

List Family



he name, Johann Adam List, stands out among the second group of colonists who arrived in Frankenmuth in 1846—the year after the German Lutheran settlement was founded. John was not like most of the unskilled immigrants who were seeking cheap land and a job. He was a successful carpenter who earned journeyman status in Germany. His skills had a significant impact on the construction of homes and other buildings in the community. He also became a civic and church leader.

Johann Adam was born in Rosstal, Kingdom of Bavaria on Christmas Day 1814. The son of Johann Georg List, a carpenter, followed in his father's footsteps, and became a journeyman carpenter in 1840. While he was being trained, he sketched. His drawings have been preserved dating back to 1831 when he was just 17 years old. The earliest ones were architectural sketches that were made to accompany his carpentry work. He drew Greek sculptures, facial features and even wildlife. In 1978 the Frankenmuth Historical Museum exhibited his drawings in a show entitled "John Adam List; Frankenmuth folk artist".

Johann Adam married Margareta Muller in 1835. They had five children before they came to America: Johann, who became a preacher in Chicago; Sophie Barbara Stuetzer; A. Marie Zink; John Jacob, a carpenter in Indiana; and John Michael, also a carpenter.

The couple and their children arrived in Frankenmuth May 28, 1846 after traveling more than two months. They sailed on a ship that had been used to transport tobacco and the conditions were described as "almost unbearable". The ocean voyage took seven weeks to the New York harbor. The rest of the trip to the Saginaw Valley was made by train, steamboat, canal boat, and on foot.

The talented carpenter was welcomed into the community. He helped the early settlers upgrade their crude leaf shelters and log cabins. He built many frame houses and farm structures. He constructed a wooden covered bridge across the Cass River making travel more convenient. He built the frame St. Lorenz Church in the 1850's which replaced the original cabin in which the first settlers worshipped.

List's impact on the community went beyond his carpentry. He was also actively involved in the church and local government. Johann was elected a trustee of St. Lorenz Church January 4, 1859. He was also a collector of St. Lorenz Church subscriptions to support church operations.

The carpenter also served as moderator and director of St. Lorenz District School No. 4. He was secretary of the Deutschen Frankenmuther Unterstutzungs Verein (German Frankenmuth Aid Association) for the first six years of its existence. The Association was formed to assist unfortunates who sustained losses through fire, lightning and other acts of God. Today the association is known as the Frankenmuth Mutual Insurance Company. On the Frankenmuth Township level, Johann Adam was elected treasurer and clerk for several terms.

Johann and Margareta had eight more children after they arrived in Frankenmuth. John Leonhard became a teacher in Illinois while Anna Barbara married Johann Friedrich Zehnder, grandfather and great-grandfather of the Bavarian Inn Zehnder family.

The other children were: John George, a farmer; Michael John, a carpenter; George Adam; John Friederich a farmer in Richville; Margaretha, who died at 3 months; and Margaretha A. Smolt.

Johann Adam died February 7, 1874 at the age of 60.



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