



# AN IMMIGRANT'S GIFT

by Joe Herring

In the early days of our community, a young immigrant moved to Kerr County. He had little formal education. His life was not an easy one: he lost his parents when he was young, and was on his own at 16. Though he lived here most of his life, he always spoke with a slight accent.

He loved Kerrville and Kerr County and his actions proved his feelings for our community.

The immigrant was a hard worker, and he was smart. His business acumen was phenomenal. He was not trained in business; his father had not been a businessperson; he was never an apprentice, learning from a mentor. Still, he was a gifted businessman, with an eye for value, and he was an excellent merchant. He built a great fortune,

His customers liked him, and his community trusted him: they elected him to several public offices, including county treasurer.

Late in his life, after providing for his large family, he gave a lot of his wealth away, in gifts large and small, mostly benefiting the community of Kerrville and our neck of the Texas Hill Country.



He donated lands for schools, churches, and camps. He donated money for a road building fund. He donated money to bring the railroad to Kerrville.

The gift which has touched the most lives was his gift of a school on the outskirts of Kerrville, a preparatory school for boys.

The immigrant first had the idea for the school before World War I. He announced his plan: he would donate \$250,000 to establish the school, with the provision work on it could not begin until the war was over and at least a year had passed from the signing of the peace treaties.

In those days \$250,000 was an enormous amount of money, much greater than it is today. In the years after the announcement about the school, the immigrant added to his gift; the total he gave for the school eventually added up to a little over \$550,000.

It wasn't until 1922 that construction on the school began. Three buildings were erected: a three-story main building, a dormitory, and a headmaster's house. The architectural style of the buildings was described in the *Kerrville Mountain Sun* as "English Colonial," a style "which is specially adapted to the rugged surroundings and has the further advantage of being very homelike."

When the cornerstone was dedicated, the immigrant was there.

In September, 1923, 95 years ago, the school opened its doors to students. Again, the immigrant was there for the festivities.



That immigrant, of course, was Charles Schreiner; the school he started was Schreiner Institute, which is known today as Schreiner University.

Immigrants helped build our community, our state, and our country.