

Bunjes Family



The Bunjes name came here through Herman Friederich Bunjes, a teacher in one of the St. Lorenz district schools. Herman Friederich was born near Oldenburg, Germany in 1869 to Ahlert Gerhard Bunjes, a stone mason, and his wife, Wuebke Margarete zurHorst. After attending primary school in Germany, he became a mechanic's apprentice and was also given some training to become a cabinet maker.

Herman Friederich left Germany by himself at the age of 16, sailing from Bremen to Baltimore, traveling westward to Chester, Illinois, to live in the home of his sister and her husband. The following year he enrolled in Concordia Teachers College at Addison, Illinois. After the death of his mother in Germany, his father joined the family in Illinois in 1889, later returning to Germany to bring another daughter to America.

After graduating from Concordia Teachers College in 1893, Herman Friederich was called to teach in a school in Fairfield, Illinois. He taught eight grades, 80-100 students, in 2 languages, in a one-room school, at \$400 per year. Since he was not married, the congregation expected him to live in the church. A year later he married Dorothea Maria Kuhlmann Ann of Fairfield. Two sons were born to them: Hermann, a Lutheran teacher and later a banker in Albuquerque and Los Angeles; Arthur, who died at age 6.

In 1899, he accepted a call to Worden, Illinois, again to teach 80-100 students in 8 grades, in a one-room school. Two more sons were born at Worden: Bernhard, an assistant professor at Concordia Teachers College, River Forest (formerly Addison College), also a teacher at Park Ridge and later a private piano teacher near Denver; Edwin, a bank employee in Albuquerque and a real estate agent in Los Angeles.

After 13 years in Worden, Mr. Bunjes accepted a call to Frankenmuth in 1912, to teach in a one-room school in the Southern District, the "Bunjes School."

With his carpentry and mechanical background, he was able to do most of the maintenance work on the house, school and lawns. In addition, he was organist at St. Lorenz, conducted a secular male chorus, and led a district youth group. He designed and probably built the St. Lorenz Christmas decorations that were used well into the 1940's. Mr. Bunjes also constructed playground equipment, benches, lunch tables, and initiated the landscaping of the school and grounds of the teachers' homes.

Two more sons were born in Frankenmuth; Martin and Paul. Martin was a barber in Frankenmuth and later an airline employee in Denver. Paul became a teacher and taught in Wassau, Wisconsin. Later Paul was a professor at Concordia Teachers College in River Forest, Illinois, where he taught organ, composed music, and designed organs.

Paul designed the organ that was installed in the church at St. Lorenz in 1966. Unfortunately, their mother died in 1919, leaving Mr. Bunjes with three boys ages 5, 6, and 14.

The following year Mr. Bunjes married Agnes Schellhas. Two daughters were born to them: Irma, a clerical worker, patent translator, and drafter, and Martha, a nurse and bank employee.

In 1929, the parents and four of the children undertook a trip to Colorado in a Model T Ford with the hope that the trip would improve Mr. Bunjes' failing health. In 1932, at the depth of the depression, he died leaving behind two young children and two teenagers. His wife lived in Frankenmuth until her death in 1966. Today there are almost 60 descendants of Mr. Bunjes scattered throughout the western states.

