

Bronner Family



he expertise of Johannes Bronner as a stone and brick mason made him an important figure in the construction trades in early Frankenmuth. His work and that of his sons Richard, Herman and William is still evident within a 15-mile radius of Frankenmuth. His grandson Wallace Bronner also made a significant impact on the community by turning his sign painting business into Bronner's Family CHRISTmas Wonderland, the largest year-round Christmas display store in the world.

Johannes was born May 29, 1857 in Pfaffenhofen Wurttemberg, Germany. He was baptized June 1857 and confirmed April 23, 1871. Johannes was a master stone mason. In 1882, at age 25, he boarded a ship for America and continued his line of work in the colony here. Frankenmuth had been founded 37 years earlier and the original log cabins and other crude structures were being upgraded. In the summer, spring and fall seasons he was busy with masonry and construction. In the winter he helped settlers cut lumber in the woods, earning 75 cents a day for his labor.

July 21, 1889, Johannes married Maria Barbara Rohn in the parsonage of Rev. Conrad Volz at St. John's Lutheran Church in Saginaw, Michigan. The couple lived at 320 East Tuscola Street in Frankenmuth. Johannes died June 29, 1934 and Maria died February 7, 1938. Both are buried in St. Lorenz Cemetery in Frankenmuth. They had seven children: Emma Ranke, who was a florist and homemaker; Richard and Herman, who both worked with their father; Johannes, who was a farmer and brewery worker in Frankenmuth; Maria, who died when she was only six months old; William, who worked with his father and brothers in the construction business; and Agnes Walter, who was a farmer and homemaker.

When sons Richard, Herman and William joined their father in the trade, their business was known as John Bronner and Sons.

When Johannes retired, the three brothers continued the business and they were known as Bronner Brothers, Masonry Contractors. By 1946, another generation of Bronners entered the family business. William's son, Ronald, joined him. When Richard and Herman retired, the father and son team continued the work and the name of the firm changed again – to Wm. Bronner & Son. After William's death in 1969, son Ronald assumed full ownership of the firm and Ron's son Matthew joined him in the business.

The Bronner men worked in the traditional masonry trade until 1959 when they went into the general contracting business, specializing in commercial, industrial and institutional buildings. Over the years, Wm. Bronner & Son has been especially active in church construction, namely, Blessed Trinity Catholic Church in Frankenmuth, Frankenmuth United Methodist Church, St. Michael's Lutheran Church in Richville and St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Millington. Construction in Frankenmuth includes: St. Lorenz Lutheran School, additions to the Bavarian Inn, bank buildings and Bronner's CHRISTmas Wonderland. The Bronners have always been known for quality workmanship and construction. The firm and its talented employees have been honored with many awards for outstanding projects.

Another Bronner descendant, Richard's son Herbert, was also active in the building industry in Frankenmuth. He owned and operated the Bronner Lumber Company on Genesee Street. Herbert later became a developer and began one of the first sub-divisions in Frankenmuth and was the builder of the city's first apartment buildings.

Johannes' and Maria's grandchildren were: Elsie Knoll, Lorine Weiss, Herbert and Arnold Bronner, Helen Rupprecht, Wallace Bronner, Wilma List, Wyman and Harvey Bronner, Iverne Duby, Ruth Popp, Elaine Schultz, Ronald Bronner, Charlotte Gilmore and Marie Bierlein.



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