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HENRY H. BECKMAN
1834 - 1910

by Elwood R. Beckman
Great-grandson

Henry H. Beckman was born near Bremen, Germany, in what was then known as the Kingdom of Prussia, on March 13, 1834. His parents were William and Wilhelmina Beckman. His father was a farmer who opposed Napoleon Bonaparte at the conquest of Westphalia and was taken prisoner. He later fought with Napoleon's army at Waterloo.

When Henry was 3 and his brother Christopher was 5 their mother died. The brothers lived with strangers until they were 15 and 17. In 1848 they sailed from Bremen to Baltimore in 54 days. In America they traveled from Baltimore to Whitehaven, Pa., and later to Peru, Ill., before they arrived in Wisconsin. There, for \$65 a year and board, they worked in farming and lumbering.

In the spring of 1853 they joined a four-wagon ox-team train to California and arrived there six months later in San Joaquin County.

They found Stockton too marshy and headed north to where the oaks were larger and the soil deeper. This territory was Kettleman Land. In 1854 they purchased their first piece of land on the west side of West Lane between Harney and Kettleman Lanes. Five years later the brothers agreed to divide their 400 acres. The south half was to remain with Christopher's heirs until 1970, when it was sold to subdividers. Henry's north half is still owned by his grandson, Stanlee Beckman and Stanlee's daughter.

That same year Henry bought his home ranch on Kettleman Lane just west of what is now the Woodbridge Irrigation District canal. Later he bought the old Caldwell ranch and the railroad ranch, both on Armstrong Road. Still later he bought 160 acres of river property adjoining Lodi Lake on the east. The records show he owned 1,000 acres before 1890. The river property was sold in the 1960's by LeMoin Beckman, Margaret Devine and Winifred Jones, Frank's heirs.

Henry Beckman first raised grain and cattle. After the canal was built the place changed. Alfalfa, grapes, pasture and other irrigated crops were raised. A dairy was started. His son-in-law, Harry Bailey, later sold the first pasteurized milk in this area for \$1.25 a quart. Horses were a necessity. Henry had some of the finest, including running horses, which he did run.

On August 9, 1868, Henry married Margareth Toni from Canton-Grandbunden, Switzerland. She was living in Sutter Creek with her family, and they were married there. They had five children: George Victor, June 24, 1869; Henry Theodore, May 3, 1871; Frank William, July 26, 1874; a son,

who died in childhood; and Eva Mabel, June 29, 1882. All of their children were to spend their lifetime in Lodi, California.

Henry and his wife had 9 grandsons and 4 granddaughters, all but one of whom are still living in Lodi or did until they died. They had 23 great-grandchildren, 50 great-great-grandchildren to date, some of whom have children. Since George Victor's birth in 1869 there have been 5 generations born in Lodi. Henry and Margareth have more than 90 descendants. Henry had two other brothers, William and Fredrick, who came from Germany later and have themselves many descendants in the Lodi area.

The Beckman family and Henderson School had a profound association. From the 1870's when Henry and his children attended, to the 1960's, Beckmans were enrolled there. Henry learned to read and write English, as well as other fundamentals. He believed in education and saw that his children were able to attend Salem, Lodi Union High School and the San Joaquin College at Woodbridge. Some of his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren have served on the Henderson School Board. Most have taken part in activities at the school over the years. Henry, along with others, helped build the first Henderson School building, which was replaced in the early 1900's.

Some of Henry's children branched out into fields other than farming. Frank, his youngest, went into the mercantile business - Beckman and Beatty - which was later to become Beckman and Thompson and then Beckman, Welch and Thompson, Lodi's leading mercantile establishment at the turn of the century. On May 23, 1907, Frank died and his brother (Henry) Theodore, became president of the firm, until all but the brokerage business was disposed of in 1921.

Eva married Harry Bailey and had one child, Howard. She lived on the home ranch until after Harry's death. Eva's mother, Margareth, also lived there until she died at the age of 98.

The oldest son, George, remained primarily in farming, as did two of his sons, Raymond and Willard. Willard today resides on the old Caldwell ranch where he was raised. Three of George's sons, however, did well in corporations - Sherwood, who was for many years president of the Woodbridge Irrigation District, vice president of Farmers & Merchants Bank and secretary-treasurer of the Del Rio Winery; George Oswald, a founder and president of the Super Mold Corporation; Harold, 43 years with the pear industry and a founder of the California Canning Pear Association. George's two daughters, Eileen Perrin and Lucille Heagarty, are now residing in Lodi. A great-grandson, Millard Beckman, is the founder and president of Beckman & Co., Inc., a brokerage firm with its main office in Lodi.

A document, recorded October 12, 1899, states the following: "On April 15th, 1865, in Woodbridge Lodge No. 131 F. & A.M., Henry Beckman was raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason. On that same night and almost the same hour, Abraham Lincoln, the Martyr President of the United States, fell at the hands of Wilkes Booth the assassin, which created the wildest confusion in the American Temple of Liberty while the people mourned."

It is evident that this 15 year-old emigrant knew what he was about when he settled where "the oaks were larger and the soil deeper." After all, more than 90 descendants - most of whom remain in the Lodi area - can't be wrong.

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