

Keinath Family



The hard work of the early settlers brought prosperity to Frankenmuth less than a decade after the community was founded in 1845. When Johannes Keinath brought his family name here in 1854, Frankenmuth had hundreds of residents, a thriving business district, and prosperous farms. The early settlers endured many hardships, especially during the first few years. They transported their German work ethic of labor from sun up to sun down to the new land; but some simply didn't have the strength to keep up the pace. Fever and malaria, spread by the mosquitoes in the area, weakened them. Smallpox was another epidemic that claimed victims and others died young of exhaustion. The women bore many children – often year after year – and some of them died in childbirth. The infant mortality rate also was high.

Although the earliest settlers were disappointed with the colony and its crude cabins and wooded fields, those that arrived later, were impressed. The log cabins were replaced by frame houses, a system of roads made travel by wagon easier, and local businesses offered supplies that were considered luxuries to first wave of immigrants.

Letters sent back to Germany raved about the “pleasantness” of the colony and the optimism was more than enough to maintain a steady influx of new settlers. Frankenmuth became a gathering place for German Lutherans in America who wanted to maintain the traditions, customs and language of their homeland.

Johannes Keinath came from the area of Reutlingen, Germany and settled on acreage northeast of town on Block Road. He farmed like most of the other early immigrants. His great-grandson, Norbert Keinath, lived on the family homestead.

Johannes and his wife had 10 children before they arrived in Frankenmuth. Johann Georg was born June 26, 1832 while Christian was born February 27, 1835. A daughter, Maria Elizabeth, was born April 24, 1837 and a second son, Johannes S., was born November 11, 1838. Johann was born September 11, 1840 and Ernst Friedrich was born June 16, 1842. The seventh child was a son named Gottleb born March 31, 1845. Anna Margaretha was born on January 25, 1847; followed by Johann Conrad on April 2, 1848. The last child born was Johann Jacob on October 18, 1853.

The oldest son, Johann George, married Barbara Hecht. Barbara lived next door to Johann George. The couple had four girls and four boys: Leonard, Christina Bickel, Johannes, Ernst, Elizabeth Krauter, Anna Maurer, Conrad, and Barbara Schiefer. Johann George died when he was 69 years old.

Johann George's son Johannes was born February 27, 1862. He married Margaretha Bickel on October 13, 1886. She was born March 27, 1864 and lived to be nearly 101 years old.

The children of Johannes and Margaretha were twins Otto and Alma Anna Barbara, born May 4, 1888; Alma died in infancy and Otto was a farmer. Other children included Edwin born November 11, 1889 who became a farmer; Martin who died in infancy; Bernhard born May 30, 1893 who became a farmer; Hilda Maria Haubenstricker born September 9, 1895; Ludwig born April 25, 1899 who became a minister; and Alfred born September 30, 1904 who worked in Saginaw.

Johannes died September 19, 1936 at the age of 74. Margaretha died in March 1965, just days short of her birthday when she would turn 101 years old.



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