

The Beckman Family



"Be fruitful, and multiply"

Mary Beckman Niekamp



Gerhard and Rebecca



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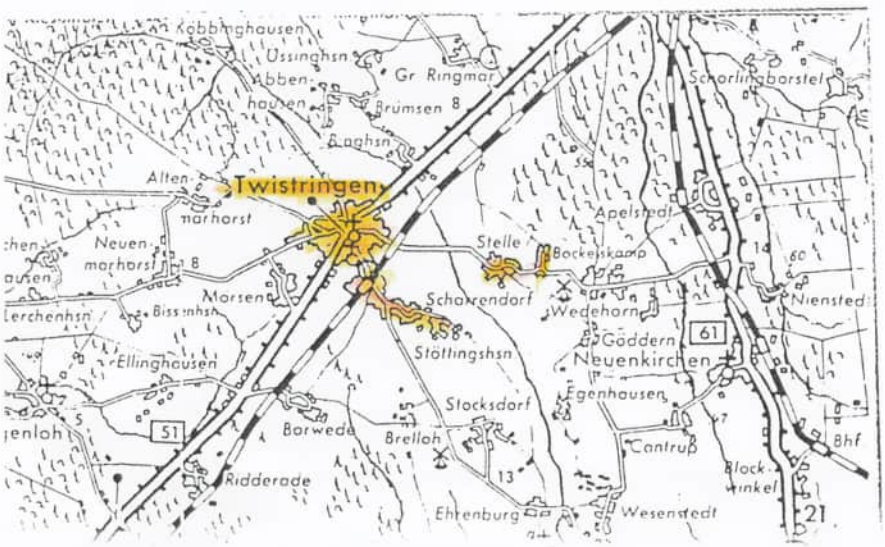
GERMANY



The Beckmans came from the area near Twistringen in northern Germany.

Twistringen is about 20 miles southwest of Bremen.

The inset below shows the three small towns of Bockelskamp, Scharrendorf, and Steele. All three are within a few miles of Twistringen.



INSET:
TWISTRINGEN
STEELE
SCHARRENDORF
BOCKELSKAMP

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THE BECKMAN FAMILY TREE

[JOHN] GERHARD BECKMAN and REBECCA MARIA PILSTER

Direct Line

GREAT GREAT GREAT GRANDPARENTS :	[John] Gerhard Beckman Rebecca Maria Pilster
GREAT GREAT GRANDPARENTS :	[Gerhard] Henry Beckman Elizabeth Borgerding
GREAT GRANDPARENTS :	Frank Beckman Margaret Herman
GRANDPARENTS :	Henry A. Beckman Clara Gottemoller
PARENTS :	Luke F. Beckman Lorine Stammen
DAUGHTER :	Mary Lee Beckman Thomas Niekamp

IN GERMANY

PARENTS of [JOHN] GERHARD BECKMAN

Gerhard Beckman and Rebecca Maria Heidkampf were married in Twistringen, Germany, on October 30, 1776. Gerhard, who was born in 1733, died on October 28, 1803. Rebecca Maria was born in 1754 and died on April 16, 1824.(1) Both parents died in the small village of Stelle where they had made their home. Stelle probably had no Catholic church as all family baptisms and marriages were celebrated in Saint Anna Church in Twistringen which was about two miles west of Stelle.

PARENTS OF REBECCA MARIA PILSTER

Franz Pilster and Gesina Maria Stegemann, his third wife, were married in 1791. The couple lived in Scharrendorf, a small town about two miles to the southeast of Twistringen. Franz was born in the year 1748 and died on November 15, 1822. Gesina Maria was born in 1757 and died on December 29, 1827.(2) Residents of Scharrendorf, like those in Stelle, took their children to Saint Anna's in Twistringen to be baptized.

1. Church Records: St. Anna Church, Twistringen, Germany.
2. Ibid.

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THE FAMILY OF [JOHN] GERHARD AND REBECCA MARIA BECKMAN

[John] Gerhard Beckman
5/22/1783 - 2/28/1841

Rebecca Maria Pilster
3/23/1792 - 9/11/1869

married(1)
Twistringen, Germany
January, 1814

2nd marriage(2)
St. Henry, Ohio
11/28/1845
Fr. J. Van den Brock

Henry Kizer
-/-/- - -/-/-

CHILDREN

name	birth place	baptized	sponsors
1.Maria Elizabeth	Bockelskamp	Twistringen 2/10/1815	Maria E. Geevers Johan H. Pilster
2.Anna Maria	Bockelskamp	Twistringen 11/1/1816	Anna M. Pilster Johan H. Beckman
3.[Gerhard] Henry	Bockelskamp 6/6/1819	Twistringen 6/8/1819	Gerd H. Beckman Gesina M. Pilster
4.Catherina Maria	Bockelskamp	Twistringen 8/19/1821	Catherina Pilster Hermann Beckman
5.Maria Adelheid	Bockelskamp 4/11/1824	Twistringen 4/12/1824	Maria A. Beckman John Ber. Feldman
6.Rebecca Maria(3)	Bockelskamp 3/16/1827	Twistringen 3/18/1827	Cath. M. Heuerman Johan H. Pilster
7.Franz(4)	Minster, Oh	Minster 7/-/1834	Franz Buschmann Maria Pilster

1. Marriage Records: St. Anna Church, Twistringen, Germany.
2. Marriage Records: St. Henry Church, St. Henry, Ohio.
3. Children 1 through 6: Baptismal Records: St. Anna Church, Twistringen, Germany.
4. Child 7: Baptismal Records: St. Augustine Church, Minster, Oh.

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THE CHILDREN OF GERHARD AND REBECCA BECKMAN

MARRIAGE RECORDS

Maria Elizabeth Beckman - no information - possibly died young.
2/10/1815 - -/-/- Did not come to America.

Anna Maria Beckman 11/1/1816 - -/-/-	married Cinn.(1) 11/20/1838 Fr. J.W. Henni	Gerhard Henry Feldman -/-/- - 5/26/1849
	2nd marriage-Cinn.(1) before 5/21/1852	Joseph Wenzing -/-/- - -/-/-
Henry Beckman 6/6/1819 - 8/3/1868	married Cinn.(1) 2/13/1844 Fr. John A. Nash	Elizabeth Borgerding 8/8/1822 - 8/16/1887
Catherina M. Beckman 8/19/1821 - 3/5/1870	married Cinn.(1) 2/7/1843 Fr. M.C.Hammer	John Fihe -/-/1811 - 2/27/1858
Mary Adelheid Beckman 4/11/1824 - 1/6/1891	married Minster(2) 2/20/1841 Fr. H. Herzog	Gerhard Goke -/-/1814 - 4/14/1850
	2nd marriage(3) Maria Stein Fr. Andrew Kunkler	Hermann H.Doermann 7/25/1850 - 9/16/1863
Rebecca Maria Beckman 3/16/1827 - 10/-/1906	married Cinn. ca.1851	John Boellner -/-/-/ - -/-/-
Franz Beckman -/-/1834 - -/-/1890	married St. Henry(4) 8/24/1852 Fr. Jos. Albrecht	Mary Cath. Borgerding -/-/1829 - 12/20/1857
	2nd marriage ca 1858	Catherine Willenburg -/-/- - -/-/1895

1. Marriage Records of Cincinnati 1838-1845, Cinn. Public Library
2. Marriage Records: St. Augustine Church, Minster, Oh.
3. Marriage Records: St. John Church, Maria Stein, Oh.
4. Marriage Records: St. Henry Church, St. Henry, Oh.

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ST. ANNA CATHOLIC CHURCH

TWISTRINGEN, GERMANY



THIS PHOTO IS FROM A 1802 DRAWING.

THIS IS THE CHURCH WHERE MY GREAT, GREAT, GREAT GRANDPARENTS, (JOHN) GERHARD BECKMAN AND REBECCA MARIA PILSTER, WERE MARRIED IN 1814 AND WHERE SIX OF THEIR SEVEN CHILDREN WERE BAPTIZED.

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BECKMAN FAMILY HISTORY

FIRST GENERATION IN AMERICA

CHAPTER I

This is a chronicle of the lives of Gerhard and Rebecca Maria Beckman and their progeny.

Gerhard Beckman was born and raised in the town of Stelle, Germany. Although he was baptized John Gerhard and used this name on all legal documents, he was known as Gerhard or Gerd to his family. In January of 1814, at the age of 30, he married Rebecca Maria Pilster. His twenty-one year old bride lived a few miles away in Scharrendorf. The wedding ceremony was celebrated in St. Anna Catholic Church in Twistringen in Hanover, Germany. After their marriage, the young couple settled in the little hamlet of Bockelskamp about a half mile east of Stelle. Here six of their children were born, five daughters and one son. Their first born, a daughter named Maria Elizabeth, probably died young as she did not come to America with the family.

In the early nineteenth century, life in Germany was very hard. Ownership of land could not be divided but had to be passed down to the first born son. Gerhard, like other younger sons, had to find work elsewhere. These landless sons often learned a trade or became tenant farmers or farmhands. This situation, together with economic and political unrest, left young families with little hope for a better life and caused many of them to leave their homeland and come to the United States.

The dream of owning one's own land brought Gerhard and Rebecca and many other immigrants to the raw wilderness of the newly opened Ohio Territory which was the nearest open land contingent to already settled areas. After the removal of the Indians in 1832, this land could be purchased from the government for $1.25 an acre and the purchase price could be earned by working on the Miami Erie Canal which was under construction from Cincinnati to Toledo from 1825 to 1845. The pay for workers digging the canal was "thirty cents a day and a jigger of whiskey." The workday was from sunrise to sunset and the whiskey was thought to combat malaria fever.

On November 1, 1830, when Gerhard was 47 and Rebecca 38, the Beckmans sailed for America, a voyage that lasted 7 weeks and 6 days. They arrived at the Port of Baltimore on Christmas Day, December 25, 1830.(1)

Immigrants who wished to settle in Ohio needed to hire

1. The Family Bible of Henry and Elizabeth Beckman and the Ship Quarterlies, Allen County Library, Ft. Wayne, In.

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drivers, wagons, and teams to take them across Maryland to Cumberland, then northwestward to Washington, Pennsylvania, and finally across the northern tip of West Virginia to Wheeling. This overland journey covered over 250 miles. From Wheeling they would take a flatboat down the Ohio River to Cincinnati.(1) The Beckmans arrived in Cincinnati in March 1831 and settled amid other immigrants of German descent. They lived there until late in 1832. An ever increasing prejudice toward the German Catholics who were flooding into the city caused concern and unrest among the other citizenry. They especially distrusted the German Catholics whom they suspected of being part of a plot to take over the Mississippi River Valley to form a papal domain in America.(2)

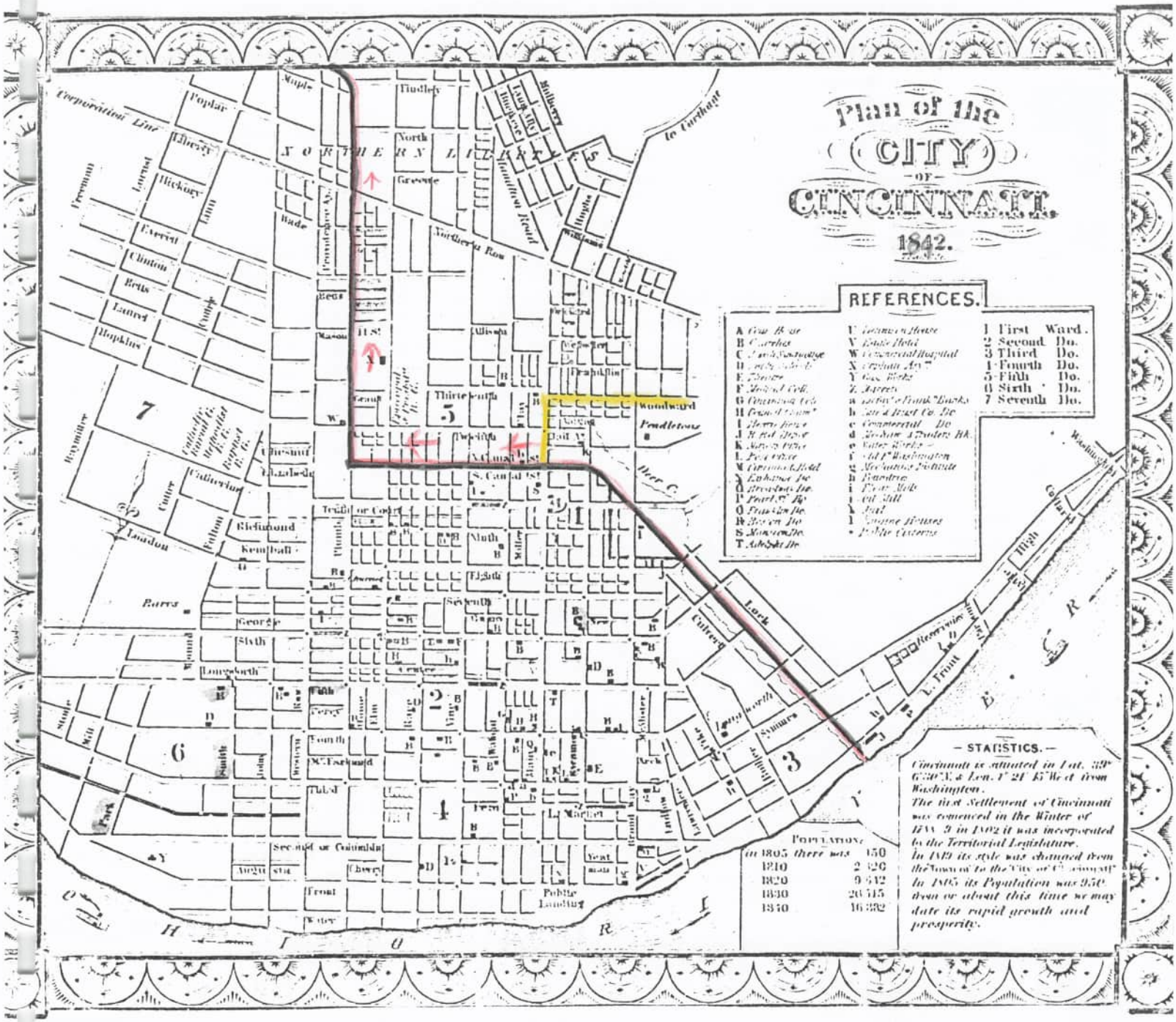
In the fall of 1832, Franz Joseph Stallo, proposed that a group be formed to found a new colony just for German Catholics and he and Gerhard Beckman were selected to find a suitable location for their new settlement. Land was chosen about one hundred miles north of Cincinnati in Mercer County along the proposed route of the Miami Erie Canal. On September 1, 1832 a stock company was formed to purchase the land and lay out the settlement of Stallostown, which would later become Minster. The Beckman family joined the first group of settlers to leave for Mercer County and an article in the "Der Deutsche Pionier" stated that the little group was given a grand send off.(3)

"The Stallo group left the blacksmith shop of Von Seggern on Woodward Street in Cincinnati in a procession of pairs for the canal boat dock with banners and a sign displaying the words "Colonie of Stallostown". Three sons of Surmann who were musicians led the group with violin, clarinet, and trumpet. The entourage was met at the Main Street bridge by a large group of people wishing them farewell. The colonists proceeded to Dayton by boat and then to Piqua by wagon. They left Piqua very early in the morning, after a layover of one day, and arrived at Stallostown late in the afternoon. Since there were no houses in Stallostown the men lived in the wagons while log cabins were built for Stallo and Cordesmann. During this period, the women and children stayed in the neighboring cabins of Flint, Farrel, and Boone, who were the only previous inhabitants of the entire township. When the first cabins were completed the women and children returned to Stallostown. Stallo now put up a sign with the name "Stallostown". Soon the neighboring squatters came to the village and laughed: "Here is a town but there are no houses!". Their glee was short-lived, however, since by January 1, 1833, there were fifty-two inhabitants at Stallostown. The majority of these citizens, however, did not live within the village proper.

1. Liwwat Boke: Knapke, Luke.
2. Pilgrims All: Hoying, Louis, Rita, Fr. David C.P.P.S.
3. Ibid. See Appendix for the names of the first settlers.

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SHOWN BELOW IS THE ROUTE FROM WOODWARD STREET TO THE MIAMI ERIE CANAL THAT WAS TAKEN BY THE FIRST GROUP OF STALLOSTOWN SETTLERS IN THE FALL OF 1832.



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"All of the first group that came with Stallo, with the exception of Cordesmann, had purchased land, or had land purchased for them by Stallo, in sections adjacent to the village, and that is where they built their first log cabins."

Gerhard and Rebecca had bought 22 acres in Section 34 which was located on the south edge of the town on the west side of the present Route 66. The next spring in Cincinnati, on April 14, 1833, a drawing was held among the stock members for the 144 lots in Stallostown. Each lot cost $8.50 and was 4 acres in size. Gerhard and Rebecca drew lot 133. Later they would buy another town lot, number 34.(1)

The land chosen for the site of the new village was completely covered with woods so dense that trails had to be marked on the trees or one would lose his way. Although the deep gloom of this pervading forest proved very depressing to many, it did promise a fertile land once it could be cleared of trees. Much of the area was swampy and without natural drainage. It was so infested with swarms of mosquitoes that the hands and face had to be covered when the settlers were outdoors. Even the heads of the oxen and the horses had to be covered with cloth. These conditions were so bad that early in 1833 five men, including Gerhard Beckman, went to Ft Recovery to see if they should resettle the colony there.(2) This trip probably provided Gerhard with his first look at Granville Township where he would later settle as it was on the route to Ft. Recovery.

Minster's first settlers faced major difficulties. The town itself consisted of only a handful of log cabins, and these had hardened mud floors with empty openings for windows and doors. In the summer, the weed, pennyroyal, was hung in bunches in the window openings to discourage the mosquitoes and flies, and skins or cloth were hung in the doorways overnight.(3)

Clearing the trees was the first order of business and both men and women tackled the job. The men chopped down the large trees and the woman and older children grubbed out the saplings and the underbrush. Venison, cornbread, and black coffee were the major part of everyone's diet. There were no cows for milk and a barrel of wheat flour, which could be gotten at Piqua for $3.00, was considered too expensive. There were so many deer that it was sometimes hard to drive them away. Whenever the settlers made small clearings and planted them with wheat and corn, the deer would eat the wheat down to the roots and the raccoons and squirrels would eat the corn.(4)

1. See Minster map on the following page.
2. Pilgrims All: Hoying, Louis, Rita, Fr. David C.P.P.S.
3. Ibid.
4. "Der Deutsche Pionier", "Deutscher Pionier Verein, Cinn.": Franz Hergenrother, a Minster settler in 1833.

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LAND OWNED BY (JOHN)GERHARD BECKMAN IN MINSTER 1832 - 1838.
MINSTER WAS PART OF MERCER COUNTY UNTIL 1849 WHEN AUGLAIZE COUNTY
WAS FORMED.



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With never ending hard work the community thrived. Like the village, the Beckman family grew when Rebecca gave birth to their seventh child, a son, Franz. He was baptized in Minster in July of 1834 by Fr. John Horstmann who came only occasionally to the area to administer the sacraments; thus Franz could have been born some months earlier. Gerhard was 51 and Rebecca 42 when their last child was born. The following year, in 1835, Gerhard declared his desire to become a citizen of the United States, beginning the required 5 year waiting period for citizenship.

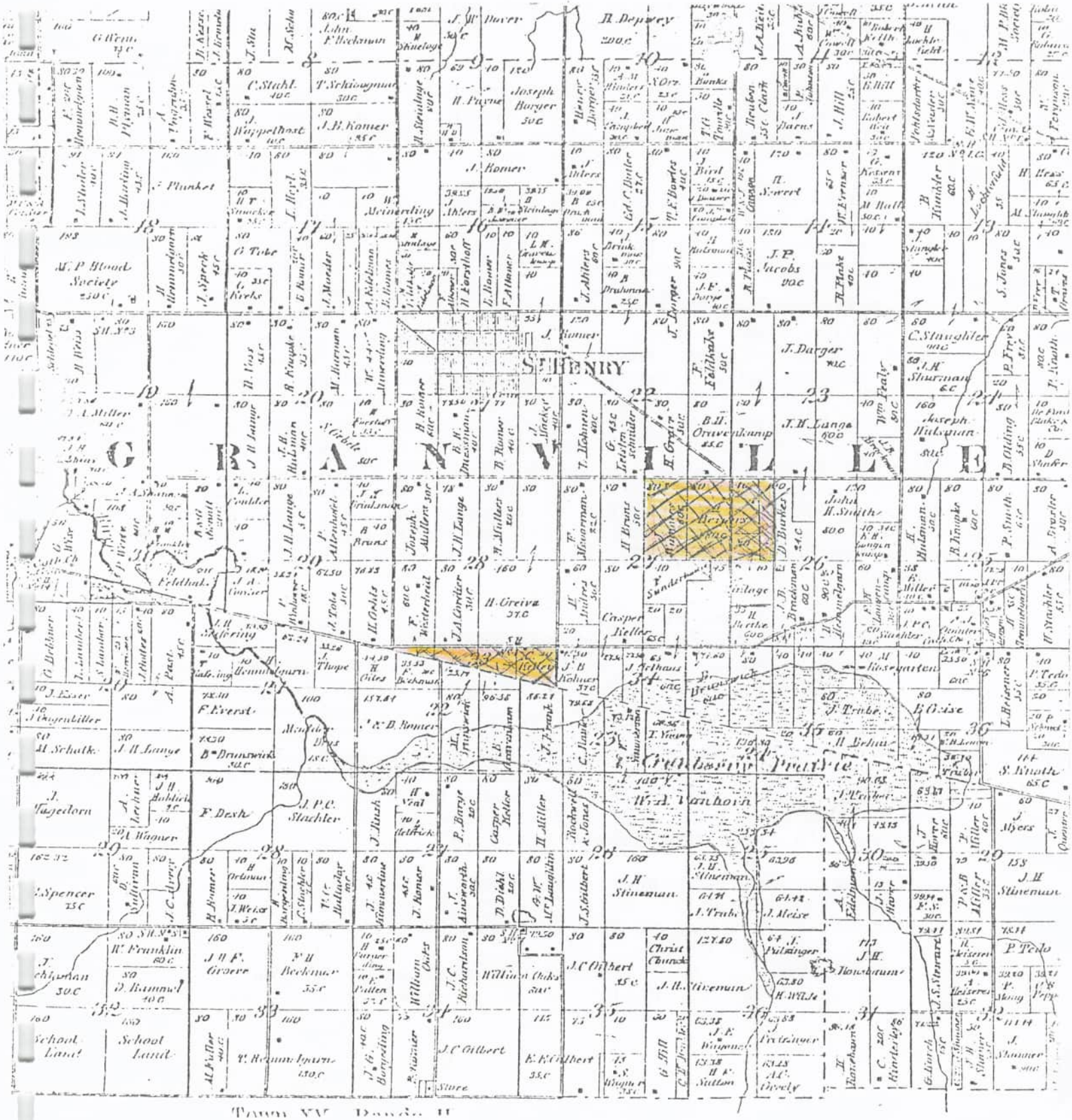
During the first summer in the sparsely settled wilderness, the community was struck by cholera. By July 1833, 26 of the residents had died including Franz Joseph Stallo and John Hermann Beckman, the brother of Gerhard. John Hermann had married Elizabeth Korte in Germany in April of 1832 and migrated immediately to Cincinnati. That fall he entrusted Franz Stallo with money to purchase 66 2/3 acres of land just south of Stallostown in Secs. 2 and 3 of Shelby County. Stallo bought the land but kept the deed in his own name intending to transfer the ownership later. Although he did not yet have title to the land, John Hermann and his new bride settled there and improved the property. The untimely deaths of Franz Stallo and John Hermann both occurred before the title was transferred. The situation was further complicated by the fact that John Hermann left no will and by the remarriage of his widow a very short time after his death. In the spring of 1835, Gerhard brought a law suit against the heirs of Franz Stallo and against Elizabeth and her new husband, Franz Buschman, asking that Elizabeth be given her dower right and the rest of John Hermann's land be divided among his remaining brothers and sister, Gerhard, John Henry Beckman, and Maria Udella Beckman. These last two still lived in Germany. The court case, entered in April of 1835, was not settled until 1839 when the court awarded the land to Elizabeth.(1)

These legal matters may have played a role in Gerhard's decision to move away from Minster. On March 13, 1837, Gerhard bought three 80 acre tracts of land in Granville Township from the U.S. Government.(2) The following day, March 14, he sold Lot 34 to John Tonnies for $50 and on June 12 he also sold him his 22 acres of section land for $195. The next year, on October 3, 1838, he sold his original Lot 133 to Henry Frierott for $200 and moved his family to Granville Township, one mile east of the newly platted town of St. Henry. Gerhard and Rebecca signed the deed transfers for their Minster lots in German script showing that they were both literate.

1. Shelby County Court House Records: Court of Common Pleas.
2. See Granville Township map. These deeds were registered in the land office in Lima and were signed by President Martin Van Buren. They were the W 1/2 of NW 1/4 of Sec. 26, 80 acres; and the NE 1/4 of Sec. 27, 160 acres; both in Township VII, Range II East.

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LAND OWNED BY (JOHN)GERHARD BECKMAN IN GRANVILLE TOWNSHIP IN 1837
THIS 1876 MAP IS THE EARLIEST ONE AVAILABLE
NOTE THE CRANBERRY BOG
SEC. 26 - - - - 80 ACRES
SEC. 27 - - - - 160 ACRES
SEC. 33 - 86 56/100 ACRES



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One of the Beckman's 80 acre tracts was located in Section 26 on the southeast corner of the present day State Route 119 and Fleetfoot Road and it was here that Gerhard and Rebecca built their new log cabin. It stood on a little rise beside a small meandering stream about 1/3 of a mile south of the intersection.(1) In April of 1838 Gerhard bought another 86 and 56/100 acres of land in Granville Township just above the old Greenville Treaty Line.(2)

One more important event was to take place in 1838. On November 20 their daughter, Anna Maria, would marry Gerhard Henry Feldman. The wedding took place in Cincinnati where the young couple would make their future home.

When the Beckmans arrived in Granville Township, there were 19 Catholic families living in the St. Henry area.(3) Only six of these lived in the town. In 1839 Archbishop John Purcell granted the settlers permission to form their own parish. A French priest, Fr. Navarron, was assigned the entire area from Greenville to Lima and he would pass through the parishes he served from time to time. His home base was St. Valberts, a small church between Versailles and Russia. He would carry the Holy Vessels and his vestments on his back and send word ahead so that the Catholic settlers could gather at someone's home to hear Mass and receive the sacraments.(4) Gerhard and Rebecca's new log cabin, being centrally located, was the gathering place where Mass was celebrated once a month until the first church, a small log structure covered with weatherboards was built in 1840.(5) It was erected in the center of town on Lot 33. Weekly Mass did not begin in St. Henry until 1845 and daily Mass much later in 1898. Beginning in 1995, the parish no longer has Mass on Mondays.

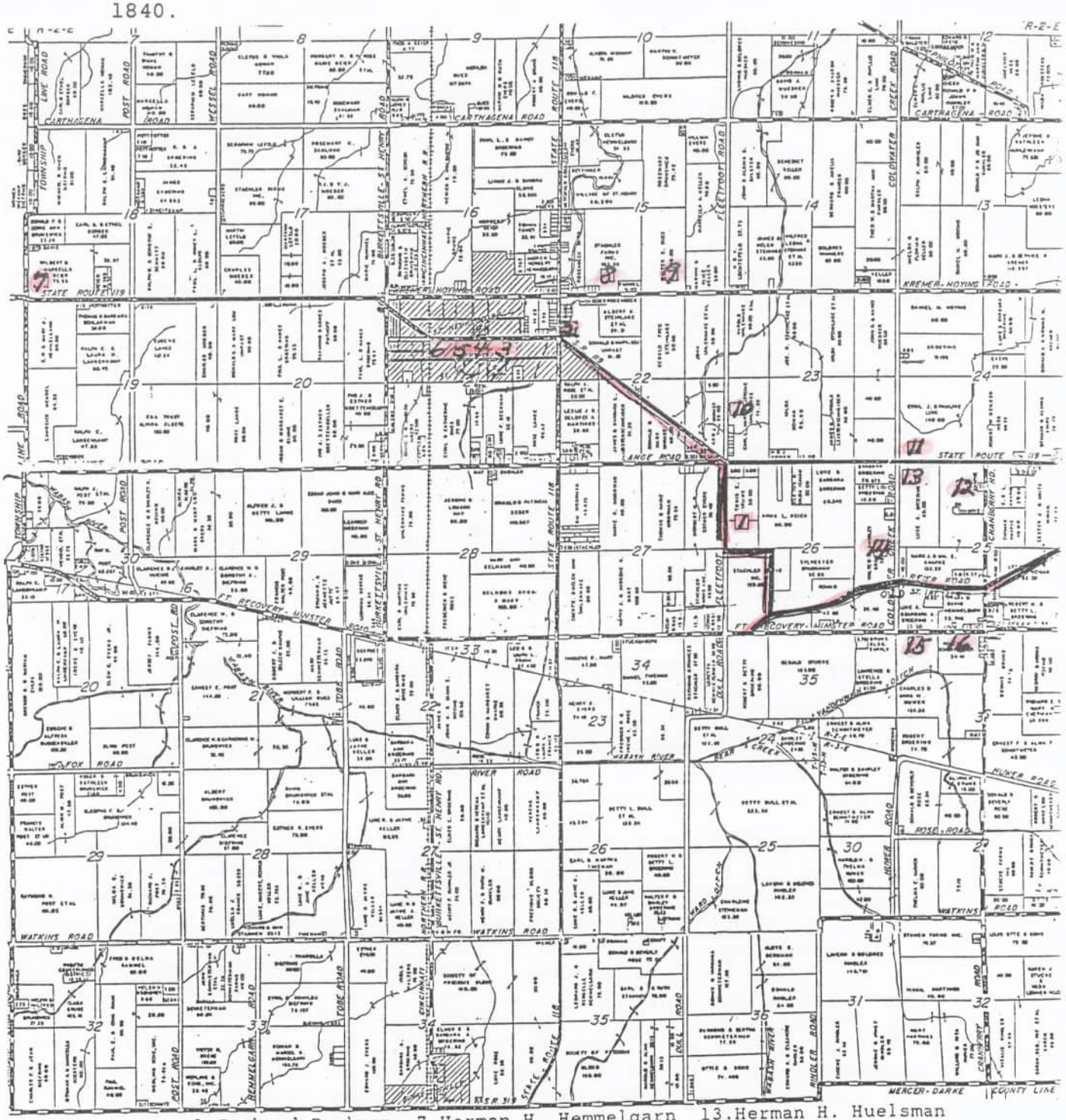
Not all of the settlers living near St. Henry were Catholic. Gerhard and Rebecca's nearest neighbor was the John Simison family who lived 2/3 of a mile to the south at the north edge of a large cranberry bog that started about 1/2 mile east of present day State Route 127 and ended 3 miles to the west near Burkettsville St. Henry Road. The bog was about one mile wide. Mrs. Simison was captured by Indians when she was a young girl and lived with the family of the medicine man for seven years. Here she learned many cures which she later taught to her son, Bill. They were both credited with saving the lives of many of the settlers from rattlesnake bites.(6)

1. Tax Assessors Plat Book, 1853; Mercer County Courthouse.
2. Fraction Section 33, 86 56/100 acres, Town. VII Range II.
3. See settlement map on the following page.
4. Atlas Auglaize County, 1880-1917.
5. Work Journal of Karl Dickman, Minster cabinet maker. Entry: July 28, 1840, St. Henry Church: 4 windows,door,altar,$28.00.
6. History of Mercer County, 1907.

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IN 1840 STATE ROUTE 119 ANGLED FROM CASSELLA THROUGH CRANBERRY UNTIL IT MET FT. RECOVERY MINSTER ROAD IN SECTION 26. THE ROAD TO ST. HENRY PASSED ALONG THE WEST SIDE OF GERHARD AND REBECCA'S LAND. SEE THE RED LINE.

BELOW IS A PRESENT DAY MAP SHOWING THE NINETEEN CATHOLIC FAMILIES IN THE ST. HENRY AREA WHEN THE FIRST CHURCH WAS BUILT IN 1840.



1. Gerhard Beckman
2. Joseph Romer
3. Bernard Romer
4. Henry Romer
5. Anton Striecker
6. Henry Bruns
7. Herman H. Hemmelgarn
8. Bernard Drahman
9. Joseph Borger
10. Henry Grievenkamp
11. John Huelsman
12. Bernard Knapke
13. Herman H. Huelsman
14. Franz Langenkemp
15. John H. Brockman
16. John T. Hemmelgarn
17. Henry Brinkman (location unknown)

18. Henry Wieners: He lived in Sec. 5 in Butler Township. He was a St. Henry parishioner until 1852. In Nov. 1851 he sold part of his land to the C.PP.S. for Philothea's first church.
19. Gerhard H. Wendel: He lived in Sec. 33 in Butler Township about 3 1/2 miles north of St. Henry. He belonged to the St.Henry Parish until Philothea 's church was built in 1852.

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It is difficult to imagine the hardships and isolation endured by our early ancestors. The thick forest made each farm an island unto itself. Even though neighbors lived less than a mile away, nothing could be seen of their presence. Each family had to be self sufficient, hunting for their own food and making all the things they needed to survive. There were no real roads or bridges, only footpaths which were often quagmires of mud. The settlers needed a compass to keep from getting lost. They lived in an almost cashless society, trading whatever goods and services they had for things that they needed. However they did need cash to buy land and to pay taxes and this could be earned by working on the canal or on the reservoir at Celina. Once a year, the settlers would load pack horses with the animal furs they had accumulated over the months and take them to Cincinnati to sell. These had great value and settlers traveled together in large groups to ensure safety from robbers.(1) Grain had to be taken to Sidney or Piqua to be ground into flour which required a two or three day journey through the forest. Life improved greatly after the canal was opened as far as Minster in 1843 and northward to Toledo in 1845. Most transportation by ox cart then ceased. Merchants received their drygoods, salt and iron by canal boat and the settlers sent their grain, both corn and whiskey, to New York and hoop poles and cord wood to the South.(2)

The Beckman family slowly prospered. In 1840, Gerhard owned 326 56/100 acres of land, most of it still covered with trees. He had two horses, and six cows. Henry, his oldest son, still unmarried, also owned two cows.(3) On August 20 of that year, at the new courthouse in Celina, (John)Gerhard Beckman became a citizen of the United States.

The year 1841 brought both joy and sorrow to the family. On February 20, the Beckman's celebrated the wedding of their sixteen year old daughter, Mary Adelheid, who was married in St. Augustine Church in Minster to Gerhard Goke, a young man from Maria Stein where they would make their home. This happy occasion was followed by tragedy when eight days later Gerhard was killed while felling a tree as he worked to clear more of his land. He was 57 years old, just a few months short of his 58 birthday. He left his widow with four children still at home. Henry, the oldest son was 21 and became the head of the household. Catherine and Rebecca were still teenagers and the youngest son, Franz, was only 6 years old. Gerhard was one of the first parishioners to be buried in St. Henry's first cemetery behind the log church on Lot 33. He died without a will, thus 1/3 of his estate went to his wife and the rest to his children. In May, Henry bought his

1. Liwwat Boke: Knapke, Luke.
2. Atlas of Auglaize County. 1880 - 1917.
3. 1840 Personal Property Taxes, Mercer County Court House.

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mother's dower right to sections 26, 27, and 33 for $200. That summer he bought the rest of the home farm in Sec. 26 from Franz and his 4 sisters, paying $150 for each of their shares.(1)

Henry was appointed administrator of his father's estate which was finally settled in 1847. The assets totaled $491.95. Debts, uncollectible bills still owed to his father, plus other expenses reduced the assets to $113.88. One item on the debit list was a widow's allowance of $3.00.(2) It was listed only once, so with the money Henry paid her for her share of the land, Rebecca must have needed no other cash during the six years that the will was in probate.

In February 1843 the family traveled to Cincinnati for the wedding of 21 year old Catherine. The canal, completed almost to Minster but frozen and unusable in the winter, left them with a slow and difficult overland journey. On February 7, Catherine was married to John Fihe and the couple made their home in Cincinnati.

The following year, the family again gathered in Cincinnati when Henry was united in marriage to Elizabeth Borgerding who had just come from Germany six weeks earlier. It is not known how they met, but the union was probably arranged by relatives of the pair, a practice that was common in Germany at that time. After the wedding, Henry and Elizabeth settled on the home farm near St. Henry.

The next wedding in the family was that of the widow, Rebecca, who remarried in November of 1845. Her marriage to Henry Kizer was the first wedding ceremony held in St. Henry's 1840 log church. No marriages were performed before this date due to the sporadic nature of priestly visits. This changed when the Precious Blood Fathers arrived at Maria Stein and established a convent there in 1845. After their wedding, Rebecca and Henry moved to the east of Maria Stein.

Death was a frequent visitor to the Beckman family. Anna's husband, Gerhard Henry Feldman, died in May 1849. They had been married 10 1/2 years. Anna's unmarried sister, Rebecca, probably came to live with her at this time as deed transfers show her to be in Cincinnati in 1850. Gerhard Goke, the husband of Mary Adelheid, died the following April a few months after their ninth wedding anniversary. These two young widows were both married again by 1852, as was their sister, Rebecca. Anna wed Joseph Wenzing in Cincinnati and Mary Adelheid stayed in Maria Stein and married Hermann Doermann. Rebecca met and married John Boellner and lived with him in Cincinnati for the rest of her life.

1. Mercer County Court House Records: Deeds.
2. Gerhard Beckman's Estate: Copies included at end of Chapter I.

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John Fihe, Catherine's husband, and Joseph Wenzing, the new husband of Anna, both owned drygoods stores on Race Street in Cincinnati. The Fihe's at 517 and the Wenzing's at 585. By 1859 the Wenzings had sold their business to John and Rebecca Boellner and moved to a new location at 72 12th Street. A few years later they would move to Richmond, Indiana. After John Fihe died in 1858, his widow, Catherine, continued to live at 15 Woodward Street.(1) In 1862, the Boellners purchased the Fihe store and moved their own business to the Fihe's 517 Race Street location. By 1869 the Boellners again moved their dry goods store, this time to 558 Central Avenue. In the early 1890's John Boellner opened a wholesale, retail store dealing in hay, grain, and coal at 635 Race Street.(2) After her husband's death in the late 1890's, Rebecca and her youngest daughter, Tillie, lived at 1780 Powers Street. Rebecca, who died in 1906 at the age of 79, was the only child from the marriage of Gerhard and Rebecca Beckman who lived past the turn of the century.

While three of the Beckman daughters lived in Cincinnati, the two sons lived in St. Henry. Franz, who was only 11 when his mother remarried, probably moved to Maria Stein with Rebecca and Henry Kizer. At the age of 16 he was living as an apprentice in the home of John Goke, a cabinet maker in Maria Stein. According to 1860 census records, Franz became a master carpenter. On August 21, 1852, at the age of 18, he married Mary Catherine Borgerding, a sister of Henry's wife Elizabeth. The newly married couple first lived on Lot 10 in St. Henry, but in 1855 they built a new log house on Lot 8 on the southwest corner of Walnut and Columbus Streets. Like many young wives, Mary Catherine was pregnant each year. In April of 1857 death claimed their only daughter, Rebecca, who was almost three years old. That December, just three days after the birth of their fourth child, Mary Catherine also died. Franz, left with three sons under the age of five, soon remarried. His second wife was Catherine Willenburg who bore him 8 more children. Of these, 1 daughter, their first born, died shortly after birth. In the early 1880's, Franz moved his family to Green Creek, Douglas Township, Effingham County, Illinois where both he and his second wife are buried.(3)

After Henry Kizer died, Rebecca began to live with her children. In 1860 she was living with Franz(4) and in 1869, when she died at the age of 78, she was living with her daughter, Mary Adelheid in Maria Stein. She is probably buried in St. Henry where Gerhard was buried 28 years earlier.

1. Woodward Street is 13th Street today.
2. City Directories of Cincinnati: 1853-1900.
3. Mercer County Court House: Deed Transfer for Lot 8, St. Henry, Franz and Catherine were in Illinois when deed was signed.
4. 1860 Census Records.

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APPENDIX

CHAPTER I

Following is a list of the first settlers to leave for Stallostown in the fall of 1832.

Franz Joseph Stallo and his two eldest sons
Gerhard Surmann and family, 3 sons, 1 daughter
Feldmann and family
Beckmann and family
Friedrich Gerwers and family, wife and 2 sons
Heinrich Quartmann and family, tailor, wife and 3 children
Rohenkohl and family
Tauke and family, wife
Joseph Cordesmann,
J. Busse, who followed shortly after Stallo,
adds the following names
Bramlage, 2 sons and 1 daughter
Kemper, unmarried, a tailor
Friedrich Sommer, unmarried
Bernard Busse

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The following page was taken from the Ship Quarterlies for the Port of Baltimore and lists the passengers arriving there in the last quarter of 1830.

The Beckman Family Bible states that the family left for America on November 1, 1830. They probably signed papers as ship passengers sometime in October as their daughter, Anna Maria, is listed as age 13. She was born on November 1, 1816 so should have been listed as 14 when they boarded on that day.

The family landed at Baltimore on December 25, 1830. Their names are among the last recorded for the 4th quarter, October to December 31.

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LIST OF PASSENGERS entered in the District of Baltimore, by vessels, f
of October to the 31 December 1830

				COUNTRY TO WHICH THEY BELONG.	COUNTR TO
David Victor	45	Male	Shoemaker	France	Ma.
Nicholas Philan	29	"	Merchant	No States	
Benjamin H. Hinds	35	"	Farmer	"	
F. E. Wadsack	54	Female		Germany	
K. F. "	25	"		"	
M. E. "	22	"		"	
A. Manert	40	Male	Plumer	"	
Charles "	7	"		"	
August "	5	"		"	
Rufsina "	9	Female		"	
Charl "	30	"		"	
F. T. Finke	48	Male	Cooper	"	
J. P. "	2	"		"	
Marg "	34	Female		"	
Joh "	14	"		"	
Henr "	12	"		"	
Sophie "	5	"		"	
Anna "	34	"		"	
D. Finke	31	Male	Carpenter	"	
C. M. "	32	"	"	"	
A. M. "	6	Female		"	
A. E. "	4	"		"	
Ludwig "	2	Male		"	
F. Vand. Legger	30	"	White Smith	"	
C. H. "	3	"		"	
F. B. Schroeder	36	"	"	"	
C. A. "	66	"	"	"	
F. C. "	7	"		"	
F. Henr "	5	"		"	
Geo Henr "	3	"		"	
F. H. Feldmann	41	"	Farmer	"	
C. M. "	12	"		"	
C. M. "	31	"	"	"	
F. G. Berkmann	47	"	"	"	
Henr "	11	"		"	
Re. Mar "	38	Female		"	
A. M. "	13	"		"	
C. M. "	8	"		"	
Adelina M. "	3	"		"	
Fran. Fibler	18	Male		"	
A. C. A. Stylleberghen	28	"	Gun Smith	"	
C. Lapsmann	30	"	Farmer	"	

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COURTHOUSE RECORDS SHOW THAT J. GERHARD BECKMAN BOUGHT THESE PROPERTIES FROM THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT ON MARCH 13, 1837 EVEN THOUGH THEY WERE RECORDED ON SEPT. 4, 1838.

deed 64 pg 60

THIS IS THE DEED TO THE HOME FARM IN SEC. 26.

The United States of America.

Certificate No. 9533

To all to whom these Presents shall come---Greeting:

Whereas, John Gerhard Beckman of Mercer County Ohio

has deposited in the General Land Office of the United States, a Certificate of the Register of the Land Office, at Lima, whereby it appears that full payment has been made by the said John Gerd. Beckman

according to the provisions of the Act of Congress of the twenty-fourth of April, one thousand eight hundred and twenty, entitled, "An Act making further provision for the sale of the Public Lands," for The West Half of the North West quarter of Section twenty Six. Town seven, South of Range two East. in the District of lands subject to sale at Lima Ohio Containing eighty acres.

according to the official plat of the survey of the said Lands, returned to the General Land Office by the Surveyor General, which said tract has been purchased by the said John Gerd. Beckman

Now Know Ye, that the United States of America, in consideration of the Premises, and in conformity with the several Acts of Congress, in such case made and provided, Have Given and Granted, and by these presents Do Give and Grant, unto the said John Gerd. Beckman and to his heirs, the said tract above described: To Have and to Hold the same, together with all the rights, privileges, immunities, and appurtenances of whatsoever nature, thereunto belonging, unto the said John Gerd. Beckman and to his heirs and assigns, forever.

In Testimony Whereof, I, Martin VanBuren President of the United States of America, have caused these letters to be made Patent, and the Seal of the General Land Office to be hereunto affixed.

Seal

Given under my hand, at the City of Washington, the fourth day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty eight, and of the Independence of the United States the Sixty Third

Recorded Volume 19 Page 456 Entered for Record Dec: 16 1895 and Recorded Dec: 18 1895, in Book 64 Page 60 Records of Mercer County, Ohio.

J. E. Hamburger Recorder.

By the President: Martin VanBuren

By M. Markuduff Sec

Jas. S. Wilkins acting ad interim

Recorder of the General Land Office.

Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. ..... 189.... I, ... Commissioner of the General Land Office, do hereby certify that the annexed copy of patent is a true and literal exemplification from the record of this office. In testimony whereof I have hereunto subscribed my name, and caused the Seal of this office to be affixed, at the City of Washington, on the day and year above written.

..... Commissioner of General Land Office.

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DEED TO LAND
IN SEC. 27

The United States of America.

Certificate No. 9534

To all to whom these Presents shall come—Greeting:

Whereas, John Gerd: Beckman
of the County of Mercer, Ohio
has deposited in the General Land Office of the United States a Certificate of the Register of the Land Office, at Lima, whereby it appears that full payment has been made by the said John Gerd: Beckman according to the provisions of the Act of Congress of the twenty-fourth of April, one thousand eight hundred and twenty, entitled, "An Act making further provision for the sale of the Public Lands," for The North East quarter of Section Twenty seven, Township seven, South of Range two East, in the District of lands subject to sale at Lima O. Containing One Hundred and Sixty acres

according to the official plat of the survey of the said Lands, returned to the General Land Office by the Surveyor General, which said tract has been purchased by the said John Gerd: Beckman

Now Know Ye, that the United States of America, in consideration of the Premises, and in conformity with the several Acts of Congress, in such case made and provided, Have Given and Granted, and by these presents Do Give and Grant, unto the said John Gerd. V Beckman and to his heirs, the said tract above described: To Have and to Hold the same, together with all the rights, privileges, immunities, and appurtenances of whatsoever nature, thereunto belonging, unto the said John Gerd: Beckman and to his heirs and assigns, forever.

In Testimony Whereof, I, Martin Van Buren President of the United States of America, have caused these letters to be made Patent, and the Seal of the General Land Office to be hereunto affixed.

Seal

Given under my hand, at the City of Washington, the Fourth day of Sept, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty eight and of the Independence of the United States the Sixty third

By the President: Martin Van Buren
By Moses Badgley Jr.
Joseph J. Wilson
Recorder of the General Land Office.
at interim

Recorded Volume 19 Page 457, Entered for Record Nov: 26 1895 and Recorded Nov: 26 1895, in Book 64 Page 57, Records of Mercer County, Ohio.
F. O Hamburg Recorder.

Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. ..... 189.....

I, ... Commissioner of the General Land Office, do hereby certify that the annexed copy of patent and literal exemplification from the record of this office. In testimony whereof I have hereunto subscribed my name, and caused the Seal of this office to be affixed, at the City of Washington, on the day and year above written.

..... Commissioner of General Land Office.

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No.5266. PATENT DEED.

CERTIFICATE NO. 11,158

To all to whom these Presents shall come, Greeting: Whereas, John Gared Beckman, of Mercer County, Ohio, has deposited in the GENERAL LAND OFFICE of the United States, a Certificate of the REGISTER OF THE LAND OFFICE at Lima whereby it appears that full payment has been made by the said John Gared Beckman, according to the provisions of the Act of Congress of the 24th of April, 1820, entitled "An Act making further provisions for the sale of the Public Lands," for the whole fraction of Section thirty-three, in Township Seven South, of Range two East, in the District of Lands subject to sale at Lima, Ohio, containing eighty six acres, and fifty six hundredths of an acre, according to the official plat of the survey of the said Lands, returned to the General Land Office by the Surveyor General, which said tract has been purchased by the said John Gared Beckman.

NOW KNOW YE, That the United States of America, in consideration of the Premises, and in conformity with the several acts of Congress, in such case made and provided, HAVE GIVEN and GRANTED, and by these presents DO GIVE AND GRANT, unto the said John Gared Beckman, and to his heirs, the said tract above described: TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the same, together with all the rights, privileges, immunities and appurtenances of whatsoever nature, thereunto belonging, unto the said John Gared Beckman, and to his heirs and assigns forever. IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I, James K. Polk, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, have caused these Letters to be made PATENT, and the SEAL of the GENERAL LAND OFFICE to be hereunto affixed. GIVEN Under my hand, at the CITY OF WASHINGTON, the first day of June, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty-five, and of the INDEPENDENCE OF THE UNITED STATES the Sixty-ninth.

"B" (L.S.) BY THE PRESIDENT: James K. Polk,

By J. Knox Walker, Sec'y.

S.H. Laughlin, RECORDER of the General Land Office.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR.

GENERAL LAND OFFICE, Washington D.C. Jul 11 1927. I hereby certify that this photograph is a true copy of the patent record which is in my custody in this office.

1266011 (SEAL) M. P. Le Roy,

Recorder.

Filed July 19, 1927 at 4:30 P.M.

Recorded July 21, 1927

Fee 90¢

H. J. Hinders

Recorder.

COURTHOUSE RECORDS SHOW THAT J.G.BECKMAN BOUGHT THIS LAND IN APRIL 1838.

THIS PURCHASE NEEDED TO BE VERIFIED IN 1845, FOUR YEARS AFTER J. G. BECKMAN'S DEATH.

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THESE PAPERS WERE HAND WRITTEN BY J.G. BECKMAN'S SON, HENRY.

Estate of John G. Beckman Dec'd

Appt Hom. A.G. 1847 Final Settlement

Be it remembered that at a court of Common Pleas holden at the Court house in Licking Township Licking County Ohio on the twenty fourth day of April in the year of our Lord One thousand eight hundred and forty seven, before the Honorable Thomas Ewing President Judge and his associate judges of the court aforesaid The Honorable Robert Singer Joshua Hamilton and Daniel Simpson, in the matter of

Henry Beckman Admr.
of
John G. Beckman Dec'd

This day came into Court and made settlement of his administration as follows, the vouchers filed of record in the office of the clerk of this court—and the court find that the amount of assets that came into his hands as administrator

$491.95¼

Amount paid out on vouchers as follows from 1 to 24 inclusive $21.64
Amount of claims allowed not collected 2.64
Amount of per centage on $463.51 24.79

Leaving a balance in Administrators

$374.07

[illegible]

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Estate of John G. Beckman Decd

April 1st Term A.D. 1847 Final Settlement

The account current and vouchers of Henry Beckman Administrator John G. Beckman Decd Charges himself as follows

Amount of sale bill returned	$473.25
Cash on hand	11.72
Account on Henry Wenand	6.29
	$491.95½

Cantee C. R.

By amount paid out on vouchers as follows

No 1	James Grant	$ 5.00
" 2	Z. Richardson	2.13
" 3	H. Westerman	1.12½
" 4	J. J. Walker S. J.	16.21
" 5	Ab Giles	1.50
" 6	H Burns	2.25
" 7	B. Mucher account	14.87½
" 8	Henry Beckman	4.50
" 9	Henry Burns	
" 10	Bernard Roemer	10.77
" 11	Joseph Roemer	2.00
" 12	James Giles jun	1.00
" 13	J. M. Kelly Clerk	1.75
" 14	Vouchers (1841)	2.10
" 15	do— 1843	8.40
" 16	do— 1844	2.40
" 17	do— 1845	10.33
" 18	To H. Bell a note & agreement	100.00
" 19	Vouchers for collecting the &c.	3.00

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2-11

Estate of John G. Beckman dec'd

Apl Term A.D. 1947 Final Settlement

No 20	To Time for due account	$ 12.16
" 21	To Time for Services attending to about Estate	4.00
" 22	Cash on account	91.27
" 23	Ohio Widow allowance	3.00
" 24	To Clerk Recording bills and final Settlement	3.25
		$321.64

Said Administrator claims allowance for following claims Sale bill that cannot be collected, to wit

Judgment on Willis Nelson	$ 17.91
Balance on Judgt vs Scoenle Mercer	4.31
Balance of Judgment vs Dulla Jones & wife	4.42
Administrators per centage on $468.51 at 6	27.79
	374.07

Recording fee

State of Ohio
Academy

Henry Beckman being sworn says that the following numbers 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 14, 28 he knows from his own personal knowledge to be correct and just claims against the estate and that he paid the same as charged and that the items and claims not named above are not collectable owes for property bought at time of sale and the parties said the consideration good but are now insolvent and removed away and cannot now be collected without renewed response to the claim as he verily believes and that the foregoing account current he believes contains a true statement

Recorded Vol 14 Pg 1945

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 21st 1946

Henry Beckman

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TYPED VERSION OF JOHN G. BECKMAN'S ESTATE

Estate of John G. Beckman Dec.
April Term, A.D.1847 Final Settlement

Be it remembered that at a court of Common Pleas holden at the Court House in Celina, Mercer County, Ohio on the twenty fourth day of April in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty seven, before the Honorable Patrich G. Good President Judge and his associate judges of the county aforesaid The Honorable Robert Singer Justice Hamilton and David Simpson in the matter of

Henry Beckman Adm.
of
John G. Beckman Dec.

This day came into court and made settlement of his administration as follows. The vouchers filed at a former term of this court and the court find that the amount of assetts that came into his hands as administrator $491.95

Amount paid out on vouchers as follows from 1 to 29 inclusive	$321.64
Amount of claims returned not collected	$ 28.64
Amount of per centage on $463.31 at 6	$ 27.79
Leaving a balance in administators hands of	$378.07

One hundred thirteen dollars and eighty eighty cents on hold for distribution according to law. $113.88

Page 2

The account current and voucher of Henry Beckman administrator John G. Beckman Dec. charges himself as follows

Amount of sale bill returned	$473.25
Cash on hand	$ 11.72
Account on Henry Wenard	$ 6.99
	$491.95?

(Canten)? C. R.

By account paid out on vouchers as follows

No	1	James Grant	$ 3.00
"	2	Z. Richardson	2.03
"	3	H. Waterman	1.00
"	4	J.J. Walker J.P.	16.26
"	5	Job Gilen	1.50
"	6	H. Bermer	8.25
"	7	B. Mackeé account	14.87
"	8	Henry Beckman	4.50
"	9	Henry Bruns	
"	10	Bernard Romer	10.77
"	11	Joseph Romer	2.00
"	12	James Gillespie	1.00
"	13	J.W. Riley Clerk	1.75

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No	14	Treasurer (1841)	$ 2.10
"	15	do (1843)	8.40
"	16	do (1844)	8.40
"	17	do (1845)	10.33
"	18	To H. Bell a note and agreement	105.00
"	19	To same for collecting one (?)	5.00

"	20	To same for due account	12.46
"	21	To same for services as atty. about estate	4.00
"	22	(cedus)? on account	91.27
"	23	Paid widow allowance	3.00
"	24	To Clerk Recording bills and final settlement	3.25
			$321.64

Said Administrator claims allowance for following claims
Sale bill that cannot be collected to wit Judgement on
Willis Nieson 19.91
Balance on Judg vs Scoerale Mercer 4.31
Balance on Judgment vs Smith Jones (?) 4.42
Administrators per centage on $463.31 at 6 27.79
378.07

Recording 60

The State of Ohio
Mercer County

Henry Beckman being sworn says that the following vouchers 2,3,6,7,8,10,11,14,28 he knows from his own personal knowledge to be correct and just claims against the estate and that he paid the same as charged and that the items and claims not named above as not collectable was for property bought at time of sale and the parties and the consideration good but are now insolvent and removed away and cannot now be collected without renewed expense to the claim as he verily believes and this the foregoing account current he believes contains them as stated.

Henry Beckman

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 21st 1846
Benjamin (Sirga)? Deputy Clerk

Recorded Oct. 18, 1848

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CHILDREN OF FRANZ BECKMAN

1853, 6/25	Gerhard Henry Beckman	
1854, 9/29	Rebecca Beckman	died 4/16/1857
1856, 7/26	John Henry Beckman	
1857, 12/14	Joseph Beckman	died 12/13/1879

These are children from his first wife Catherine Borgerding.

1860, 1/21	Anna Maria	died 8/15/60
1861, 2/16	Bernard Francis	
1863, 6/8	Johanna Liseta (Lizzie)	
1865, 12/10	Fred George	
1868, 9/14	William Henry	
1871, 2/8	Maria Catherine	
1874, 3/14	Maria Catherine	
1878, 1/1	Johnnes Henry Sylvester	

These are children from his second wife, Catherine Willenburg.

In March of 1882, Franz and Catherine Beckman were in Douglas Township, Effingham County, in Illinois where they appeared before the Justice of the Peace of Effingham County to sign the deed transfer for Lot 8 in St. Henry.

The underlined names indicate what the family called each child.

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Henry and Elizabeth



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THE STATE OF OHIO, }
Hamilton County, } SS.

No.

Personally appeared before me the undersigned, CLERK OF THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS, within and for the County of Hamilton, Henry Beckman who being duly sworn, deposeth and saith that he is more than twenty-one years of age, and has no lawful wife living. And that Mary Elizabeth Bergerdick is more than eighteen years of age, and has no lawful husband living; that she is a resident of the County of Hamilton aforesaid; and that he knows of no legal objections to the marriage contemptated between him and the said Mary Elizabeth Bergerdick

And further this deponent saith not.

Sworn to and subscribed before me, this 8th day of February 1844 }

Henry Beckman

Jac W. Piatt
Clerk, Common Pleas.

By J. M. McMaster
Deputy.

MARRIED, on the 13th day of February A. D., 1844
Henry Beckman and Bargedirk
By John A Nasch
Minister of the Gospel

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CHAPTER II

SECOND GENERATION

THE FAMILY OF HENRY AND ELIZABETH BECKMAN

Gerhard Beckman
5/22/1783 - 2/28/1841
Rebecca Pilster
3/23/1792 - 9/11/1869

John Borgerding
9/17/1799 - -/-/1834
Catherine Siegmann Wolfkuhle
6/-/1801 - 11/4/1866

(Gerhard) Henry Beckman
6/6/1819 - 8/3/1868

Elizabeth Borgerding
8/15/1822 - 8/16/1887

married
Cinn., Ohio
2/13/1844
Fr. John Nash

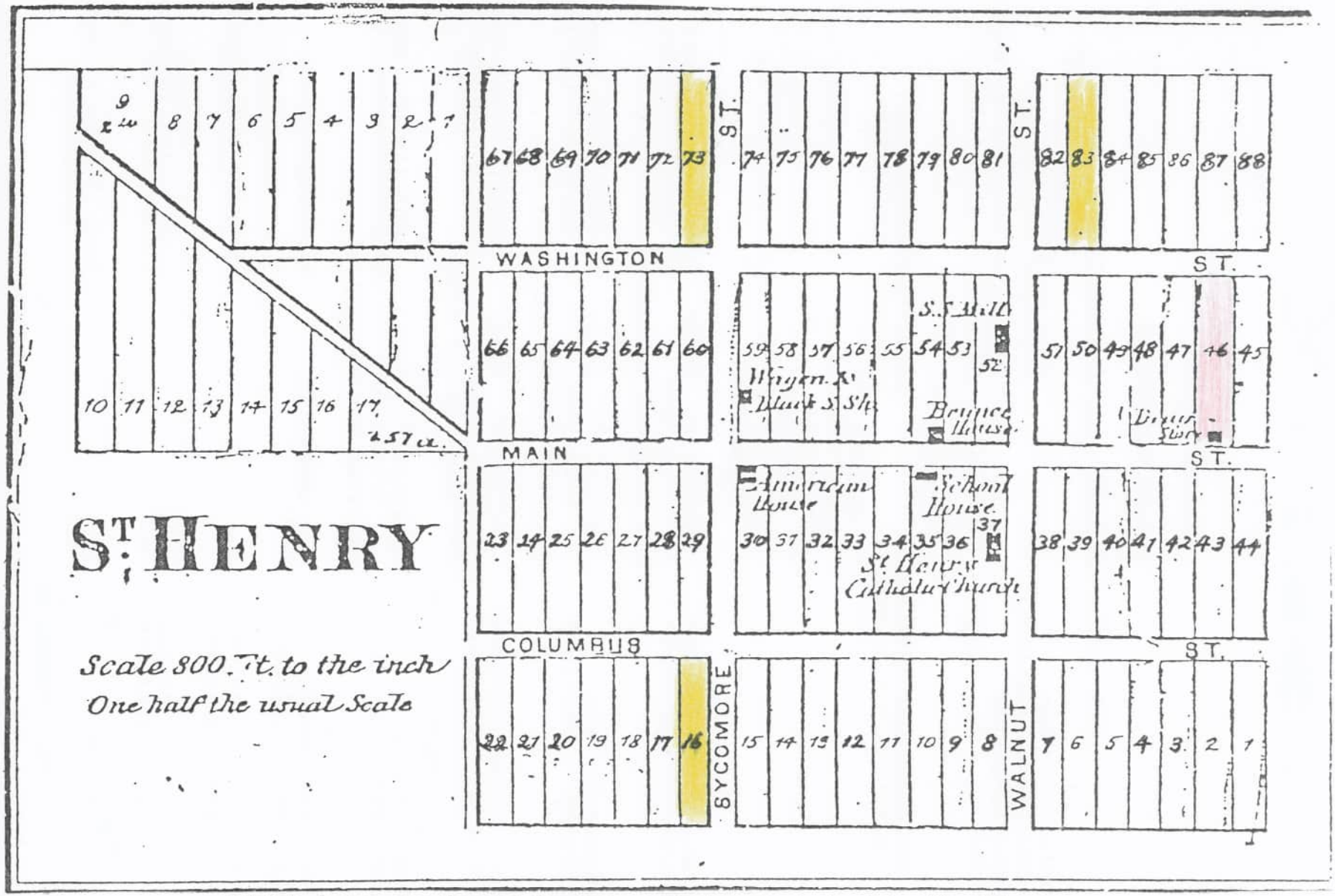
CHILDREN

John Gerhard Beckman 5/9/1845 - 4/27/1897	married St. Henry 7/13/1869 Fr. John Van den Brock	Catherine Romer 11/1/1849 - 9/10/1920
Rebecca Beckman 8/5/1846 - 6/13/1919	married St. Henry 2/26/1867 Fr. John Van den Brock	John Henry Romer 1/31/1840 - 1/5/1918
Mary Adelheid Beckman 1/6/1848 - 3/18/1902	married St. Henry 10/15/1868 Fr. John Van den Brock	Bernard Frank Romer 2/25/1845 - 12/18/1930
Frank Beckman 8/15/1849 - 5/13/1911	married St. Henry 9/13/1870 Fr. John Van den Brock	Margaret Herman 1/20/1854 - 2/26/1919
Catherine Beckman 4/11/1853 - 1/8/1882	unmarried	died 28yr.8mo.28days
Joseph Henry Beckman 4/21/1855 - 4/1/1857		died 1yr.11mo.20days
William Henry Beckman 1/27/1858 - 2/1/1858		died 4 days,10 hours
Clara Beckman 12/2/1859 - 12/16/1859		died 14 days,4 hours

The Family Bible of Henry and Elizabeth Beckman.
St. Henry Church Records, Death Cards, and Newspaper Obituaries.

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ST. HENRY PLAT MAP - 1876



First lots purchased by Henry Beckman: Lots 16, 73, 83.
Site of Henry Beckman's 1856 house and store: Lot 46.

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Chapter II

HENRY AND ELIZABETH

(Gerhard) Henry Beckman came to America in 1830 with his parents, Gerhard and Rebecca, and his four sisters. Henry was eleven at the time and his older sister, Anna Maria, was fourteen, Catherine was eight, Mary Adelheidt was six and Rebecca was three. His brother Franz would be born in America. Like his father before him, Henry was always known by his second name although his baptismal name was Gerhard Henry.

Family history says that Henry had only three months of schooling but he became proficient in both German and English. This education probably took place in Cincinnati where the family lived from early 1831 until the fall of 1832. Henry would have been 12 or 13 at that time. This would account for his mastery of English. After the family moved to Stallostown (Minster), Henry's formal education ended. Although the town had a school as early as 1833, Henry was probably considered too old to attend.(1) Young teenagers were needed to help clear the land.

Education was important to the Beckman family. Both of Henry's parents were literate for they signed their names in German script when they sold their Minster land in 1837. Henry's brother and his sisters could also read and write as no "x's" were used when they signed deed transfers after the death of their father in 1841.

While still a teenager, Henry worked on the construction of the Miami Erie Canal and on the Grand Reservoir at Celina which supplied water for the Canal. Both were dug with pick, shovel, and wheelbarrow. The reservoir, built from 1837 to 1845, was the largest man-made lake in the United States until the Hoover Dam was completed in 1936.(2) Henry used some of the cash he earned from this labor to buy his first land. On January 6, 1838, he bought three lots in the new town of St. Henry. The lots sold for $10.00 each and Henry bought lots 16, 73, and 83.(3) The town had been platted by Henry Romer the preceding year and the lots were advertized for sale in July, 1837, in a Catholic weekly newspaper, "The Wahrheitsfreund", which originated in Cincinnati.(4) Like many of the early settlers in Mercer County, Henry valued the ownership of land and he continued to buy and sell property all of his life.

1. Pilgrims All: Hoying, Louis, Rita, Fr. David C.P.P.S.
2. History of Van Wert and Mercer Counties, 1907.
3. See Plat Map of St. Henry on preceding page.
4. See advertisement on the following page.

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AUGUST 22, 1837, HENRY ROMER THE FOUNDER OF ST. HENRY, PLACED THIS AD IN A CINCINNATI NEWSPAPER.

St. Henry.

Unter diesem Namen wurde kürzlich eine Stadt (town) in Mercer County, Seven Township ausgelegt, Die Gegend ist meistens flach mit reichem und trockenem Boden. Die Stadt liegt ohngefähr 12 Meilen von St. Mary's, und eben so viele Meilen von Münster, von wo aus sie eine offene Strasse aufnimmt, und nach Wappaghkanneta führt, indessen auch eine Strasse, die von Cincinnati nach Greenville kömmt, durch unsere Stadt nach St. Mary's läuft. Ueberdies wird St. Henry zwischen zwei Kanäle zu stehen kommen ;— ungefähr 6 Meilen vom Canal, der von Indiana über St. Mary's laufen wird, und ungefähr 9 Meilen vom Miami-Canal, der nämlich von Cincinnati aus sich über Dayton, Troy, Piqua und St. Mary's erstrecken soll.

Alle diejenigen welche hierüber nähere Auskunft und die nähern Bedingungen zu wissen wünschen, werden ersucht bei dem Unterschreiber, in Cincinnati, Ecke der Sycamore und Abigail Strasse, nachzufragen.

Heinrich Römer.

Cincinnati, den 22ten August, 1837. (6——

Recently a town, under the name of St. Henry, was laid out in Mercer County, Seven Township. The area is mostly flat with rich and dry soil. The town lies about twelve miles from St. Marys and just as many miles from Minster, to which a public road leads. This road futher leads to Wapakoneta. This road is part of the road that leads from Cincinnati to Greenville. This particular road is the one that runs through our town and on to St. Marys. Also to be noted is the fact that St. Henry will come to be located between two canals - about six miles from the canal, which will run from Indiana through St. Marys, and about nine miles from the Miami Canal which of course is supposed to stretch from Cincinnati and through Dayton, Troy, Piqua, and St. Marys.

Anyone wishing to know further information and is in need of the closer assistance should write to the person whose name is signed - Henry Romer. His address is Cincinnati, corner of Sycamore and Abigail Street.

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In the fall of 1838, Henry moved with his parents to the land that his father had purchased in Granville Township just one mile east of St. Henry. In time, Henry would become one of this town's first businessmen and one of its outstanding citizens.(1)

Even though he never attended law school, Henry established a large law practice serving people throughout Mercer and the surrounding counties. His name can be found on many old wills in the Mercer County Probate Court Records. He was a Notary Public at an early age as he is listed as such on the deed transfer when his parents sold Lot 133 in Minster in 1838.

On January 11, 1838, 5 days after he bought his first land, and still only eighteen years old, Henry was appointed Justice of the Peace for Granville Township.(2) This was a very responsible position in those early days. Since travel was a considerable hardship, many legal matters were settled before the Justice of the Peace. His duties included, keeping the peace, trying misdemeanors, punishing violators of the law, issuing warrants, holding inquests, and performing marriages. Henry also held office of Township Clerk.(3)

Henry was 21 when his father, Gerhard, was killed while felling a tree. Two of his sisters were married, but Catherine, 19, Rebecca almost 14, and Franz only 6 remained at home with their mother. Gerhard died without a will and Henry was appointed the administer of his estate. He purchased his mother's 1/3 dower right to all the land owned by his father while the other 2/3's was divided equally among her 6 children. Almost all of this land was still covered with woods.

Henry married at the age of 24. The wedding took place in Cincinnati on February 13, 1844. His 21 year old bride was Elizabeth Borgerding who had emigrated alone from Oldenburg, Germany. She departed from Hamburg on the ship, "Westphalia", and arrived at the port of New Orleans on December 31, 1843, just six weeks before her marriage. She then traveled up the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers to Cincinnati. After their wedding, the young couple moved to the farm east of St. Henry where Henry's parents had lived, and it was here that six of their eight children were born.

It isn't known what Elizabeth thought of her new home in Ohio. Perhaps she felt as blessed as the man near Minster, who in 1845, wrote to his relatives back in Germany about his life in America. He listed reasons why he would not want to live again in Germany.

1. Sutton's History of Mercer County, 1882.
2. Ibid.
3. Bowen, History of Mercer County, 1896.

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"The farmers here do not have it as in Germany. I have in the house in which I dwell no other things. The animals I have in the barn and there I also have a threshing house. Here the speck is not smoked in the house. I have a little house to do that.

The new land here is all over-grown with heavy timber. Here there are trees that are five to six feet thick and seventy to sixty feet tall. Wood here costs nothing. One has to chop it down and burn it to make roads and to get the land ready (for agriculture). Here I would also like you to know that we don't eat any black bread. The bread we eat here we bake every day from winter wheat flour, and bacon and meat we have here in such quantity that we eat until we are full.

I would like to return to Germany to talk to you but not to stay. My taxes on the land and animals comes to $3.00 a year and I have to work two days a year on the post road. I close my letter and greetings to the people of Hagen."(1)

It is not known whether Elizabeth sent word home to her family, but we do know that her sister Mary Catherine, her two brothers, John and Henry, and her mother all came to America in 1852 and settled in Granville Township. Her father, a sailor, had died in Germany in 1834. Elizabeth's sister, Mary Catherine, married Franz Beckman, Henry's 18 year old brother.

Henry, who already owned his father's home farm in Section 26, wanted to purchased the rest of his father's land. He bought the shares held by his sisters but his brother Franz wanted to keep his 1/6 share. Two months before Franz married, Henry petitioned the court for the partition of the land, in effect forcing Franz to sell his share for the value set by the court. There were 206 and 56/100 acres involved and the court's value was set at $1030 making Franz's 1/6 share worth $171.67. This was $21.67 more than Henry paid to each of his sisters. Henry was required to pay Franz within the next two years with interest. The case was settled on March 10, 1853.

Henry and Elizabeth prospered. By 1853 they owned 546 acres of land scattered throughout Granville Township. Their home farm had 25 acres of cleared land for plowing, 20 acres of meadow land, and 35 acres still covered with trees.(2) Part of Henry's holdings included 40 acres of "berry land" near Cranberry Prairie which, when drained, would become some of the richest farmland in Mercer County. Henry also owned 9 town lots in St. Henry which by 1853 had grown to 11 log houses, 1 frame house, and a barn.(3)

1. See letter at the end of the chapter.
2. Tax Assessors Plat Book, 1853.
3. Ibid.

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The quality of life was qradually becoming less burdensome for these second generation settlers. Although the roads were still mud, they were much improved because all property owners had to donate two days of labor each year working on the roads. Provisions, which were now hauled on the Canal instead of overland, were more accessible and less costly. In 1852, Mass and the Sacraments became available on a weekly basis when the Society of the Precious Blood established the Himmelgarten Convent just two miles west of town. Soon the parishioners had thoughts of building a new and larger church.

Like his parents before him, Henry was active in the parish. In 1854, he became superintendent of the building of St. Henry's second church. This brick church stood on the southwest corner of Main and Walnut Streets where the priest house stands today. It was twice the size of the log church. The parish had grown to 41 families but the town still had only 13 houses. Most of the parishioners lived on the surrounding farms. Henry served as the church secretary and treasurer for many years and his signature is on many of St. Henry's early church records. It was in this church that the children of Henry and Elizabeth were married.

In 1855 the Beckmans decided to move to town. Although Henry now owned 5 lots on Columbus Street and 4 lots on Washington Street, he wanted to build on Main Street.(1) On July 20, 1855, he bought Lot 46 from his brother, Franz, and the following year he erected a large two story frame house there. It stood on the north side of Main Street, the second lot east of John Street. This fine frame house had a stone foundation and a cellar. Best of all, Henry and Elizabeth had iron stoves to heat their new home. This was a vast improvement over a log cabin with a fireplace.

Henry also built a storeroom on the west side of his house where he sold patent medicines, books and notions, and practiced his trade as silversmith.(2) This storeroom would later serve as the post office when Henry was appointed postmaster in 1866. Henry was the second person to fill this position. A post office had been established in St. Henry in 1850. Before that time each individual had to pick up his own mail at the nearest area post office which originally was located at Minster. Often it took days, weeks, or even months for people to get their mail. Since letters and newspapers were the settlers main contact with the rest of the world, a local post office was an important addition to the town.

Henry, whose law practice made him one of the town's earliest businessman, became one of its most successful citizens

1. Columbus Street Lots: 3, 16, 20, 21, 22.
   Washington Street Lots 71, 73, 76, 87.
2. 1860 Census Records.

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THE HOME OF HENRY AND ELIZABETH BECKMAN
BUILT IN 1856
THE TWO-STORY REAR WING WAS AN ADDITION
ADDED BY FRED TOBE WHO PURCHASED THE
PROPERTY IN 1903



Henry's store stood to the left side of his house.

In 1907 the store was moved to the north end of this lot and made into a house facing Washington St.

THIS PICTURE WAS TAKEN IN 1930

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when he opened his store in 1856. That year his personal property had the highest value in the town.(1) This would be true for the next eleven years and then he would be surpassed by several other St. Henry businessmen.

The marriage of Henry and Elizabeth was blessed with eight children. The first five grew to adulthood but the last three died in infancy. The year 1857 was a particularly dire year for the family and especially for Elizabeth. On April 1, death claimed her sixth child, Joseph, who was almost 2 years old. Just 15 days later she had to comfort her sister, Mary Catherine, when her 2 1/2 year old daughter, Rebecca, died. That December Mary Catherine herself died after giving birth to her fourth child.

The new year brought still more sadness. In January 1858, Henry and Elizabeth had their seventh child, William Henry, who survived only 4 days. In December of the following year, when Henry was 40 and Elizabeth 37, their last child, Clara, was born. This little girl survived for only 14 days.

Henry and Elizabeth's first born child was a son, John Gerhard. He was born in the spring of 1845 and was named for his parental grandfather. John G. received his first schooling in St. Henry where he was taught both German and English. At the age of fourteen he was sent to Dayton to attend the Dayton Academy. This was like a high school but it also trained students to become teachers.(2) After completing his studies, he returned to St. Henry where he was engaged as a school teacher, a position he held for 22 years.

John G. was 16 when the Civil War began and 20 when it was over, but like most of the young men in southern Mercer County, he did not join in the war; however his uncle, Henry Borgerding, served in the Union army for three years. This area's German settlers were "Peace Democrats". There already was a large colony of free blacks in the county at Carthagena, and many of the Germans were afraid that freed slaves from the South would come North and increase the size of this black settlement.(3) Although John G. never went to war, his son Clemens fought in World War I and was killed just a few days before the armistice was signed.

On August 3, 1868, at the age of 49, Henry Beckman died of lung disease. He and Elizabeth had been married 24 1/2 years. John G., who was 23, took over the family business. Rebecca, the oldest daughter, had already married and Mary Adelheid's wedding was only two months away. Frank, the younger son, was 19 and he

1. Personal Property Taxes, Mercer County Courthouse.
2. Dayton and Montgomery County Library, Dayton, Ohio.
3. Pilgrims All: Hoying, Louis, Rita, Fr. David C.P.P.S.

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Catherine, the youngest daughter, was just 15. About six months after Henry's death, Elizabeth sold the home farm in Sec. 26 to Henry Rengers for $740. She signed the deed with an "x" as she never learned to read or write.

The next spring, on April 5, 1869, three months before John G.'s wedding, his mother bought a log house on the northwest corner of Main and John Street. Elizabeth moved there with her unmarried children, Frank and Catherine, allowing John G. and his future wife to live in the large frame house that Henry had built thirteen years earlier. Elizabeth lived in this log house until 1887 when she died of a hemorrhage. Five years earlier, in 1882, her unmarried daughter, Catherine, died. She was 28.

John G. was 24 when he married in July, 1869. His bride, Catherine Romer, was the 19 year old daughter of Bernard and Agnes Romer. Bernard Romer and his brothers, Henry and John Joseph, were three of the original settlers in St. Henry and the founders of the town. They came in October of 1838 about six months after the Beckmans came to the area. The three brothers possessed little wealth and had walked most of the way from Cincinnati to Mercer County.(1) The wedding of John G. Beckman and Catherine Romer was the third tie between these two prominent St. Henry families. Their union was blessed with 12 children, however 2 would die shortly after birth and 3 more would die between the ages of 1 and 2 1/2 years.

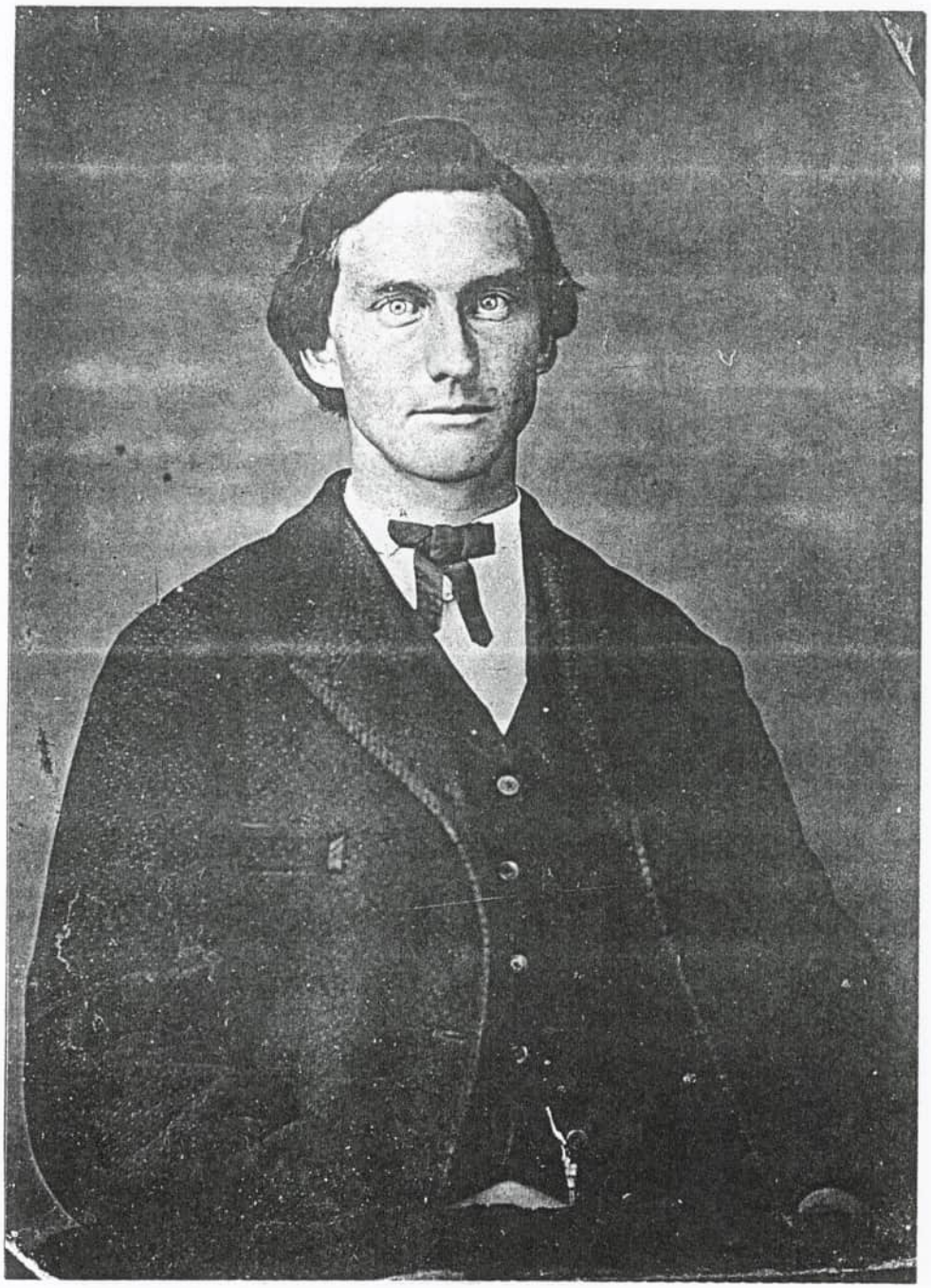
Like his father before him, John G. was a successful business man. His store sold sewing machines as well as books, and notions. He was a dealer in patent medicines and was a watchmaker and jeweler.(2) Although the town was small, it didn't escape crime completely since John G.'s store was robbed in October of 1895.(3)

Besides teaching school, John G. was also appointed postmaster in July 1871 and held that position for 19 years. He was the president of St. Henry's Building and Loan and of its gas company. He also served as Township Clerk for 20 years and was a notary public for 30 years.

In 1896 John G. ran unopposed as the Democratic candidate for Probate Judge, and in December of that year he moved his family to Celina. Before moving, he sold his business, but not his buildings, to his brother-in-law, J. H. Romer, the husband of his sister, Rebecca. Three years later, at the turn of the century, J. H. Romer sold this store to his nephew, Henry A. Beckman, the oldest son of John G.'s younger brother, Frank.

1. Scranton's History of Mercer County, 1907.
2. Bowen's History of Mercer County, 1896.
3. Der Bote, Oct. 10, 1895.

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John Gerhard Beckman
5/9/1845 - 4/27/1897

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Catherine Romer Beckman
11/1/1849 - 9/10/1920

Judge Beckman began his term on February 9, 1897, but served only 2 1/2 months before his death from Bright's disease. He died on April 27, 1897. His widow, Catherine, and her children remained in Celina where Catherine died on September 10, 1920. She is buried in Celina's Catholic Cemetery.

Rebecca, the eldest daughter of Henry and Elizabeth, was the first of their children to marry. On February 26, 1867, at the age of 20, she was wed to John Henry Romer, who was born in January, 1840. He had the distinction of being the first male child to be born in the new town of St. Henry.(1) His parents, John Joseph and Mary, came to St. Henry in 1838 and purchased land on the east edge of town. Their house, located on the northeast corner of St.Rts. 118 and 119, faced west and overlooked the Main Street of the town. Here they started one of St. Henry's earliest businesses when they opened a store in their house in 1840. When J. Henry was a boy, he helped his father on the farm and in the store, and as a young man, hauled cured meat and wool to Cincinnati and returned with merchandise for the store. On one of these trips, as he neared Ansonia, he sold his entire load including the hat on his head which he had purchased in Cincinnati(2). This necessitated another three or four day trip back to Cincinnati for a second load of goods for his father's store. In 1854, his parents bought Lot 53 in St. Henry and moved their store into town.

J. H. Romer was a very enterprising young man. At the age of 27, the first spring after his marriage, he started his own store, taking over from his father. He operated this store for the next 37 years. In 1893 he started the St. Henry Building and Loan in his store building and he and his brother-in-law, John G. Beckman, were its first officers. This Building and Loan remained an active business until the mid 1940's. J. Henry's business was so successful that in 1889 he built a new, two story, brick store on the west 1/2 of Lot 52. This large building, which still stands across the street from the church, was as fine as any store in Mercer County.

When the First National Bank was founded in Celina on January 1, 1901, J. Henry Romer was the only out-of-town director. This experience encouraged him to start his own bank in St. Henry. On January 5, 1905, he opened his bank, renting space in the west half of the store of his nephew, Henry A. Beckman.(3) That same year he built a new brick bank on the east side of his 1889 store, moving there toward the end of the year.

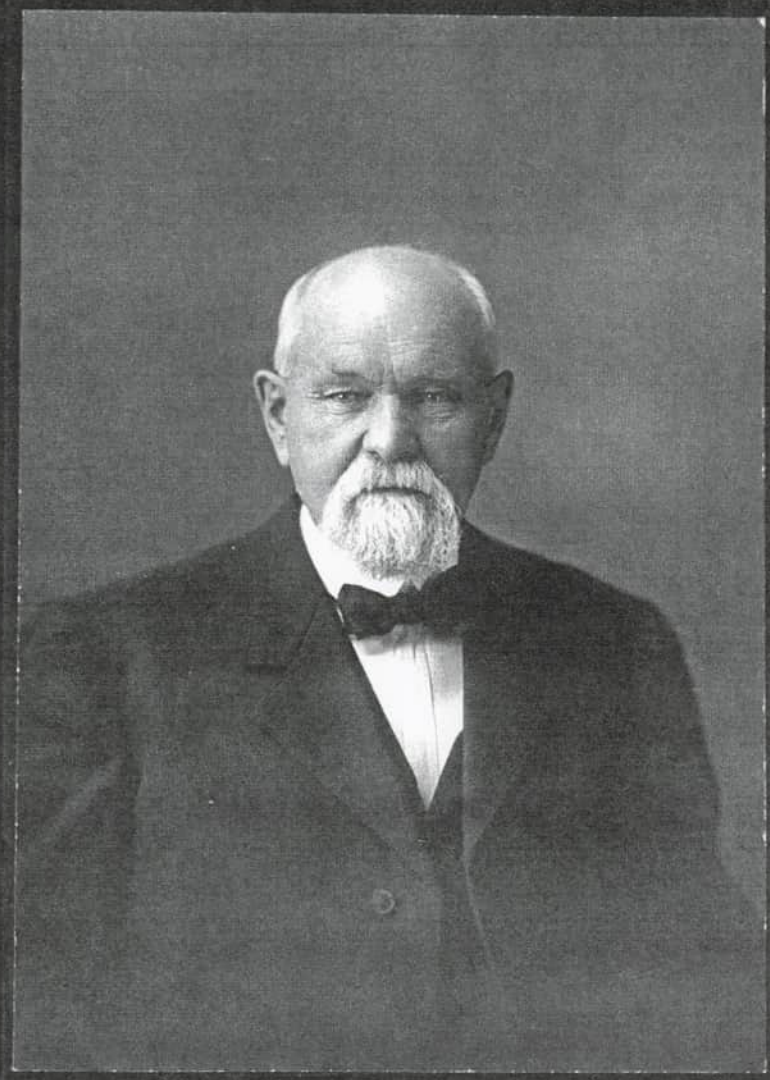
Rebecca and J. Henry had 8 children. The first six were boys. Their second child, Herman, died at eleven months, and

1. Scranton's History of Mercer County, 1907.
2. Horse and Buggy Tales, Bronsart H. Gilberg.
3. Scranton's History of Mercer County, 1907.

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Rebecca Beckman Romer
8/5/1846 - 6/13/1919



John Henry Romer
1/31/1840 - 1/5/1918

A. W. Cron

A. W. Cron

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their sixth child, an unnamed son, died the day he was born. When Rebecca and J. Henry were both in their 40's, they had two little girls. Rebecca was 43 and J. Henry was 49 when their last child was born.

In 1898 the Romers began construction on a beautiful Queen Anne house on the northwest corner of Main and Walnut Streets. While the DeCurtins Brothers were erecting St. Henry's third church in 1895-1897, J. Henry got to know them well and he asked them to design his house. This was the first house in St. Henry to be built from architectural plans. It had running water and a bathroom. The supply tank for the gravity flow water system was located in the attic and the water had to be pumped by hand from a well outside.(1)

Rebecca and J. Henry were the first couple in the Beckman line to celebrate their Golden Wedding Anniversary. They celebrated this coveted goal in February, 1917. J. Henry died eleven months later, but Rebecca lived for two more years.

Mary Adelheid Beckman, the third child of Henry and Elizabeth, was named for her aunt and baptismal sponsor, Mary Adelheid Goke. All the living children of Henry and Elizabeth bore the names of members of Henry's family, although some of these names were also part of Elizabeth's lineage.

John Gerhard, for his father - Rebecca, for his mother
Mary Adelheid, for his sister - Frank, for his brother
Catherine, for his sister.

This repetition of family names was a custom brought from Germany that would begin to disappear in the next generation.

When Mary Adelheid was 20, she married Bernard Frank Romer, Jr., the only son of Bernard and Agnes Romer. An early newspaper article states, "On October 15, 1868, he was united in marriage to Miss Mary Beckman in the Catholic Church at St. Henry."(2) Except for the year, these very same words would apply to my own wedding exactly 81 years later.(3)

Bernard Jr., was the cousin of J. Henry Romer, Rebecca's husband, and the brother of Catherine, who would marry John G. Beckman, the following summer.

Bernard was born in 1845 in a log cabin built on Lot 42 in St. Henry. This cabin had been raised in one day just as soon as the three Romer brothers and their families arrived in October of

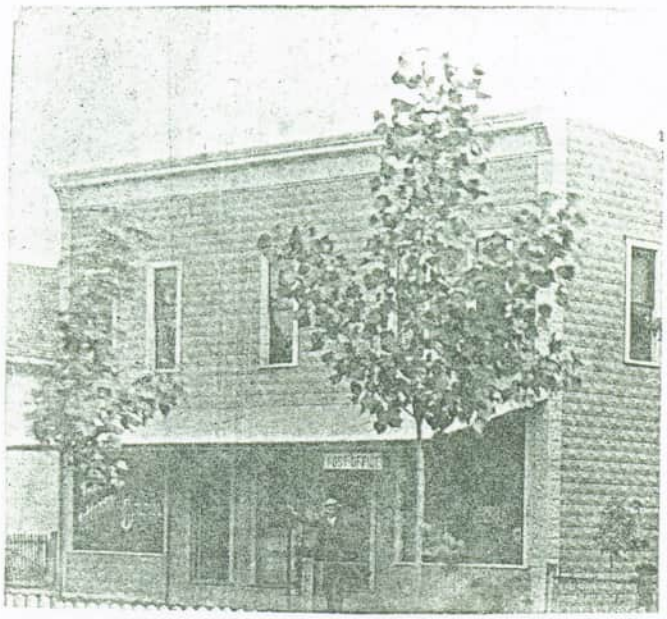
1. Notes of Dr. Edward Bernard, grandson of Rebecca and J.Henry.
2. Coldwater Chronicle, December 1930.
3. Mary Beckman,the author of this account, married Thomas Niekamp on Oct. 15, 1949 in the Catholic Church at St. Henry.

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JOSEPH ROMER'S 1840 HOUSE AND STORE. IT STOOD ON THE EAST EDGE OF ST. HENRY IN SEC. 22. THIS WAS THE BOYHOOD HOME OF J.H. ROMER.



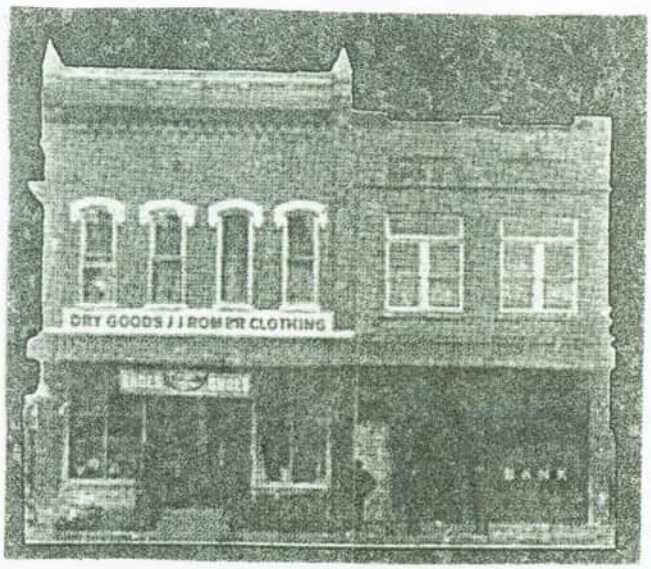
J.H. ROMER OPENED HIS FIRST BANK IN THE WEST HALF OF H.A. BECKMAN'S 1903 STORE ON LOT 50.



JOSEPH ROMER'S STORE, BUILT IN TOWN ON LOT 53 IN 1854. IT BECAME THE STORE OF J.H. AND HIS WIFE, REBECCA, IN 1867.



BELOW LEFT - J.H. ROMER'S 1889 STORE.
BELOW RIGHT - J.H. ROMER'S 1905 BANK.





THE 1898 QUEEN ANNE HOUSE BUILT BY REBECCA AND J.H. ROMER.
TO THE LEFT IS J.H. ROMER'S 1905 BANK.

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1838 and it was their only shelter during their first winter. An early family story relates that during the first winter, while the men traveled to Cincinnati for supplies, the women were left in this crude shelter with hides covering the window and door openings. One night a wolf entered and spent the night lying before the fire in the fireplace. He left in the morning without harming anyone.(1)

In 1842 Bernard's parents built the first frame house in the area. It stood on Lot 39 and had hand-hewed beams. The inside walls were plastered with mud and straw. They started a store in one of their rooms,"all in a kitchen cupboard". It was stocked with a few staple items and jugs of whiskey. People would stop in and buy a drink.(2)

Bernard, a man of many talents, was known as "Yankee Ben" by everyone and is referred to by that name even today. He was a successful trader in horses and was considered the best sales crier in the southern part of the county. Perhaps that is how he acquired his nick-name. Although his education was limited, he was a well-known and well-respected man. He was strictly honest and his word was as good as his note.(3) At the age of 14 he acquired his first farm near St. Peter and he continued to purchase land, eventually owning 400 acres both inside and outside of Mercer County.(4) In the 1900 Census, Bernard is listed as a capitalist, and for a time he had an interest in the lumber business in both St. Henry and Coldwater.

Mary Adelheid and Bernard had eight children, losing one son in infancy at the age of six months. In 1884, they moved the frame house that was built by Bernard's parents one lot to the east and on Lot 39 they erected a two story, 12 room, brick house. This impressive home was the finest house yet built in St. Henry. The original frame house was made into a double and was used until 1926 when it was demolished.(5)

Mary Adelheid died in the spring of 1902 at the age of 54. She and Bernard had shared 33 1/2 years of marriage. Her husband survived for 28 more years, dying a week before Christmas in 1930. He was ill during the last eight years of his life, often needing a wheel chair, and was confined to bed for the last year before his death.(6)

Frank Beckman, the youngest son of Henry and Elizabeth, is the subject of the next chapter.

1. Notes from Esther Bruns, granddaughter of Bernard and Mary A.
2. Ibid.
3. Coldwater Chronicle, December 1930.
4. Scranton's History of Mercer County, 1907.
5. Notes from Esther Bruns, granddaughter of Bernard and Mary A.
6. Coldwater Chronicle, December 1930.

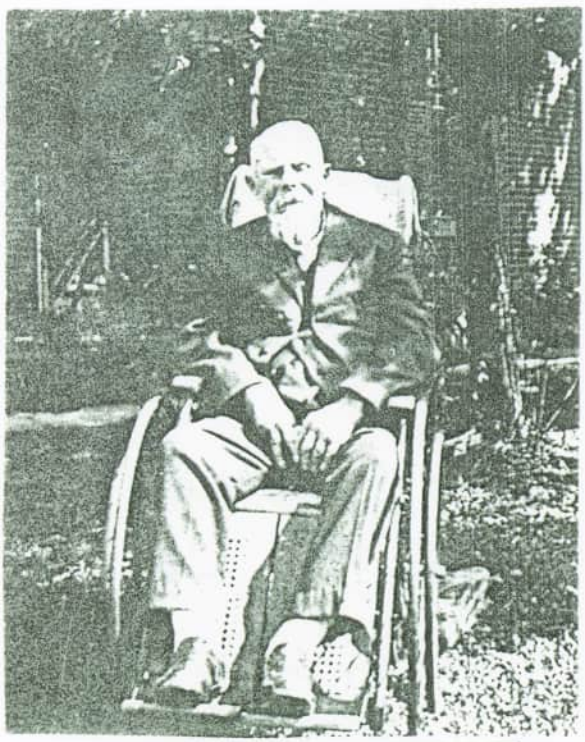
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Mary Adelheid Beckman Romer
1/6/1848 - 3/18/1902

THE 1884 HOME OF
MARY ADELHEID AND BERNARD ROMER





Bernard Frank Romer
2/25/1845 - 12/18/1930



1842 FRAME HOUSE OF BERNARD ROMER, SR.
THE CHILDHOOD HOME OF BERNARD ROMER,
HUSBAND OF MARY ADELHEID BECKMAN.
THE CHILDHOOD HOME OF CATHERINE ROMER,
WIFE OF JOHN G. BECKMAN.

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This house was originally the store building of G. Henry and Elizabeth Beckman. The store stood next to the west side of the Beckman's large two story house. The house and store were built in 1856 on Lot 46 at 431 East Main Street. The gable end of the store faced Main Street.

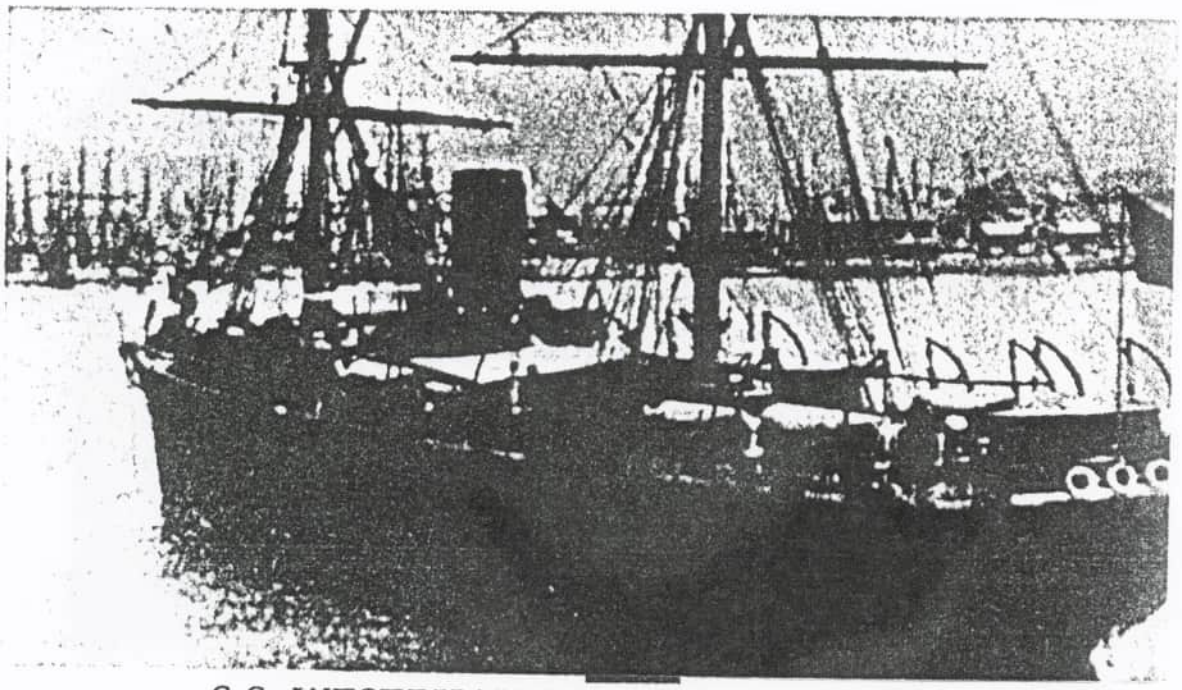
This store served as St. Henry's post office during the years from 1866 to 1868 when G. Henry Beckman was the postmaster, from 1871 to 1890 when his son, John G. Beckman was postmaster, and from 1900 to 1903 when his grandson, H.A, Beckman, served as deputy postmaster. The post office was moved in 1903 to 341 East Main Street and again in 1913 to 121 East Main Street all while H.A. Beckman was postmaster. He served until 1922.

Joe Naseman bought the store building in 1907 and moved it to the north end of Lot 46 at 432 East Washington Street. He made it into a house with the side of the building becoming the front of the house. He added the dormer and the front porch. The garage to the left was added much later.

On October 23, 1931, Albert Beckman, the great grandson of G. Henry Beckman, bought this house and lived here with his family until July, 1945. Albert Beckman was also one of St. Henry's postmasters. He served from 1934 to 1946.

Lori and Doug Speck bought this house in 2005 . Lori is the great, great, great, great granddaughter of G. Henry Beckman.

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S.S. WESTPHALIA, Hamburg American Line
Courtesy Steamship Historical Society Collection, Univ. of Baltimore Library

Elizabeth Borgerding came to America on the sailing ship, "Westphalia". She left from the port of Hamburg, Germany and arrived in New Orleans on December 31, 1843.

The ship carried 177 passengers and Elizabeth was listed as number 88. Her age was given as 21, her occupation was listed as servant, her destination was Ohio, and she had one trunk.

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List of Passengers on Board the Ship Hedyhilia, Capt H. Hasselt.

No	Names	Age		Occupation	Country & Place of Last Residence	Their Luggage
54	Ant. Tiemann	31	—	Sailor	Ohio	1 Cop
55	Mlle. Meyer	47	—	Farmer	Hanover	
56	Maria " Louise	50	—	"	"	
57	Heinrich " Jan	17	—	"	"	
58	Christian "	9	6	"	"	3 "
59	Caythia " Daughter	8	—	"	"	
60	Louise "	3	9	"	"	
61	Christian "	1	6	"	"	
62	F. H. Ohlendorf	31	—	"	"	
63	Helene " Louise	30	—	"	"	
64	Caroline " Daughter	8	—	"	"	
65	Louise "	5	—	"	"	3 "
66	Christian "	—	9	"	"	
67	H. Ohlmann	24	—	"	Ohio	1 Trunk
68	H. Kuster	26	—	Smith	Ohio	1 Trunk
69	Chr. Lubking	18	2	Labourer	Hanover	1 Box
70	H. Hardenjost	20	—	Farmer	"	1 "
71	Heinr. Lubking	18	—	"	"	1 "
72	Chr. Hornemann	23	—	"	"	1 "
73	Heinr. Ellmeyer	21	10	"	"	1 "
74	H. Hardenjost	21	—	"	"	1 "
75	Hch. Schierenjost	50	—	Farmer	"	1 "
76	Joh. Schlenker	50	—	Farmer	Hanover	2 Cases
77	Margareth " Louise	17	—	"	"	
78	Wilhelmine " Daughter	11	—	"	"	
79	Johann " Son	9	—	"	"	1 Box & Bundle
80	Jan Margareth " Daughter	6	—	"	"	
81	Franciscus " "	3	—	"	"	
82	Heinr. Hoeker	29	—	"	"	
83	Margareth " Sister	24	—	Maid	Ohio	1 "
84	Heinr. Runkel	27	—	Farmer	"	
85	Maria Anna " Wife	23	—	Weaver	"	1 "
86	Ernst Lemmer	18	—	Linenmaker	"	
87	Linda " Sister	21	—	Weaver	"	
88	Elizabeth Bringhoff	21	—	"	"	2 "
89	Heinr. Hellinghoff	19	—	Labourer	"	1 "
90	Caspar Bruckmann	44	9	Peasant	"	1 " 1 Trunk
91	Gerhard Lindemeyer	33	—	"	"	
92	Caspar	29	—	"	"	
93	Ernst Stuke	20	2	Farmer	"	3 "
94	Ernst Steman	50	—	Carpenter	Ohio	1 "
95	H. L. Ruthe	26	—	"	Ohio	
96	Hyatte " Son (Daughter)	5	—	"	"	
97	Louise "	4	—	"	"	2 "
98	Maria Bohlmann	28	—	Labourer	"	1 "
99	Heinr. Bohlmann	42	—	Merchant	Ohio	1 "
100	Heinr. Koppen	23	—	Labourer	"	1 "
101	Ernst Bodecker	26	—	Carpenter	"	1 "
102	Ernst Koppen	50	—	"	"	
103	Catharine " Wife	33	—	"	"	
104	Maria " Daughter	11	8	"	"	
105	Maria "	7	—	"	"	2 "
106	Charles "	4	—	"	"	
107	Joh. Gerh. " Son	1	6	"	"	

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Court case brought by Henry Beckman against his brother, Franz, for the partition of all the land owned by their father excluding Section 26 which Henry already owned.

Deed Bk. R. pg. 218

26427 + 33-7-2

315

Sheriff of Mercer Co. To Henry Beckman Deed

To all to whom these presents Shall Come Greeting

Whereas on the eight day of June A.D. one thousand eight hundred and fifty two Henry Beckman of the County of Mercer and State of Ohio filed his certain petition in the Court of Common Pleas of the County of Mercer against Francis Beckman demanding partition of certain Real Estate hereinafter described and whereas Said premises were Said upon Said petition that the Commissioners appointed by Said Court to make partition of Said estate Should report that partition of the Same could not be made without Manifest Injury and that the Value thereof was One thousand and thirty dollars and whereas at the December term of Said Court A.D. One thousand eight hundred and fifty two the Said report of Said Commissioners was approved and confirmed by Said Court and the Said Henry Beckman electing to take Said estate at the Valuation thereof by Said Commissioners and Securing paid to Francis Beckman the other party in interest his full proportion of the Said appraised Value the Said Court did adjudge Said estate to the Said Henry Beckman and did order the Said Sheriff to execute A deed in fee Simple for the Same to the Said Henry Beckman all which will more fully appear reference being had to the Records of Said Court

Now therefore I Samuel C Snider Sheriff of the County of Mercer in the State of Ohio in consideration of the premises and by Virtue of the powers in me Vested by Said Order by these presents grant Bargain Sell Alien and Convey unto the Said Henry Beckman and which is described as following to Wit: the West half of the North West quarter of Section No twenty Six the West half of the North East quarter of Section twenty Seven and the West Piece of fractional Section No thirty three all of Township No Seven South Range two East in the County of Mercer and State of Ohio Containing two Hundred Six & 56/100 Acres with all and Singular the appurtenances To have and to Hold Said premises to him the Said Henry Beckman and to his heirs and assigns forever

In testimony Whereof I have hereto Set my hand and Seal as Sheriff as aforesaid this fourth day of January A.D. Eighteen hundred fifty three

Signed Sealed and Acknowledged S. C. Snider

in the presence of Sheriff of Mercer Co

James Watson Riley

W. G. Blocher

The State of Ohio }
Mercer County } ss On this fourth day of January in the year of Our Lord one thousand eight hundred and fifty three before me the undersigned a Probate Judge within and for Said County personally appeared Samuel C. Snider and Acknowledged the Signing and Sealing of the foregoing deed as his official act and deed Sheriff of the County of Mercer

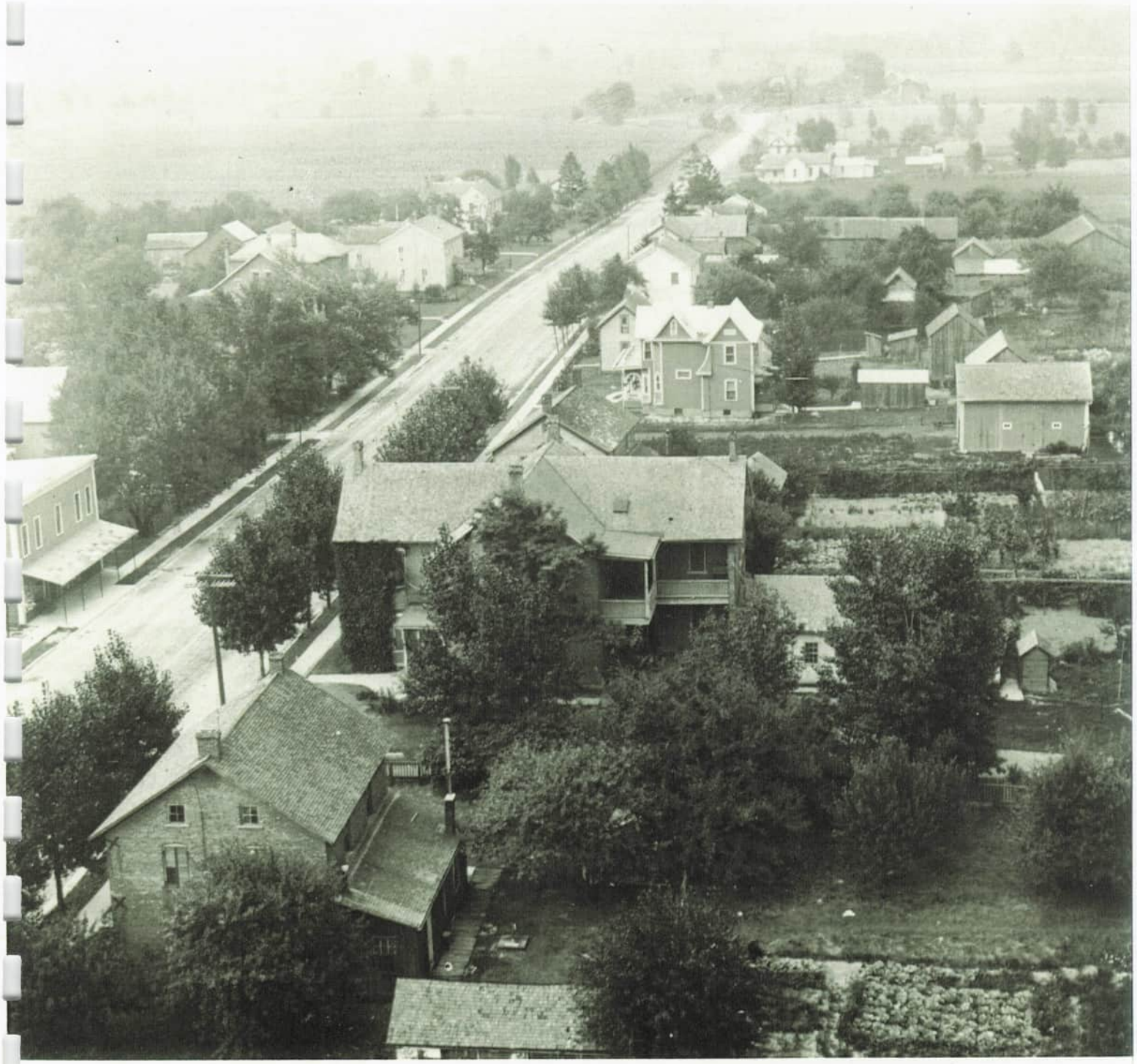
In testimony Whereof I have hereunto Set My hand and affixed my official Seal at My office in Celina the day and year above written

Seal

W. G. Blocher
Probate Judge

Entered for Record January 21st /53 and Recorded January 24/53

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THIS PICTURE TAKEN FROM THE ST. HENRY CHURCH STEEPLE IN 1914, LOOKS DOWN EAST MAIN STREET. THE BRICK HOUSE IN THE LEFT CORNER STOOD ON THE SE CORNER OF MAIN AND WALNUT STREETS. IT WAS BUILT BY BERNARD ROMER SENIOR IN 1872 AND WAS DEMOLISHED IN 1935. NEXT IS THE 1884 TWELVE ROOM HOUSE OF BERNARD ROMER JUNIOR (YANKEE BEN). NOTE THE TWO STORY VERANDA PORCH TO THE REAR. THE ROOF OF BERNARD ROMER SENIOR'S FIRST HOUSE BUILT IN 1842 CAN BE SEEN JUST BEYOND HIS SON'S HOME. THIS 1842 HOUSE WAS TORN DOWN IN 1926. THE NEXT HOUSE IS A VICTORIAN GOTHIC BUILT BY WILLIAM SCHWIETERMAN IN 1909. IT IS FOLLOWED BY A SMALL HOUSE THAT STANDS CLOSE TO THE STREET. THIS HOUSE WAS BUILT IN 1905 BY HERMAN TUMBUSCH. THE NEXT BUILDING, A LARGE TWO STORY HOUSE, WAS BUILT BY FRED ATHMER IN 1867. IT WAS BUILT ON THE SITE OF THE FIRST LOG CABIN ERECTED IN ST. HENRY. IMMEDIATELY ABOVE THE ATHMER HOUSE IS THE PEAK OF HENRY STEINLAGE'S 1856 HOUSE AND THE LONG HORIZONTAL ROOF OF HIS 1885 TANNERY. BOTH STAND CLOSE TO THE STREET. THE TANNERY WAS MOVED TO SYCAMORE STREET IN 1938 AND MADE INTO A RESIDENCE. THE HOUSE WAS DEMOLISHED IN 2009. NEXT IS A SMALL HOUSE NEAR THE TOP OF THE PICTURE THAT WAS BUILT BY ELIZABETH ROMER IN 1904. BEYOND THE ROOF OF THE ROMER HOUSE IS THE SECOND STORY OF THE 1909 HOUSE BUILT BY LAWRENCE FRANCK.

IN THE CLUSTER OF TREES AT THE VERY END OF MAIN STREET IS THE HOUSE OF JOSEPH ROMER WHICH WAS BUILT IN THE EARLY 1840'S. IT FACED WEST AND LOOKED DIRECTLY DOWN MAIN STREET. THIS HOUSE WAS DEMOLISHED IN 1962.

ON THE NORTH SIDE OF MAIN STREET IN THE MIDDLE LEFT OF THE PICTURE, IS THE 1903 COMBINATION HOUSE AND STORE OF HENRY A. BECKMAN WHO OPERATED A STOVE STORE AND A TIN SHOP IN THE EAST HALF OF THE BUILDING. HE WAS THE POSTMASTER AND POST OFFICE WAS LOCATED IN HIS STORE. HIS UNCLE, J.H. ROMER, OPENED THE ST. HENRY BANK IN THE WEST HALF IN 1905. THE ROOF OF DR. MORY'S 1905 HOUSE CAN BE SEEN NEXT TO THE STORE. THE GABLED END OF ALBERT BRUNS' 1922 HOUSE AND A SMALL PORTION OF WILLIAM ROMER'S 1908 HOUSE CAN BE SEEN ABOVE THE TREES. NEXT IS THE LARGE TWO STORY WHITE HOUSE BUILT BY GERHARD HENRY BECKMAN IN 1856. IT WAS DEMOLISHED IN 1972. THE FOLLOWING HOUSE WAS BUILT BY HENRY GOTTEMOLLER IN 1898 AND THE FINAL HOUSE, PARTIALLY HIDDEN BY A PINE TREE, WAS BUILT IN 1867 BY ANTON LAMMERS AND TORN DOWN IN 1957.

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Hoying Family Acquires Letter Written in 1845

A copy of the following previously unpublished letter written in 1845 to relatives in Vechta and Hagen by an early settler from a Munster, Ohio address has recently come in possession of the Louis A. Hoying Family through the courtesy of Franz Bragelman, an attorney and historian of Vechta, Oldenburg. The existance of this letter was discovered several months ago and was forwarded by Bragelman in the interest of mutual historical scholarship. The contents are very helpful understanding the social conditions of the early period of German colonization in the local area.

Sckalbe County, Ohio
5 March 1845

Dear Brother, Sister, Brother in law and Sister in law,

We received your letter from the year 1843 and from it understand that you are very healthy and happy and that you through your children have become free of the land obligations. Or did you become free in principle only. We have debated this amongst us here. Now we wish you would write us the truth. We have thanked God that your letter was received in good health and that our letter will come in your possession finding you healthy. And if it is different it would break our heart. We are by the grace of God still very healthy and happy and have had four children. Our Henry, the oldest, is dead, our Anna, the second, is still healthy and happy and is three and one-half years old. Our Diena, the third, who was nine months old is dead. Our Maria, the fourth is now six months old.

We have five milk cows and two oxen for agricultural work and eight calves, a total of fifteen, and we have a horse for riding and for plowing turkish wheatland. The plows here are different than in Germany. Here one does not have a rudder under the plow tree (or plow beam), just a beam that one has to grip with the hands. We have seventeen hogs living and have butchered ten and we have two oxen butchered and we have twenty-two chickens. We have good rye, winter wheat, buckwheat, turkish wheat, good potatoes, pumpkins, flax, pole beans, peas, onions, and many other things that you have in Germany. We have all kinds of grain laid away and have sold much this year. A malter of rye like your same measure costs $4.00 here and a malter of winter wheat costs $5¼ and a malter of oats $2.00 here. A bushel of potatoes costs here 24 Grote (penny) and a pound of dried ham fat costs here 6 Grote.

We have sixty two acres, of this thirty acres are ready for agriculture and wheat ground and the others is still growing in wood. An acre is three and one-half times as large in comparison to your Scheffelsaat. On all our land we do not have a single cent of debt anymore. There is a town laid out by the name of Berlin from which we are a one-fourth of an hour away. There is yet no church. We go to Munster to the church from which we are an one and one-fourth hour away, and where we usually see Franz Evers and Jon Brockman every Sunday. Hermhenry Klone von Stuckenbarg is our first or next neighbor. We have already many neighbors. Further we would like you to know that Hermhenry Gudenkauf and the brothers Heuing from Krimpenfort are one-half hour distance from our place and all the people from Hagen and Vechta who live in our neightborhood are still healthy and happy. From your letter we have spread the word that you are all healthy and happy.

We would like to know how everything is going with our sister and her husband and also would like to know if the old Father Jansen is still living and how many children my sister has. Also we wish to know how things are going in Hagen and in Vechta. About the number that have died since we left. And further we wish to know how everything is with Ernst Stromberg, his wife and children. Now we would like to know how my relatives are doing, my Uncle Kenkel and his children and also how my Aunt Pfung is doing.

The sugar we make here ourselves. Here there are trees which one can let the sap flow from in the spring and from which sugar can be boiled. Soap we cook ourselves from log ashes so strong that it burns the eyes and then we add speck rinds and hot fat and cook so long until it becomes good. Vinegar we make ourselves from sugar, water and harvest wine. A greeting from Herm Henry Gudenkauf, his wife and children, also a greeting from Bernard Stromberg, his wife and children. Further a greeting from Jon Henry Borgerding, his wife and children and greet all the acquaintances and relatives for me. The farmers here do not have it as in Germany. I have in the house in which I dwell no other things. The animals I have in the barn and there I also have a threshing house. Here the speck is not smoked in the house. I have a little house to do that.

The new land here is all overgrown with heavy timber. Here there are trees that are five to six feet thick and seventy to sixty feet tall. Wood here costs nothing. One has to chop it down and burn it to make roads and to get the land ready (for agriculture). Here I would also like you to know that we don't eat any black bread. The bread we eat here we bake every day from winter wheat flour, and bacon and meat we have here in such quantity that we eat until we are full.

I would like to return to Germany to talk to you but not to stay. My taxes on the land and animals comes about to $3.00 a year and I have to work two days a year on the post road. I close my letter and greetings to the people of Hagen.

in Sckalbe (Shelby),
Munster, Ohio.

When you write again then make the address: in Munster, Masser (Mercer) Counte, Ohio.

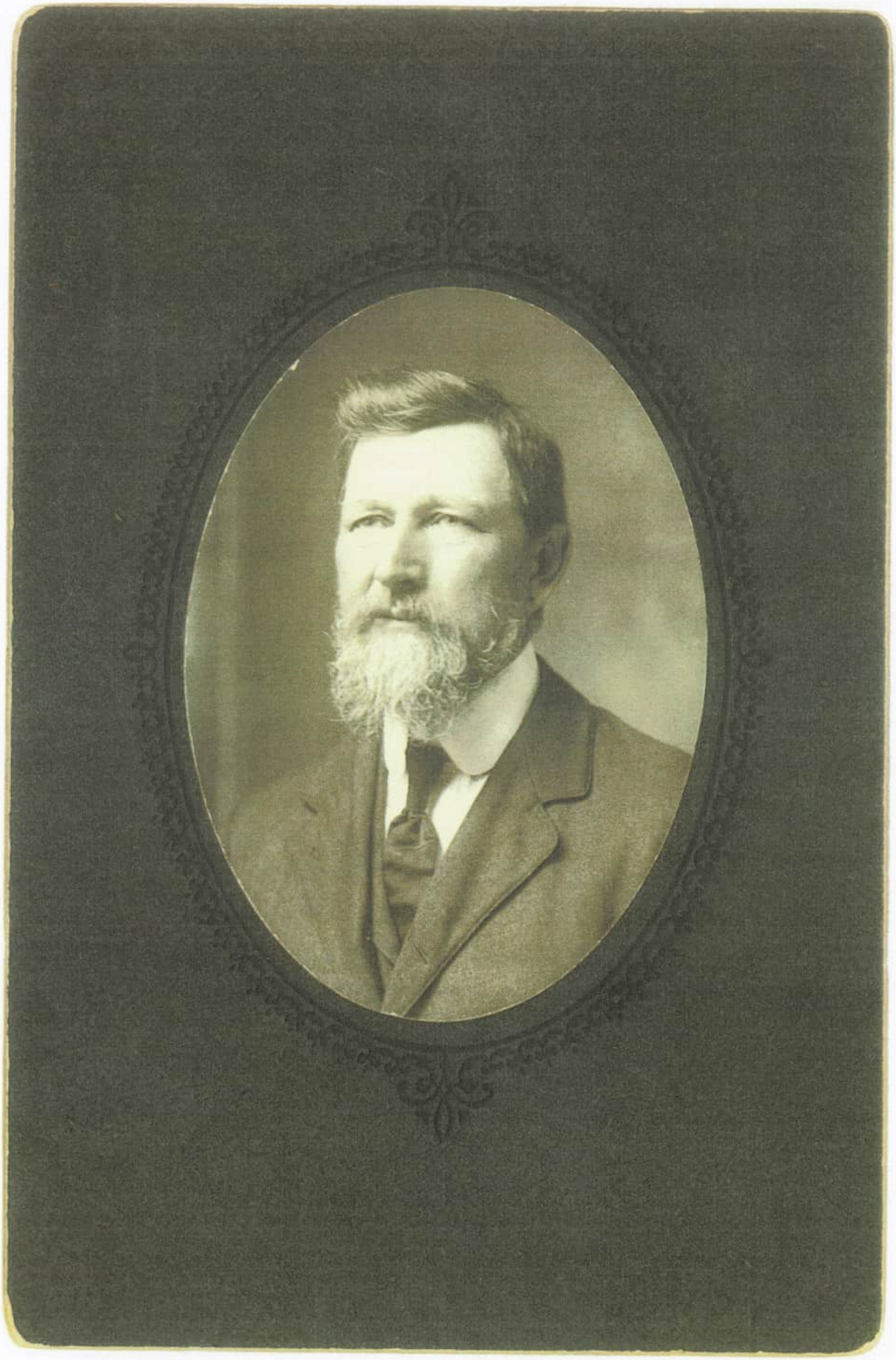
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Frank and Margaret



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Frank Beckman

8/15/1849 - 5/13/1911

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Margaret Herman Beckman

1/20/1854 - 2/26/1919

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CHAPTER III
THIRD GENERATION
THE FAMILY OF FRANK AND MARGARET BECKMAN

Henry Beckman
6/6/1819 - 8/3/1868
Elizabeth Borgerding
8/8/1822 - 8/16/1887

Andrew Herman
2/26/1806 - 3/22/1878
Magdalena Vierman Stucke
-/-/1816 - 4/25/1858

Frank H. Beckman
8/15/1849 - 5/13/1911

Margaret Herman
1/20/1854 - 2/26/1919

married St. Henry
9/13/1870
Fr. John Van den Brock

CHILDREN

Henry Andrew Beckman 6/20/1871- /27/1923	married St. Henry 10/9/1895 Fr. Bernard Russ	Clara Gottemoller 8/16/1875-6/29/1961
John Beckman 9/16/1872-4/30/1935	married Celina Imm. Con. Ch. 6/11/1902 Fr. George Hindelang	Elizabeth Beiersdorfer 5/14/1876-10/27/1966
Maria Catherine Beckman 3/14/1874-1/1/1880	unmarried	died 5yr. 9mo. 17days
Albert Beckman 7/7/1875-11/23/1894	unmarried	died 19yrs.4mo.16days
Edward Beckman 5/8/1877-11/21/1951	married Westville,In. 2/11/1908	Martha Gloff 6/2/1890-1/28/1920
Philomena Beckman 1/29/1881-11/10/1961	married Dayton Emmanuel Church 6/6/1905 Fr. Frances Kuenle	William McMinnis 2/2/1878-2/4/1955
Anna Beckman 3/19/1883-12/29/1974	married Dayton Emmanuel Church 7/26/1913 Fr. Sieber	Gordon Hiles 8/23/1863-3/7/1946
Clara Beckman 9/24/1887-12/28/1887	unmarried	died 3mo. 4days
J. Liborius(Lee) Beckman 1/29/1891-6/26/1964	married Dayton 8/3/1914 Minister F. S. Kreager	Bertha Kehr 5/14/1890-5/27/1948

St. Henry and St. Bernard Ch. Records; Mont.Co.Marriage Records.

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CHAPTER III

THIRD GENERATION

FRANK AND MARGARET

Frank Beckman, the fourth child of Henry and Elizabeth Beckman, was born on the family farm a mile east of St. Henry. It was here that his grandparents settled when they first came to Granville Township and it was here that his parents lived when they were first married. He was six when his family moved to town and opened a store. While growing up, Frank probably worked in the store as well as on the farm which was not sold until after his father's death in 1868. Combining farming with other business interests was a common practice for the early settlers.

Frank attended the local school where his lessons were taught in German. English was taught as a separate subject. There is no record of Frank being sent to Dayton to further his education as his brother John G. had been. A few months after his 20th birthday, he became a Justice of the Peace and a Notary Public.

Frank, an easy-going man with an even temperament, was 6 feet 4 inches tall and had very long legs. His shoe size was 13. On September 13, 1870, at the age of 21, he married Margaret Herman who was only 16. His diminutive bride could easily walk under his outstretched arms. Margaret, a lovely girl with very dark hair, was somewhat capricious and liked to play tricks on her brothers and sisters.(1) She was a proud woman with a strong will and she would become the moving force in their marriage.

The Andrew Herman family had moved to a farm a mile west of St. Henry when Margaret was 13. She had been born in Marion Township on a farm located on the northeast corner of St. Rts. 119 and 716 just west of Maria Stein.(2) Margaret was the daughter of Andrew and his second wife, Magdelana Vierman Stucke, a widow 10 years younger than her husband. She had lost four of her five children in a cholera epidemic. Andrew's second marriage produced 7 children. In March, 1858, their last child was born, a son who died shortly after birth. Magdelana herself died a month later. Andrew was left with 6 children, the oldest 12 1/2 and the youngest 2. Margaret, the fifth of their seven children, was only 4 when her mother died. The following year Andrew married for the third time and it was this 51 year old widow, Margretha Schoenberg, who raised Andrew's children and was the only mother that Margaret ever remembered.

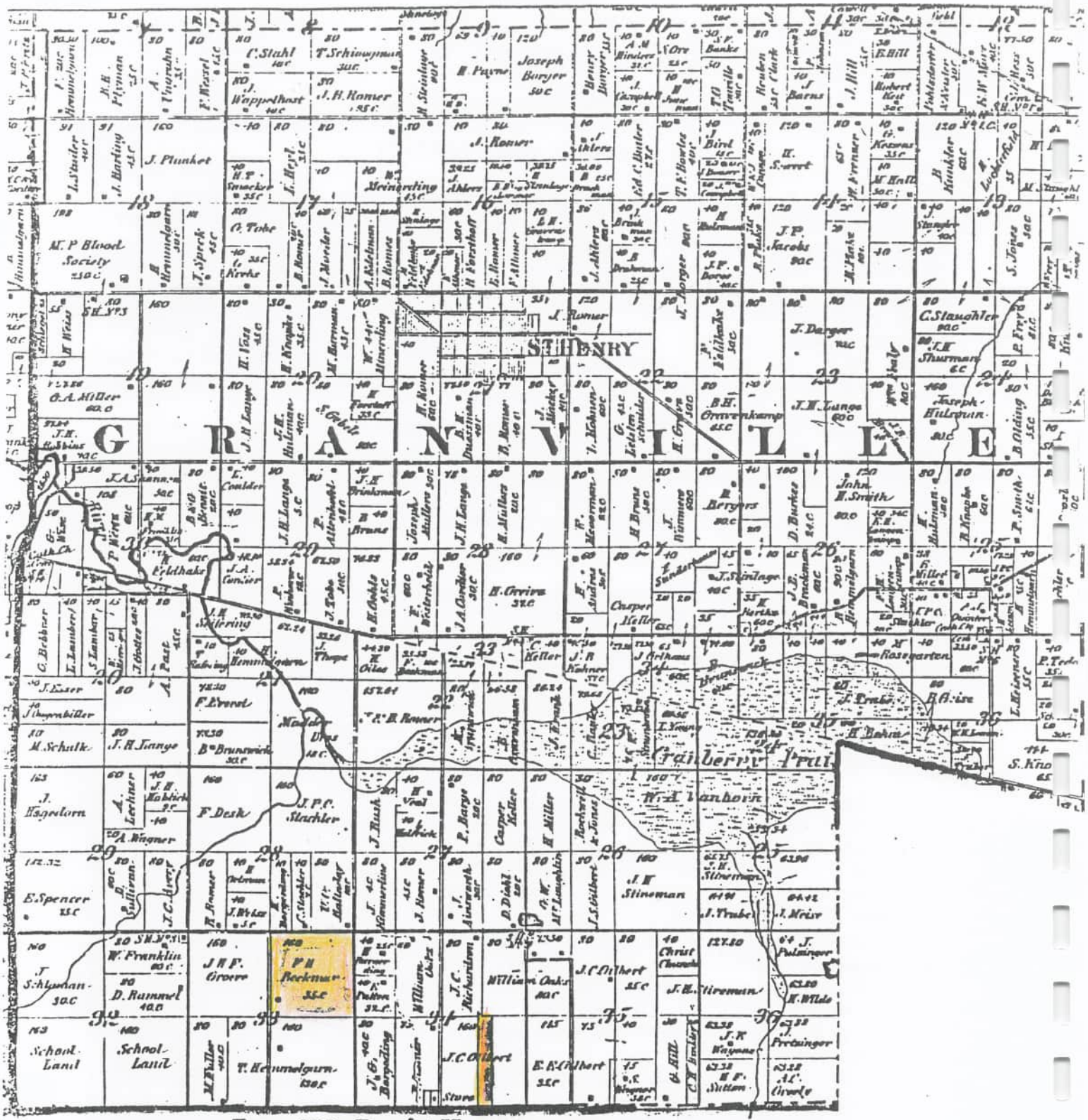
A month before Frank and Margaret were married, Frank bought

1. Notes from Marcelyn Meinerding, Margaret's great-niece.
2. See appendix for the Andrew Herman family history.

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GRANVILLE TOWNSHIP

"1876"



Sec. 33
Frank and Margaret's first farm - 160 acres owned 1870 to 1882.

Sec. 34
Frank and Margaret's second farm - 20 acres owned 1897 to 1901.

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160 acres of land about 5 miles southwest of St. Henry. The farm was located on the south side of Watkins Rd. bounded by Tobe Rd. on the east and Hemmelgarn Rd. on the west. His parents had purchased this land in 1864, four years before his father died. The previous owner had built a house there in 1858. Frank may have helped to clear some of this land before he was married. Although his parents had paid $1400 when they purchased it, Frank paid $2000 when he bought it from his mother indicating that more land had been cleared or that a building, possibly a barn, had been built. Frank needed to borrow $960 of the purchase price from his mother giving her a mortgage that was due six years later in 1876.(1) This mortgage was a harbinger of things to come for Frank would seldom be free of debt for the rest of his life.

In 1870, at the time of Frank and Margaret's wedding, St. Henry was a very small town. It had 153 people and 39 dwellings many of which were the original log houses of the first settlers. The roads were still mud and you couldn't go very far very fast. The railroad was still 13 years away but there was much speculation about a train to be built through the town. As early as 1858 the Cincinnati and Mackinaw Railroad purchased Lot 23 on the west edge of St. Henry and 40 acres in the NW 1/4 of Section 34 south of the town. Henry Beckman may have been speculating when he purchased the farm in Section 33 where Frank and Margaret settled as its east boundary butted against the land purchased by the railroad.(2)

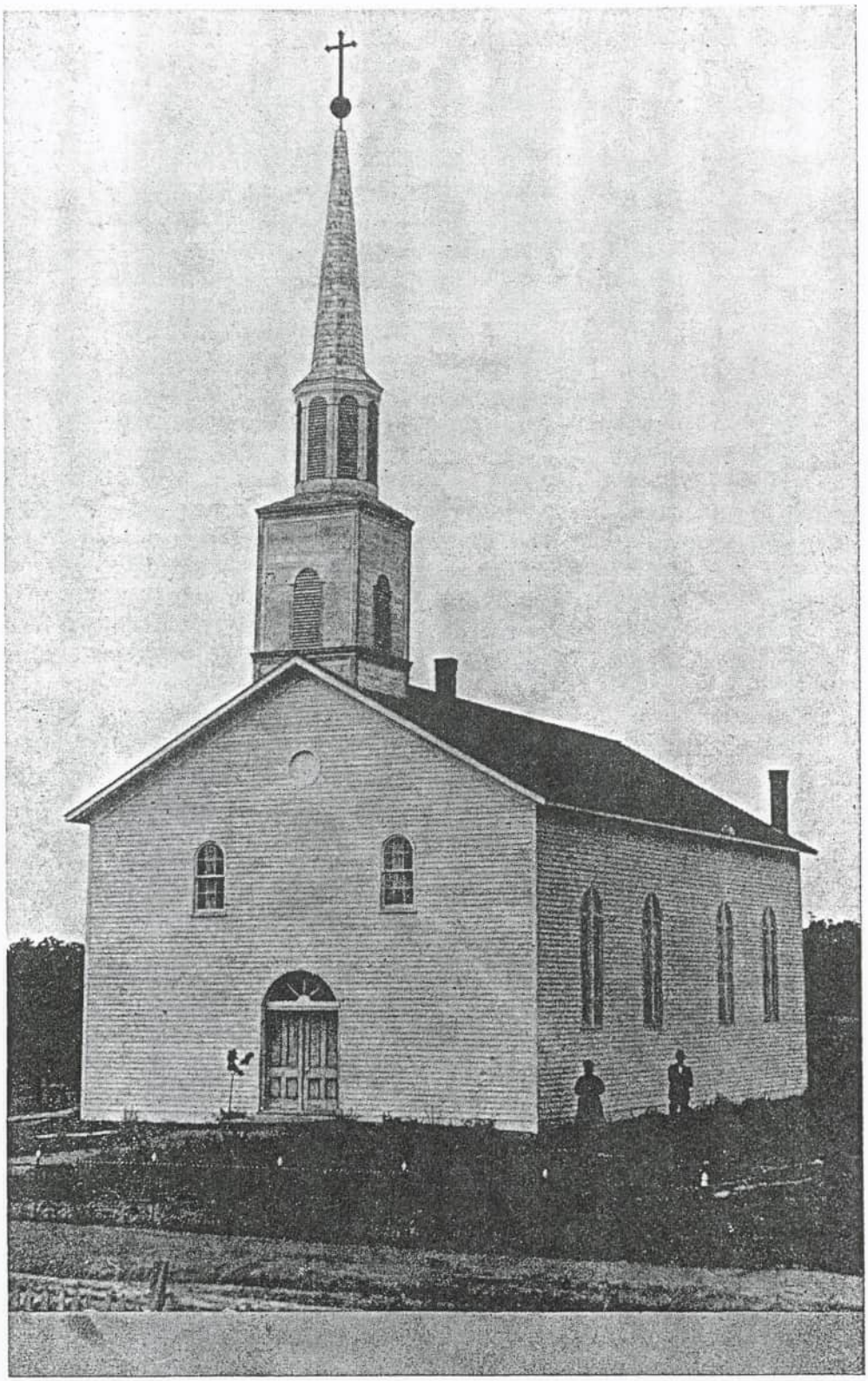
Frank and Margaret's marriage was blessed with nine children born over the next 21 years. Margaret gave birth easily. She delivered her children so quickly that during the last month of her pregnancies she wore big bloomers for fear that the baby would be born with the first pain of labor and that she would not get upstairs to her bedroom in time.(3) At the age of 21, she was already the mother of four children.

Frank and Margaret's first child was a son, Henry Andrew, who was named for his two grandfathers, Henry Beckman and Andrew Herman. A second son, John, was born 15 months later and a daughter, Mary Catherine, followed in another year and a half. A third son, Albert, joined the family in 1875. He was born with a strange malady which the doctors of the time could not diagnose.

The Beckmans, along with other Catholics in the southern part of Granville Township, found it difficult to travel the 5

1. Mercer County Courthouse Records.
2. The Cincinnati and Mackinaw never built a railroad. In 1883 The Cincinnati Northern was built a mile east of Frank's land on the east side of Sec. 34.
3. Story told to me by my grandmother, Clara Beckman, the daughter-in-law of Frank and Margaret.

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St. Bernard Church — Dedicated October 1875.

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miles to St. Henry for mass and the sacraments. They joined 5 other area families to found a new church in the little settlement of Burkettsville which was just one mile from their home. This effort brought forth the St. Bernard Church which was dedicated in October 1875.(1).

The mortgage on Frank's farm was due in 1876 and he was hard pressed to pay off his loan. The "Panic of 1873" had greatly hurt farmers as prices for farm products dropped sharply but interest rates remained high. On February 26, he sold the north half of his 160 acres for $700 which was less than he had paid for it in 1870. That same day he repaid the loan from his mother. This policy of selling property to meet debts became a pattern in Frank's life.

In May of 1877, the Beckman's fifth child, Edward, was born. When he was taken to St. Bernard's Church for baptism he became the first child in two generations to receive this sacrament in any church other than St. Henry; not since the marriage of his grandparents, Henry and Elizabeth, in 1844.

The following year the family left the farm although they did not sell it. They moved to Burkettsville where they rented a building across from the church and began a general store. According to an early advertisement, they sold: "dry goods, groceries, hardware, hats, caps, boots, shoes, crockery, glassware, seeds and a full assortment of merchandize". The Burkettsville Post Office was also located in this store and Frank was the postmaster from 1881 to 1884.

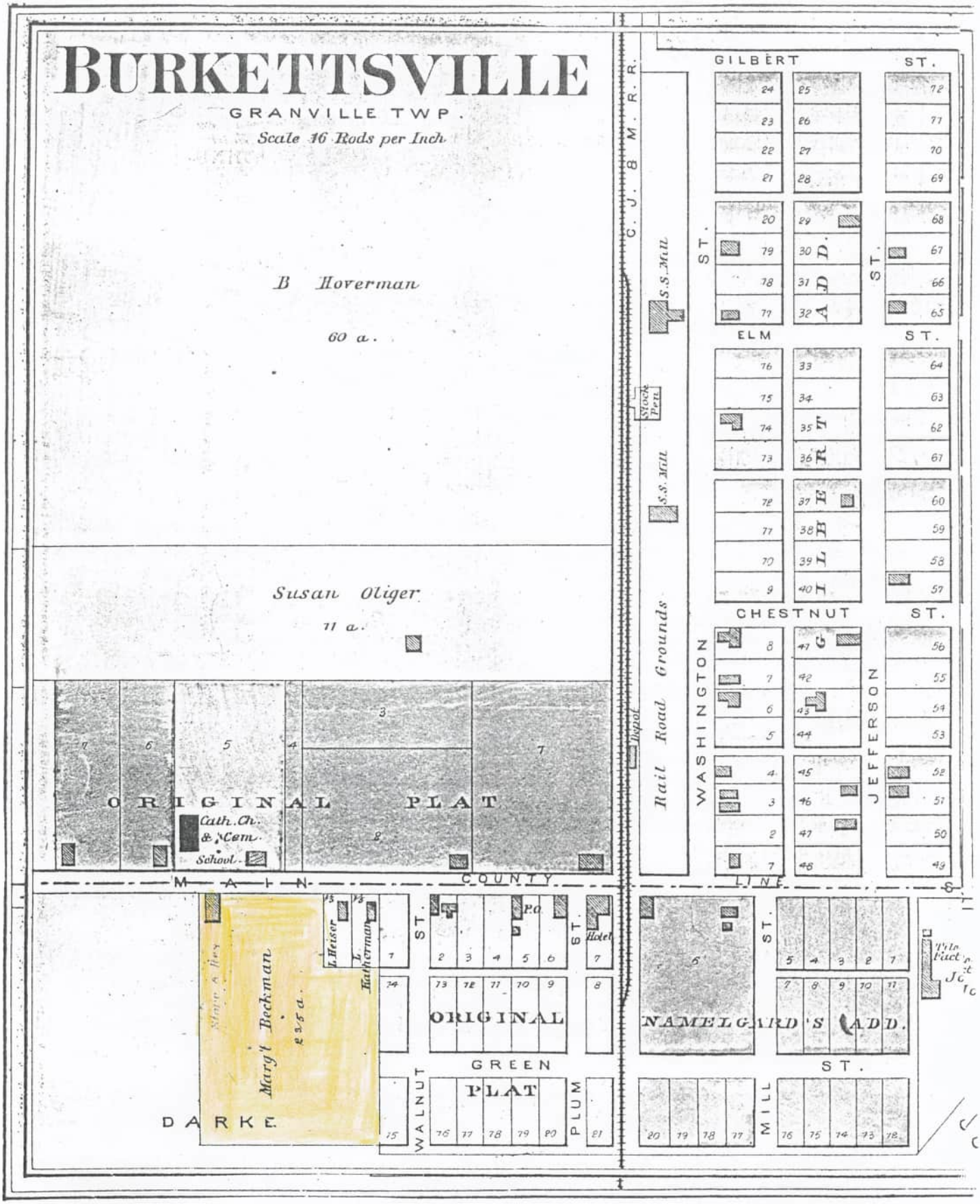
In the 1880's few families escaped the death of one or more of their children and Frank and Margaret were to be no exception. On New Year's Day in 1880 their only daughter, Mary Catherine, died just a few months before her sixth birthday. The pain of this loss was somewhat eased by the birth of a new daughter, Philomena, a year later. Another daughter, Anna, was born in 1883. The Beckman's would have two more children; a daughter, Clara, who lived but three months, and a son, Lee, who was born in 1891.

In March of 1882, Frank and Margaret sold their remaining 80 acres for $3274 which included his house and farm buildings as well as 40 acres of cleared land and 40 acres of woods. Four months later they paid $800 to purchase the combination house and store that they had been renting in Burkettsville.

The train finally arrived in Burkettsville in 1883 but it failed to bring prosperity to the Beckman store. During the next

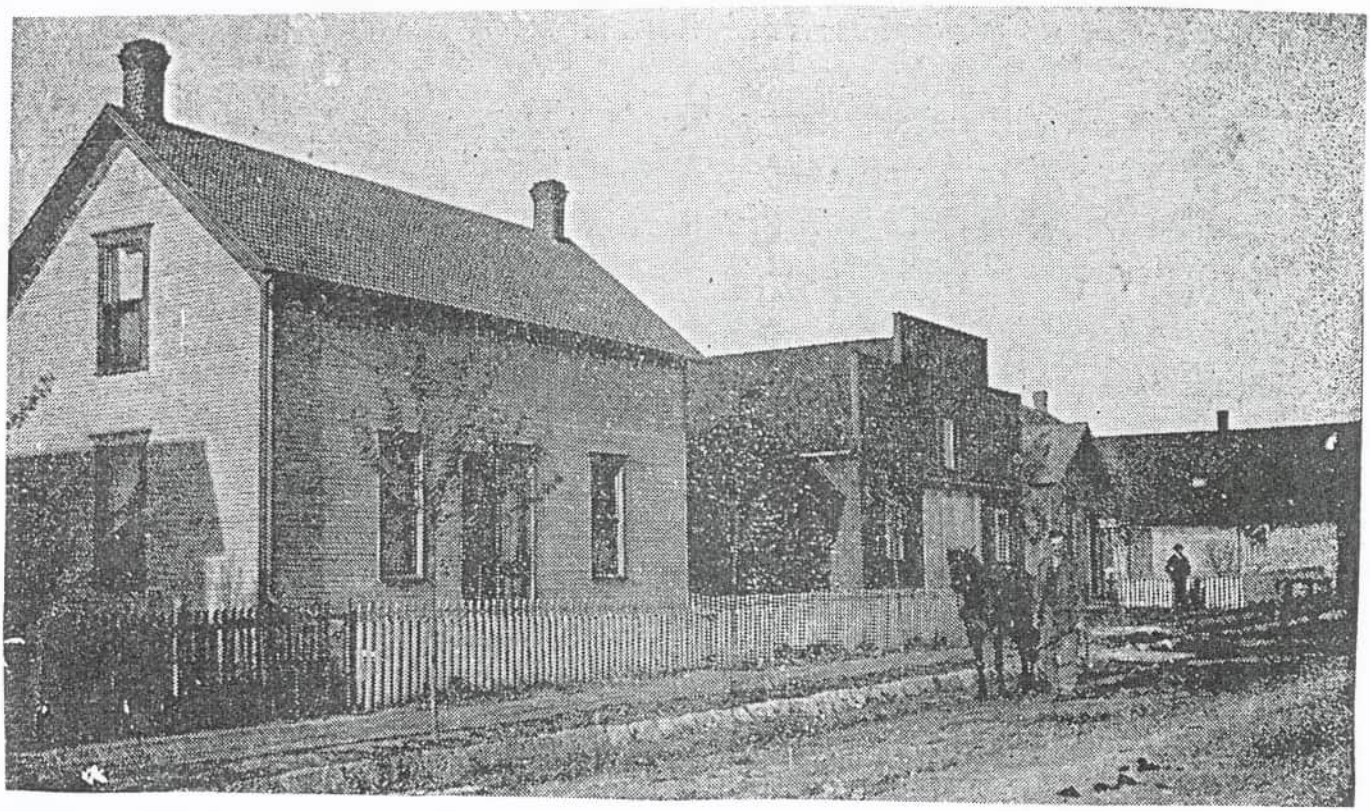
1. Founders of St. Bernard Church: Frank Beckman, Sebastian Fink, Theodore Hemmelgarn, Joseph Nordenbrock, and John and Henry Borgerding who were brothers of Frank's mother, Elizabeth.

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This picture of Burkettsville was taken before the turn of the century. It shows the south side of West Main Street.



The building to the far right is the Beckman's store and the gentleman standing near the store is Frank Beckman.

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two years Frank and Margaret continued to fall deeper and deeper into debt. Finally in March 1885 they became insolvent and were ordered by the court to sell their property.(1) Through the help of their relatives the store and all of its inventory were purchased in Margaret's name for $9000. Frank would never own property in his name again.

This lack of financial success was made more difficult to bear because his brother, John G., and the husbands of Rebecca and Mary Adelheidt, were all very successful businessmen as was Jacob Bany who had married Margaret's older sister, Anna. Jacob, an early entrepreneur, invented the Bany Washing Machine. He established the first factory in St. Henry and sold his washers throughout Ohio, Indiana, and even Montreal, Canada.(2)

Frank and Margaret's nineteen year old son, Albert, died in 1894. He had worked as a clerk in his parents' store.(3) Because he had been born with an unusual affliction that affected his appearance, the doctors wished to do an autopsy but Frank and Margaret would not give them permission to do so. In 1902, eight years after Albert's death, St. Bernard's cemetery was moved. Albert's casket was opened and it was discovered that his head was missing.(4) Apparently the autopsy had been done without their knowledge.

In the fall of 1895, Henry Andrew, the Beckman's oldest son was married to Clara Gottemoller. Henry was 24 and his bride was 20. The couple lived in St. Henry where Henry was employed in the store of his uncle, J. H. Romer. Clara had a millinery shop in the home of her mother where she sold "hats, flowers, ribbons, silk and velvet".(5)

In March 1897, Frank and Margaret sold their general store and returned to farming. They purchased 20 acres about a 1/2 mile east of Burkettsville. Their second son John, who was 24, was a clerk in the W. H. Anthony dry goods store in Ft. Recovery where he had been working since he was 18. Their son Edward, almost 20, was employed in a hardware store near Gary, Indiana, and their three youngest children, Minnie 16, Anna 14, and Lee 6, were all at home.

This return to farming lasted four years as they sold the farm in January 1901, paying off their mortgage on the same day. They then moved to Celina where they bought a small house on the SW corner of Mill and Livingston Streets. Frank found employment

1. Darke County Courthouse Records.
2. Information from Marcelyn Meinerding, granddaughter of Jacob and Anna Bany.
3. Darke County Death Records.
4. Leona Beckman Gast, granddaughter of Frank and Margaret.
5. De Bote, 1894

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This is the very humble log house east of Burkettsville where Frank and Margaret lived after they sold their store. They remained here from 1897 to 1901 when they moved to Celina.



Seated: Left to Right: Frank Beckman, unknown girl, Margaret Beckman. The child at Margaret's knee is Lee Beckman.
Standing: Left to Right: Min Beckman, Anna Beckman, unknown boy, Ed Beckman, two unknown ladies. The unknown people may be Margaret's relatives on the Herman side.

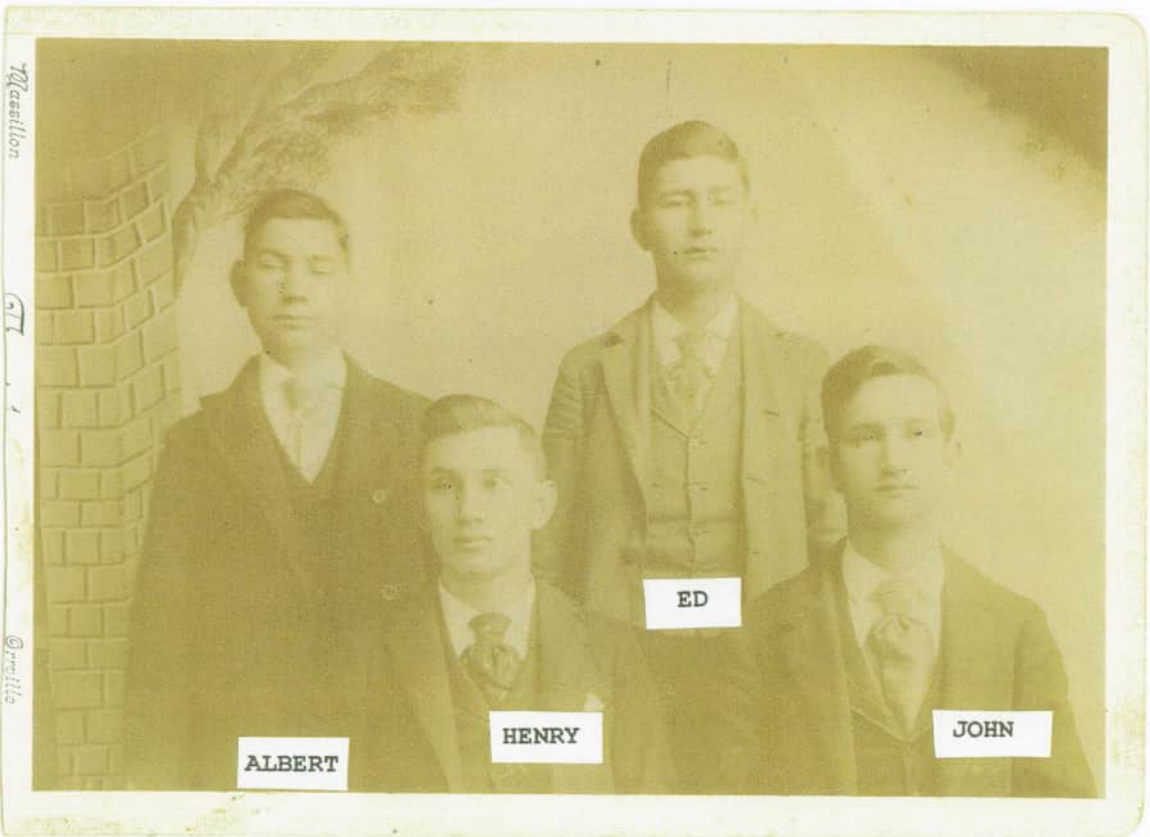


On the fence: Left to Right: Two unknowns, Ed Beckman, unknown lady, Min Beckman, Frank Beckman. Lee Beckman is standing in the front.

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at the Kuntz and Herr Lumber Yard where his brother-in-law, Yankee Ben Romer, had a financial interest. Ten year old, Lee, moved with the family to Celina but the two girls, Minnie now 20, and Anna 18, had gone to Dayton to work.

In June of 1902, the Beckman's second son, John, married Elizabeth Beiersdorfer. The groom was almost 30 and his bride was 26. John was now employed as a clerk in the Heirholzer store in Celina and Elizabeth was a dress maker. John became a very successful businessman. The year after his marriage, he and Lawrence Remaklus, who worked with him in the Heirholzer store, established the Remaklus and Beckman Department Store on the SE corner of Fayette and Walnut Sts.(1) Thirteen years later in 1916, they bought the dry goods stock of W. H. Anthony and prepared to open a second store. This store located on Main Street sold dry goods and women's ready-to-wear garments while the Fayette St. store handled carpet, room-size rugs, linoleum and curtains.(2)

John and Elizabeth had no children. In 1935, after suffering from failing health for over a year, John died at the age of 62. His wife, Elizabeth, reached the age of 90 before her death in 1966.

In 1905, Philomena (Min), the elder of Frank and Margaret's two daughters was married to William McMinnis. Mac had a colorful career. At the time of his marriage he was working on the railroad in Cincinnati. In 1910 he joined the Dayton Police Department as a patrolman and later became a plain-clothesman.(3) Nine years later Mac and Min entered the grocery business, probably with Lee Beckman, Min's brother.

In 1932, during the depression, they moved to St. Henry where they continued in the grocery business occupying a store near the center of town. They sold this business to Julius (Mups) Bruns in 1938 and moved to Glenkarn where they opened a restaurant. John Fullenkamp had a beer distributing business in St. Henry and this restaurant was one of his customers. He knew that the former owners were going out of business and he encouraged Mac and Min to buy it. This was a bar, an eating place, and the site of Saturday night dances. Both Mac and Min enjoyed their next seven years in Glenkarn. They retired when Min was 64 and Mac was 67 and returned to St. Henry.

Min and Mac, who had no children of their own, became very attached to Luke and Albert, the two sons of Min's brother Henry.

1. Fayette Street was a major street in Celina and the first city street to be paved with bricks in 1902, preceding Main Street by three years.
2. The Daily Standard, Oct. 2, 1916.
3. William McMinnis obituary; The Daily Standard, Feb. 5, 1955.

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Christmas 1951



William McMinnis

2/2/1878 - 2/4/1955

Philomena Beckman McMinnis

1/29/1881 - 11/10/1961

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These two nephews welcomed their aunt and uncle into their own family gatherings.

Mac died in February 1955 just two days after his 77th birthday. He had become a convert to the Catholic faith just 9 1/2 months before his death. Min's health began to fail after Mac's death. When she could no longer live alone, she was cared for by Al and Ruth Beckman, her nephew and his wife. Min entered the Colonial Nursing Home in Rockford just three weeks before her death in 1961. she was just a few months from her 81 birthday.

Edward Beckman was the fourth of Frank and Margaret's children to marry. As a young man he had moved to Indiana near the city of Gary where he worked in a hardware store. At the age of 30 he married Martha Gloff who was 18. His bride was born in Russia and had emigrated to America with her parents, 3 brothers, and 4 sisters. Ed and Martha were married in February 1908 in the town of Westville, Indiana, where Martha's parents lived. The newly married couple moved to Chesterton and here their 3 children were born. In 1919 Martha became ill with influenza followed by pneumonia. This caused here death on January 28, 1920, just 2 weeks before their twelfth wedding anniversary. She was 27 and Ed was 42. Both Martha and Ed, who died 31 years after his wife, are buried in the Westville Cemetery in Indiana.(1)

In March 1909, Frank and Margaret sold their Celina property, paid off their last mortgage, and came to live in St. Henry. They rented an upstairs apartment near the center of town and Frank, who was 59, again found work at the local lumber yard. Lee, their youngest child, was 18 and working in Dayton.

The continual stresses in their marriage caused much unhappiness for Frank and Margaret and they lived apart during the last months of their lives. Margaret went to Dayton to live with her daughter, Anna, while Frank remained in St. Henry where he boarded with his niece, Emma Moeller. Emma was the daughter of Frank's sister Mary Adelheidt. Emma's husband, Joseph, owned the lumber yard.

In the spring of 1911 Frank became ill with heart trouble and went to St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Dayton in an attempt to recover his health. He left the hospital on May 11 and went to the home of his daughter, Min McMinnis, where he died two days later. He was 61. His body was returned to St. Henry for viewing at the home of his eldest son, Henry. He is buried in the St. Henry Cemetery.

Margaret, who outlived her husband by eight years, remained in Dayton for the rest of her life. She and her daughter, Anna, were living on Franklin Street near Ludlow during the Great Flood

1. Porter County Public Library, Valparaiso, Indiana.

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Anna Beckman Hiles

Ed Beckman

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of 1913. Margaret and Anna were rescued by boat from a second story window and taken to the Chaminade School which was nearby.(1) Anna remembered seeing many dead horses floating in the flood waters.(2)

Five months after the flood, Anna married Gordon Hiles, a widower who lived just a few houses away on Franklin St. Gordon was the Humane Officer for Montgomery Co. and was 20 years older than Anna. At the time of her marriage Anna was working at the National Cash Register Co. Gordon owned a car and when he and Anna visited Henry and Clara Beckman in St. Henry, all the Beckman children got their first automobile ride.(3)

The Hiles had four children, a girl who died in infancy and three sons. When the boys were old enough for school their parents choose to send them to the public school instead of the parochial one. Their parish priest would not allow this. Anna and Gordon then got permission from the bishop to do so. At that time it was a practice at the parochial school for the parents to supply food to the school for the student's lunches. Anna took her turn and sent over a pot of soup. Because the priest was upset with the Hiles, the school refused to accept the soup and sent it back. Anna was very hurt and she and Gordon left the church. Anna kept her faith strong by reading her bible daily and could quote from it fluently.(4)

In 1914, Lee married Bertha Kehr. Bertha was not a member of the Catholic faith and the priest insisted that she join the church before he would marry them. This altercation caused Lee to leave the church as his sister Anna had. Lee was a handsome young man and he and Bertha had both graduated from high school, which was unusual for their generation. Lee owned a grocery store and Bertha was a typist when they married. They became the parents of four children, three girls and one boy.

Lee changed the location of his store several times because of frequent robberies. Once when he was being robbed, he angrily jumped across the counter and nabbed the thief.(5) In 1919 his store was located across from the Soldiers Home on West Third St. Luke Beckman, his nephew, boarded with Lee and Bertha while he attended Miami Jacobs Business School. Luke also helped in the store for 10 to 15 cents an hour.(6)

Lee liked to bet on the horses at River Downs and had his own method of picking winners. According to his son, Paul, his

1. Leona Beckman Gast, granddaughter of Frank and Margaret.
2. James Hiles, son of Anna and Gordon Hiles.
3. Leona Beckman Gast, daughter of Henry and Clara.
4. Leona Beckman Gast, niece of Anna Beckman Hiles.
5. Leona Beckman Gast, niece of Lee Beckman.
6. Luke Beckman, grandson of Frank and Margaret, nephew of Lee.

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Lee Beckman 1/28/1891 - 6/26/1964



Ed Beckman - Age 67



Lee Beckman - Age 64

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father was very successful. When Paul was older, Lee sometimes sent him to the races with a list of horses on whom he wished to bet.

Luke's sister, Leona, came to Dayton to work in an airplane factory during World War I.(1) She stayed with her Aunt Anna and her grandmother, Margaret. Margaret loved to play cards and Leona remembered her grandmother's joy when she beat everyone at Fantan, her favorite game. Margaret suffered from asthma during the last years of her life and she died in February of 1919. She is buried beside her husband in the St. Henry Cemetery.

Margaret lived to see 13 of her 16 grandchildren but Frank knew only 6. None of Frank and Margaret's children married at as young an age as their parents. Lee was the youngest groom at 23. Henry was 24, and both John and Ed were 30. Min was the youngest bride at 24 while Anna married at 30.

Frank and Margaret's generation saw a multitude of changes that made their lives easier and more comfortable. Frank saw the little town of St. Henry grow from 13 buildings when his family moved to town in 1856 to 132 in 1910. He was 6 when St. Henry built its second church and 48 when they built the present one in 1897. He witnessed the construction of St. Henry's first high school which was part of the 1903 elementary building and he witnessed the construction of numerous business buildings including the new 1903 store of his son, Henry. He also read the town's earliest newspaper, "The St. Henry Advocate". Its first edition was published on May 25, 1907.

Although the horse and buggy remained the major means of local transportation during his entire lifetime, he did see many of the mud roads covered with gravel.(2) Cement for the Main Street of St. Henry would not come until 1925, but Frank did walk on the town's cement sidewalks in 1906. This was the same year that the town was lit by gas streetlamps.

Frank, born shortly after the completion of the Miami Erie Canal saw it rise to its heyday from the 1850's to the 1880's and then witnessed its decline until it closed two years after his death. The canal was doomed by the arrival of the train which had a great impact on the speed and the distance that people and goods could travel. After 1883, when train service began in St.

1. Orville and Wilbur Wright founded their airplane factory in Dayton in Nov. 1909. By 1910 they built 4 planes a month. After Wilbur's death, Orville sold his controlling interest to a group of New York financiers. Leona worked for the new owners.
2. Marion Township had the first gravel roads in 1881. State Rt.118 from St. Henry to Burkettsville was graveled in 1899.

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Margaret Herman Beckman

1/20/1854 - 2/26/1919



THIS PICTURE WAS TAKEN IN DAYTON. THE EMMANUEL CHURCH STEEPLE IS IN THE BACKGROUND LEFT OF THE CHIMNEY.

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Henry, the local citizens often took the train to Dayton and Cincinnati and also on shorter trips to Coldwater and Celina.

Frank saw the first automobiles in St. Henry shortly after the turn of the century and although he knew of the airplane he probably never saw one fly.

Fire was always a great threat for Frank and Margaret's generation. There was a disastrous fire in 1905 that destroyed the hotel and livery barn of Frank Bruns and threatened to burn the entire block across from the church. This impelled the town to organize its first volunteer fire department and to build a municipal water works. The Mercer County Observer printed in its November 19, 1908 edition that "St. Henry will soon learn that for a village of their size a municipal ownership water works plant is a very expensive luxury". This luxury soon became a necessity as faucets with running water rapidly replaced the hand pumps and buckets used to obtain water from the well.

When gas was discovered in 1888 it was used not only for lights but also for cooking and heating homes. Gas lights were a wonderful improvement over candles and kerosene lamps. In February 1910 Frank Beckman was the first one hired to light the town's 18 gas street lights. He had to keep them in good repair and would received 5 cents per light each night that they were lit. He got no pay if a light went out before ten o'clock.

Gas stoves which replaced the old wood burning cook-stoves were truly a blessing. Wood burning cook-stoves produced so much heat that all the cooking in the summer months had to be done in summer kitchens separated from the house.

Another new invention, the telephone, became available to the residents of St. Henry in 1898. It was operated from Mrs. Tohle's house on west Main Street. The newly invented phonograph provided pleasure for the whole town. A newspaper article in April 1901 said the "Frank Miller gave an entertainment on his phonograph at the city hall and everyone was well pleased.(1)

Farmers' lives were also made easier by the availability of new farm machinery such as reapers, binders, and threshing machines, but tractors didn't appear on the local scene until 1922, eleven years after Frank's death.

Great medical advances were made during Frank and Margaret's lifetime. At the turn of the century St. Henry could boast of two doctors, Dr. Schirack and Dr. Mory.

1. The Celina Democrat, April 12, 1901.

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APPENDIX
ANDREW HERMAN
11/30/1806 - 3/22/1879

First Wife	Second Wife	Third Wife
Mary Schwerer	Magdelana Vierman Stucke	Margretha Schoenberg
-/-/-/ -/-/1844	-/-/1816 - 4/25/1858	9/8/1808 - 9/18/1885
Children	Children	Children
Mary	Mathius	None
Eliza 1835 - 1927	Philomenia	
Eva - died young	Anna	
Agnes - died young	Henry	
	Margaret	
	Andrew	
	John	

Andrew Herman came to America from Baden, Germany and in the early 1830's married Mary Schwerer. Mary's mother was the sister of Major General Richard Butler who was killed in 1791 at Ft. Recovery when St. Clair's troops were defeated by the Indian forces of Little Turtle and Blue Jacket. No other United States army has ever suffered such a complete rout.(1)

Andrew and Mary lived in Mad River Township, Champaign County, Ohio. The 1840 census records list four daughters, two under the age of five and two between five and ten. In November, 1842, they came to Mercer County and leased land east of St. Henry from John Schwerer, probably one of Mary's relatives. Andrew agreed to clear and fence 40 acres on the E 1/2 of the NW 1/4 of Section 26. Thus they became land neighbors to Henry Beckman. Family history says that Mary and her children were baptized into the Catholic Faith shortly before Mary's death. Two of her daughters must have died about that same time.(2)

On March 27, 1845 Andrew married his second wife, Magdelana Vierman Stucke. She was a widow and the mother of five children, four of whom had died from cholera. The next year in September Andrew bought a farm in Marion Township just 1/2 mile west of Maria Stein. This land was located on the northeast corner of St.Rts. 119 and 716.

Andrew and Magdelana's family increased. Besides his two daughters, Mary and Eliza, and Magdelana's daughter, Mary, the couple had seven more children together. Their fifth child, Margaret, would grow up and marry Frank Beckman. In March, 1858, the Herman's last child was born, a son who died shortly after birth. The following month, April 25, 1858, Magdelana also died.

1. Ft. Recovery State Memorial: Ohio State Historical Society.
2. From Marcelyn Meinerding, the Herman's great-granddaughter.

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On September 9, 1859, at St. John's Church in Maria Stein, Andrew married for the third time. He was 52 years old and his wife, Margretha Schoenberg, was a 51 year old widow. Margretha raised the children from Andrew's second marriage. The youngest was 3 and the oldest was 14.

A week later, on Nov. 16, 1859, Andrew's daughter, Eliza, was married. She was a child from his first marriage. She married Peter Bloom who was farming with his parents in St. Joe, Ohio. The day after her wedding Eliza walked from St. Joe all the way back to her father's house in Maria Stein, a distance of about 14 miles. She informed her father that she did not want to be married. That afternoon Peter came in a buggy to fetch her and Andrew told her that she was now married to Peter and had to go along with him. Eliza dutifully returned to live with Peter and his parents. She became the mother of 10 children. Eliza often smoked a pipe, a common practice among many pioneer women.(1) She was 92 at the time of her death.

In August of 1867 Andrew and Margretha sold their land near Maria Stein and moved with their children to an 80 acre farm about a mile west of St. Henry which they had purchased the previous fall. Four years later the land he had left in Marion Township was platted as St. John's Station and in 1881 Mercer County's first railroad, the narrow gauge C H and D, passed along its western edge. Joseph Oppenheim bought this land in 1897. Here he invented the "New Idea Spreader" and started his first factory in the barn behind his house.

In 1871, Andrew and Margretha sold their St. Henry farm to their oldest son, Mathius, and 3 years later in 1874 built a new brick house on west Main Street in St. Henry. Andrew died here on March 22, 1879. Margretha lived 6 1/2 years longer, dying of lung fever on September 23, 1885. They are both buried in the St. Henry Cemetery.



Andrew Herman's 1874 brick house stands on the south side of St.Rt. 119 as it angles west from St. Henry.

1. Marcelyn Meinerding, great-granddaughter of Andrew Herman.

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Henry and Clara



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CHAPTER IV

FOURTH GENERATION

HENRY AND CLARA BECKMAN

Frank Beckman
8/15/1849 - 5/3/1911
Margaret Herman
1/20/1854 - 2/26/1919

Henry Gottemoller
4/26/1840 - 5/27/1926
Elizabeth Overman
2/22/1854 - 11/23/1940

HENRY ANDREW BECKMAN
6/20/1871 - 4/27/1923

CLARA GOTTEMOLLER
8/16/1875 - 6/29/1961

married
St. Henry Church
10/9/1895
Fr. Bernard Russ

Leona Beckman
9/20/1897 - 4/12/1997

married
St. Henry Church
11/6/1919
Fr. Seraph Kunkler

Lewis Gast
6/25/1895 - 11/20/1964

Luke Beckman
1/4/1901 - 4/19/1988

married
St. Bernard Church
Burkettsville
10/7/1925
Fr. Dennis Schweitzer

Lorine Stammen
1/25/1907 - 11/30/1966

(second marriage)

married
St. Albert Church
Dayton, Ohio
10/19/1968
Fr. James Byrne

Marie Wirkner Sutter
7/31/1914 - 9/16/1994

Albert Beckman
2/14/1905 - 2/8/1965

married
San Francisco, Ca.
5/30/1929
Fr. J. Lineham

Ruth Galbraith
12/14/1907 - 6/1/1966

Eva Beckman
4/19/1907 - 10/17/2002

married
St. Henry Church
11/26/1931
Fr. Philip Schritz

Aloysius Schritz
7/22/1907 - 7/11/1982

Mary Agnes Beckman
3/30/1910 - 7/5/2000

married
St. Henry Church
6/20/1934
Fr. Pius Kanney

Alfred Winkeljohn
3/19/1909 - 3/3/1974

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HENRY ANDREW BECKMAN
6/20/1871 - 4/27/1923



CLARA GOTTEMOLLER BECKMAN
8/16/1875 - 6/29/1961

CHAPTER IV

FOURTH GENERATION

HENRY AND CLARA

Henry Andrew Beckman was named for his two grandfathers; Henry Beckman, who died almost three years before he was born, and Andrew Herman, who died when he was about 7. He was born near Burkettsville on the farm of his parents, Frank and Margaret Beckman, and was the oldest of their nine children. As a boy, he attended the one room schools in the area which were only open during the winter months. When the weather was nice the children were needed at home to work. In 1878, when Henry was seven, his family moved to Burkettsville. The parish opened a parochial school in 1880 and Henry was a student there until 1882 when, at the age of eleven, he came to St. Henry to live with his grandmother, Elizabeth Beckman, who had been left all alone when her spinster daughter, Catherine, died that January. Elizabeth lived in a log house on the north west corner of Main and John Streets.(1) When Henry came to St. Henry three of his sisters, Min, Anna, and Clara, and his brother, Lee, were not yet born.

Clara Gottemoller, a little girl of about seven, lived about a half block to the east of Henry's grandmother. She remembered the first time she saw Henry Beckman. He was running down St. Henry's mud street and splashing mud up the back of his knickers. She was not impressed with this young man. In fact he looked sort of "ragtag" to her. She would view him quite differently when she was eighteen.

Clara attended St. Henry's school until she was 12. She liked school and did well in her studies and she would be an avid reader all of her life. She wanted to continue her schooling but her parents, Henry and Elizabeth Gottemoller, needed her at home for she was the second oldest of the Gottemoller's 12 children. Her parents operated a saloon, shoe shop, and millinery store; all three combined with their home. Clara remembered serving customers in the saloon. Once when she was 12 she served whiskey to Bill Simison, a local character who lived near Cranberry Prairie. He had been a deserter during the Civil War and whenever the army tried to find him, he would hide in the cranberry bog. No one went after him because they were afraid of the rattlesnakes. Bill knew a cure for rattlesnake bite so he felt safe. Clara remembered how he looked the day she served him. He wore a straw hat, blue checked shirt and red checked gingham pants. He wore high leather boots with a gun in one and a knife in the other. Bill was a renowned hunter and trapper.

Henry continued his schooling in St. Henry, probably until

1. In 1882 John St. was not there. It was constructed ca. 1920.

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he was fourteen. St. Henry did not build its first high school until 1903, therefore Henry attended "college" in Coldwater until he was 18.(1) He always had a good head for figures and excellent handwriting.(2) Both of these qualities were useful to him in 1889 when he returned to St. Henry to work in the new store of his uncle, J. H. Romer. This brick store still stands across Main Street from St. Henry's Catholic Church. Henry boarded with his Aunt Mary Adelheid and Uncle "Yankee Ben" Romer. In 1884 they had built a large 12 room brick house just two lots east of the church that still remains today.

Now independent and making $9.00 a week, Henry found his thoughts turning to love. Clara was 14 and still too young to gain his interest, instead he gave his heart to Annie Keeler. This romance was not destined to end in marriage and in time they broke their engagement.

During her early teenage years, Clara went to Cincinnati to do housework for the family of a relative. She recalled coming home on the train. It was night and very dark. Clara had to walk from the station across the town to her parent's house which was on the east edge of St. Henry. There were no street lights, only a mud road and walks made of wooden boards.

When Clara was sixteen her parents sent her to Dayton to learn the millinery trade. She returned to St. Henry and worked in her mother's millinery shop. Trimming hats was a profitable business in the late 1800's as women wore hats wherever they went. The store also sold yard goods for most women sewed their own clothes or had them made by a local seamstress. Clara's mother often bought special bolts of fabric just for the dresses of her daughters so no one else in town would have a dress made from the same material.(3)

Clara, now in her late teens, had a beau, Henry Meinerding. Henry Beckman also noticed her and he too began to court her. Like other young men in love, he told Clara that Henry Meinerding was not good enough for her implying, of course, that he was. One evening in the apple orchard behind the Gottemoller house, Henry told Clara about his earlier engagement to Miss Keeler. The explanation has been lost, but Clara must have understood for some time later, when Henry asked her to marry him, she said "yes". Henry proposed to Clara while she was sitting in her

1. Mercer County Standard, July 3, 1884. This "college" was called the Coldwater Academy and Normal School. It began in 1883 and the courses of study were Commercial, Classical, Scientific, Teachers and Musical. Tuition was $8.00 per term and food was $1.25 per week.
2. Leona Beckman Gast, daughter of Henry and Clara.
3. Mary Beckman Niekamp, told to her by Clara Beckman.

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Wedding 10/9/1895 Henry and Clara Beckman

mother's parlor in a chair called a "stiff Katie". This was a wooden chair with a very straight back. The back could be folded down to rest on the arms of the chair thus it became a small card table. Clara's parents gave her this chair after she was married and it is still in the family today.(1)

When she informed her mother that she and Henry were planning to marry, Clara was shocked and embarrassed to learn that her mother was pregnant with her twelfth child which would be born the following August. The young couple then set their wedding date for October 9, 1895 and were married in St. Henry's second church just three months after the cornerstone for the new church had been laid. Clara wore a creamy white dress that was made by Annie Schoenburger, a seamstress in town. The material had white satin stars on it. Her wedding pictures show no veil or hat but she probably wore one or the other as women at that time could not go to church with their heads uncovered.(2) Henry wore a black suit with a vest and a cutaway coat. Their reception was held at the town hall that stood on the northeast corner of Main and Walnut Streets where St. Henry's postoffice is today. The young couple rented the west half of a house on the north side of West Main Street. It was the third house from the northwest corner of Main and Sycamore Streets.(3)

Henry and Clara spent their first Christmas together in this apartment. Clara's family had always celebrated Christmas and Clara wanted a tree. Henry didn't think they should spend money on such a frivolous thing so Clara brought in a small tree branch and wrapped each twig with green paper with the edges fringed. Thus began a tradition of celebrating Christmas that lasted throughout Clara's lifetime.(4) Henry grew to love the holiday as well and he never missed giving gifts on Christmas and on birthdays. He often ordered these gifts from his store catalogs so they would be a big surprise.

After five months of marriage Henry and Clara bought a lot and made plans to build their first house. In March of 1896 they paid $75 for the north end of lot 48 facing Washington Street. This was part of the same lot where Henry had lived with his grandmother when he was a boy, only she lived on the south end facing Main Street. Henry contracted with Vian, Frey, and Schlosser to build a two story four room frame house for $530.

1. This chair is owned by Clara's great granddaughter, Mary Beyke, the daughter of Pat Beckman Post.
2. This rule was changed after Vatican II.
3. This house was demolished in 1977 and the lot is now used by Jacobs and Sons Logging.
4. When Clara was old she still put up a small artificial tree that she decorated with real candles (the size of birthday cake candles) held in tiny holders that clipped on to the tree branches just like they used before they had electric lights.

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121 West Main Street. (demolished)
Henry and Clara lived in the left half of this house when they were first married in 1895.



382 East Washington Street
First home built by Henry and Clara in 1896.
The front portion and porch are later additions.

Henry also had to pay $48.81 for the lumber and labor to build the outhouse and $16.65 for other incidentals. A cost overrun of $17.93 made the grand total, $688.39. Henry paid his contractors on October 25, 1996. Both Henry and Clara had worked for some years before their marriage and they did not borrow any money to build their home.(1) At that time the entire length of Washington Street had only nine houses and a creamery, all of which were on the north side of the road. The Beckman's house was the only building on the entire south side.

Henry and Clara had been married a year when they moved into their new home and Clara had not yet conceived. J. H. Romer, Henry's uncle and employer, gave Henry a bottle of "Lydia Pinkhams", an iron rich tonic for women. He told Henry "there's a baby in every bottle". Clara took the tonic and she did indeed become pregnant but it was not a trouble free nine months. Clara hemorrhaged from time to time and they feared she would lose the baby. People were so modest in those days that they didn't speak about their pregnancies and Clara sewed ruffles to wear under her bodice to hide the protrusion of her stomach.(2) On the day that Mrs. Mory, the doctor's wife, came to see the new house, Clara was sitting in a rocking chair and she began to hemorrhage. She was too embarrassed to tell her friend what was happening so she just sat there and didn't offer to show the house. After Mrs. Mory left, Clara found the pillow in the rocker so completely saturated with blood that it had to be burned.(3)

That summer Clara's mother and her youngest sister, two year old Erma, came over to help Clara shell peas. When Clara talked about the coming baby, her mother started to cry but would not tell Clara why. Dr. Mory had told her mother that Clara would probably not survive the birth of her child. When her due date was near, the couple made plans on how to notify Henry if he were at work when Clara's labor began. They planned to give a blank piece of paper to a neighbor boy and have him take it to Henry at the store. It was blank in case the boy lost it. They didn't want someone to find it and know that Clara was about to give birth.(4) With great joy and much thanksgiving, Henry, Clara and all their relatives welcomed the safe delivery of a little girl on September 20, 1897.

St. Henry's new Catholic Church had been dedicated the previous July and the entire town was waiting to see whose baby would be the first to be baptized there. The Tohles and the Kessens both had baby boys on August 3. At that time it was customary for babies to be baptized the same day they were born.

1. Courthouse Records show no mortgage on this property in 1896.
2. Mary Beckman Niekamp. Grandma Clara gave me this same advice when I carried my first baby. I declined.
3. Mary Beckman Niekamp, told to her by Clara Beckman.
4. Ibid.

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The story is told "that the Tohles practically ran to the church so their son would be first".(1) Three more babies were born in St. Henry before the birth of Henry and Clara's daughter, Leona, but they were all boys so Leona became the first girl to be baptized in the new church.

In late 1899 Henry's uncle, J.H. Romer asked Henry if he would be interested in buying the business that had previously belonged to John Beckman, another of Henry's uncles. J.H. Romer was a brother-in-law of John Beckman and J.H. had purchased this business when John was elected Probate Judge and moved to Celina in 1896. At that time, J.H. put Henry in charge of operating this business for him and also made him the deputy postmaster as St. Henry's postoffice was located in this store. Henry had been working for J.H. Romer for the past 10 years and knew this was a great opportunity for him. He told Clara about the offer but he feared that he had to refuse because they had spent most of their savings on their house. Clara surprised Henry when she brought out her personal savings account with the St. Henry Building and Loan. Unknown to Henry, she had been saving 50 cents every week from the household money. This, plus Henry's willingness to give up smoking to save extra money, allowed them to purchase the business. They did not buy the store building but rented it from Catherine Beckman, John's wife, who kept ownership of the building after the death of her husband in 1897.

In January 1900 Henry and Clara rented out their Washington Street property and moved into the big white house on East Main Street that had been built by Henry's grandparents in 1856 and Henry became the proprietor of the store that was attached to the house. He was the third generation of the Beckman family to own this business. The house and the store had been built by his grandfather and was passed to his Uncle John when his grandfather died and now it was Henry's. The store sold patent medicines, stationery, religious articles, jewelry, clocks, school supplies, wallpaper and sewing machines. In March Henry sold the sewing machine business to another of his uncles, Jacob Bany.(2)

Henry and Clara's new residence was just two doors west of the new house of Clara's parents. The home where Clara lived as a girl was destroyed by fire in January 1898 and her parents had built a new house on the same lot. This made it easy for their daughter, Leona, to play with her aunts Marie and Erma Gottemoller, who were just a few years older than she. These three became lifetime friends.

The large Beckman house allowed Henry and Clara to take in

1. Leona Gast, daughter of Henry and Clara.
2. Sale recorded in Der Bote: 3/15/1900. Jacob Bany was married to Anna Herman, the sister of Henry's mother. Their daughter, Rose Bany, would marry Henry Meinerding, Clara's old beau.

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two school teachers as boarders thus providing extra income for the household which was growing. In April Clara became pregnant with her second child and fortunately this pregnancy went more smoothly than her first. On January 4, 1901, Clara delivered a black haired baby boy whom they named, Luke. He was jaundiced at birth and his skin looked quite yellow. An unthinking neighbor saw the baby and declared him "the ugliest child she had ever seen". Clara's heart almost broke and she never really forgave her neighbor for her hurtful words. There was still anger in her voice as she told me this story fifty years later.

Henry was a well liked, successful business man and a prominent citizen of the community. He held many public positions beginning with his election as clerk of Granville Township in 1893 when he was 22. He was a director of Mercer County's Fair for 20 years and was its treasurer for 13 of those years. During fair week Henry brought the days receipts home with him each night to be banked. Since Henry never owned a car, a friend drove him to St. Henry and they took a different route every night to insure the safety of the cash. One year a picture of Henry , framed with lights, was hung in the grandstand.(1) The family never attended the fair together as Clara had to take care of the store and the post office while Henry was gone. The children sometimes went with their father for a day. They could look at all the exhibits, ride the ferris wheel or merry-go-round, see the side shows or play games.(2) Clara sometimes took the train to the fair by herself but never tried for "blue ribbons" in any of the competitions.

Henry was vice-president of the St. Henry Building and Loan and was associated with the Citizens Gas Company and the St. Henry Scale Company. He was the recording secretary of the Catholic Knights of America and secretary of their building committee. For seventeen years Henry was the secretary-treasurer of St. Henry's Catholic Church. He also served as St. Henry's postmaster for 23 years, the longest period of time that any individual has held that position in St. Henry. He was a deputy postmaster for 7 years and the appointed postmaster for 16 more years.

Henry also wrote wills for people. One of the local citizens, Henry Entrup, asked him to draw up a will leaving all his property, which consisted of a house and two farms, to his only daughter. Henry tried to convince Mr. Entrup that he should leave everything to his wife, Anna, and then to his daughter after his wife's death. The man insisted that his daughter would always look after her mother. As fate would have it, Mr Entrup died and his daughter married. Then the daughter died. The son-in-law was a young man and soon remarried. During the depression

1. Eva Beckman Schritz, daughter of Henry and Clara.
2. Ibid.

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in the 1930's the farms and the house were lost and Anna, who lived to an old age, made her living by baking bread, coffee cake and rolls in her kitchen and selling them to her neighbors.

Henry was a good manager and his store was so successful that he and Clara made plans to build a new one. On November 3, 1902 they sold the house that they still owned on Washington Street for $650 and on January 1, 1903 they purchased the east half of lot 50 for $100. Here they built a two story business building with living quarters attached.(1) The building had pressed tin siding and the family always referred to it as the "tin clad" house. Henry's store and the postoffice were located in the front east half of the building and he rented out the west half. On January 5, 1905, his uncle J. H. Romer opened St. Henry's first bank there.

Leona was six and Luke was two when the family moved to the "tin clad" house. Typical of the "terrible twos" Luke got into a crock of lard and tracked greasy footprints all over the new wooden floor in his mother's kitchen. The wood was unfinished and the footprints could not be scrubbed off, only time made them disappear.

Soon Clara was pregnant again and a second son, Albert, was born on Valentine's day in 1905. It was 14 degrees below zero when Clara's labor began and Henry needed to put a heating stove in their bedroom for warmth. Although it was extremely cold, the newborn baby was brought to church for Baptism the next day. Henry usually gave Clara a gift whenever their babies were born. For Albert's birth, he gave her a large pendulum clock to hang on the wall.(2)

Luke, who was now four, came down with diphtheria and the family was quarantined. This created a problem for Henry who dealt with the public every day. During this period, Henry ate and slept in the store. One evening Clara slipped him a piece of homemade pie through the transom above the door that connected the store to the house. Luke recovered from the disease but he lost his hearing for a whole year. During this time he became quite spoiled, at least eight year old Leona thought so. Leona had a beautiful doll that had a China head. Luke took it off of her bed and began to bring it downstairs. Leona saw him and told him he could not have it but Luke, who couldn't hear her, drug it down the steps and broke its head.

1. This building is still standing on Main Street today. It is the second building east of St. Henry's present postoffice. Clara would be shocked to know that there is a beauty shop in her living room and a tanning salon in her kitchen.
2. This clock is owned by Clara's great granddaughter, Sue Hoying, the daughter of Pat Beckman Post.

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A 1905 Picture of the Tin Clad Store Henry Beckman Luke and Leona



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Two more children were born in the "tin clad" house. Eva in the spring of 1907 and Mary Agnes in the spring of 1910. Leona was nine when her first sister was born and her parents let her choose the name for the new baby. Leona's Aunt Caroline, who lived in Dayton, had a friend whose name was Eva and Leona chose that name. The names - Leona, Luke and Eva - were all new names in the Beckman family line while - Albert and Mary Agnes - had been used in previous generations.

Clara had a hired girl during these years. Keeping house and helping Henry in the store kept her busy. She became run down and very thin. Dr. Mory, her next door neighbor, suggested that each day Clara drink a glass of beer with a raw egg in it. Soon her energy increased and her weight came back to normal.(1)

At Christmas time, when the children were small, Henry and Clara locked the door to the front parlor a few days before the holiday and put up the tree and set out the presents. There was an open stairway in the dining room and one Christmas Leona was tall enough to peek through the glass transom over the parlor door when she went upstairs to bed. She didn't see the tree but she saw a box of cigars on a chair and told her mother that she had seen them there. The next morning there was a curtain over the transom. On Christmas Eve the Beckman's would go to visit their grandparents, Henry and Elizabeth Gottemoller, and when they returned home the parlor door would be wide open revealing the tree and the presents. Most of the children's gifts were clothing but there were some toys. Their Uncle Ed Beckman who lived near Chicago, owned a hardware store and often brought them tin toys at Christmas.(2)

When Al was small he wanted a "loop-around" for Christmas. Henry and Clara hated to disappoint their little son, but they had no idea what it was that he wanted. Sometime after the holiday Clara was walking with Al when they passed the general store. Al suddenly jumped up and down as he excitedly pointed to a "loop-around" in the window. It was a toy horse pulling a cart. It seems that Luke, while playing with his brother, would loop a rope around himself and become a horse as he pulled Al in their wagon.

In December of 1905, J.H. Romer moved his bank to a new building next to his own store and Fred Gottemoller, Henry's brother-in-law, began a furniture store in the vacated space in the west half of the "tin clad" building. Fred was the town's undertaker and funeral director and he prepared bodies for burial on the second floor above his store. He then returned the bodies to their homes where they were laid out for viewing. It would be the 1950's before this custom would change and bodies would be

1. Mary Niekamp, told to her by Clara Beckman.
2. Leona Beckman Gast.

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viewed in funeral homes. Fred would use his fine horse-drawn hearse to carry the bodies to the church and to the cemetery.

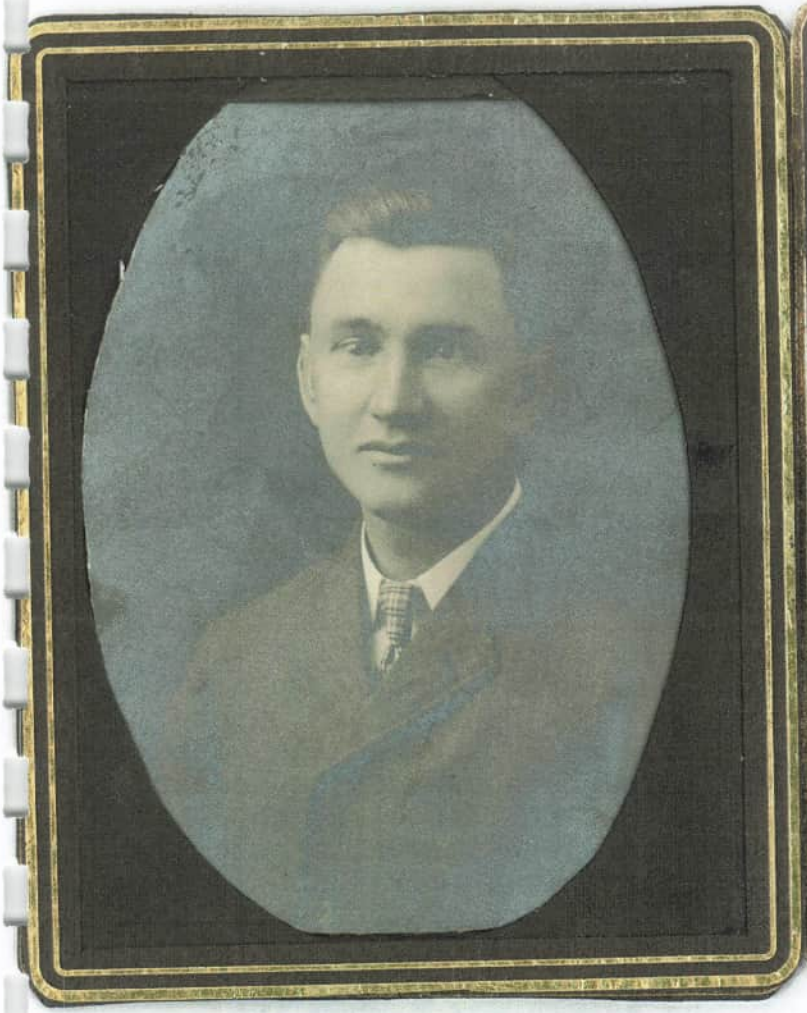
Toward the end of 1905 Henry decided to enter into a new business. He sold the stock from his variety store to Ed Schmitz who opened his own store in the old town hall which stood on the northeast corner of Main and Walnut Streets. On January 1, 1906, Henry and his brother-in-law, John Gottemoller, formed a partnership to embark in the stove and tinware business. They would sell wood and gas burning ranges for cooking, coal burning base burners for heating, and a new innovation, warm-air floor furnaces.(1) Their stock would include standing seam tin roofs, tin siding for buildings, spouting, lightning rods and other tin ware.(2) The front east half of the "tin clad" building would now be occupied by Henry's stove business and the postoffice.

When Henry opened his new store, St. Henry was a thriving and prosperous village with four to five hundred inhabitants. It could boast of a new church, a new rectory, and a new public school part of which was the town's first high school. Cement curbs and sidewalks would be put in that summer and the dirt street in front of the store would be covered with crushed stone. The speed limit was 8 miles per hour. The town had train service, telegraph service and a telephone system with over 40 customers one of which was Henry's store. His number was 11. The village had a bank, a building and loan association, three large general stores and many smaller establishments. It had a gas company, a washing machine factory, a handle factory, an elevator, a grain mill, a dairy, a creamery and the second largest lumber yard in the county. It had two doctors and four saloon keepers.(3)

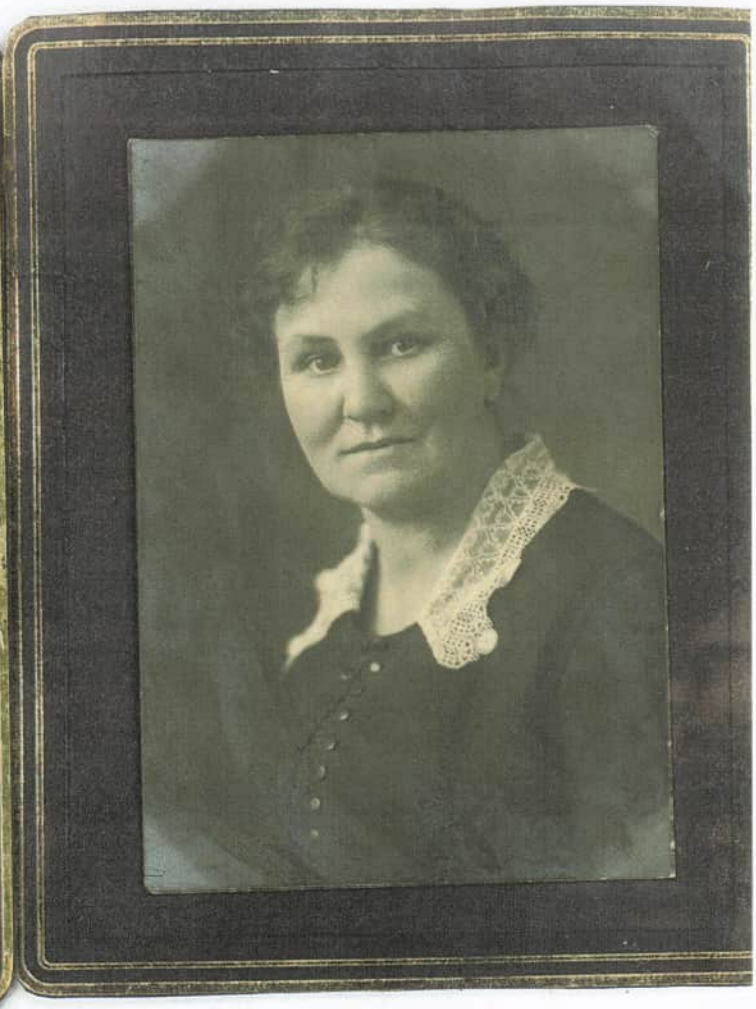
In 1911, when Luke was 10 years old, he went to live and work for Ben Gels and his old maid sister, Rosie. Hiring out young boys to help with farm chores was a common practice in those days. Ben and Rosie lived in a large brick house on Washington Street where they had a small farm.(4) Each morning Luke got up at 5 a.m. to feed the animals. After breakfast he milked two of the Gels' twenty cows and then went to school. In the summer he helped cultivate corn, made hay stacks and bedded the animals. Although the Gels farm was only a block and a half from his parents' house, Luke came home only on weekends. But

1. Floor furnaces had the heating unit in the basement with a large open grate set into the floor above. The heat passed directly to the room above. There were no pipes from the furnace to carry heat to other rooms.
2. The Celina Advocate: January 1906.
3. The Celina Advocate: February 17, 1906.
4. This house still stands on the west corner of Washington and Spring Streets although it is now covered with vinyl siding. In the 1950's the farm land became a housing development.

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HENRY BECKMAN



CLARA BECKMAN



AL LUKE
EVA MARY AGNES LEONA

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life was not all work for Luke still found time for swimming in the local ponds and playing baseball with his friends.(1)

The stove business demanded heavy lifting and after seven years Henry developed a hernia. It was about this same time that the townspeople were demanding that the postoffice be more centrally located. On July 14, 1913, Henry and Clara bought the west half of lot 58 from John Leistenschneider. This lot on Main Street was near the center of town just a few doors east of Sycamore Street. The property had two buildings, a bakery and a house. The Beckmans sold the bakery to Henry Wimmers who moved it to Sycamore Street two doors south of the water tower and made it into a home that he rented out.(2) Henry and Clara remodeled the Leistenschneider house before they moved there. They added two large rooms to the north end of the house, a sitting room and a kitchen. Behind the kitchen was a large screened porch where Clara washed clothes in the summertime and attached to this was a series of sheds that held wood and coal and finally at the end was the privy. This was a great convience because in the winter you could get to the privy without going outside. On September 24, 1913, the family moved into their new residence and the post office was moved into the front section where they also sold wallpaper, stationery, and religious articles. This house would be the last property Henry and Clara would own. Three years later they sold the "tin clad house" to H. M. Winkeljohn.

Mary Agnes was 3, Eva was 6, and Albert was 8 when the family moved in 1913. Luke was 12 and was still working for Ben and Rosie Gels and Leona was a young lady of 16.

There was a large garden and an apple orchard behind the house and each fall Henry would bury two wooden barrels full of apples in the garden. This would keep the family in apples all winter long.

Henry, a handsome man, was usually clean-shaven but sometimes sported a mustache. He shaved every morning in the family kitchen using a straight razor. He kept his shaving mug in the kitchen cupboard. This hand painted mug was decorated with purple violets and had gold letters spelling his name.(3) Henry was a very upright individual; a strict but fair father. He disliked liars and taught his children the need to be honest.

Each year during the Lenten season, Henry and Clara and their children attended the Way of the Cross devotions on Sunday afternoons. These devotions required genuflecting, kneeling and standing at each of the fourteen stations. Mary A., the family's

1. Mary Beckman Niekamp. Told to her by Luke Beckman.
2. Tom and Mary Niekamp bought this property from Linus Bertke on June 26, 1954 and Tom's parents lived there until they died.
3. This mug is owned by his granddaughter, Mary Beckman Niekamp.

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name for Mary Agnes, went along to church. She was too young to understand the meaning of the Way of the Cross but she liked to attend what she called the "up and down" devotions.

Luke had always been a very bright child and he skipped the second grade when he was in school. As a schoolboy he was involved in several boyish pranks. Once he caught a live bird and he and his friends tied a long string to its leg and early the next morning, before the teacher arrived at school, they tied the string to the light fixture in their schoolroom. Needless to say, this caused enough commotion to delay classes for quite a while. Another escapade involved the mystery of the missing caps. It seems that every day one of the boys' caps would be missing and would later be found in the privy behind the school. After the first week, Luke, to avoid suspicion, threw his own cap into the privy.(1)

Henry and Clara's oldest daughter, Leona, did not graduate from high school but took a business course instead and worked in the summertime doing bookkeeping for the Western Ohio Creamery which was located on the northeast corner of Washington and Walnut Streets. Two years later, when her grandparents and her two aunts, Marie and Erma Gottemoller, moved to Celina, Leona went with them and got a secretarial job at Mersman's Furniture Factory for $6.50 a week. It was in Celina that Leona met the man she would later marry, Lewis Gast. In 1917, shortly after they became engaged, Louie was drafted into the army. After he left to serve in World War I, Leona gave up her job in Celina and went to Dayton to work in an airplane factory where she almost tripled her salary to $18.00 a week.

When America went to war with Germany in 1917 many of the inhabitants of St. Henry felt pressured to stop speaking German at home and at school. They decided to switch exclusively to English. Most people were bilingual at that time so the change was not drastic. In 1919, the state legislature banned German as a language of instruction in Ohio's schools but this was later found unconstitutional. The war effort caused some discomfort at home. Families had to cut back on coal which was the common fuel used to heat their homes. White flour and sugar were hard to get and everyone drank ersatz coffee which was a substitute for the real thing. Many of Mercer County's 18 to 45 year old men had to go to the service but Luke and Albert were both too young.

Luke, who was now 16, left the Gels farm and again lived at home where he helped in his parent's store and became a substitute driver for St. Henry's two rural mail routes. At that time deliveries were made with horse drawn postal wagons.

Luke was a junior in high school when the school bought four

1. Told to Mary Beckman Niekamp by her father, Luke Beckman.

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basketballs and started St. Henry's first basketball team. There was no gym at that time so practice was held in the town hall where the team learned the rules of the game and how to dribble and shoot. The following year St. Henry played their first game at Minster and the coach, Julie Moeder, took all seven players there in his Model T Ford. St. Henry scored only one point in the game when Luke made a foul shot. After that inauspicious start, the team went on to win the Mercer County championship and advanced to the tournament which was played at Defiance. There were no divisions for large or small schools at that time and St. Henry drew Steele High School, the biggest school in Dayton. St. Henry lost the game in overtime.

Luke graduated from high school in 1918 when he was seventeen and went to Miami Jacobs Business School in Dayton for two years. He studied business administration, accounting, English and typing. Upon graduation he began working for the National Cash Register Company for $17 a week. He took a course in higher accounting which was sponsored by the company and in 1920 NCR sent him to Brooklyn to set up an accounting system for a sales office with 72 salesmen. He earned $50 a week but it cost him $20 a week for room and board. He lived on Flatbush Avenue across from Prospect Park with an Irish landlady who cooked breakfast and the evening meal for him. Luke was next sent to Chicago and then to Philadelphia where he set up accounting systems. The man he worked for in Philadelphia later started IBM. After this he was transferred back to New York.

It was about this time that St. Henry first got electricity. Henry and Clara had it put into their home even though service was limited to a couple of hours a day. That year Luke bought them a floor lamp for Christmas but they had no wall outlets so they plugged it into the ceiling fixture.(1)

In 1919 the Beckman family celebrated their first wedding. Louie Gast had returned from the war and he and Leona were married on a Thursday morning in St. Henry's Catholic Church on the 6th of November. Leona wore a dark blue suit with a corsage bouquet of pink roses. Louie also wore a blue suit. After the ceremony a breakfast was served at the bride's home for relatives and friends. In the afternoon the couple left on the train for a wedding trip to Cleveland. After several days they returned to 410 North Main Street in Celina where Louie was employed as a salesman in "Big Pete's" shoe store.

In March of 1921 Henry and Clara became grandparents for the first time when Leona had her first child, James Warren Gast, who was named for the two presidential candidates of the preceding year, James Cox and Warren Harding.(2) It is ironic that the

1. Eva Beckman Schritz.
2. Beckman & Gast Family History, Dorothy Gast Abernathy.

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Leona Beckman Gast
9/20/1897 - 4/12/1997



Lewis Gast
6/25/1895 - 11/20/1964

election of Warren Harding in 1920 would cause an unforeseen upheaval in the Beckman family.

Several political events took place in 1921 that affected the Beckmans greatly. First the government raised St. Henry's post office from fourth-class to third-class which meant that the post office could no longer be part of another business, therefore Henry and Clara would have to close their store. Secondly, political patronage became an important influence on the appointment of postmasters which in the future would be given to individuals belonging to the same political party as the president of the United States.

Warren Harding, a republican, took office in March, 1921. A year later in March, 1922, Henry, a democrat, who had been St. Henry's postmaster for 23 years, was replaced by Julius (Mups) Bruns, a republican. Henry, now 50, was out of work for the first time since he became a clerk in the store of his uncle J.H. Romer at the age of 18.

That summer, Luke came home from New York on vacation and he, his father, and Leona's husband, Louie Gast, discussed the possibility of buying the general store of Ed Bruns which stood on the southwest corner of Main and Sycamore Streets. They made an offer to Mr. Bruns but he did not wish to sell. The following day Harold Romer approached them about buying his mother's store which stood across from the church. This was the same store where Henry worked as a young man. Henry, Luke, and Louie formed the Beckman and Gast Company and bought the inventory of the Romer store for $22,000. They paid $10,000 in cash with an additional sum to be paid each year until the final amount was reached. They also rented the store building for 10 years at $100 per month with the stipulation that no member of the Romer family could start a store within 10 miles of the Beckman and Gast store until the end of the lease.(1) They purchased the store on July 5 and held their Grand Opening on September 1, 1922. At that time it was the largest general store in Mercer County. An advertizement in the Coldwater Chronicle on October 6, 1922 listed the following merchandize: dry goods, notions, boots, shoes, rubber footwear, ladies dresses and cloaks, gents furnishings, groceries and queensware.

In 1926 the store held a big Christmas promotion. Every customer who bought a pair of stockings for their child could leave one of the stockings at the store and it would be hung on a line to be filled with candy and other small items.(2) This idea was so successful that two wires running the full length of the

1. Within a year and a half Harry Romer started a store in St. Henry and Harold Romer started one in Coldwater but no attempt was made to stop them. Information from Luke Beckman.
2. Leona Beckman Gast.

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BECKMAN AND GAST STORE
1926 CHRISTMAS AD



This photo was taken in the late 1950's.
The Beckman and Gast name has been added.

Guessing Contest

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

Awards: $3.00 Doll for the Girls.
$3.00 Camera for the Boys.

The Doll *will* be displayed and given a name. Each Girl who calls at our Store will get one chance to guess the name of the doll. Whoever guesses the correct name will get the doll.

There will also be a Box on display with one article in it. Each Boy will get one chance to guess what is in the box. Whoever guesses correctly will win the Camera,

All guesses must be registered before Saturday, December 18th

Awards made by Santa on Thursday Evening, Dec. 23rd, at 7 O'clock.

Santa Wants All The Good Little Children

in this community to write him a Letter in care of BECKMAN & GAST STORE. The best letter received from each--a Boy and a Girl --will receive a big present from Santa.

We want every Boy and Girl to buy one pair of

Rollins School Hose

and leave one Stocking here where it will be hung up for Santa to fill. Santa has promised to be here on Thursday Evening, December 23rd, at 7 o'clock, when he will give out the prizes for the best letters, and also return the Stockings with a Gift for each child. All Stockings and Letters must be registered at our Store by Saturday, December 18th, and each child must bring the mate to the Stocking left at our Store.



It is not necessary for each Child to write a letter who wish to have their Stocking filled by Santa.

No Children above the age of 12 years expected to take part in this contest.

Be sure to let Santa know what you expect for Christmas.



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store were needed to hold them all. When the day arrived to pick up the stockings, the store had a Santa Claus and the crowd was so large that no business could be done.

After the purchase of the store, Leona and Louie moved to St. Henry. They could not make the trip from Celina every day as they did not have a car. A few people owned cars in St. Henry in the early 1900's but these were undependable and often got stuck on the mud roads. Two pre-1910 owners traded their cars for horses and buggies saying that, "It costs about as much to keep an auto as it does a horse and when you get outside of the corporation with a horse and buggy it is very seldom anyone else has to haul you home".(1) Henry Beckman never owned a car and Luke didn't buy his first car until 1923. It was a used Ford coupe which cost $250. Louie bought a Ford sedan with a California top in 1924 for $600. It had isinglass windows instead of curtains and was the first car in St. Henry to have a self-starter and demountable rims. This meant that you no longer had to crank the engine to start it or pry off the tires to change them for the wheels had bolts like they do today. Henry Ford had developed the assembly line and by the mid 1920's the price of a car was within the reach of the average family. This was especially true since the 1920's also brought about buying on credit. You could now pay a small amount down and pay the rest in small installments. Previously people paid cash for their purchases and were ashamed to be in debt.

In the spring of 1923, Clara, who had suffered with female problems since the birth of her children, decided to have surgery to correct a fallen uterus that caused her to wear a truss for many years. She went to the Good Samaritan in Cincinnati for the procedure. While Henry visited her at the hospital he became ill with quinsy and received treatment there.(2) Henry returned to St. Henry but the next week he had pains in his stomach and wrote to Clara that he planned to take a large dose of castor oil the next day. In the meantime he sent his son, Al, to the bank to get his safety deposit box. Because Henry was still ill he did not return the box to the bank. That night the bank was robbed and all the deposit boxes were carried away but Henry's papers were safely at home.(3)

The next morning Henry took castor oil and by evening the pain became so severe that he had to be taken to Otis Hospital in Celina where surgery was performed that same night. They found that his appendix had burst. Clara came home on the train to be with her husband who survived for two days after the surgery. Henry died at 6:30 on Friday evening, April 27, 1923, at the age of 51 years, 10 months, and 7 days. He and Clara had been

1. The St. Henry Advocate. May 25, 1907.
2. Coldwater Chronicle: May 4, 1923. Henry's obituary.
3. Ibid.

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married for 27 1/2 years. According to Clara, they had had a very happy relationship. Henry had told her when they were first married that they should never go to bed angry with each other but always "kiss and make up".(1) They apparently did this all of their lives and it is worthy advice to pass on to the future generations.

Clara was 47 when Henry died. There was no Social Security or postal pension in those days so Clara took Henry's place at the store and continued to rent the front part of her house to the post office. At the time of their father's death, Leona was married but the other four children were still living at home. Luke was 22 and operating the store; Albert, 18, was a senior in high school just four weeks from his graduation; Eva was a junior and Mary A. was in the seventh grade.

Shortly after his graduation, Al had a rapid growth spurt shooting up to 6 foot 2 inches tall. This strained his health and the family feared that he might get tuberculosis. The doctor recommended a change in climate, therefore Al joined his two aunts in Modesto, California, where he worked in a sporting goods store.

The following spring Eva graduated from high school. She was a very good student, especially in mathematics, and like her brother, Luke, had skipped the second grade. Eva wanted to become a nurse and in January of 1925 went to Good Samaritan Hospital in Cincinnati for her training.

The children of Henry and Clara were coming to age in the "Roaring Twenties". These were financially prosperous times in America and young people looked at life far differently than their parents. They wanted to have a good time and they did. This was the "flapper" era when the girls bobbed their hair and wore short skirts with rolled down hose. The young men wore knickers, patterned hose and bow ties. They listened to jazz and danced the Charleston, a dance that their parents thought was scandalous. Al was exceptionally good at the Charleston and it was wonderful to watch his long legs performing the steps.(2)

By 1925 most of the people in St. Henry had electricity and were buying radios. For the first time they were exposed to nationwide advertizing and ideas. The broadcasts of sporting events made great heroes of sports figures like Babe Ruth and Jack Dempsey while overlooking their personal indiscretions. Luke liked to listen to the Cincinnati Reds baseball games and kept the box score inning by inning as he listened. He continued to do this all of his life. People attended the "silent" movies

1. Told to Mary Niekamp by Clara Beckman.
2. When Luke's daughters were young, Al entertained them by dancing the Charleston. Mary Beckman Niekamp.

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and idolized stars like Rudolph Valentino and Greta Garbo. It would be 1927 before "talkie" movies made their debut.

In the summer of 1925, Al came back to Ohio for a two month vacation but had to return to California just a month before the wedding of his brother, Luke.(1) Luke had met 17 year old Lorine Stammen in December, 1924 when she came into the Beckman and Gast store. Lorine, who lived in Burkettsville, was staying in St. Henry to help her sister, Regina Bernard, who had given birth to her sixth child. Luke and Lorine dated about twice a week and often went to wedding dances where Luke called the square dances. After dating for nine months they were married in Burkettsville on October 7, 1925, in the new St. Bernard Catholic Church and were the second couple to be married there. For the 8:00 A.M. ceremony the bride wore a white crepe street-length dress trimmed with beads and ribbon. The groom wore a dark blue suit. The wedding breakfast was held at the farm of Jack Stammen, Lorine's brother. The day's festivities included dinner and square dancing in the barn followed by a wedding dance at Sutters Hall.(2) After a honeymoon to Washington, D.C. Luke and Lorine returned to St. Henry where they rented a house on Main St. just west of the one where Luke's mother lived.

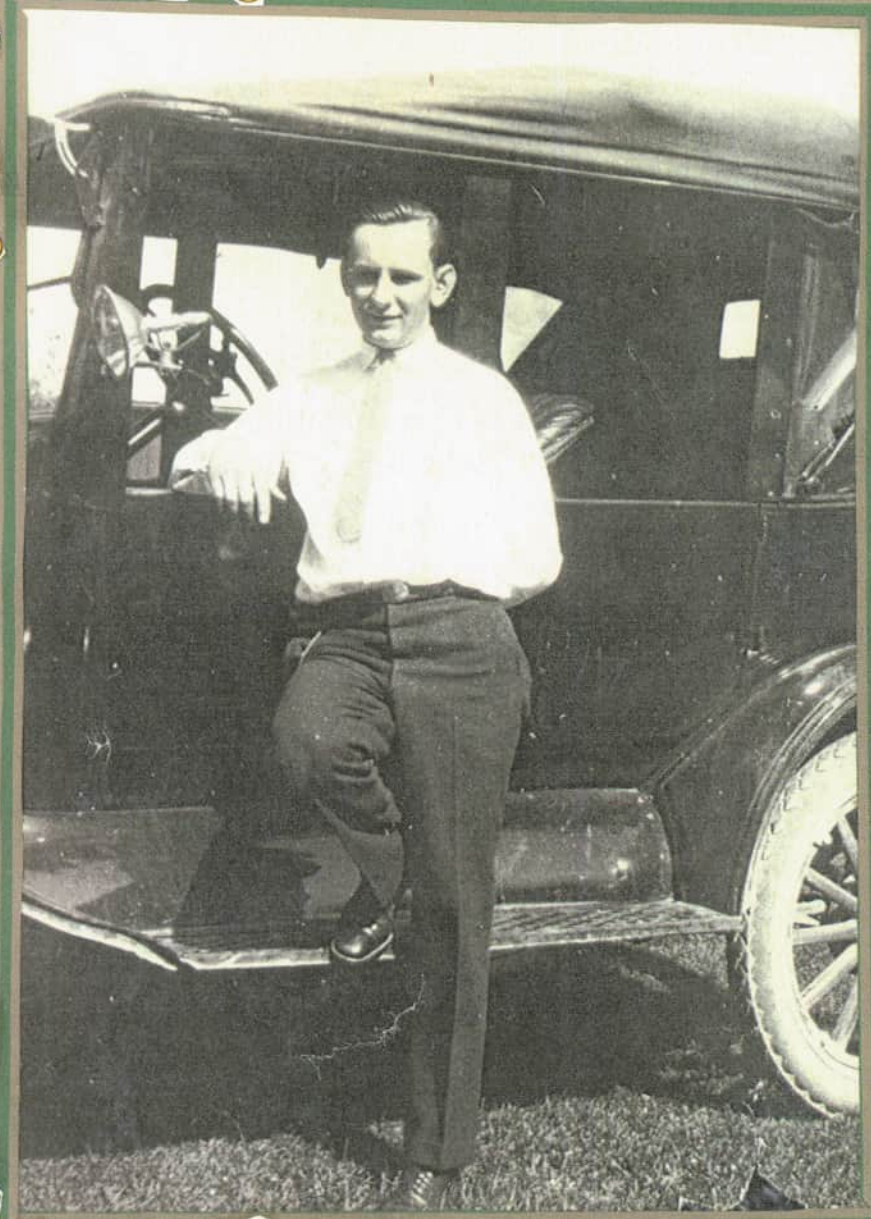
Not only had Al missed his brother's wedding, but so did Leona who was recovering from the birth of her third son born two weeks earlier. In those days new mothers were not allowed out of bed for the first 10 days after giving birth.

When Luke and Lorine were married, the country was midway through the years of prohibition. Many parts of the country did not approve of the law and St. Henry was among them. Breaking this law was common and people did not consider it a serious crime. Women who never drank before prohibition now found it fashionable to drink bootleg liquor and to smoke cigarettes.(3) Bootlegging was common in the St. Henry area. Distilling whiskey required sugar which was bought at the Beckman and Gast store. The county sheriff at that time was Ed Bernard, a brother-in-law of Lorine's sister, Regina. When he knew that the Feds planned a raid, he would casually mention it in the store. Luke and Louie would then let their customers know so that they could hide their stills and avoid being arrested.(4)

In May 1926, Clara's father, Henry Gottemoller, died at the age of 86. At this time, Leona and Louie and their three sons were living with Clara and her family. The Gasts had been forced to move from their rented house and there was no other housing

1. Coldwater Chronicle: August 7, 1925.
2. This hall was upstairs in the 2nd building east of the corner of Main and Sycamore Streets (122 East Main Street).
3. Lorine Stammen Beckman.
4. Luke Beckman.

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Luke Beckman
1/4/1901 - 4/19/1988



Lorine Stammen Beckman
1/25/1907 - 11/30/1966

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available. Clara and her two daughters, Eva and Mary A., moved in with Bestmama, Clara's mother.

The following July, Luke and Lorine had a baby daughter, Betty. Clara already had three grandsons, but Betty was the first granddaughter. A year and a half later, in December 1927, Luke and his family moved from Main Street to East Washington Street and Lorine's parents came to live with them.

For the previous five years the Beckman and Gast store had done very well and in late 1927 another business opportunity presented itself. The Ben Macke canning factory came up for sale. According to Luke, Mr. Macke owned the finest house in town, drove the biggest car, and ran the largest account at the store, so there must be money in canning tomatoes.

Raising the capital to buy the factory presented a problem. The St. Henry Bank would not give them a loan saying they already had enough trouble with canning factories. Doctor Gibbons, who was on the board of the Citizens Bank in Celina, was Louie's doctor and he offered to go in 50-50 with them. They turned him down, but he encouraged them to go to a bank board meeting at the Citizens Bank and this lead to a loan for $10,000 for purchasing the factory and $2500 for operating expenses. On February 4, 1928, Luke and Louie bought the factory which Luke would manage while Louie would manage the store. The Beckman and Gast Canning Company had a very successful tomato pack that fall which netted a profit of $5800. They used the money to pay the interest on their loans and, with the bank's permission, paid nothing on the principal. Instead they built a two room addition to their factory.(1) They again made a good profit in 1929. In 1930 they offered their growers a bonus if they exceeded a certain amount of tonnage per acre. Almost everyone earned the bonus and the factory had more tomatoes than they wanted. One of the growers said he made so much money on his crop that he thought he should give some of it back.(2)

Joe Schnell, who had been making turtle soup in his basement in Piqua, made an agreement with Beckman and Gast to pack it at the factory and it became one of the best money makers for the company.(3) During World War II tin cans were scarce and the government would not allow them to pack it for they considered it a luxury. The factory resumed packing it after the war.

1. Luke Beckman.
2. Leona Beckman Gast. Tomatoes were grown on small acreage. The planting and the picking were done by hand. The tomatoes were put into wooden crates and hauled to the factory.
3. Mary Beckman Niekamp remembers a time when live turtles were kept in her father's barn before they were butchered to make soup.

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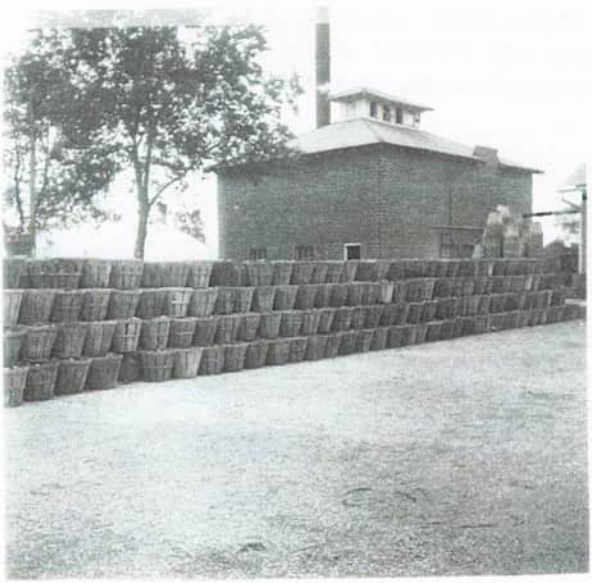
THE BECKMAN AND GAST CANNING COMPANY - PURCHED IN 1927

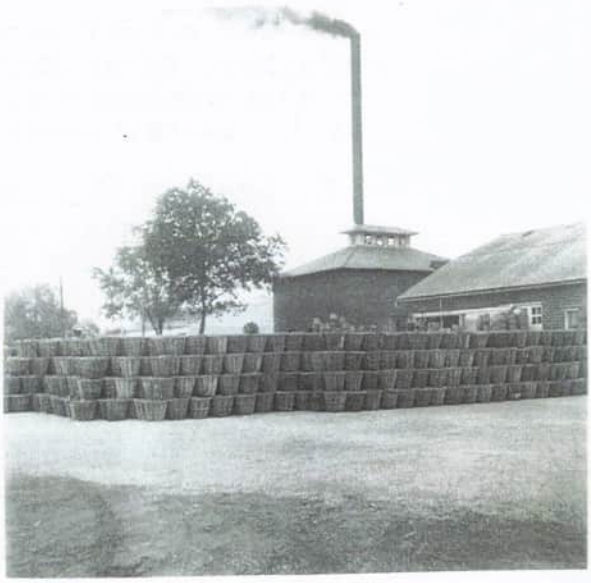












Many changes took place in 1928. In March, shortly after the purchase of the canning factory, Luke and Lorine had their second daughter, Pat, thus giving Clara 6 grandchildren, Leona's four boys and Luke's two girls. In May, Mary A. graduated from high school and Eva graduated from nursing school. Since Clara had always promised Al that she would visit him in California, this seemed a good time to go. That November Clara, Eva, and Mary A. took the train to California to live with Al who had rented a house for them in Modesto.(1) This house had a bathroom and for the first time Clara and the girls knew the convience of indoor plumbing.

While they were in California, Mary A. went to business school and Eva did private duty nursing. Al gave up his job in the sporting goods store and bought a dry cleaning business which he ran by himself.

Shortly after arriving in California, Clara had a strange experience. They had all gone to a show and suddenly - clear as a bell - Clara heard Henry's voice saying, "Clara, don't sell the house." Henry had been dead for 6 years and Clara had no idea what his words meant. No one else had heard anything. The next day she received a letter from St. Henry saying that someone wanted to buy her home. Of course, she didn't sell.

During their stay in California, both Al and Eva met the person they were to marry. Al fell in love with Ruth Galbraith whose family had come to California in 1908 from Johnsonville, Illinois. Ruth was just a baby when the Galbraiths moved. Like many pioneers before them, they made the journey by wagon. Ruth grew up and went to nurses' training. She finished her courses but never took her state boards however her marriage license says that she was working as a special nurse when she married. On Memorial Day, May 30, 1929, Al and Ruth eloped to San Francisco. Ruth was not a Catholic and never converted to the Catholic faith but she and Al were married by a priest and Ruth fulfilled her promise to raise her children as Catholics.

Al was a tall groom with very long legs like his grandfather, Frank Beckman. Just as Frank's bride, Margaret, could stand beneath his outstretched arm, so Al's bride, Ruth, could fit neatly under his.

Al brought his new bride to Ohio for their honeymoon.(2) After a short stay, they returned to California. They then decided to move back to St. Henry, arriving by car at the end of September. Al went to work at the Beckman and Gast Store where he had worked as a teenager.(3)

1. Coldwater Chronicle: Nov. 6, 1928.
2. Coldwater Chronicle: June 14, 1929.
3. Coldwater Chronicle: October 4, 1929.

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Eva met Al Schritz when he and two of his friends came to California for a vacation. Al was from Skeels Crossing, a little community about 10 miles west of Celina. Eva and Mary A. returned to Ohio in August 1929 but Clara remained for three more months, coming home in November. Eva had bought a car and the two girls and Schritz and his two friends drove it back to Ohio. They made the trip in 4 days, driving long hours and pulling to the side of the road occasionally to sleep. Eva and Mary A. settled in Cincinnati where they worked for several years.(1)

In the fall of 1929, Luke and Louie decided to sell the store. Farm prices had not been good for quite a while and they suspected that hard times might be coming. Their fears were reinforced when the stock market plunged in October of 1929. The partners had a difficult time finding a buyer until their real estate agent, Luke's brother-in-law Tony Bernard, suggested that they sweeten the pot by agreeing to open a glove factory for at least a year. This would insure more jobs in the community and more customers for the store. They sold the store at invoice price on March 21, 1930 to Harry Romer who took over on May 31. Luke and Louie purchased the machinery and materials to make gloves for $1000 and opened a factory in the building that would later be "Mups" Bruns' store which Louie Gast and Tony Bernard had purchased.(2) When the year's obligation was completed, the glove factory was sold to a Mr. Blackschlagle who continued to run it for a few more years.

Shortly before the store was sold, Luke and Lorine had their last child - a third daughter named, Mary Lee. Clara now had seven grandchildren but there still were no boys who could carry on the Beckman name. This was remedied when Al and Ruth had two sons; John who was born in 1934, and Jim, born in 1936.(3)

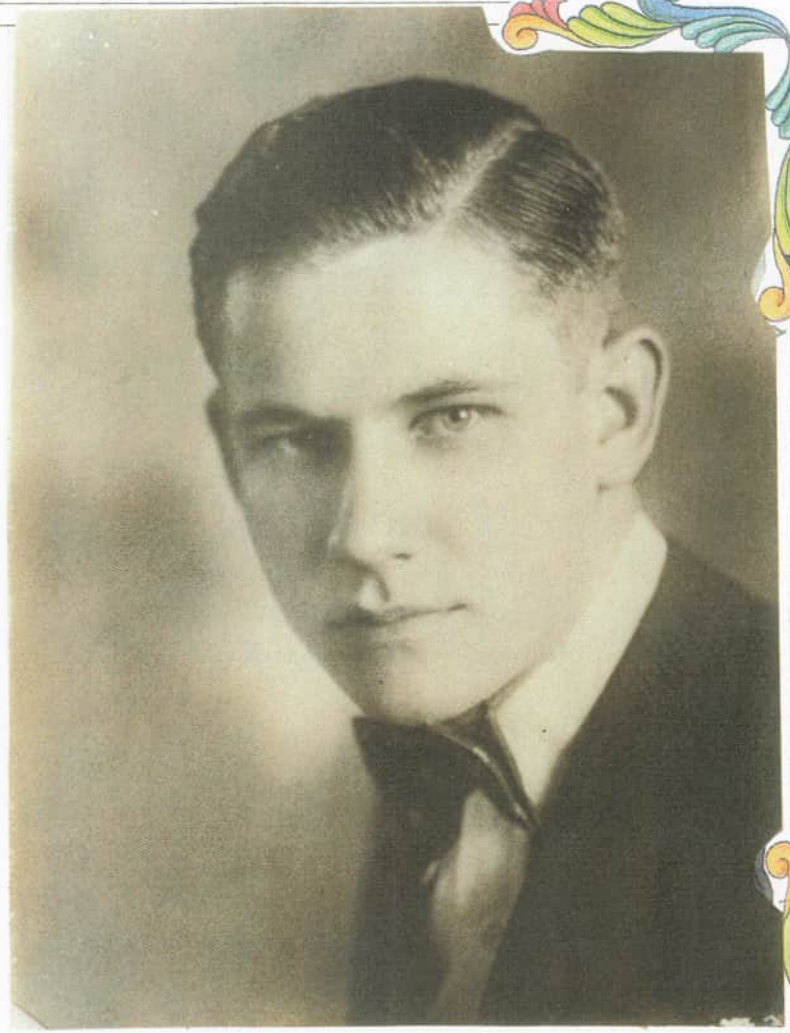
In January of 1931 Luke and Lorine moved to a house at 132 Sycamore Street just north of St. Henry's first fire department.(4) For the first time they had a bathroom and a furnace. Lorine's parents, who had been living with them, moved to a small house on Columbus St. across from today's high school. There was very little new building in St. Henry during the depression years. In December 1932 Luke bought a two room house at 211 West Washington Street near the canning factory. The original two rooms became one long living room across the front of the house. Behind the living room, Luke and Lorine added a dining room, a dinette, a kitchen, two bedrooms and a bath. They put a basement under this new addition and installed a furnace. Water pipes ran through the furnace so the family had hot water

1. Eva Beckman Schritz.
2. This building still remains on the south side of Main Street; the 2nd building east of the corner of Main and Sycamore Sts.
3. John and Jim Beckman each have one son. Jim has one grandson.
4. This house has been moved to 132 West Columbus Street.

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Ruth Galbraith Beckman
12/14/1907 - 6/1/1966



Albert Beckman
2/14/1905 - 2/8/1965

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in the winter time. In the summer a tank of water was heated by a small cast iron stove that stood next to the furnace. This was used mostly on Saturdays because the stove created too much heat.

However Al and Ruth were the first of Henry and Clara's children to buy their own home. In the fall of 1931, they bought a home at 432 East Washington Street. This house originally was the store of Al's great grandparents, Henry and Elizabeth Beckman, and had stood next to the west side of their 1856 home on Main St. It had its gable end facing the street. In 1907 Joe Naseman bought the building and moved it to Washington St. The side of the store became the front of the house.

On Thanksgiving Day in 1931, Eva married Alois Schritz. She had continued to see Al after they both returned from California in 1929. For her wedding, Eva wore a dark green dress trimmed with black chiffon velvet and carried an arm bouquet of roses. The ceremony at St. Henry Catholic Church was followed by a breakfast for relatives and guests at the home of Leona and Louie who were living in Clara's house near the center of town.(1) Eva and Al went to Dayton on their wedding night and the following day went to Cincinnati where a group of their friends held a party for them. Weddings in the 1930's were rather modest because the nation was in the midst of the great depression and few people had money for elaborate celebrations or honeymoons.

At the time of their marriage, Schritz was working for the Cron Tire and Supply Co. in Celina and Eva was doing private duty nursing whenever work was to be had. The newlyweds moved into a duplex on east Anthony Street. Mary A., who was now 21, came to live with them in Celina.

Eva had learned to play bridge in 1929 and she and Schritz were both excellent players. The depression made card playing a popular entertainment for it cost nothing to play. In 1932 Eva began playing golf at Northmoor Country Club even though it was considered an expensive sport. Eva played to a 20 handicap most of the time and her lowest score was an 85.(2) Eva had an avid interest in both of these activities all of her life and is still playing bridge at the age of 92.

On October 29, 1933, the Schritzs had their first child, a girl whom they named Ann. The following year they had a son, Bob, who was born on December 7, 1934. A third child, Penny, arrived almost seven years later on August 22, 1941, just a few months before America entered into World War II. She was Clara's 15th and final grandchild.

1. Clara lived with Bestmama in the east half of the house at 414 East Main Street.
2. Eva Beckman Schritz.

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Eva Beckman Schritz
4/19/1907 - -/-/-
10/17/2002



Aloysius Schritz
7/22/1907 - 7/11/1982

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Mary Agnes was the last of Henry and Clara's children to marry. She met Alfred Winkeljohn when she was working in Celina as an accounting clerk in the office of the National Mutual Insurance Company and Al was a payroll clerk at the Mersman Brothers Corporation. Al had been born in Cincinnati in 1909. His family moved to Celina when he was a boy and he graduated from Immaculate Conception High School.

Mary A. and Al (Wink) were married in the St. Henry Catholic Church on June 9, 1934. She wore a white crepe suit and a white straw picture hat. She carried an arm bouquet of white roses. After the 8:30 Wednesday morning ceremony, a breakfast was served to the immediate families at the home of Leona and Louie Gast. The newlyweds left in the afternoon for a motor trip through Kentucky. After their return, they lived in Celina at 431 West Fayette Street.

After the Beckman and Gast Store was sold in 1930, Al Beckman worked at the canning factory until he became postmaster in 1934. He was the fourth generation of Beckmans to serve as postmaster in St. Henry. He was preceded by his great great grandfather, Henry; his great uncle, John G.; and his father, Henry A. His grandfather, Frank Beckman, was also a postmaster but he served in Burkettsville.

In September 1935 the Gasts had their first daughter, Jean Ann. Leona, now 38, had given birth to her fourth son over 8 1/2 years earlier and this baby girl was a welcome addition to the family. At the time of Jean Ann's birth Leona and Louie were in the midst of building their new home on Sycamore Street. This fine brick house stood just north of the village water tower. A fairly steep ramp led to a garage in the basement. Having a garage attached to the house was a very novel idea in the 1930's. The ramp was not too successful for it often became ice covered and unusable in the winter.

When the Gasts moved into their new house in January 1936, Clara and Bestmama moved back into Clara's home at 121 East Main Street where both she and her mother would live until their deaths. That Christmas, Clara invited all of her children and her grandchildren to her house for Christmas dinner. The Beckman family continued this holiday tradition for many years but the pot-luck dinners and the exchange of gifts were held at the homes of Clara's children, each child taking a turn. These family gatherings ended when the older grandchildren grew up. They then wanted to celebrate at their own homes. Clara and Al and Ruth's family continued to share Christmas with Luke and Lorine and their three daughters.

1936 brought more changes to the Beckman family. Eva began working at Gibbons Hospital in Celina and became their head surgical nurse, a position she held until 1948. In June, Mary A.

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Alfred Winkeljohn
3/19/1909 - 3/3/1974



Mary Agnes Beckman Winkeljohn
3/30/1910 - 7/5/2000

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and Wink moved to St. Henry. They purchased Wolf's bar and restaurant across the street from Clara's house. They lived with Clara for a short time before moving into living quarters above the restaurant. They named their new business "Wink's Inn". Their sister-in-law, Lorine, baked the pies that were sold there. Wink made a "Rainbow Room" behind the bar area where the high school kids could come to drink coke, listen to the jukebox, and dance.

The Winkeljohn children were born while Mary A. and Al were living in St. Henry. Alan (Pete) was born in August, 1937, and Lois joined the family in June of 1941. The following August, Mary A. and Wink moved to Dayton where Al worked for the White Baking Co. They had sold their restaurant the previous January to John Vondrell but they didn't move until that fall.

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and the United States entered World War II. Although Clara's sons had never served in the armed services, her grandsons did. Leona and Louie's boys were just the right age. The two oldest, Jim and Bill, were in the Air Force, and John became a paratrooper in the airborne infantry. Jim was trained as a bombardier navigator but was always stationed in the United States. Bill was the radio operator on a B17 bomber. His plane was shot down over Germany in September, 1944, and he became a prisoner of war until the armistice. John was part of the D-Day invasion of June 1944 and parachuted across the Rhine River behind the German lines. He was one of the lucky ones who survived.(1)

Leona read about the D-Day invasion while she was in the hospital in Dayton. The doctors had discovered cancer in her colon and she was recovering from a colostomy. She was 46 at the time and over the next two years would undergo five surgeries relating to her cancer. In September 1944, while Leona was in the hospital at Dayton for her second surgery, the Gasts received word that their son Bill was a prisoner of war. On that same day, Mary A. and Wink were told that their son, Pete, had polio and he was brought to the same hospital. Luckily Pete recovered with no serious complications, however he did experience some weakness in his back when he was a teenager and needed to wear a brace for some years.

Al Beckman always loved plants, trees, and flowers and once told a friend that had he been able to go to college, he would have majored in horticulture.(2) He played a leading role in a

1. After the Korean War, three more of Clara's grandsons served in the Armed Forces: John Beckman was in the Coast Guard from 1953-1957; Jim Beckman was in the Army Tank Corps in Germany from 1954-1958; Bob Schritz was in the Marine Corps from 1956-1958.
2. told to Dr. Edward Bernard in 1945.

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tree planting program to beautify St. Henry in the late 1930's and his own landscaped yard, with the town's only pergola, inspired many of St. Henry's citizens to beautify their own properties. In the early 1940's, Al started a dry cleaning business in the summer kitchen behind his house. Pick-ups and deliveries were made by pulling a cart behind a bicycle.

In July, 1945, Al and Ruth sold their Washington St. house and all of their furnishings and planned to move back to California where Al hoped to open a landscaping business. They decided not to go after Ruth read in the paper that two million people had moved to California that year. They decided it would be too crowded.(1) The family moved in with Al's mother, Clara, in the big house on Main Street, thus adding to the long list of family members who had once lived there. A short time later, Al and Ruth bought a small farm on St. Rt. 118 about a half mile north of St. Henry. They lived here until 1955 when they moved into the new California styled home that they had built in a small woods on the west end of their farm. This house had a flat roof and was the first of its kind to be built in the area.

In August 1946 Al retired from the post office and became a representative for Investors Diversified Services, an investment company out of Minneapolis, Minnesota. Al, with his out-going personality and his even temperament, seemed ideally suited as a salesman. He opened an office in the First National Bank building in Celina and continued in this business until his death in 1965 from cancer. Al died on February 8, just six days before his 60th birthday. After his death, Ruth returned to California for a short time where she stayed with her sister. After coming back to St. Henry, she sold their house in the woods and bought a cottage along Grand Lake in Celina. Her new home was next door to one of her dear friends, Bea Hakes, who was also a widow.

Ruth died suddenly at her home on June 1, 1966, just a year and four months after Al. Her body was found the next day by her sister-in-law and closest friend, Lorine Beckman. Ruth was 58 1/2 years old at the time of her death.

During the war, Eva had bought savings bonds with a portion of her salary. In 1948 Schritz and a friend, Ott Steinbrunner, had the opportunity to buy the Celina Body Shop, a company that sold cars and did body work.(2) Like her mother before her, Eva used her savings to help her husband start his own business. She gave up her nursing position and became the company bookkeeper. The following year the company became an auto parts store and changed their name to CBS Automotive Supply. Eva worked there full time until 1952 and then part time until 1970 when she and Al began spending their winters in Florida and returning to Ohio

1. From Jim Beckman.
2. Dale Bear later became third partner in CBS.

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for the summertime. In 1972 Schritz retired and he and Eva made their permanent home in Florida where they built a new house at Lehigh Acres in 1979. Eva and Al celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in November, 1981, and were the only members of the Beckman family to reach that milestone. Schritz died the following July just 11 days before his 75th birthday. Eva stayed in Florida until 1997, when at the age of 90, she moved to Akin, South Carolina to be near her oldest daughter, Ann.

Mary A. and Wink raised their two children in Dayton. When Pete and Lois were older and asked why the family had left St. Henry, Wink jokingly told them, "I couldn't raise my daughter on a bar stool".(1) Wink worked as credit manager for the White Bakery until 1962 when the company was liquidated. He then became Chief Deputy in the Montgomery County Treasurer's Office. Mary A. also worked for Montgomery County in the Auto Registration Bureau.

They both began to play golf when they were in their forties. They enjoyed it very much and continued to play during their retirement. Mary A. retired in 1971. As she grew older she began to have trouble with her eyes. In 1973, a year after Wink retired, they decided to move to Albuquerque, New Mexico, in hopes that the dry climate would help Mary A.'s sight. She had dystrophy of the cornea and would eventually have transplants. The cornea in her left eye was replaced three times and the one in her right eye was replaced once. She had her first transplant on her left eye in 1976 when she was 66 years old but it only lasted two years. Her second transplant lasted 5 years before a third transplant was needed. Her right eye was operated on in 1991 when she was 81.

On March 3, 1974, just a little more than a year after they moved to Albuquerque, Wink died suddenly from a high blood pressure stroke. He and Mary A. had just returned from a round of golf and Mary A. was in the kitchen making BLT sandwiches. She asked Wink a question and received no reply. When she went to get his answer, she found Wink making a gurgling noise. Mary A. tried to revive him but it was too late. Wink died just a few weeks before his 65th birthday.(2)

Mary A. continued to live in Albuquerque for twenty more years. She returned to Ohio in 1994 where she was diagnosed with dementia. She tried assisted living for one month and then she entered The Franciscan of St. Leonard Nursing Home in Centerville on September 9, 1994. Mary A. has been there 5 years this past September.

1. Lois Winkeljohn Scherzinger, daughter of Mary A. and Wink.
2. According to Lois Scherzinger, her mother didn't eat another BLT sandwich for many years.

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The Beckman and Gast Company remained a prosperous endeavor for both Luke and Louie. Luke was always liberal in his ideas and Louie leaned to the conservative side. Their decisions met somewhere in the middle to the benefit of themselves and the company. Before World War II they bought 160 acres of farm land in the Cranberry prairie and for the first time they seeded their own tomato plants instead of using transplants that were shipped from Georgia. By the late 1930's the company was canning red beets, tomatoes, and carrots. Pumpkin was add to their inventory in 1939. Luke and Louie continued to expand their business and on April 6, 1943, they purchased their second factory, the Minster Canning Company, Minster, Ohio. Luke managed this plant but continued to live in St. Henry while Louie oversaw the St. Henry factory. After the war they acquired a third factory in New Carlisle, Ohio.

Leona put her early bookkeeping training to good use. For over 40 years she worked in the office of the factory during the canning season. She did this until she was 72. She was also an avid gardener and spent much of her time tending to her yard.

As Luke and Louie's children became young adults and began to marry, the time came to dissolve the partnership. This division would allow the owners to take their children into the business. In 1950, after selling the New Carlisle plant, Luke and Louie divided their assets. Louie and his sons kept the St. Henry factory and Luke took the Minster plant plus a 25 cent royalty on each case of turtle soup packed by Beckman and Gast. This was an amicable separation and the two companies continued to cooperate over the ensuing years.

Luke soon offered positions and part ownership of his company to his three sons-in-law. In 1953 they bought the machinery from the Union Food Products of Greenville and added ketchup, packed in gallon cans, and mustard to their production line. During the 1960's they purchased three farms and raised their own tomatoes. They also bought the old Wooden Shoe Brewery building and converted it into offices and warehousing.

Louie and his sons also bought land, purchased another factory in Osgood, Ohio, and added green beans to their line. In the early 1950's Louie's health began to decline. His ankles swelled from edema and he also suffered from emphysema probably caused from a life time of smoking. It was time to start taking it a little easier. Leona and Louie started to spend their winters in Florida. They bought an apartment in Lake Worth and usually stayed for about 4 months; however they always managed to be home for the Gasts' Christmas.

On a cold snowy day in November 1964, Louie had finished his breakfast and was sitting by the dining room window. Leona was in the kitchen washing the dishes. When she returned to the

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dining room, she found that Louie had very quietly died. He was 69 and he and Leona had been married for 45 years.

Leona wished to stay independent which meant that she now had to learn to drive a car. Many women of her generation never drove. Leona passed her driving test but never gained enough confidence to make more than short trips around the area. She continued to live in their home on Sycamore Street and attend to her yard and flower gardens. She also continued to go to Florida for the winter months. Five years after Louie died, Leona sold her house and moved into an apartment a few doors east of the home of her son, Bill.

Leona was a woman of strong will and great wit. She had a wonderful sense of humor. She walked every day for her health and once fell while walking along Main Street. When a passerby asked if she needed help, she quipped, "No, I always lie here at two o'clock in the afternoon".

Like her mother before her, Leona wished to remain self-reliant and not be a burden to her family. In September, 1994 she recognized that she could no longer live alone and decided to enter Briarwood Nursing Home in Coldwater where she would spend the rest of her days. Although her body was frail, her mind remained very alert until her death. Leona died on April 12, 1997 just 5 months before her 100th birthday.

Following in the footsteps of his father, Luke was an active member of his community. He belonged to the St. Henry Commercial Club which was founded in 1907 to improve the business climate of the town. Luke's father, Henry, was one of its charter members. Luke also served on the City Council and the Board of Public Affairs. He was president of the school board when the 1939 high school was built. The old high school was located in the 1924 two story south addition of the 1903 elementary building. This was a time of high tension for the town of St. Henry as many people held very adamant views either for or against this project. Parades and rallies were held before the election and the issue passed by 176 votes. During World War II Luke was state chairman of the Manpower Commission and chairman of the Industrial Draft Board of Ohio.

Lorine was kept busy raising their three daughters. She worked at the factory during the canning season but she was primarily a homemaker. She was a very good seamstress and during the Depression she sewed most of her children's clothes. She also made slip covers and drapes for her relatives and friends. She had a talent for making her house a comfortable and welcoming home. In December, 1945, Lorine and Luke bought 80 acres of land just south and east of St. Henry's cemetery. In 1952 they built a brick ranch style home in the woods at the south end of this property along Lange Road. Here Lorine planted extensive flower

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gardens as she enjoyed working in her yard.(1) Lorine learned to play golf late in her life, and though she wasn't an accomplished player, she enjoyed the friendships and the camaraderie that golf provided.

From the beginning of his ownership in the canning factory, Luke was active in the Ohio Canners Association, attending state conventions and national ones. He was elected president of the Ohio Canners in 1947-1948 and received the J.D. Brown award for distinguished service. He was also active at the national level and became president of the National Canners Association in 1970. His installation took place at their 63rd annual convention which was held in Washington D.C. Luke served on the Legislative Committee of the National Canners from 1946 until shortly before he retired. He was the chairman of this committee from 1965 to 1970 and was proud to say, "We never lost a battle on Capitol Hill when I headed the Legislative Committee". The purpose of this committee was to prevent congress from passing bills that were detrimental to the canning industry.

Tragedy devastated Luke's family on November 30, 1966 when Lorine was killed in an automobile accident as she and Luke were coming home from Minster. The day before a six inch snow fall with heavy winds had left the roads very hazardous. A road-grader that was being used as a snow plow turned into a farm lane in front of Luke. Although he swerved the car to avoid the plow, it still hit the passenger side and Lorine was killed instantly. She was 59 years old, 5 weeks short of her 60th birthday. Lorine and Luke had been married 41 years the previous October.

Luke was the only one of Henry and Clara's family to marry a second time. He remained a widower for two years. In the summer of 1968 he met Marie Sutter, a 54 year old widow from Dayton. They met at a luau party at the Mercer County Elks. Luke courted Marie throughout the summer and on October 19, 1968, they were married at St. Albert's Church in Dayton. For the next 19 1/2 years they lived in Luke's house in the woods. In 1971 they traveled to Ireland with one of Luke's boyhood schoolmates, Andrew Bertke, and his wife, Rafie. These two couples remained lasting friends. Luke and Marie spent their winter months in Lakeland, Florida, where they golfed with other friends from Mercer County.

As Luke neared the end of his life he began to suffer from alzheimer disease. He entered the Heritage Nursing Home at Minster in July of 1987 and died there nine months later on April 19, 1988. He had reached his 87th birthday the previous January. The following year Marie sold the house and farm and moved to an

1. Ann Niekamp Stammen, the granddaughter of Luke and Lorine, and her husband, Howard, bought this house and about 45 acres of land in 1989 after Luke's death.

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Luke Beckman
and his second wife
Marie Sutter Beckman

apartment in town. She outlived Luke by 6 1/2 years and was 80 years old when she died at Briarwood Manor Nursing Home at Coldwater, on September 16, 1994.

Henry and Clara Beckman celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary in 1920 just 2 1/2 years before Henry's death. Although Henry knew only one of his 15 grandchildren, Clara lived to see 42 of her 60 great grandchildren. After Bestmama died in 1940, Clara continued to live alone in the big frame house that she and Henry had bought in 1913. Clara was a woman of deep faith. Each morning she rose early to go to the six A.M. mass. There was a later mass at eight o'clock but Clara wanted to make the extra sacrifice of getting up early. She also said the rosary each day. When any member of the parish died, she prayed the prayers on their death card each day for a year, stopping on the anniversary of their death. Clara also had great trust in her guardian angel. Clara once awoke in the middle of the night because she felt someone pull her leg. She turned on the flashlight that she kept by her bed but she saw nothing. She decided to get up anyway. When she went into the kitchen she found that her toaster was red hot. She had forgotten to unplug it. In those days toasters didn't shut off automatically as they do today.

Clara always kept Christmas in her heart. Each December she would bake coffee cakes and cookies for the sick, the needy, and the lonely. Her sugar cookies were not only good but they were a sight to behold. Her Santa Claus faces had raisin eyes and coconut beards and her stocking cookies were striped with red and white icing and had decorated toys coming out the tops. Clara's grandchildren delivered these gifts a few days before Christmas.

It was hard to find housing in St. Henry in 1949 when Clara's granddaughter, Mary Beckman married Tom Niekamp. Clara allowed them to make an apartment in the four rooms of her upstairs. Their first Christmas together, the Niekamps put up a small Christmas tree that stood on a table. They had little money for ornaments so Clara brought them some cardboard tubes that had contained bouillon cubes and some cardboard spools from "ripple tie" ribbon. She helped them cover these with silver foil and then decorate them with colored plastic tape making them look like candy canes and little drums. These homemade ornaments still hang on the Niekamp's tree each Christmas.

Clara always waited until Christmas morning to open her gifts. In 1949 she received a beautiful large glass ornament from her sister Anna. At first she was disappointed as she considered it a useless gift in her old age until she found a $5.00 bill rolled up and tucked into the hole at the top. Clara kept the money but she hung the ornament on her granddaughter's tree upstairs.



Clara Gottemoller Beckman

Clara was almost 86 when she died on June 29, 1961. She had been a widow for 38 years. She was able to live alone in her own house from 1940 when her mother died until her own death - just as she wished it!

THE GRANDCHILDREN OF HENRY AND CLARA BECKMAN

CHILDREN OF LEONA AND LOUIS GAST

James Gast	March 12, 1921
William Gast	August 30, 1923
John Gast	September 22, 1925
Robert Gast	January 31, 1927
Jean Ann Gast	September 7, 1935

CHILDREN OF LUKE AND LORINE BECKMAN

Elizabeth (Betty) Beckman	July 13, 1926
Dorothy Jean (Pat) Beckman	March 22, 1928
Mary Lee Beckman	February 15, 1930

CHILDREN OF ALBERT AND RUTH BECKMAN

John Beckman	June 15, 1934
James Beckman	May 21, 1937

CHILDREN OF EVA AND AL SCHRITZ

Ann Schritz	October 29, 1933
Robert Schritz	December 7, 1934
Penelope (Penny) Schritz	August 22, 1941

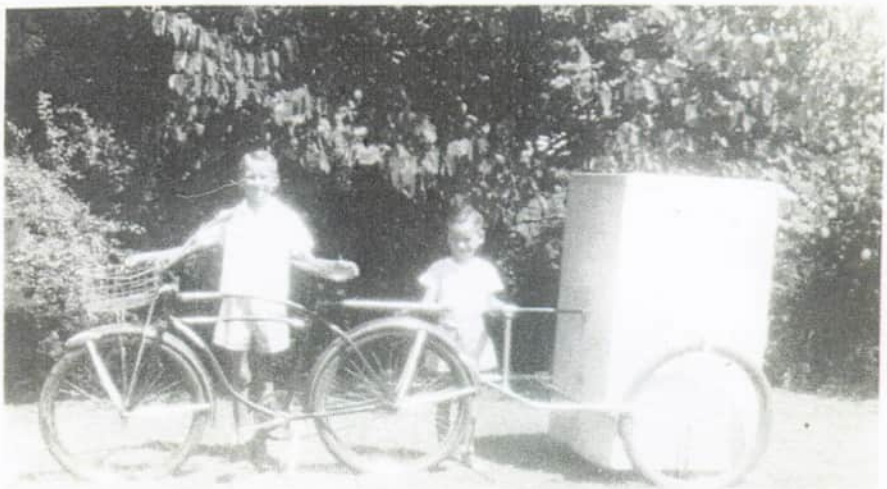
CHILDREN OF MARY A. AND AL WINKELJOHN

Alan (Pete) Winkeljohn	August 24, 1937
Lois Winkeljohn	June 2, 1941

Completed: May 1, 2000
Mary Beckman Niekamp

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Al Beckman's Varsity Cleaners Delivery Cart
Sons: John and Jim
Early 1940's





California 1929: Eva Beckman's Roadster

Left to Right: Glen Holton (Ruth's brother-in-law), Al Beckman, Ruth Galbraith (Beckman), Mary A. Beckman (Winkeljohn), Al Schritz, Eva Beckman (Schritz)

WINK'S INN



THIS RESTAURANT AND BAR WAS PURCHASED BY AL AND MARY A. WINKELJOHN IN 1936 AND WAS SOLD AGAIN IN 1941. THE WINKELJOHN FAMILY THEN MOVED TO DAYTON.

THIS PHOTOGRAPH WAS TAKEN IN 1951 WHEN IT WAS OWNED BY CARL (CHICK) KNAPKE.

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W 1/2 of Lot 58
121 East Main Street

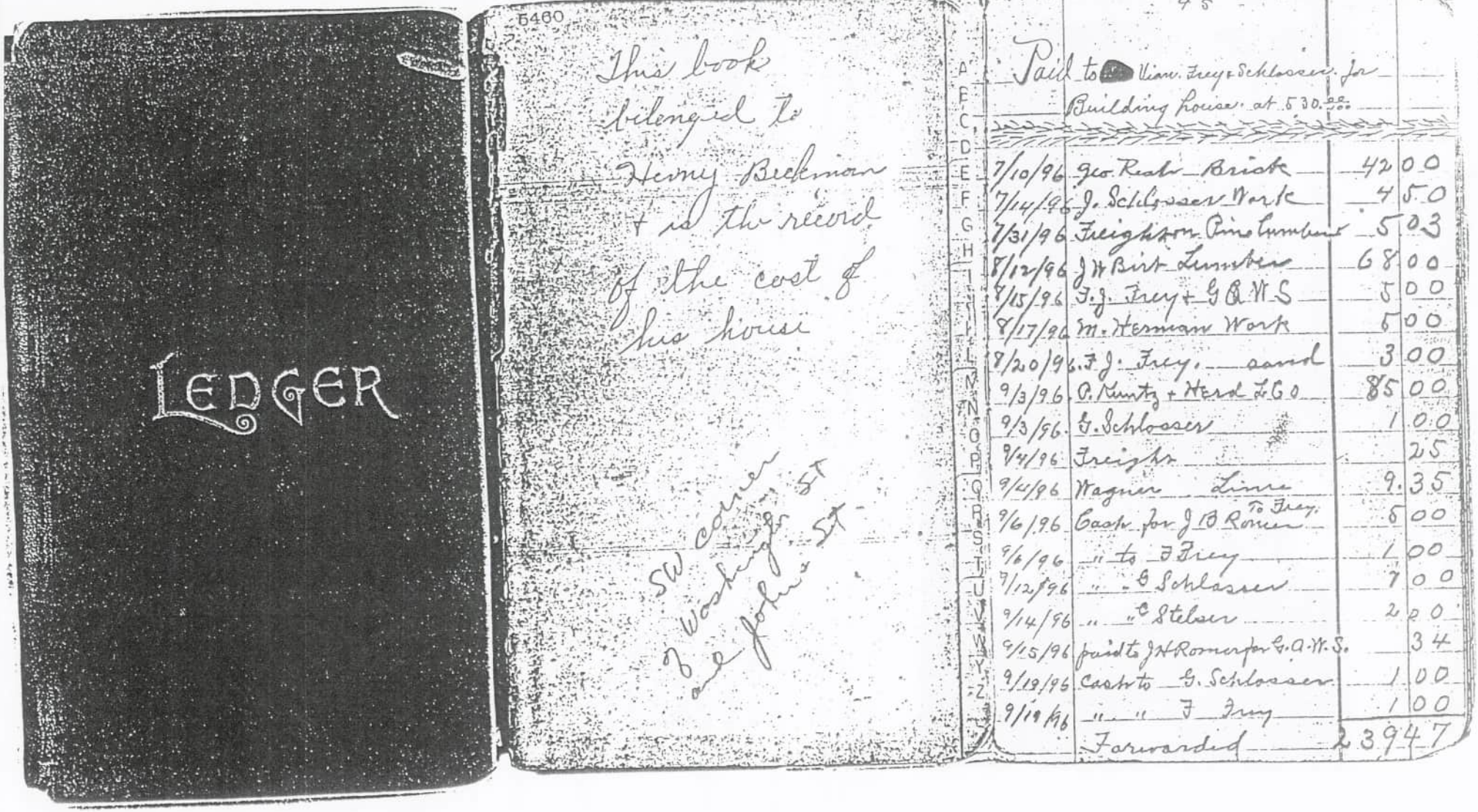


This house was bought and remodeled by Henry and Clara Beckman in 1913. It was at one time the home to both of their parents, several of their children, and two of their granddaughters.

1875: Clara was born here. Her parents, Henry and Elizabeth Gottemoller, rented the upstairs until they could rebuild after their home on East Main Street was destroyed by fire.
1909: Henry's parents, Frank and Margaret Beckman, moved from Celina to St. Henry and rented the upstairs for two years. After Margaret died in Dayton in 1919, her body was returned to St. Henry and the viewing was held in this house then owned by Henry and Clara.
1913: Henry and Clara bought this property, added additional living quarters to the back and moved the post office into the front section. Henry's body was laid out here in 1923.
1925: Henry and Clara's daughter, Leona, lived here with her family until January 1936 when they moved into their new house on Sycamore Street. Clara lived in an apartment with Bestmama during this time.
1936: Henry and Clara's daughter Mary A. and her husband, Al Winkeljohn, lived here with Clara for a short time until the living quarters above their restaurant were available.
1945: Henry and Clara's son, Al, and his family lived here with Clara from the time they sold their Washington St. house until they moved to a farm on St. Rt. 118.
1949: Henry and Clara's granddaughter, Mary Beckman Niekamp, began her married life in the upstairs apartment. She and Tom lived here until 1953.
1950: Henry and Clara's granddaughter, Pat Beckman Post, lived in the front downstairs apartment after the post office was moved to Lot 61 in the fall of this year. Pat and Wally moved in 1952.
1977: This building was demolished.

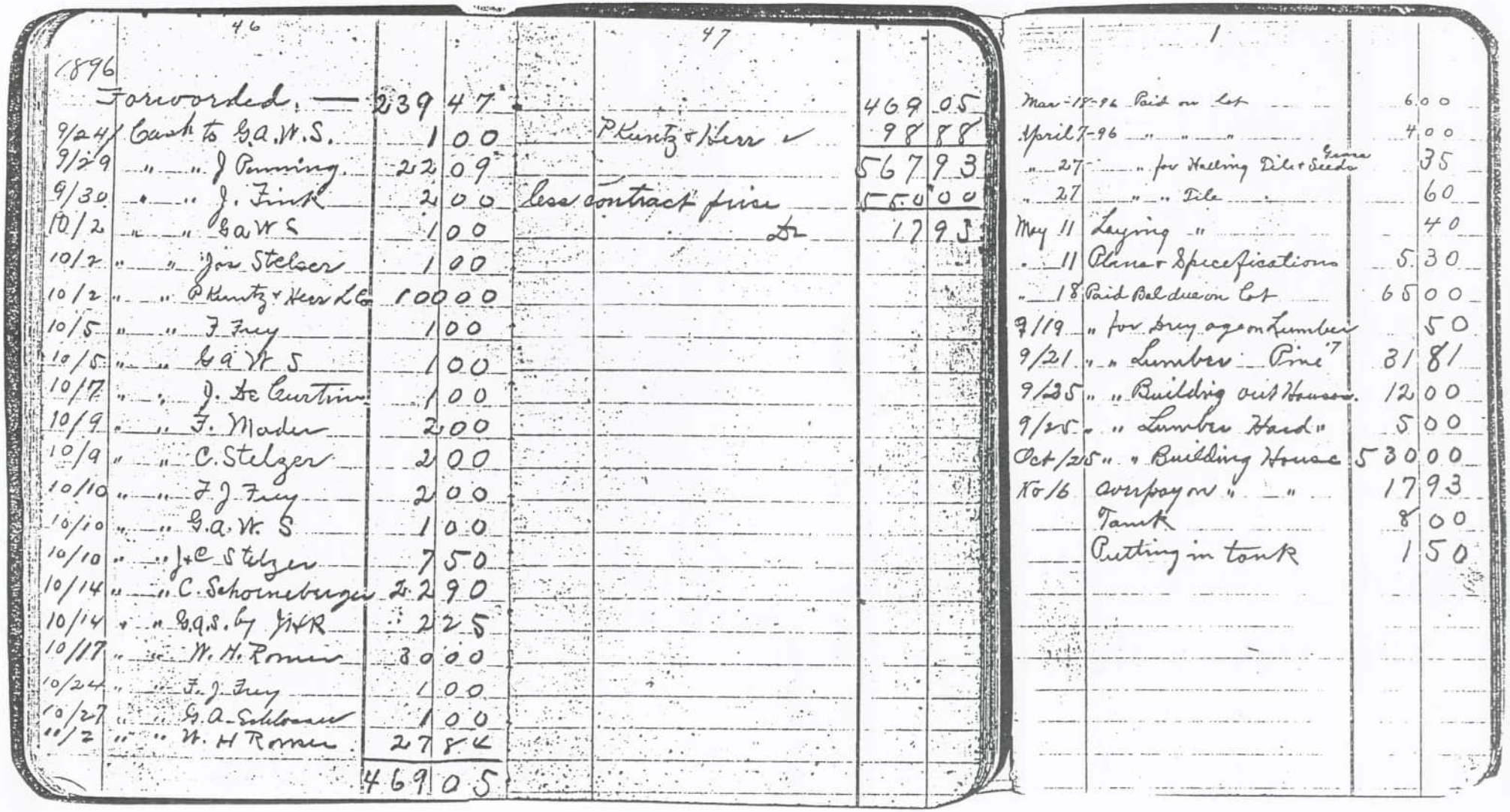
1961: Clara Beckman lived here until her death in 1961.
1977: This building was demolished in 1977.

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HENRY BECKMAN'S LEDGER
Record of expenses for building his 1896 house on the SW corner of Washington and John Streets.

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46

1896

	Forwarded. —	239	47
9/24	Cash to G.A.W.S.	1	00
9/29	" " J Penning	22	09
9/30	" " J. Fink	2	00
10/2	" " G.A.W.S	1	00
10/2	" " Jos Stelzer	1	00
10/2	" " P Kuntz & Herr LC	100	00
10/5	" " J Frey	1	00
10/5	" " G A W S	1	00
10/7	" " J. & C Curtin	1	00
10/9	" " F. Mader	2	00
10/9	" " C. Stelzer	2	00
10/10	" " F J Frey	2	00
10/10	" " G.A.W.S	1	00
10/10	" " J & C Stelzer	7	50
10/14	" " C. Schoneberger	22	90
10/14	" " G.A.S. by J&R	2	25
10/17	" " W. H. Romig	30	00
10/24	" " F. J. Frey	1	00
10/27	" " G. A. Schlosser	1	00
11/2	" " W. H Romig	27	84
		469	05

47

		469	05
	P Kuntz & Herr ✓	98	88
		567	93
	less contract price	550	00
	Dr	17	93

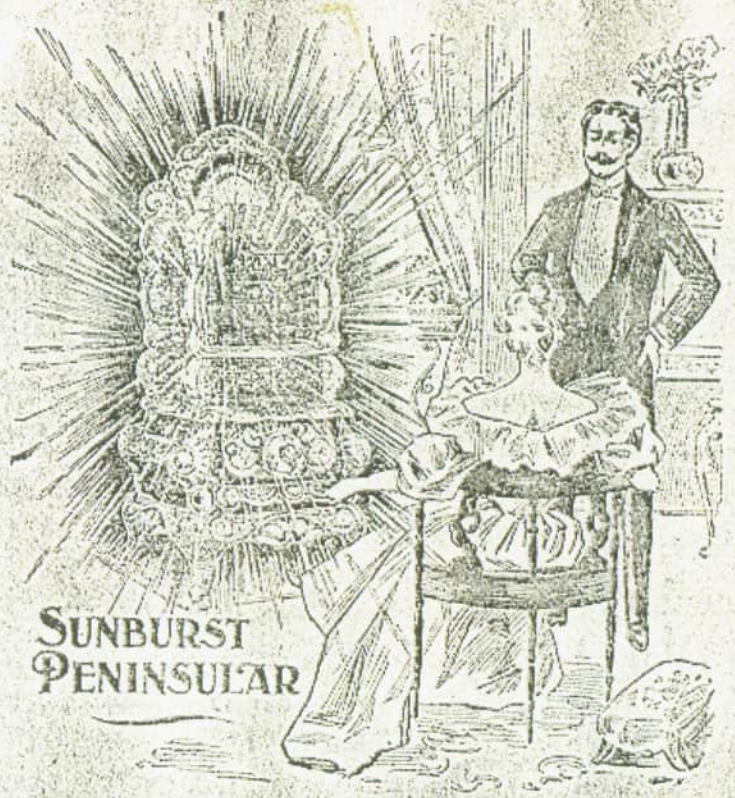
1

Mar 18-96	Paid on Lot	6	00
April 7-96	" " "	4	00
" 27	" for Hauling Tile & Gravel & Seeds		35
" 27	" " Tile		60
May 11	Laying "		40
" 11	Plans & Specifications	5	30
" 18	Paid Bal due on Lot	65	00
9/19	" for drayage on Lumber		50
9/21	" " Lumber: Pine"	21	81
9/25	" " Building out Houses	12	00
9/25	" " Lumber Hard"	5	00
Oct/25	" " Building House	530	00
10/6	overpay on " "	17	93
	Tank	8	00
	Putting in tank	1	50

Ledger Continued

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Base Burners



RANGES AND HEATERS

That Have a Reputation

SOLD BY

H. A. BECKMAN

The Stove Man

ST. HENRY, - - OHIO

APRIL 1908

H ow are you?
A re you ready to look at,
B uy a Range or Cook Stove?
E very one of ours guaranteed
C ome in—look at them
K now if you ought only
M y line you would BUY SURE
A s to prices and ASSORTMENT
N o can't beat 'em— quality considered.

BECKMAN



BECKMAN



Yours for Stoves,
H. A. BECKMAN, St. Henry.

Weather hot or weather cold,
Weather dry or weather wet,
But remember what I have told
Not to let you ever forget
That in rain or sunshine
Mine is the best stove line,
And your order sure I will book
If you only will have a look.

H. A. Beckman
Stovemar.
ST. HENRY, OHIO

OCTOBER 1906

H. A. BECKMAN

DEALER IN

Wall Paper

STATIONERY, RELIGIOUS ARTICLES
AND PRAYER BOOKS

St. Henry, Ohio, 6/28 191[illegible]

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1907 BASEBALL TEAM



FIRST ROW: (L TO R) JOHN SCHLOSSER, EARL JASPER, ALFRED DAVIS
SECOND ROW: (L TO R) FRANK BANY, ED SCHMITZ, AL JASPER, TONY POND
HENRY BECKMAN (UMPIRE)
THIRD ROW: (L TO R) LOU GOTTEMOLLER, AL GOTTEMOLLER, FRED ROMER,
GEORGE ROMER

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Marie Sutter Beckman
Second wife of Luke F. Beckman

Marie was born in Medina, Ohio, on July 31, 1914. She was one of four children born to Bernard Wirkner and Mary Bihn Wirkner. Marie had two brothers, Urban and Martin, and a sister, Lucille. Her mother died in 1917 when Marie was only three. Their father could not care for them, so the children were raised by their aunts and uncles. Marie lived with three different families while she was growing up, but never with any of the other siblings.

Albert and Rose Bihn, the third family to care for Marie, moved to Mercer County when Marie was a teenager and she attended Ft. Recovery High School for her junior and senior years.

One of Marie's best friends was Martha Sutter who introduced Marie to her brother, Ray Sutter, at a dance at Kemper's Grove near Minster. Two years later, on February 10, 1933, Marie and Ray were married at St. Paul's Catholic Church in Sharpsburg, Ohio. They made their home in Dayton where Ray was employed at General Motors.

The Sutters had four children:
Eileen, who married Charles Whitsett
Esther, who married Paul Horn
Patty, who married John McCarthy
Jerry, who married Marilyn Hummer

Ray Sutter died of a heart attack on November 11, 1964, at the age of 61. In the summer of 1968, four years after his death, Marie came to St. Henry to visit her sister-in-law, Sally Sutter Stahl. Sally and her husband, Clarence, took Marie to a luau party at the Mercer County Elks where she met Luke Beckman. They dated throughout the summer and were married on October 19, 1968, at St. Albert's Catholic Church in Dayton.

Luke and Marie lived at St. Henry for 19 1/2 years. Luke died in April, 1988, and Marie passed away in September 1994.

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Henry and Elizabeth Gottemoller
Parents of Clara Gottemoller Beckman

APPENDIX

HENRY JOHN GOTTEMOLLER 4/26/1840 - 5/27/1926	married St. Henry Church 5/6/1873 Fr. John Van de Brock	ELIZABETH OVERMAN 2/22/1854 - 11/23/1940
Fred Gottemoller 1/31/1874 - 12/2/1961	marrried	Catherine Banks 7/25/1872 - 7/10/1946
Clara Gottemoller 8/16/1875 - 6/29/1961	married	Henry Beckman 6/20/1871 - 4/27/1923
Agnes Gottemoller 5/9/1877 - 8/5/1969	married	Charles Wagner 8/-/1877 - 9/1/1943
Alex Gottemoller 2/5/1879 - 9/14/1972	married	Natalie Gulde 8/21/1881 - 10/22/1971
Louis Gottemoller 2/27/1881 - 1/28/1959	married	Josephine Tobe 4/29/1889 - 1/2/1978
John Gottemoller 12/27/1882 - 6/20/1972	married	Albina Dahlinghaus 12/15/1883 - 1/26/1963
Julia Gottemoller 2/9/1885 - 2/22/1885		died in infancy
Henrietta Gottemoller 5/7/1886 - 8/29/1886		died in infancy
Caroline Gottemoller 5/16/1887 - 10/5/1974	married	Benjamin Bruns 1/18/1886 - 1/21/1950
Anna Gottemoller 12/11/1890 - -/-/19--	married	Emil Kernel 7/9/1887 - 2/16/1943
Marie Gottemoller 4/23/1893 - 9/8/1975	unmarried	
Erma Gottemoller 8/14/1895 - 5/9/1992	unmarried	

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HENRY AND ELIZABETH GOTTEMOLLER

Henry and Elizabeth Gottemoller were contemporaries of Frank and Margaret Beckman therefore they shared the same life style and witnessed the same social changes that occured in the last half of the 1800's and the first part of the 1900's.

Henry was born on his parents farm near St. Rose, Ohio, in 1840. He was the fifth of their six children. As a young man he became an apprentice to a shoemaker in Carthagena, Ohio. After the first year he went to Cincinnati to finish his training and to practice his trade. Henry followed this occupation for 38 years.

During the Civil War he worked in a Cincinnati shoe factory making boots for the Union Army. When he was called up for military service, his employer paid a $300 bounty to keep him out of the army. It was legal at that time to pay someone else to serve in your stead. Family history says that the man that took Henry's place was killed. Toward the end of the war, Henry was again called up and this time he went. He often told his family that as the army marched by, women along the way would sell pies to the soldiers. The crust was so tough that they could hang the pie on their bayonet all day and it would not fall off.(1) The war was over before Henry arrived at the front line and he never saw any fighting. It ended on his 25 birthday, April 26, 1865.

Henry returned to Mercer County and worked for his brother-in-law, Henry Boise, who owned a sawmill near Coldwater, Ohio. In 1867 Henry sawed the lumber for Coldwater's first Catholic Church, helped in its construction, and when it was completed, served the first Mass that was read there.(2)

In 1872, after the untimely death of his brother-in-law, Henry moved to St. Henry and opened a business that combined a saloon, a store, and a shoemaking shop. That same year he met his future bride, Elizabeth Overman, who came into his shop to have her shoes resoled and to buy a pair of boots. Henry was 32 and Elizabeth was 18 when they met.

Elizabeth, born in Marion Township to Henry Overman and Agnes Brockman Overman, was the seventh of their nine children. Her parents had settled in Mercer County in 1837, buying 80 acres of land from the U.S. government for $1.25 per acre. To earn cash, Elizabeth's father worked on the construction of the Celina Reservoir. His pay was 50 cents a day plus a shot of whiskey, his lodging, and feed for his horse. Whenever he was gone from home over night, the Overman children would help their mother pile a cord of wood in front of their cabin door at dusk. This protected the family from the wolves that roamed the area in

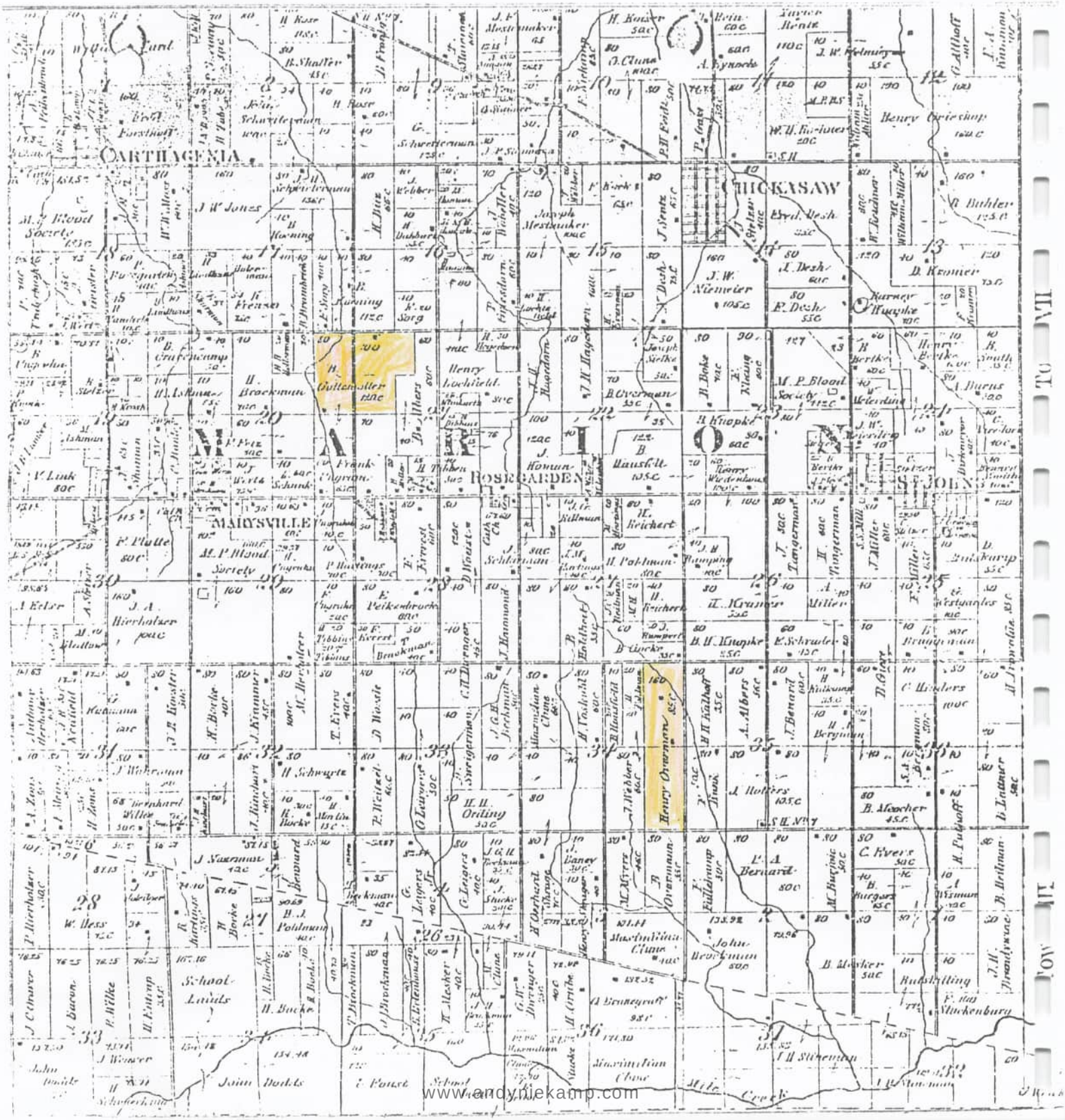
1. Erma Gottemoller, daughter of Henry and Elizabeth.
2. Ibid.

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This "1876" map of Marion Township is the earliest map available.

Gottemollers - first land - Sect.20 E 1/2 NE 1/4 - 80 acres.
Overmans - first land - Sect.34 E 1/2 NE 1/4 - 80 acres.

Marysville is now Cassella. Rose Garden is now St. Rose.
St. Johns is now Maria Stein. St. John's Station was half way
between St. Rose and Maria Stein. Mercer Cty.'s first railroad,
the 1881 CH&D, ran along the east side of the Overman farm.



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packs often consisting of 40 to 50 animals.(1)

The Overman's one room log house stood along St.Rt. 716 about 1 1/2 miles south of St. John's Station. It had a broom clean floor which means that it was made of hard packed mud that was swept clean. Often in the winter the family would wake up with their beds covered with snow.(2) When Elizabeth was in her early teens she worked as a hired girl, a common practice at that time. Almost all families needed extra help especially when new babies were born.

Henry and Elizabeth were married in St. Henry's second church on May 6, 1873. Elizabeth wore a black dress, a white embroidered shawl, and a white sailor hat made of straw. Henry wore a black broadcloth suit and a black velvet vest with gold rosebuds painted on it.(3) The Gottemollers began their married life in the combination house and shop that Henry owned on East Main Street which stood just 2 doors east of the big frame house that Henry Beckman had built in 1856. Henry and Elizabeth had twelve children, the oldest born in 1874 and the youngest 21 years later in 1895. Henry was 55 and Elizabeth was 41 when their last child was born. Two of their daughters died shortly after birth but all the others lived remarkably long lives.

In early 1875, the Gottemollers suffered the first of two fires that destroyed their home and business. While their new building was under construction, Henry and Elizabeth rented the upstairs of the Leistenschneider house, a large frame house near the center of town. Here their second child, Clara, was born. Clara would live in this same house when she died almost 86 years later.(4)

When they rebuilt their house they added a millinery shop along with their saloon and shoe shop. They also had a barn, a granary, and a summer kitchen with a brick oven. Elizabeth would bake bread once a week. A large wood fire would be built in the top part of the oven and when the wood had burnt to embers, they would be scooped out and placed in the bottom section of the oven. The bread would then be put in the top section to bake. Often Elizabeth would bake a cake after the bread was finished. The family used this oven until they moved to Celina in 1915.

Henry owned 20 acres of land near Cranberry Prairie which he farmed. He also kept bees and sold honey. Once Leona Beckman,

1. Erma Gottemoller: daughter of Henry and Elizabeth.
2. Clara Gottemoller Beckman visited her grandmother's house with the "broom clean" floor and she heard the story about the snow on the beds from her mother, Elizabeth.
3. Erma Gottemoller remembered seeing her mother's hat and her father's vest but both were destroyed when their home burned for the second time in 1898.
4. In 1913 this building was bought and remodeled by Henry and Clara Beckman. The front part became the post office.

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The Gottemollers

April 23, 1908



Carolyn 20 Lou 27 Marie 15 Al 29 Aggie 31 John 26 Anna 18

Clara 33 Henry 68 Erma 13 Elizabeth 54 Fred 34

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Henry's granddaughter, poked into a hive and was stung over and over again. They covered her entirely with wet mud and she survived with no ill effects.(1)

Henry raised grapes and plums and apples. He was quite adept at grafting different varieties of apples onto old root stock. He also cross pollinated his trees and once developed a new apple which he called, "The Gottemoller Favorite". This yellowish apple with red streaks was sold to the Stark Brothers Nursery, a company that specialized in fruit trees and sold their products nationwide.(2)

The Gottemollers always had a big garden. In the late 1800's some staple items could be purchased in the store such as sugar, salt, spices, dried fruit, dried peas and beans, crackers, eggs, and homemade butter but every family needed to grow and preserve much of their own food. Root cellars kept vegetables over the winter and sometimes barrels of apples and pears were buried in the garden and dug up as needed. When the Gottemollers butchered, they had fresh pork, blood pudding, and grits but the hams, the bacon, and the sausage needed to be smoked. Sometimes fresh sausage was placed in a large crock and covered completely with lard in order to preserve it. There were no green salads in the winter time so everyone looked forward to spring and the first dandelion greens. Sunday dinner was special and the family usually ate roast beef or chicken.(3)

When the Gottemoller children were young, the St. Henry school was located on what is now a parking lot west of the church. The school stood near the street and faced the church. When a new combination elementary and high school was built in 1903, the old building was used for the first and second grades and was called the kindergarten school.

At that time most local travel was by horse and buggy and Henry, unlike most families who lived in town, owned his own buggy and horse, usually a fine stallion.(4) Most people rented a horse and buggy for a day from a livery stable. Frank Bruns owned such a livery across from the present day library. It was destroyed by a huge fire in 1905 which also burned his hotel and saloon and threatened to incinerate much of the town. The youngest Gottemoller children and their eight year old niece, Leona Beckman, watched this fire from their upstairs bedroom window.(5)

1. Erma Gottemoller: Letter to Mary Niekamp in 1980.
2. My grandmother, Clara Beckman, had a "Gottemoller Favorite" apple tree in the orchard behind her house. In 1950 when Tom and I lived in her upstairs apartment, she told me this story and gave me a "Gottemoller Favorite" to eat.
3. Erma Gottemoller, daughter of Henry and Elizabeth.
4. Luke Beckman, grandson of Henry and Elizabeth.
5. Leona Beckman Gast, granddaughter of Henry and Elizabeth.

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THE GOTTEMOLLER HOUSE



Built after the fire of January 6, 1898. Henry and Elizabeth did not combine any of their previous businesses with their new home. The child in the chair to the left of the porch is Erma.



The Gottemoller house as it looks today. It stands on Out Lot 3 east of Lot 45.

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The Gottemollers always celebrated Christmas. Santa Claus came on Christmas Eve and the family began Christmas Day with Mass at 5:30 in the morning when it was still dark. Erma, the youngest daughter, liked to see the bright stars and hear the snow crunch under her shoes as they walked to church. Once inside, the church was warm and filled with light from the acetylene gas lamps.(1) The Christmas music was very beautiful. At noon the family always had a big Christmas dinner either at home or at their grandmother's house. In the afternoon they would visit the Gottemollers' married children to see what presents they had received.(2)

Erma recalled many things from her youth. She was in her early teens when the town installed gas streetlamps and she remembered seeing the man coming each night to light them and then coming again in the morning to put them out. She took her first train ride when the school organized an excursion to Cincinnati to take the children to the zoo. She never rode on the Miami Erie Canal but she remembered her father pointing it out to her. Main Street was a dirt road and Erma watched when the town first put crushed stone on it in 1906. The first car she remembered seeing was a red run-about owned by Dr. Mory. She witnessed the erection of the first water tower in 1909, the building of the first fire house, and the purchase of St. Henry's first fire truck in 1917. For entertainment, Erma enjoyed chicken dinners held at the church, ice cream socials, and Sunday afternoon baseball games.

In 1898, on Three Kings Day, January 6, fire destroyed the Gottemoller's home and business for a second time. It started from a faulty flue in the attic. Henry was in church and Elizabeth was at home with the children. Although they saved some of their belongings, the building was reduced to ashes.(3) That February Elizabeth sold her millinery business to Joseph J. Romer(4) and Henry opened his saloon in the old second church that had been empty since the previous July when the new church had been dedicated. He remained there until March of 1901 when the old church was torn down so a new priest house could be built on that lot.(5)

Marie and Erma, the two youngest daughters of Henry and Elizabeth, never married. Each had begun working at the Western Ohio Creamery at St. Henry at the age of 15. The company moved to Celina in 1915 when Marie was 22 and Erma was 20. Henry, now 75, and Elizabeth, 61, sold their St. Henry property and moved to Celina so the girls could continue working for the creamery. Three years later Marie went to Modesto, California to stay with

1. Acetylene gas lights were put in the church in 1902 when Erma was seven. Electric lights came in 1917.
2. Letter written by Erma Gottemoller to Mary Niekamp in 1980.
3. Mercer County Standard: January 8, 1898.
4. Celina Democrat: February 3, 1898.
5. Mercer County Standard: March 21, 1901.

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The Gottemollers



Erma John Carolyn Anna Lou Aggie Al Clara Marie Fred

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a distant cousin. She liked it so much that she encouraged her parents and sister to come too. Henry, Elizabeth, and Erma joined her in November 1919. They went by train; a trip that took about four days. They stayed for a year and although Henry and Erma liked California, Elizabeth grew so homesick that she and Henry returned to Celina. They went back to California in 1922 and were there when they celebrated their golden wedding on May 5, 1923.(1) In 1924 Henry and Elizabeth returned to Ohio and again settled in St. Henry. Two years later Henry died at the age of 86. After his death Elizabeth and her oldest daughter, Clara, began to live together. Clara had already been a widow for 3 years.

Elizabeth had seldom been sick during her lifetime. She did have gall stones in the 1930's and had surgery at St. Vincent's Hospital in Ft. Wayne. The doctor removed the stones but told her that they would probably come back. When they did return, Elizabeth went to a lady in Wapakoneta who claimed she could cure gall stones without surgery. She gave Elizabeth some foul tasting medicine that had to be taken at full moon and her gall stones disappeared. Some years later two of her children, Clara and Fred, also had gall stones. They too went to this lady in Wapakoneta and both were cured.(2)

Although my great-grandfather Henry died four years before I was born, I did know great-grandmother Elizabeth who lived until I was ten. All of her great-grandchildren called her Bestmama. She made her home with Grandma Clara Beckman and I always remember her sitting in a rocking chair in the living room. She was heavy set and had a jolly laugh. Her eyes were bright and her skin was very soft. The skin on her hands and arms was loose and she would let me pick it up and lift it away from her bones. I was always fascinated by how high I could lift it. She always wore tiny gold rings in her ears. The lobes of her ears had long slits in them, either they were pierced that way or the weight of earrings over the years made them so.

Bestmama died at Grandma Beckman's house in November of 1940. For a few days before her death, Bestmama kept asking to go home. Clara would tell her that she was at home; that her dresses were right there and so was her bed. Bestmama was not satisfied; she still wanted to go home. No one knows if home meant where Bestmama lived as a girl or if it was where she lived when her own children were growing up.(3) Perhaps it meant heaven. Clara suspected that her mother might not live through the night so she pushed an overstuffed chair in front of the couch and placed Bestmama in it. Clara then sat on the couch facing her mother so she could watch her. During the night, Clara went into the kitchen to get an apple and when she returned to the living room, Bestmama had slept away.(4)

1. Letter from Erma Gottemoller, 1980.
2-3. Grandma Clara Beckman.
4. Leona Beckman Gast.

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Bestmama Gottemoller

2/22/1854 - 11/23/1940



Henry Gottemoller

4/26/1840 - 5/27/1926

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Henry Gottemoller's Parents
In Germany and America

(John) Henry and (Anna) Elizabeth Whitbecker, were the father and mother of Henry Gottemoller. The Whitbeckers changed their name to Gottemoller so they could inherit a grist mill that stood on 2/5 acre of land in Germany. In the early 1800's, Germany required that the person inheriting property had to retain the name of the land's original owner; therefore the Whitbeckers became Gottemollers.(1)

Henry's parents were both born in Germany in 1800. His father,(John) Henry, was born in Lage and his mother,(Anna) Elizabeth was born in Neuenkirchen. They married on Sept. 25, 1828, in Norden, Germany, and here their first three children were born. Sometime in 1837, they sold their inherited property and used the money to finance the family's emigration to America.

After an arduous 7 to 8 weeks aboard ship, they finally came within sight of land. Imagine their dismay when a severe storm came up, broke the main mast of their ship, and drove them out to sea again. It took 6 more weeks before they would reach port. Food and water supplies were about depleted and the passengers were allowed only 1/2 cup of water and 1/2 slice of bread a day. They grew so weak they needed to remain in their bunks all day to conserve their strength.(2)

The family finally disembarked from the ship and traveled to Cincinnati where they met some old friends, the Henry Overmans, who had preceded them to America. The Gottemollers and the Overmans both came to Mercer County where they purchased land . On September 3, 1838, the Gottemollers bought 80 acres in Section 20, one mile west and one mile north of St. Rose. The Overmans had already purchased 80 acres in Section 34 along St.Rt. 716 two miles south of Maria Stein Station in 1837.(3)

The last three of the Gottemoller's six children were born on their St. Rose farm and their fifth child, Henry, grew up and married Elizabeth Overman, the daughter of their old friends.

Henry's father died 8/10/1869. He was 69. His mother died 4/10/1897. She was 97.

1. Brother Thaddeus Gottemoller C.S.C., grandson of Henry and Elizabeth Overman Gottemoller, researched the Gottemoller history in 1984.
2. Brother Thaddeus.
3. Mercer County Courthouse Records: Mar. 26, 1837, Henry Overman from the U.S. Government, E 1/2 of SE 1/4 Sec. 34, Marion Twp.

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Elizabeth Overman's Parents

Henrich and Agnes Bockman Overman were both born in Hanover, Germany. Henrich in 1808 and Agnes in 1815. About 1831 they each came to America separately. They met and married in Cincinnati where Henrich worked during the winter months. In the summer he worked in the South.

The first of their nine children was born in Cincinnati but the other eight were born in Mercer County. Elizabeth, who married Henry Gottemoller, was their seventh child.

Henrich Overman died 3/8/1878 at the age of 70. His wife, Agnes Overman died 5/6/1904 at the age of 89.

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Agnes Bockman Overman

-/-/1815 - 5/6/1904



Mother of Elizabeth Overman Gottemoller

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