

Amman Family



he last of the four Franconian colonies to be settled in the Saginaw Valley was Frankenhilf. Frankenhilf owes its origin and founding to the ideas and work of Pastor Wilhelm Loehe. He developed a concern for the many poor German peasants he saw daily. Crop failures, hostile society, oppressive economic, political, and religious conditions left many of his countrymen helpless and suffering.

In 1849, Pastor Loehe decided to organize a new colony especially for the poor. The colony would be called Frankenhilf (the help of the Franks). The poor would be helped to begin a new life in America. It is ironic that in later years the name of the community would become - Richville. Arrangements were made through the colonization capital fund to buy 1,592 acres of land on the Cheboyganing River eight miles northeast of Frankenmuth and six miles east of Frankentrost.

In the spring of 1850, a group of emigrants left their Mittelfranken Bavaria homes and made the journey to New York, Detroit, Saginaw, and Frankenmuth. By then, most of the group had decided to abandon the goal of starting a new colony and instead went off on their own to established settlements in Detroit, Monroe, and lower Saginaw. Only Karl Gottlieb Amman, a merchantman from Mennigen, Germany, his family, and his cousin Michael Schwartz, continued on to start the new colony.

Karl Gottlieb Amman was born September 20, 1812 in Memmigen, Germany, the son of Michael (1782-1854) and Anna (1792-1858) nee Bachsler Amman. Karl Gottlieb was the oldest of eight children. He married Christina Keller in July 1836. They had six children, three of which died as infants. The other three: Anna, born August 2, 1841, Karl Gottlieb, born November 4, 1843, and Katharina, born April 18, 1848, came to America with their parents in 1850.

Leaving his family in Frankenmuth, Mr. Amman searched out land to settle upon and immediately began to build a fine large home. The home was equipped with a big room to accommodate church services. On August 17, 1850 the home was dedicated and many of the German Lutheran settlers came from nearby Frankenmuth to help celebrate the happy event. More than the foundation of a home was laid in Frankenhilf on that day in 1850. Spiritual foundations were laid, too. Pastor Kuehn dedicated the settlement and gave a sermon sharing God's Word for the first time in the new wilderness colony.

After spending the winter alone, the Ammans welcomed Mr. and Mrs. Michael Gruber, who came in the spring of 1851. Three more families also arrived in the fall of 1851. Other families joined the colony in 1852 and 1853. Frankenhilf's growth helped it survive a shaky beginning and it became a thriving community.

Soon the room Mr. Amman had built and provided for church services was too small, so in 1853 it was decided to build a church. Mr. Amman donated four acres of land at the site of the present St. Michaels Cemetery.

Before the church was completed and dedicated, the small congregation was faced with a growing disagreement between Germany's Pastor Loehe and the new Missouri Synod. Pastor Deindorfer, who supported Pastor Loehe, resigned his ministry and left for Iowa. September 4, 1853, Pastor Deindorfer preached his farewell sermon in the newly completed church. Carl Gottlieb Amman and his family supported Pastor Deindorfer. Carl took his family and went with him to Iowa where they formed the Iowa Synod, later to become the American Lutheran Church and now a part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

