

Louise (Loll) Dowdell

By Jaroslava (Jarka) Lojdova



Louise in San Juan Capistrano, California on mission

Let's look back to the past and explore the origins of Galt through the eyes of Louise Dowdell, one of the original residents of Galt.

Louise Loll was born on August 15th, 1918 in Galt. She graduated from Brown Grammar School in Galt in 1932 and got married in 1937 in Reno, Nevada to Earl Dowdell. She had a variety of different jobs: she worked for 26 years in the Galt Post Office, for three years in Stockton as a ticket clerk for Greyhound lines (buses), for two years cooked in the cafeteria at Galt High School and for one year she worked for a Real Estate office in Galt. In between she took some minor jobs, a babysitter, a shop assistant in a drug store or a helper with picking fruit and walnuts to increase the family income. She became a Christian and joined the Galt Bible Church in 1957. In 1978 she retired and now is the president of the Galt Area Historical Society. She had the

privilege to be the first president and now is honored to have this position again.



Louise, Earl and her colleagues from Greyhound lines in Stockton



Earl Dowdell

Born: San Francisco on September 7th, 1917

Job: Mechanic

On December 7th, 1942 left for the Navy when WWII began by the air attack on Pearl Harbor

Returned from the Navy on October 13th, 1945

Died: January 28th, 1995 from cancer



Earl Dowdell during his leave from the Navy in 1943

Louise's maternal grandmother was born in Healdsburg, California and her great-grandparents came from New Jersey and New York State by a covered wagon train.

Louise's Parents



Louise Loll and her mother, Stella Loll

Mother's name: Stella Loll

Born: in Fresno, California

Birth date: 1889

Job: Housewife

Died: 1969



Athos Carl Loll (around 80 years old)

Father's name: Athos Carl Loll

Born: North Dakota

Birth date: 1893

Job: Farmer

Died: 1987

Louise's grandparents (father's side) came to the USA from Germany, which means that she is an American of German descent. Her grandma went back in 1928, for one year and then returned to the USA.

Earl's parents moved to Galt in 1933 and opened the Dowdell's Midway Cafe. In that era it was the best restaurant in the whole region!

Earl Dowdell's parents:

Mother's name: Christina Logan

Born: Scotland

Birth date: 1892

Job: Restaurant owner

Died: 1952

Father's name: Grant (Frank) Dowdell

Born: Anorka, Minnesota

Birth date: 1887

Job: Restaurant owner

Died: on May 1947 from a heart attack in the back seat of the car on their way to the mountains

Family origin: Scotch-Irish

In Louise Dowdell's family they have come from several nationalities and backgrounds: Scotch-Irish from the husband's side and Pennsylvania Dutch and German influence from Louise's side.

According to Louise Dowdell's stories:

Louise's grandparents came to California in April 1905 after selling their property in North Dakota. Her grandfather and father (at that time only 12 years old) came to California by a box car train with their cows. Each time the inspector came by, her father had to hide among the cows as they were only allowed one person to accompany the cows.

Back in North Dakota, they had very severe winters. Once a huge hailstorm broke the windows.

They bought property and settled down in Galt. Louise's grandma was educated and ran their family business. At those times it was very common that women didn't go to work but raised children at home.

There is a very interesting story about how Louise's mother met her husband: Louise's great-grandparents' daughter had six children. Their oldest daughter got married and moved to Galt. Louise's mom went to visit them and she met her future husband, who lived across the road. After three months they got married.

Louise's great-grandparents originally lived in Healsburg in California. This area suffered from floods and once a huge flood had flooded them out and they decided to move 150-160 miles south. The government let them have 160 acres. They had to live on this bare land for five years and build and improve the property. After they had proved up, they got their papers giving them the land.

Louise Dowdell's Childhood



Louise in her early childhood with her kitty, Mary

As a little girl, she lived on a ranch and always wanted to own a pony. When she was eight years old, they went to visit her grandmother (who had six children). There were also some of granny's friends and they had a pony. Louise wanted her pony so badly, that she went and asked her grandma, if she would give her the money for it. It was so cheap! Only \$30. Her grandma replied:" Go and ask your dad. If he allows you to buy the pony, I

will give you the money.” And dad agreed. Louise named her Minnie.



Louise while riding Minnie

She was so mean! Nobody could ride her. They had quite a hard time with Minnie. Louise’s mom was quite worried about her. She would be sewing and when she would hear the pony running she would look out and see no Louise. She thought Louise would have a broken arm or something. After a while Louise learned how to hang on and didn’t get dumped any more.

First Miss Galt Rodeo special guest

Miss Galt Pageant to be held April 22



The Delta College Music Department will perform and Susan Horton will be at the piano at the annual Miss Galt Pageant, which will be held April 22 at 8 p.m. at the Galt High School. An outdoor Pageant is planned for this year, weather permitting, next to the Galt High Auditorium.

Special guest at the Pageant will be Louise Loll Dowdell, who was the first Miss Galt Rodeo Queen in 1935. Mrs. Dowdell reigned over the two-day event held on August 3 and 4 of that year.

Ten girls are vying for the title of Miss Galt. They are Rene Roether, Audrey Reed, Shelley Grenz, Mona Lisa Pena, Kathy McVey, Cindy Daigle, Phyllis Ham, Kim Calvert, Susan Willis and Debbie Porteous.

Louise Loll- First Miss Galt Rodeo (16 years old)

“After I got married, I didn’t ride much any more. We lived in a small room of my husband’s parents’ house. When we got a new job, we would live in other places too. We didn’t have any special place where we would stay. We lived in different places in Galt, wherever. It was all different during the Great Depression. My father bought a ranch and lost it. It was all hard, you know,” said Louise.



Louise and Earl Dowdell in Tiajuana, Mexico 1942 (shortly before Earl left for the Navy)

The Great Depression

(The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy; E.D.Hirsch, Joseph F. Kett, James Trefil)

The great slowdown in the American economy was the worst in the country’s history, which began in 1929 and lasted until the early 1940s. Many banks and businesses failed, and millions of people lost their jobs.

According to Louise Dowdell's story:

“In 1920s everybody thought that everything was OK. It's like now. It's scary. Look at all those houses and cars people have. If the Depression came now, I wouldn't like to be here. In late October 1929 the stock market crashed. Some people committed suicide because they had a lot of money in stocks. Prices went lower but nobody could buy anything. Banks and businesses started to suffer. Banks closed the door. My grandma put some of her money in a Sacramento Bank and she lost all of that.”

“I knew one man who came to California from North Dakota. He had cattle and a ranch. He sold some cattle in a different place and got \$800 for them. He decided to put it to the bank in that town instead of taking it back to his hometown. When the Depression came, people started being mad at him. It was a nice sum of money back in those days. They thought he knew something they didn't know.”

Origins of Galt

“In 1852 people settled in a small village and named it Liberty. One man, Mr. Harvey, decided to buy property near there. A railroad was planned to be built from Sacramento to Los Angeles. Mr. Harvey was smart and was trying to put the railway through his property. When they finally put the railroad here, it destroyed Liberty. Back in those times, people didn't have cars, they used horses and wagons. There are still a few houses moved from Liberty in Galt (one of them is the old Christian Church). The first settlers were Europeans who came from the eastern coast of the continent. The Liberty cemetery still stands and there are over 100 people who have probably something to do with the first settlement here. The town of Galt was named by Mr. John McFarland, who came from Galt, Canada. Galt was established in 1869.”

“First of all, Galt was only a railway station and then people settled down around the station. The main street was 4th street. Everything was there- the stores, saloons, hotel, restaurant, bakery, doctor, etc. There is still one old building made from brick- the old Webster’s (built in 1869). The general store had all kinds of different things. When I was a little kid, I used to go there and buy a whole bunch of candies for only a nickel!”



Dowdell's Midway Cafe

“Dowdell's Midway Café was a very well-known restaurant, because the Lincoln Highway and 99 went through Galt. Highway 99 was built in 1938 before the freeway. When they knew it was going to change, they bought property and built a brand new restaurant on Highway 99. They had banquets from Stockton and Sacramento. The bar made a huge difference too”, says Louise.

Oral interview

This oral interview was done by Jaroslava (Jarka) Lojdova in late 2004, in Galt, California. Jarka is from the Czech Republic and has done this type of historical documentation in her home town of Trebic, Czech Republic. This is part of her work for her Internship for the Galt Area Historical Society. Jarka hopes to attend Cottey College and study music and International Relations. She plays concert piano, guitar and the recorder. Jarka speaks Czech, German, Spanish, English and has studied Latin.

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