

# The Sierran

The following article is from a recent Sierran newsletter. The Sierran is published four times a year by the Sierra County Historical Society and sent to members. We will be featuring articles from the Sierran on the website but to enjoy all the interesting and unique stories and articles contained in each Sierran, we encourage you to join the Sierra County Historical Society! A one-year individual membership is \$20.00, a family membership is \$25.00, a business and supporting membership is \$35.00, a sustaining membership is \$50.00, and a lifetime membership is \$300.00. In addition to receiving the Sierran newsletter, you are entitled to free admission to the museum and mine tours.

## The Emil Loeffler Family

By Andy Ponta Jr.

**E**mil Loeffler, the owner of the Kentucky Mine, arrived in Sierra City in 1874. The family consisted of Carl Albrecht (father), Johanna Marie (Windler) wife, and children Minna (11), Emil (8), Anna (6), Paul (5), Richard (3), and Albrecht (1). They had departed the Saxony area of Germany via steamer in the late summer of 1874. After the ship arrived on the East Coast, the family continued their journey by train to Truckee and then finished the trip by wagon and sled, arriving at Sierra City in the late fall.



*The Loeffler family—Emil between Mother and Father.*

The family established their first home in nearby Loganville where they remained for approximately the next 20 years. Carl, the father, (often referred to as Albert Loeffler) worked in several of the local mines, including the Buttes Saddle. He was naturalized in Downieville in July, 1880. While in Loganville, four additional children were added to the family, Herman, Ernest, Bertha, and Jeannie. The long cold nights must have been the same as in Germany. Some of the family children attended the

small Loganville school, which during that time was supported by approximately 20 homes.

By around 1896 most of the family, with the exception of son Emil, had departed the area going to San Andreas in Calaveras County and the Bay Area.

Sadly, Albrecht was killed a short time later while working at the Marshall Gravel Mine near San Andreas. His son Ernest was working with him but managed to survive. Albrecht's wife, Johanna, who was born in Germany in 1843 passed away in 1928 while living with her son, Herman, in Hayward, California.

Emil, like his father, continued to work in several local mines including the Colombo, the Young America, Sierra Buttes, Marguerite, and even the Gold Bluff near Downieville. In the early 1890's he met Annie Seitz and they were married on May 24, 1894.

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The Emil Loeffler Family (Continued from Page 1) —



*Emil and Annie on their wedding day in 1894.*

Annie Mary Sietz, the daughter of Frank and Anna Seitz, was born in Downieville on January 7, 1867, in the house known as the “Bell Alexander” home, which is still standing. the daughter of Frank and Anna Seitz. The family arrived in California in 1855 and first settled in Poker Flat, to the north. They remained in that area including Deadwood, Pine Grove, and Eureka while searching for gold, with little success. They soon were engaged in the grocery and butcher business. One son, Tony, was born in the small community of Port Wine. While still involved in the grocery/

butcher business they moved to Downieville in 1862 and then to Sierra City in 1884. The family continued with their successful business and also obtained a controlling interest in the Buttes Saddle Mine.

Before and after marriage, Emil’s interest in gold mining continued, but he was also in the butcher business. The old slaughter house was located at the upper end of town and the old red barn is still standing. Emil owned one of the town water systems, now owned by Charles Smith, and also used some of his “strong water pressure” to power his electric lights. He was also active in the Masonic Lodge, town band and other local activities.

The Kentucky Mine development started in the late 1850s. Judge Galloway from Downieville was one of the early owners. Over the years development continued with first a five-stamp mill being built followed by a ten-stamp mill and finally becoming Consolidated Gold Mine in 1887.

Emil and his son, with the added help and interest of Emil’s brother, Paul who had recently spent two years in Alaska searching for gold, relocated and filed a claim on the abandoned property in 1910.

The Emil Loeffler Family (Continued on Page 4) —



*Emil and son unloading beef at butcher shop/residence.*

**The Emil Loeffler Family (Continued from Page 3) —**

During the following years up to the mid-1940s, Emil and “Dutch” spent many hard days and years remaking and working on top and underground like most miners do—just hoping tomorrow would be the day.

The five family children were all born in the old Loeffler home, except Irma, who was born in the Loyalton Hospital. They all attended and graduated from Sierra City Grammar/High School.

**ADOLPH (Dutch):** 1885-1944 - Spent a good part of his life working with his father. For a short time he also worked for PG&E in Auburn, the U.S. Forest Service, assisted in the family business, and also spent many days gathering mining material and helping rebuild the Kentucky Mine. During WWI he served in the U.S. Army and was sent to France. He was well liked and known as a

very hard-working, cordial person. Sadly, he was killed in the Kentucky Mine Tunnel on May 2, 1944.

**VERNIE:** 1899-1991 - Met Herman Veale, a native of Relief Hill, Nevada County. He was employed at the Monarch Mine. After serving in the U.S. Navy during WWI, Herman returned to Sierra City where they were married. After living a short time in Chilcoot, Sierra Valley, they settled in Auburn where Herman was employed by PG&E. They had one daughter and five grandchildren.

**MABEL:** 1901-1982 - Met and married Hugh E. Frye who had been working at the family “Standard Mine” near Downieville. While living in Sierra City, their home (near the current Hennessey House) was completely burned to the

**The Emil Loeffler Family (Continued on Page 5) —**



*Family in front of residence (current Brook's home) about 1906/1907.*





The Emil Loeffler Family (Continued from Page 4) —

ground. The family, including three sons finally departed Sierra City at the start of WWII and settled in Auburn where Hugh also worked for PG&E. Their oldest son, Hugh Jr., a WWII B-17 pilot, was killed in action over France in July, 1944, approximately two months after his uncle Adolph was killed in the Kentucky Mine...a sad year for the family.

IRMA: 1904-1997 - Met and married Andrew Ponta who was born at the old Ponta Ranch overlooking Downieville. He worked for a short time in the local mines then drove stage over the Yuba Pass. In 1930 he became a State Traffic Officer. The family lived several years in Downieville, then moved to Colusa County and finally to Auburn. The family's two sons have remained part-time residents of the Downieville area.

ANNA: 1905-1961 - Met and married Vernon C. Hansen, son of one of the old-time Sierra City families.

At least four of the original Hansen family homes are still in use. Vernon was employed for many years by the local State Division of Highways and the family also ran the local grocery store. Their son and his wife also ran the store for a short period of time.

Emil and Annie Loeffler both passed away in 1947 and are buried alongside their son in the local cemetery. It is regretful that this brief history of one of the Loeffler family children does not include the many stories of the other nine children.

To add a little additional interest, the pictures on this page show the Loeffler son-in-law, Andrew Ponta, leaving Bassett Station on one of his mail runs over the Yuba Pass. In the 1920s he was employed by Tullie Dubordieu of Sierraville. The "driving experience" may have helped him get the appointment as State Traffic Officer (1930) for all of Sierra County. During many of the following years his duties as traffic officer also included issuing driver's licenses throughout the county. His CHP career ended in Placer County in 1955.

