

Heinlein Family



he Heinlein name came to this area when Johann Heinlein, at age 30, came to America in 1850 and settled in Frankentrost, northwest of Frankenmuth. The Frankentrost colony was established three years earlier and was described this way in a

letter sent to Germany: *“Frankenmuth is nice but it’s still nicer in Frankentrost. (It is) a beautiful German village, seldom seen in America sometimes I had to check my bearing, whether I was in America or Germany.”*

Frankentrost was a two-hour walk through the forest from Frankenmuth. A cozy parsonage was at the center of the village with one brook north and another south. The soil was good and so was the drinking water.

The community only had one street by the time Heinlein arrived. It ran east and west. The rest of the property was forestland with huge oaks, hard maple nut trees, beech, bass, ash and elm. There were also plum and cherry trees and wild grapes by the north creek.

Pastor John Henry Philip Graebner led the congregation at Frankentrost, and in 1849, he reported there were 30 families. The health in Frankentrost was generally better than in surrounding communities, although it was not rumored to be so. *“Fever is striking all around,”* wrote Graebner, *“but in our village there has not been a sign of fever for weeks and I do not think there has been a dozen cases here in all.”*

Graebner did point out, however, that the settlement is not located on a navigable river and necessities must be delivered slowly over land routes.

Johann Heinlein became a charter member of the Frankentrost colony. Like the other settlers, he was a farmer – the same occupation he held in Bavaria.

Johann had two daughters by his first wife – Magalena Hemmeter and Maria Schultheis. Later, he married Klara (Shildern) on February 5, 1874 and they had a son, Andrew, who grew up to be a farmer. Johann’s stepdaughters were Anna Beyerlein and Maria Schian.

Andrew was born in a log cabin on Janes and Dehmel Roads, April 3, 1875. He married Ida (Niehoff) on September 10, 1893 and the couple had eight children. They are: John, Karl, William, Konrad and Mary Elisa Heinlein; Clara Bender, Emma Zwerk and Karoline Pelavin.

As of the year 2005, Johann’s descendants number 152 persons.

When Johann died April 17, 1905, his obituary appeared in a German newspaper. It read: *“Another one of our German Bavarian fathers closed his eyes. It was Johann Heinlein who passed away Monday after a long suffering of illness. Johann was one of the German pioneers that with others came here from Bavaria. He was born December 10, 1820 and he immigrated to the United States in 1850 to Frankentrost where he lived until he died . . . The funeral is Friday at 12 o’clock at the house and at 1 o’clock – Frankentrost Immanuel Evangelical Church. Pastor G. Storm will officiate.”*

Johann’s wife died two years later on March 2, 1907.



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