

~Johann Heinrich Schmidt~

Johann Heinrich Schmidt was the youngest son born to parents Karl and Marie (Sell) Schmidt, on March 22, 1844 in Dramburg, Prussia. Henry's father, Karl, died when Henry was only three months old. Henry's brother Carl David Schmidt immigrated to America in 1852 to seek out the perfect spot for a new home for his family. First settling in Chicago for four years, Carl Schmidt was one of the pioneer settlers of New Ulm, Minnesota with his wife Dorothea and children, moving there in 1856. When Carl arrived in New Ulm, he sent for his two brothers to join him. The 1857 Minnesota State census shows all three brothers living together in New Ulm:

First Precinct, Brown County, MN, pg 160:
Schmidt, Charles, age 28, farmer, b. Germany, Naturalized
Schmidt, Dorothea, age 24, keeping house, b. Germany
Schmidt, Anna, age 2, b. Illinois.
William Schmidt, age 30, naturalized German born
Louisa Schmidt, age 28
Charles Schmidt, age 1 year
Henry Schmidt, age 14

Notice the youngest brother, Henry, was only 14 years old at this time. The oldest brother, William Schmidt, along with his wife and family were murdered in the Sioux Indian Uprising of 1862.

Henry enlisted in service for the Civil War joining the Union ranks of the Old 5th Minnesota, Company D on March 30, 1862, serving 3 years.

I have some transcribed family notes in my possession that were made by Dorothea Zehnder Seder from when she interviewed Henry. Dorothea was born in 1905, daughter of Clara Lucy Schmidt (daughter of Carl David Schmidt). Following are excerpts from Dorothea's interview with her great Uncle Henry:

My mother died when I was 12 and my brother William had records made over giving custody to himself. Brother Carl was in America (blacksmith) and moving from Chicago to New Ulm. Wrote his brothers to come. In 1856 we left for America in a 3 masted sailboat taking 7 weeks...one bed only for my brother, his wife, child, and myself. Landed at New York; spent a day at Niagara, took a train to Columbus, and boat down to the Mississippi and up to St. Paul, and down the Minnesota River to New Ulm arriving June 11, 1856. Henry helped his brother break land with oxen. William moved to Big Cottonwood and Henry hired out, carrying lumber to Fort Abercrombie. Told of losing his hat. Travel was usually in groups because of Indian hostility. Once there was a group of 50 and enroute 2 oxen were lost, so 5 remained behind and spent a day hunting for them. At age 16 Henry rode a mail route and remembers sighting 5 wild oxen enroute. This probably was from Henderson

to St. Cloud via Glencoe, Litchfield, and Paynesville where he stopped with a family named Knabel. This little group of Germans wanted a minister to visit them, so Henry told of the wish when he got to St. Paul. A minister was sent down. At age 18 he enlisted in the Union Army, March 30, 1862. About this time there were 39 members at the Middle Creek church, Renville County, killed by the Indians. They had been warned to flee and were enroute to Fort Ridgely but were caught...one of these was Henry's brother William, his wife was also killed and a three months old baby was not killed but starved to death. The five year old girl was captured from a nearby house and carried off. The story is that later this little girl was found with the Indians and a New Ulm doctor made every effort to save her life but she died probably from malnutrition. Brother Wilhelm was never found. Minister Seder was also killed. "After the war Carl was hard up and I loaned him money; then I looked over the farm (William's) at Redwood and went to Paynesville to see Knabels. We converted October 22, 1865. Returned to St. Paul after buying the Redwood farm in the Henderson Land Office." In St. Paul he got a job on Third and Rosabel (now the site of the Union Depot) in a sawmill and for two years he roamed with Andrew Schoch and attended Pine Street church. Schoch was working in a store and the minister loaned him \$100 to buy out the owner. The store was on 7th street. Henry had various jobs: hauling with one ox (paid \$80 for a wagon), traveled to Duluth for \$4 a day and board. Harvested with a cradle, thrashed with a cylinder. He married a Beguhn daughter and rented a farm near Cannon Falls, probably was the farm of a brother-in-law. When this venture proved unsuccessful, he returned and bought the tax title to his Redwood farm and lived there.

>From this sketch and a few documents that I have been able to locate, we can reconstruct a few of the events in Henry's life.

Upon returning from his service in the Civil War, Henry first married a lady by the name of Helena Beghun. Henry and Lena had four children: Edward born in 1873, Hattie born in 1875, Emma who was born in 1877, and Henry Jr. born late in 1880.

The 1880 federal census finds the family listed in Renville county, Flora township as follows:

SMITH, Henry, age 36, farmer, born in Germany
Smith, Lina, age 26, wife, keeping house
Smith, Edward, son, age 7
Smith, Hattie, daughter, age 5
Smith, Emma, daughter, age 3

Shortly after the birth of their youngest son Henry Jr., Lena died. Henry remarried a second time to Anna Graffenberger in 1882, by which he had an additional nine children, making his total children born at 13. These next

nine children were Martha, Oscar, Eugene, Edith, Alfred, Waldemar, Walter, Lynda, and Luverne.

Henry Schmidt received a land patent dated December 30, 1884 which was for 48 acres designated as "Sioux Indian Lands", Section 3, Township 113 North, Range 36 West. This evidently was the farm that his brother William had pre-empted just prior to the Sioux Massacre of 1862. On the Bureau of Land Management website, this patent is listed as being in the "Redwood/Renville County" area, evidently right on the border of the two counties. Flora township was the closest township to the farm, which is probably why this is where Henry appears on the federal census^M in Flora twp.

The 1900 federal census shows the family still enumerated in Flora township:

SCHMIDT, Henry, age 56, born Mar 1844, married 18 years
Anna, wife, age 43, born Jan 1857, married 18 years, 9 children born, 9 children living
Martha, dau, b. Mar 1883, age 17
Oscar, son, May 1884, age 16
Eugene, son, May 1885, age 15
Edith, dau, b. June 1886, age 13
Walter, son, Aug 1888, age 11
Alfred, son, Feb 1890, age 10
Waldemar, son, May 1891, age 9
Lyndia, dau, Sept. 1893, age 6
Luverne, son, Aug 1898, age 1

1910 federal census, Flora township:

SMITH, Henry, age 66, married 28 years, born in Germany
Anna, age 52
Oscar, age 25
Eugene, age 23
Ida, age 22
Walter, age 21
Alfred, age 20
Waldemar, age 18
Linda, age 16
Luverne, age 11

By the 1920 census, Henry and his wife were living with their son Eugene, which had taken over the managing of their farm:

1920, Flora township

SCHMIDT, Eugene, Farmer, Head of House, age 34

Sarah, wife, age 29

Henry, father, age 75, emigrated 1857, naturalized 1865

Anna, mother, age 60

Lynda, sister, age 26, music teacher

Henry was an active member of the local GAR and a charter member of the Middle Creek Evangelical Association. He gave a wonderful speech at the event of his brother Carl's 50th Anniversary celebration in Menomonie, Wisconsin in 1904, relating the hardships that the 3 emigrant brothers faced when they arrived in America. In the newspaper article describing this speech, Henry was referred to as "Brother Henry" by the GAR officers that were present.

The GAR monument at Redwood Falls Cemetery lists Henry Schmidt, Co. D, 5th MN Regiment, although I am told that his grave is not located in this cemetery. We are still searching for the exact location of Henry's grave.

Eventually Henry and Anna's daughter, Lynda, moved to St. Paul and Henry went to live with her. Henry passed away on March 16, 1935 at the age of 91.