

"The Berk Families"

Written by Sue Cummings

Bob Frantz donated an original photo of the Louis Berk family to the historical society. Bob identified the people in the photo, including his grandmother Alice Berk Frantz, wife of Marion Frantz, his grandfather. I have sorted out the information for this column from Bob's notes, biography of Henry V. Berk of Randolph Twp. from Beer's 1882 History of Montgomery County, and from phone conversations with Louis Berk (Brookville) and Margaret Berk Hough (Dayton), whose fathers were brothers and sons of Louis Franklin Berk.

Henry Berk, Sr. was a native of Hesse Darmstadt, Germany. He and his wife Margaret Abt had three sons. Both Henry, Sr. and his wife died at age 39 and only two sons were still alive in 1882: Lewis and Henry V., Jr. Henry V., Jr. was born in Germany in 1816 and trained as a cabinetmaker. He came to America in 1836, landing at Baltimore. Shortly thereafter, he traveled to Frederickstown, Maryland, then Vienna Crossroads, Clark Co., Ohio and then to Dayton. By 1857, Henry V., Jr. had purchased 28 acres in Randolph Twp. He has acquired 400 acres in Randolph Twp. by 1882.

In 1840, Henry V., Jr. married Anna Glass and they had eight children: Amelia, Anna, Enna, Ellen, Henry, Louis and Theodore. Henry V., Jr. saw that all of his children received some of his land. The Montgomery County Atlas of 1895 shows Henry Berk (the son) owning 160 acres (northeast quarter of Section 28) and Louis owning about 100 acres (northwest quarter of Section 27). The two farms were separated by Union Road and each was south of Wenger Road. Their neighbors were the Moist's, Engle's and Mann's. The photo, ca. 1902, shows the Berk farmhouse, and Louis Franklin, his wife Mary and children Frank W., Clara F., Mary Alice, Harry Albert and Earl Ralph born between 1878 and 1893. Clara married Melvin Bennet and her daughter Ruth are also in the photo. Bob Frantz's grandmother Mary Alice was the wife of Marion Frantz and their son Harry was Bob's father. Margaret Berk Hough's father was Harry Berk who married Martha Black. Louis' father was the youngest son, Earl Berk, and he married Ethel Black, sister of Martha. The Black's were from Covington, Ohio.

More details on these families can be found in the society's genealogy archives along with the original photo.