

FEATURED

## Four Wedding Dresses and One Family History

- By Karen Cernich, Missourian Feature Writer
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Looking closely at the 105-year-old white cotton wedding dress worn by Helene Catherine Laumeier when she married August Carl Becker Aug. 15, 1911, at the Femme Osage church parsonage, it's hard to see any signs of its age — maybe a slight pull in the lace here or there that left a tiny hole.

Helene had paid someone \$2 to sew the new dress for her back in 1911.

More than a century later, as Helene's 16-year-old great-great-granddaughter, Brea Hindersmann, Dutzow, tried on the 1911 dress just for the fun of it, the family marveled at the history before them and how perfectly the dress fit her.

"It's like it was made for her," Tonya Hindersmann remarked.

The same is true of a 1936 wedding dress worn by Brea's great-grandmother, Mildred Becker, when she married Ora Schnarre June 30, 1936, at the same Femme Osage church parsonage.

"Both of those dresses are very small, and they fit (Brea) like they were made for her," Tonya reiterated, with a smile.

Both dresses had been hanging in Hindersmann's guest room closet since her grandmother, who had saved them, passed away in 2010. When she realized about a year ago that Brea had grown up enough that they might actually fit her, the two held a dress-up session.

That led to Tonya's mom, Sandy (Bolle) Schnarre, pulling out her wedding dress from when she married Keith Schnarre Aug. 27, 1966, at Wentzville UCC to add to the family collection.

Brea tried it on, along with Tonya's wedding dress from May 7, 1994, when she married Doug Hindersmann at the same Femme Osage church where the others had been married in the parsonage.

Brea, who is a sophomore at St. Francis Borgia Regional High School, was excited to try on each of the wedding dresses. It was neat being so close to family history like that, she said.

“I wanted to see how they looked on me. I wasn’t exactly fond of them, because they are sort of outdated, but it’s cool to see what they would have worn then, and to see that they fit me so well. That’s kinda weird,” said Brea.

She likes her mom’s 1994 wedding dress a lot, although the sleeves are “too puffy” for her taste, and her grandmother’s dress from 1966 is “too plain.”

Brea’s great-grandmother’s dress from 1936 is all the more interesting because, not only is it pretty with its lace and sheer overlay, but her grandmother saved all of the accessories — the shoes, veil, handkerchief, even the bra and underwear.

“My grandma was kind of funny, how she saved everything,” said Tonya with a laugh. “And her dress has a really open back, which I feel like would have been really risqué for the 1930s, so it has a really long crisscross-style bra that took us a while to figure out.”

Brea’s favorite of the four wedding dresses is her great-great-grandmother’s dress from 1911.

“I like it because it’s simple, but pretty,” she remarked.

Along with the four wedding dresses, the family also has the suit worn by Ora Schnarre. It’s hanging in the same closet in a garment bag from Bocklage’s store from Downtown Washington.

### **Discovers Family Ties to Femme Osage**

Back when she was a Schnarre growing up on a farm in Centralia, Tonya came to Femme Osage often for family reunions.

Doug Hindersmann grew up in Augusta.

The couple met at college and when they decided to get married, they agreed Femme Osage United Church of Christ was a perfect location, a beautiful country church.

Tonya had grown up in the Methodist church, and Doug had been raised Catholic.

They took their Catholic Pre-Cana classes through Doug's priest, Father Gambon, who blessed their wedding at Femme Osage UCC, which was officiated by her childhood Methodist minister, the Rev. Brent Mustoe.

"I didn't realize until I started looking into the background of the dresses that both my grandmother and great-grandmother were also married at the parsonage there," said Tonya.

Even more amazing was the discovery that Brea's great-great-great-grandfather, Fredrick Schnarre (grandfather of Ora Schnarre), had built Femme Osage Church in 1888.

Tonya learned that from an article by Bill Schiermeier that appeared in The Cracker Barrel News, printed by The Wentzville Union, Dec. 17, 1975:

"Mr. Schnarre grew too in his skill as a carpenter, and his best known project was the construction of the present Femme Osage E. & R. Church."

All of those connections make the family's wedding dress collection that much more special, said Tonya. They don't have special plans to do anything with the dresses at this point.

"I guess we'll just keep them forever," Tonya remarked.