

Geyer Family



he Geyers came to Frankenmuth in the very early years. John Michael Geyer, who arrived first in 1853, became a farmer like most of the other early settlers. John George Geyer, who made the voyage from Germany in 1867, became a local businessman

with a most popular product - - Beer!

Early histories reveal that one of the first items the settlers missed most in their new colony was that traditional German refreshment. Farmers in the fields in the heat of those first summers in America were said to pause, look heavenward and sign saying, "Wenn I etz bloss a Bierla Haet!" or "Oh, what I wouldn't give for a beer now!" It took a while for their wish to be granted.

Beer was first brewed in Frankenmuth in 1857 by John Matthias Falliers who built the Frankenmuth Brewery. The quality was said to not equal the taste of German beer but at least it was beer. The brewery closed in 1864, but in the meantime another one – the Cass River Brewery – was opened in 1862 by William Knaust. Knaust sole the brewery to John George Geyer in 1874. In 1884, John George also purchased the Frankenmuth Brewery which was reopened in the 1870's. John George felt the beer business had a future in Frankenmuth.

John George was born June 22, 1843 in Ismannsdorf, Germany and baptized and confirmed at Windsbach. He was a flour miller before he came to America. Seven years after he arrived here he married Maria Barbara Roedel on August 30, 1874.

The Geyers originally came from Austria. They were driven out because of their evangelical beliefs and have been at the same location – House No. 6 in Ismannsdorf – since 1714.

John George and Barbara had six children: the first was a daughter, Gertrude, who married Fred Weber; the second child was a son, John L.; Katharine who married Rev. Fred Rutkowsky; a son Fred Geyer; a son Ernst who owned a tavern across the street from the family brewery until the prohibition era; and Helen who married Walter Gugel.

John George trained his sons John L. and Fred in the family business. John L. became the brewmaster at Geyer's Brewery. He was also president of the village of Frankenmuth from 1938 to 1945. Fred was the office manager of the brewery. The sons eventually took over the business in 1908 and were in charge until 1949 when both retired.

The family company was later reorganized with the sons of John L. among the incorporators. In the later 1960's the family business was sold.

John George's grandchildren are: John, Herbert, Walter, Carl and William Geyer; Ella Kaiser, Elsie Naegele, Marie Wolf, Lydia Ruff, Margaret Atkins, Walter, Fred and Earl Rutkowsky, Martha Paul, Meta Timm, Irene Wilkie, Lydia Nuechterlein, Esther Gruber, Lorna Kemp Cheney, Doris Trautmann, Florence Arendt, Norma Zehnder, Hildegard Hintz, Wilbert Gugel and Lorine Moore.

John George's descendants presently total about 130 persons.

John George died July 2, 1915 at the age of 72 and is buried at St. Lorenz Cemetery. John George's wife Barbara died August 29, 1931.



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