

Wilson Island Stories of the Early 1900s

The Henry & Gladys Korn Home at 1465 N. Echo Avenue

*The merchant and his partner,
influencers in the community*

Henry Korn and Gladys Klein came from very different beginnings in Fresno and Iowa respectively. They married relatively late in life, had no children, traveled often and summered at their second home in Carmel or in the cooler climates of San Francisco and Lake Tahoe. How and when they met is a matchmaker's mystery. Both were sensitive about their ages and frequently used a variety of birthdates that made younger claims and minimized the difference in their ages. Reliable sources confirm that Henry was born in San Francisco in 1878 and Gladys was 10 years his junior, born in Michigan in 1888.



Henry Louis Korn, age 44, 1922 passport
Blue eyes, brown hair, 5'5 1/2" tall
A few years before his marriage to Gladys Klein

By the time they were introduced to each other in the 1920s, Gladys was in her 30s working as a stenographer at a bank in Blackhawk County, Iowa and living with her parents, her sister Gertrude, and brother Edwin. It was a job she had had for at least a decade. Henry was in his 40s and vice president of E. Gottschalk & Co.

Gladys' marriage to Henry brought her to Fresno, where she began life as the wife of one of the town's most prominent merchants. She was soon swept into a social life that was

frequently reported in the society pages of the local paper. She hosted bridge clubs, entertained wealthy out-of-town visitors, routinely arranged dinner and mahjong parties for 15, and participated in the Fresno Council of Jewish Women. She helped run benefits for Temple Beth Israel, and hosted visiting speakers from San Francisco for Fresno's Hadassah.

Her social circle included the wives of other prominent men in Fresno, such as realtors and insurance brokers Sigmund and Herbert Levy, newspaper publisher Chase Osborn, and banker Orval Overall, as well as businessmen Frank Bradford and Fredrick Twining. All of these women would become her neighbors when she and Henry moved from Huntington Boulevard to the Wilson Island in 1935.



When they designed their home on Echo Avenue, they anticipated hosting out-of-town visitors for extended periods of time. One of the regulars was Gladys' sister Gertrude.



Korn home at 1465 N. Echo Avenue

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Gertrude Klein was an unmarried kindergarten teacher who came to live with Henry and Gladys during the summer. The two sisters often would travel to Lake Tahoe and San Francisco to escape the summer heat.



Gertrude Klein (left) from Chicago, sister of Gladys Klein Korn (right) during Gertrude's summer visit with the Korns. Gertrude and Gladys planned on spending part of the summer in Tahoe. Fresno Bee, July 1942

The Korns' move from Huntington Boulevard on the east side of Fresno to the Wilson Island to the north was an indication of the continuing perception of this neighborhood as a desirable, upscale, high class area 15 years after the initial building boom. In 1934, in the depths of the Great Depression, they chose the lot at 1465 N. Echo Avenue. And in 1935 Gladys ran an ad in the local paper to sell the GE refrigerator, furniture, and drapes at the Huntington house in preparation for moving to her new home on Echo. At that time there were two large homes to the south of their lot and virtually nothing north to McKinley. With few exceptions, the only lots left in the Wilson Island were those along the western side of Echo. The same year, their good friends Sigmund and Mildred Levy also bought a lot in the next block north of theirs at 1549 N. Echo.

Henry's beginnings paint a portrait of a young man who grew up in the folds of the clothing merchants of early Fresno, in the heart of the German-speaking Jewish

immigrant community. His parents (Abraham and Polina) were born in Poland. His mother was from the Kutner family, associated with the Kutner-Goldstein Department Store, a major clothier in Fresno at the turn of the 20th century. The manager of that store was Emil Gottschalk, who would become an important part of Henry's life. Emil was born in Germany in 1862 and immigrated via England to the U.S. with his family at the age of 6 in 1868. As a young man of 29 living in Fresno in 1891, Emil was described as having blue eyes, dark hair, a scar on his right wrist, and 5'6" tall.

According to Emil, 13 years older than Henry, he had known Henry since the boy was 10 years old. Emil married Henry's sister Dora, and in 1900 Henry was living with his sister and brother-in-law at their home at 1524 J Street in Fresno. Henry was 22 and single. What ensued over the course of Henry's life suggests that Emil was a mentor who cared deeply for Henry. In 1900, Henry was a young clothing salesman who Emil was grooming for bigger opportunities.

Over the next 20 years Henry remained single and in Emil's employ. In 1904, Emil announced the grand opening of his own store: E. Gottschalk & Co in the Forsythe Building at the corner of Tulare and J streets. The store opened at 8:30a.m. on September 17, and closed at 6p.m. for customers to browse and make purchases. It opened again at 7:30p.m. for a grand reception and concert. No sales were permitted that evening. Reflective of Emil's German roots, and intended as a robust beginning to the evening, the program began with Richard Wagner's "Niblungen" [sic] Grand March followed by Rossini's William Tell Overture. Adding a bit of cultural diversity, he included Davila's "Maria" Mexican dance, "When Johnny Comes Marching Home" from Julian Edwards Comic Opera, and ended the evening with Paderewski's "The Famous Minuet."

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**Grand Opening
and Reception**
— OF —
**The Great New
Department Store**
Saturday, Sept. 17th

DOORS OPEN AT 8.30
A. M.
CLOSE 6 P. M.
REOPEN AT 7.30 P. M.
FOR

**Grand Reception and
Concert From 8 to 10 P. M.**
BY
Sixth Regiment Band N. G. C.,
PROGRAMME

PART I.

1. Grand March, "Niblungen" Richard Wagner
2. Overture, "William Tell" G. Rossini
3. Piccolo Solo, Selected Dr. Harry Glasgow
4. Waltzes Concert, "King Dodo" G. Luders
5. "American Patrol" Meacham

PART II.

6. March, "Officer of the Day" Hall
7. Mexican Dance, "Maria" Davila
8. "When Johnny Comes Marching Home," from Julian Edwards Comic Opera.
9. "The Famous Minuet" Paderewski

This programme will be interspersed with the latest popular music.

Handsome Souvenirs Presented to the Ladies
No Goods Sold During the Evening's Reception.

E. Gottschalk & Co.
COR. TULARE AND J STS.

Program for the grand opening of
the store at Tulare and J Streets
Fresno Morning Republican Sept 16, 1904

The next day, Emil placed an ad in the newspaper with photos of the people who undoubtedly were there to greet customers the night before. In the center is Emil himself. Twenty-six-year-old Henry is somewhere among them. Unfortunately, the photos were not labeled.

THE FRESNO MORNING REPUBLICAN SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 1904

E. GOTTSCHALK & CO.
INCORPORATED

Familiar Faces Employed in the Above Establishment

E. Gottschalk & Co.
COR. TULARE AND J STS.



E. Gottschalk & Co. We invite the patronage of every citizen of Fresno and its vicinity. E. Gottschalk & Co. COR. TULARE AND J STS.

Gottschalk's ad the day after the grand opening on
September 17, 1904 at the corner of Tulare and J Streets.
Korn was 26 and likely one of the men pictured along with
Emil Gottschalk, 42 years old. Fresno Morning Republican

The department store occupied the ground floor of the Forsythe building for the next 18 years. It had developed a reputation for carrying the latest fashions secured by Emil on his trips to New York City. Their motto was "the store that cares." Their competition in town was Kutner-Goldstein, whose motto was "the house that saves you money."

Unfortunately, the Forsythe building burned down in 1922, taking the store with it. The

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loss was a major setback for Emil though he remained undeterred. In 1922, he and his wife, along with Henry, sailed for an extended stay in Europe. That year Henry applied for his passport in preparation for his first international trip. They sailed in July on the S.S. "*Rotterdam*" to visit Holland, Austria, Germany, Italy, and Belgium. They returned 14 months later on the S.S. "*Homeri*" departing from Cherbourg. Upon their return the new, bigger store opened in the Patterson Building.

Sometime between 1923 and 1929 Henry met Gladys, the bank stenographer living in Iowa with her parents. By then he had moved up in the ranks at E. Gottschalk & Co. For the next few years they lived on Huntington Boulevard. Henry was now vice president and was being mentored to become president. Prior to his death in 1939 Emil turned the company over to Henry, who became the CEO, and to his nephew Abe Blum who ran operations. Perhaps it was in anticipation of this advancement that Henry and Gladys decided to build the house on Echo. Or they may have needed a home big enough to accommodate visits from Gladys' sister and her father who came to stay for up to three months at a time beginning in 1932.

Henry and Gladys traveled often throughout the 1930s for several weeks at a time, closing up the house on Echo while sailing from San Francisco for New York where they stayed at the Waldorf Hotel, or traveling to San Francisco staying at the Mark Hopkins, and to Los Angeles at the Ambassador Hotel. Presumably they were combining business with visits to friends and family. In February 1941, Henry took Gladys on her first international trip. They were gone for two months, sailing from San Francisco to Acapulco, with stops in Cristobal and Balboa in the Canal Zone en route to New York City, boarding a train to Florida, and then returning home via Chicago to visit Gertrude.

The home on Echo remained the center of their social activities for the rest of their lives. Henry passed away in 1954, followed by Gladys in 1971. Upon her death the house was deeded to her sister Gertrude, who sold it in 1974. Thus, for 40 years, the house on Echo was the home of the self-described clothing salesman who became the CEO of his company and his wife, who was an active participant in elite social circles at the heart of which was the Jewish community she served. Though they traveled often, they always returned to the comfort of the Wilson Island surrounded by the familiar faces of their neighbors and colleagues.

Sources include public records, newspaper articles of the period, and anecdotal information provided through interviews with homeowners.

Prepared by Jeannine Raymond, Ph.D.
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