

Auernhammer Family



The Auernhammer family started through Johann Adam Auernhammer who came to Frankenmuth in the fall of 1854. Johann only lived here 10 years before he died; but he established the family name and a line of descendants that today number in the hundreds. Johann Adam was born on January 6, 1826 in Nürnberg, Germany. He was a peasant and farmer who married Eva Maria (Volkertin). Eva was disowned from her family because she married a peasant. She was referred to as a “wilde vogel” (wild bird), free-spirited and energetic. The couple’s first son Mathias was born January 28, 1855, a few months after they arrived in Frankenmuth. He often said, “I was made in Germany and born in America.” Johann Adam and Eva purchased 34.92 acres of Indian Territorial land in October of 1855. That land is now the northwest corner of Baker and Loesel Roads. They bought the acreage from the United States government during the term of President Franklin Pierce.

Johann Adam and Eva had 3 more children. Anna Barbara was born in 1856, Johann in 1859 and Adam in 1860. Eva died giving birth to Adam, a brief five and a half years after she arrived in Frankenmuth. Johann Adam deeded his acreage then valued at \$75 to his four children on October 30, 1865; five days before he died. Mathias was only 10 when his father died; Anna was 9, Johann 6 and Adam 5. The orphaned Auernhammer children were then raised by friends. Johann and Barbara Loesel, who were neighbors to the Auernhammers, adopted the three boys and raised them. They had sons of their own who were close in age to the Auernhammer children. Another neighboring couple, Johann Georg and Sophie Reif, adopted and raised Anna Barbara.

Mathias married Anna Katherina Uebler in November 1876. Anna Barbara married a rich lumberman, John Hugener, in 1878.

Both couples lived in Saginaw. Mathias and his family lived with or near his father-in-law Joseph Uebler.

August 29, 1881, the four Auernhammer children signed off the acreage their father left them to Joseph Uebler. Mathias was involved in a number of local land deals after that, some involving his wife’s family. His father-in-law sold him 60 acres in Birch Run Township for \$2,000 in 1885. It was part of an 80-acre parcel Joseph Uebler bought 11 years earlier for only \$400. Mathias bought 20 more acres for \$340 in 1897. He then obtained another 80 acres for \$1 on a quit claim deed from his housekeeper, Theresa, whom he married after his first wife died. As the story has been told, Theresa could not take the environment and ridicule from Mathias’ sons, so she left him and they divorced. Mathias sold his acreage for \$3,000 in 1920 to his son Herbert, but reserved the right to occupy one room in the homestead for the rest of his life.

William Zehnder, Sr., grandfather of Bavarian Inn Lodge President and Owner, Judith Zehnder Keller, bought the acreage from Herbert in 1922 and assumed the \$3,000 mortgage. He sold it to two men from Flint in 1928 after they agreed to assume the mortgage that had grown to \$4,000. Zehnder used the sale money to help him get into the restaurant business. He purchased the Exchange Hotel, now known as Zehnder’s of Frankenmuth.

Mathias had eight children and his sister Anna Barbara had four. Johann was divorced twice and had 12 children in all. Adam, the youngest of the clan, had six children. Johann and Adam purchased 80-acre farms within a mile of each other, yet they were 10 or 12 miles from the Auernhammer homestead. The transplanting occurred while the boys and their “Loesel stepbrothers” worked in Denmark Township clearing two 80-acre parcels that their stepfather purchased. Each bought acreage that bordered or was only a short distance from the Loesel property.



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