

The Schaerers Migrate to Monteagle

Godfrey Henry Schaerer (1861-1926)

by Jackie Layne Partin

How interesting it must have been to see the immigrants flowing slowly into John Moffat's town, Moffat, Marion and Grundy County, Tennessee. In **1866**, five-year-old Godfrey Henry Schaerer's adventure started in Bern, Switzerland, and later the ship, "Sir Robert Peel," on which he would travel to America departed London, England and arrived in New York City, New York on July 22nd. His parents were Hendrick "Henry" Rudolph and Elizabeth "Eliza" (Staub) Schaerer. Godfrey was their youngest child on the ship's roster, but five siblings, Rudolph, Hendrick, Emile (male), Edward, and Julia also accompanied them to America. He became a naturalized citizen in **1871**.

The original Swiss colonists settled in Grundy County in **1869**, and many were unable to speak English well. The **1870** Census taker could not spell some of their names or understand their occupations well enough to fill out the records correctly, but oh, what talented folks they were! The Schaerers did not seem to be a part of the group who went to the vicinity later called Gruetli, Laager, TN. Those who landed on the east coast generally met a relative or friend who took them into their household for a short period of time. Then they headed off on wagons or trains going in the direction of the new colonies being settled around the U. S. A. The Schaerers had a mind to work themselves down South to Tennessee, namely Moffat/Monteagle.

Young Godfrey would have been about seven years of age when he looked out over the plateau and into the valleys to decide if his family had really found a new Switzerland. Since he was so young, it seemed reasonable to say that he came to Monteagle with his parents, Henry and Eliza. Two of his other siblings, Rudolph Edward and Julia Henriette, came with the family. Other researchers have family histories on those two siblings. Some of the Swiss immigrants moved into Tracy City, a busy, little, coal town where the life as pioneers began with coal dust all around, on the laundry waving in the wind, in the houses and in the air breathed. The Swiss became the business people of the town. Others like the Graenichers kept on moving on the plateau when they heard about the little village, Moffat, being formed west of Tracy City. Some of the Swiss saw as much opportunity in those two towns as they did in Gruetli. They could choose to farm the land or to operate businesses needed to build towns. One

explanation as to why the Schaerers may have started their American dream by settling in John Moffat's territory is the fact that one of Moffat's good friends was Peter **Staub**, possibly a relative of Elizabeth (**Staub**) Schaerer. Mr. Staub may well have pointed Henry to take his family to Moffat/Monteagle. He had a good little start on developing his Swiss Colony in Gruetli, so why not help John Moffat build up his little colony on the west end of the plateau? Mr. Moffat wanted Scottish immigrants, but he quickly gave that up and settled for skilled immigrants, period. The Schaerers were in Moffat, Tennessee in **1874** when they were listed, among many other families, as having bought land from John Moffat—questionable land dealings that would eventually upset the whole village.

In the **1880** Census, Elizabeth, the matriarch, lived with her daughter Julia Henrietta and her husband, George Seeley. Baby Emma Seeley, Julia's first child, was a delight to her grandmother. The patriarch of the family, Henry Rudolph had probably already passed away and was buried in the Monteagle Cemetery in an unmarked grave. If so, his adventure in Monteagle and America was cut short. His wife Eliza probably filled one of several fieldstone-marked graves near some of the Schaerer families when she passed away.

On **July 22, 1880**, Godfrey married a young local lady named Sarah Jane "Sallie" Long (**1865-1952**), daughter of Cornelius and Lourany Long. C. L. Keith, J. P. officiated at that occasion. The Longs may have been one of the oldest families to pioneer that neck of the woods. From this marriage a daughter, Lula May Schaerer was born on **May 4, 1881**, and another daughter, Maud Elizabeth, was born on **Sept. 1, 1885**. On **January 8, 1902**, a Monteagle society article mentions that the Schaerer ladies, Sallie, Lula, and Maud, were in attendance at a "Tacky Party" and candy pull at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Brown Mankin (Permelia). The Schaerer ladies appeared to be involved with local society in Monteagle. This party shows a connection of two families, the Schaerers and the Mankins, which would bring about a marital issue about five years later.

On **September 22, 1888**, Godfrey H. Schaerer and wife Sarah L. Schaerer filled out a warranty deed (half interest) to Brown H. Mankin concerning a sawmill on the bluff of Little Fiery Gizzard Gulf, wherein Battle Creek Road is mentioned. That is the original name of the road I live on now (**2019**). This brings Godfrey Schaerer and Brown Hall together in a business deal.

At the age of twenty-one, Lula Mae Schaerer married Alexander E. Collins on **July 9, 1902** on the Monteagle Sunday School Assembly auditorium. What an exciting event for all of Monteagle!

The Nashville American, **July 11, 1902** published the following story in the Monteagle News section:

“Late yesterday afternoon Dr. George Summey, platform manager, whispered it around that something intensely interesting would happen in the auditorium just before the lecture by Dr. Crossfield at 8:15. Long before that hour people, young and old, were filling the auditorium until over 3,000 were seated in the building.

*At 8:15, to the strains of the Lohengrin wedding march, played by Dr. Nicholas Elsenheimer, a bridal party of five couples entered and formed a semi-circle on the stage, which was decorated with mountain foliage. The bride, **Miss Lula Schaerer**, was gowned by white organdy trimmed in Valenciennes lace and carrying a shower bouquet of white double petunias and asparagus fern, followed on the arm of the groom, Alexander E. Collins. The ceremony was performed by Dr. Summey, while Dr. Elsenheimer played a nocturne. The bride is a daughter of **Mr. and Mrs. Godfrey Schaerer**, and is considered one of the prettiest girls in Monteagle. The groom is a young business man of Mobile, Ala. The bridal party were Miss Maud Schaaerer and L. C. Brill, of Mobile; Miss Belle Starlings and George Seely, Miss Hattie Smith and John Sampley, Miss Belle Seely and John Blanton, Miss Lee Bell Payne and Henry Garner. The bridesmaids wore gowns of white organdy and carried bouquets of asparagus fern. As the wedding party left the auditorium the audience expressed their good wishes and congratulations by long applause. A reception was given at the bride's home. Many handsome presents were received. Mr. and Mrs. Collins leave Saturday for their future home in Mobile. They are at home with the bride's parents here until then.”*

There are more interesting local names for researchers in this society page article. It seemed as though I was in attendance when I recognized the names of the wedding party either through Census searches, cemetery records, or word of mouth. What a treasure trove!

Sadly, Lula May (Schaerer) Collins died two years later on **Dec. 1, 1904**. She was buried in the Monteagle Cemetery.

From Lula's wedding account, I can see that Godfrey and Sallie were still married in **1902**, but somewhere along the way they divorced, for on **September 5, 1907**, Sallie

Schaerer married Brown Hall Mankin (1852-1927) in Grundy Co. with W. D. Bennett officiating. Brown's first wife Permelia Jane (Downing) Mankin had died in 1904 leaving Brown a widower. What brought about the marital differences between Godfrey and Sallie, I cannot say, but now Godfrey was on his own for the time being.

We see in 1910, Jefferson Co., AL, that Godfrey, his daughter Maud, her husband Johnny Mankin, and their son, Henry Hall Mankin all lived in the same household. Those readers who remember some of the Mankin men know that house painting was their expertise, and they used it to support their families. Some of the Schaerers were also house painters. Throughout the 1910-1920 decade, Maud and Johnny lived in Alabama or Hamilton Co., TN.



**Maud Elizabeth
(Schaerer) Mankin
holding her son
Henry Hall Mankin
Lucretia Metcalf, a
friend, is the other
lady in the photo.
(Photo taken in 1908)**

On **October 7, 1911**, Godfrey married Lavenia Trevene Trussell (b. **June 22, 1888**), daughter of Andrew and Malinda (Kilgore) Trussell with W. D. Bennett, J. P. officiating.

To this couple was born a daughter Virgie Mae Schaerer (1919-1982). On **February 27, 1920**, Lavenia died with pneumonia in Chattanooga, TN. Thankfully Godfrey's daughter Maud was old enough to help care for her half-sister Virgie May, who was known by most Monteagleans as Sis "Mankin," not Schaerer.

Johnny and Maud eventually moved back to Monteagle from Birmingham, via Hamilton County, possibly to help attend Maud's father in his last years and then with the rearing of Maud's little sister, Virgie "Sis." Sis grew up and married David "Son" Adams and the couple together had no children. The only hope for the "Schaerer" name in Monteagle to be carried on was through Godfrey's brother, Rudolph Edward Schaerer's descendants.

In the *Mrs. Grundy* newspaper dated **May 13, 1926**, we read the obituary for Godfrey Henry Schaerer as follows:

*"**Godfrey Schaerer Dies**—Godfrey Schaerer an old and respected citizen died Friday evening at the home of his daughter Mrs. Johnny Mankin of Monteagle. Dr. Logan assisted by Rev. Blackwood conducted funeral services and his body laid to rest Sunday in the Monteagle cemetery. He is survived by two daughters: Mrs. Johnny Mankin and Virgie May Schaerer and one Grandson Henry Hall Mankin all of Monteagle."*