

13th & OAK

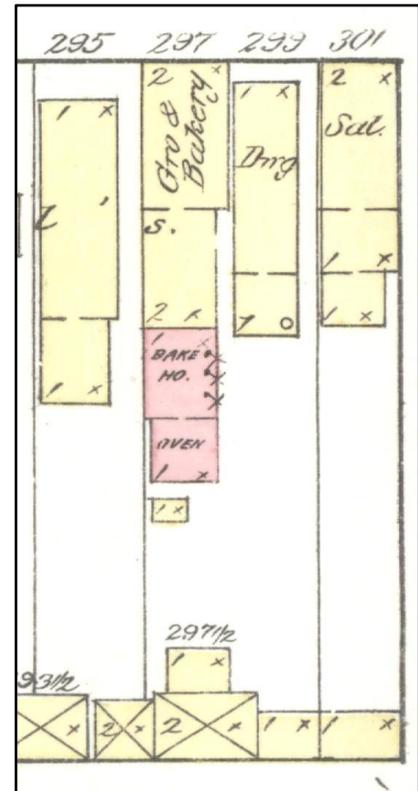
The Birthplace of

JOSEPH CARDINAL RITTER

Compiled and written by Raymond Day

ELMER JOSEPH RITTER was born in the second-floor bedroom of his home at 1218 East Oak Street on July 20, 1892. As the fourth of six children born to Nicholas and Bertha Luette Ritter, he attended St. Mary of the Annunciation Catholic Church and School. Subsequently he helped his father in the family bakery, attended St. Meinrad Seminary, was ordained a priest and soon after a bishop, became archbishop of both Indianapolis and St. Louis, and was elevated to the rank of Cardinal. He died a week after suffering a heart attack in 1967 at the age of 74 years and 11 months.

The purpose of this document is to chart the ancestry of Joseph Cardinal Ritter as well as the history of his birthplace in New Albany, Indiana. Today his restored and repurposed home dominates the southwest corner of 13th and Oak Streets and reveals many details of the past. When the area was developed in the 1860s, the current birthplace property contained four separate residences. An address numbering system was not introduced until about 1881, as shown on the map on the right. This small segment of the 1891 *New Albany Sanborn Fire Insurance Map* indicates the first four lots



MAP 1 – A portion of a Sanborn Fire Insurance Map – 1891, cropped to show LOT 51 (Plat 13) of Floyd County Plat Maps.

Map shows how it was divided into residential lots fronting on East Oak Street, at 13th Street. Lots 295 to 301 were eventually owned by the Ritter family. 13th Street is at right.

westward from 13th Street are – 301, 299, 297 (Ritter Bakery), and 295 East Oak. Before discussing this topic in detail, let us step back several decades to the first quarter of the 19th century and trace the ancestors of Cardinal Ritter.

Part One

NOTE: The first mention of each person within the text below will appear in italics, thus aiding the reader in tracking the cardinal's ancestry.

ANCESTRAL HISTORY

...Lorenz Ritter and Katherine Muller Ritter were likely born in Prussia prior to 1775. They are the 2x-great-grandparents of Cardinal Ritter. Their son and wife eventually emigrated to America.

...Jakob Ritter, the great-grandfather of Cardinal Ritter, was born to Lorenz and Katherine between 1795 and 1802 in the region of Koblenz, Germany, where the Mosel River meets the Rhein on its northerly flow to the North Sea. Although information about Jakob's wife, *Maria Schaadt Ritter*, is extremely elusive, evidence indicates she married Jakob sometime between 1820 and 1823.

...Jakob H. Ritter, the grandfather of Cardinal Ritter, was born to Jakob and Maria Schaadt Ritter in June 1824, in a small town in the northeastern corner of Saarland, a region in southwest Germany bordered by France and Switzerland. The exact town is unknown; however, one source suggests the village of Sankt Wendel, which is named for Saint Wendelin of Trier.

(NOTE: The "H" in Jakob H. Ritter's name will distinguish him from his father throughout this document.)

...Katharina Elisabetha Julius, the future wife of Jakob H. was born on November 24, 1824, in Barweiler, Bad Kreuznach, Rheinland-Pfalz, the first of six children born to *Wilhelmi Antoni Julius (1792-1868)* and *Mary Elisabetha Ostien (1792-1840)*.

...Jakob H. and Katharina Julius Ritter, along with his parents Jakob and Maria Schaadt Ritter, immigrated to America in the middle of the 19th century.

Pinpointing the exact year has been a challenge. One source indicates 1850 and the second insists 1853. Both scenarios are detailed as follows.

SCENARIO ONE: 1850

With their arrival in America, immigrants often “Americanized” their names. Thus Jakob H. simply became *Jacob* and Katharina became *Catharine*. As early as 1855, his name on his citizenship “intent” form was spelled “Jacob.” However, the *1859 New Albany City Directory* it appears as “Jakob.” In the 1860 edition of the *Directory*, it was again “Jacob.”

In the *1900 U.S. Federal Census*, both Jacob H. and Catharine indicated they immigrated in 1850 and had been married for 49 years. Because of their Catholic heritage, the assumption may be drawn that they married in Holy Trinity Church established in 1836, the only Catholic congregation in the city at the time.

Before continuing to Scenario Two, a bit of local history may be helpful. The town of New Albany was founded in southern Indiana in 1813, across the Ohio River from Louisville, Kentucky. Catholics first gathered for a Catholic Mass in the home of French immigrant Johann Thomas Laden around 1835. The next year, a wooden framed church was erected on the northwest corner of Seventh and Market Streets and took the name Holy Trinity. The congregation was made up of French, Irish, and German Catholics in the new town. In 1851 a large brick and stone edifice was built diagonally across the street to accommodate the growing population. The Germans preferred to build a church of their own, and within two years they received permission from Bishop Jacques Maurice de St. Palais of Vincennes to form the *St. Mary of the Annunciation German Congregation*. They were also allowed to continue worshiping in the old Holy Trinity wood-framed church until their new brick church was completed in late 1858 at the corner of Eighth and Springs Streets.

Although a search of the 1851 Holy Trinity Parish book of records did not produce evidence of either Jacob H. and Catharine Ritter’s marriage, or their parish membership, it may be concluded they were not yet residents of New Albany, but living in the surrounding countryside with relatives and married in one of the early rural churches.

SCENARIO TWO: 1853

In the *Index of Floyd County Naturalization Records 1854-1926*, there is a document dated October 9, 1855, that mentions Jacob H, and “his intention to become a Citizen of the United States.” In the document he identifies himself as a stone mason, 30 years of age, and a native of Prussia. He declares further that he traveled from Antwerp to New York in October 1853. Because of the five-year waiting period required for full citizenship, it is safe to assume that he may have completed the naturalization process in 1858. Unfortunately, to date, this has not been verifiable. If he did not emigrate until 1853, then their marriage at Holy Trinity about 1851 is a moot issue. Lastly, their first child was not born until November 1854. Hmmmmm....?

Whichever scenario the reader chooses to believe, there is proof they became founding members of the St. Mary’s German Congregation. Father Joseph Weutz was appointed by the Bishop of Vincennes to be the first pastor of the newly formed *St. Mary’s German Catholic Congregation* in 1854. His first baptism took place on December 3 of that year in the old wooden Holy Trinity Church.

Catherine Ritter gave birth to a daughter on November 19, their firstborn; and she was given the name *Catharina Elisabetha* after her mother. Little Catharina was also the fourth new infant member of the *German Congregation* when baptized by Fr. Weutz on December 17. Sadly, the infant died just 10 days later, the 27th.

Jacob H. and Catherine were blessed with six more births.

1. *Nicholas Ritter (1857-1905)* eventually owned and operated Ritter Bakery, and in 1892 become the father of Elmer Joseph, the future Cardinal Ritter. Nicholas was twenty-seven years old when he married *Bertha Barbara Luetze* on September 24, 1884. The nuptials occurred just fourteen days before her nineteenth birthday on October 8. Since 1880, he had been operating a bakery and grocery business next door to his parents while residing above his bakery at 297 E. Oak Street.
2. *Henry Ritter (1859-1925)*, was born while his parents were renting a house on the “W side upr 5th abv Sycamore [later Culbertson].” (*This location became part of Fairview Cemetery when it expanded westward to E. 4th Street, north of Culbertson Avenue.*) Henry Ritter’s date of marriage to a woman with

the surname Wathen is unknown at this writing. By 1887 he was a “polisher” at the DePauw Glass Works and resided on Oak Street between Silver and Jay Streets.

3. When *Jacob H. Ritter Jr. (1862-1944)* arrived, the family of five were living in a rental dwelling on the “E side upr 5th btw Main and Water Streets.” (This location is currently a parking lot across the street from Hagedorn Collision Center.)

Jacob H. Ritter Jr. is an uncle of Cardinal Ritter and will play a major role in the life of Ritter Bakery. The date of his marriage to Julia Hutt is also unknown, but they first resided at 811 East Sycamore (later named Culbertson Avenue). Sometime during the next decade, they moved to 1215 Culbertson, one block from the bakery.

4. When *John Ritter (1864-1865)* was born, the family was living at yet another location, one block north on “upper 5th btw Main and Market.”
5. What a relief it must have been for Catherine when her fifth child, a girl, was born. *Elizabeth Ritter (1868-1870)* arrived in the family’s fourth residential location, but this time they were settled in a home of their own at 295 Oak Street. Sadly, little Elizabeth died on August 18, 1870.
6. Genealogical research indicated another child was born, but the gender, birth and death dates are unknown.

And so, the immigrant generation continued living in the homestead at 295 until Katharina’s death in 1903 and Jacob’s passing in 1905. To this day, they are buried side-by-side in St. Mary’s Catholic Cemetery in New Albany.

Nicholas Ritter, the oldest son of Jakob H. and Catherine Ritter, and his wife,



Bertha Luetete, gave birth to six children. Although they produced the *Ritter Bakery generation*, that is not what brought notoriety to the corner of 13th and Oak Steets in New Albany. It was their fourth son, Elmer Joseph, who, after grade school at St. Mary’s School, then attended St. Meinrad Seminary. He was ordained a priest in 1917, bishop in



1933, archbishop in 1944, and cardinal in 1961, and consequently brought significant community recognition to this location.



The Nicholas and Bertha Ritter family, circa 1903. Standing, L to R: Frank Henry, Elmer Joseph, Harry Nicholas, and Edmund "Ed" J. Seated: Carl Joseph, Bertha Barbara, Catherine Caroline and Nicholas.

The Ritter Bakery generation included the following:

1. *Harry Nicholas* (1885-1968), who married Corinne Josephine Parrot on Aug 10, 1917, became a medical ENT doctor.
2. *Frank Henry* (1887-1945), who married Lula Mae Kraft on June 4, 1917, became a medical surgical doctor.
3. *Edmund "Ed" J.* (1890-1960), who married Agnes Flynn on December 26, 1916, became a dentist.
4. *Elmer Joseph* (1892-1967), became a priest, bishop, archbishop and cardinal, celebrated his golden anniversary of priesthood on May 30, 1967. He died eleven days later, on June 10.

5. *Carl Joseph* (1897-1960), who married Mary Kathleen Wolfe on September 27, 1927, became a grocery manager.
6. *Catherine Caroline* (1902-1992) became a teacher and at about the age of 40, a Sister of Charity, Nazareth, Kentucky.

A GENEALOGICAL SUMMARY

Lorenz & Katherine Ritter (Prussia) begot...
 Jakob & Maria (Emigrated to America), who begot...
 Ja(k)cob H. & K(C)atherine, (Cardinal Ritter's grandparents) who begot...
 Nicholas & Bertha (Cardinal Ritter's parents) who begot...
 Elmer Joseph (Priest, Bishop, Archbishop, Cardinal)

____Part Two____

PROPERTY HISTORY - SW CORNER OF 13TH AND EAST OAK STREETS

Sometime between 1864 and 1868, Jacob, Catherine and family moved into a one-story clapboard house located on Oak Street, fourth from the southwest corner of Chestnut (later called 13th Street). The *1868 City Directory* lists his occupation as stonemason. About 1881, the residence was given an address number, "295 Oak nr Upper 13th Street." A decade later, the *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of 1891* (see page one) identified their residence at 295 as a single story "shotgun" structure. Three other structures separated the Ritter family from Chestnut Street. Next door at 297 was a grocery & bakery storefront with a storage room behind and residential space on the second floor. Attached at the back was a brick structure for preparation and baking.

A one-story shotgun dwelling stood at 299 ("Dwg" on map), and on the corner at 301 was a two-story commercial structure that housed a saloon at street level and residence above and behind.

A Close Look at the Maps

NOTE - In the following text, the capitalized word "LOT" refers to the Floyd County Plat Maps. The lower-case "lot" refers to property containing a residence or other structure within the Plat.

LOT 51-(Plat 13)...fronted on the SW corner of Oak Street and extended 165 feet along 13th Street. The 1891 Sanford Fire Insurance Map (again, see *MAP 1*

on page one) shows four residential “lots” with address numbers 295, 297, 299 and 301 on the corner at 13th Street.

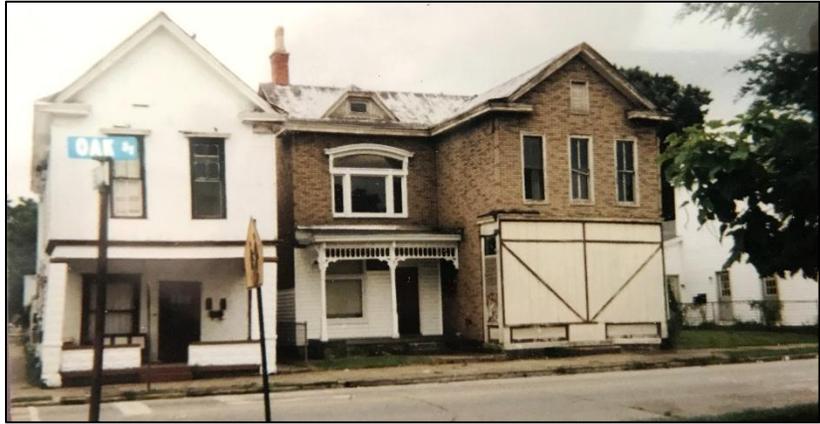
Lot 295...was originally owned by Thomas Conner and wife until May 27, 1857, when it was transferred to James Conner (presumably their son). James sold it to Michael Kock and wife on April 5, 1866. They transferred it to Wilhelmina and John Rippberger. One week later, on April 12, the sold to Jacob Ritter, “subject to a mortgage of \$190 to Michael Koch on said property.” Thus, April 12, 1866, is the first evidence of Jacob H. (1824) residing at this 295 Oak Street location, and it remained in Ritter hands for the next six decades.

Lots 299 & 297...were purchased at some unknown time by Jacob H. Ritter. A notice in the *New Albany Weekly Tribune* dated April 1, 1898, confirms he transferred both lots to his son Nicholas Ritter for the sum of \$1,500. Jacob H. was 73 at the time and Nicholas was 41. Lot 299 was a one-story residence and 297 was the two-story residence with the bakery operated by Nicholas since 1880.

Lot 301... James Conner, original owner of lot 301 deeded the property to Robert L. Williams and wife on September 10, 1861. On February 10, 1868, Robert L. Williams, and his wife Elizabeth Conner (daughter of Sarah C. Conner identified below) transferred the property to William B. Conner. On March 17, 1876, Sarah C. Conner, mother and co-executor with her son Charles of William B. Conner’s estate following his death in October 1868, transferred the property to Michael Dowd. On December 5, 1878, Michael Dowd transferred it to George Yochum. On March 7, 1898, Catherine Yochum Kannapel (likely daughter of George Yochum) deeded the property to Nicholas Ritter.

Thus, as of March 1898, the first three lots along Oak Street, west of 13th Street, were owned by Nichaolas Ritter and the fourth by his father Jacob H. Ritter.

The photo at right was taken in June 1998, exactly one hundred years after Nicholas Ritter purchased the saloon/residence at 301 Oak (later 1222). It was destroyed by fire in 2001, and today the vacant space is the “side



yard” of the Cardinal Ritter Birthplace property. To the right is 299 Oak (later 1220), and since the circa-1889 remodeling by Nicholas it merged with the bakery building. Today it is the entrance to our front parlor. Next, 297 Oak (later 1218) is the former Ritter Bakery with Nicholas and Bertha’s residence above. Lastly, at far right, there is a vacant lot 295 (later 1216, and formerly where Jacob H. and Catherine Ritter resided). It is today the site of the Ritter Rose Garden and provides entry to the current tenant, GILDA’S FLOYD.

___Part Three___

AN EVEN CLOSER LOOK AT 13TH & OAK

As early as the 1830s, one Epaphras Jones carved a wide swath through the woodlands from the Ohio River, where he intended to initiate a ferry crossing to Louisville, to today’s Charlestown Road. He called it Vincennes Road since that was his ultimate destination. The small town that quickly grew there was named Providence. Although the venture never continued to its intended destination, development continued both east and west of the broad street. At the same time the town of New Albany was rapidly expanding eastward through woodlands until the streets of the two communities merged at what is now 10th Street. New Albany absorbed Providence and soon residences and local businesses replaced trees and wildlife. Today’s 13th and Oak was originally part of Jones’ Providence.

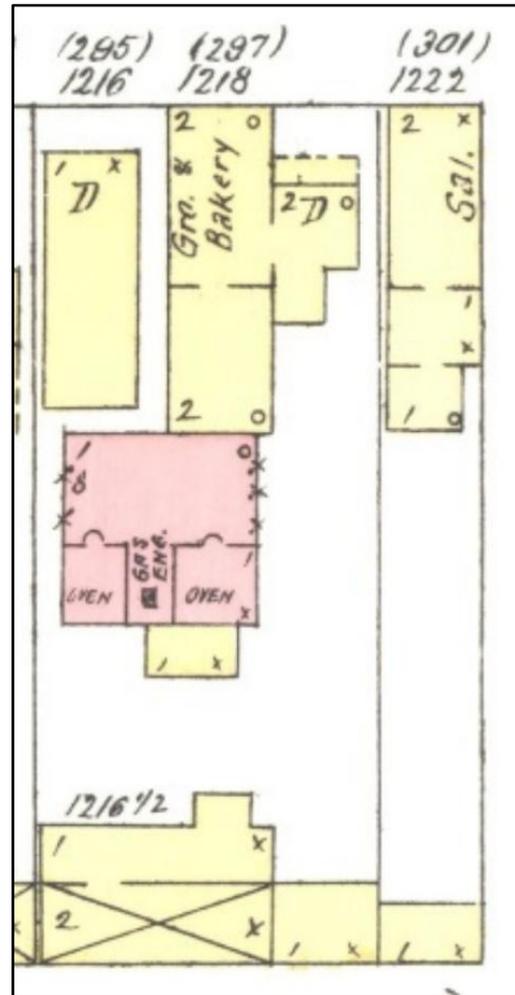
“The return game of ball between the New Albany Club and Excelsior Club of Jeffersonville will be played this evening, on the grounds, corner of Oak and

Upper Thirteenth streets, at one o'clock. Let everybody go and see the game." This brief news item from the *New Albany Daily Commercial* newspaper dated October 25, 1867, is evidence that the Ritter House property of today served the Civil War Era community as a space for recreation and social outings. A decade earlier the *National Association of Base Ball Players [sic]* was formed in New York. The sport blossomed following the war, and by 1867, the New Albany and Jeffersonville Clubs were counted among the over 400 clubs across the nation.

301 (1222) OAK STREET

Ten months later, August 21, 1868, a news item regarding this same location appeared in the *New Albany Daily Commercial*. It read, *"Another Daring Burglary. The store of William Conner, at the corner of Oak and Upper Thirteenth streets, was broken into by burglars early yesterday morning, and over one hundred dollars worth [sic] of groceries, dry goods, notions, &c, taken. No arrests. Who the burglars will go through next is very hard to tell."*

It appears the storefront building at the corner of 13th and Oak had been built between October 1867 and August 1868. Records show William B. Conner purchased the property (LOT 51 on Oak Street of Plat 13) from R. L. Williams in February of 1868. He subsequently died in October 1868 following a two-year illness. The property was willed to his mother Sarah C. Conner, who held onto it until 1876 when she sold it to Michael Dowd. Shortly thereafter, Dowd sold it to the Ritter family who benefitted from it for many years as rental property.



MAP 2 - 1898 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map showing structures at 297 and 299 merged into one residence. Notice the bakery prep and oven rooms in the 1891 map have now been doubles in size and a second oven added. Ovens were evidently powered by a gasoline engine.

About 1879 or 1880, George Yochem was operating a grocery store at the location. Following his passing in 1892, his brother, Joseph Yochem may have continued the business and subsequently married the daughter of the owner of Kannapel's Grocery diagonally across Oak Street on the NW corner 13th and Oak. The *1886-87 City Directory* indicates the 301 storefront and residence now housed a saloon operated by Melchior Orth, a brewer in the City Brewery, and eventually by John B. Scholl.

299 (1220) OAK STREET

The 1891 Sanborn Insurance Map (on page 1) identifies the 299 Oak Street lot contained a "Dwg" (Dwelling), a one-story shotgun house with a small room at the rear. The map drawing of the 299 dwelling was drawn separately from the 297-bakery structure. The year 1892 was significant for Nicholas as well, because that was the year his third son, Elmer Joseph Ritter, was born.

297 (1218) OAK STREET

The storefront and residence may have been built as early as 1880 because records indicate 24-year-old Nicholas Ritter was operating a bakery at this address, albeit while residing at 295. However, city directories are not always reliable sources of such information since they were published only every other year.

The first reference to the presence of the storefront structure is found in the *1884-85 City Directory*. The listing identified Nicholas Ritter as "baker & grocer." His 23-year-old brother, Jacob Ritter Jr. was a baker for his brother and living with his parents next door at 295 East Oak. When the *1886-87 City Directory* was printed, 30-year-old Nicholas was listed as "baker and grocer," and his 25-year-old brother Jacob was listed as "baker." And by 1898, the Fire Insurance Map (*See MAP 2*) shows lot 297 contained the 2-story structure with a "Gro & Bakery" on the first level, with a 2-story space behind.

The upper-level rooms were residence for Nicholas, Bertha, and their growing family. Immediately behind, in pink on the map, was a 1-story structure containing space for prep work and two ovens. At the rear of the property was a 2-story barn-like structure and a single level room structure that was likely rented as a dwelling, since it was given the 1216½ East Oak address.

It was about 1889-91 when Nicholas replaced the one-story house at 299 (1220) with a two-story addition attached to 1218 to become the front entrance to his residence. Thus, the 1898 map indicates 1220 had merged with 1218.

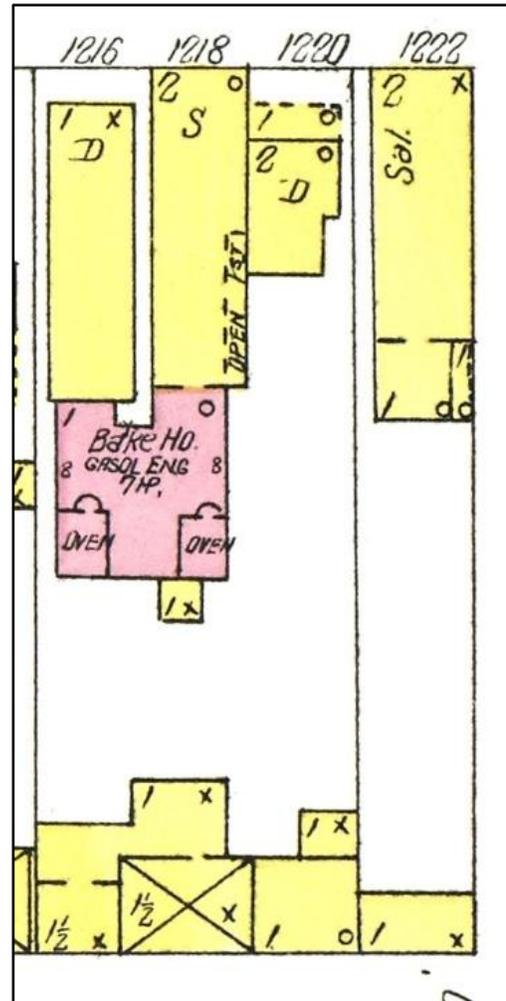
295 (1216) OAK STREET

As written earlier, the Jacob Ritter family lived in the residence at 295(1216) Oak Street from 1868 until 1905. Catherine passed in 1903 and Jacob in 1905, and both are buried in St. Mary's Cemetery in New Albany. The 1905 Sanborn Insurance Map (See MAP 3) does show the presence of the dwelling. But since there is no further mention of it in subsequent city directories, the homestead must have been demolished soon after Jacob's death.

Nicholas Ritter (b. 1857) and his brother Jacob Ritter Jr. (b. 1862) first appear in the 1880-81 City Directory. Both were still living at the 295 Oak homestead. Even though Nicholas was by then a "baker" and Jacob was a "clerk" in the bakery, Nicholas was still living in the homestead as of 1883. He subsequently married Bertha Luetete in September 1884 and took up residence at 297 Oak.

Nicholas's listing as "baker" in the City Directory of 1928 was the last. His youngest son Carl became sole proprietor in 1927 when his father retired. The bakery was shuttered in 1930.

In the photo on the next page, the upper left room with the arched stain glass window is where Elmer Joseph Ritter was born on July 20, 1892. The house, partially visible on the left, burned in 2001, just before the derelict Ritter



MAP 3 – 1905 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. Notice the multiple structures at the rear of all four lots.



Carl Ritter, the son of Ritter Bakery founder Nicholas Ritter, pictured circa 1920s in front of the store at 1218 East Oak in New Albany, IN.

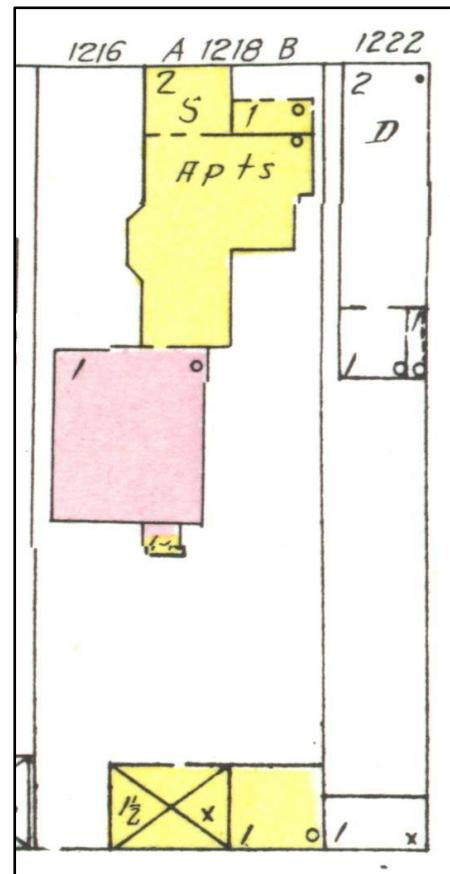
house was purchased by Indiana Landmarks. Notice also the vacant lot to the right, where the home of Cardinal Ritter's grandparents Jacob and Catherine resided. It has been vacant since circa 1906 and is currently home to the Ritter Rose Garden

In 1932, Carl was a manager at the A & P Grocery Company, located just two blocks south on Spring Street.

The building was vacant in 1933 and 1934. Fowler & Fowler Grocers conducted business for several years. In 1937-38, it housed T & T Furniture Repair operated by Fred and ML Tinius. By 1940 it was again vacant.

During the following seventy decades, the Ritter home and bakery deteriorated greatly, and lost its original purpose and identity. Alteration after alteration occurred. At one time the building was made to accommodate as many as seven separate apartments. My research has identified most of the tenants who have come and gone, but since they have no direct connection to the Ritter name, the reader has been spared from such a long and weary path.

MAP 4 – 1939 Sanford Fire Insurance Map. 1218 East Oak St. house was internally dissected to accommodate up to seven apartments for the next 60 years.



In 2001, the house on the corner (remember 301 and 1222?) succumbed to fire. One of the firemen from that day recently told us how difficult it was to keep the old Ritter place from being destroyed as well. The scorched left wall vividly verifies the intensity of the inferno and the success of firefighters to protect the Ritter home. Restoration and rebirth of the Ritter homestead is a story to be told at another time.

Rather, let this be a reflection on the family of Joseph Cardinal Ritter and their six decades at the corner of ***13th and Oak.***



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