

**A WANDERER, BEING A BRIEF
SKETCH OF THE CIVIL AND
MILITARY EXPERIENCES OF
HENRY FAIRBACK PP. 1-63**

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1-63 by Henry Fairback

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HENRY FAIRBACK

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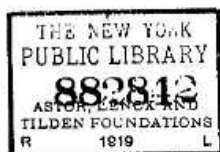
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A WANDERER is dedicated to my beloved descendants;
to the Comrades of Companies A and E, First Regiment
Engineers Missouri Volunteers; Comrades of Ransom Post
and Grand Army of the Republic.

HENRY FAIRBACK.

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Henry Fairback



HENRY FAIRBACK
Born November 25th, 1839

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A WANDERER.

I was born November 25th, 1839, on my father's estate of an over-shot water flour mill, some three miles from Uberwelstadt, Hessen, Darmstadt. My father was an ardent lover of a republican government. He disposed of his estate, excepting a piece of property which was in litigation, and of which I received a share in 1864. I had often heard him say that he was determined to go to the United States, a Republic in which his children, especially the boys, had the opportunity of all the preferment any other citizen could acquire. Father, mother, three sisters and two boys, Casper older than myself. We left in the month of February, 1849. Our Uncle Casimeer, who was the Burgomaster of the village, took our family, with our baggage, to the City of Frankfort, on the River Rhine. There we embarked for Amsterdam, where we went aboard of a three-masted sailing vessel for New Orleans. We were three months on the passage.

When it was announced that our ship was within a few days of America, all the immigrants threw over-board all of their useless articles, especially their old clothing, and dressed up with the newest and best that they had. As a child, I remember them singing a German song, "Now we come to the land of liberty, the land where the golden orange grows." There steamed toward our ship, in the evening before bedtime, a tug boat. When I observed the boat with smoke and steam coming forth, the negro fireman opening the fire doors, throwing in wood, they were singing, the wheels splashing the water. As a boy of nine years, it was a sight and an amazement to me. Then the tow-boat fastened to our ship and towed us up the Mississippi River, passing the plantations on either side of the river. On many of those plantations around the planters' homestead were orange trees in groves. Then my

youthful mind was impressed with the song, for surely we had come to a new world, a garden of Paradise. I had never seen black people before. They impressed me wonderfully; their large mouths, white teeth, black eyes and curly hair, large hands and feet. These black men, women and children, when we landed on the wharf at New Orleans, pointed their fingers at us, laughed and smiled. They then to me seemed a remarkable species of human beings. It was years before I could distinguish one black man from another, for they all seemed alike to me. We arrived in St. Louis May 1st, 1849. At the time of the big fire we lived on Almond street, between Second and Third streets. My father took the entire family in a wagon and moved us out of reach of the conflagration to the old French Market. On the northern end I viewed the fire as it swept from the north to the south. When the epidemic of cholera came father fell a victim; our family then lived on Thirteenth street, between Franklin avenue and Wash street. He lived only a few days after the cholera attack; then my noble, resourceful mother housed us under her care and industrious, God-believing principles.

When ten years of age she placed me as an apprentice to a shoemaker. This task-master compelled me to hammer sole leather on a large flat stone all day, until I begged mother to relieve me from this punishing and burdensome labor. Brother Casper, four years my senior, had learned the barber trade. She placed me under his instruction, and all went well until he had me shave his face, to practice on. I did fine until the razor cut him in the ear and then he scolded me. I felt insulted at his rebuke. Mother then put me with Louis Dorsheimer Saddlery Co., Main street, between Market and Chestnut streets. Here was companionship, with plenty of young apprentices, many of whom finally became prominent, among them was John Slevan, who was elected City Marshal. The foreman in charge of the saddlery department was a most efficient, fatherly, genial and accomplished gentleman—Mr. Vaskes—he whistled nearly all day long, he could run off the latest operatic and classical airs; not one of us, while we tried, could compare with him. Some ten to fifteen of us, wild, hard-

working, devilish youths, all ran with one or the other fire companies. We could run as fast as a deer, and holler as loud and strong as an Indian, the Central Fire Company was my ideal as a boy of fifteen. On Sunday morning some of the members, smoking clear Havana principes, dressed in their swell garments, hair parted in the middle, front and rear of the head. On each side of the cheeks the boys wore soap locks, coats blue swallow-tail with brass buttons, ruffled shirt front bosoms, white trousers turned up at the bottom; my, but to me they seemed swell; men criticized women's change of styles which, after all are not more extreme than those of men. I lived within a half block of the engine house, and when the fire bell tapped I would run with the small hose cart called "Dinkey," the four-wheel "Grace Darling" (she was a beauty) the regular members would not permit us boys to catch on.

I received \$3.50 per week as an apprentice. Then we boys, under the leadership of John Slevan, would act as soldiers, farmers, citizens or sailors upon the theatrical stage, we received twenty-five cents per night for our services; when we were not required as supes we were admitted to the pit or gallery, ate roasted peanuts, were contented and happy; we knew the merits of nearly all the actors and actresses, especially when Richard the Third was played, we as soldiers were clad in armor of steel and made a formidable appearance on Bosworth battle field, where he was defeated; when they fenced with their broad-swords the fire flew from their blades, then the cheers rang from gallery to pit and we boys were happy. When the great French pantomime actor, Gabriel Ravel, with his troupe of actors, came to the St. Louis Theater, between Third and Fourth on Pine Street, all of his performances were wonderful; with them came Blondine the great tight-rope performer, who, on a rope, walked across Niagara River with a cook-stove. When he reached the middle of the span he sat down the stove, lit a fire to cook a meal. Ravel's French dancers were the admiration of St. Louis audiences. In the "Green Monster" I took a leading part, the pantomime started with Gabriel Ravel sitting in a Roman chariot pulled by