

# Rupprecht Family



he early settlers in the mid-Michigan German Lutheran colony of Frankenmuth sent letters encouraging relatives and friends to join them. They wrote that America offered more liberty and economic opportunity than they ever could enjoy in Germany at

that time.

Each new wave of immigrants brought new working power. Young, strong men were needed to clear the fields of trees and brush for planting. They helped each other build log cabins, barns and a church in a spirit of Christian community.

Johann Rupprecht came to Frankenmuth in the mid 1800's as a young teenager. By the time Johann arrived, Frankenmuth had a saw mill and a flour mill. Both places offered job opportunities for the newcomers. They also gave the colony some independence from Saginaw and Flint. The settlers could build and heat their homes from lumber at the saw mill and bake with grains processed at the flour mill. There were always plenty of eggs, butter and vegetables in the colony. The settlers obtained fish from the Cass River and used their hunting skills to put venison and other large and small game on the dinner table. A freight service was started between Frankenmuth and Saginaw and soon the neighboring towns became buyers in Frankenmuth.

Johann Rupprecht was born September 11, 1841 in Schwarzenbach Bayern, Germany. Early St. Lorenz Church records show that he was confirmed here in 1855. Ten years later he married Margarethe Katharine (Zehnder). Margarethe was born April 10, 1846 and confirmed in Frankenmuth in 1860. Johann became a farmer in Birch Run Township. Only one of the couple's children, George Melchoir Rupprecht, remained in Frankenmuth.

George was born March 25, 1871 at the Birch Run homestead and was baptized and later confirmed in Frankenmuth. He married Margaretha (Deuring) August 20, 1893.

George became a local businessman. He operated a general store on the "Canadian side" of Frankenmuth. The store was located on the corner of Main and Jefferson Streets and was built in 1905 with lumber hauled in by a horse-drawn wagon from Saginaw. "Frankenmuth's Canadian side" was a label the locals gave to the area south of the Cass River. At first a wooden covered bridge joined this part of Frankenmuth with the northern half. In 1893, it was replaced by an iron bridge. The present Main Street concrete bridge was built in 1943. The "Canadian side" nickname still is used to refer to this portion of the city.

George Rupprecht's store was operated under the names Rupprecht and Deuring from October 1, 1905 until the partnership dissolved in 1914. Adam Deuring was George's father-in-law. George then operated the business alone until his death in 1932. His daughter Agnes Reichle Zehnder took over and managed the business until 1945. She married William Zehnder, Sr., grandfather of Bavarian Inn Lodge President Judith Zehnder Keller. The store was purchased by Marcus Kern in 1949 when he began his family's sausage and grocery business that still operates in Frankenmuth today.

In addition to Agnes, George and Margaretha had seven more children; Irma, Herman, Olga Frank, Eugene, Gretchen Reif, Loretta and Clarence. Their grandchildren are: Irene Szymanski, Otto Jr., Eugene, Clarence and Harold Frank, Joann Smith, Gary Rupprecht, Barbara Zeilinger and Lori Warnemuende. Gary became Mayor of Frankenmuth January 1, 1986.



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