

# Under the Walnut Tree

Edition 5.1, 1/13/2014

In the beginning, there was the Big Bang. Time began. Time passed. Species evolved. In 1066 CE, the Normans invaded England, bringing people with odd names. Alured De Valer was one of them. De Valer is supposed to have meant **of the valley**. In a few generations, as the cultures and languages merged, they became Wallers.

Alured was granted land as a reward for his service, and his name is listed in the Domesday Book. He was grandfather to another Alured, who died in 1183. His son was Walter, whose son was Henry, the first to drop the **de** and became **Waller**. Henry sired Thomas, who bought Groombridge.

## Groombridge

In 1239 William Russell and his wife Haweis built a small moated castle at Groombridge.



By the mid 14th century, the lands were held by Sir John de Clinton, whose grandson, Lord Clinton and Saye, sold Groombridge to Thomas Waller of Lamberhurst, ***“whose family was possessed of good estates in this county and Suffex, and bore for their arms, Sable, three walnut tree leaves, or, between two cotizes argent.”*** around 1400.

Thomas had a son named John, whose son Richard became famous for his role in the battle of Agincourt in France, fought on October 25, in the 4th year of Henry V, (1415), ***“which was the greatest victory that ever was, or perhaps ever will be, obtained by this nation, England.”***

*“The king's army amounted only to 9000, and those sickly and greatly harrassed; whereas the French were 150,000 men, in health and unfatigued. The battle lasted from ten in the morning till five in the afternoon. There were slain on the side of the French, one archbishop, three dukes, six earls, ninety barons, 1500 knights, and 7000 esquires or gentlemen. The loss of the English was very inconsiderable, not more than four hundred, of every degree.”*

Sir Richard Waller discovered, under a heap of dead bodies, Charles, Duke of Orléans, commander of the French army, still alive, and took him prisoner. In honor of his taking so noble a prisoner, a **walnut-tree**, with the motto, ***Hœ fructus virtutis***, (*the fruit of virtue*) was added to his crest. Sir Richard took the duke back to England and confined him at Groombridge for 24 years, until the French finally ransomed him. The duke was treated

kindly, and before long the two became good friends.

The Wallers held Groombridge Place for over 200 years until it was sold in the seventeenth century.

Sir Richard fathered Sir John, who had a son named William. William sired John, whose son was William, father to John, who begat Richard, father to Robert, who sired Edmund, whose son was Robert, who fathered Edmund the poet.

**Edmund Waller**(1606-1687) , the poet, son of Robert Waller and Anne Hampden, was moved to Beaconsfield as a child, about 25 miles northeast of London. On 5 July 1631, Waller married Anne Banks, the wealthy heiress of a London mercer. The Court of Aldermen were her legal guardians, and they disapproved. They charged him in the infamous Star Chamber, where legal rules were arbitrary and decisions were often unjust and abusive. King Charles personally intervened, and Edmund was released upon payment of a fine. Anne Waller died in October, 1634, after bearing a son and a daughter.

Edmund became a member of The Club (also known as the Great Tew Circle) of Lucius Cary, 2nd Viscount Falkland, an intellectual association of many of the most advanced thinkers of the time. Edward Hyde, Ben Johnson, Thomas May, and possibly Thomas Hobbs were some of them. Their views tended toward [Socinianism](#), which later evolved into Unitarianism, and favored tolerance, Latitudinism, and Irenicism, pacifism, and humanism.

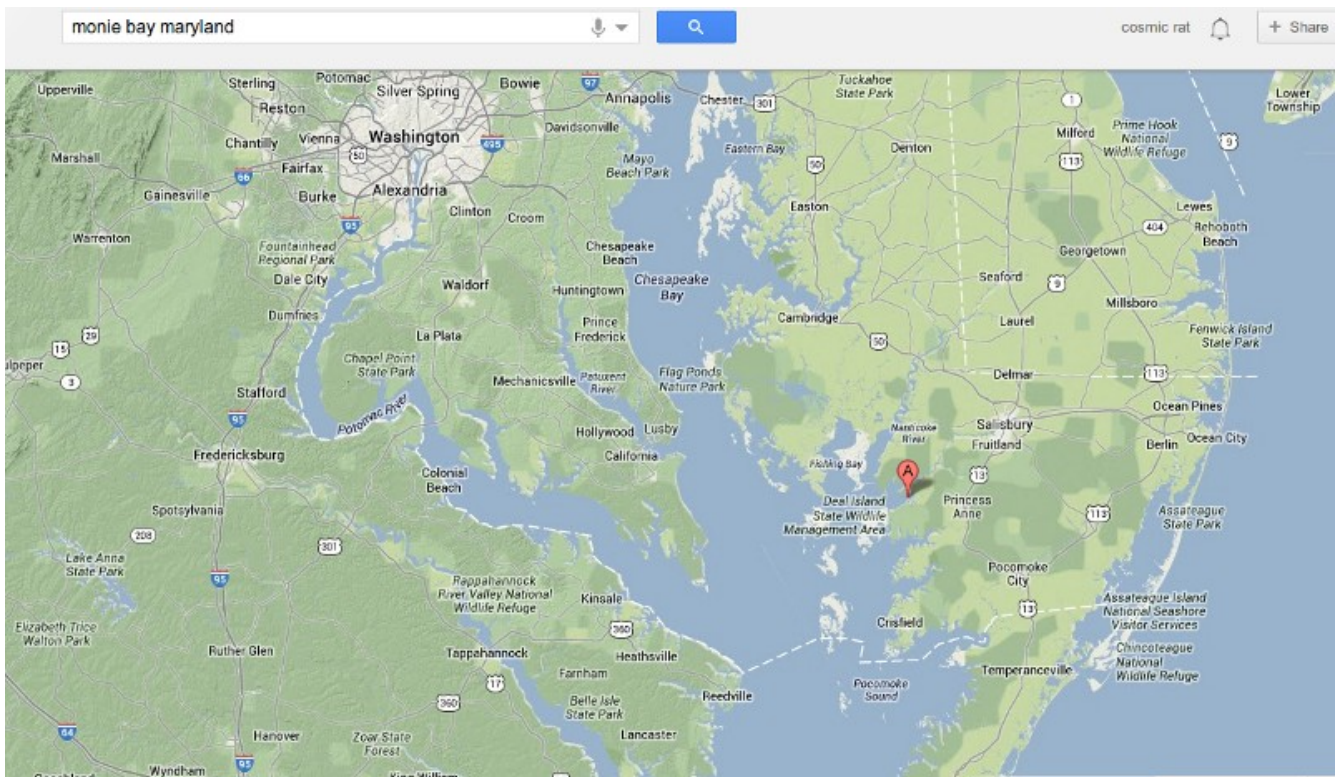
As a young man he tried to woo the lady Dorothy Sidney, daughter of the earl of Leicester, who he called Sacharissa, using all his poetic talent. Sadly, she rejected him, but perhaps it was for the better of the verse.

During the English Civil War, Edmund the poet was accused of a conspiracy known as Waller's Plot, suspected of trying to aid the King. He claimed he was actually trying to negotiate peace and compromise between the two sides. He was fined £10,000 in 1644, imprisoned, and then banished to Bermuda. Later he moved to Paris. He returned to England in 1651, when the [Rump Parliament](#) revoked his banishment. He returned to Beaconsfield, where he lived quietly until the [Restoration](#). After the restoration he was welcomed back to court.

On the other side, Sir Hardres Waller was a major-general in the parliament army against king Charles I. and one of those responsible for his execution. After the restoration, he was tried and condemned, but the King pardoned him.

*A branch of the Waller family was seated later at [Newport Pagnell, Buckingham](#), from whence they removed in the 17th century to [Virginia](#), where they became prominent in early Virginia affairs. [Benjamin Waller](#) (As clerk of courts, he read the [Declaration of Independence](#) from the Williamsburg courthouse steps on July 25, 1776), [Littleton Waller Tazewell](#) and [Edwin Waller](#)). --Wikipedia*

It was **John Waller**, Edmund's younger brother, born about 1616, who sailed to the New World, seeking adventure. "Waller's Adventure" was his new farm on the Chesapeake Bay, at a place called Little Monie, Somerset County, Maryland, about 60 miles north of Accomack, Virginia. John was the founder of my branch of the American Wallers. He was not the only Waller to come to the New World, of course.



One of Edmond's sons, Benjamin, ended up in the West Indies. His son John, who was born there, had several children including Henry, born in 1774. Henry ran a coffee plantation called "Waller's Delight" in British Guiana. Later he and his wife, Melinda Gordon Ver Plank, moved to a place on the eastern shore of Chesapeake Bay near Podes Island. During the War of 1812, the British, on the way to attack Washington, fired rockets that burned his house and killed some of his livestock. After the war he hired Francis Scott Key as his attorney and sued the government for \$8000 for the damages. He won the lawsuit.

*A Congreve Rocket Burns Henry Waller's Kent County Farmhouse, August 28, 1814*

John (Edmond's brother) married Alice Major and had a son William in 1661. William married Bridget Nelson and had Thomas in 1696, who had a son, Thomas J., with Mary Threlkeld in 1714. They married the following year, 1715.

By 1689, William and Mary were on the throne in England, and colonists were asked to sign a "loyalty oath". It said, "*wee resolve to continue (by the grace of God) in the Profession and defence of the Protestant Religion and your Majesty's Title and interest against the French and other Papists that oppose and trouble us..*" William Waller signed it.

Thomas J married Jane Calloway and produced yet another Thomas in 1745. Clearly, it was time to find a new place, and to get out of the rut of naming sons "Thomas". This Thomas, and his wife Sophia Gaithner, did just that. They named their son Richard in 1774 and they moved to Kentucky

They also had two other sons, Cornelius and John. In their fathers will, Cornelius and John each inherited 104 acres of land.

Richard was left only one dollar. We don't know what he may have done or said to earn his father's disapproval. In every generation, there seems to be at least one Waller who questioned authority-- who wanted to follow a different path. Richard married Elizabeth Leet, and had a son named Thomas on June 15, 1801. He also had two girls, Sophia and Elizabeth, and a son named John.

Richard must have forgiven his father for disinheriting him, since he named his son after his father, adding yet another instance of the overused appellation.

*Another Thomas had just been elected as the third President of the United States. In 1803, he made the Louisiana Purchase, adding 828,000 square miles to the nation's territory. As the news of this spread, some farmers began to dream of traveling places barely settled, with new fertile land to farm, and adventure to be had.*

Richard might have had such dreams, but lacked the means to pursue them. It would be up to his children to fulfill that destiny.

Sophia married William Griffith, and Elizabeth married William Poe. Her first marriage ended, and four years later she married James Fields. They had two children, Berry and Angeline. Though some thought Berry was Thomas 1801's son, it seems that something happened to James and Elizabeth, and Thomas adopted Berry, and his brother John adopted Angeline, taking the children with them to Missouri. Angeline was born in 1835; Berry in 1837. They were

quite young for the trip.

## Off To Missouri

*The Land Act of 1820 reduced the price of federal land in the Northwest Territory and Missouri Territory to \$1.25 acre, with a minimum purchase of 80 acres and a down payment of only \$100. It gave squatters the right to purchase the land even more cheaply if they had made improvements: building homes, fences, or mills.*

It was this Act that enabled Thomas and John to acquire land in Macon County in 1840. Their certificates were signed by President Van Buren. In those days, in addition to the calendar date, the number of years (64) since Independence in 1776 was included. Thomas obtained 9 parcels of land altogether.

Dolly Reynolds was born 1814 in Hutsonville, Lincoln County, Kentucky. In 1817 her family moved to Missouri. Thomas met and married her there in March of 1840.

In 1841, John William Waller was born. Thomas and Dolly would have 11 more in the next 20 years.

Besides farming, Thomas also raised horses and sold them to the cavalry.

Thomas's other children were Sarah Elizabeth, Catherine, Thomas Jr., Sophia Ann, Margaret Jane, Richard, Permela, Harrison, George, Daniel, and Leet.

Living nearby was the Lyle family. Four of Thomas Waller's daughters, Sarah, Catherine, Margaret, and Permela, married Lyle sons. If Sophia hadn't died when she was 4 days old, she probably would have married a Lyle, too, if there was another one to marry.

Thomas Jr. became a shoemaker, and eventually moved to Joplin. Richard, who was to become my great grandfather, started a school and became its teacher. Leet was a blacksmith and furniture maker as well as a farmer. He, George, and Daniel stayed on the Waller family land and farmed it together. Harrison died of pneumonia at the age of 18.

George and Daniel never married.

As time went on, more of the family needed to seek other occupations besides farming. A large farm family may have the advantage of plenty of labor, but when the children grow up, marry, and have their own children, they either need to get land of their own or find another way to earn a living.

## Other Wallers

Not all Wallers are related to one another. Our family seems to have originated from Norman French de Valers who came to England and, a generation or two later, altered the name to Waller, adapting it to the English language. There are also families bearing the name Waller from Germany and other countries, perhaps altered from the original spelling. No doubt others originated in England as an occupational name, stone or brick masons who built walls.

There was another Thomas Waller, too, who acquired his name as a slave. He fought for the Union in the Civil War. He could have been related, but not in the usual way. He was a member of the 117th Regiment, United States Colored Infantry, and his name is listed on the African-American Civil War Memorial.

We don't know which Waller owned him as a slave. We can be sure, though, that he wanted very much to be free. Veterans are often said to have fought for freedom, though in most wars that is only a myth of propaganda.

The Civil War was indeed a fight for freedom, and this soldier literally did fight for his own liberty and that of his fellow slaves. War is the worst way to decide anything, and most of them are tragic and unnecessary, but slavery was an evil that had already been tolerated for too long. It had to be stopped, even at the cost of a bloody and divisive war.

## Slavery and the Civil War

Of all the designated slave states, Missouri had the second fewest slaves. In 1860 they were less than 10% of the total population. The majority of them were concentrated in the counties along the Missouri River, where conditions were best for growing hemp, cotton, and tobacco. North of there, including Macon County, the land and climate was better for corn and wheat. The 1860 census counted only 660 slaves in Macon County, and 200 slave owners.

When the Civil War started, Missourians were divided in their sentiments. The original decision was to remain neutral and send no troops to either side, but there was a faction that wanted to join the South, resulting in considerable warfare within the state.

The original county seat of Macon County was Bloomington. Because that town was pro-Southern, the seat was moved to Macon, rather than the alternative plan, which was to burn Bloomington to the ground. Macon became of strategic importance to the Union. The North Missouri and Hannibal & St. Joseph railroads intersected there, and the town became the location of over 7000 Union troops.

The *Macon Gazette*, beginning in January 1862, left no doubt to the leanings of the newspaper and the editor and owner Francis Taylor, "As for politics, it is sufficient at the present time to

say, that I am a Union man, and that the present gigantic efforts of the National Government for its preservation have my earnest and unaffected sympathies.” The Gazette was full of articles and stories related to the war.

Macon County may have been spared much of the fighting and disruption that took place in other parts of the state.

Thomas would have been 60 in 1861, and probably would not have fought in the war.. John William, born in 1841, might have been involved, but we don't know. The other sons of Thomas would have been too young.

## **Richard Waller**

Richard, who was probably the smartest one of the family, grew up to become a teacher as well as a farmer. His wife was Georgiana. Some had her surname as Myers, though when she married Richard she gave her name as Georgiana Bryant. Spelling varied. She was one of 3 children that her mother, Mary Myers, had before she married John Bryant, so there is a case for either name being correct.

They proceeded to procreate, having Mollie, Daniel Edward (Eddie), Richard Arthur, Alonzo Thomas, Dolly (who died at age 2), and John Myers.

*The same Thomas Jefferson whose vision of America was a nation of free independent farmers working their own land, and who helped make that a possibility, also wanted citizens to have the opportunity be educated, with free public schools and state universities. In the mid 1800's that was not yet a reality. Those who established schools in their communities were pioneers of learning. Someone like Richard Waller, who may have learned to read and write from his parents, and, seeing the value of that, became determined to share it with the next generation, served his town and his nation far more than those who amassed wealth or fought in wars.*

Sadly, Georgiana died in 1890, four days after her last child, John Myers Waller, was born. She was only 30 years old, and Richard seems to have taken her death very hard. They had been together since she was 15; she had their first child, Mollie, at 16. Perhaps Richard tried for a while to raise the children by himself, as well as farming and teaching school, but things were never the same after that. He seems to have traveled some, living in Kansas for awhile. Eddie lived with him part of the time. Later, to be allowed to marry under age without his father's permission, Eddie claimed that he was “abandoned”, but that may have been an exaggeration. When he died in 1921 at the age of 71, Richard had returned to Macon.

## **Alonzo Thomas Waller**

My grandfather, Alonzo Thomas Waller, was born January 25, 1883. He was only 7 when his mother died. What his life was like for the next 10 years is hard to say. Richard Arthur, another of Richard's sons, lived with “family and friends”. He began working at the local bakery in 1901, and purchased it, in 1907. The family operated the bakery for thirty eight years. John Myers Waller also became a baker, but he died of typhoid when he was only 26.

When Alonzo was 17, in 1900, he was listed on the census living with the Emmett Halley family, listed as a servant, and working as a mill-hand. Sometimes in those days children that couldn't

be cared for were “bonded out”, and the result could be cruel and hard, a kind of indentured servitude. However, Halley had married into the Lyle family, four of whom had married Waller girls, so there was relativity involved.

He grew up learning to work hard. He soon found a girlfriend, Sarah Susan Goodrich, the woman who would become my grandmother. He called her Susie.

With a little imagination, I can see them, not as the old couple I knew as a child, but young, fun-loving, and excited about one another and their future together. Like his grandparents once had, they set off for new horizons, the city by the Mississippi, Hannibal, Missouri, 60 miles away, leaving Macon behind.

## **The Goodrich Family**

The discovery of a book, “The Goodrich Family In America”, available as a free ebook on Google, has provided lots of information on both the genealogy and historical background of this family, and is well worth reading.

William Goodrich and his brother John were born in England and settled in Connecticut.

William married Sarah Marvin in 1648. Their son William, born in 1661, married Grace Riley and had Benjamin in 1688, who married Grace Kilbourne and had a son Benjamin in 1717.

That Benjamin married Sarah Dewey, producing John in 1754, whose wife was Abigail Price, resulting in Levi in 1782, who married Nancy Taylor and had another Levi (yes, that means we have Levi genes).

Abigail's mother was Martha Grant. She was the daughter of Noah Grant, and the sister of Noah Grant II, who was the father of Noah Grant III. His son was Jesse Root Grant. (That was 3 Noahs and a Jess.)

Jesse's son grew up to become President of the United States, after becoming the General who won the Civil War, Ulysses S. Grant. That makes him my 3<sup>rd</sup> cousin 4<sup>th</sup> removed.

He was born as Hiram Ulysses Grant, but when a friend of his mother wrote a recommendation for his admission to West Point, he gave his name as Ulysses Simpson Grant. Rather than explain the error, the young Grant decided he liked the new name better.

Despite being a West Point graduate, Cousin Ulysses did not care for war or military life. He served in the war with Mexico, which he felt was an unnecessary conflict. Before the Civil War, he had left the army. Convinced that the Union must be saved, he rejoined, and fought ferociously and well. When he became President, he tried to avoid war. He used policies he hoped would reduce the need for force against Native Americans. Then, as now, one can't take success for granted, but he did his best.

Levi Goodrich Jr., a farmer born in 1812, and his wife Elizabeth Byers raised several children in Jackson County, Ohio. One of them was Azariah Zebulon Goodrich,

Azariah married Mary Jane Currier in Ohio in 1856. They had 6 children before she died. He moved to Macon County, Missouri, in 1875 and married Sarah Rogers. She died less than a year later, probably in childbirth.

*Becoming a mother, even once, could be a dangerous undertaking, especially in the days before modern medical care, yet women were expected to repeat it time after time, creating huge families, or die trying. It seems today to have been a primitive custom. Men planted seeds in their*



wives just as they did in their land, and took pride in bountiful crops from both. There seems to have been no thought of restraining the human crop, out of consideration for the woman's well-being, and it was not because there was no knowledge of birth control. There are many ways to interpret the drive to procreate at all costs, but it clearly led to some tragically short lives. It is not known whether Levi was related to Benjamin Franklin Goodrich, who founded the rubber company.

Azariah married Catherine Lister three years later and proceeded to father 6 more children, 3 of whom survived. One of them was my grandmother, Sarah Susan Goodrich, born Oct. 28, 1885.

## Hannibal

Alonzo and Sarah first appear in the Hannibal directory in 1907, though they may have moved there a year or two earlier. He got a job with the Burlington Railroad. A year later, my father was born: Nolan Alonzo Waller.

My grandfather worked on the railroad for 3 or 4 years, then the cement factory for a year or two. In 1911, they had a daughter, Wilma. Lon, or L.T., as he now preferred to be called, didn't mind hard work, but naturally he hoped for something better.

Saving what he could of his hard-earned wages, he and Sarah moved to Lindell Ave. in 1912 and started a small grocery, operating out of their home. They seem to have done all right with that, since they were still doing it 4 years later.

By 1918, however, he had become the manager of the Hannibal branch of the Clough-Reihm Motor Company at 1702 Market Street.

*Mr. Clough had become interested in the automobile business. In 1912 he built at 1738 Broadway, Quincy, Ill., a spacious business structure of reinforced concrete, 50 by 100 feet in dimensions, two stories in height. In 1914 Charles L. Reihm became a partner, in Clough, Reihm & Company. Repairing business is done, and the firm makes a specialty of handling the Chevrolet cars and the Republic tracks.*



Sarah and L.T. Waller

One might think the car and "track" business would be a golden opportunity in 1918. It was the year that GM bought Chevrolet. However, we don't know what happened to Clough & Reihm, but by 1920, L.T. listed his occupation as "traveling salesman". What he was selling is unclear, though on the 1910 census, he said he was an insurance agent. That may have been a sideline that he continued until he eventually combined it with real estate 8 years later.

In 1922, it was back to the grocery business. He opened a store on Market Street, separate from the residence. The following year he became partners with Ova Lawson, forming Lawson & Waller's Feed, Fuel, Hay, and Grain, located at "the foot of Broadway". The store's phone number was "5".

In 1925, L.T. Gave horseless carriages another try, this time as his own business.

**L. T. WALLER GARAGE  
AUTOMOBILE REBUILDING  
MACHINE WORK A SPECIALTY  
ACCESSORIES-TIRES-SUPPLIES  
GASOLINE-OILS  
STORAGE**

**3607 MARKET ST (Oakwood) PHONE 1113**

It was clear that self-propelled vehicles were the wave of the future, and that they would need frequent repair and service. Cars were selling by the thousands, and businesses were springing up nationwide to make money off them. The First Motel (Motorists Hotel) opened in San Luis Obispo, California, in 1925. My father was 17; his sister was 14.

Aside from the potential for profit, my grandfather did not have a personal interest in automotive repair and service. Getting greasy and turning wrenches didn't appeal to him.

In 1926, his occupation changed to "real estate agent". He opened an office at 108-A North 3rd Street, offering Real Estate, Insurance, and Loans. By 1929 L.T. Had moved the business to the Holmes Building at 102 North 6th Street, Rooms 13 and 14, then to 306-A Broadway in 1935

### **Homes in Hannibal**

In the 30 years from 1907 to 1937 L.T. Waller and his family moved frequently. Whenever they could find a better or more convenient place, L.T. Took the opportunity. Some of the houses are no longer there, and one of the streets, Lindell Avenue, where he lived from 1912 to 1916, has been mostly replaced by Warren Barrett Blvd. The houses at 2002 Chestnut (1920) and 1706 Broadway (1922-23) are empty lots now. Their last home, 2618 Bird Street, is now a part of the Mark Twain School playground.



**1907: 824 Union St. The first known address in Hannibal**



**1909: 1113 Fulton Ave.**



**1918: 114 N 3rd Street**



**1925: 911 Church Street**



**1926: 3301 St. Charles**



**1927: 111 North Maple**



**1929: 2501 Broadway**



**1931: 1900 Broadway**



**1937: 3508 West Ely Road**

## **Nolan Alonzo Waller**

Nolan graduated high school in 1926, and in the fall, started college at William Jewell in Liberty, Missouri. It was, and still is, a respected 4-year college, but it was owned and run by the Southern Baptists. Perhaps he had expected a freer educational experience than it was

prepared to provide. He might have run afoul of some rule dictated by its administration's religious dogma.

On the application for admission to William Jewell, he was required to "*Agree to observe the regulations of the college, and, in particular, not to drink intoxicating liquors or to engage in any form of gambling or to loaf about the streets, stores or hotels.*"

Or maybe he was just restless for something other than studying. After the first year, he didn't go back.



He went to work in Chicago. So did three of his friends, Roger, Robert, and Whaley. They shared an apartment at 5809 West Lake Street, and got jobs with an electric appliance company as clerks. The rent was \$115 a month, \$28.75 for each of them. Chances are they were hired before the crash in 1929, when employment got much harder to find. As it was, their pay was probably about \$1000 a year: \$83 a month. After rent, that left them over \$50 a month for food, clothes, and entertainment.

As the economic depression worsened, though, and demand for products dropped, companies had to lay people off. Perhaps that ended the young men's carefree lives in the big city, or they may have decided it was time to return home and try something else. Layoff or not, chances of advancement were probably slim.

Roger Hibbard went back to school, married a doctor's daughter, and eventually became Hannibal's city attorney. Robert Lake sold tires, and Whaley Larrison later joined the Army. Nolan worked at a Standard Oil station in 1935, and by 1937 he owned the Waller Service Station at 921 Broadway in Hannibal.

And, he met Hazel. I imagine that she drove into his station and said "Fill me up and check my oil, please." They soon moved in together and were married in 1937. Originally from a small town in Illinois, Hazel had attended the State Teacher's College in Kirksville, then moved to Hannibal. She worked at Suzanne's dress shop. There were problems, though.

Hazel's brother owned Scoville's Tavern, and Nolan's Southern Baptist parents disapproved of drinking. On top of that the Scovilles were Catholic, and their tavern was known as a "Catholic" bar. As odd as it seems today, there was a strong sectarian divide in those days between Protestants and Catholics. They weren't bombing each other's houses, but they didn't associate socially, either.



So, Nolan's parents didn't approve of Hazel or of Nolan's marriage to her. Perhaps Hazel's relatives disapproved of Nolan, too, or at least resented the attitude of Nolan's parents toward her. Even today it can be difficult to have a relationship when families are un-supportive. In the 1930's, the concept of tolerance was much less developed. There may have been other reasons as well, but by 1940 they had divorced. Hazel and three sisters eventually retired to Sun City, Arizona

**Wilma Waller**





Nolan's sister, Wilma, graduated high school in 1929. Soon she began working in L.T.'s office as a bookkeeper, and moved out of her parents' house to 216 Division Street, where L.T.'s former partner in the feed and grain business, Ova Lawson, lived.

With the experience she gained in her father's office, Wilma got a bookkeeping job with the Singer Sewing Machine Company by 1935. By then, Nolan was back in town, and the whole family moved to a house on West Ely Road.

Around 1938, she met Herman G. Kreitner and married him. They moved to Springfield, Illinois, where she got a job as a file clerk for a motor company. He worked for the Illinois Secretary of State's office as a supply clerk.

We can only hope their marital happiness was blissful and intense while it lasted, because tragically, she died in 1939, only 28 years old.

## **World War Two**

In September, 1939 Germany invaded Poland. Though the US did not immediately become involved in the mostly European war, Roosevelt knew we would need to eventually, and American manufacturers began producing weapons and equipment on a large scale to supply the Allies effort. The American people were not inclined to favor another war, having been propagandized into entering World War One to protect US bankers' investments, and

understandably wary of another one.

Weapons production was beginning to fully restore the economy that had been so severely damaged by the twin impacts of capitalistic collapse and the huge and long-lasting drought in the midwest and western states. Most people would have preferred to enjoy the growing prosperity and remain at peace.

Still, Hitler needed to be stopped, and it was looking like the US would need to help do that. FDR began to manipulate and incite the Japanese to attack us, since it was unlikely the Germans would do it soon enough. War with Japan meant war with Germany. Sure enough, the expected attack came on Pearl Harbor in December 1941.

Nolan didn't want to be drafted into the Army, so he enlisted in the Navy in 1942. He served on PT Boats. He called them "submarine chasers".



Nolan and L.T. Waller



Sarah and Nolan Waller

## **OWENS FAMILY**

Michael Owens and Mary Boyle, were born in Ireland in the 1830's, and moved to America. By 1870 they were living in Wisconsin and raising 6 children. The oldest,, Thomas Owens married Ellen G. Clark, and their son, Frank J. Owens, who married Mynette Mallaney, became my maternal grandfather.

Mynette Faleste Malaney was the daughter of James F. Malaney, born 7/20/1858, son of John

Malaney and Margaretha Mattimore. He was a steam heating plumber

Her mother was Theresa Schmidt. She was born in 1860 in Württemberg of George and Frances Schmidt. Younger siblings were George Jr., Albert, and Katrina. George & Frances, in the 1920 census, were 79 and 76, living with George Jr.

She immigrated to Wisconsin and had her first child, Mynette, on 2/7/1885 when she was about 25 years old. She had two more children, a daughter Sarah in 1889 and a son, John in 1894. Her husband, James, died 1/3/1903, when she was 43, and Mynette was just under 18.

Four years later Mynette married Frank Owens. In 1910, Frank and Mynette were living with his parents, and had just had their first child, Joseph F., who later became a podiatrist and an alcoholic.

My mother, Virginia T. Owens, was born February 14, 1913 in Madison, Wisconsin. James Owens was born about 1916 according to the 1930 census. Not much is known about him. He may have been a taxicab driver, living in San Diego.

In 1918 Frank was registered for the draft. He was 32, 5 feet 9 inches tall, and working as a tailor at 312 State Street in Madison.

The 1930 census found the family in Chicago. Frank was 44, Mynette 43, and Joseph was 20. Virginia was 17, and James was 14.

In 1942 Frank Owens again had to register for the draft, at 56 years old. He was working for Bell Telephone, at 131 North Franklin.

In 1937, Virginia had a son, with Herman Dehmer. Though they lived together, Virginia was not at all sure she wanted to marry Herman. He seemed nice enough in the beginning, but something about him worried her. They were living with her parents in Chicago, at 6417 Kenwood Avenue. Herman worked as a construction helper for the power company. By 1940 or before, she found her concerns were well-founded. It was time to leave, she thought, and her mother agreed. Mynette, Virginia, and her son began traveling.

In May 1940 when the census was taken, the three of them were counted in Chicago, along with Frank, Herman, and Herman's younger brother James, but Virginia, at least, was probably not there. She had met Arthur Robert Bretschneider in Sarasota, Florida, and on March 30, 1940, she married him. He was a sign painter, born in Ohio, living with his parents, Sidney and Edna, and his younger sister Ellen. He was 21. Virginia soon became pregnant with a daughter, who was born around 1941.

It was not a relationship destined to last. Perhaps it was the age difference, or that he was not ready to be a father to two children.

Perhaps, thinking the children needed a father, Virginia decided to marry Herman. In 1941, She divorced Arthur and married Herman Dehmer, a marriage which lasted about 3 years.

In 1944 she divorced Herman and married my father, Nolan Waller, on March 29. A county judge performed the ceremony.

## Nolan and Virginia

The Second World War was drawing to a close, and Nolan was stationed around Miami, Florida, soon to be discharged from the Navy. They probably met in Miami, where Virginia got her divorce from Herman. Nolan was discharged in October of 1945. A young man just out of the service; a beautiful dark-haired woman; a semi-tropical paradise with balmy breezes and ocean beaches; a world again at peace. It should have been the beginning of a long romance.

It is likely that I was conceived on New Year's Eve, a seed sown in celebration and joy. The months to come must have been happy, full of love and hope and future plans. By May they had moved to St Petersburg, and she had seen a doctor. It is not clear whether complications could have been anticipated.

On September 8, 1946, I was born. Four hours later, my mother died, at 33 years old.



Her body was sent to Chicago, where a funeral was held at St. Cyril's Church. She was buried at St. Mary's Cemetery. Her grave bears no marker.

The more I learn about my mother's life, the more fascinating a person she seems to have been. For most of my life I've known only that she was a beautiful woman that my father loved, who died the day I was born, and that she had two children by different fathers before me. The story I have discovered is one of a free-spirited woman, living in an era when traditions and society's expectations pressured one to conform far more than they do today.

Conflict was inevitable, but I see in her a joyful exuberance and a determination to seek the love and the life she wanted, not settling for what others wanted for her. I would like to think she found that at last when she met my father.

I have never forgotten, in all my 68 years, that she once lived, and that she died far too young.

Can I miss a mother who I never met? Absolutely.

Yes, it makes me sad to think that I could never get to know her, and she could never get to know me, and that my father lost the woman he loved.

If I could, I would want to know the sound of her voice; to hear her laugh, to call my name. I wish my father could have, when I was old enough to understand and remember, told me stories of her, how they met, what she was like; words she had said. But as it is, fairly recently I have gained a little more insight, bits of knowledge on which I can speculate. On that day of birth and death, I would like to think that every second, and every bit of knowledge they had was being used to try to save her. Even today, though more is known, sometimes it isn't enough.

## **Back in Hannibal**

My father and I moved to Hannibal. I wasn't consulted about the decision, and anyway I was too young to speak, but for him, Hannibal was home, and my grandparents could help take care of me. My memories of the early days are a little hazy. Learning to crawl. Sunbeams through high windows making bright spots on dark hardwood floors. Screen doors.

Nolan joined his father, L.T., in his real estate and insurance business. Soon my grandfather had renamed it "L.T. Waller and Son".

I knew nothing of time, but years were passing. Changes were coming. The first hint of that was when my father would come home from work and say, "Let's go to Sue's place." Before long, he married her.

Then, on weekends, we would take trips outside of town and walk through fields of Jimson weeds taller than I was. My father bought the place, 27 acres and a long-vacant old house. He and Sue worked hard to make it livable. It had gas lighting, no plumbing, a cistern for water, and desperately needed a new roof and paint. They did it all- wired it for electricity, installed a gas furnace and stove, fed by a big LP gas tank in the yard, drilled a deep well for water drawn by an electric pump, installed an indoor toilet and plumbing, a septic tank, a new roof, and much more. By the time they were done, it was as modern and pleasant as a house in town.



On November 4, 1952, Nolan was elected to the position of Administrator of Marion County, MO, a post that L.T. Waller had held before him. The Administrator handles the affairs of those who have been judged unable to care for themselves. His tenure in office lasted only 24 days. My father died on November 28.

## The Strode Family

Susan Leona Strode was the daughter of Charles E. Strode and Alberta Glascock. They also had two sons, Charles Jr., born in 1913, and Lloyd, born in 1919.

Charles and Alberta Strode first appeared in Hannibal in 1905. He was born in Rolla, Missouri on April 4, 1878 to James D. Strode and Anna Dodd. She came from Ralls County, born September 2, 1877. Her parents were Jacob and Susan Hickman Glascock.

Charles went into the coal and wood business. Between 1911 and 1914, he seems to disappear from Hannibal. Perhaps he participated in World War One, or they moved elsewhere for a while.

When he returned in 1914, he joined Louis Wilhelm's grocery business, making it Wilhelm & Strode, at 1300 Broadway.

By 1916, however, he had started his own grocery with Ollie C. Glascock, who was likely related to Alberta. They called it Strode and Glascock, at 1300 Market St.

Charles' next business venture came in 1918, when he rejoined Wilhelm, but this time in automobiles. It was the Wilhelm-Strode Motor Co., at 806-810 Broadway, and he was its vice-president. The Secretary was F.V. Hedges. When he registered for the draft in 1918, he was living at 2202 Broadway, next door to the Wilhelms.



Charles E. Strode

He continued in that enterprise until 1923, when Charles and Hedges started their own company, selling tires at 115 Broadway. Charles Strode also entered politics that year, getting elected as a city Alderman from the 6th ward. He held that office through 1925. In 1926 he was appointed Hannibal's City Clerk, the position he occupied until June 4, 1929, when he suddenly died on the job. The front page of the Jefferson City Post-Tribune reported:

**HANNIBAL CLERK DROPPED DEAD**  
**C.E. Strode Had Just Been Elected For New Term.**

*Ten minutes after he had been reappointed City Clerk of Hannibal in the city council chamber last night Charles E. Strode, 51, dropped dead. He had been city clerk for two and one half years.*

*Physicians said that Strode's death was due to a cerebral hemorrhage. He had been ill Sunday but was in his office all day yesterday preparing for the council meeting last night at which Mayor J.B. Robinson and the new city council were inaugurated.*

*Strode had resided in and near Hannibal all his life. His widow, 3 children and two sisters, Mrs. John S. Wood, St. Louis, and Mrs. Morris Anderson, wife of a former Hannibal mayor, survive.*



**2202 Broadway Next door was 2000, the Wilhelm residence**

Susan Strode, born March 30, 1912, was only 17 when her father died. As the oldest of the 3 children, it was her task to help support the family. She soon became a physician's assistant, working for Dr. W.F. Francka for 22 years. She remained dedicated to taking care of her mother, until April 15, 1948, when Alberta Strode died.

Her brother Charles Jr. ran a coal business. He married Hester Webb and had two daughters. They also had one son, Charles III, who did not survive. Lloyd sold tires, and married Frances Hopkins. Both their sons became doctors of osteopathy.

In 1951, Susan married my father, Nolan Waller. He died on November 28, 1952, at the age of 44.

## Michael Owens Waller

Though I am both narrator and a character in this multi-century story, my role is not its climax. I am just another brick in the Wallers; another knot in the vast web to which we all connect.

At the tender age of 21, in 1967, I got married to a woman I met while working at McDonald's when she placed an order. It was an over-the-counter encounter; a hamburger meet. We moved to the Promised Land: the Golden State. At the time, Los Angeles was probably the best place on Earth to live. About 8 years later, on January 26, 1975, my son was born. She wanted to leave paradise. I wanted to stay. We parted ways. My son grew up back in Missouri.

This is by no means the end of the story. It has no end, and the beginning is so far back in prehistory that it will never be known. A surname traced backward is only part of the story. Every generation back, the number of direct ancestors doubles. A family tree is the reverse of a real tree. It does not start at the trunk, growing branches, but starts with many branches to grow a trunk

Our ancestry does not separate us from the rest of the world, but shows us how we are connected to all of humankind.

*(Names of living descendants have been omitted from this version of the narrative, so that it can be made public.)*

**--By Michael Owens Waller, 2013, updated 1/10/15**