



## HERITAGE GUIDE



### ***Steam Pump Ranch: The Pusch Era (1874 – 1933)***

In 1865, two young immigrants arrived in New York where they later met and developed a partnership that lasted for many years. The first, George Pusch, had sailed from Bremen, Germany and the second, John Zellweger, arrived from Switzerland. They worked in butcher shops in New York and held various jobs across the country including Saint Louis and San Francisco before establishing a cattle ranch along the Cañada del Oro north of Tucson.

George Pusch's grandson, Henry Zipf, knows many of the family stories passed down from his mother. He wrote: "Both George and John were bright, hard working, industrious people. They had learned the trades of farming and butchering in their native land and used those trade skills to provide incomes for themselves shortly after their arrival in the United States."

He added: "At the age of 27, George Pusch thought the time had come for him to be a **"Py Gott, big cattleman!"** So, he bought a wagon and a span of 14 mules and headed from San Francisco to Prescott in the Arizona region. Then it was on to Phoenix and finally to Tucson." Pusch recruited his friend Zellweger to come with him, and together they bought ranch land along the Canada del Oro and cattle and established the "PZ" brand.



Pump house and blacksmith shop in 1928.

George Pusch hand dug a well at the ranch and purchased a steam driven pump to propel water from the well into holding tanks. The pump was housed in a tall adobe building with an adjacent blacksmith shop. This ready supply of water, for both people and cattle, led to the name the property retains today. By the mid 1880s, "*Pusch's Steam Pump*" was a well-known location.

Pusch and Zellweger shared additional business endeavors. They opened a butcher shop in Tucson in 1875, and they owned the leading slaughterhouse and wholesale/retail meat firm in the city from 1875 until 1925. Another shared venture was the Tucson Ice and Cold Storage Company, also established in 1875. The connections between cattle, water and retail meats were profitable.



Mathilda and George Pusch



Gertrude Pusch, Henry's mother, near the Ranch.

In 1881 Pusch married Mathilda Feldman, a young woman recently arrived from Germany. Two years later, John Zellweger married a friend of Mathilda's. He then sold his interests in his Tucson businesses with Pusch and relocated to the Florence, Arizona.

Pusch also purchased property along the San Pedro River near Feldman in Pinal County in 1886 known as the San Pedro (Feldman) Ranch. Zipf described trips to that Ranch: "Pusch used the Steam Pump Ranch as an overnight stop for the trip to the Feldman Ranch – 55 miles from Tucson. He would travel in a wagon across the Antelope Plains, and on many occasions mounted Apaches would circle the wagon to greet my grandfather. He never carried a gun, but instead would give the Indians sugar, flour, and other provisions."

Between 1883 and 1898 George and Mathilda had nine children (twin girls died shortly after birth). They maintained a residence in Tucson where Pusch pursued business endeavors such as director of Arizona National Bank, chairman of the Territorial Livestock Sanitary Board, member of the Territorial Legislature in 1891 and 1899, and member of the State Constitutional Convention in 1910.

Pusch suffered a series of strokes beginning in 1914 and died in 1921. Henry Zipf sums up the years following his grandfather's death: "George Pusch, Jr. took over operation of the Steam Pump Ranch in August 1921. On June 27, 1928 George sold Pusch Land and Cattle Company and the properties owned on Congress Street. In 1933 J. M. Procter bought the Steam Pump Ranch from Mathilda's estate shortly after her death." Thus, a new era of occupation began at the Ranch. *(by Patricia Spoerl 2016).*



Photograph of the Pusch family taken at the Ranch about 1900  
(Mathilda, George Jr., George, and Gertrude)