

Ranzenberger Family



he name of Ranzenberger, in the early days of Frankenmuth, had two local distinctions because of Georg Adam Ranzenberger—he was the first businessman in Frankenmuth and he was well-known for his humor.

It was Ranzenberger who once stood on a local bridge with the township supervisor while a flood threatened to wash the bridge away. The supervisor turned to him in dismay and said, “If only there would be a hook up in the sky on which we could pull our bridge up”. Ranzenberger replied, “Yes, if the Lord had ever imagined that we would one day have such a dumb-fool supervisor, he might have put a hook up there”.

Georg Adam arrived in Frankenmuth in 1846 with the second wave of immigrants who came to reinforce the Lutheran settlement here.

Georg Adam was born October 8, 1814 in Deittenheim, Germany. He married Anna Maria Schleier in Bremen, Germany March 18, 1846, just before they set sail for America.

The couple settled in Section 28 of Frankenmuth Township where Georg Adam farmed and worked at Frankenmuth’s St. Lorenz Church.

In 1847 he opened the Ranzenberger General Store about one block west of the church. It was hoped that other businesses would follow suit and that the community’s commercial district would develop around the church. However, when the Hubinger brothers came to town the following year and established their saw mill and flour mill, they chose a more convenient site along the Cass River. Other Frankenmuth businessmen followed them.

The Ranzenbergers had six children and nine grandchildren.

Their firstborn—Johann Georg—lived to be 89 years old and was probably the best known of his generation. When he was 15, Johann Georg enlisted in the Union Army and prepared to fight in the Civil War. But his father had him discharged because he was not old enough. Johann Georg was persistent. At the close of the war he enlisted again—this time in the Fourth Artillery, and was sent to North Carolina during the period of the carpetbaggers.

Johann Georg was also involved in local politics. He served 10 years in neighboring Birch Run as a Justice of the Peace from 1878 to 1888. When he returned to Frankenmuth he lived in the house his father built in 1872. He was elected Justice of the Peace for two terms in Frankenmuth.

Like his father, Johann Georg was also involved in the local St. Lorenz Lutheran Church. He inherited his father’s job as sexton and took his work seriously. He even kept a set of diaries that recorded not only his daily activities but also every wedding and funeral at St. Lorenz. He also included non-church related activities in the community like fires and barn raisings.

Johann Georg had the honor of ringing the St. Lorenz Church bells once more in his final years during the 100th celebration of the State of Michigan at the Detroit fairgrounds in 1936.

He died on January 19, 1938.



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