

Frankenhilf History



The history of this community in Michigan dates back to Wilhelm Loehe of Neuendettelsau Bavaria, Germany. Loehe was the university-educated pastor of the church at Neuendettelsau Franconia (northern Bavaria). He publicized the need for funds to supply Lutheran workers to America and formed an organization to prepare workers and to continuously gather funds. He sent a small group of people together with their pastor to form a congregation at the place where they would settle. Over a seven-year period, several hundred colonists were delegated to establish a number of Bavarian settlements in Michigan, known as the Franconian colonies. Although Loehe himself never came to America, he is considered to be the founder of the Franconian colonies in the Saginaw Valley- Frankenmuth in 1845; Frankentrost in 1847; Frankenlust in 1848; and Frankenhilf (now Richville) in 1850.

Pastor Loehe became interested in the welfare of Lutherans caught in the agonies and hardship of the times in the Old World. He developed a special concern also for the many poor German peasants whom he saw daily. Crop failures, a hostile society and oppressive economic, political and religious conditions, left them helpless and suffering.

In the year 1849, having already launched new colonial ventures at three other Saginaw Valley locations, Loehe decided to organize a new colony especially for the poor. The plan was to offer to the poor a home in the New World where especially the poor newly-married young people could pursue a life in the way God had intended matrimony – free of the state's requirement that they own property of a certain value before being able to marry.

Because it was to be of help to the poor and because God was to be the guiding force in the venture's quest for success, it was called Frankenhilf (the help of the

Franconians). It joined its three sister communities of Frankenmuth, Frankenlust and Frankentrost as a colonial adventure based on Lutheran Christianity. It is somewhat interesting that in later years the name of a community originally founded expressly for the poor should become . . . Richville.

A group of emigrants were sent from Mittelfranken Bavaria in the spring of 1850 to begin the long journey to their new home. However, the settling had not even begun and already those who were sent to found it began to lose heart and turned from their original goals. After arriving in Michigan, a portion of the group separated itself from the main body and went off on its own to Monroe and Detroit to settle there. Most of the group abandoned the party in lower Saginaw and instead joined other settlements. Two families remained steadfast, and came to the future site of Richville. They were Mr. Gottlieb Amman and wife, a merchantman from Memmingen, Germany and Mr. Michael Schwartz from the same community.

Mr. Amman immediately began to build a fine large home, equipped with a large room to accommodate immediate church services. On August 17, the home was erected and dedicated and many came from nearby Frankenmuth to help in the happy event. Pastor Kuehn, who was to lead the congregation, was unable to remain as it was difficult enough for the first two immigrants to feed themselves. He, therefore, stayed in Frankenmuth until he received a position in Rodenburg, Illinois.

Within the next three years, additional families arrived which included names such as Gruber, Popp, Glave, Dahl, Schwab, Heinlein, Gress, Bauer, Huber, Kamm, Sippel, Trump, Honol, Schemm, Pruegel, Wuerflein and Schultz. As of 2005, the congregation numbered 1650 baptized members and a school enrollment of about 200.



Researched & Compiled by Bavarian Inn Lodge
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