

# Fechter Family



he community of Frankenmuth was approaching its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary by the time John Michael Fechter arrived here in 1883. Many of the hardships of the earlier years were overcome and the colonists enjoyed freedom and prosperity. Their farmland, once thick

woodland, was now cleared and yielded vegetables and grains.

Frankenmuth also had a thriving “downtown” area by then. There were saw and flour mills, a brewery, carpentry shops, blacksmith and wagon shops, general stores, and at least three hotels. At first the hotels were boarding houses where single men, who worked at the mills or other businesses in town, lived. Later as the roads improved, the hotels catered to traveling salesmen who had routes between Flint and Saginaw.

John Michael was born in Merkendorf Germany, January 28, 1858. He was 25 years old when he made the voyage to America. His three sisters remained in Germany. John Michael married Anna Sophia Uebler in Frankenmuth, October 22, 1865. They settled on a farm on King Road and raised a family of four sons and one daughter. The daughter died when she was very young. The oldest son, Ernest, became a carpenter and builder. He was followed by Otto, who operated a stone block works in Frankenmuth. The third son, Carl, was a plumber and tinsmith. The fourth, Edwin, owned and operated a hardware store.

John Michael and Anna’s grandchildren remember stories they heard about the weekly Saturday night parties at the Fechter house on King Road. There was always a dance and the beer was kept under a tree in the backyard.

John Michael’s son, Otto, began his stone block business while the family lived on King Road. It was headquartered in a garage at the same location where the Mid-Town Shops are now located.

Tom Fechter, former owner of Nuechterlein Electric (one of the Mid-Town Shops), was the electrical contractor for the Bavarian Inn Lodge.

In 1923, John Michael and Anna retired from farming and moved to a house on Hubinger Street in Frankenmuth. Their house remains standing to this day. John Michael began a blacksmith business in the garage shoeing horses, which earned him two to three dollars a week.

John Michael and Anna’s oldest son, Ernest, had five children: Erna, Ruth, Bernice, Donald and Ernest, Jr.

Otto (Oct. 5, 1887 – Feb. 27, 1935) married Nina Felgner (Mar. 16, 1906 – Mar. 10, 1993). They had five children: Shirley, Clark, Thomas, Larry and Katherine. Shirley, born Feb. 23, 1926, married Frank Brodowski. They had 3 children: Tamara, Sherry and Todd.

Clark, (Oct. 10, 1927 – June 29, 2006) married Eunice Lee. They had 3 children: Clark Jr., Gretchen and Sara. Thomas, (July 10, 1932 – May 30, 2008) married Marie Rupprecht.

Larry, (July 21, 1933 – July 23, 2006) married Eunice Freundt. They have one son, Christopher.

Katherine, born Jan. 9, 1934, married Gene Schmidt. They had 3 sons, Tom, John and Ronald.

The third son, Carl, had three children: Russell, Frances and Alta. The youngest son, Edwin, had two daughters: Viola and Marcella.

John Michael died July 6, 1931 at the age of 73. He suffered a heart attack, but told his family on his deathbed, “It’s not such a bad thing. I had a good life.” Anna lived two years longer, dying on March 9, 1933. Both are buried in St. John’s Lutheran Cemetery, Frankenmuth.

