

Vanek Family



The Vanek name in this area started with Vaclav Vanek, who was born in Bohemia in 1847 and then migrated to the United States in 1867. He married Anna Mayer. They had nine children, seven of which lived to adulthood. The family originally lived in Bridgeport, Michigan, ten miles west of Frankenmuth.

Charles Sr., born to Vaclav and Anna in 1883, married a Frankenmuth native, Bertha Mantel, in 1907. They lived in Saginaw for several years and then moved to Detroit, where Charles was an automobile salesman. Charles and Bertha had two children: Charles Jr., born in 1909 and Waldo, born in 1912. Charles Sr. became ill and died suddenly in 1921. Bertha and her children moved back to her childhood home in Frankenmuth, just south of the Frankenmuth Historical Museum. Bertha worked as one of the first telephone operators in Frankenmuth, and she was employed at the Fischer Hotel (now Bavarian Inn Restaurant). This enabled her to support her children.

Charles Jr. married Emily Mossner in 1941. He left to serve in World War II. His daughter, Beverly, born in 1943, was ten months old before he returned home. Beverly married Eugene Knoll of Frankenmuth and had three children: Kelly, Douglas and Deanna. A second daughter, Marcia, married Ron Loesel and they had two children, Matthew and Tricia. Marcia later married Thomas Conaway Jr. Marcia was a Bavarian Festival Princess in 1965.

In 1951 Charles Jr. married Elvira Schiefer. They had three children: Mary, Sharon and David. Mary married James Reinbold and had four children: Sarah, Rachel, Laura and Matthew.

Sharon married Thomas Pruner and had three children: Katie, Megan and Thomas. David married Darlene and they had a son, Anthony. David served in the United States Navy.

Charles Vanek Jr. was employed at the Frankenmuth Post Office for many years. He was a member of the American Legion Post 150 and a lifelong railroad enthusiast. He is remembered by area residents for his "slow drives" through town with his pet dachshund on his shoulder. Charles died in August of 1991.

Waldo Vanek married Hilda Reinbold in 1942. Waldo left to serve in World War II when his brother Charles was discharged. He served in the Pacific Theater and was discharged in April 1945.

Waldo and Hilda had two children, Ann and Jane. Ann married Bill Stevens. They had three children: Sherry, Gail and Michael. Jane married Don Wescoat and they had two children, Donald and William.

Waldo worked for over 40 years at Universal Engineering Company. He died in 1992. Waldo was known for his enjoyment of good old-fashioned sing-alongs, especially at the family gatherings.

Many of the Vanek family traditions continued in the family. This included pretzel baking, the Christmas Eve supper menu, and the special recipes like "Poorman's Meal".

Family pets have always been a part of the Vanek family. It was a running joke that the stray animals could come to a Vanek house and find a good meal.



Researched & Compiled by Bavarian Inn Lodge
For copies of Family Histories go to www.bavarianinn.com/familyhistory