

Lotter Family



The first fifteen German settlers in Frankenmuth hardly began to organize their Lutheran colony in 1845 when a second group was already making plans to join them. John Frederick Lotter and his wife Margaret nee Winkler were among the passengers who made the voyage in 1846. They left Nuernberg March 6, 1846 and arrived in Frankenmuth at the end of May. They were one of several young couples who were married enroute March 18, 1846, because strict German laws did not allow young men to marry unless they had certain assets in Germany.

The immigrants planned to make the voyage on a brand new ship, but construction problems delayed its completion. Instead they boarded a two-mast converted freighter in Bremen and their adventure across the ocean began. On many occasions the small vessel seemed to be going backward more so than forward. Conditions were almost unbearable since the ship had been used earlier to transport tobacco. To make matters worse, the immigrants were crowded together in one large warehouse-type room.

A six month old baby died five days into the journey and other hardships followed. Nearly everyone got seasick. There wasn't enough water on board for drinking so the passengers caught rain water to quench their thirst.

After seven weeks of stormy weather, the ship arrived in the New York harbor May 9, 1846. When they finally reached Frankenmuth three weeks later, many were greatly disappointed. They thought the new colony would resemble the Bavarian "dorfs" they left in Germany. Instead they found simple log cabins and a parsonage, which also served as a church and mission house, in the middle of miles of wilderness.

At first they lived in the communal house or with the earlier settlers. Later they built their own cabins on acreage they purchased.

John Frederick settled three miles west and ½ mile south on the Cass River on a 78 acre parcel of land. Like the other colonists, he cleared his land and then farmed. Potatoes, beets, cabbage and corn were planted at first. Fish was obtained from the river and the forest yielded wild game for the table. The colonists bought chickens and cows so they had butter and eggs.

John Frederick and Margaret had eight children. The boys- William, John and Adam were farmers. The daughters- Barbara, Margaret, Mary, Anna and Eva were seamstresses. John died in 1898 at the age of 84. Margaret died April 5, 1895 when she was 76.

Their son John was born September 16, 1851 and he married Mary nee Luebker. They had a daughter Mary Deuring and a son John George William (G.W.). He was born May 4, 1879. John G.W. married Hedwig nee Ortner June 1, 1922. She was born in Richville March 27, 1890. They had a daughter Myra Whittle and a son John Frederick. John G.W. died February 18, 1955 at the age of 75. His wife died June 8, 1953 at the age of 63.

Five generations of the John Frederick and Margaret Lotter family have occupied the original homestead. John Frederick and his wife Norma Elaine nee Rebuehr lived there as of 2005. John was born August 12, 1925 and Norma was born August 21, 1927. Their son John Timothy was born May 24, 1957. John and Norma's daughters were Suzanne Agans and Sally Heinlein. They had seven grandchildren as of 2005.



Researched & Compiled by Bavarian Inn Lodge
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