

TRAIL OF THE PIONEERS CHARLES AND MARGARET SCHWALD

Information supplied by Mrs. Grady (Elsie Schwald) Phillips ca. 1962

Charles and Margaret Schwald emigrated from Germany in 1883 but did not meet each other until they had arrived in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, which was a sort of information and dispersal area for many of the German immigrants.

Mr. Schwald went to North Dakota to homestead and worked on a horse-breaking ranch but did not stay long as he said the country was too flat and too cold. He then went to the Willamette Valley and it was too rainy. He arrived in Walla Walla in 1886 and worked on the wall of the penitentiary. After that he hired out for \$1 a day and board on a Mill Creek wheat ranch owned by a Mr. Buroker. After much correspondence he coaxed Margaret Kronenberg (she was afraid of Indians) to come from Wisconsin and they were married in Walla Walla in 1887. They moved into a one-room cabin on the ranch and started housekeeping with a wood range, table and a rocking chair. Mrs. Schwald helped Mrs. Buroker with the cooking for harvest crews. Their first child, William, was delivered there in 1888 by a Dr. Clough.

In 1891 Dr. Clough sold them his 10 acres of apple seedlings on Appleton Road at the intersection of Winesap Avenue. This place was the last land with water rights out of the Sunnyvale Ditch. It had a 4-room house, cellar and smokehouse and Mr. Schwald told of hiding an Italian horse thief in the cellar to save him from being hung by pursuing vigilantes. The worst offense was water-stealing and Mr. Schwald had to walk up the ditch almost every night during irrigation periods to re-open his weir which had been closed to divert water elsewhere. In 1893 an adjoining 90 acres was bought from the Baker Boyer Bank and a 7-foot well was hand-dug and powered by a gasoline engine to supply irrigating water for the additional land. (The old well house still stands at the intersection of Winesap and Appleton.)

Seven more children were born on this property, six of them delivered by Dr. Thomas who lived at the foot of Milton Hill and a last child, in 1904 by a Dr. Dittebrand.

From 1892 to 1910 Mr. Schwald peddled fruit and produce in Pendleton with team and wagon. It was an all-day trip. He sold his load the following day, and would start home in the evening, sleeping in the wagon bed, as the team knew the way home from making two trips a week. In later years with a Model T truck, he could remember service trucks plying the road during 'The Roundup' with supplies of gas, water, tires and fan-belts to succor stranded motorists who had not become entirely familiar with the workings of their gas buggies.

There was a 'Panic' from 1891-1896 and men searched for work at 50 cents a day and wheat sold for 25 cents a bushel.

In 1909, the 4-room house was moved back to make room for the 2-story home, which still stands in excellent condition. The Construction Foreman was George Johnson of Freewater and his two carpenters were his son, Arthur, and A.A. Thomason. (Many years later, the old house was bought, moved to Lamb Street, refurbished and is still occupied.)

Some of the home-made remedies used were probably as efficacy as modern ones; salt was used for washing teeth and gargling onion syrup or a drop of turpentine on sugar for sore throats;

goose grease plaster on chest and a wool sock around the neck for chest colds; soda for burns as well as stomach aches; axle grease used as a poultice for cuts and, particularly, to put on soles of feet from stepping on rusty nails; and the ever-present bag of asafetida around the neck to ward off everything else, including people. Hair was curled on long strips of rags or kid-curlers and whey (from making cottage cheese) used as a hair-set for pincurls around the face. Mrs. Schwald knitted or sewed all the clothing and the girls were forever embarrassed over the colorful peacock on the seats of their bloomers, made from Peacock flour sacks. 200 quarts of peaches was the least she ever canned besides other fruits and vegetables canned and dried to supply the family and harvest hands; the smokehouse was full of hams, bacon and sausages and the cellar full of root crops and barrels of pickled meats and sauerkraut.

After Fruit Commission houses were started (Lamb's, Frank Shields), Mr. Schwald continued to peddle the culls in Pendleton and Walla Walla. Surplus culls were made into cider and about 200 gallons of vinegar was supplied to Schwabacker's (now Gardner's) in Walla Walla every year. The apple pulp was fed to the hogs and occasionally it fermented, and tipsy hogs were reeling around in their pasture. 80 acres was always kept in alfalfa to supply 6 to 8 horses and a dairy herd. The surplus was sold mostly to Umapine farmers who were still clearing sagebrush from their land.

Mr. Schwald and sons, Pat and Charley, would take the teams and wagons up the Linton Mt. Road to haul wood from the Blue Mts. to supply a wood range and two heaters. In places the road was so steep both teams would be hooked to one wagon to pull it over the hump. They also used the teams and a Fresno scraper to work on the county roads as part of the taxes could be deducted. The Walla Walla River often overflowed down Main Street of Milton and school children had great fun splashing ankle-deep on Appleton Road.

Except for one child, Helen, who died in infancy, all the children finished eight grades at Ferndale School. Much of the social life of the community centered around box socials, school programs and parties at the old Ferndale Hall. Revivals were held in tents on the school grounds and one zealot became so overcome he climbed a telephone pole and couldn't be coaxed down until the following day. When the snow was really deep Mr. Schwald would hook a team to an orchard sled filled with straw and hot bricks to carry all the neighborhood children to school. He brought his first gas buggy in 1914 from the Cockburn Buick Agency in Milton. Mr. Schwald was a cart-racing fan and often took prizes at the 'Frontier Days'; the boys always won a ribbon with their Shetland pony at the 'Milton Strawberry Festival', after which it would buck off and return home.

William died in 1904 in Spokane, the victim of a typhoid epidemic. Frances, a student nurse at St. Mary's, died during the flue epidemic in 1920. Charley died in 1963 in Walla Walla, shortly after returning to the Valley to retire. Both Pat and Charley served in World War I; Millie was a clerk in Schmidt's Dept. Store (now the Pastime Club); Anna was a bookkeeper for the Walla Walla Creamery, and Elsie played the pipe organ in the old Strand Theatre (later the Roxy) in Walla Walla. Mrs. Schwald died in 1926. Mr. Schwald re-married and continued to live on the old home place (51 years total) until his death in 1942, shortly after he had sold the 100 acres to the Pete Kessler family.

There are four children still living; Anna McAllister, Walla Walla; Pat Schwald, Lynnwood, Washington; Minnie Duff, County Road; and Elsie Phillips, Crockett Road.