Henry Wallbrown & Elizabeth Mittendorf

Families

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Henry Wallbrown was born in Prussia, Germany, January 15, 1836. Little is known of his early life. It is said he was an only child of a wood cutter and as a child helped his father gather in the wood. At that time in history the German ruler gave each family a job to do. Henry's father was to supply fire wood for the area in which they lived. This could be a possible clue to the origin of the "WALLBROWN" name. In Germany, some names were derived from their professions. In German, woods or forest is spelled "WALD". In the 1870 census of Butler County, Pennsylvania, " WALLBROWN" is spelled "WALDBROWN".

Henry supposedly had one uncle. We know at least one other Wallbrown came to America and he was a relative of Henry's. More than likely he had many other Wallbrown relatives left in Germany. However, at this time we have been unable to locate any.

He immigrated to the United States from Germany in 1852. He left Germany one day before his sixteenth birthday, to keep from being inducted into the army, because every male was liable for military service in the various state armies. In some parts of Germany registration was required of every male child at birth, and the record was kept up to date as far as addresses were concerned until his call-up-date. Henry came to America as a stowaway and his port of entry was Baltimore, Maryland. He came as a stowaway, because before leaving Germany, one had to declare ones intentions of leaving Germany, so all debts would be paid. It is unlikely he would have been allowed to leave because of his military obligations. His only alternative was to become a stowaway. After sneaking aboard the ship, he hid in a grain box. He went for three days and nights without food or water before being discovered. He was given one tablespoon of water at a time until he could eat. He then worked on the ship to pay for his passage. Henry continued to work on this ship for five more years. The voyage from Germany took almost six months. It has been said Henry became an American citizen after being in America for a year and returned to Germany for a visit, while working on the same ship that he had once been a stowaway on. No nationalization records have been located as of yet, so this has not been proven. However, it could be an accurate account.

Henry later lived in Pennsylvania, where married Elizabeth Mittendorf (Middendorf). It is said they were married at Pottstown, Pennsylvania in 1861 or 1862, during the early part of the Civil War. Thus far, no record of their marriage has been found. Elizabeth was born in Hanover, Germany, April 15, 1838. She, also, immigrated from Germany. Elizabeth was a passenger on the Bremen ship "Roland". The ship sailed from Bremen, Germany to Baltimore, Maryland. Her age was listed as twenty and she apparently traveled alone. Elizabeth Mittendorf was small of statue and very sickly child. She was sent to America hoping that the climate and/or medical care would improve her health problems. She landed in Baltimore, Maryland on October 25, 1860 and found her way to a Dutch-German settlement in Pennsylvania where she eventually met Henry. Her original destination was listed as the state of Ohio.

One source tells as little different story of how and where Henry and Elizabeth met. He says Henry

worked on the ship Elizabeth traveled to America on. However, they did not meet until the ship docked in Baltimore. He tells us that Henry an Elizabeth were walking on the beach and happened to meet and fell in love soon after.

We have no way of knowing what Henry's thoughts were on the Civil War, but it is said he drove a supply wagon for the Union Army.

In the 1870 Census, Henry and Elizabeth lived in Butler County, Pennsylvania, Adams Township. Before moving to Butler County, they lived in the Germantown section of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Eight of their twelve children were born in Pennsylvania, the last four being born in Calhoun County, West Virginia. They moved to Calhoun County, between April 1876 and May 1878.

On March 2, 1880, Henry purchased 300 acres of land on Beech Fork in Calhoun County, West Virginia from M.W. Kidd, E.L. Bill, and J.C. Bill for the sum of seven hundred dollars all paid except for one note for two hundred thirty-three dollars and thirty-three cents dated, November 20, 1887, due four years after that date. (Deed Book 5, Page 337). On December 2, 1891, Henry made the final twenty-five dollar payment on both the principal and interest on this tract of land.

Henry and his oldest sons traveled to Calhoun County from Pennsylvania and cleared some land on which they built a small log cabin. After Henry and his sons cleared more of the land, the whole family traveled from Pennsylvania to Calhoun County with all their household goods loaded on wagon. Henry built the wagon himself of white oak lumber. He used pitch pine tar to grease the axle on the trip. They drove their cows, turkeys, geese, pigs, and other livestock along behind he wagon on foot. After moving his family, Henry went back to Pennsylvania and worked on the railroad to pay for his farm.

Henry built four houses on his Beech farm. His family was much to crowded in the small log cabin, so Henry built a larger two story log house with glass windows. This house stood between the little log cabin and where the house now stands. This house had a cellars at one end and was in later years used as a horse barn. The fourth house still stands, although unoccupied. The third house was destroyed by fire. The Henry Wallbrown family went to church one Sunday morning, and their daughter, Clara, volunteered to stay home to prepare lunch. The family always had a house full of company every Sunday for lunch. The minister usually joined them as well. After preparing the meal, she decided to iron a tablecloth. In those days, when having visitors, one simply did not use a wrinkled tablecloth. She must have gotten too close the stove and somehow caught the house on fire. The fire was seen from the church. Family and friends saved the cellar and out buildings but the house was lost. Apparently they managed to save some of the furniture and personal belongings as some of Elizabeth's things are highly prized by her descendants. The family set up housekeeping again in the last log house. Henry then proceeded to rebuild on the foundation of the third house. His interest in the finishing of the last house waned after the death of his beloved wife, Elizabeth. The last house was painted light green. The house still remains in the family and belongs to his son Will's descendants.

At the time Henry built his house the Beech road ran along beside the Beech Creek to the mouth of Beech. Henry's large orchard was above the road on the hill behind the last house. His vineyard was located between the log house and the present house. He had several rows of grapes of all kinds. Some of which, he used to make wine. It is a well know fact, Henry greatly enjoyed his wine.

Henry was an excellent carpenter and took great pride in his work. The third and fourth houses each

Had a porch on the front and L-shaped porch on the back. Above both porches on the front and back were upstairs balconies. There was, also, a small single porch off the kitchen. Henry did beautiful scroll and lattice work on the porches. Henry used a little machine that looked like a sewing machine to make the lattice work. He bored a hole in a board and a small saw in the machine cut the delicate designs. He, also, made many pieces of their furniture.

Elizabeth took great pride in her house. She had hand woven carpets throughout her house. She used straw as a padding and tacked them down around the edges. In the spring and fall these carpets were hand washed in large tubs and hung out to dry and new straw padding added. Elizabeth had beautiful table linens, a cut glass crystal punch bowl, and other fancy things she brought from Germany with her. Elizabeth's crystal punch bowel was still in the house when her daughter-in-law, Gracie passed away in 1965.

Elizabeth had a summer kitchen and a winter kitchen. The winter kitchen was in the house and the summer kitchen, which was not connected to the house, was located behind the well house. From the summer kitchen there was a covered walkway down the steps to the cellar where Elizabeth kept her milk and butter cool as well as her canned foods. The smokehouse was beside the cellar for her convenience.

The third house had covered wooden walkways from the house to Elizabeth's wash house, the blacksmith shop, and the shed where the buggies were kept, as well as the cellar and smokehouse.

On wash days, the boys would haul barrels of water from the creek in the wagon to the wash house and then heat the water in large kettle for Elizabeth and her daughters to do the laundry.

Henry's farm was very prosperous and was good place for Henry and Elizabeth to raise their large family. The following children blessed their union: Michael, Lena, Bertha, Henry Jr., Frank, Clara, John, Joseph, Elizabeth, Anna, Amos and William Henry.

The 1900 census of Calhoun County lists a Martha Gillenwater, age 6, as a servant. How she came to be living with Henry and Elizabeth and for how long is not known.

Henry was a strict disciplinarian as was the rule in German families of that time. When he cracked the whip they all jumped and the boys in the family appeared to have left home as jobs and means of making a living became available. Yet they seemed to be a happy and close family.

On August 21, 1888, for the sum of one dollar, Henry deeded to his wife, Elizabeth, 185 acres of land on Beech, Calhoun County, West Virginia. The deed was recorded in the county clerk's office, September 11, 1893 (Deed Book 18, page 185). In Elizabeth's will, dated February 16, 1897, she conveyed the same 185 acres back to Henry. F.M. Houchin and Amos Kenney were the witnesses of Elizabeth's will. After Elizabeth's death, J.H. Roberts, James Lynch, and F.M. Houchin Sr. were appointed appraisers of her estate; with Henry Wallbrown as executor.

Also, on August 21, 1888, Henry sold to Elizabeth for the sum of three hundred fifty dollars the following personal property (2) three year old colts, (1) six year old mule, (2) milk cows, (3) three year old heifers, (1) three year old bull, (2) two years old heifers, (1) yearling calf, (2) calves and all farming utensils of every kind including a wagon. This, also, included all household and kitchen furniture, (10) head of hogs, (50) bushels of wheat, and (26) bushels of oats. This transaction was recorded in the Miscellaneous Records of Calhoun County on September 11, 1893. The reasons for

these transactions are not known.

Besides farming, Henry carried the mail in the Linden and Beech area for twenty years. It is said Henry could not read English, so Elizabeth would put the mail in order according to the houses on his route. If there was no mail for a house she would put a blank sheet of paper where that house's mail should be. This he understood meant there was no mail for that family and would pass that house by. It would sometimes be late when he would return home from his mail route and he would still have his farm work to do. Many a time Elizabeth would hold the lantern so that he could see to cradle wheat at night. His wheat field was across the creek behind the house.

Henry was member of the Catholic Church, but after coming to this country he was converted to the Protestant faith and united with the M.E. Church of which he was member at he time of his death. All of his children were baptized and raised in the Catholic faith. Later in life several of his children also joined the Methodist Church. Elizabeth, who was Lutheran and changed over to Catholicism, remained a Catholic for the rest of her life.

In 1898, Henry helped his neighbors build and finance the Beech Church. It was built by volunteers. Some cut the trees for lumber. Some took the lumber to the mill to be dressed. While others put it under roof. Henry and Good Isaac Smith did most of the interior of the church, from the rounded ceilings; down to the hand made pews and pulpit. Halfway up the wall is paneled with alternating hand tongue-and grooved strips of oak and walnut. The remaining wall and rounded ceiling are of oak. No rough lumber was used inside; it was all dressed down and smooth. The charming little country church remains much as it was when Henry and his family worshipped there. Both Henry and Isaac took great pride in their work. Their carpentry skills are being enjoyed and appreciated by the congregation yet today as they sit in some of the same original pews and the preacher makes use of the hand made pulpit.

At the time the Beech Church was dedicated the congregation still owed $137 for having the lumber dressed. The preacher asked for donations from those attending the dedication. No one made a donation the preacher then said "Oh well, Mr. Wallbrown will pay for it". At which Henry's reply was, "I wouldn't be too Bod Damn sure". However, he did donate the $137 to pay the bill.

This reminds me of another amusing story about Henry Wallbrown. It seems a revival meeting had been going on for several nights. Henry's youngest sons had been going and taking their girl friends. One night, Henry wanted to go with them and they didn't want him to . Henry always got happy when there was an alter calling. He would run up and down the aisle shouting. This embarrassed his sons greatly. Henry had been wanting a new pair of felt boots to wear inside of his gum boots to keep his feet warm. He told his sons it they would buy him a pair of felt boots, he would stay home. Well, they refused. Not to be out done, Henry went to church by himself. When his sons spotted Henry, they took him aside and made him an offer. If he could sit down for the entire evening without running up and down the aisles and shouting, they would get him the felt boots he wanted. He accepted. Henry sat quietly in his pew. He seemed calm at first and kept his seat and refrained from shouting. But as the preacher warmed up and his preaching got louder, Henry got fidgety. This went on for a while until he could stand it no longer. He jumped to his feet and (being unable to speak English plainly) yelled, "Poots or no Poots, here goes Wallbrown". With that he began shouting and running up and down the aisles as he had done previously. Needless to say, his sons did not purchase a pair of felt boots. This is said to have happened at the Beech Church.

Henry was known for his colorful language; almost every sentence contained a cuss word or two. It is

thought by many, that he did no realize that he used such profane language and was a very religious man. Henry attended church faithfully and said grace in German before every meal.

Henry was a Democrat, as were his sons, Michael, and Amos. On the other hand, sons, Frank, Joseph, John, and William Henry were Republicans.

Elizabeth died at her home on Beech, December 21, 1906, at the age of 68. She was buried on Christmas Day. Because the snow was so deep, her coffin was taken to the cemetery by sled. Elizabeth was remembered as a kind and gentle woman who often traveled many miles to care for sick neighbors and friends. Elizabeth was called the "Doctor of the Community". Henry would take her anywhere someone was sick and she would stay with them until they were well. Even though, she was a soft spoken lady she seemed to be the one who saw to it things were done. Henry seemed to bow to her wishes.

After Elizabeth's death, Henry married Ida Simmons, on July 4, 1908. The marriage lasted less than a year. In the Circuit Court of Calhoun County, West Virginia on August 19, 1909, Henry was granted a divorce. For a time Amos and Maggie and Will and Gracie and their families all lived with Henry. In later years, Henry lived with his oldest son, Michael. When he became ill, he moved to another son's (Amos) home on Panther Run, Calhoun County. He died there at the age of 87, on Sunday, November 25, 1923, at 5:10 P.M. The attending doctor was Guy Stalnaker; he listed the cause of Henry's death as complications of disease due to old age. The Vandale Undertaking Company of Spencer, Roane County, was in charge of the funeral arrangements. Henry and Elizabeth are both buried at the Road Run Cemetery, Calhoun County, West Virginia.

Henry lived in Calhoun County for over forty years and was call "Uncle Henry" by many who knew him. Henry was a small man with blond hair and blue eyes. He looked like a little boy riding around on his big horse.

Many of Henry and Elizabeth's children remained in Calhoun County and raised there families there. Many of their descendants still live in Calhoun County yet today. Henry and his children were all remembered as honest and hard working people.

Other possible spellings of Henry Wallbrown's name "Heinrich Wahlbraun" and "Henry Wahlbraun".

The only other "WALLBROWN" that we have been able to locate is John Bartholomew Wallbraun. He was know in the Calhoun area as "Bartlett". He was related to Henry, although we are not sure just how they were related (some say an uncle, a cousin, and even a brother). I think they were brothers. John Bartholomew (Bartlett) and his wife, Martha Elizabeth, and their children, Joseph, Margaret, Mary, and Anna immigrated from Germany in 1881. Joseph was already married and his wife, Anna Clara and son, Clement also came with Bartlett and his family. They apparently came straight from Germany to Calhoun County, West Virginia to Henry Wallbrown and his family. In March 1882, Henry and Elizabeth Wallbrown made a deed to Bartlett and Martha for 65 acres on Beech, Calhoun County, West Virginia for the sum of $260 (Deed Book 6, Pg. 256). This piece of land later became the Frank and Tava Wilson farm. John Bartholomew and Martha had two sons who remained in Germany. One was named Clemens and was said to be a banker in Kessel, Germany. The family left their land in Germany in his care. He late had some financial difficulties and sold their land.

Submitted & Researched by Donna J. Walbrown