
Henry T Zimmer

Police Chief, Crime Fighter, State Senator, Humanitarian

Henry Theodore Zimmer Sr
1862–1938

BIRTH MAY 1862 • Saint Joseph, Buchanan, Missouri
DEATH 17 OCT 1938 • Kansas City, Wyandotte, Kansas

Introduction:



Henry Theodore Zimmer (the husband of the author's great grand-aunt) is long forgotten. Which is a shame, because for the 40+ years in the early 20th century he was a prominent presence in the lives of Kansas City citizens. His civic service was varied and exemplary. His humanitarian contributions to Kansas City were extraordinary by any measure. His biography could fill a book. All we can do here is restore his memory and provide a timeline and a few examples of his service. He truly was a leader servant of the highest stature, making the needs of others his main priority.

HENRY ZIMMER AND GRANDDAUGHTER, AILEEN, 1918

Parents:

John L Zimmer Sr
1828–1893

BIRTH 7 FEB 1828 • Leutesheim, Ortenaukreis, Baden-Württemberg, Germany
DEATH 1 MAY 1893 • Saint Joseph, Buchanan, Missouri

Mary Anna Kreimer
1831–1888

BIRTH 6 AUG 1831 • Leutesheim, Ortenaukreis, Baden-Württemberg, Germany
DEATH 16 MAR 1888 • Saint Joseph, Buchanan, Missouri

Spouse:

Married: Sep, 1885, Kansas City, Jackson County, MO
Elizabeth Helen Wendt
1869–1945
BIRTH NOV 1869 • St. Louis, Missouri
DEATH 23 DEC 1945 • Kansas City, Wyandotte, Kansas

Upon marrying Elizabeth Wendt in Sep, 1885, Henry Zimmer relocated to Kansas City, KS. Henry and Elizabeth were truck farmer/gardeners and lived on 18th St, near Kansas Ave. This would have been in the east bottoms of Kansas City (along the Kansas River.

Armourdale.
 THE TIMES branch office is at Postoffice news and cigar stand where advertisements, subscriptions and all communications will be received. Irregularity of service or change of address should be reported here.

The residence of Henry Zimmer, a gardener residing on Thirty-second street, was burglarized Thursday evening and \$250 in cash was stolen. Mr. Zimmer was absent, and his wife and a hired girl, Clara Erdman, who were engaged in the garden, saw a young man approach the house. The women started to the house immediately, but the burglar had gained an entrance through a front window before they arrived and was making a thorough search for valuables. The women attempted to attract the attention of some laborers a short distance away but they were prevented from doing so at the point of a revolver. After he had secured the boodle he went to the stable and bridled a fine horse, but he was frightened away by some men and took to the woods. A party was soon organized and a search was instituted. He was traced to Muncie but darkness overcame the party and he was allowed to escape.

In Aug, 1889, the home of the Zimmers was burglarised. Might this have been one of reasons that Henry became interested in law enforcement?

Points about the Delegates.
 Joe McGraw is a good young Irishman and works with Andy Blaine.
 Henry Zimmer represents the farming element his produce truck for market.
 James L. Packard went under last spring

In Aug 1890, Henry became involved in politics by running to be a Democratic State Convention Delegate in the 6th Ward of Kansas City, KS. He won.

Won over Berry.
 In the Sixth ward Henry Zimmer is sure of election. He has been a resident of that ward for the past six years and is known for his honest and upright manner of transacting business. The republicans have little hope of electing their man in the Sixth ward. Mr. Zimmer resides in the western part of the city and the people in that section feel as though a city officer was due them. The Sixth ward is very large and each end is entitled to one councilman. Henry will be elected by a good majority.
 Mr. Timothy Burke the candidate of the demo-

In April, 1891, Henry was elected State Representative of the 6th Ward of Kansas City, KS. This election success would be the beginning of a long and distinguished career of public service.

Public Service Timetable:

- Kansas City, KS Chief of Police (3 terms), 1901; 1913-15; 1921-1923
- Established the Christmas Basket Plan with the Police Relief Association, 1911
- Kansas State Senator, 1896-1900
- Democrat , w/ support by the Populist Party
- Kansas City, KS Council (Sixth Ward) Member, 1891-1892
- Father of the Kansas City, KS city court system (while a State Senator)
- Kansas City, KS Assessor, 1903
- Kansas Election Commissioner, 1913-1915
- Kaw Valley Drainage Board, 1925-1931
- Chief Special Agent for the Kansas City Stockyards Company for eight years
- Deputy US Marshall, 1935-1938

Public Service Summary:

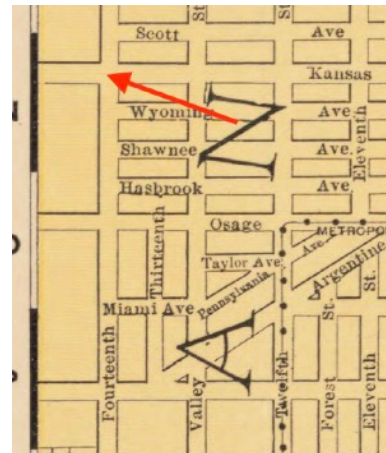
He battled crime, pioneering policing methods, including the first use of a police car in 1910. He twice captured the notorious train robber, Bill LaTrasse. He directed the investigation of the Dinnelo Children murders in 1922. He fought against Ku Klux Klan influences in the 1920's. He is known as the father of the Kansas City, KS city court system. He was highly respected in government and praised as a great humanitarian. President Theodore Roosevelt mentioned him, "He was a dandy officer".

Humanitarian Service Summary:

After the sudden death of Margarethe Wendt-Widdicombe (Henry's wife, Elizabeth Wendt's sister) in 1904 giving birth to daughter Mary, Margarethe's husband Robert C. Widdicombe took their 10 children and belongings and headed to Galveston, TX. Along the way, however, he abandoned the children who then had to make it back to the Turner, KS area where their grandparents on their Mother's side, Max and Minnie Wendt, lived. They were in their 70's at the time. Thus, the 10 children were adopted and raised by family members. Henry and Elizabeth (Wendt) Zimmer adopted Robert, Walter, Frank, Henry, Minnie, Maude, and Mary. Fred (Elizabeth Wendt's brother) and Annie (Curth) Wendt adopted Elizabeth, Margarette, and Charles. [Note: See *"Widdicombe Children's Odyssey"*]

The Zimmer family lived in a large home built in 1898 on an acre of land at 14th and Kansas Ave in Kansas City, Kansas.

Henry T. Zimmer, state senator, has just completed an elegant brick residence at Fourteenth street and Kansas avenue. The site is an acre of land. The building consists of eight rooms with modern improvements. Surrounding the east and south sides of the house is a porch of colonial architecture. Every part of the building is substantial. The out-buildings, too, are very fine.



Death and Remembrances, October 1938:

HENRY T. ZIMMER DEAD.

Deputy U. S. Marshal at Kansas City, Kan., Was Born Here.

Henry T. Zimmer, seventy-seven years old, deputy United States marshal at Kansas City, Kan., and a former St. Joseph resident, died Tuesday and was buried yesterday at Kansas City, Mo. He was confined to his bed for two weeks with his first serious illness.

He was prominent in Democratic politics and served as federal marshal for several years. Previous to that he was chief of police of Kansas City, Kan., under three mayors and also was prominently identified with other enterprises.

Mr. Zimmer was born in St. Joseph and was reared here, moving to Kansas City, Kan., when he came of age. He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Elizabeth Wendt Zimmer, to whom he was married fifty-three years ago; four sons and four daughters, all of Kansas City, Kan., and two sisters, Miss Mary E. Zimmer and Mrs. Minnie Whittington, both of St. Joseph.

The two sisters; a sister-in-law, Mrs. Bertha Zimmer, and her son, John Zimmer, also of St. Joseph, attended the funeral.

Chief at Critical Periods

Entirely fearless as a private citizen and as chief of police, Mr. Zimmer was ready to defend his idea of right with two good fists—and did. It is told that there once was a gang known as "the dirty dozen," at the old Kansas City, Mo., market, when Mr. Zimmer was selling produce there. One time a member of that group backed his wagon into that of Mr. Zimmer and a quarrel resulted. The others came to their companion's assistance, but Mr. Zimmer did not need any help. Single-handed he routed the "dozen," resulting in its disintegration.

When chief, Mr. Zimmer did not order his men out on dangerous cases. His remark invariably was: "You fellows (indicating the men he wanted) come with me," and he led the officers out to whatever there was to be faced.

When working on a case, Mr. Zimmer frequently did not even go home for several days and nights. He had a cot in his office and used it for what few hours of rest he snatched at the time.

Bought First Police Car

Mr. Zimmer was chief when the police department, in 1911, got its first automobile and, the same year, its first ambulance. Jack Jenkins, now director of the Kansas state highway patrol, and William Carr, still with the department as sergeant, were assigned to drive the ambulance.

But Mr. Zimmer used a motor car before the department purchased one. He owned a little red Maxwell car, and he simply brought it to police headquarters and used it for the city. That was his way. Chief Zimmer, accompanied by another officer, was a familiar sight, speeding—as fast as the car could go—on some important call.

Quietly Aided Needy

And to children's homes and to children whose own homes were sadly in need of food and clothing went gifts from Mr. Zimmer, often taken by him personally. The Zimmer farm had lots of produce which never reached market—it was dropped off quietly at homes where there wasn't enough money to buy enough potatoes and so on to keep folks from being hungry.

Mr. Zimmer remembered when he had come to town "without a nickel," and had made his own way. He wanted to help in any way he could—and he did help in many ways, in ways that became known only because those he helped couldn't help telling how much they thought of him.

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GOOD CHIEF ZIMMER THE CHILDREN'S FRIEND

Henry T. Zimmer, former chief of police, will, according to his custom of several years, provide the biggest part of the Thanksgiving at the Children's Home. Mr. Zimmer offered to give turkeys for this year's feast, but Mrs. George Van Cleave of the Home board protested, saying that the government was urging that the turkey supply be conserved. Whereupon the former police head announced he would supply some big fat chickens, cranberries for trimmings and butter, too.

Many others also are remembering the little ones at the Children's Home, some of them from out of town. Well-born people, Mrs. VanCleave says, have been particularly generous.

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His funeral service was attended by one of the largest crowds in Kansas City History.

THROW AT FUNERAL RITES FOR HENRY T. ZIMMER

The funeral service for Henry T. Zimmer yesterday afternoon at the Butler & Son's funeral home was attended by one of the largest crowds ever to pay last respects to a Kansas City Kansan. Long before the service began the chapel was filled and the front porch and lawn were occupied by hundreds of the civic and political leader's friends.

Words of eulogy from Rev. Silas P. Bittner, pastor of St. Peter's Evangelical church, Kansas City, Mo., were not needed, for those present who knew Mr. Zimmer—and most of them did—knew him as a law enforcement officer of fairness and courage and a man of the type which is an asset to any community.

Cars lined Eighteenth street for several blocks and Seventeenth and Nineteenth streets and adjoining blocks were used as parking space as the crowd continued to grow. One noticed the large percentage of people present, who are in their sunset of life, those people who were friends of Henry Zimmer when the veteran Armourdallan was only beginning to become an example of good citizenship in this city.

It was a crowd of many types—Republicans and Democrats, county and city officials, those who have plenty and those who are not so fortunate. That was evidence of the way Henry Zimmer was in life, a man who did not choose his friends by class, wealth or creed.

Mr. Zimmer's splendid record as a public official, his many contri-

butions to this city and his love of people were mentioned by Reverend Bittner, but not because the hundreds present needed to be reminded of them.

Eight uniformed police sergeants were the pallbearers for Henry Zimmer, eight men who served on the police force when their boss and friend was Chief of Police Henry T. Zimmer. Burial was in Maple Hill cemetery.

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