

Bender Family



he Bender family started out a little differently from the other settlers that came to this area. Frederich Bender was probably one of the few settlers who came to Frankenmuth in 1852 with proceedings already underway for American citizenship.

Frederich took an oath and began the application process in New York on August 16, 1852, two weeks before he arrived in the German Lutheran colony of Frankenmuth. However, it was on May 4, 1868 before his citizenship was finalized. Unlike most of the immigrants who traveled directly to Frankenmuth from Europe, Frederich spent years in New York and Massachusetts before he made his way to Michigan.

Frederich Bender was born on April 26, 1826 in Sien, Prussia. When he was about one year old, his father was appointed as “overseer” of some land.

Frederich went to school and was confirmed in Sien.

An autobiography Frederich wrote in April 1895 said that he was the son “*of a poor family that had to work for their daily bread.*” According to Frederich’s own story, he worked as a carpenter for seven years but was often sick. To his regret, he was sick “*always at a busy time when one could learn something.*”

By the time he was 19 or 20, he decided to come to America. October 17, 1847, Frederich began his voyage. He borrowed money for the passage from his parents and promised to pay them back as soon as he earned it. He arrived in New York the middle of December after an eight week crossing.

Frederich wrote that it was difficult to find work, but he managed to keep things going for himself.

Finally he moved from New York to Massachusetts where he found employment. “*I sent back the money to my parents...and from then on things got better,*” he wrote.

Frederich was in Massachusetts for almost five years when the company he worked for moved to Europe. By then he wanted to find a home for himself and had hopes of buying a farm.

A friend advised Frederich to come to Detroit and from there he made his way to Frankenmuth in September of 1852.

Frederich’s dream came true. He bought a farm on what is now Bender Road and worked it until he was 68 years old. He was a very civic-minded person and attended community meetings regularly.

Frederich married Eva Margaretha Hochtanner on June 13, 1854 in Frankenmuth. They had seven children. Their sons George, William, John, Leonhard and Frederich were all farmers, as was their daughter Maria. Their other daughter, Margaretha, married a mason contractor.

The autobiography, Frederich wrote, ends with his philosophy. It reads, “*Nobody has to be ashamed of being poor as long as it isn’t the person’s own fault.*”

Frederich died on June 10, 1921 at the age of 95 and is buried in the Frankentrost Cemetery. He was survived by 42 grandchildren, as of 2005.



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