

A life sketch of

Ludwig Friedrich Osswald

1843 – 1907

The small village of Reiderich, in southwestern Germany, is hundreds of years old. Reiderich is situated on the River Erms, which flows through the village. The rolling hills around Reiderich were once covered with thick forests, part of the famed 'Black Forest', which runs across most of southern Germany. They are the hills made famous in the fables by the Brothers Grimm. It is here that Ludwig Friedrich Osswald was born, as were his paternal ancestors for several centuries. He was born May 18, 1843, at Riederich, Schwarzwald, Wuerttemberg, Germany.



There was strict schooling and compulsory Lutheran Religion at the time. Every boy was required to learn a trade. Ludwig learned to be a stone mason. He was very skilled at this trade, which he did throughout his life.

Not much is known of Ludwig's early life. His mother, Anna Maria Osswald, was a seamstress. She often did sewing for people in their homes, which took her away from her own home and children. When she was not gone, she was busy sewing for people in her home. Ludwig and his brother, Johann Christoph, were kept on task helping with the chores and household duties in her absence. Little information is known of their real father or why they carried their mother's maiden name. When Ludwig was twenty one years old, his mother married Georg Friedrich Kaut.

As a young boy Ludwig became acquainted with a little neighbor girl. They became good friends and spent as much time together as they could. This young friend, Eva Dorothea Schwab, was the daughter of a well to do family. Her father did not like Ludwig because he came from a poorer class of people. As Ludwig and Dorothea grew older they continued their

friendship. Dorothea would often share her lunches with Ludwig. Even though her father forbid her to see him, she continued to sneak away to spend time with him.

Service in the German Military was mandatory for all male citizens. When Ludwig became of age he began his formal training. After his training was completed he became an active member of the German Confederation Army. He received his orders and was sent to France to fight in the French German War.

The night before he was to leave he put on an officers uniform and slipped out of the barracks to see Dorothea. He had to pass a beer parlor where the officers were having a party. They saw Ludwig returning and set out after him. By the time they found his barracks, and him, he was in bed and appeared to be asleep. He narrowly escaped a severe reprimand. As messenger for German Generals, he was sent to many different destinations with top secret documents. Once he carried a message on a small piece of paper and was told to swallow it rather than let the enemy get their hands on the information. He had many close calls with this responsibility.

Although he disliked the war and his having to be a part of it, he would often tell his children stories about his army experiences. One time, while hiding behind a dike, the group he was with was told to fight only if no more than two Frenchmen were there. If there were more than two they were to stay in hiding. Occasionally, the German officers would bluff the French by sending no more than seven lone men in to battle. If they returned, they would receive an iron cross for their bravery. During the war with France, Ludwig Friedrich was on guard when the Catholics were having a parade. The ceremony was so amusing to him that he burst out laughing. The Priest walked up to him and slapped him. Ludwig lowered his gun and called halt. He then marched the Priest to the authorities, as it was a serious criminal offense to assault someone who was representing the King. After considerable talking, the Priest was pardoned and allowed to go his way.

Ludwig told about marching into France, about having boiling water poured out of second story windows by French patriots onto the heads of the advancing Germans and about the cruelties of war committed by both the French and the Germans. Apparently, Ludwig

became one of the personal guards of Kaiser Wilhem I, the aging King of Prussia and Kaiser of the new German Confederation.

When he could, Ludwig would write to Dorothea and she would write to him. Dorothea's father became very ill and just before he died he agreed to let Dorothea marry Ludwig.

Ludwig Friedrich and Eva Dorothea were married November 26, 1867. He had completed his military obligation and they were excited to begin their life together. Not long after they received the upsetting news that the war had escalated once again and Ludwig was called back into active duty.

These were trying years for them. Not only were they apart most of the time, but they lost their first child while Ludwig was at war. Named after her mother, baby Dorothea, born December 28, 1868, died when she was only fifteen days old. Thirteen months later on February 28, 1870, their second child was born. They named her Anna Magdalena. This daughter was a lot of company for Dorothea while Ludwig was gone. Their third child was born while Ludwig was fighting on the front in France. He was born January 26, 1871 and was named Ludwig Friedrich Jr.

Ludwig and Dorothea were a devoted couple. When they were not together they wrote regularly and counted the days until they would be together again. Ludwig missed seeing his growing family. When he could earn leave he would hurry home, and he dreaded the day he would have to leave them and return to duty.

When Ludwig was again released from his military service, he contracted to do masonry work on various houses and buildings. Sometimes he would not make enough on the construction to pay for the material and labor, which he agreed to provide. He found himself deep in debt, even though he worked very hard. In trying to make settlements with his creditors, he was obliged to take out mortgages on their home. Some of the creditors threatened to foreclose. Liens were placed on the pigs and calves Dorothea was raising. Once when the creditors were trying to seize her pigs and calves, Dorothea confronted them by saying that they

were her animals and could not be taken. A conflict arose and Dorothea was struck by the man's cane. Being a strong woman she grabbed him by the collar and choked him, took his cane away and hit him with it. She then pushed him out of the door, throwing his hat and cane after him.

This experience in addition to their pressing financial problems concerned Ludwig a great deal. While serving as a guard to the now eighty four year old Kaiser Wilhem I, he had said to him, "Ludwig, you have a lot of nice boys for my armies." Ludwig had seen the effects of the war. He did not want his boys to serve in the Kaiser's Army.

The Osswald's heard of American missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who were teaching in the community. Members of their families were very interested in their message. The families sometimes took the missionaries into their homes when the villagers became too hostile. In addition to teaching religion, the missionaries told the families about America, in particular the migration of Saints to the Salt Lake Valley of Utah.

Ludwig formed a plan, which he disclosed only to his wife. They would take his family to America. His interest in the Latter-day Saint Church would direct him to Salt Lake City where the main body of the church was gathering. He would go as soon as sufficient money could be saved and then he would send for his family. They began accumulating everything they could for the fare.

On August 27, 1881, at 10 p.m., Ludwig, Dorothea and other members of their family met at the River Erms. It was dark and they hoped their meeting would not arouse the suspicion of the villagers and government officials. In the dark of the night they were baptized members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The next day, August 28th, Ludwig was laying the bricks of a chimney on a new house in Reiderich. That evening he laid down his trowel and told the owner he would finish when he came back. He walked away from the home and never returned. They had saved enough money for his fare and he left Germany for America. Since passports were not required in Europe at the time, he found his way thirty five miles northward to Stuttgart. There he went by

train and riverboat to Holland, where he crossed the North Sea to England and from there he went by steamship to New York City. From New York he took the train to Chicago, Omaha and finally Salt Lake City, Utah.

Meanwhile, Ludwig's family was left without husband and father. At first, no suspicion of his permanently leaving the country was aroused. Ludwig had often been away for extended periods of time while doing his masonry work. Creditors, however, continued to hound his family. With the onset of fall and winter, the authorities became quite concerned when Ludwig did not return home. German authorities were called in to try and find him as his creditors wanted him found and he still had obligations to the Confederation. The longer Ludwig was gone, the more those who sought him suspected he was in hiding, or had left Germany. They placed a price on his head and ordered him executed when found.

The responsibilities mounted for Dorothea as she was left alone to manage their home, the farming, the care and raising of their animals, and the needs of their family, which had grown to include Sophia Katherine born March 24, 1872, Wilhelm (William) born August 14, 1873, Elisabeth Dorothea born November 18, 1874, Anna Maria born January 10, 1876, Johan Christoph born on June 26, 1877, Pauline Wilhelmine born on August 30, 1878, followed by Elise Babatta who was born October 25, 1879, but died December 8, 1879, Karl Heinrich born December 5, 1880, but died March 12, 1881 and a little daughter was born October 1, 1881 and died shortly after. These children were all born at Riederich, Schwarzwald, Wuerttemberg, Germany.

Dorothea struggled to save money and make ready to go to America. The preparation had to be in secret because of the search for Ludwig. Had the German Army officials known she was planning to leave they would have prevented that, hoping to lure Ludwig back into the country. Correspondence with Ludwig in America was delivered through the church missionaries.

In Utah, Ludwig found jobs doing masonry work and also worked in the Park City Mines of Utah. He was sending what money he could to Dorothea, but it was not enough to pay the fare for her and the children. The situation was becoming desperate due to the family constantly being watched and questioned. Dorothea's mother and sister advanced additional

funds to Dorothea, which would allow her to buy the necessary passage that would allow them to leave Germany for America. On May 11, 1882, eight and a half months after Ludwig had left Germany, his family was on their way to find him. This quiet, carefully thought through escape placed a huge worry upon Dorothea as she, with her children, left their homeland and family members. She was in constant fear of being caught and returned for punishment, as well as placing consequences on their friends and family.

Ludwig was aware of his family's plan, but he did not know of their welfare once they left Germany. All he could do was wait for word and hope they were successful in their journey. According to plan, Ludwig met the train in Salt Lake on June 4, 1882. There he met his family and could hardly believe they were together again. What a happy reunion it was!

Life in their new land of America had begun and there were many adjustments to make including a new language, many new customs and people to meet, but the Osswald Family was together and together they would meet their challenges.

Ludwig built several homes in the Salt Lake Valley. He was proud and honored to work on the Salt Lake Temple. He also made gravestones upon request. The Osswald's bought a farm at West Jordan where they lived in a small house Ludwig built. In April 1883, while living on the farm, Ludwig went hunting ducks with a muzzle-loaded shotgun. The powder backfired and blinded him for six weeks. Although grateful he could see, this accident left him very ill for ten more weeks.

After the accident, the ward teachers came and asked if the family needed help. Ludwig said he would appreciate it until he could see again and go back to work, but the ward teachers never did return. Six weeks later Ludwig walked into Salt Lake City and met some Lutheran people. They gave him things from their store and told the storekeeper to keep an open account for him until he was well. He was very grateful for their help and began going to the Lutheran Church. Although Ludwig never officially left the Church, he was never active after this incident and became quite bitter towards the Church. Dorothea never left the Church and always tried to uphold its principles and provide the children the opportunity to participate.

While living in the Salt Lake Valley, three more children joined the Osswald Family. They were Babatta born June 3, 1883, but died August 10, 1883, a little girl was born July 18, 1884, but died the same day, and Louisa Sophia who was born July 20, 1886, but passed away September 10, 1886. These were trying times for Ludwig and Dorothea.

After Ludwig hurt his eyes, the doctors said the mountain air would be better for him. When the spring water flooded their home, they sold their farm in West Jordan for \$500.00 and took most of the money to buy groceries. They purchased nine acres east and south of Salt Lake City, in an area called East Canyon.

Ludwig built a large two room stone house on this property. They had cows, chickens, and some sheep. Ludwig continued to do masonry contracts and Dorothea continued to farm and raise animals. It took all the effort they could muster to take care of their little family and their day to day needs, but they were happy and enjoyed life and the freedoms they found in America.

The family welcomed another son while living in Payson, Utah. He was born August 5, 1887, and was named Gotthilf August.

The children enjoyed their new home and countryside. There was a stream of water that ran through it where they could go swimming. Ludwig hung a rope across this stream where it was deeper to swing on. The children loved to play in the stream when the chores were done.

In the winter of 1888, Ludwig and his son-in-law, Abraham Gneiting, heard of land in the Idaho territory, which the government was opening for homesteads. At this time it was desert land covered with sagebrush. The idea of this new frontier appealed to them. They decided to travel to Idaho and look things over.

Ludwig liked what he saw and decided to take 320 acres. He quickly began staking his property and filed his claim. Within a few days he started some small buildings and a house. He returned to Utah, and with the help of his son-in-law proceeded to gather the family's belongings and prepare to move to Idaho. Dorothea was ill at the time and stayed behind. Abe drove a wagon and Ludwig Jr. drove another team and wagon. Christoph, who was twelve

years old, drove the cattle riding bare back on a horse most of the way. He always referred to the trip as a 'sore trail'.

The first night they were going to camp at Woods Cross, but a Scandinavian told Christoph to get the cattle out of there or he would put them in the pond. Christoph drove them about two miles farther where he had a better place to night the herd. They went by way of Copenhagen where there was water. There the cattle got mixed with other cattle and it took a lot of riding to separate them. When the wagons caught up with them, Ludwig Jr. drove the cattle for a ways and let Christoph rest. The mosquitoes were a plague to them and made much of their travel miserable.

At Brigham City, the boys saw an apricot tree heavy with ripe fruit. Abe climbed into the tree and ate some of the apricots. They were a tasty treat and he proceeded to pick more fruit and put them in his jacket, which was held shut at the bottom by a belt. The owner came out of his house and threw a pail of water on him as he chased Abe off his property.

While traveling north, this group expected to camp at Fort Hall, Idaho where they had heard there was plenty of water. When they reached their destination there was no water to be found. The creek was dry. They learned that the Indians were irrigating and when they irrigated it took all of the available water. They were very thirsty and grateful when they were offered a cold drink from the stored water.

Between Fort Hall and Blackfoot the road was near the railroad tracks, which the cows used for a trail. One day the travelers saw the train coming and tried to drive the cattle off the tracks, but couldn't. As the train came nearer and blew it's whistle, the cattle all moved off the tracks and none were hurt. The cows, as well as riders, were all relieved to reach the Blackfoot River, and all were grateful for the cool water and rest.

Two months later, Dorothea followed her family and arrived at Eagle Rock (later known as Idaho Falls) on the train. She stayed with her family until Karl Heinrich was born on December 1, 1889. This child was the second son named Karl Heinrich and brought the total of children born to Ludwig and Dorothea to seventeen.

During this time, Ludwig traveled back and forth from Eagle Rock and what was known as Poverty Flats, which was later divided into the areas of Grant, Garfield and Coltman. Poverty Flats was where their homestead was located. He continued to work on their home and the out buildings for their animals. He also took masonry contracts as they came available. Hard work was nothing new for the Osswald Family. They made plans for their future and worked long hours to see those plans through.

Christoph stayed at the homestead where he was assigned the task of making dobbies for their new house. This was a lonely time for him because he was alone for days at a time. All the company he had was a little black cat. One day he met another boy, Alf Kirt, who was also alone and making dobbies for his family. They became fast friends and from then on they developed a rotation for making dobbies. One day they would make them for the Kirt house and then the next day they would make dobbies for the Osswald house. (Dobbies were bricks made of mud and dried in the sun.)

In order to homestead the 320 acres, the family had to agree to comply with a condition called the Timber Act, which required people to plant 10 acres of trees. This condition was one of the first projects the Osswald's completed. They planted a grove of trees about one half mile east of their house. The grove was planted from cuttings off trees already established in the area. They planted them in neat rows and were proud of their work as they watched them take root and begin to grow.

Water was not always available for the new orchard. At first, water was carried from the Burgess Canal in barrels. Then it was hauled in buckets to each tree. When irrigation canals and ditches were made the chore became much easier. When the water was hauled in barrels, drinking water was a real concern. People dipped what water they needed for their house and outside use from a ditch or canal. It was believed that early morning was best for collecting the water because it would be purer and colder. Ludwig worried that his family would get germs from this water and devised a filter to purify the water. Ludwig's filters were made of sand stone. The large stones were shaped like bowls; rounded at the bottom and set on a wooden

box. A vessel was slipped in the box under the bottom of the rock to catch the water that dripped from the rock. This was an ingenious invention that he eagerly shared throughout the valley.

Ludwig had found and acquired a red stone quarry in Henry's Canyon. He spent much of his week quarrying rocks from it and use the stone for some of his contracts. On one of the trips to the canyon pieces of coal were discovered. Ludwig quickly went into partnership with several other men and a coal mining operation began. The mine did not prove to be successful, but he continued to quarry stone from this canyon for years.

Ludwig was socially inclined and loved to host parties. He often asked his family and German friends to his home where they would have a luncheon, foot races, rope pulling contests and sometimes a few short horse races. The smaller children would play hide and seek, drop the handkerchief, hopscotch or jump the rope. He was always giving prizes for the winners. He showed so much enthusiasm with the children and their games that everyone was happy they came and looked forward to the next invitation.

At one of Ludwig's parties a grandson, who was about four years old, was walking out toward the barnyard in his pretty knee pant suit. Ludwig told him that he better go back to the house or the goose would get him. The little boy did not heed the warning and it was not long before those gathered in the yard could hear him crying. The gander had hold of him by the seat of his pants. This was a story Ludwig loved to tell at the parties thereafter.

As their boys married, Ludwig and Dorothea gave each of them forty acres of the homestead. This gift kept their family close by so they could enjoy their children and their grandchildren.

When Ludwig came home from his masonry work on Saturday evenings, Dorothea always updated him on her latest accomplishments and the family news. They would then take a tour of the farm, orchard and flowerbeds. This was a time they both looked forward too.

Ludwig's reputation as a very talented stone mason provided him with many opportunities to work on different projects in the valley. In 1889, he built the first flour mill in

Eagle Rock, now Idaho Falls. In the fall of 1889, he built the abutments for the first steel bridge across the Snake River that was to replace the Taylor-Anderson wooden bridge, which stood between the railroad and the new abutments. One abutment still stands as a historical marker and tribute to those who built it.

Ludwig built the first rock Latter-day Saint Church in Eagle Rock, as well as the Armory Hall, later used as an Opera House and even later as the Milner Apartments. He built the Porter Hotel, the Fanning and Clark Buildings, and the first flourmill at Eagle Rock. With his sons he built the Iona Merc, the Menan L. D. S. Church and the Menan Mill, the Rexburg Mill, and the first school and hotel in Market Lake (Roberts) called The Patre. He also built the abutments for the bridge to be built across the Snake River near Market Lake. He built many homes and business buildings in and around the cities of Idaho Falls, Menan, Roberts, and Rexburg.

Ludwig did much of the work on the canals in the Snake River Valley. He helped build the Tautphaus Canal, laying the rock for the head gates. He also did the rockwork on the Great Western, later known as the New Sweden Canal.

In 1895, a new project began to assist in the irrigation needs of the valley. Ludwig was enlisted to do the rockwork. Much of the actual canal work was done with teams and slip scrapers, but the rockwork on the head gates was Ludwig's responsibility. At the time it was built it was the largest canal in the world, although not the longest. It was named the Great Feeder Canal. Ludwig felt honored to be part of such a major undertaking.

The story is told of Ludwig and a Mr. Metzner who were working on the canal. They were tired and dirty and decided to go to Heise Warm Springs to take a bath. Ludwig carefully placed his clothes on nearby sagebrush. Mr. Metzner teased him about that. Ludwig cautioned him that he should do likewise as the rattlesnakes were thick in that area, but Mr. Metzner did not see the need. They had their bath and as they were dressing to return to work, Ludwig saw Mr. Metzner talking to himself something fierce while trying to shake the snakes from his clothes. They both learned a lesson that day.

In 1904, Ludwig's health began to fail. He became short of breath and sometimes had fainting or weak spells. Although he was very sick he continued to work. He had quarried many red stones and had them hewn and ready for a new home he and Dorothea dreamed of. They had staked the spot and anticipated the building of this home for a long time. They both felt it would be their last home and looked forward to its completion. With Ludwig's health failing, the unfinished project worried him a great deal.

Dorothea tried her best to care for him. Soon he was so sick that he was not able to leave his bed and required a lot of attention. On September 23, 1907, after months of poor health, Ludwig passed away. He was buried in the Grant Central Cemetery, Jefferson County, Idaho.

Ludwig's daughter, Anna Gneiting, told about an experience she had sometime after her father's death. She related that her father came to her in a dream. He visited with her and told her to tell Dorothea to go and do their Temple work. This was exciting news to the family as their father had been disinterested in the church since his bad experience with ward teachers in Utah. Upon hearing of Anna's dream, Dorothea made the necessary arrangements and on June 11, 1914, she was sealed to Ludwig in the Salt Lake Temple.

The house that Ludwig had planned to build for Dorothea was completed by his son, Wilhelm (William), and she lived there until 1930. It was located on the southeast corner of the Lewisville Highway and the County Line Road in Jefferson County. It remains a landmark in the area.

Ludwig was a beloved husband and father. He had earned the respect of those who knew him, and the skills he mastered as a mason placed him in a position of great demand as the surrounding communities developed. His artwork in stone still marks the Snake River Valley and stands as a monument to the contributions that he made.

The author of the original edition of this Life Sketch of Ludwig Friedrich Osswald Sr., was Caroline Gneiting Miller in 1962. This is the revised edition with additions made to make it more complete from stories, documents and other records collected and kept in the Family History Library of K. Oswald. Names and vital dates of the Osswald children have been added.

Note: The name Osswald is spelled correctly and as it was given for centuries in Germany. In order to become more American, an 's' was dropped and the name was spelled Oswald.