

Schellhas Family



The Schellhas family had some interesting beginnings. Wilhelm Schellhas (1808-1883), unlike most families that settled in Frankenmuth in the 1800's, first went to Mohawk Valley, New York, before coming to Frankenmuth. He was born, baptized and confirmed in Eschwege Hesse, Germany. He also married Margaretha Limburg while still in Germany.

It was after coming to America and settling in the Mohawk Valley that they found themselves unwelcome in New York due to their German descent and customs. Hearing that there was a German settlement in Frankenmuth, Michigan, they decided to move there. In 1858, they made the journey to Frankenmuth and settled on a farm just south of the village.

Frankenmuth had been settled in 1845 by a small group of German immigrants, with the express intent of doing mission work among the Indians. By 1858, there were only about 1,000 Indians left in the Saginaw Valley.

The pastor at St. Lorenz Church was mainly concerned with his own growing congregation of German immigrants. In 1847, there were 153 persons in the congregation.

By 1852, the congregation had grown to 345 members and it was determined that the old log church was no longer adequate. They decided to build a new frame church 74 feet long, 40 feet wide and 24 feet high, with three windows on each side, but no tower. It lacked a chancel and an organ but the bells were under a roof. The building was dedicated in 1852.

In 1853, a chimney was built and a heating stove installed; after nine years, there finally was heat in the church for their daily worship services.

Herman F. Zehnder, in his book, "Teach My People the Truth," tells us that the men sat on the left side of the church facing the altar, and the women sat on the right side, during church services.

In 1859, the congregation numbered 860 members.

In 1861, an organ was purchased for the church.

By 1862, the women began to complain that there was not enough room on their side as the children usually sat with their mothers. The church was enlarged by adding a chancel and balconies in 1864.

Wilhelm and Margaretha had three children: William F., a farmer; George, a farmer; and a Mrs. Buerger, whose husband owned a brewery in Lapeer.

Their grandchildren include: John Schellhas, George Schellhas, Fred Schellhas, Mrs. Leonard (Mary) Conzelman, Mrs. John (Margaret) Veitengruber, Mrs. George (Friedericke) Rau, Mrs. Carl (Johanna) Veitengruber, Mrs. Peter (Barbara) Schemm, Mrs. Herman (Anna) Scheffer, Mrs. Adam (Elizabeth) Deuring and Mrs. Fred (Agnes) Bunjes, Wilhelm Schellhas (died in infancy), Michael Schellhas, Mrs. Michael (Margaret) Ziegler, Mrs. Michael (Mary) Beyerlein, Wilhelm Schellhas, Mrs. Michael (Christina) Herzog, Adam Schellhas, Caspar Schellhas, Leonard Schellhas, Clara Schellhas, Carolina Schellhas and William Schellhas.

