

Bernreuter Family



The German Lutheran settlement of Frankenmuth was established in 1845. It was just a matter of time before relatives and friends joined the original 15 settlers that had come at that time and the community grew. Georg Bernreuter made the voyage to America sometime in the 1850's or 1860's; the exact date is not known. Although he had a small family in America, generations of his descendants now total more than 110 persons.

Travel across the Atlantic was a true adventure in the era when Georg made the passage. Many of the vessels were not in the best condition. Some ships actually leaked and collisions at sea were common. Quarters were often cramped. Beds were piled so close on top of each other that it was difficult to sit up straight in them. When a storm rocked the ocean waters, life on the ship was chaos. Belongings that were not secured down rolled from one end of the ship to the other. Hardly a passenger escaped an episode or two of sea sickness. Lice, smallpox and the fever also claimed many victims.

Georg did not take the direct route to Frankenmuth that most of the early settlers took. Instead, he arrived in New Orleans and then traveled up the Mississippi River.

Georg made his first American home in Springfield, Ohio. Later, he came to Frankenmuth and settled on Junction and Beyer Road.

Like most of the early settlers, Georg was a farmer. The soil near Frankenmuth was rich, fertile and flat. Corn, potatoes and the other vegetables were grown at first. Later wheat, oats, barley and other grains were also raised.

For the most part, the community kept German farming traditions intact, but eventually they discovered easier ways of completing farm chores. For example, a letter from early settlers praised a "mowing machine" the immigrants discovered in America. It was described to the Germans back home as a way to "accomplish haymaking with ease". The settlers wrote that a boy who could drive a team of horses with a drag can just as easily drive a team with a mowing machine and he could ride instead of walking behind it.

Probably the most dramatic differences between the farms in Frankenmuth and those back in the homeland were the living arrangements. In Germany the farmers built their homes near the center of the community, even though their acreage was spread throughout the countryside. The settlers preferred the Yankee idea of living on their own property. The settlers were somewhat isolated until roads and other forms of transportation were improved, but they were conveniently close to their daily farm work.

George Bernreuter eventually married Margareta Drescher and they had three children. Samuel became a farmer like his father. John died when he was only 24, while a daughter Anna died at the early age of 13. Their grandchildren were Otto, William and Ludwig Bernreuter, Ida Schiefer, Norman and Clarence Bernreuter and Clara Reichle.

Ludwig, who died in 1986, compiled a comprehensive history of St. Michael's Church and the community of Richville.

George died during a typhoid or smallpox epidemic in 1868. His widow remarried and became the matriarch of the Simon Daenzer family tree.



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