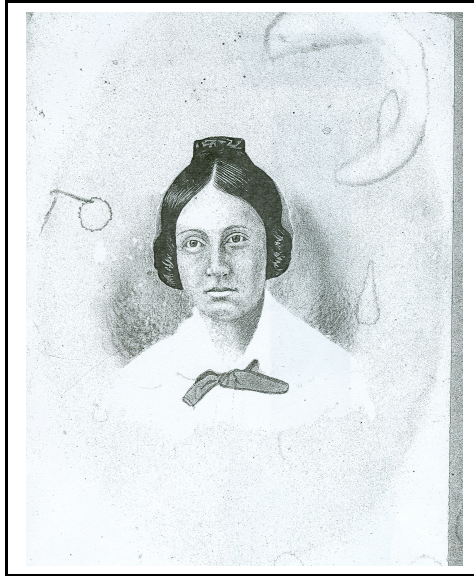


## **Across Oceans, Across Time® ...**

### **Stories from the Family History & Genealogy Center ...**



**Henriette Christiane Marie Waldt** was born in Copenhagen on September 6, 1818, the eldest of three daughters of sea-captain Frands Georg Diderick Waldt and Sophie Friderica Ungermann. She grew up in a typical courtyard-centered apartment block on Borgergade in the central city. Lodging in the same building in 1834 was a young Norwegian student, Johan Reinert Reiersen. Perhaps Henriette encountered Johan at the public water-pump or caught his eye while running errands for her family. They married and had their first son, Oscar, in 1836, before moving to Norway, where Henriette gave birth to three more children. Johan Reiersen was a writer and editor and a proponent of Norwegian emigration; he toured the United States during the 1840s, scouting out likely localities for settlement and sending correspondence back to his newsletter, *Christianssandsposten*. During this time Texas caught his eye, and in 1845 the males in the extended Reiersen family sailed to New Orleans to settle in Texas. Henriette and her family joined them around 1846; during the long voyage the Reiersen's only daughter died at sea. They established the first Norwegian settlement in Texas near Prairieville, in what was then Henderson (now Kaufman) County. Here Henriette gave birth to two more children before dying at the age of 32. She is buried at Four Mile Prairie Norwegian Cemetery. And thus this young Danish woman was one of the founding 'Norwegian' families of Texas.

Henriette's Danish-born son, Oscar F. Reiersen, was among the handful of known Danish immigrants who served in the Confederate Army during the Civil War. Oscar had left Texas for Virginia to study law before hostilities began and enlisted in Co. F of the 35<sup>th</sup> Virginia Cavalry. He married Mary Flanagan and died in Albemarle County around 1890. Letters from Johan to Oscar are part of the Reiersen Family Papers at the Barker Texas History Center, at the University of Texas at Austin. (Portrait courtesy of the Reiersen family.)