



# Bavarian Inn History & Facts

TIMELINE

STORY

FACTS

## ~ BAVARIAN INN RESTAURANT HISTORICAL TIMELINE ~

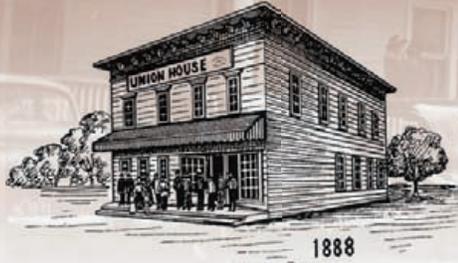
- 1888 Union House built by Theodore Fischer as boarding house, renamed Fischer's Hotel
- 1950 Zehnder Family purchased Fischer's Hotel
- 1959 Fischer's Hotel remodeled with Bavarian architecture and renamed "Bavarian Inn"
- 1959 1<sup>st</sup> Bavarian Festival (our grand opening)
- 1960 1<sup>st</sup> Dirndls (German costumes) worn by waitresses
- 1966 Expanded kitchen facilities from 2500 to 7000 square feet and added homemade ice cream machine
- 1967 50 foot Glockenspiel & 35-bell carillon built in Germany and installed here
- 1969 Renovated Main Street entrance and front porch into Bavarian architecture
- 1972 Zwiebelturm (onion tower) put on Bavarian Inn Restaurant
- 1973 Fischer Platz (outdoor biergarten) opened
- 1974 Alpine Room Grand Opening
- 1975 1<sup>st</sup> Waiters and 3 story addition and expansion of kitchen
- 1978 Main Street entrance and lobby remodeled
- 1980 "Holz-Brücke" Covered Bridge Grand Opening
- 1982 Edelweiss Room Grand Opening & 3 story addition to add retail and lobby space
- 1986 Bavarian Inn Lodge Phase I opened (100 rooms)
- 1987 Doll & Toy Factory and Roof Garten are added
- 1989 Bavarian Inn Lodge Phase II (198 total rooms)
- 1989 Freeway Fritz (in Bridgeport) opened
- 1991 Swiss Rooms Grand Opening & Bavarian Room remodeled with Grimm Brothers fairy tale theme (can now seat 1,200 guests total in add dining rooms)
- 1991 Linda Lee joins restaurant as house entertainer
- 1992 Purchased Heileman Brewery property and building
- 1994 Bavarian Inn Lodge Phase III (354 total rooms, 3 pools, family fun center, mini-golf)
- 1994 On October 15, 1994 served 5,974 guests (current record)
- 1998 Bavarian Inn Lodge Phase IV (convention center)
- 1999 Bavarian Inn Lodge Phase V (360 total rooms, 5 pools, fun center expanded)
- 1999 Renovated Main Street Lobby and added an elevator
- 2000 Castle Shops Grand Opening
- 2001 River Place opens in former Heielman brewery location
- 2001 All restaurant dining rooms are 'non-smoking'
- 2005 River Place renovated
- 2007 Restrooms in lower and upper levels remodeled

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## ~ BAVARIAN INN RESTAURANT HISTORY ~



Bavarian Inn Restaurant was founded as the Union House Hotel in 1888 by Theodore Fischer and renamed "Fischer's Hotel." His family continued the business for the next two generations. It was Theodore's son, Herman and wife, Lydia, who are credited with first promoting "Frankenmuth all-you-can-eat family style chicken dinners." The couple passed their popular Fischer's Hotel to their son, Elmer, in 1941.

The William & Emilie (Bickel) Zehnder, Sr. Family has been operating Zehnder's Restaurant since 1928. Son, William Jr, whom everyone called "Tiny", worked as a farmer. He would stop at Fischer's to pick up garbage to feed the hogs on his farm. He inquired about the possibility of the Zehnder family purchasing Fischer's. After a terribly snowy Thanksgiving Day left Elmer

Fischer stuck with an oversupply of food and frustration, Elmer was ready to talk. To compound the problem, Zehnder's had just completed an addition and it was impossible to overlook the long lines of guests who eagerly waited outside to be served there. Elmer had two alternatives—sell or expand. The sale to the Zehnder family was finalized February 4, 1950.

Tiny left farming, and he and his young wife, Dorothy (a former waitress at Fischer's) became the managers of the new business. Almost immediately they modernized the kitchen, installed dishwashing equipment, built a laundry, and improved the building design. Despite all the improvements, the Zehnder family's recipe for success went flat. The restaurant lost money in 1956 & 1957. With the country in the midst of a recession, there was talk about closing the restaurant. After many debates, the family made a courageous decision—to expand Fischer's, not close it.



The expansion gave the restaurant a new viable focus, one that instilled ethnic pride. The new addition boasted an authentic Bavarian exterior—stucco walls, woodcarving, flower boxes and other German accents were blended with the new German entrees served by "Bavarian" costumed servers. A weeklong celebration with German entertainment was held in 1959 which today is known as the Frankenmuth Bavarian Festival.

Almost non-stop remodeling and expansion occurred transforming the interior and exterior of the building to the Bavarian theme. In 1967 the stunning 50-foot Glockenspiel was added, topped off with a 35-bell carillon. It became an instant Bavarian Inn landmark with its revolving figures that depict the legend of the Pied Piper of Hameln.



Many Frankenmuth community leaders and residents considered Tiny Zehnder the driving force behind the transformation of their rural agricultural community into "Michigan's Little Bavaria". He spent nearly 50 years of his life assisting and encouraging other Frankenmuth businesses to either build or remodel their buildings in the Bavarian style. Due to poor health, Tiny resigned from active management of the Bavarian Inn Restaurant in 2004. He remained Chairman of the Board of Bavarian Inn, Inc. until his death May 23, 2006.

Dorothy Zehnder celebrated her 85<sup>th</sup> birthday on December 1, 2006. Since purchasing the restaurant in 1950, she has routinely worked six days and 60 hours per week. Her motto is "if you don't feel well, go to work and pretty soon you'll feel better".

She has personally developed most of the recipes used in the restaurant and has taught thousands of employees the correct method to prepare all of the food that is served in the twelve dining rooms that seat 1200 guests. Her mother, Hedwig Hecht, is credited with passing on her German cooking and baking talents.

Always paying attention to detail, Dorothy's work ethic has been an inspiration to several generations of workers who have worked side-by-side with her over the years. She has helped to train many young employees who had their first job at Bavarian Inn. Some return each year and ask for her.

Three generations of the Zehnder family now are actively involved in the day-to-day operations of the restaurant. Dorothy is joined by son William A. (Bill), President, his wife, Karen and daughter, Amy Zehnder Grossi, Co-General Managers. Tiny & Dorothy's daughter, Judy Zehnder Keller, is President of the Bavarian Inn Lodge and Gift Shops, Inc. Judy's son, Michael Keller Zehnder, has joined her as Manager at the Bavarian Inn Lodge and her husband, Don Keller, is the Corporate Treasurer.

BAVARIAN INN RESTAURANT - 713 S. MAIN ST., FRANKENMUTH, MI 48734 - 800-228-2742



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## ~ BAVARIAN INN RESTAURANT FOOD QUANTITIES ~

### FOOD AMOUNTS USED ANNUALLY IN OUR DINING ROOMS AND RETAIL SHOPS

- 750,000 pounds of Golden Brown Chicken (approximately 205,500 chickens)
- 172,945 pounds of other meats and seafoods
- 28,000 heads of cabbage
- 566,749 pounds of potatoes
- 200,000 pounds of Blue Hubbard Squash
- 1,550 bushels of apples
- 37,400 pounds of butter
- 54,000 pounds of cottage cheese
- 10,946 gallons of ice cream
- 11,925 gallons of milk
- 25,056 shakers of Chicken Seasoning
- 6,300 pounds of Chicken Seasoning used in the kitchen
- 9,900 pounds of coffee beans
- 78,000 pounds egg noodles
- 2,652 half barrels of beer
- 25,692 bottles of wine
- 85,334 mixed drinks
- 138,913 loaves of Stollen (fruit and nut bread)
- 62,527 loaves of Backofenbrot (white bread)
- 49,113 loaves of rye & other breads
- 5,001 Tortes
- 20,848 Pies
- 7,800 complimentary birthday cakes