

Henry C. Hall

As we appropriately thank and worship our Savior and try to obey the admonitions of his Latter-day prophets, I realize that it has been a long time since I put pen to paper. So let me tell you some things about Henry C. Hall who was born October 11, 1858. I'll begin with the subject of horse drawn streetcars.

Before streetcars were electrified, the cars were pulled by horses along wooden rails that were capped with a thin strip of steel. This enterprise, which spread from city to city beginning in the 1850's, was a major operation. The Vanderbilt family wealth was generated, initially, from their horse car holdings.

Following are some U.S. statistics concerning horse-powered streetcar lines in the year 1880:

Number of horse car railways: 415
Number of cars: 18,000
Number of horses: 100,000
Yearly hay consumption: 150,000 tons
Yearly grain consumption: 11,000,000 bushels
Miles of track: 3,000
Passengers carried: 1,212,400,000
Employees: 35,000
Investment: \$150,000,000

Some mules were employed on the street railways. They had advantages and disadvantages. One disadvantage was a mule's stubbornness. It would often just lie down and refuse to work or it would head for the "car barns" where it knew there was hay and grain to eat. On the positive side, a mule could be toilet trained.

Horses could not be trained in this respect. Consequently, their accumulated excrements were knee deep in some areas of New York City and the odor was unbearable. This was the era of the long skirt and you can well imagine Madam's problems in "keeping her skirt clean."

My grandfather, Henry C. Hall, was the first man to drive the street railway car when it was introduced into Cedar Rapids, Iowa in 1882. Cedar Rapids employed mules to pull the cars.

My grandfather, Henry C. Hall, of whom I speak, was born in Lafayette, Allen County, Ohio. My great grandfather, also named Henry C. Hall, was a merchant who owned a small store in Lafayette. Unfortunately, he died on October 20, 1858, leaving five children: Clarrisa, Hannah Ellen, Esther, Mariette and Henry C. who was 14 years old at the time. Tragically, Elizabeth Staley, Henry's wife, died two years later.

Great grandfather's will was probated and gives an interesting account of about 100 persons who owed him money. My father and mother, Howard and Florence Tracy Hall, made an effort in 1949 to locate his store only to find that it had been torn down the day before they arrived.

Henry C., the youngest of the children, was sent to live with his grandfather, William Hall. On obtaining his majority at age 21 years, he received in cash, his portion of his father's estate.

With part of his cash, he bought a team of horses and a wagon and started west, buying and selling scrap iron along the way. The farther west he went, the more valuable the scrap iron became. Upon reaching Mount Vernon, Iowa, he stopped to rest and stayed a while. I estimate that the trip lasted 90 days and covered about 900 miles.

While there, he met Mary Ann Woodcox and, after a short courtship, married her on November 29th, 1883. It is rumored that Mary Ann's parents, Alfred Woodcox and Naomi McElroy, for unknown reasons did not fully appreciate the sterling qualities of my grandfather. Consequently, Henry had to steal his bride-to-be with the help of a ladder to a second story window. They then continued west to Cedar Rapids, where grandfather sold the horses, the wagon, and the rest of the scrap iron. With the proceeds, they purchased a home on Second Avenue (also called Eagle Street). I have been unable to determine the location of their home from the old-time maps. Their oldest children, Saint (Sam) and my father, Howard, were born there.

Soon after taking up residence, my grandfather obtained the streetcar driver position already mentioned. The pay was good and the work enjoyable, but he was still attracted to opportunities further west. So he moved again.

After four years of mule-team streetcar driving, he and his young family boarded a train for Pocatello, Idaho where they again bought a home and grandfather went to work as a locomotive fireman on the Oregon Short Line Railroad. Eugene and May Naomi were born here. Eugene was born on November 30, 1890 and died one month later on December 31, 1890. I have researched "on site" in the Pocatello area for the location of their home and also for the burial site of Eugene without success. May Naomi was also born in Pocatello on March 28, 1892.

Sometime later, the railroad built a branch line in Cache Valley, Utah. Henry then transferred to the new branch line, sold the Pocatello home, moved to Ogden, Utah and bought a home at 2783 Pacific Avenue on the west side of the railroad switching yard. Ralph, the youngest child, was born in Ogden, Utah on July 30, 1894.

After seven years on the Cache Valley line, he transferred to the Southern Pacific Railroad as a brakeman where he again worked for seven years.

The railroad yards in Ogden were growing at a rapid rate and, in fact, had become the most important railroad terminal west of Omaha. As a result, the Pacific Avenue home, along with other homes on the west side of the tracks, was purchased by the railroad.

Henry and Mary Ann then acquired a property and built a home at 126 Binford Avenue, where they resided until they departed this life.

In the northeast corner of the property, Henry built a two-story horse barn for a transfer business on which he had embarked.

The material on my grandfather up to this point has been obtained from Linn County Iowa histories, general US Histories of the period, taped interviews of my mother and father, and brief, written histories of Howard and Florence Tracy Hall.

Early recollections of my Hall grandparents began in 1927 when we were living in Marriott and I was seven years old. We visited grandma quite often and played with our cousin Betty Hensley, who was also about seven. We envied Betty very much because Grandma Hall gave Betty money to buy one candy bar every day. Betty's mother, May Hall Hensley, had died of tuberculosis and she was being raised by Grandmother Hall. In addition to the huge horse barn, which had a driveway running to it on the east side of the property,

there was a neatly trimmed hedge in front, a grape arbor (a cool place to be in on a hot summer day), and a small, well-trimmed lawn.

Playing in the barn was forbidden, but I remember playing there anyway with Betty, my brother Eugene, and two neighborhood Negro girls.

The home was wood frame with a small porch on the south side, where there were two rocking chairs. The house was painted gray. The living room was always dimly lit. I remember those old, twisted, greenish cords descending from a high ceiling, terminating in a wavy glass shade on which there was a switch for turning on the light. The bulb was probably only 40 watts.

I relished the treat that Grandma always had for us children but had a hard time forgiving her for telling me that there was no Santa Claus.

The main attraction in Grandma's living room was the Edison phonograph. We would crank it up and listen to jazzy saxophones and comedians telling funny jokes. Interestingly, the steel needle on an Edison moved up and down as it followed the track. In all other brands of phonographs of that day, the needle wiggled from side to side in a horizontal plane as the record revolved.

Grandma Hall was a short woman with very deep-set eyes. We have a good picture of my grandfather's family. Grandfather Hall was a stalky man with a moustache. He always went to a barbershop for a shave (not uncommon in those days).

Grandfather Hall was a far-sighted man who quickly changed from using horses and wagons in his transfer business to using motorized trucks. He was the first in Ogden to make the change. At this time his business was located at 231 25th Street. In addition to transferring baggage, he did moving of all kinds and sold kindling wood, coal, and bailed hay. My father, Howard, was a partner in this enterprise during its early years.

Incidentally, my wife, Ida-Rose, blames my grandfather for handing "junk genes" down to me. It's true; I look for steel in junkyards first before buying new steel to build experimental high pressure/high temperature machines capable of transforming graphite into diamond. I'll bet you did not know that old railway axles make excellent tie bars for my diamond making machines. I've bought tons of pounds of ductile-iron steel from a Canadian company that went bankrupt. I simply can't resist a bargain in steel and probably have 20 tons of it stored in front of my machine shop located at 1190 Columbia Lane in Provo. Ida-Rose worries about what she will do with it if I should be the first to die.

Railroading was in my family's blood. My father, Howard Hall, followed in his father's footsteps until going into the transfer business previously mentioned. My Hall ancestry does not come from the pioneer family genealogical lines and tracing our ancestry has proved to be difficult. My grandparents were nominally inactive Methodists and not at all interested in such things.

Briefly, my mother, Florence Tracy, converted my father to the LDS church before they were married in 1918 in the Salt Lake temple. I was their first child and they named me Howard Tracy Hall. To avoid confusion between my father and me, they called me Tracy and I have signed my name as H. Tracy Hall for a very long time.

My father's life dramatically changed after he joined the church.

