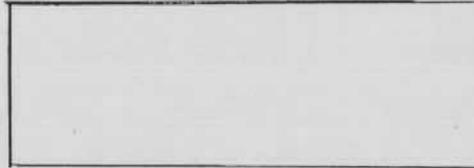


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ENTREPRENEURS: JOHN WEIMEISTER AND FAMILY

Why make the perilous 6-9 week journey over the Atlantic to an unfamiliar country, to a remote farm in Livingston County in the early 1800s? Military conscription, political unrest and the hope of owning one's own land prompted many from Germany to begin anew in America; even to the extent of leaving family ties behind.

How did one, living in Europe, become aware of this possibility? The 1860 Livingston County census indicates Henry W. Weimeister, Sr. and sons John and Henry, Jr., are neighbors in Genoa Township. With mother Elizabeth and John's wife, Catherine, all have come from Hanover, Germany by the mid 1850s. Henry, Jr.'s wife is Matilda Elizabeth Buek, who was born in America after the Bueks arrived in 1838. (Dr. Ernest Adolph Buek returned to Hamburg, Germany, in 1845, to solicit funds for the construction of a church for the newly formed St. George Lutheran congregation in Genoa. Is it possible Dr. Buek encouraged the Weimeisters' decision even as he had been by Ferdinand Grissom who settled in Hamburg Township?) The Weimeisters are listed with those first members of the church. Henry Sr.'s wife, Elizabeth, is interred in that church cemetery. We've not determined where Sr. is buried.

In that census both Henrys are listed as farmers; son John as a merchant. Shortly after settling John had bought a mill and store, including the post office, in Oak Grove c. 1858 and built many additions. He also is the 2nd owner of the old Dutch Grocery on the Grand River Trail at Euler road. Built by Lawrence Euler c. 1835, it was one of several between Brighton and Howell which offered groceries, household and other items needed by travelers and the settlers. Assistance and advice could be gleaned from John's wife, Catherine, and his mother, Elizabeth, both of whom could empathize with the young women. One could also count on help from the regulars who patronized the grocery. One of the many stories which enlivened a world of hard work is related: About to close one cold, stormy night John admitted a young man who came in for a spool of thread. "Your mother does a lot of sewing?" "No, it's for my wife. Mother wouldn't send me out on a night like this." Before long John also assumed the job of post master from Chester Hazzard.

Well educated, as were many German immigrants, John prepared legal documents such as deeds, notes and contracts. An astute business man he started a bank in Howell October 19, 1868. Within a year he had built the Weimeister block to which he moved the bank. By 1879 the bank was in the south side of the National Hotel (Opposite the courthouse), which he'd built. John and Catherine had two children: Arlia and Albert. Henry, Jr. and Matilda, four: John, Alma, Nellie and Henry C. A number of the Weimeister family are buried in Lakeview Cemetery in Howell, and others are found in the St. George Church Cemetery in Genoa Township. (Compiled by Marieanna Bair from: Bill Pless writings; 1880 History of Livingston County; Bob Watson's work re: Buek; local obituaries collected by Milton Charboneau; and various cemetery records. Additions/corrections welcomed. 810/229-6402.)