

News from Nan

BIRTHDAY TRIBUTE

BIRTHDAY TRIBUTE: HENRY REBMANN (DICK'S GREAT-GRANDFATHER, DECEMBER 7) (AI ENHANCED)

DECEMBER 7, 2025 | DICK

This post was created by two humans (Dick and Anna) and an AI assistant (Perplexity).

Henry Rebmann was my (Dick's) great-grandfather, father of my maternal grandmother, Louise Rebmann Moseley.

Henry was born on December 7, 1865, so today is the 160th anniversary of his birth.

Henry was born in Gundershoffen, Bas-Rhin, Alsace, France. The map below shows the location of Alsace, which is near Strasbourg and the German border.



At beginning of the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871) the Germans marched directly through the the area where Henry and his family were living. After the war, the Germans retained control over the Alsace region, which they had lost to France in the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648).

Henry was born in 1865, at the tail-end of the more-than-300-year period of French rule, which reverted back to German control in 1870, when Henry was about five years old.

The Rebmann family, like many in the Alsace region, were apparently of German origin. Henry's given name was listed as "Henri" instead of, perhaps, "Heinrich." We wondered why. (In his young adulthood, when he migrated to the U.S., he settled on "Henry" and never again called himself by either of the other variants.)

AI enhancement #1

We asked Perplexity, our favorite AI assistant, about the "Henri Rebmann" phenomenon. According to Perplexity, after 1803, when Napoleon was emperor, children's first names in all of France had to be drawn from the Catholic saint's calendar or from a small pool of approved historical names. In Alsace, most of the surnames were Germanic, so "Henri Rebmann" was not at all unusual.

Back to the Rebmann family

Henry's surname was also a bit confusing: he was born "Henri Lang" to Marguerite Salomea ("Salomea") Lang, and the birth was registered as "out of wedlock." However, Salomea's marriage to Henri Rebmann in August 1866 legitimized his birth and gave him the surname Rebmann.

Henry's arrival in the United States is documented as occurring in 1888 (when he was about 22), and he settled in Buffalo, New York.

Henry's three siblings (all born in Alsace as Rebmans) also came to the United States:

- Salomea ("Sally") (born 1870) went from France to Allegheny, Pennsylvania, in 1887 (the year before Henry's migration), and she died and was buried near San Francisco.
- Georg was born in 1878, and nothing definitive is known about him after that.
- Peter ("Uncle Pete") (born 1880) joined Henry in Buffalo in 1905.
- Carolina ("Carrie") (born 1886) went to Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1902.



Salomea Rebmann Guenther's gravestone in the Colma Cemetery near San Francisco

AI enhancement #2

We also asked Perplexity “Why might a man like Henry, born in Alsace in 1865, have migrated to the Buffalo area in 1888? The answer was “probably one of the following common reasons people left Alsace (and other parts of Germany and France)”:

- Resentment of German government control
- Fear of conscription into the German military
- Declining economic prospects in Alsace
- Booming economic possibilities in the U.S.

Back to the Rebmanns, again

Henry married Anna Kalert (born 1860 in St. Louis) on May 3, 1890, in Buffalo, New York. Anna's parents and other family members had migrated from Bavaria in 1857.

In Buffalo Henry worked as a stone cutter, baker's oven builder, wagon maker, and teamster. He became a U.S. citizen in 1906.

He died young, at age 47, in 1912.

Henry and Anna's children were:

- Anna Jr., born in 1890.
- Henry Jr. (“Hank”), born in 1892.

- Selma, born in 1893.
- Frederick ("Uncle Fritz"), born 1896.
- Louise ("Lou"), born 1898.
- Elizabeth ("Libby"), born in 1900.

Here is a picture of Anna Sr. and her two younger daughters, Louise and Elizabeth. The man is probably Smith Aldrich, who was Elizabeth's first husband, and died in 1921. The picture was probably taken sometime between 1918 and 1920.



Anna Kalert Rebmann, daughters Elizabeth ("Libby") and Louise ("Lou") Rebmann, and probably Elizabeth's husband, Smith Aldrich

Anna Kalert Rebmann never remarried, and was sometimes called "Anna Allein" (which means "Anna alone" in German) by members of the family. (In fact, Dick's mother Lillian, Anna Sr.'s granddaughter, thought "Allein" was Anna's birth surname!)

◀ 1865 ◀ 2025 ◀ ALSACE ◀ FRANCE ◀ GERMANY ◀ GUNDERSHOFFEN ◀ HENRI REBMANN ◀ PERPLEXITY AI
◀ SALOMÉ LANG