

Schoenow Family



The Schoenow family has served as pastors in the German Lutheran communities in the Saginaw Valley for two generations. In 1919 Carl William Schoenow accepted a call to Immanuel Lutheran Church in Frankentrost, seven miles northwest of Frankenmuth. Later his son, William, accepted a pastorage at St. Michael's Church in Richville, a German Lutheran community northeast of Frankenmuth.

Frankentrost, Frankenhilf (the original name for Richville), Frankenmuth, and Frankenlust (in Bay County) were all part of a missionary plan by Pastor Loehe of Neuendettelsau, Germany. The immigrants who founded these colonies were to be missionaries to the Chippewa Indians and also were to serve the many Germans who were immigrating to America.

Carl William Schoenow was 12 years old when he left Germany with his parents. His father Johann served in the Prussian army. He fought in the Austro-Prussian War in 1866 and in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71.

After the war, Johann was placed in charge of Nobleman Baron von Fiebelkorn's stables. The threat of war continued, so Johann brought his wife and two children to America.

In 1882 they settled in Altamont, Illinois and he worked as a cabinet-maker at the Altamont Furniture Factory putting veneer on furniture. A bedroom set he hand-carved is now displayed at the Frankenmuth Historical Museum. Carl worked until he was 80 years old at which time he still walked with the stature of a young man.

While his parents lived in Altamont, Carl William entered the Lutheran ministry in Springfield, Illinois.

He studied under Professor August Craemer, the pastor who accompanied Frankenmuth's fifteen original settlers that came in 1845. Carl served his vicarage in Texas. While there he contracted yellow fever and left the area. After graduating in 1893, he accepted a call to Marion Springs, Michigan.

In 1895 Rev. Carl Schoenow married Wilhelmina Starke. They had five children: four girls and a boy. In 1886 he accepted a call to St. John's Church in Saginaw. From there he served in Centerville, Belknap-Rogers City, and finally Immanuel in Frankentrost. His father, Johann, came to live with him in Frankentrost until he died in 1945.

Carl's only son, William, studied at the Lutheran Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana from 1911-1915 and then at Springfield, Illinois until 1920. He served as pastor at Au Gres and Omer, Sawyer, Hawks and Posen before coming to St. Michael's in Richville in 1937. He married Florence Golm in 1924. They had four children: William Jr., Louis, Henry and Gertrude Hess. Louis resided in Frankenmuth.

During his ministry, Rev. William Schoenow served as Counselor for the Flint and Saginaw Circuit and was 2nd and 3rd Vice-President of the Michigan District. He was also on the Missouri Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations. In 1977 he received a Doctorate of Divinity from the Seminary at Fort Wayne, Indiana. After his retirement in 1979, he served as a German guest preacher at St. Lorenz in Frankenmuth. He died in 1991.

A 7th generation member of the Schoenow family continues the Lutheran Ministry tradition – Rev. Stephen J. Hess, son of Gertrude and Ken Hess, serving Zion Lutheran Church in Ft. Myers, Florida.



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