The name Pretzer derived from Bretzer, meaning baker of crackers and pretzels. Later it was changed to Pretzer. The family originated in Alsace-Lorraine, which had been part of Germany and also of France, and tradition has it that they left the area to preserve their Protestant religion. The first Pretzer recorded was Heinrich Pretzer, who lived near Mannhein and Heidelberg in West Germany in the late 1600’s. The family moved to Pomerania, the northeast corner of Germany and now the western edge of Poland.

The Saginaw County Pretzers are descendents of Carl and Esther Pretzer who came to America in 1854. Carl was a farmer from Locknitz, west of Stettin, and a city on the Polish/German border. Upon arrival in America, they went to Macomb County, Michigan, where they were farmers until 1880, when most of the family moved to Richland Township (Hemlock) in Saginaw County. Carl died in 1899. Their children were: Charles, Henry, John, C. Frederick, William, Ferdinand (Irene Pretzer’s grandfather), Bertha, Julius and August. Ferdinand was born in Pommern July 31, 1851 and came to Michigan at age 3. He married Bertha Achtberburg (12-25-1861) from Prussia in 1879. They had ten children: Charles, Frederick, August, William (Irene Pretzer’s father), John, Ferdinand, Henry, Ester, Emma, and Arthur.

William Pretzer born May 27, 1886 married Anna B. Stenzel (5-4-1890) on April 29, 1914. He farmed the same land his father farmed and, with his son Delbert, continued until his retirement. Delbert lived in the Pretzer homestead, and when he retired he rented his farm acreage which was designated “A Centennial Farm”. William died August 11, 1974 and Anna died December 30, 1976.

William and Anna had eight children: Clarence born May 8, 1915 died of tonsil hemophilia August 13, 1925 at age 10.


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