



Jacob Alles in later years

Jacob Alles (1868-1937)

A German Russian who escaped the persecutions of the Russian monarchy by immigrating to America only to find much of the same fear driven society with the outbreak of WWI. Jacob persevered to successfully own and operate one of Missoula's first garbage services.

- **Historical Note:** On July 9, 1762 Catherine II assumed leadership of Russia upon the assassination of her husband, Peter III. She became the longest ruling female leader of Russia and dubbed "Catherine the Great." Catherine set out to modernize Russia. Embracing her German heritage, Catherine recruited Germans to settle and develop land along the Volga River. These Germans came

to a blank landscape and endured great hardships as they began to shape the land. They were a tight knit group, consisting mostly of farmers, who built churches, homes, and schools. Catherine II's successors disagreed with many of Catherine's visions. Upon her death on November 17, 1796 Catherine's son, Paul I, inherited the throne and immediately set in motion the retraction of many of Catherine II's policies. One of his first orders of business was to reclaim Russian land for Russians not Germans. He invoked heavy taxation then began outlawing everything German including the speaking of the German language.

To escape the persecution, those Germans who were able began to flee the area.

- **1868-Born.** May 23, 1868 in Walter Russia in the state of Saratov. Jacob's parents were German farmers who raised hops, wheat, barley, rye, potatoes, and sugar beets. His family came to Russia in 1768.
- **1890s-Army.** Jacob was one of many young German men drafted into the Russian Army. He was ordered to serve in Poland as part of a Russian peace keeping force. It is unknown when or how he left that service.
- **1894-Married.** Jacob married his first wife, Katherine Giesick. Together they had four children.
- **1898-United States.** Persecution of the German Russians became intolerable for this young family. Jacob, Katherine, their baby son George, and one of their nieces immigrated to the United States. They went directly to Lincoln, Nebraska where Jacob worked for a railroad company that served the entire Midwestern states. (The Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad had extensive tracks from Sheridan, Wyoming to St. Louis, Missouri to Chicago, Illinois.)
- **1906-Death and Marriage.** Jacob and Katherine's family had grown to four children when tragedy struck. Their one year old baby boy died from sickness then soon after Katherine died of tuberculosis. As a widower left with small children and a need to care for them he soon married Anna Marie Luft Froesheiser. Anna was a widow with two children of her own. Together, Jacob and Anna would have another six children.
- **Taxi Business.** Jacob acquired a horse and surrey and entered his entrepreneurial stage running a successful taxi business. His horse was known for its beauty and his surrey for its fringe on the top. Unfortunately, luck was not with him for long.
- **1910-Fire.** Jacob's entire livelihood literally went up in flames. It is believed a local drunk dropped a lantern at the livery barn where Jacob rented space for his horse and surrey. The entire building was lost including all livestock and equipment housed there. Jacob lost the means to support his ever growing family.
- **Farming.** Jacob returned to his farming roots. He joined a brother in Vassar, Michigan and worked the sugar beets. He later attempted to establish a farm in Glendale, Arizona but soon realized the arid environment was not conducive to sugar beet growing. He moved his family again. This time to Portland, Oregon for four years.
- **1916-Park City, Montana.** Jacob moved his family to Park City, Montana in one final attempt to homestead a farm. Unfortunately he found there was little land to be had and was forced to work for others to support his large family. None of Jacob's attempts at farming proved successful. Sugar beets required irrigation and a large labor force of which he had neither
- **1918-Flu and WWI.** The onset of WWI found Jacob once again a target. This time it was a target of social fear. Germans were viewed as anti-government and strict codes were enforced to ban their language, customs, and beliefs. His children would tell chilling tales of retribution for the slightest offense. Jacob's English was limited which now cut off his communication to the outside world. It was his children who taught him to write English from their primers at the dining room table each evening. The tragedy that dogged Jacob soon dealt him a double dose. The flu epidemic of 1918 did not leave his household unscathed. Anna was a strong woman with a large heart. She took it upon herself to aid her fellow neighbors by tending to their illness. Unfortunately, she contracted the disease herself and died on December 14, 1918. Jacob was once again left alone with a houseful of children.
- **Depression.** Throughout the next decade Jacob followed the beets. He moved his family to Billings, Montana and worked in the beet factory. As a second job, he hired out to local farmers. A hard life but needed for his family to simply survive. One by one the children married and left home. As they left, however, they often took one or more younger siblings with them to alleviate some of their father's burden.



Jacob's military photo

- **1927-Missoula, Montana.** Jacob and his remaining three daughters arrived in Missoula, Montana. The girls were placed in area homes where they worked for room and board until Jacob finally sent them to live with their older married sisters.
- **1929-Garbage Business.** In the year of the great stock market crash, Jacob purchased a horse and wagon. He opened a garbage hauling business. For 25 cents a household could have their garbage hauled, their furnace cleaned, and the ashes disposed. At last Jacob prospered. He purchased his first home on Fifth Street which still stands. He sent word for his young daughters to return home. Eventually, Jacob bought a Ford truck from H.O. Bell. He employed his son Emmanuel (E.J.) Alles, son-in-law Henry Wittman, along with Peter Stickney and Mr. Raymond. The dump was located along the Clark Fork River on the north side of the Orange Street Bridge where the old Fox Theater resided.
- **1937-Death.** Jacob died on October 14, 1937 at his home on Fifth Street in Missoula, Montana. The garbage business was divided and sold. Peter Stickney purchased the service on the south side of the river and Mr. Raymond purchased the service on the north side of the river.



Grave 6 - Lot 12 - Block 44A

Information and photos of Jacob Alles provided by Jacob's granddaughter, Brenda Holland. She wrote "Jacob Alles was a typical American immigrant. He was not a spectacular success and in fact spent much of his life dealing with tragedy and failure. He knew only one thing - work. He was not educated or particularly ambitious. In fact, he was not special at all. But he supported his family and he was courageous enough to come to a new country he knew little about. He was known as an honest hardworking man of faith. When he died at age 69, he was a respected citizen of Missoula and he had established a home and a business in spite of revolution, war, disease, and drought. He was not special at all. He simply managed to survive. He lost two wives, a son, and two businesses. He became proficient in reading and writing three languages – German, Russian, and English. His descendants prospered. Many of them remain citizens of western Montana. They became teachers, nurses, carpenters, policemen, farmers, engineers, editors, and more. Jacob was nothing special but he and millions like him made America a great nation."

Historical note provided by Mary Ellen Stubb, Missoula Cemetery Sexton and great-granddaughter of Jacob.