

Frantz Family In Wabash County

by Dore M. Frantz

Last July I had a very pleasant visit in North Manchester, the place of my birth, and vicinity, for the purpose of looking up the locations where some of the Frantz family had settled, in the early years of the history of Wabash County, and as there are many descendants of these early Frantzes, now living in Wabash County, perhaps a short story of my visit, would be of interest to quite a few of your readers.

I think the first of the Frantzes to settle in Wabash County, was Nicholas Frantz, who was an elder in the Brethren Church, becoming a bishop after the death of Elder Joseph Harter in 1861. He first moved to Clark County, Ohio, from Virginia about 1826, and on to North Manchester in 1841, purchasing land at the north-west corner of Route 114 and the Delauter Road, 3 miles west of North Manchester. Here he built his home, cleared the land, lived and died. He and his wife and quite a number of his descendants are buried in the little cemetery on his farm near Route 114. He had a family of ten daughters. No sons.

Between 1841 and the Civil War, I found record of nine other Frantzes settling in the county, among whom were five Johns. It seems, that to distinguish between them, they were given nick names: Old John; Big John; Little John; Black John; and Blue John; the latter being my father. Then there was a Christian, an Abraham, a Jacob and an Elizabeth who married Henry Brubaker and moved there from Virginia.

Of these all were related to each other except Old John and Black John. In the short time I had out there, I was unable to find out anything about the ancestry of these two, or where they had lived before moving to Indiana. What they had lacked in relationship, they soon made up by inter-marriage. Black John soon married one of the ten daughters of Nicholas, and one of Black John's sisters married Abraham, the two being son and daughter of Old John. Then Big John and Little John each married one of the daughters of Nicholas, there being

three John Frantzes who married three Frantz sisters.

In looking up the farms where these Frantzes settled, I was taken back the Miller Road, and shown the homes where Old John, Abraham and Big John had lived, their farms being between Route 114 and the Kosciusko County Line, while the former home of Christian was on the same road, just over the line. The home of Black John was on Route 114 just west of the Delauter Road. I was unable to locate the home of Little John, but Blue John, my father, lived in North Manchester, near the college, and was a brick and stone mason by trade. He helped to build many of the down town buildings, as well as many of the residences. One of the treats, I sought and enjoyed while there was to put up at the Sheller Hotel, which he helped build, and which was once operated by a man named Grimes, it being known at that time as the Grimes Hotel. My brother Hollis married Jennie Grimes, a daughter of the proprietor, and moved to Springfield, Ohio; she is still living. All of these homes, I believe, have passed out of the hands of the Frantz family.

Jacob Frantz and his sister, Elizabeth, (Mrs. Henry Brubaker) bought farms about six miles south of Wabash, on Route 13 at the Palmer Road. Elder John Frantz, his brother, Henry, and their first cousin, Barbara Pulley, who was Barbara Brubaker, still live in the vicinity, all getting along in years.

I was able to locate descendants of about all of these early settlers. Simon Frantz of North Manchester is a descendant of Christian Frantz. Ezra Frantz, the lumber merchant and his brother, Noah, are descendants of Big John Frantz. Cornelius Frantz is a descendant of Abraham Frantz. Josiah Frantz is a descendant of Black John. Besides these, other descendants of all generations would probably number several hundred, just counting those now living, and through marriage, many now have such well known names as Hay, Neher, Metzger, Snell, Miller, Ulrey, Cripe, Butterbaugh, Witters, Kohr and Biechler, as well as others.

While there I also had a very pleasant visit with Mr. and Mrs. Otho Winger, president of Manchester College, who is also descended from the Frantz family, his ancestor having come to America from Switzerland in the early 1700's and settled first in Pennsylvania, later descendants moving from there to Virginia, and others still later to Indiana.

I was very pleased with the data I was able to gather, while there, but was somewhat disappointed in not being able to learn anything about the ancestors of "Old" John Frantz.

An interesting event of our visit to North Manchester, was: One evening I told my wife I would like to take a walk down to the river to see if the old suspension bridge was still there, upon which I had as a boy jumped up and down to make it swing. Needless to say it was no longer there. While standing on the present structure, looking down at the water, which I had remembered as being clean enough to cut ice from, I got in conversation with a man crossing it, and spoke about the little jail that used to be there and pointed out the location where I had remembered its having been, and he called my attention to the present one and mentioned that it now had a women's department. I could not help looking at the jail and at the water, and just wondering "how time does change things." And this is not a slam at North Manchester either. This beautiful little college town had just been keeping pace with her larger sisters. The little three celled calaboose with seldom an inmate, has a descendant, for which there is ample need. I told this man that I had been born in North Manchester, and was there on a visit, to see if I would recognize the place and he asked me my name, and when I said it was Frantz, he said his name was Frantz, also; Henry Frantz, of 103 South Market Street. He is a descendant from Old John.