

Elisabeth Friedrichs



Elisabeth Friedrichs Becker Johannes Becker

The Friedrichs family came to Detroit, Michigan prior to May of 1855, having emigrated from Germany shortly before 1855. Our Great Great grandmother, Elisabeth Friedrichs married Johannes Becker on the 21st of May, 1855 in St. Mary's Catholic Church just outside of downtown Detroit. She gave her residence as being Mackinaw, Michigan, which in 1955 was a section of Detroit, not the upper peninsula Mackinac. Her fiancé, Johannes Becker, also gave his residence as Mackinaw at the time of his marriage.

Johannes Becker, like Elisabeth Friedrichs, immigrated to Detroit very shortly before 1855. It is believed that Johannes came to Detroit from Coberlein (or Oberlein) or possibly from the neighborhood of Grunberg, Germany as that is the names of the towns in Germany that Johannes Becker and his family members listed in official documents.

Elisabeth Friedrichs and Johannes Becker lived 2 blocks apart at the time they were married. It is not known whether Elisabeth and Johannes met in the neighborhood in 1855 or whether the Friedrichs and Becker families emigrated together from Germany. There was no official paper work in any of the Friedrichs documents showing where in Germany they lived prior to coming to Detroit.

Shortly after coming to Detroit, we were in danger of losing the whole Friedrichs and Becker family tree when a cholera epidemic broke out in Detroit in the early 1850s. The Friedrichs and the Becker families sprinkled lime around their house as recommended by the Detroit Board of Health in

an effort to break the epidemic. They were safe and never became ill from this plague despite the fact that many other fellow Detroiters succumbed to this deadly disease. Had Elisabeth and or Johannes succumbed to cholera, our huge branch of the family tree would have been wiped out and none of us would be alive to read this.

Another possibility is that Johannes met Elisabeth in her family home at Marion near Riopelle as both Johannes Becker and Elisabeth Friedrich's father or brother were both coopers and their business location was only 2 blocks apart. As both cooper enterprises were in their very early infancy chances are that they may have joined forces in making those early casks and barrels. Johannes Becker remained in the cooper business from the early 1860s till his death in 1905. On the other hand, we are uncertain whether Thomas Friedrichs continued on in the cooper business beyond 1870.

Whereas Thomas Friedrichs was a cooper, his father (or son) Francis was a carpenter from 1855 through 1870 and may have also worked with Thomas in the cooper business as making barrels and casks required a lot of carpentry.

Francis was the first Friedrichs family member to obtain gainful employment in Detroit in 1855, 9 other Friedrich men found gainful employment over the next 15 years. Thomas was the second in the family to establish himself in a profession which lasted for many years. Charles established himself as a glass stainer, first by himself from 1863 and 1864, and later as a company named Charles Friedrichs & Peter Staffin, located at 261 Lafayette in Detroit.

William Friedrichs became a printer for the Daily Union Newspaper in 1866 an employment he maintained for over 10 years.

John Jacob, most likely a second generation Friedrichs, found employment as a trimmer, then joined his brother Joseph and neighbor Jacob Butsch as a butcher. His butcher shop was located at Groghan & Riopelle, then later at 130 Antoine, corner of Fort Street. George, also probably a second generation member of the family was a shoe maker. Carl, a younger member of the Friedrichs family, started work as a laborer.

Our great great grandmother is the only female member of the Friedrichs family that we are aware of. For the most part females did not work outside the home, so for the most part, they were never mentioned in the Detroit City Directory unless they were a widow, in which case they were listed as a widow of their husband.

Elisabeth Friedrichs Becker was mentioned in the archives of the Detroit records because she quit claimed a piece of land shortly after she was married to her husband, Johannes Becker so he could build his cooper shop on it on Gratiot Ave just outside of downtown Detroit across from St. Joseph Church. (Elisabeth and her family attended St. Joseph's church there for many years.) Most likely that piece of land was bequeathed to her by her father as most women in those days did not own their own property, especially if they were a young women as she was in 1856.

The following entry was taken from the Wayne County Land Records, volume XXXI, page 96:

August Keratz and John Becker of Detroit, received from Elizabeth Becker of Wayne County on the 4th of January, 1856, a quit claim to lot 29 of F.B. Crane's Subdivision of out lot 16, Witherall Farm, North of Fort Gratiot Rd in Hamtramck.

Witnesses: G.M. Rich and George Miller

Registrar: H.R. Nowland

Received: 4 January, 1856

Volume 82, page 129.

Elisabeth Friedrichs Becker was a devout Catholic, attending St Joseph Catholic Church with her husband and children on Gratiot Ave from 1856 until around 1900 when her husband Johannes Becker passed away in their son John's home 228 Forsythe in Detroit.

Elisabeth had to fend for herself for several years while her husband John was in the Civil War. He was injured seriously in the Battle of Gettysburg. He returned home to Detroit to recuperate and once again took up his work as a builder of barrel and casks which he supplied for the Union Army for the duration of the war.

Elisabeth never had a formal home. From the time her husband built the cooper shop at 483 Gratiot until she moved in with her son John H. Becker in 1905 when her husband was dying, she lived above the cooper shop in an apartment that he built for the family. As he enlarged the cooper shop down below, that also enlarged the living quarters above, which gave the family more room as the family grew in size.

Elizabeth Friedrichs Becker and her husband John had 5 living children: Sophie Becker Ott, born on the 25th of February, 1856, Nicholas John, born in 1858, John H. born May, 1865, and Mary Becker Cavanaugh and Elizabeth Becker Booms.

Sophie Becker Ott was the mother of Grandmother Elizabeth Ott Bender and the grandmother of Edward Paul Bender, Arthur Bender, Beatrice Bender Gamache, Mildred Bender Neff, Harold Bender and Norman Bender.

Elizabeth had a heart of gold. She was very kind and considerate toward all her children and grandchildren. When the grandchildren would visit her in her apartment on Gratiot Ave. Elizabeth would look the children over to decide what they would need in the way of clothing and shoes. When she would see that the shoes or the clothing was too small she would purchase the needed items. Her often heard statement was “Die Kinder brauchen Schue”, meaning, the children need shoes.

Her greatest sacrifice in life occurred when she was 70 years old. Her youngest daughter, Elizabeth Becker Booms died in childbirth giving birth to her 5th baby. Great great grandma Elizabeth Becker immediately stepped in and took 4 of the Booms children into her home on Gratiot Avenue, raising them until her death at age 87years. The youngest child under her care was now 17 years, old enough to fend for herself.

Elizabeth became a citizen of the United States on the 26th day of October, 1891 when her husband John became a citizen, declaring that he renounced his allegiance to Wilhelm II, Emperor of Germany.

Great great grandma Elizabeth Becker died in her son John H. Becker’s home at 228 Forsythe in Detroit on the 15th of October, 1911.