

1-1-2015

Traugott Bromme and The State of Maine

Richard L. Bland Ph.D.
University of Oregon Museum of Natural and Cultural History

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mainehistoryjournal>



Part of the [United States History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Bland, Richard L.. "Traugott Bromme and The State of Maine." *Maine History* 49, 1 (2015): 102-112.
<https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mainehistoryjournal/vol49/iss1/5>

This Research Note is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UMaine. It has been accepted for inclusion in Maine History by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UMaine. For more information, please contact um.library.technical.services@maine.edu.

TRAUGOTT BROMME AND THE STATE OF MAINE

INTRODUCTION AND TRANSLATION BY RICHARD L. BLAND

In the mid-1800s many Germans emigrated to the United States. It was a new world to them. Traugott Bromme, one of their fellow countrymen who had traveled to the United States, came upon the idea of writing a handbook for emigrants. This book, which went through a number of editions, described each state in the hope that arriving Germans who spoke little or no English would not be at a complete loss regarding the most suitable place for them to settle. The passage featured here is Bromme's 1848 description of the state of Maine. Richard L. Bland, PhD is a retired archaeologist, formerly of the University of Oregon Museum of Natural and Cultural History. His research interest is in Alaska, and more specifically Russian America, which dates from approximately 1741 to 1867. Traugott Bromme's handbooks were produced during that time frame, stimulating his interest.

IN THE early 1800s, economic and political problems brought many Europeans to the United States. A large number came from Germany. Among them was Traugott Bromme, who was in fact more of a traveler than an immigrant. Bromme quickly saw a chance for making a profit from this movement of peoples by writing guide books for Germans entering the United States. Between 1840 and 1866 he wrote and published several editions. His guides included information on many regions of the Western Hemisphere, including all the states east of the Mississippi.

Simon Traugott Bromme was born on December 3, 1802, in Anger, near Leipzig, in what would later become Germany.¹ His father was 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. In 1817 he attended a class at a Leipzig bookshop. While this eventually led him into the book business, Bromme did not immediately become a writer or publisher.

Instead, he spent three years studying and traveling, even finding adventure. In April 1821 Bromme emigrated 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 time in a Haitian jail.²

Bromme’s writing career began in 1824. In June of that year he returned to Saxony, settling in Dresden. There he became a partner in the Walther’sche Hofbuchhandlung, which the book dealer Johann Gottlieb Wagner, his brother-in-law, had purchased in the same year. In 1833 Bromme again traveled 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 thing that Bromme 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. Many of these people were Germans looking for a new start in life. These émigrés needed information that would let them know what to expect. In response, Bromme wrote a travel guide for German emigrants that became relatively popular. It was entitled *Traugott Bromme’s Hand- und Reisebuch für Auswanderer nach den Vereinigten Staaten von Nord-Amerika, Texas, Ober- und Unter-Canada, Neu-Braunschweig, Neu-Schottland, Santo Thomas in Guatemala und den Mosquitoküsten* [Traugott Bromme’s Hand- and Travel-Book for Emigrants to the United States of North America, Texas, Upper and Lower Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Saint Thomas in Guatemala and the Mosquito Coast].⁴ Bromme’s travel guide indicates that he did substantial research on the various states using the maps of Henry Schenck Tanner and others.⁵

The *Hand- und Reisebuch* contains over 550 pages divided into two main parts. In the first, Bromme gives a general overview of the United States, including thumbnail sketches of most of the states, territories, or countries that an emigrant was likely to enter in North America. He devoted more attention to those places he considered most likely to benefit an immigrant—the state of Massachusetts, for example, is described in about four pages. Much less space was devoted to locales Bromme considered inhospitable to immigrants. For example, “The Territory of Missouri and the Oregon Territory” received less than half a page, and Bromme told his readers that for “settlement, this recommendation comes still too early . . . in the two aforementioned Indian territories with the wild inhabitants of the same.”⁶



“Grimmer’s Orchestra,” Portland, 1880. German-Americans constituted a significant portion of Maine’s population throughout the nineteenth century. Charles Grimmer, sitting at the front left with a violin, was a German-American immigrant who made his living in the Portland area as a performer and teacher of violin and guitar. *Collections of the Maine Historical Society*.

In the second part of his book Bromme deals with the question of who should and should not emigrate; he discusses the various trades and professions most in demand in the region, about one hundred in all. Bromme touts his book “as the most crucial and accurate purveyor of information on the conditions of the western world, insofar as emigrants might be interested.”⁷ For example, he tried to provide a size and description of the landscape, the agriculture and industry, government and education, religion, and so on, and, as you will see, in only a few pages. Bromme also gives a few examples of the occupations that one might find in Maine: farming and raising livestock, lumber, potential mining, and so on.

Bromme obviously traveled some in the United States and perhaps in other countries of the Western Hemisphere, but it is equally obvious that it was not possible for him to have visited all the places he described in his *Hand- und Reisebuch*. His travel guide is rather formulaic with re-



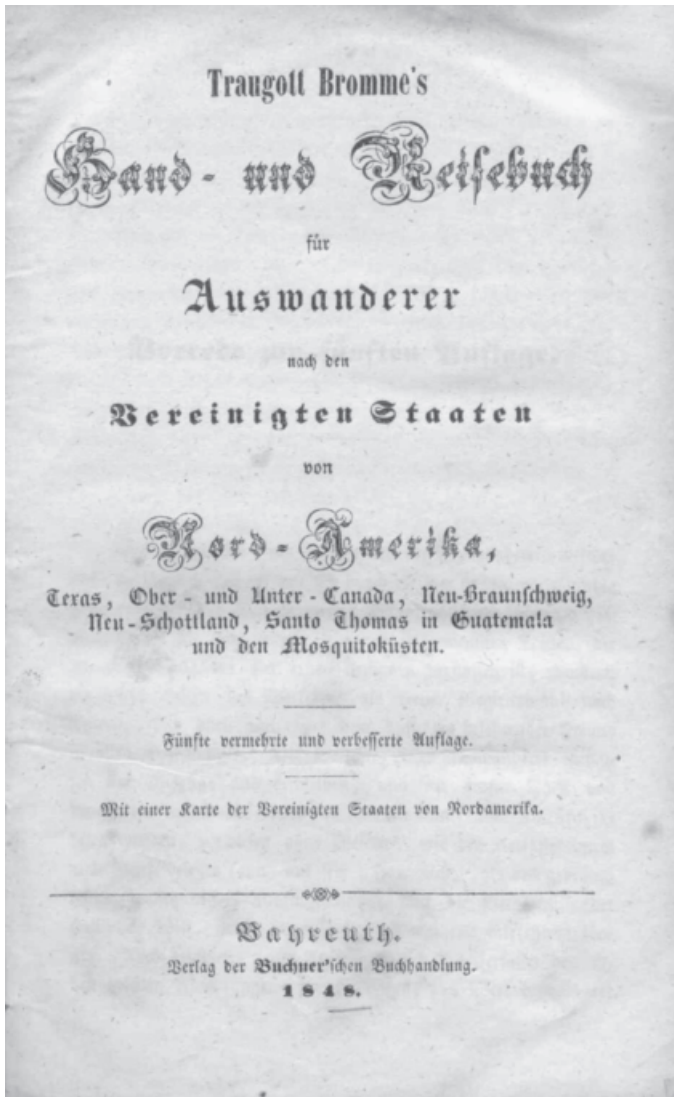
An illustration from an 1867 Spanish translation of Traugott Bromme's "Systematic Atlas of Natural History". Some of Bromme's work covered academic topics, but it is unclear the degree to which his publications drew from any direct expertise on Bromme's part. D. Juan Ruiz del Cerro, trans. *Atlas Sistemático de Historia Natural, para Uso de las Escuelas y de las Familias, Escrito en Aleman por Traugott Bromme* [Systematic Atlas of Natural History, for School and Family Use, Written in German by Traugott Bromme] (Madrid: Imprenta de Rojas y Compañía, 1867), opposite p. 23.

gard to the information provided for each state. He gives the general geography, economy, industry, some vital statistics, and so on, generally devoting two to four pages to each state. His information appears to have been gleaned from other sources. In a study of German travel guides, historian Klaus Dieter Hein-Mooren says of Bromme: "His writings were not scientific works, but rather generally understandable, popular representations. He also sweepingly declined to name his sources and to state whether his workmanship was only made up of translations of foreign-language works."⁸

With regard to the number of books he produced detailing the United States, Bromme may be one of America's most forgotten authors.⁹ According to Joseph Sabin, who in 1869 published a massive catalog of books related to America, Bromme produced at least twenty-three titles, all of them concerned with geography. Some were multiple volumes and some supplements to the works of others, such as those of famous naturalist and explorer Alexander von Humboldt.¹⁰ Just as Bromme's use of sources is uncertain, it is also questionable whether he was actually associated in any way with von Humboldt. Hein-Mooren believes it is more likely that Bromme (or his publisher) simply used von Humboldt's name to increase book sales.¹¹ It is known, however, that Bromme did not intend that all his books be used solely as guides. For example, in 1842 he published the second of his two volumes entitled *Gemälde von Nord-Amerika* (Portrait of North America).¹² As is apparent in the full title, these volumes were intended not only as travel guides but as entertaining instruction as well. Bromme's final publication was the eighth edition of the *Hand- und Reisebuch*, published posthumously in 1866.

German immigration was not new to Maine in the time of Bromme's handbook. In 1752-1753, Samuel Waldo visited Germany and recruited about 1,500 immigrants.¹³ These immigrants sometimes named their communities after their home towns, such as Hanover, Bremen, and Dresden. Waldo himself was the namesake of two communities, Waldo and the aforementioned Waldoboro.¹⁴ Many of the German immigrants who came to Maine before the American Revolution are listed in the Maine Old Cemetery Association's directory of the "Old German Cemetery" in Waldoboro.¹⁵

While certainly not a new phenomenon in the mid- and late-1800s, then, German communities were still becoming more established in Maine at the time of Bromme's handbook. Bromme mentioned only two German communities by name, "Biddeford and Waldoborough



Cover of the 1848 edition of Traugott Bromme's *Hand- und Reisebuch für Auswanderer nach den Vereinigten Staaten von Nord-Amerika, Texas, Ober- und Unter-Canada, Neu-Braunschweig, Neu-Schottland, Santo Thomas in Guatemala und den Mosquitoküsten*, a guide for German emigrants to North America and parts of Central America and the Caribbean. This 1848 edition was the fifth of what would be eight editions of the work. Traugott Bromme, *Traugott Bromme's Hand- und Reisebuch für Auswanderer nach den Vereinigten Staaten von Nord-Amerika, Texas, Ober- und Unter-Canada, Neu-Braunschweig, Neu-Schottland, Santo Thomas in Guatemala und den Mosquitoküsten*, 5th ed. (Stuttgart, Germany: 1848).

[now Waldoboro],” with the German language widely spoken only in the latter. Other communities included the German Jews also immigrated to Maine, arriving in Bangor as early as 1829 and establishing the Bangor Hebrew Center in 1839; after another decade, the Congregation Ahawas Achim was founded in 1849.¹⁶ These milestones, and the publication of the *Hand-und Reisebuch*, coincided with the rising trend of German immigration to the United States throughout the nineteenth century, reaching 434,626 in the 1840s and rising to 951,667 in the following decade.¹⁷ For those arriving Germans who were not fluent in English, Bromme provided a general description of their adopted country and advice to aid them in their new life. The following is a translation of what an immigrant from Germany would learn from Bromme about the state of Maine.

“The State of Maine”

From Traugott Bromme’s *Hand- and Travel-Book for Emigrants to the United States of North America, Texas, Upper and Lower Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Saint Thomas in Guatemala and the Mosquito Coast*.

This state, the northeastern-most of the Union, lies between 43° 5' and 47° 45' north latitude and between 6° 10' and 10° 8' east longitude from W;¹⁸ it is bordered on the east by New Braunschweig, in the north and northeast by lower Canada, in the west by New Hampshire, and in the south and southeast by the Atlantic ocean. It extends 246 miles from north to south and 162 miles from east to west, and it embraces a surface area of 30,945 miles or 19,810,560 acres.¹⁹ The surface of the land is mostly hilly; in the northwestern part stretches a range of steep mountains, which here and there form narrow valleys that are distinguished for their fertility. A number of large and small rivers cut through the state in all directions; the most significant of these are the St. Johns, St. Croix, Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, Kennebeck, Androscoggin, Saco, and Sebasticook. The interior of the land contains several lakes, of which the Moosehead, which is 40 miles in circumference, and the Sebacock are the most imposing. The coast is very broken, and it offers excellent inlets rich in fish in Passamaquoddy, Machias, Frenchman and Casco bays.

East of the Penobscott River the ground is bad: between this river

and the Kennebeck it is better and offers splendid crop- and meadow-land. West of the Androscoggin the land is sandy, and at the coast rocky. Granite is predominant.

The largest part of the state is still a wilderness, except between the Penobscott and Kennebec, where the ground is excellent, and at the source of the St. John and its upper tributaries. Regarding public lands, the state possesses at present 2,583,960 acres, of which a great part is very favorably located and fertile, and can be acquired by emigrants at a low price. The climate is exceptionally severe; the thermometer often falls 52° F. = 8.9° R.;²⁰ winter commonly lasts from the beginning of November to the end of March. Summer is hot; the mercury often climbs to +90° to +100° F.; one does not get to become acquainted with spring; therefore fall is that much more pleasant. The country is wholesome and inhabitants often reach an age of 100 years. Farming and livestock raising are the chief means of income for the inhabitants. Wheat, rye, barley, oats, peas, flax, hemp, and some fruit are grown. Natural meadows can be found in all parts of the land; the cattle are handsome, but small; the horses are the same, but persevering and tireless; sheep thrive well; best however are swine, which are raised in large numbers. Much of the land is covered with good forests; several kinds of conifers are found, among which the white spruce (*Pinus strobus*) provides the most export lumber; high-trunked beech, red and white oak, birch, maple, elm, poplar, linden, and willow are native and cover great areas, and the beautiful arborvitae embellishes the dismal appearance of the marshes and swamps, which are spread throughout many parts of the land. In minerals the land is rich, and lime and iron, vitriol, sulphur, and ocher can be found in all counties.

Much care is taken for inland improvement: the Kumberland and Oxford canal connect Portland with Sebago Pond; the Bangor and Orono railroad of 12 miles length unites these two cities; the Portsmouth, Saco, and Portland railroad connects to the Boston-Portsmouth railroad, and a new one of 132 miles in length, from Portland to Bangor, is about to be built.

The number of inhabitants in 1840 amounted to 501,793; at present there are 607,328 souls, of which 101,630 are occupied in farming, 2921 in trade, 21,879 in industry, 14,091 on the sea, and 1889 in the scholarship.

The first settlers of the land were primarily of English origin; later the country was peopled by immigrants from Vermont, New Hampshire, and Massachusettes. There are only two German settlements in the

land: Biddeford and Waldoborough, and only in the last has the German language been maintained.

Public instruction has become much attended to in recent years, and at present, in addition to Bowdoin College in Brunswick and the theological seminaries in Bangor and Readfield, there are 86 academies with 8,477 students and 3,385 elementary schools with 164,477 students.

As everywhere in the Union, complete religious freedom reigns here as well, and the Congregationalists count the numerous fellow believers at 161, the Baptists with 222 churches, and the Methodists with 115 traveling preachers.

The export trade of the state is limited for the most part to lumber, lime, and products of the fisheries, and amounted in 1845 to 1,127,083 dollars, with an import of 692,518 dollars by comparison; 70 wholesale and 14 commission businesses lead the foreign trade and 2,220 retail businesses of all kinds satisfy internal trade; 2,068 people are employed in the lumber trade and 3,610 in the coastal and sea fisheries. Many sawmills were built on the Kennebeck and other rivers, and a large number of boards, shingles, masts, spars, and so on, are exported annually to neighboring states, to the West Indies, and to Europe.

The legislative power of the state consists of a senate and a house of representatives. The governor is selected by the people every year.

Maine is divided into 13 counties: Aroostook with 9,413 inhabitants, Cumberland with 68,658, Franklin with 20,801, Hancock with 28,605, Kennebeck with 55,823, Lincoln with 63,517, Oxford with 38,351, Penobscot with 45,705, Piscataquis with 13,138, Sommerset with 33,912, Waldo with 41,509, Washington with 23,327, and York with 54,034.

The most significant city of the land is Portland—a city, main port, and county seat of Cumberland, with 15,218 inhabitants, on a peninsula in Casco Bay—with 16 churches, 1 courthouse, 1 city hall, 11 academies and middle schools and 32 free schools, 6 banks, and a spacious secure harbor. [Other cities are] Machias, at the mouth of the river of the same name in Machias Bay, which here makes an excellent harbor, has 3,019 inhabitants; Castine, on a point of land, on the eastern shore of the Penobscot, with 1,592 inhabitants who make a living by trade and navigation; Bangor, on the western bank of the Penobscot, which transports vessels to here, has 8,627 inhabitants; Norridgewock on both banks of the Kennebeck has 1,865 inhabitants; Augusta, seat of government, capital of the land, on the Kennebeck, which carries to here ships of 100 tons; with 9 churches, 1 statehouse, 1 arsenal of the people's brigade, 1

insane asylum, 1 high school, 2 academies, 26 elementary schools, 2 banks, and 5,314 inhabitants. Hallowell, also on the Kennebeck, below the previous town, with a lively trade and 4,654 inhabitants; Wiscasset, on the Sheepscot, 13 miles distant from the sea, with a good harbor, 7,879 inhabitants; Thomaston at the mouth of the St. George, with 4 churches, the state prison, 2 banks, and 6,227 inhabitants, who maintain several sawmills and primarily make their living from firing lime and the lime trade; about 60 lime kilns are in the vicinity of the city. Paris, on the small Androwscoggin, has 2,482 inhabitants; Pork, on the stream of the same name, has 3,111 inhabitants; Kennebunk, at the mouth of the river of the same name, has 2,330 inhabitants; Biddeford, on the Saco; Arundel on the Mousum; Lebanon on the Piscataqua; and Waldoboro, all small cities that carry out a significant lumber trade.

NOTES

1. At that time the region consisted of small independent states that would later unify as the country of Germany.
2. According to James Grant Wilson and John Fiske, Bromme “settled in the United States in 1820, and afterward traveled extensively in Texas and Mexico, became surgeon on a Columbian [*sic*] war-schooner cruising in the West Indies, and was detained for a year as a prisoner in Hayti [*sic*]” (Wilson and Fiske, eds., *Appleton’s Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (New York, 1888), 1:384). Historian Klaus Dieter Hein-Mooren’s research indicates that Bromme came to the United States in 1821, studied medicine (although he does not say where), later became a doctor in the “Colombian service,” and spent some time in Haiti, returning to Saxony in 1824 (Hein-Mooren, “Gediegene Schriften für Auswanderer’: Bromme, Buchner und die Auswandererliteratur” [“Dependable Publications for Emigrants’: Bromme, Buchner and the Emigrant Literature”] *Buchhandelsgeschichte* 15: B45–B46, 2001).
3. Hein-Mooren, “Gediegene,” B45–B47.
4. The fifth edition of Bromme’s *Hand- und Reisebuch*, which is used in this document, was published in Bayreuth, Germany, 1848.
5. Henry Tanner created numerous maps in the early 1800s. As a result, it is difficult to say with certainty which ones Bromme used. For those interested, Tanner’s maps can be viewed online at, for example, <http://www.davidrumsey.com/>. Regarding his maps, Bromme wrote the following work: *Post-, Kanal- und Eisenbahn-Karte der Vereinigten Staaten von Nord-Amerika: nach Smith, Tanner, Mitchel und den Berichten des General-Postamts, bearb. von Traugott Bromme* [Postal, Canal, and Railroad Maps of the United States of North America: After Smith, Tanner, Mitchel, and Reports of the General Post Office, elaborated by Traugott Bromme] (Stuttgart, Germany, 1850).
6. Bromme, *Hand- und Reisebuch*, 186–89, 225–26.

7. *Ibid.*, v.
8. Hein-Mooren, “Gediegene,” B48. This and other quotations from Hein-Mooren’s article are translations from the German provided by the author.
9. I have left Bromme’s spellings, errors, and omissions as they are in the original, trying not to intrude upon the author. However, at times I have changed his punctuation and syntax in order to bring the text somewhat more in line with modern idiomatic English. I have also broken the text into several paragraphs—only two are in the original. I would like to thank the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin for helpfully providing materials and Nan Coppock for editorial assistance.
10. Joseph Sabin, *Dictionary of Books Related to America* (New York, 1869), 2:516–18.
11. Hein-Mooren, “Gediegene,” B45. Alexander Freiherr von Humboldt (1769–1859) was a German explorer, scientist, and natural philosopher who conducted expeditions to Cuba and Central and South America. His greatest work was the five-volume *Kosmos* (1845–62). Some scholars of the era credit Bromme with working on the illustrations in *Kosmos* by (Sabin, *Dictionary of Books*, 2:516); this, however, is questionable.
12. Traugott Bromme, *Gemälde von Nord-Amerika in allen Beziehungen von der Entdeckung an bis auf die neueste Zeit—Eine pittoreske Geographie für Alle, welche unterhaltende Belehrung suchen und ein Umfassendes Reise-Handbuch für Jene, welche in diesem Lande wandern wollen* [Portrait of North America in All Connections from the Discovery to the Most Recent Time—A Picturesque Geography for Everyone Who Seeks Entertaining Instruction, and a Comprehensive Traveler’s Handbook for Anyone Who Wants to Travel in this Land] (Stuttgart, Germany, 1842).
13. George Jones Varney, *A Gazetteer of the State of Maine* (Boston: B.B. Russell, 1881), 559.
14. Samuel Llewellyn Miller, *History of the town of Waldoboro, Maine*. (Wiscasset, ME: Emerson, 1910), 5.
15. The Maine Old Cemetery Association (MOCA). (<http://www.messar.org/patriots.html>).
16. Benjamin Band, *Portland Jewry, Its Growth and Development* (Portland, ME: Portland Jewish Historical Society, 1955), 6.
17. “Appendix B: Maps, Figures, and Tables” in Joseph Powell, *The Encyclopedia of North American Immigration* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2005), 392.
18. Bromme separates east and west longitude, that is, forms a prime meridian, at the present longitude of 77° west. This apparently is because 77° west longitude runs through the nation’s capital, Washington, D.C., and apparently for which the “W” stands.
19. The small square is Bromme’s way of designating square miles.
20. R = Reaumur, a thermometer scale with 0° at freezing and 80° at boiling. 8.9° R = 52° F; thus the author probably means here a temperature of -20° F.