



## RECOLLECTIONS OF AN 1860 CATALPA TREE THAT WAS BEHIND THE LIBRARY

I was a catalpa tree that was planted around the time the Civil War began. Of course, no one was around that remembers how I came to be. Was my growth started intentionally on the village green near the current library or was I seeded naturally? No matter. I was here for well over a hundred years and witnessed Franklin history close up and personal.

Stories of our settlement began about 40 years before I came on the scene so I had some catching up to do. It wasn't hard. I just kept my eyes and ears open, paid attention and logged the stories in my memory.

The footsteps of our early settlers planted our history. I was there to follow their journey and now, you are too!

A German family comes to mind. Now don't let the name lead you astray. They were not of German descent. German was their last name. They were actually from England and left their native country to make a new home in America.

John German Jr. was the first member of the family that I met. He had purchased 137 acres of land to farm on my stomping grounds... the village green. I guess you could say that I grew up with the crops that he planted! In 1846, he also purchased mill property with Jonathon White, a cousin of his wife Jane White German. The grist mill was almost a straight shot from me across Franklin road, then called Main street, and on a street that would later bear his name, German Mill. John lived with his wife and nine children at 26068 German Mill.

It was common back then to live near your place of work. It made for an easy commute to work, you know! In 1861, John would sell his mill and move the family to a house on the village green. When his father passed away two years later, the family would move to the John Sr. homestead. Patience, please. The location of the homestead will be explained down the road. I mean it was almost down the road!

The red schoolhouse near the corner of Franklin and Maple (now Carol) streets was the school that the John German children would have attended.

That's the story in a nutshell of my first encounter with the German family. As I grew and listened to the conversations in town, some might call it gossip, I started to piece together when and where the family originated, how they traveled here and where they settled. The journey actually began with John's younger brother George, who was 21 years old at the time. He left Bideford, England, and arrived on Prince Edward Island

to check out a suitable place for his parents and siblings to settle. He was not enamored with the area and suggested to his parents to meet him in New York. And, that's exactly what happened! On June 12, 1837, John and Grace German, their children John (22), Mary (17), William (14), Elizabeth Jane (12) and Grace (7) arrived on the Brig Ramsey in New York. The Germans had two other children that did not travel with them. Their first child Richard was born in 1808. Nothing was spoken of him.



*Home of John German Jr.*

*Cont. from pg 1*

I assumed that he passed away in infancy. A daughter, Ann, born in 1810, married John Trick and would come to America in a few years. More details on that part of the family to come!

Now, where did the family decide to settle in the new country? They came to Michigan! People had chosen the Michigan Territory as their new home years before and now Michigan had become one of the newest states!

The patriarch of the family, John German Sr., bought 200 acres of land for \$1.00 per acre in West Bloomfield Township. Later, he would purchase additional property. The sons helped clear the land and prepare it for cultivation. All of John and Grace's children lived in the home on 14 Mile road, between Middlebelt and Inkster roads, until they married. Although they lived in West Bloomfield, their post office was Franklin, so they referred to their home as part of Franklin village.



*Home of John German Sr.*

When George German married Henrietta Pins, he built a home just west of his parents' home.



*Home of George German*

And, when William married Betsey Graves, his home was built between his brother's and his parents'. What happened to the rest of John, George and William's siblings? Well, Mary would wed John Derrick and live in Clarkston, Elizabeth married David Windiate and settled in Pontiac, and Grace united with William Williamson and resided in Bloomfield.

Ann German married John Trick in England. They came to America sometime before 1841. They arrived with Grace, Ellen and Margaret. George and John would be born in Michigan and Richard in Ontario. The Tricks built a Greek Revival home just a hop, skip and a jump away from the family. They lived on the southwest corner of 14 Mile and Middlebelt. Life was good, that is, until around 1850. Like many families in the early days, life had its tragedies. John, the father, passed away, and his wife, Ann, around 1860. The lives of their six offspring changed forever, but life went on.

***Kite & Key*** is a publication of the Franklin Historical Society.

The Franklin Historical Society seeks to preserve such material, structures and artifacts that help to establish the history of the Village of Franklin and to make it accessible for those who wish to study it. The Society maintains a museum and archival area at the Derwich house, 26265 13 Mile Road (at Kirk). Volunteers and donations are most welcome. ***Kite & Key*** and the Society welcome mail at:

**P.O. Box 250007**  
**Franklin, MI 48025**

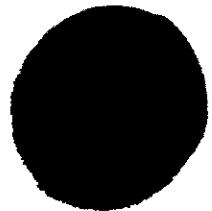
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**Contributors: Bill & Ann Lamott**



## **A WHILE AGO IN FRANKLIN**

Harry German (1876 – 1954) was the grandson of George German and Henrietta Pins German.

He loved the game of baseball!  
He played for the Toledo Mudhens as a pitcher from 1902 – 1904.



Grace Trick, the oldest, would marry in 1852, bear five children and pass away eight years later. Family members stepped up and took care of her children as her husband, Henry Cox, enlisted in the Civil War. Ellen Trick, their second daughter, would die in 1851. By 1860, Margaret Trick would marry, George, and John Trick would live with aunts, two of their mother's sisters. Richard, the youngest, would live with his grandmother, Grace Essary German, in 1850. He would later enlist in the 30th Michigan Infantry Company E and pass away in 1865.

I would be remiss if I didn't revisit the William German family with you. William came to America as a teenager from England with his parents and siblings in 1837. He purchased 70 acres between his brother George and his parents on 14 Mile between Middlebelt and Inkster. His story was probably known at the time to many people, but it was hushed. It was kept secret because lives could be in jeopardy if the word got out. You see, there was this means of travel called the Underground Railroad that helped slaves escape to the North and gain their freedom. Henry Parker was one such fugitive who left with his



*Home of John Trick*

mother and two sisters from Benjamin Cooper's farm in Western Virginia, and fled to a farm in Franklin, Michigan. It was William German's farm! Parker worked there from the fall of 1859 into the spring of 1860. Who knew? Sh-h-h, it was a secret. It was a successful secret!

Many of the German houses are still visible. Franklin history is all around you. It isn't hard to find. Just keep your eyes and ears open and pay attention.

## GERMAN FAMILY FACTOIDS

Two cousins, George H. German, son of George, and Franklin P. German, son of John Jr., married half-sisters Caroline Durkee and Emily Durkee in a double wedding ceremony on November 8, 1876, at the home of William Durkee.

Frank D. German, grandson of George German, was a doctor. He and his wife lived on Franklin road. Frank attended his father-in-law, Adna Dunbar, in the Franklin hotel, just a few doors east of where German lived. Dr. German also cared for Jeanette Snow, a few doors east of their home.

Seriously, the German family is related to almost every family in the cemetery!

*The nice part about living in a small town is that  
When you don't know what you're doing, someone else does!*

# FRANKLIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 250007, Franklin, Michigan 48025

[www.franklin-history.org](http://www.franklin-history.org)

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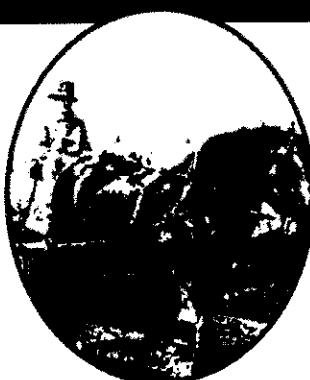
## STREET SMARTS – WITH GERMAN FAMILY TIES



*Art Kreger*

### KREGER STREET

Kreger Street is located in the Franklin cemetery. It was named after Arthur Kreger, a builder, church leader and volunteer in the Cemetery Association. He was married to Cora Johnston. His father-in-law was Charles Johnston and his mother-in-law was Grace German Johnston.



*Charles Worthing Johnston*

### CHARLES LANE

Charles Worthing Johnston was the grandson of Jonathon and Nancy Hemingway Worthing, original landowners. He was married to Grace German, who was the daughter of John German Jr. and Jane White German.



*John German Jr.*

### GERMAN MILL

John German Jr. arrived in New York in 1837, with his parents, John German and Grace Essary German, and siblings from Bideford, England. His home and grist mill were on the street named in his honor.

**COMING SOON!  
QR CODES ARE  
ON THE WAY!**

The Franklin Historical Society has developed two self-directed tour booklets of historic buildings in the village.

One is a walking tour which includes 39 structures.

The other one is a driving tour of 11 buildings in and around the Franklin vicinity.

*Stay tuned.*

**THE CLAPBOARD CAPER**

This is an 1840 clapboard cabinet. Within its doors is its history. Its story is riddled with hints, but without conclusions. Here is a plausible scenario.

There are many pieces to its puzzle. Fitting them together is indeed another puzzle! One clue is derived from a handwritten will of Grace Essary German written on the 11th day of October 1856. Grace was the wife of John German Sr., who traveled from Bideford, England, in 1837, with his family to New York City. They ultimately settled on 14 Mile road between Middlebelt and Inkster roads.

It was Grace's desire to leave her feather mattress, feather pillows and a bureau to her granddaughter Mary Jane Derrick. I will put aside this tale for another time and deal with unraveling her other wish... the clapboard cabinet.

The clapboard cabinet would come, at the time of her demise, to be in the possession of another granddaughter, Grace Trick Cox. Henry Cox, Grace's husband, was designated executor of the will. This was the essence of Grace German's intent.

A few events would occur that would disrupt the inheritance of that treasured cupboard. In 1860, Grace Trick Cox passed away. She was to be the recipient of said cabinet. Grandma Grace was still alive, in possession of it and living on 14 Mile road. In 1863, Grandpa John would pass away. Their home would come into the hands of John

German Jr. and his wife Jane and family and so would that clapboard cabinet! John Jr. and Jane German were the aunt and uncle of Grace Trick Cox.

Well, Grandma Grace would pass away in 1866. The wishes in her will were not fulfilled. John German Jr. died in 1884. The old homestead was handed down to a son, Emanuel, and his family. Jane German moved into the Broughton house (village offices) that same year and lived out her life there. Where was that now infamous cabinet? Did it stay in the old homestead, did Jane take it with her to the Broughton house? I suspect that she did.

In 2008, the cupboard was discovered in the basement of the Kreger house. What? How did it get there? John and Jane German's youngest child was, yes, another Grace! She married Charlie Johnston in the Broughton house in 1888. In 1900, they moved to a house on Scenic Drive, and so did that cupboard. They had a daughter Cora, who married

Arthur Kreger, and that's how the Kreger house got its name.

You see, the mystery of the elusive cabinet was really quite simple. It belonged to Grace Essary German, who willed it to Grace Trick Cox, that ended up in the hands of cousin Grace German Johnston.

*It was always in the hands of Grace.*



# FRANKLIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2026 MEMBERSHIP

## We need you!

The Franklin Historic Society is a non-profit organization with a purpose of enhancing the understanding of Franklin history, including its character and sense of community. The society's activities include, but are not limited to:

- Operating the Franklin Historical Museum
- Disseminating historical information
- Collecting and archiving historical materials
- Encouraging historical preservation in Franklin

The museum has recently been totally renovated and is open for you to come see our new twist on Franklin history. We've developed new exhibits about Franklin's past cooper shop, shoe maker and taverns. You'll also be able to visit the general store and school as well as the Pickering exhibit and more.

Please support our efforts and join in 2026 by completing this membership form and sending in your contribution. You can also join online at [www.franklin-history.org](http://www.franklin-history.org).

I want to become a 2026 member of the Franklin Historical Society.

Family/Individual Membership \$50

Business Membership \$75

Life Membership \$500

I have photos or artifacts to contribute. Please contact me.

I would like to contribute my time to work on Society projects. Please contact me.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Please mail this form and your tax-deductible contribution to the Franklin Historical Society, P.O. Box 250007, Franklin, MI 48025.

Headquarters and Museum: 26165 Thirteen Mile Road at Kirk Lane.