

Ortner Family



The research of the Ortner Family history traces it to the Salzburg Province of Austria. Dr. Donald Ortner (1922-2006), descendant of the J.P. Ortner family, discovered this information. Nycol Ortner and his wife Brigitte bought a parcel of land in the Gastein Valley in the early 1300's. That piece of land is still identified as "das Ortner Gut," the Ortner property. Because of religious persecution in the mid 18th century, many of the Ortners and others fled this area, going to regions in Germany, particularly the Augsburg and Nürnberg areas.

Johann Leonard Ortner (9-17-1827 to 8-15-1873) was the son of J. Michael and Anna Margaretha nee Ehemann Ortner of Unterwurmbach Bavaria, Germany. His father was a weaver by trade, coming to nearby Nordstetten in 1815 to settle on his wife's farm. J. Leonard left Germany on March 6, 1852 and came to Frankenmuth with his sister and spouse, J. Leonhard Rödel (Roedel) and their four children, and his younger brother J. Georg. Another sister, Anna Barbara, had married Georg Wimmer in 1849, and was living in Detroit until their move to Frankenmuth.

J. Leonard bought and settled on a 40-acre farm at 3160 S. Gera Road, three miles north of Frankenmuth. On April 23, 1853, he married Maria M. Maurer (6-20-1829 to 12-29-1924), who was 23. She came from Kalbensteinberg, near Gunzenhausen, Germany. She would not marry J. Leonard until he owned a cow. J. Leonard and Maria had six children. The first-born, Maria Barbara, died at the age of 8 of scarlet fever. The other children were: J. Paulus (2-2-1857 to 8-24-1945), Georg Michael (4-2-1859 to 4-18-1902), Maria Margaretha Riethmeier (12-25-1861 to 11-10-1931), J. Heinrich (6-1-1864 to 6-9-1941), and Catharina Margaretha Hack (9-23-1867 to 2-3-1953).

J. Leonard and Maria worked long hours to clear their woodland for farming. Unfortunately, their partnership did not last long.

J. Leonard died August 15, 1873 at the young age of 45. He broke his neck during an accident as he was hauling logs to the Saginaw saw mills. Apparently, a train frightened his horses and he was bolted off his wagon. The accident left Maria and 16 year-old J. Paulus and 14 year-old Georg with the farm work. Another son, J. Heinrich, was too young to help. Before his death, J. Leonard had acquired 240 acres of land – much of it wooded. When her farming days were over, Maria was a mid-wife and assisted at more than 100 births. At age 66, she had to care for her four granddaughters, ages 6 months to 4 years after their mother died. At the age of 72, her son Georg died leaving her the sole responsibility to raise the girls. She died December 29, 1924 at the age of 95½ years.

Their oldest son, J. Paulus, bought a General Store in Frankenmuth around 1903. Their grandsons, Richard and Carl, began working there and later took over the business. Richard studied business administration at Valparaiso University. In January 1919, he and Carl acquired the former List Hotel and operated it as a hotel and restaurant. In late November of that year they moved the General Store to that location and continued the business until December 31, 1950. Later Oscar Rau Furniture Center was located where the Ortner Company Store used to be.

Georg Michael Ortner (3-10-1830 to 12-15-1909) was born in Gräfensteinberg, near Nürnberg. He came to America on Feb. 3, 1853 with other fellow Lutherans. He married Eva Margaretha Rebelein (2-17-1828 to 9-26-1900) on July 23, 1854 at St. Lorenz Lutheran Church. He bought 40 acres of wooded land on what is today known as 5351 Frank Road. They had 6 children: Maria Christina (1855-1900), J. Paulus Georg (1857-1938), J. Gottfried (1859-1922), J. Leonard (1861-1918), Anna Margaretha (1863-1939), and Maria Sabina (1866-1951). G. Michael served in The Civil War and later became totally blind. He was not related to Johann Leonard Ortner.



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