

Hubinger Family



The Hubingers were the most prominent business leaders in Frankenmuth during the founding years. Brothers Johann Matthias and Johann Georg were among the second group of settlers who arrived in 1846 when the colony was less than a year old. They set up a much needed saw mill and later a grist mill along the Cass River, altering the original plans to develop Frankenmuth's business district around St. Lorenz Lutheran Church. Other businesses joined them and the couple of stores built near the church were soon disbanded or relocated to the present downtown area the Hubingers established.

The Hubingers came from a lineage of millers that dates as far back as 1610. Their father Johann Georg Hubinger owned Louismill adjacent to the village of Dessmannsdorf, a few miles south of Ansbach. Both sons were born there and served an apprenticeship at Kunstmill in Schweinfurt. Their mother died in 1845 and their father earlier than that, so the two decided to come to America. Reports suggest they brought machinery with them for a saw mill but left it somewhere enroute because the duty imposed on it far outweighed the benefit.

Johann Matthias was the older of the two brothers. He was born in 1820 and married Anna B. nee Walther from Rosstal, March 17, 1846, just before they boarded a two-masted ship for America. They arrived in New York on May 8, 1846.

Johann Matthias and his brother began their business ventures by building a dam at the bend of the Cass River. They needed a waterfall to generate power for the waterwheel destined to operate their mills. They completed construction of a saw mill in 1848 using supplies obtained from Buffalo, New York. Roughly the same year they constructed a flour mill.

In 1849 Johann Matthias sold his interest in the mills to his brother. He then opened a general store on the southeast corner of Main and Tuscola Streets. It was later turned over to his son Gottfried.

In 1870 he built a steam powered roller mill which he named the Star of the West. It was located at the present boat launch area on East Tuscola, but it was destroyed by fire. In 1874 the operation was relocated to the site of the present Star of the West Milling Company.

Johann Matthias also owned about 300 acres of farmland which was eventually given to his sons. He served the community as postmaster, as township treasurer and was also a trustee of St. Lorenz Church.

Johann Matthias and Anna had 10 children. Their oldest son Lorenz followed in his father's footsteps and operated the Star of the West Mill from 1870 to 1903, when a group of farmers formed a partnership and bought the mill from him. He later went to work for the Frankenmuth Cheese Factory as a salesman.

Their second son, Johann George (not to be confused with his uncle) was a farmer, miller, and later operated a general store. From 1896 to 1898, he held the office of Justice of the Peace and in 1900 he was elected Frankenmuth Township Supervisor.

Georg Leonard was a farmer; a daughter Johanna married H. Leonard Heine, a store owner. Anna married John F. List who also operated a store. Gottfried took over management of his father's store in the late 1800's. The other children are: Margaretha, Rosina B. (who died in infancy), Lorenz C. and Elizabeth List.

Johann Matthias died in 1903 at the age of 83.

