



THE FIRST ANNUAL PICNIC

of the

MESSMER FAMILY

July 29, 1934.



During the year 1832 Joseph Foegle and his wife Margaretha a bride of less than year left their home Schweighausen in Alsace. They sailed for America and landed at Cape Vincent, N. Y. Six weeks later in the village of Oswego Mrs. Foegle gave birth to a daughter.

Joseph Foegle intended to locate in the City of Philadelphia, but he heard such glowing tales about settlements on the Genesee River that he sailed to Charlottsburg (Now Charlotte).

For a short time he was employed in the ship building industry at Charlotte. Carthage a settlement near the Lower Falls interested him and he purchased a tract of land in the locality of the Memorial Bridge. This venture proved a bad investment as Carthage went into decline due to the rapid development of Rochester.

When Rochester became a city, Joseph Foegle was a citizen living at 133 Brown Street and the owner of a lumber yard and cooperage, situated at Oak and Smith Streets. Because of the great demand for barrels at that time the milling industry was one of major importance and Joseph Foegle's business prospered.

Special Note: Joseph Foegle's tax bill for 1837 was \$1.18. This was the total tax assessment on his three lots and his home.

As he desired to maintain an adequate supply of raw materials, he purchased a canal boat for \$650.00. The boat was christened "Black Hawk" and was operated on the Genesee Valley Canal. Periodical trips were made to Dansville where lumber and barrel staves were marketed.

St. Joseph's Church the first German Catholic parish in Rochester was such a great distance, the residents of the west side of the city formed a second parish. St. Peter's Church was built at King and Maple Streets in 1842. Joseph Foegle and Chas Zueg were the first trustees.

Due to a controversy in the congregation over who was to retain ownership Joseph Foegle's life was sacrificed.

Peck's History of Rochester and the Daily Advertiser are both in error publishing the manner of his death. The following is the account which appeared in the Daily Advertiser on January 18, 1853. "Mr. Joseph Foegle a worthy German Citizen residing on the west side died suddenly last night. He had been unwell for several days and was attacked last evening with a severe pain in his chest which was shortly followed by vomiting of blood, that caused death several hours later. Deceased was a trustee and member of St. Peter's Church and took a prominent part on the Bishop's side in the recent division among the members."

The true account of the tragedy was as follows: During the night of January 6th, 1853 fire broke out in the vicinity of Buffalo Street (West Main Street). When an alarm was sounded in those days every able bodied man responded. Joseph Foegle and his son George left their Brown Street home and ran towards Bull's Head. George preceding his father reached the intersection of Buffalo and Brown Streets and turned to see if his father was following. He was stunned to see his father lying prone on the street. Hurring to his side he found him unconscious and bleeding freely from a severe wound in the back of his head. Perplexed George carried his father home. Joseph Foegle remained in a semi-conscious state several days. Upon regaining consciousness he related that two men attacked him from the rear striking him with a club or stone but that he was unable to identify his assailants. An internal hemorrhage caused his death January 18th, 1853.

It is evident the assassins sought revenge as they made an attempt to break up the funeral cortege the day he was buried.

Three of the five Foegle children reached maturity. A son George and two daughters Mary and Teresa. Both daughters married school professors who were also organists. Mary was married to John M. Claesgens and Teresa to George Messmer who during the late 70's held the office of Poor Master for the City of Rochester. Later he was appointed Registrar of Vital Statistics. He was also proprietor of the old Jefferson House at Brown Street for a number of years. George Messmer took an active part in the development of Choral Culture. He directed the Leiderkranz and Arian Singing Societies when these organizations had their inception.

At the age of fifteen Teresa Foegle (Messmer) participated in a catastrophe that shocked the nation.

July 27th, 1852 in company of two cousins she left Rochester to visit an Aunt in New York City. They traveled by rail to Albany and the following day booked passage on the Henry Clay.

A competitive steamship took leave the same time as the Henry Clay and as usual a wager was made as to which ship would be the first to reach the Metropolis. There was great excitement aboard. According to press reports women and children became alarmed but were reassured there was no danger. The fireman on the Henry Clay in an effort to maintain the maximum amount of steam imprudently dipped the logs in tar before casting them into the boiler. This aroused the ire of one of the passengers who drew a pistol and threatened to shoot the fireman if he continued.

At five o'clock that afternoon, three miles north of Yonkers the boat caught fire. Almost immediately the boat was an inferno amidship. The captain ordered the boat beached but when it reached shore the bow was also on fire. Teresa and her cousins were in the stern of the boat and the male cousin cautioned them to remain calm as he would endeavor to help them to safety. He plunged into the flames amidship but sacrificed his life in the effort.

As the fire came steadily towards them the other cousin became panic stricken and jumped into the river and drowned.

By this time most of Teresa's clothing was torn from her and everything around her was blistering hot. She crawled along the deck rail until she reached the water wheel and then jumped and grasped one of the paddles to which she clung desperately until rescued.

The Henry Clay had a passenger list of three hundred, eighty of whom lost their lives.

At the present time there are living in Rochester about two hundred descendants of Joseph and Margaretha Foegle.

This information was gathered from authentic sources by
GEO. J. FRANK

Foegle was a supporter of the Bishop. His death coincided with the verdict listed on the previous page.