

Simon Family



he arrival of Elmer P. Simon into Frankenmuth in 1946 actually brought him back to his maternal historical roots since his mother's grandfather, George Schmidt, emigrated from Germany (Kitzingen) in 1850. Four years later George Schmidt married

Margareta Bauker at St. Lorenz Lutheran Church. Most of the children they had in that decade died of a plague that hit the small community very hard.

When Frankenmuth was made a separate township (from an over-sized Bridgeport township) in 1854, Elmer's great-grandfather Schmidt was elected its first Supervisor.

Schmidt moved into Saginaw in 1858 to pursue a political career in the county courthouse (Register of Deeds and County Clerk). His son, Henry Schmidt, served in the State House of Representatives in Lansing for a term in 1900 before beginning a career as a cheese manufacturer. It was in Saginaw that his daughter, Florence Schmidt, married Peter, a blacksmith who turned auto mechanic. He was soon drafted into the U.S. Army for World War I in Europe. Upon his return from war, Peter and Florence established a family of six children.

Their second child, Elmer P. Simon, was born on the West Side of Saginaw on February 13, 1921. After parochial education at Holy Cross Lutheran School and public education at Arthur Hill High School, he attended Valparaiso University in Indiana where he received his law degree and, in the same year, 1943, enlisted in the Army. Upon his return from Europe at the conclusion of World War II in 1946, Simon passed the Michigan Bar in April, married Mary Ellen Stegman, his college sweetheart, in June and commenced practicing law in Frankenmuth two weeks later.

His first corporate client, Frankenmuth Mutual Insurance Company, acquired him on a full-time basis about ten years later. In 1958 he was appointed Vice President and General Counsel of this fast-growing Insurance Company. When the village of Frankenmuth became a city in 1959, Simon was elected to the city council and was appointed Mayor Pro-tem by the city's first Mayor, James Wickson. Following Wickson's resignation in 1965, Elmer assumed the office of Mayor for the next fifteen years, a period during which the city experienced interesting growth and progress. "Pete" and Mary Ellen were privileged to make a dozen official visits to Gunzenhausen, Germany, Frankenmuth's "Sister City".

At their newly built residence at 2 Mueller Court in Frankenmuth, they raised three children: David, John and Elizabeth (two football players and an artist), all of whom attended "Valpo", the school where their parents met. These children have sired seven grandchildren, namely: Aaron Simon, Rachel Simon, Julie Crandell, Leah Simon, Derek Simon, Sara VanderVelde and Sam VanderVelde. As of the year 2005, two great-grandchildren have been added: Sam and Sophie Simon (children of Aaron and Erin Simon).

Even though "Pete" retired, he continued to serve as chairman of Frankenmuth Mutual Insurance Company, as well as to serve on such boards as Valparaiso University, St. Lukes (Covenant) Hospital, Saginaw Symphony Orchestra, Family Farm-Loan Commission for the Site of Michigan and the Frankenmuth Historic Preservation Commission.

In 2005, Elmer "Pete" Simon authored a book entitled "The Cross Vs the Swastika", based upon the World War II experiences of a German client.



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