

Hetzner Family



he first settlers who traveled to Frankentrost, the German colony seven miles northwest of Frankenmuth, included Johann George Hetzner and his wife Maria Margaretha. Frankentrost and Frankenmuth, as well as the two

settlements of Frankenhilf and Frankenlust, were part of an overall plan designed by Pastor Wilhelm Loehe in Germany.

Loehe realized the advantages America could offer German Lutherans. He organized groups of immigrants to make the journey and put a Lutheran minister in charge of each colony to guarantee their religious allegiance.

As a result, the four settlements were deeply rooted in the Lutheran religion. Although they eventually broke ties with Loehe and the Lutheran Church in Germany, and joined the Missouri Synod in America, the church remained the focal point of their new communities and daily lives.

Each settlement had a distinctive purpose. Frankenmuth or the “Courage of the Franconians” was by far the most challenging. It was to be a Lutheran mission settlement to convert the Chippewa Indians to Christianity.

Frankenhilf, now known as Richville, was a haven for the poor, including couples who did not have the material wealth to get married in Germany. Frankenlust the “Joy of the Franconians” and Frankentrost the “Consolation of the Franconians” were formed to cluster Bavarian Lutherans together in the new land.

The Hetznern left Unterwurbach, Germany in March 1847, and arrived in Frankenmuth, June 10, 1847.

They sailed 40 days on the “Hermaine”, a typical ship used for overseas voyages. They docked in New York and remained there one night. Then they took a steamer along the Hudson River to Albany – a ten hour trip. From there the journey to Michigan continued by train. They boarded in Albany and traveled to Buffalo where they took a steamship across Lake Erie to Detroit.

The rest of the way the women and children rode in rented farm wagons while the men walked beside them. Three days later they arrived in Pine Run, just south of Frankenmuth, where they were greeted by a group of Frankenmuthers who welcomed them into their homes. They remained in Frankenmuth until they cleared land and built cabins in Frankentrost.

Johann George purchased 60 acres of land in Frankentrost for 550 guilders of \$220. The following year he planted the first crops – wheat, corn, potatoes and other vegetables. The couple’s first child – Johann Peter Hetzner – was born March 27, 1853. The following year they purchased an additional 20 acres for \$50.

Johann Peter Hetzner married Katherina Margaretha Brechtelsbauer on October 17, 1883, and they had a son the following year – Johann Michael Conrad Hetzner.

Johann Michael married Katherina Rosina Hammerbacker and worked as a farmer and mason. They had nine children. Albert, their first child, moved to Frankenmuth in 1929. Emil Johann and Otto Johann also live in Frankenmuth. The others that remained in Frankentrost are Loretta Sommerfield, Wilmer, Eldor, Helena Durrenberg and twins George Johann and Peter Hermann.



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