

## **Helen Ross Hall (1846-1923)**

Helen Ross was born on September 15, 1846, in Kenagh, County Longford, Ireland. She was the oldest of nine children. Her parents, John and Elizabeth Ross, were of English descent. Helen's grandfather, Arthur Dean, had served as an officer in the English Army during the Napoleonic Wars. Her family was proud of their English roots and were members of the Episcopal Church.

Helen's father, John, worked as a head gardener at the Kingston Estate, where he planned and planted gardens. His job helped the family avoid the hardships many Irish people faced during the Great Potato Famine. Helen went to school as a young girl, and at 15, she began working as an assistant to the dining room servant at Mosstown House, where her father worked. She served food at the estate's meals and often brought food to Miss Charlotte, the ill sister of the estate owner, Master Murray. Over time, Charlotte became very fond of Helen and asked her to become her Companion. This meant Helen no longer had to serve food and instead spent time reading to and talking with Charlotte over the course of eight years.

At 21, Helen met Samuel Hall, who would become her husband. After two years of courting, they decided to marry and move to the United States. Charlotte reluctantly agreed to release Helen from her duties, and they married on August 28, 1868. Soon after, they sailed to New York, enduring a difficult three-week voyage in steerage class. The ship encountered a violent storm, making the journey unpleasant for everyone.

Once in New York, Samuel's relatives helped them get settled. Samuel found work in a rope-making factory, and they lived in a small apartment with only two rooms. The winters in New York were harsh, and Samuel struggled to keep a steady job. After Samuel was attacked during a strike, they decided to move to Illinois after receiving an invitation from Helen's uncle Davy Dean. In February 1869, they moved to Bloomington, Illinois, where Samuel found work at the local railroad.

Helen and Samuel had 14 children, starting with their first child in 1870. They had three boys and eleven girls. Unfortunately, their daughter Helen passed away at 16 from typhoid fever. Despite financial struggles and Samuel losing jobs, Helen and Samuel made the best of their situation. Samuel eventually joined the police force in 1886 to provide more stability for their family. He worked as a policeman for 29 years, earning a small salary, and later became a night watchman.

Over the years, they moved to several different homes as their family grew. In 1871, they moved into a three-room apartment and later built a house on Emerson Street, which they moved into in 1872. The house was small, but it felt like a mansion to them. They added rooms over time, and in 1895, they bought a larger home with a big kitchen, dining room, and large bedrooms.

Helen's daily life was filled with responsibilities like cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the children. She often felt homesick and sometimes became depressed, especially after hearing of Miss Charlotte's death in 1871. However, Helen's depression lessened when her family started moving to Illinois, and she became close with them again.

Helen's children grew up to become teachers, dressmakers, nurses, and wives. Many of her daughters stayed close to her throughout their lives. Helen gave them advice about marriage, always telling them to "fix a nice supper, wash your face, put on a clean dress, and never let the sun go down on your anger."

After Samuel's death in 1923, Helen lived for five more years. She passed away on March 21, 1928, at the age of 82. Before her death, she had expressed a wish to be buried in a lavender dress, and her daughter honored that request. Helen was buried beside Samuel in Evergreen Memorial Cemetery, where they were remembered for their happy and hardworking life together.