

UNSOLVED MYSTERY

The Frantz Puzzle

by Lorraine Frantz Edwards*

Many of us are familiar with a television program called "Unsolved Mysteries." I particularly enjoy the segments where lost family members are reunited after forty or fifty years. Usually children were separated because of a death in the family or poverty. We all smile—and weep—with the individuals.

On a smaller scale (less sensational), we read articles in the *Genealogical Helper*¹ under "Relatively Speaking." Families are reunited!

I'm vaguely aware of the efforts of ALMA² (and other organizations) to locate the natural parent(s) of adoptees. Occasionally I reflect on the obstacles to be overcome by an adoptee who desires information on his ancestor.

It's difficult for me to imagine a person searching for "a needle in a haystack." Forget the needle, forget the haystack. I have a forest of ancestors and each tree is old with lots of branches and leaves.

My "unsolved mystery" has to do with **TOO** many ancestors with the same name—specifically Michael Frantz.

For several generations, every family had a "Michael Frantz." They were all cousins to one degree or another; many have similar birth years; and many lived within the same geographical area.

Who was the father of the man that researchers call Michael III? I refer you to the article, "A 'Lost' Frantz Family: Michael Frantz III," published in Fellowship of Brethren Genealogists *Newsletter*,³ Vol. 22, No. 3, Fall 1990, pp. 44-48.

Evelyn Rosemary Frantz, and Arthur Shanks, did extensive research in Botetourt County, Virginia, and shared their findings with me. Through microfilm (LDS #305241), I searched the 1810 Census for Botetourt County, Virginia, and found two men named Michael: Michael, Jr., and Michael, younger.

The family of "Michael, younger" corresponds to the family listed by Elizabeth Miller Lane (author of aforementioned "A 'Lost' Frantz Family: Michael Frantz III").

1810 U.S. Census—Botetourt County, Virginia

- 1 male over 45 - Michael Frantz, younger (b. 1764; age 46)
- 1 female between 26-45 - Marian Elizabeth (b. 1767; age 43)
- 1 female between 16-26 - Elizabeth (b. 1791; age 19) (Anna, b. 1788, age 22, married in 1809)
- 2 males between 16-26 - John (b. 1789; age 21) and Henry (b. 1794; age 16)
- 2 females between 10-16 - Susannah (b. 1797; age 13) and Magdaline (b. 1798; age 12)
- 2 females under 10 - Margaret "Peggy" (b. 1801; age 9) and Catherine (b. 1806; age 4)
- 2 males under 10 - _____ and Michael (b. 1810)

The birth year (1764) of this Michael fits comfortably with those of Christian IV (ca1766) and Matthias (1769) Frantz. These men, sons of Christian III, are documented in *The Genealogy of the Matthias Frantz Family of Berks County, Pennsylvania*, researched and compiled by E. Harold Frantz, Reuben Frantz King, and Laura Frantz Pfautz (Lebanon, PA: Boyer Printing, 1972), pp. 29, 31.

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Tradition has it that three brothers came to America: Michael, Christian, and Balzar. Reportedly all settled in the Cocalico district of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, where children and grandchildren were born. The families obviously continued with the Germanic custom of naming children after grandparents, aunts, and uncles. The names of Anna, Christian, Daniel, David, Elizabeth, Henry, John—and Michael—are oft repeated.

The land and court records in Fincastle, Botetourt County, Virginia, verify that many of Immigrant Michael Frantz's grandchildren relocated in that area,

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likewise, the grandchildren of Immigrant Christian Frantz. Sorting out who belongs to whom has been a challenge for Frantz researchers for years.

According to J. Arthur Shanks in *The Shanks Family From Pequea Creek* (Evansville, IN: Whipporwill Publications, 1985), pp. 45-46: "Michael II died about 1808, so the Virginia Census of 1810 shows that there were only two men named Michael Frantz living in Botetourt County at that time. One was listed in the census as 'Michael Frantz, Jr.' The other was listed as 'Michael Frantz, the younger.'

"Michael, 'the younger,' was listed with several teenage children at home. Michael, 'Jr.', was shown with himself and wife (both in the 'over 45' bracket; one male in the 26 to 44 bracket, and one male 'under 10'). Michael, 'Jr.', was obviously much older than Michael, 'the younger.'

"Other research shows Michael, Jr., had only four children, all married by 1810. When he made his will in 1816, he named all four children, one of whom he designated as 'Elizabeth, wife of Adam Shank of Kentucky.' ... Michael Frantz, father-in-law of Adam Shank, was identified as Michael Frantz, Jr., in a deed dated September 11, 1792, and recorded in DB No. 4, page 387. The deed was for 268 acres located on Carvin Creek and just west of present-day Roanoke, Virginia.

"On April 8, 1800, [Michael] acquired an adjoining 24 acres from his brother Daniel—this land being 'on the north branches of the Roan Oak River.' Michael, getting old in years, sold off part of his land in 1809 and another part in 1811, retaining 82 acres on which he lived until his death.

"Michael's wife, Elizabeth, continued living there until she died, apparently about 1832. The 82-acre tract, on which she had lived, was sold by the Executor

of Michael's estate on October 11, 1832, and the proceeds from the sale, \$189.42, was noted in the final account of the estate settlement which was recorded at the March term of court at Fincastle in 1833."

To further complicate the clear definition of family units, I found records showing a woman married directly, and indirectly, into the Michael and Christian line. Marie Elizabeth Garst⁴ was first married to David Frantz, son of Michael II and second to Leonard Houtz. Leonard's sister, Magdalena Houtz, married Christian Frantz IV.

Two of Leonard's children (by his first marriage) married two of Marie Elizabeth's children (by her first marriage). My research would suggest that Michael II's grandchildren (Elizabeth "Betsy" Frantz and Abraham Frantz) became in-laws to Christian IV's niece and nephew (Catherine Houtz and Henry Houtz).

Someone "viewing" this article may be able to solve the mystery—just as the emcee advises the television audience: "Perhaps you hold the clue that can unlock that crucial mystery."

Clues to the "unsolved mystery" regarding the clearly defined parentage of Michael, Jr., and Michael, "younger," may come from data on collateral families. I can't offer a reward—or a toll-free telephone number—but this 5th great-granddaughter is anxious to find additional information on the children of Michael Frantz II.

¹ Everton Publishers, Inc., P.O. Box 368, Logan, UT 84321.

² The ALMA Society, Inc., P.O. Box 154, Washington Bridge Sta., New York, NY 10033.

³ F.O.B.G., 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120.

⁴ *Our Garst Family*, by William Tell Garst (Kansas City: Brown-White-Lowell Press, 1950), p. 32.

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