

THE HALLER FAMILY (In the United States)

Johann HALLER, *27 May 1887 (JC) 8 June 1887 (GC) and Luisa SCHMIDT, *21 March 1886 (JC) 2 April 1886 (GC) were married on 22 January 1909 (JC) 4 February 1909 (GC) in the Parish Lutheran Church of Bergdorf/Glueckstal, Odessa District, Russia. Johann HALLER'S ancestors have been traced back to Cleebourg, Wissembourg, Alsace but it has been possible to trace Mrs. HALLER'S (Luisa SCHMIDT'S) ancestry back only a few generations.

Mrs. Haller said that she was born in Gortomanov but this village is unknown by any knowledgable contact and Dr. Stumpp surmised that it could have been Neudorf/Glueckstal, Odessa District (Russian name: Karamonova). Her father was Christian SCHMIDT, born about 1860 in Neuburg, Odessa; her mother was Maria GRAMINSKE or Kraminsky, born in Akkermann, Bessarabia in 1862, died in 1909; her father died in 1913, both in Sofiental/Glueckstal. The Graminske's were Germanic immigrants from Prussian Poland. The SCHMIDT family had no "Crown Wirtschaft" (Land received from the Russian Government) so they rented land and moved several times during her youth, always in or near the Glueckstal area, and came to live in Sofiental in 1906 where the George HALLER family had settled in the 1890's.

In May 1911, Mr. and Mrs. Johann HALLER immigrated to the United States with Mr. HALLER'S father, George HALLER and family, arriving on the S.S. HANNOVER at Philadelphia on 17 May 1911. George Haller's family, in addition to Johann and wife Luisa, consisted of son Peter, age 20, daughter Lydia, age 12, his second wife Christina and her four daughters: 1. Justine with husband Jacob Hohenecker, 2. Maria, 3. Magdalena and 4. Lydia.

In the U. S., the Johann Hallers stayed with friends and worked in the Eureka, South Dakota area for several months. Then they and his father rented a farm several miles SW of Ashley, North Dakota. Here, Johnny (John) was born on 1 January 1912. That year, they rented a farm some eleven miles SE of Ashley where they lived until the fall of 1913. They then separated from his father and rented a farm several miles east of Eureka, SD where Lydia (Lee) was born on 4 October 1913. After several years on this farm, they moved to a farm about 5 miles SE of Ashley. They stayed here until 1918 when, caught up in the excitement of good crops and high wheat prices generated by World War I, Mr. Haller bought a 300 acre farm, generously strewed with prairie rock, four miles west of Ashley. The family prospered by frugal living and hard work (remembered with special aversion was the clearing of rocks from the land and walking in the dust behind a harrow). Oscar was born here on 19 June 1925.

The loss of one of his best crops by a fire in an uninsured commercial elevator in Ashley and an automobile accident which left him unconscious for six weeks almost ended Mr. Haller's quest for a farm of his own. But he would not give up and fought a losing battle for some years, even after Lydia and Johnny married in 1935 and started their own careers. Oscar, ten years old at that time, was not interested in farming either and already showed an interest only in mechanical devices, specifically car repair.

The drought of the 1930's, known as "the dirty thirties," wrought its havoc on the rock-infested land of the farm and Mr. Haller finally bowed to the inevitable. He and Mrs. Haller moved to Ashley where they worked at odd jobs in town or on vicinity farms.

In 1944, they moved to Whittier, California to be with their daughter, Lydia, whose husband was serving in the U.S. Army, having recently been sent overseas to the European Theatre of Operations. By this time, son Oscar had also been called into the military and was serving as an Army Medic and Ambulance Driver on the front lines "somewhere in France and Germany."

Mr. Haller found work in a defense plant in Whittier and Mrs. Haller spent her days taking care of the Wildermuth girls, Elaine age 7 and Carol age 3½, while Lydia worked in a defense plant (McDonnell Douglas Aircraft), spending a good part of each day trying to find a place to live.

Finally, in September 1944, she was able to buy a small newly-constructed house in south Whittier and moved in even before it had been cleaned up for occupancy and before the street had been paved. Here, Mr. Haller was able to return to his first love, making things grow. In the spring of 1945, he put in a lawn, planted trees, and dug up space for flowers and a garden which he and Mrs. Haller put in and tended.

Herman Wildermuth returned from Europe in August 1945 and went back to work with the U. S. Corps of Engineers in Los Angeles. In the meantime, Oscar had also returned and found work at his vocation of auto repair. Later, he went to work at the Sears service center, installing and repairing the then-new automatic washing machines. He graduated to installation of televisions sets and antenna in homes. This only satisfied him for a short period when he decided that television repair was really his field, in which he excelled until his retirement from Sears in 1983.

In May 1951, the Wildermuths and Hallers moved to a larger home in east Whittier, where again, Mr. Haller did the major work of putting in lawn, garden, and trees. However, he became ill in the Fall and passed away in a Los Angeles hospital on 14 December 1951. His remains were taken to Ashley, North Dakota, accompanied by Mrs. Haller. Interment was made in the Zion Lutheran Cemetery on 26 December, just before the start of one of the most severe snowstorms ever to hit the area.

Mrs. Haller came back to live with the Wildermuths in Whittier but returned to South Dakota almost every summer to stay with the John Haller family who, by this time, owned their own Red Owl Agency grocery store in Bowdle, SD. They later owned their own Ben Franklin Variety Store in Eureka, SD, and Mrs. Haller continued to visit them almost every summer. She made these trips to South Dakota by train and bus until 1966, when air fares made it more reasonable and convenient to go by air.

In 1953, she attended a necessity-postponed English and Citizenship class at a local school and then achieved a long-time desire; her U.S. Citizenship on 9 October 1953, at age 67. In 1969, she suffered from gall stones and had to undergo an operation from which she recovered without any lessening of her usual busy life.

In 1968, Mr. Wildermuth retired from his job in Los Angeles and the family moved to Yucca Valley the following year, taking her along. She still took her summer trips to Eureka, SD, during the following years visiting her friends from earlier days. She enjoyed good health, remained alert and took care of her own room and many other household tasks such as baking "Kaffee Kuchen" and other German cuisine goodies although failing eyesight and hearing curtailed her activities. She enjoyed watching TV in the evenings, the Lawrence Welk Show being the favorite after "Lucy." Her 95th Birthday was celebrated here in March 1981 with her sons and wives present together with most of her grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

The following year she had several minor strokes indicated by several incidents of falling and then lameness on one side. However, she recovered well but could not be left alone and we could not take her on any long trips. In June 1983, she had another stroke which necessitated hospital care for several days after which she was again able to come home but required constant protection from falling. In August, after several light strokes, she had one more severe and spent another week in the hospital. After coming home this time, she was unable to walk, talk, or do anything for herself. Lee had to tend to all her needs. In December, she had difficulty breathing and could not cough up any phlegm. She was treated for pneumonia but her condition became worse and on 14 December she was again taken to the hospital where she died peacefully within a few hours. Her remains were sent to North Dakota and kept until spring when she was interred in the Zion Lutheran Cemetery beside the remains of her husband Johann Haller and baby Raymond who had died in 1930, several months after birth.

* = Date of birth
(JC) = Julian Calendar
(GC) = Gregorian Calendar