

Zeilinger Family



he name Zeilinger was originally brought to Richville, Michigan in 1854 from Ebersdorf by the wife of Johann Phillip Zeilinger. Her name was Anna Margaretha Barbara Heinlein. Records indicate that Johann died in Ebersdorf. Anna came to Richville with four of her seven children: Elisabetha, Johann Georg Adam, another son name unknown and her illegitimate son Johann Lorenz Heinlein. She left one son and two daughters behind in Germany.

Anna's son Johann George Adam grew up in Richville, Michigan and eventually married Eva Maria Ulrich in 1865. They lived on Richville Road. Johann became a farmer. He also served as Marshall of St. Michael's Lutheran Church, the governing body of Richville for many years.

Johann George Adam had 11 sons and daughters – two of whom were named Gottlieb and Phillip. Gottlieb's daughter Linda Eischer was the first Zeilinger descendant to come to Frankenmuth. She and her husband Ludwig moved there in 1926.

The first person to bring the Zeilinger family name to Frankenmuth arrived two years later in 1928. Carl (Charlie) Martin Zeilinger moved in with his sister Linda when he was looking for a job. Charlie worked for the Frankenmuth Granite Works, a cement block company for nine years. In 1933 he married Edith S. Zuellig. Four years later he began his first business. He borrowed \$400 to buy a gas station which he operated until 1954. At the same time he started to develop a trucking and excavating enterprise. The company began with a \$350 truck. It grew into Zeilinger Trucking Service, a business owned and successfully operated until his retirement. The trucking excavation business gave Charlie an important role in the development of the community.

He often said, *"There isn't a road, sidewalk or parking lot in Frankenmuth that I didn't have a hand in"*.

He was also very active in civic affairs. He participated in the local Board of Trade, Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, Scouts, youth activities and the Frankenmuth Conservation Club.

Charlie and Edith had two children: Jack, who married Ruth Ann Hauck and Sue Ann, who married Dale Wakeman. Charlie died September 7, 1983 and Edith died in 2007. Their grandchildren are: Scott and John Zeilinger; Mary, Jacqueline and Neil Wakeman.

Charlie had three brothers and five sisters: Linda Eischer, Emma Irion, Selma Rupprecht Osborne, Walter, Norman, Herbert, Irene and Gladys Mueller. Irene was the editor of the Frankenmuth News for 28 years and then became the Executive Director of the Frankenmuth Chamber of Commerce. Norman or "Red" operated Zeilinger Beverage Company. Walter's son Gary owns and operates Zeilinger Wool Company in Frankenmuth.

Another grandson of Johann George Adam – Erwin Clarence Zeilinger – established a branch of the Zeilinger family here in 1934. Erwin moved to Frankenmuth when he was 14 years old to live with his aunt and uncle after his parents died. He began working at Universal Houdaille, which was a tool and die company then. In 1942 he married Adele Weiss and moved within the village limits. Erv worked at Universal Houdaille for 42 years – the last 16 he served as Plant Superintendent.

Erwin (deceased) and Adele had three children: Robert, who married Barbara Rupprecht; Karen, who married William Zehnder III, President of Frankenmuth Bavarian Inn; and Susan, who married James Willbanks. Their grandchildren are: Stephanie (deceased), Mark and Tracy Zeilinger; Amy Zehnder Grossi, Paula Zehnder Nevruz, Kathrine and Jennifer Zehnder; Michael and James Willbanks.



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