

Bio: Walter John Germann

Pamela Hutchison Garrett, 2019

Walter John Germann was born on the 13th of August 1879, the son of Alfred Christian Germann and Julia Elizabeth Neider. He was probably born in or near the community of Louisville in Lincoln county Missouri. The 1880 census shows the family in Lincoln county Missouri - Alf Germon, farmer, with his wife Julia, and four children identified as Ida age 8, Low age 6, Alf age 5, and Walter age 1. The family grew by several more children - Garfield, Dollie, Bessie - in the following years. It is not known where Walter's birth family was living during his "growing-up" years, but by the 1900 census Alfred Germann was in Watkins township of Dent county Missouri, and Walter Germann, who was about age twenty-one, does not appear with his family in this census. A later census record reveals that Walter Germann had the opportunity to school through the fourth grade. It is likely that he set to work on the family farm at a young age. Several of Walter's siblings married and farmed in Missouri and Kansas, but three of the Germann boys moved further west - Garfield to New Mexico where he died young, Alf to Colorado where he ranched and lived as a bachelor, and Walter to Wyoming.

Esther Allan, in her 1973 article titled History of Teton National Forest, shares some fascinating details on Walter Germann as a young man. The original source for her "picture" is not given:

Walter Germann came into the valley in 1904 over Teton Pass driving a yoke of bulls. He worked cutting timber for the Jackson Lake Dam which was being built, and was known to be the best crosscut saw-operator in the country. He built a wagon, wheels, and all from a huge log he felled, and it was used to haul trees down to the lake where they were floated to the outlet. He homesteaded in the Buffalo River country in 1907. He hauled freight from Ashton, Idaho to Moran.

Walter Germann married Pearl Thacker on the 13th of April 1908 in Fremont county Idaho. Pearl was born in 1888 to Frederick Thacker and Sarah Jane Price in Wasatch county Utah, just south of Salt Lake City. Her mother died when she was sixteen and she eventually moved north to Chapin Idaho to live with relatives. Chapin sits on the western edge of today's Grand Teton's National Park, and is about fifty miles from Moran Wyoming. Perhaps Walter and Pearl met during one of Walter's "freight hauls" between Moran and Ashton. St Anthony, where Walter and Pearl's marriage is recorded, is the county seat of Fremont county Idaho.

Walter Germann was nearing age thirty when he married. It is not clear where Walter and Pearl lived as newlyweds, but it was probably in the Jackson Lake area. The Bureau of Land Management records, Evanston Office, indicate that Walter J Germann acquired land in Teton county Wyoming in 1914. This original 160 acre, land grant came to Walter by the authority of the 1862 Homestead Act, and was located just east of the community of Moran, on Blackrock creek (Section 30, Township 45N, Range 113W). This property may be related to, or the same as, the 1907 homestead "in the Buffalo River country" mentioned above. No record has been found of a 1907 homestead.



Buffalo River near Moran Wyoming

Wyoming was granted statehood in 1890, and many of the early white settlers were involved in stock-raising, primarily cattle and sheep. The success of this enterprise ebbed and flowed during Wyoming's early decades. By 1914, when Walter Germann acquired his property, most settlers were engaged in a small-scale farming and ranching effort:

. . . the most common operation was the middling farm, ranch of a few hundred acres or less on which homesteaders grew a small herd of cattle, some hay, some oats and barley, select other crops, some draft horses, ample poultry, a few pigs, and a vegetable garden that could be measured as a fraction of an acre, or acres . . . The small or modest dwellings and ranch buildings of the multitudes were as much a part of the lives of those who worked to build the ranches and farms of the region.

from - Lives Worth Living, History Worth Preserving: A Brief History of Wyoming Homesteading, Ranching and Farming 1860 - 1960; Michael Cassity, 2010; for the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office.

During the first fifteen years of their married life, Walter Germann and his wife Pearl Thacker Germann introduced nine children into the world - Walter Garfield Germann, Alfred Frederick Germann, Pearl Germann, Lora Hazel Germann, Archibald Lamar Germann, Oliver Reed Germann, Cecil Irvin Germann, Faye Inez Germann and Ronald Phil Germann. Family members describe their marriage as "stormy", and sometime before 1930 Pearl Germann left her husband and took her daughters and four youngest sons with her to Vernal Utah. Eventually Walter and Pearl were divorced and Pearl was remarried in 1936. Eventually the children returned to their father's home in Wyoming, and most of the children are shown in Walter Germann's household by the 1940 census.

Walter John Germann died on the 6th of May 1949, at the age of sixty-nine. His obituary, published in the Jackson Hole Courier, described the funeral service as, "attended by a large congregation of relatives and friends and particularly by neighbors from Moran and the Buffalo River country where Mr. Germann had been a rancher for many years." It went on to note that, "Clifford Hansen, Jackson Hole rancher, spoke extemporaneously in glowing tribute of Mr. Germann."



Walt Germann feeding colt, Buffalo Valley
from "The Last Homestead"
Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum

Walter Germann is buried in the Allen Cemetery in Moran Wyoming, along with his daughter Lora Germann who died at the age of twenty.

Several members of the Germann family have diligently gathered, and generously shared their work on this family. Family Search and Find A Grave are great resources to learn more about aunts, uncles, siblings, cousins and children.

Do you want to know more?

[Link to Walter John Germann in the database](#)

For Further Reading:

[The Last Homestead](#)

In 2014 the Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum presented an online exhibit titled "The Last Homestead". It tells the story, through clippings and photographs, of the McKinstry family who homesteaded near Moran Wyoming. It is a treasure trove of information about life in the area during the early 20th century. **There are several mentions and photos of the Germann family, who were neighbors.** Check out the introductory page, and then proceed on

to the exhibit that is linked at the bottom of the page. It is well worth reading in its entirety, but don't miss the Germann photos on pages 27 and 43 (of 49 pages).

Germann Family Papers, 1920-1952. 0.1 cubic ft. (1 folder) Acc. #9797 The Germann family lived in Wyoming's Grand Teton National Park during the twentieth century. Collection contains 10 photographic copy prints of the Germann family and Grand Teton National Park, taken by unidentified photographers between 1920 and 1952. The photographs of the Germann family contain images of Cecil, Garl, Lora, Pearl, Hap, Walter, Claudia, Archie, Oliver, Walter, and Ronald Germann. The photographs of Grand Teton National Park include images of the Germann homestead, which was located on the Buffalo Fork River.

[source] American Heritage Center; University of Wyoming; Guide to Wyoming and the West Collections; compiled 2000 and edited 2013.

Bio of Walter John Germann compiled by Pamela Hutchison Garrett for the Family Stories website; 2019.