

Henry Wendt

Henry Wendt was born in Germany in 1846. He saved his money to pay for passage on an old windjammer sailing vessel, arriving in New York in 1863 where he began his new life. The trip took five weeks and four days, but the fare was cheaper than a steam-driven ship. Henry was a stranger in a new land with little money and a lot of ambition.

Henry eventually made his way to Nebraska where there was a large German population, and he successfully filed claim for a homestead. Henry met and fell in love with another German immigrant, Mary Schlake. They were married in 1874 and would have nine children.

In 1874-75 the Midwest suffered a grasshopper plague. The Wendt family decided it was time to move West, first to California, before settling in Jacksonville in 1887.

Henry opened a dairy farm and became Jacksonville's first milk merchant. The dairy farm and his family's residence were located on both sides of 5th & G Streets in Jacksonville. The Wendt children used a two-wheeled pony cart to deliver milk door-to-door.

In addition to his dairy farm, Henry drove a stagecoach for the Jacksonville & Applegate Stage Line, served on the Jacksonville City Council and held the post of street commissioner.

When Henry died at the age of 70, sons George and Chester took over the milk business and kept it going for several more decades.