

Krafft Family



he patriarch of the Krafft family in Frankenmuth was Johann Leonard Krafft. He was supervisor of Frankenmuth Township in the 1860's and 1870's. Johann's great-grandson, Richard Krafft Jr., followed in his political footsteps and served as mayor

of the City of Frankenmuth from 1980-1986, and was a city councilman for 22 years prior to that.

Johann Leonard, commonly known as Leonard, was born in Unterbaimbach Bavaria, Germany on October 13, 1826. Unterbaimbach is a small *dorf* occupied entirely by members of the Krafft family. It is located approximately 30 kilometers from Nuernberg and some 10 kilometers from Rostall. The Krafft family relatives still occupy Unterbaimbach but the Krafft name there has died out.

Leonard intended to marry Anna Elizabeth Laemmermann who lived in Oberbaimbach, a small *dorf* only about five kilometers distant from Unterbaimbach. Since Leonard could not show that he would be able to support a wife and family, they were not allowed to marry. As a result, they decided to travel to America and emigrated with the second group that came to Frankenmuth in 1846. Their marriage is the first shown in the records of St. Lorenz Lutheran Church and is dated July 1, 1846.

The couple purchased a 160-acre farm September 28, 1846 on Dehmel Road, one mile north of Frankenmuth. Leonard was one of the first settlers to learn English. As a result he became interested in politics and business and served as township supervisor for nine years, first commissioner of township highways, public school district treasurer and inspector, elder of the church, founder and officer of the Frankenmuth Fire Insurance Company and also ran "unsuccessfully" for county treasurer.

The Krafft couple had 10 children, but only six survived to adulthood. Anna Barbara, Johann Konrad, Junigunde and Johann Jakkob all died young. Their oldest child Rosina Barbara is the matriarch of a huge Schreiner family of the Frankenmuth area. A son, Johann George, bought a farm about three miles from the homestead. He was a farmer but 26 of his descendants, or their spouses, were workers in the Lutheran Church as either pastors or teachers.

The couple's other children were Anna Margaretha, a housewife; Johann Leonard, a farmer who occupied a portion of the homestead; Maria Margaretha, a housewife; and Johann George Friederich, a farmer who occupied the remaining portion of the homestead.

Two sets of twins were born in the lineage of Leonard. That in itself is not unusual, but they were born in the same house on the same day, but 29 years apart. Richard and Selma Krafft were born on November 19, 1901, and Louis and Luella Krafft Garchow were born on November 19, 1930.

Great-grandson Richard Krafft Jr. was the long-time manager of the Star of the West Milling Company and served in city government for many years. Another great-grandson, Marvin Herzog, was a well-known polka band leader and was inducted into the Polka Band Hall of Fame. Great-grandson, Norman Krafft, is the author of three books concerning Frankenmuth history, books that are in print and available.

Leonard's descendants number well over 700 persons. Leonard died on April 18, 1896 at the age of 69. His wife died 23 years earlier. As of 2005, the Krafft homestead is still owned by the descendants of Johann Leonard Krafft.



Researched & Compiled by Bavarian Inn Lodge
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