

# CANAWLERS AT REST

## HERMAN RUDOLPH SCHWEGMANN

**b. May 27, 1821**

**d. April 14, 1880**

Herman Rudolph Schwegmann\* was born in Prussia in 1821 and lived in Hanoverstadt. He later immigrated to the United States. After the Wabash & Erie Canal had been opened from Lafayette, Indiana to the Indiana/Ohio state line, Herman located in Fort Wayne in 1840. He found employment as a cook on a canal "state boat." A state boat is a work boat that is maintained by the state. The boat was engaged in repairing the canal on the division from Dixon Lock [Dickey Lock at Roanoke, Indiana] to Peru, Indiana.

Oehmig Bird (3-19-1813, 1-21-1875), of Fort Wayne, was the engineer and paymaster on this division of the canal. Herman always spoke highly of Oehmig and how he discharged his duties to the state and to the laborers engaged in the public service with scrupulous fidelity. Later in 1847-48 Oehmig also held contracts for excavation of sections 18 and 163 south of Terre Haute, for Lock gates and mitre sills in section 163, and, along with Patrick Cummins, for excavation of section 69 south of Terre Haute.

Herman attended the public school at Lagro while the canal was closed for the winter of 1840. He sawed wood and took on other labor to pay his board. When the winter was over he returned to his job aboard the canal boat.

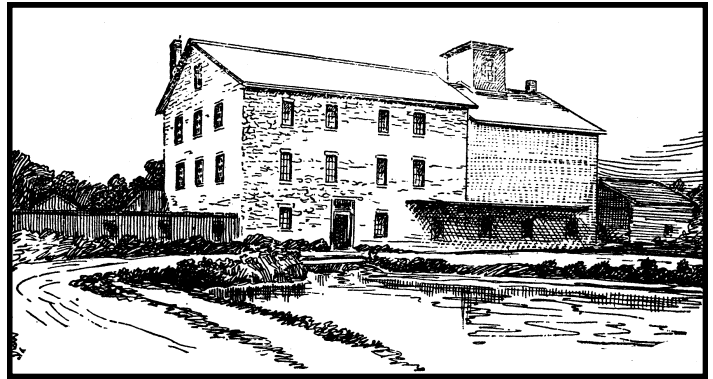
On November 23, 1841 Herman returned to Fort Wayne and was engaged as a clerk for J. W. Townley & Co.. He remained in their employ until August, 1845. In 1846 Herman formed a partnership in a firm known as Hill, Wilson & Company. Their store was stocked with general merchandise and was located on Columbia Street. That year Christian Tresselt

\*At some time after arriving in the United States the family dropped the letter "n" from the end of their name and became Schwegman.

came to Fort Wayne and was employed by Hill, Wilson & Company for four years. This is where he became acquainted with Herman.

In 1848 Herman Schwegman became John Orff's new partner in a firm established as Orff and Schwegman. They sold general merchandise. Orff had previously been the junior partner in the firm of Chittenden & Orff. However, in 1847 Mr. Chittenden, the senior partner, had died in New Orleans after having been a sutler selling food and liquor to the soldiers in the Mexican War. Orff later ran the old stone mill, sometimes known as Edsall's Mill or Empire Mill, on the canal.

The U.S. Federal Census of 1850 showed Herman Schwegman, a merchant, living in the household of John and Hannah Orff. Herman was 27 years old and John was 29. Also living with them were their daughter Emily age 1, Elizabeth Orff age 59 and Henry Orff age 23, a clerk.



**Orff's Mill  
With  
Mill's head race from the Wabash & Erie Canal**

In 1850 Christian Tresselt left Hill, Wilson & Company and became a clerk in The City Mill. Following that he was a captain on a canal freight boat. In 1851-1854 he was a partner in the dry goods business with George Wilson

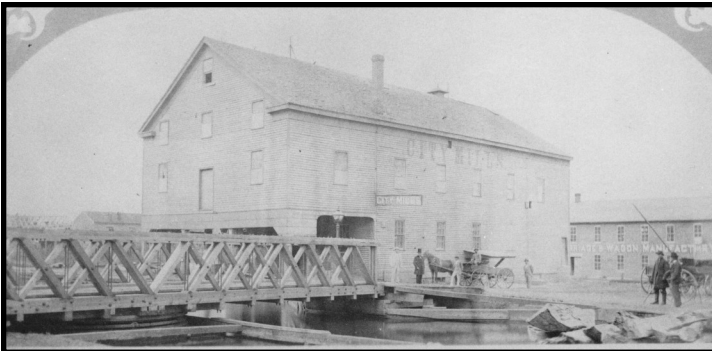
Sometime In 1852-53 Herman returned to Germany and attempted to induce his parents to immigrate to Fort Wayne, but they refused to leave their native land. While in Germany he married Matilda Siemon in Berlin. He brought Matilda and her sister, Elizabeth Siemon, back to Fort Wayne reaching there on April 19, 1853. That July the partnership of Orff and Schwegmann was dissolved. Herman purchased the interest of Orff. From July 1853 until 1869, Herman was a successful merchant.

Christian Tresselt met and fell in love with Elizabeth Siemon, Herman's wife's sister. Christian married Elizabeth in 1854 at Fort Wayne. In 1855 he became Herman R. Schwegman's partner for a year before returning to The City Mills.

Herman and Mathilda Schwegman had seven children:

Emma L. b. circa 1854

Adelia                      b. circa 1857 (also Adelhiet, Adela, Adelpha)  
 Lydia                      b. 01-19-1859, d. 10-31-1895  
 Clara A.    b. 08-29-1860, d. 08-20-1941  
 Paul R.                    b. 11-??-1862, d. 02-04-1917  
 John F.                    b. circa 1865, d. 06-13-1943



**The City Mills  
 With  
 Turn-bridge over the Wabash & Erie Canal on the left**

Gustave A.                      b. circa 1868, d. 01-19-1946

In 1855 Herman hired Claude F. Eme to work in his store. Much like Herman, Claude had previously spent two seasons working on a canal "state boat." He worked for Herman for 14 years. Then in January 1870 Claude went into partnership with Henry Rohs and Frederick Reinking in another dry goods business. That firm lasted until 1882.

The Census of 1860 showed Herman Schwegman, a dry goods merchant with real estate valued at \$5,000 and a personal estate valued at \$5,000. Living with him were his wife Matilda; his children Emma, Adelpha (Adelia) and Lydia; Rudolph Schwegman age 24; Theda Beth age 21; Caroline Auganor L. age 18; Lucy Huseman age 15; Wm B Walters age 45; Sphelia Walters age 30; the Walter's children Eliza, Mary, and Charles Walters; and Rosanera Peters age 14.

In 1866 Christian Tresselt worked with the Siemon Brothers, and in 1870 was a partner in the firm of Hoagland, Tresselt & Co., proprietors of The City Mills. The mills shipped their flour via canal boat. After Pliny Hoagland died, Christian became the owner of The City Mills in 1884. It then became known as C. Tresselt & Sons.

The Census of 1870 showed Herman, a dry goods merchant, with real estate valued at \$10,000 and a personal estate of \$5,000. Living with him were his wife Matilda, and his children Emma, Adelhiet (Adelia), Lydia, Clara, Paul, John and Gustave.

Whether it was the loss of Claude Eme or for some other reason Herman began to have money problems in his dry goods business. For years he had believed those with whom he had done business in New York were his friends. He had paid his obligations as they matured. But as money became tight, he be-

came embarrassed. Although his failure resulted partly from an untimely and injudicious crowding by his creditors to pay his bills, his own irregular business habits were what overtook and destroyed him. If he had judiciously carried out his business, he would not have encountered financial reverses.

In 1871 Herman withdrew from business. It was always his aim to deport himself honorably toward all with whom he had business transactions.

On July 6, 1876, Herman's oldest daughter, Emma, married August Senne. They were married in Allen County, Indiana. Emma died on May 31, 1918 in Martin County, Indiana.

Herman Rudolph Schwegmann died on April 15, 1880. He was buried in the 1834 Old Concordia Lutheran Cemetery in Fort Wayne located at 1146 Grant Avenue between Jefferson and Washington Streets. The north side of the tombstone marks the grave of Herman and the south side marks the grave of his wife, Mathilda.

The *Fort Wayne News* of April 17, 1880 simply said that Rudolph Schwegman was buried yesterday. He was only 58 years old. His address was given as Clinton & Jefferson. At one time he had been the Fort Wayne commissioner of patents.

The 1880 Census showed Mathilda Schwegman being the head of the household with Adela (Adelia) age 22, Clara age 19, Paul age 17, John age 15, and Gustave age 12 living with her. The Fort Wayne City Directories from 1883-1899 show Mathilda, widow of Herman Rudolph Schwegman, residing at 35 E. Jefferson Street.

Adelia Schwegman was married to Henry L. W. Meyer. The wedding took place in Allen County, Indiana on May 17, 1882.

(north side)  
**Herman  
 Schwegman**  
 geb. 27 May  
 1821  
 gebt. 14 April  
 1880  
 58 y, 3 m, 26 d

(south side)  
**Mathilda  
 Schwegman**  
 geb. 9 Sept.  
 1823  
 gebt. 21 Feb.  
 1900

Photo by Bob Schmidt



Mathilda Schwegman, born in Germany on September 9, 1823, died on February 21, 1900. She was 76 years old. She was buried in Old Concordia Lutheran Cemetery in Fort Wayne. Her son Paul then became the head of the household living with his sister, Clara; brothers, John and Gustave; and Sophia L. Klusman. After Paul died in 1917, Gustave became the head of the household with his brother, John, and sister, Clara, living with him.

Clara and Lydia Schwegman never married. They are buried in the Old Concordia Lutheran Cemetery in Fort Wayne.

Herman and Mathilda's three youngest sons are buried in Section 8 Lot 58 of Lindenwood Cemetery in Fort Wayne:

Paul H. Schwegman died at the age of 54y, 2m, 14d. He was a travel agent with Root & Company.

Gustave A. Schwegman died at the age of 75y, 5m, 25d. He was a cashier at Old National Bank in Fort Wayne in 1905.

John F. Schwegman died at age 81y, 3m, 27d. He was a plumber as seen in this advertisement at the right:

Sources:

*Fort Wayne City Directories:* 1883-1899.

*Fort Wayne News.* April 17, 1880.

Griswold, B. J. *The Pictorial History of Fort Wayne, Indiana.* Chicago, IL: Robert O. Law Company, 1917.

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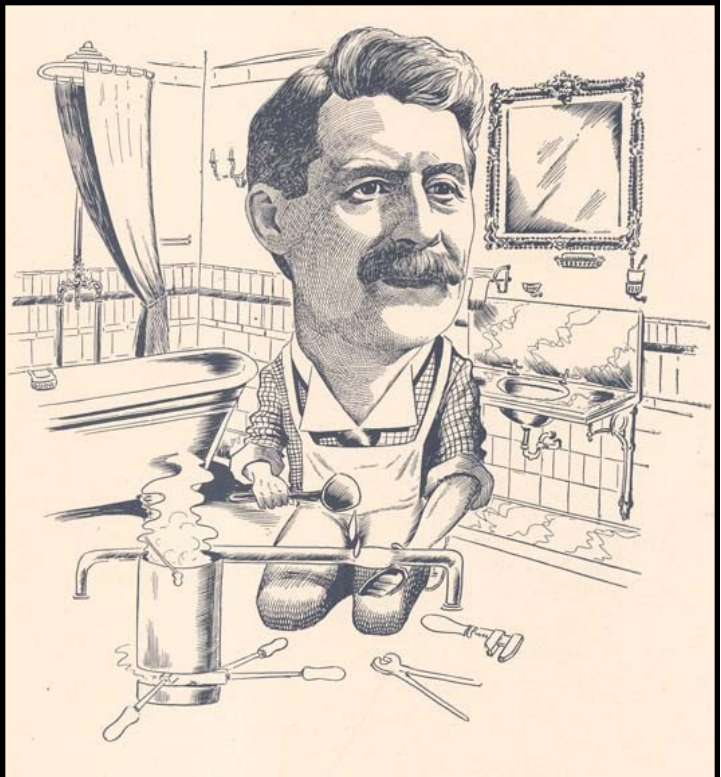
Knapp, H. S. *History of the Maumee Valley.* Toledo, OH: ?, 1877. *Men of Affairs in Fort Wayne.* Ft. Wayne, IN: The Sentinel, 1907

"One of the Old Business Men of Fort Wayne - His Rise and Fall," *Fort Wayne Weekly Sentinel.* April 2, 1879.

U.S. Federal Census: 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880

*Valley of the Upper Maumee River.* Madison, WI: Brant & Fuller, 1889.

[www.genealogycenter.info/results\\_linden.php](http://www.genealogycenter.info/results_linden.php)



**MR. JOHN F. SCHWEGMAN.**

When the snowflakes fall and the winds go wh-oo  
And your water pipes burst and your steampipes, too,  
Then you want to get a plumber who knows what he's about,  
Or Jack Frost'll git you,  
Ef  
You  
Don't  
Watch  
Out.

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"The Sentinel" of Fort Wayne published a series of these cartoon advertisements in the newspaper and eventually printed the collection as *Men of Affairs in Fort Wayne.*

