker. But she is acknowledged with completing three years of college.



Pictured left to right: Antonie (Brinkmann) Flach, Ernst K., Katy, Ida, Rudolph Martin Flach

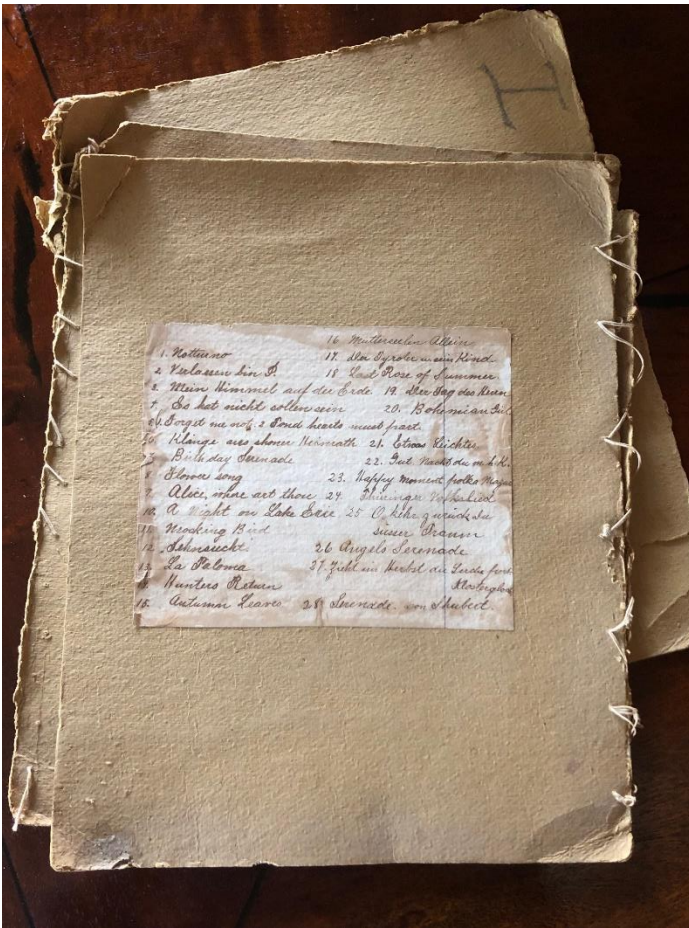
How did Ida end up in this metropolis of the north from a small rural village in Texas? And why? It becomes clear that we need to learn more to flesh out her story.

Digging Deeper

Ida's ancestors encouraged and sought out highly educated people with similar views and experiences to settle the area. Ancient and modern classics could be found in just about every home, and many had considerable experience with music,

poetry, literature, philosophy, and political debate. These values remained a priority as evidenced in letters to and from Ida, and the books and music she kept. On October 25th 1918, Ida's friend Anna (Hein) Engleking wrote, "Now about that concert, I am afraid it will have to be nothing but violin solos for my piano is not doing so well. I don't devote enough of my time to practicing and you know my hands are rather stiff and awkward and I do have very little patience with myself."

Twenty-eight marches and songs comprised one family concert. The titles were handwritten and mounted on a large piece of cardboard with the initials "I F" youthfully written on back. They included "Notturmo d-dur", "Mein Himmel auf der Erde", "Es hat nicht sollen Sein", "Birthday Serenade", "Flower Song", "Alice, where art thou", "La Paloma", "Hunters Return" and "Serenade F. Schubert". Sheet music in the hand-stitched binder included parts for zither, mandolin and guitar.



From a 1908 concert flyer for Comfort's Rock Opera House, it appears older sister, *Fraeulein Katy* and family members Alfred Flach and Walter Ingenhuett, might have been the more professional musicians in the family but all the Flach family had noteworthy musical interest and talent. Anna wrote to Ida, "Arthur is playing the phonograph while I am trying to write. He gave me six new pieces *Traumerei*, *Beautiful Ohio*, etc., Come over and play them, won't you?"

From an early age, Ida was taught needlecraft, crochet and sewing. Publications she saved from 1915 to the early 1920s included *Royal Society Crochet*, *Old and New Designs*, *Needlecraft*, plus numerous patterns and newspaper clippings. Again from Anna's letters we gain insight to Ida's talent, "When Arthur saw the pretty camisole you sent he said right away he bet that you gave me that for nobody else could make such pretty things." Louise Homilius, Ida's younger daughter, remembers growing up with her and her sister Frances never requiring a store-bought dress. Their mother sewed everything, even outfits for their dolls. Furthermore, it was Ida's sister Katy that collected all the patterns of fancy dresses from *Vogue*,

McCormick, McCall. Ida would clip the *American Weekly Patterns* column from the *San Antonio Express News*, and from the pictures, she would create patterns using newsprint. We found several of those cut out and the pieces of a single garment pinned together with a rusted straight pin, including one that had "coveralls" penciled on the back of an article about Seabiscuit, the horse that emerged as the hope for many Americans during the Great Depression.

Comfort in the early 1900s was much more than a small farming village. In 1887, the San Antonio and Aransas Pass (SAP) Railway selected Comfort, over Fredericksburg, as a depot for its route west from San Antonio. Fredericksburg leaders were so outraged, they assembled a team and headed to San Antonio in an effort to get the decision overturned. They failed. The railway came through Comfort crossing Flach land diagonally on the block bordered by Second and Third, High and Main Streets. The railway was a lifeline between San Antonio and Comfort, both economically and culturally. In May 1919, Ida writes to her cousin Elizabeth Ingenhuett, "Gee! But you ought to see the new Drug Store. If you come along High Street now, you don't know if you are really here or in S.A." The very next month, Anna writes, "I want you to pack your grip and come straightaway on to S.A. and stay with me awhile. If you will stay long enough, I promise I will go back with you to Comfort. Don't get excited but go at it right away and pack your grip, catch the SAP and come to S.A. and I will be the happiest human. Really I think we can have a right good time." Horse-drawn buggies and Ford Model T automobiles greeted the trains. Comfort hotels were full. The Rock Opera House hosted regular performances. In addition to making Comfort accessible, the railway made other destinations, including the big cities of the north, accessible to Comfort. Ida was a well-bred and skilled young woman, residing in the relevant and connected Comfort, Texas.

But life as she had come to know it changed when as a young woman in her twenties, Ida fell ill.

Following other Comfort residents, including her sister Katy, Ida went to the Lindlahr Sanitarium, a health resort in Chicago that had been established in 1914 by German immigrant, Dr. Henry Lindlahr. [See sidebar]

Ida arrived at the sanitarium with right subscapular pain, gastric disorders, nausea, material weight loss, regular headaches, general weakness and lassitude.

February 18, 1922, Dr. Lindlahr writes to Mrs. R. M. Flach that her daughter's diagnosis is summed up as "gastric atony, gastroenteroptosis, autotoxemia and acidosis". He then proceeds with a two-page thoughtful and comprehensive explanation of the diagnosis in plain English. Dr. Lindlahr explains specific test results, which ones indicate an anemic condition, and which indicate systemic poisoning, including how and why. He concluded "there is nothing in her condition that will not yield to natural living and treatment." With a regimen of therapeutic applications including water therapy and specialized diet, Ida makes a full recovery.

Ida's Defining Moment

The Lindlahr Sanitarium was very successful, routinely treating patients at capacity while maintaining a long patient waiting list. Dr. Lindlahr expanded his practice by starting his own college to train doctors in natural health methods.

Ida's experience at Lindlahr was transformative. After her recovery, she moved to study. Her coursework included classes in osteology (study of bones), syndesmology (study of ligaments), neurology, bacteriology, embryology, hygiene, gynecology, iridiagnosis (using the eye to determine information about a patient's health), dietetics, orthopedics, pathology, ear, nose & throat, massage, hydrotherapy, general nursing, first aid, electrotherapy, chiropractic principles and natural therapeutics. Ida created and kept handwritten journals on these topics, as well as books and periodicals.

Upon completion of her studies in June 1925, Ida had become a Doctor of Chiropractic and Therapeutics, a Registered Nurse, a licensed Massage Therapist and Philosopher of Chiropractic. We finally learn that Ida met her husband, Frank Norman, a fellow student and first year immigrant, at the Lindlahr school. Frank changed his name to Norman from Normantas upon immigrating to the United States from Lithuania. They returned to Texas and opened a successful chiropractic practice in Comfort in the late 1930s. This practice was operated out of the house that started me on this journey of discovery.

Perspective

World War 1 came to an end November 11, 1918. It had lasted four long years and was one of the deadliest conflicts in human history. For Ida, the experience of war was personal and firsthand. She was an avid communicator, writing and receiving letters from her cousins and brother, relaying updates and asking about all the Comfort boys, longing for the end.

On April 17, 1918, Ida received the following from "somewhere in France" –

Dear Cousin Ida,

Robinson Crusoe must have been lonesome until he met man Friday. I don't think he had anything on me until I received my first letters from home. It gives a fellow new life and new hope to receive a word of any kind from the dear ones from home and from friends on the outside world. I was well in the dumps [due] to the position I was in when I first landed over here. Was over here over two months before I was sent to my company – no letters, no needs of any kind, no friends in a strange country of people who talk a language I know nothing of. But now, since I'm back with my company, I receive news from home or someone else very regular - every week. And Bob kindly sends me the "News" every week. I am feeling good and

experiencing no ill health. We have been in the trenches and are in again now for the once over and thank [goodness] that the winter is over, however it rains plenty every week. I have written Katy a letter about a week ago. I will always be glad to hear from you. Hoping this letter will find you all well. I remain with kind regards and sincere wishes to all.

Your Cousin,

Otto Brinkmann, CoA 23rd. U. S. Inf A.E.F. France.

The end of “the war to end all wars” brought change that we can only really understand in hindsight. Women, most of whom had never worked outside the home, were in demand for jobs previously held only by men. For the first time the women’s campaign for the right to vote got attention, passing in 1920. And the horrors of war ushered in the Roaring ‘20s. “How ya gonna keep ‘em down on the farm after they’ve seen Paree” was a whimsical chorus to help explain the population shift from the farms to cities.

Our country was coming of age.

Ida survived the childhood diseases of the time including measles, whooping cough, diphtheria and even influenza in 1919 (The Spanish Flu). When she fell ill in the early 1920s, she embraced the self-control and discipline that Lindlahr spoke so passionately about as life’s biggest obstacle to restore her own health. Ida’s photo does not lie. Drawing from the intelligence and depth gently revealed in her studio portrait, Ida’s coming of age was to make living a healthy life her life work.

CALL TO ACTION

- Comfort Heritage Foundation archives located at 640 High Street has a new window display featuring The Modest and Remarkable Life of Ida Marie Flach Norman. The archives are open Tuesdays (9 a.m. to noon) and Saturdays (10 a.m. to noon, 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.) for assistance in research and to view local historical documents and artifacts. Please come by to see for yourself the realia that prompted this research.
- Are you a member of Comfort Heritage Foundation (CHF)? If not, please consider joining. The annual fee is only \$20 per person or \$35 per family. Contact: comfortheritagefoundation@gmail.com or (830) 995-2641. CHF is tax exempt 501 © and operates solely on a volunteer basis.

Curator’s notes: This keyhole view into the early life of Ida Marie Flach Norman was sourced from letters written and received in the early 1900s, books, schoolbooks and notes, periodic publications, garments, hankies, sheet music and related material, Ancestry.com and family members, coupled with publicly sourced information including from Comfort founding family publications.

REFERENCES

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- Ernst Christian Kapp 15 October 1808 – 30 January 1896 (from Volume XXXIX No. 2 The Genealogical Society of Kendall County, Texas, Inc. Fall/Winter 2020)
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- Dr. Ernst Christian KAPP & Ida Sophie Conradine KAPPELL (dgmweb.net)
- 10 Ways WW1 Changed America, by Bob Farmer, January 28 2021

APPENDIX

Removing mold spores and musty smells

First, remove silt by wiping clean as best you can. Mostly I used a new soft bristle paint brush or a damp cloth squeezed dry. It was pretty easy to clean as long as you didn't work on it too long and rub the color or print off.

I found numerous "solutions" to the musty smell problem online. Below is my personal experience in tackling this fairly common task:

1. Good ol' sunshine. I set up a folding table on my driveway in the bright sunshine. I put open books on the table and allowed the breeze to flip through the pages, sometimes all afternoon. This turned out to rarely be enough as the only step but I would repeat this process after options listed below and it proved a good last step.
2. Wrap or pack in newspaper. Again, for me, this wasn't enough by itself but it turned out to be quite useful to bide time. I had many pamphlets, notebooks to go through so I would wrap a few with newsprint and masking tape, write on it which publication it was and then set it aside until I had time to adequately address. It helped knock out some of the smell by the time I got back to it.
3. Dryer sheets. Again most helpful to me to bide time. I put dryer sheets in boxes with books.
4. Quarantine with baking soda. Put books and a cup filled with baking soda in plastic storage bin with lid. Leave it in there for at least a week.
5. Dust with baking soda and freeze. For me, this was the most effective method for books. Turns out, you need to "activate" the baking soda to have the best results. There are two ways to activate – heat or cold. I read some people would put their books in microwave or oven with baking soda but I never tried that. I was too afraid of burning them! Equally effective I read is cold. I would put 3 or so books in gallon baggie and sprinkle baking soda on them including between pages. Zip it closed and put it in freezer for no less than a week. I literally cleared out one shelf of my freezer just for baggies of books. After I took them out, I would shake off as much of the baking soda as I could, and then used a soft bristle paint brush to wipe off the excess. As final step, I would set them on the table in the sunshine and let the breeze flip the pages.
6. Spray adhesive. Of course this isn't for a book but is recommended for vintage sheets of paper that have a musty smell. I used Mod Podge spray adhesive, sprayed both sides of vintage papers and then hung up to dry. It did seem to work but it made some of the papers even more brittle. So unless you are going to immediately use it for crafting or if the paper is still rather sturdy, I don't recommend this.
7. For fabric, I found two methods most helpful. First is a product I bought off Amazon called Retro Wash. It is pretty much like laundry detergent but requires an extra long soak time. Follow the directions.
8. Second for fabric, is vodka. Yes, vodka. If clothing is too delicate to put in water, fill a spray bottle w/ vodka and spray them. When I read this, I thought yes, of course! A few years ago I had the fortune to visit backstage of the Broadway musical "Something Rotten", a spoof about Shakespeare. The costumes were bulky and made of ornate, tapestry material. The show was very physical with a lot of dancing and, consequently, a lot of sweating. Every night after the performance, they would spray them down with vodka. Vodka kills odor-causing bacteria and dries odorless. It works!

Hope that's helpful.

SIDEBAR

Henry Lindlahr

Founder of Scientific Naturopathy (1862 – 1924)

Lindlahr immigrated to America as a German-educated brewing and baking chemist. He and his brother opened Henry & Chas. Lindlahr & Gust. Garner Brewery. By 1893, Henry Lindlahr was a prosperous businessman, banker, mayor, and leading citizen of Kalispell, Montana. He had made his fortune in land speculation, buying cheap land ahead of the railroads, then selling it to them at high prices for their transcontinental line. He was 5'6" and weighed over 250 pounds. At this pinnacle of success, he was diagnosed with sugar diabetes and advised by the ablest doctors to set his affairs in order. There was no hope for him. At the age of 35 and unwilling to accept a terminal diagnosis, Lindlahr set out on a journey to cure himself. Over a two-year sojourn through Europe, that is exactly what he did. He returned to the business world "strangely discontent". He wrote: I realized that commercial pursuits, no matter how lucrative, could never again satisfy me. Money making had lost its charm. Higher and finer ideals had taken its place . . . I had grasped the law of service which ordains that we achieve contentment and happiness only as we make others happy. "Freely ye have received, freely give." In compliance with this injunction of the Master, I decided to make *Nature Cure* my life work.

With this epiphany, Lindlahr left his business, went to medical school and became a licensed doctor. He thought that as a medical doctor he could help correct the wrong thinking which had kept American medicine ignorant of the natural health principles that saved his life. His fundamental belief was that health is maintained by following the laws of nature. Disease is the result of breaking those laws. Health is restored by identifying the disease (cause) and eliminating it. In his practice, he distinguished himself as a scientific diagnostician, utilizing the best technology and doctors. A full third of his patients came to him solely for diagnosis given his reputation for not stopping until he determined the cause of an ailment.

By 1903, ten years after his diagnosis, he was one year away from graduating medical school and had already started a successful practice in Chicago as a licensed Drugless Practitioner. Eating a modified vegetarian diet, he no longer had diabetes; indeed, he was enjoying unprecedented health.

Lindlahr also believed in the power of the mind in achieving health and happiness. He demonstrated to his patients that the best way to help yourself is to help others and employed "positive affirmations" to establish healthy conditions in the mind so that they could be conveyed to and impressed upon the cells. He inspired in all his patients a strong faith in the wonder-workings of nature. He seared deeply into their minds the thrilling and comforting knowledge that there is a physician within all of us: that Nature's healing powers are automatic and need only to be encouraged and fostered. Visitors frequently commented on the cheery, happy atmosphere in the sanitarium. This likely contributed to it being described as renowned, and sometimes peculiar.

Dr. Lindlahr created what we would call today, a holistic medical practice. He was the author of one of the cornerstone texts of American naturopathic medicine, Nature Cure, which includes topics about disease elimination versus suppression, vegetarian diet, hydrotherapy, the importance of exercise, fresh air, sunshine, spinal manipulation and massage. Nature Cure is premised on a philosophy of no drugs, no surgery, no serums. Over the next twenty years he became the foremost practitioner of scientific naturopathy in America.

Dr. Henry Lindlahr was a brilliant man, pioneering concepts long before they were popular and often in the face of ridicule and accusations of fraud and quackery. Fortunately for all of us, he was not dissuaded. He remained an inspiration and beloved mentor in the lives of both Ida and Frank Norman.

REFERENCE: Summarized from NATURE DOCTORS Pioneers in Naturopathic Medicine Friedhelm Kirchfeld & Wade Boyle, 1994.

END SIDEBAR