

# Notes From the Firehouse

*Home of the Annisquam Historical Society*



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## The German Wife: Marie Reuter Gallison

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Henry Gallison, physician, lawyer, artist, spent several summers in Annisquam in the late 1800s-early 1900s, with his wife, Marie née Reuter, and brother, George.



AHS 977 Print September 1888

Thomas Clark photographer

Marie, wearing a white beret, is seated on the far right of the photo. Her husband, Henry Gallison, is sitting directly in front of her. Henry's brother, George, wearing an unusual cap, is sitting on the far left.

One of Henry Gallison's landscape paintings, *Annisquam Marshes*, hangs in the Annisquam Village Hall. During the summers of 1902-4, Tomasso Juglaris joined Henry Gallison, then in Annisquam, to work with him on the Franklin Library paintings. <https://www.juglaris.org/36-recalled>

But this story belongs to Marie Reuter Gallison, Henry's wife. In 1929, 19 years after Henry's death, Marie published a book entitled *Mein Leben in Zwei Welten* (*My Life in Two Worlds*.) Transcribed into English, and entitled *My Life In Two Continents*; the complete transcript (cover shown at right) is in the Schlesinger Library, in Cambridge, MA.

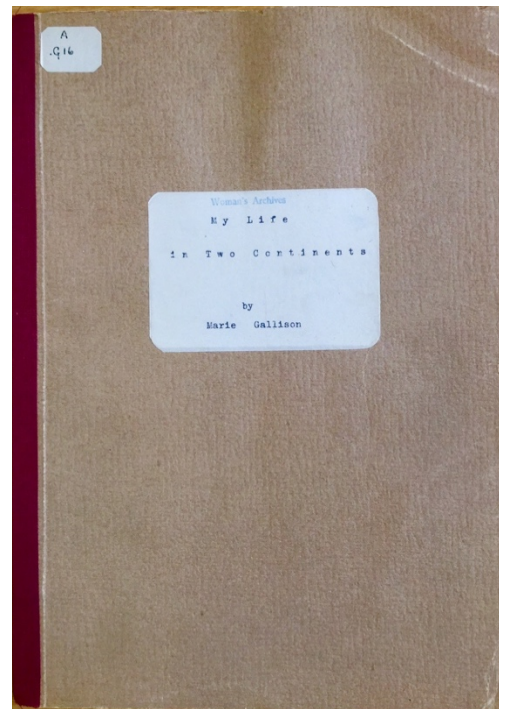
Thanks to Marie's book, we have the unique view of a summer guest in Annisquam during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Possibly, some of the text was extracted from diary entries. Specific years are undocumented, but all Annisquam references postdate her 1885 marriage to Henry Hammond Gallison in Paris. Not every summer stay was mentioned in Marie's book. Extracts are in boldface in the text that follows.

Henry's younger brother, George, was mentally ill; he had squandered all the Gallison money while Henry was in Europe and had attacks thereafter "of the "evil spirits". It was he who chose "**the health resort**" of Annisquam for their first summer stay in 1888 (the same year as the group photograph, above.) Henry, Marie and George boarded with Miss Charlotte Lane.

From page 62-63 of the English transcript of Marie Reuter Gallison's book:

**There was a picturesque little church in Annisquam; but the villagers were so poor that they had no money to pay the salary for a clergyman. So we few summerguests decided to raise money. A concert was planned to be given.**

**I thought I had found a way to unite the villagers with the summerguests for good and to help ourselves with George. So he and I scoured the neighboring little**



**places and induced particularly the natives to take part in the entertainment and to bring with them as many of their summerguests as possible.**

[The Gallisons were possibly staying in the Bragdon house (“The Castle”). Charlotte Lane did not always have room for the number of people who wanted to stay in the Lane house. Arrangements were made with villagers for housing, but guests “boarded” with her and Miss Lane was considered their landlady.]

**This first entertainment was a howling success. Some of the well-to-do cottagers had contributed generously, so that plenty of money was collected to assure a salary. But the best reward for our trouble was that the little colony wished to have regular weekly entertainments. It was decided that everyone was to pay a quarter, and each one who felt like it, was to play or recite something, give a little talk on a generally interesting topic and then spend the evening in pleasant companionship. Lemonade and crackers were served. Villagers and summer people formed a large family. These entertainments were the best medicine for George.**

Pages 63-64 of the transcript describe the dreadful times that Marie had with George the next winter. At one point he attacked her, tried tearing off her clothes, and left her wounded. **“Never shall I forget Henry’s ashy, deathlike face when he tied up the wounds which George had inflicted on me in this awful fight.”**

Page 64 continued with a note about the next summer in Annisquam—and, in spite of his preceding terrible treatment of Marie, George was staying with the couple.

**In the summer time in Annisquam our landlady “Aunt Tot” taught me how to bake bread, as no proper old New Englanders ever ate baker’s bread at that time. George was most interested in all my cooking experiences; but my breadbaking came to a sudden and direful end. I forgot something and the bread had not risen. So I was never again allowed to try my hand in breadbaking. But Aunt Tot, who was such a sweet nature and took such an interest in us, allowed me to use her kitchen every afternoon for all my other culinary attempts as putting up grape juice and other fruit juices and making all kinds of jellies for the winter. She often laughed tears when she came into the kitchen to watch me. George was delighted, in spite of many things that seemed to worry him.**

**“Will you be so disorderly in your house as you are now?” he asked me quite anxiously. [The Gallisons had been building a new house in Franklin.]**

In 1891, George died from a mysterious wasting disease termed “neurasthenia” Afterwards, Marie and Henry sold their house and moved to Cambridge.

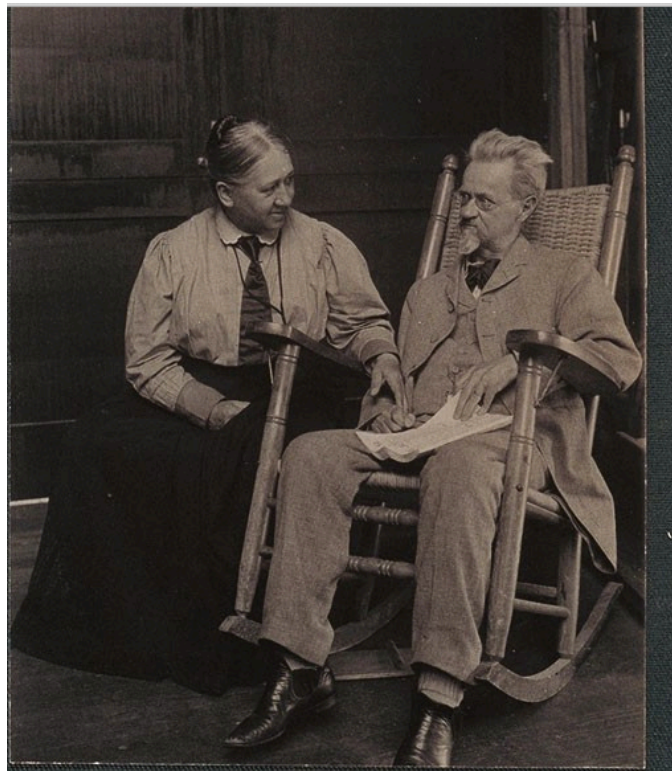
Years passed with many summers spent in Annisquam but without further information about these interludes. In 1908, Henry had a stroke followed by partial recovery . He rallied slightly, each time, from other, subsequent strokes. The couple last went to Annisquam in the summer of 1910:

**Spring came and when I suggested to go to Annisquam he [Henry] was delighted. The summer passed with ups and downs, Dr. Gannett visited us regularly. Those were festival [? festive] days. Henry’s interest in other people’s welfare had never stopped and was particularly intense this summer.**

**We celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our married life, and Henry made me go to Boston to get at the custom-house the gifts which my family, in spite of my protest, had sent; he was glad to receive them. The fate of a young teacher troubled him and he made me leave him once more for one day in order to take this young man to the greatest authority for tuberculosis in Boston.**

Although Henry wished to stay in Annisquam for the winter, Marie deemed that impossible. **The house was not arranged for winter guests, besides how could Dr. Gannett leave his Boston practice in winter to come over to Annisquam?**

Henry died in October of 1910, shortly after the couple returned to Cambridge. The undated photograph was likely taken at the Brattle Street house where they lodged.



Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University

Marie Reuter Gallison's own story until World War I, follows:

She was born 24th May, 1861 at Lubeck Germany. By the 1880s she was in Paris, studying as an alto singer, with the famous teacher Madame Viardot-Garcia whom Marie called "my Parisian mother."

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pauline\\_Viardot](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pauline_Viardot) provides an extensive portrayal of this brilliant, multi-lingual diva, friend of George Sand, Chopin, and many other famous musicians and artists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Mme Viardot-Garcia cared for all her students. She helped Marie with housing in Paris, and later, interviewed Henry Gallison following his proposal of marriage. "I am satisfied with that man; he'll make you happy," was her comment to Marie. Following the marriage, which was preceded by family turmoil from Marie's relatives who were unsure as to Henry's suitability, Mme Viardot-Garcia was the first to greet Marie as Mrs Gallison.

The couple arrived back in the United States to news that Henry's mother had died. It was also obvious at the time that George, Henry's younger brother, was severely mentally deranged. He had nearly bankrupted Henry while the latter was in Europe. Marie went seeking employment as a singer in churches and concerts. Henry went back to work as a doctor with his cousin, also a physician. A private school in Franklin hired Marie to teach French and German lessons.

The Gallisons recouped their losses with hard work, and after George's death in 1881, they moved from Franklin to Cambridge and boarded at a house on Brattle Street. Henry hired a studio in Boston and became very successful with his art, selling his work and also sending many paintings to European exhibitions. Marie gained employment as a children's teacher. The head-mistress became her sponsor by introducing her to influential friends in Cambridge. Miss Grace Norton (sister of Professor Charles Eliot Norton), Mrs Agassiz, president of Radcliffe College, and Sally Cary were to figure prominently in Marie's successes in her musical career. These included teaching at the New England Conservatory, singing at musical afternoons in Cambridge homes and performing with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in Sanders Theatre.

But it is the leadership of the Radcliffe Chorus for which Marie Gallison will be remembered. She accepted the responsibility of directing this nascent women's chorus in 1899 after instructions from Elizabeth Cary Agassiz to (1) Accept every girl who wished to sing in the chorus, whether she had a voice or not, whether she was musical or not; (2) Educate them to love the very best music ever written;

(3) Educate them to behave like ladies on the stage. [abstracted from page 95 of the transcript.]



Harvard University, Radcliffe Archives, W360398\_1

The death of her husband led Marie to consider giving up her work at Radcliffe, but she stayed on for a while, encouraged, it appears by the invitation of Dr. Archibald Davison, choir-master of Harvard University, to have some chorus members join a Christmas celebration at the University. Marie realized that her ability was in “handling single voices” and that Davison, always known as “Doc” was gifted in training choruses. For two years they worked together but a major production of Gluck’s *Orpheus* planned for Sanders Theatre was replaced by other works when its cost and the ongoing world war caused the college authorities to withdraw their support. (The opera was performed the next year in the smaller theatre in Radcliffe. The costumes were made by the students and cost no more than a dollar apiece.)

The epitome of Marie Gallison’s career at Radcliffe was the performance of the combined Radcliffe and Harvard choirs at Symphony hall under Karl Muck. It was the first time in America that a college chorus was deemed good enough to sing with musicians who, at the time, were considered to be the best in the world.

After that performance, Marie truly lived in two worlds. She had to travel to Europe to reclaim what she could of her husband’s valuable paintings that were being held

there. Later, she became involved in refugee and social work in the United States. She died in Germany, in 1949, after WWII had ended .

it seems fitting to conclude with a close-up view from the group photograph.

Marie Reuter Gallison, right of center, in mourning clothes, is surrounded by her choristers. Far back of the group, on the left, is Dr. Archibald Davison, familiarly known as “Doc”, the choir-master at Harvard University who took over direction of the combined Harvard-Radcliffe chorus.



Credit:

***Schlesinger Library, Harvard Radcliffe Institute,***

source of the photographs and the English transcript of Marie Reuter Gallison’s autobiography, “My Life in Two Continents”.

Thanks to Diana Carey and Jennifer Fauxsmith, research librarians.