

Hecht Family



The Hecht name came to America through Johann Leonhard Hecht, born July 22, 1832 in Diethofen Mittelfranken, Germany. Like many young men in his country at that time, he faced economic uncertainty. Crop failures weakened the German economy and jobs were scarce. Johann Leonhard was nearing the age for mandatory military service in the German army.

Four German Lutheran settlements were founded in the Saginaw Valley at this time. Each offered various economic opportunities. Frankenhilfe or "help of the Franconians" was the last to be established in 1851. The colony, later named Richville, was established to offer a home for the poor in the New World.

Johann Leonhard left Germany at age 18 and arrived in America in 1850. His sister, Maria Barbara Hecht, came with him. Johann Leonhard married Christiana Barbara Keinath. They had nine children: Johann George, Maria Barbara (died as a baby), Maria Barbara (Helmreich), Johannes, Ernst, Maria Elizabeth (Heinlein), Johann Conrad, Christiana Barbara (Geyer) and Johann Jacob. Johann Leonhard and his wife began a farming tradition northeast of Frankenmuth. Later four of their sons began farming east of Richville, with Conrad remaining on the homestead near Frankenmuth. Their three daughters all married farmers.

The couple eventually had 54 grandchildren. They are: Mary B. Rodammer, George Adam, John Leonard and Adolph Hecht; Fred Arthur and George Arthur Helmreich, Hedwig Gerhauser; Friedrich, Ludwig, Albert, Carl, Walter and Rudolph Hecht, Amanda Bauer, Florence Schluckebier, Emma Schluckebier, Olga Rupprecht and Erna Ranke; Herman, Otto, Herbert, Richard and Oscar Hecht, Nora Bierlein, Alma Auernhamer, Frieda Bieberitz, Lorna Kern and Agnes Nuechterlein;

Ida Zeilinger, Clarence Heinlein and Alma Schluckebier; Ella Sohn, Elmer Hecht, Martha Schiefer, Herbert, Edwin, Arthur, and Ruben Hecht, Agnes Maurer, Anita Mayer and Lillian Bunjes; Bernhard, Herbert and Oswald Geyer, Selma Brueggeman; Hedwig Rodammer, Clara Rodammer, Anna Mossner, Norman, Clarence, Jakob Jr., Ruben and Arnold Hecht and Helen Loesel.

In 1991 a letter was received from Mrs. Gunda Hecht Schrickler of Germany who was researching the Hecht family name. Her question was, "Whatever became of the Hechts who came to Frankenmuth in 1850?" This led to a visit by nine people representing the Michigan Hechts to a Hecht reunion in Wernsbach bei Ansbach, Germany in August 1993. In May 1996 a group of 29 people representing Hecht families from Mittelfranken in the area of Ansbach came to Frankenmuth. A church service was held on Sunday, May 30th, in Richville for the extended Hecht family, followed by a reunion of over 400 people at the school. Gunda Schrickler's research spanned at least 14 generations and reached back to the year 1570 when Hans Hecht lived in Petersdorf Mittelfranken, Germany. By the following year, Gunda had translated her work into English. Grace Hecht Roedel accomplished a complete update of the 1465 direct descendants of Johann Leonhard and Christiana Barbara Hecht as of 1997. The combined work was printed as the 184 page "The Hecht Book." The Hecht name continues to be common in the Frankenmuth area and beyond.

Johann Leonhard's grandson, Albert, married Hedwig Schluckebier and the couple had three children: Edna Hegenauer, Dorothy Zehnder and Raymond. Dorothy married William "Tiny" Zehnder Jr. on May 2, 1943. His parents founded Zehnder's Restaurant in 1927. When the Zehnder family purchased Fischer's Hotel in 1950, Tiny and Dorothy became the managers. The Tiny Zehnder family owns and operates the Frankenmuth Bavarian Inn Restaurant, along with this Bavarian Inn Lodge.



Researched & Compiled by Bavarian Inn Lodge
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