Gera History

This room has been named after a community which is located very close to Frankenmuth and has strong ties to Frankenmuth. The story told is that people of early Frankenmuth did not want a railroad running through their town. This would "open up" the community to "outside influences" and cause a lot of disruption. So the railroad was built four miles north of Frankenmuth, beginning operation on February 21, 1882. The crossing was dubbed "Frankenmuth Station" until April 23, 1984, when it was renamed Gera, after a city in Germany.

According to a deed held by Mrs. Grace Roedel, William Todd was one of the first people to buy property in Gera, which was the Roedel farm at 2245 S. Gera Road. Because of its proximity to the railroad the community prospered, but not as rapidly as it could have. Farmers settling in the area were reluctant to sell land for business because of the high quality of the soil. Despite this, the crossing began to take on the appearance of a farming community. An elevator was built near the depot and a stockyard went up near the railroad siding. A creamery, a section house, and two weight stations for sugar beets were built along the tracks. The hotel, with its saloon and dance hall, and the general store, with its Post Office in the back, were the busiest places in town.

An old 1905 poster tells about one of the baseball picnics held at Loesel's Grove. The poster described the event as the "biggest time of the year," and set the stage for the game between the Gera Tigers and "The Good Saginaw Team" of Seeman and Peters. The Frankentrost Coronet Band provided the entertainment.

The elevator is the only original business in town that has grown. Owned by Brand & Hardin in 1901, it was sold to Charles Wolohan, Inc., in 1922, and then bought by Star of the West Milling Company of Frankenmuth in 1956. Storage capacity in 1900 was 10,000 bushels and in 2005 it is more than 540,000 bushels.

The biggest news event in Gera's first century occurred on January 11, 1979. On that date a Chesapeake and Ohio train, hauling 77 cars, collided with a tractor-trailer truck at the M-83 crossing. Three engines and 11 cars derailed, smashing into the Star of the West Milling Co. office. Gera resident Howard J. Rogner, branch manager of the elevator, died at his desk.

The stockyards eventually became a foundry due to the efforts of Christian Melchoir, a German refugee who came to Gera after World War I. By the time of his death, in the 50's, he was one of the most well-liked men in town. Many residents can remember how he sat in front of his shack each night strumming the zither.

The creamery was owned by the Haack family, who then sold it to the Rogner family. In 1930, the creamery business began to decline, so a gas pump was added. In 1933, Herbert Rogner converted it into a tavern that continues to operate today under the management of John Minar Jr.

The general store was also the site of Gera's post office from 1894 until 1954. The general store was operated by John Rummel in 1896, and later by Emil Riethmeier from 1910 to 1965.

Next to the store was the Gera Hotel that catered mostly to agents and salesmen. In later years, the hotel was made into apartments and finally torn down in the late 1950's. As of 2006, Gera consists of the following businesses: Star of the West Elevator, a fertilizer and farm chemical business, also owned by Star of the West, the Gera Bar, and about 50 residents living between the two signs along M-83 that announce the town's name.