



Old Franklin Township Historical Society Newsletter

March 2022 - Volume 15, Issue 1 - corrected

Restoration of the Old St. Luke Cemetery, 2009-2012

By Ken Kraemer

“We started out to restore a single marker and ended up restoring an entire cemetery. It was a labor of love”

~Tom Kraemer

A walk in the cemetery

In the fall of 2009, Tom Kraemer and his wife Soni stopped at the Old St. Luke Cemetery to look for the gravesites of his relatives. They found Grace Kraemer’s (wife of Peter, his great-grandfather) grave marker fallen on the ground. They found the inscriptions stained and eroding on the Paul Kraemer and Walburga Stangl tombstones (great-great-grandparents). They discovered many other grave markers in disrepair. The cemetery had been created nearly 150 years earlier, so it is not surprising. Land for the cemetery, which at that time was close to St. Luke Catholic Church, had been donated by a parishioner – George Neuheisel in 1861.

A first step—restoring the Paul Kraemer marker

Tom and his partners (Marty and Kevin Kraemer), who had created a fund to “do good things” for the community, decided to undertake restoration of the Paul Kraemer monument. They moved the two existing grave markers closer together and joined them by a large stone where a family tree could be shown. They enlisted cousin Ken Kraemer to help design the marker. Spellman Monument company was selected to execute the design in stone, and then to install it. The idea was to show the family tree and where each generation lived within Bavaria, Germany.



Paul and Walburga Kraemer monument, 2019

The earliest known Kraemer showed up in Tiefenbach in 1649 when he got married in the Catholic church. He was a weaver.

Subsequent Kraemers also were weavers and subsistence farmers – which meant they were poor, having only enough land to raise food for the family, feed a few animals, and raise flax for weaving. Kraemers later moved to the small village of Irlach from which Paul and Walburga emigrated.

Once the monument was completed, the Kraemer team issued invitations to 150 families to join the unveiling. German wine and Wisconsin cheese were served.



Some of the guests at the Kraemer monument unveiling, October 16, 2010

Phase II - Restoration of the entire cemetery

No one anticipated that there would be a Phase II. But, as Marty Kraemer said, “The community response to the restoration of that single monument was tremendous and led us to restore the entire cemetery.” Overall direction of the project was again by the Kraemer team, but this time, they had more help in the form of donations:

- The Kraemer Company - gravel for access road
- Kraemer Brothers - plaques for Kraemer tree
- Ridgetop LLC - landscaping work
- Village of Plain - topsoil for the grounds
- Franklin Township - clearing around the perimeter
- Maggie Lamasney - restoration of the central altar and statue
- Gary Haas - research on immigrant families
- Bill Meise - grading of access road
- Fred’s Landscaping - topsoil & seeding around directory

The Kraemers worked with a team at Spellman Monument Co. from 2009-2012 to restore 300 headstones: Richard Zeman reset the stones; Jason Miller enhanced the stones; Jeanne Miller coordinated everything.

Restoration consisted of completely disassembling each tombstone, pouring a new concrete base, reassembling the tombstone on the base, and cleaning and power-washing it. Where the writing on a marker wasn’t legible, and it was possible to work the stone, the engraving was enhanced. There were 50 iron crosses that had been used for grave markers in the cemetery. These were restored by cleaning them and then power-coating them with paint. In some cases, the metal tags identifying the person interred has become loose and had to be reattached. The crosses were disassembled, provided with new bases, and reinstalled. Again, Spellman Monument did the work under direction of the Kraemer team.

Cemetery renovation consisted of regrading and reseeding all the topsoil and was done by Greg Alt of Ridge Top. A new perimeter fence was installed by Struck and Irwin Fence. New stone entry columns were built by Kraemer Brothers who also put in new gates and a steel arch to identify the place as St. Luke Cemetery. The arch was built by Dave’s Welding of Wisconsin Dells. The TKM fund (Tom, Kevin, Marty) paid the bill, which totaled \$152,570.

The restoration was a hit with visiting Bavarians

In the Spring of 2012, a group of 45 people from the Oberpfalz region of Bavaria visited Plain as part of a series of group exchanges (30-40 people) that has been going on since 1993. In preparation for their visit, the graves of people who had immigrated to Plain in the 1800s were identified with markers showing their hometown, date they immigrated, and birth-death year. In a story about the visit, JoAnn Liegel Schanke wrote in the *Weekly Home News*:

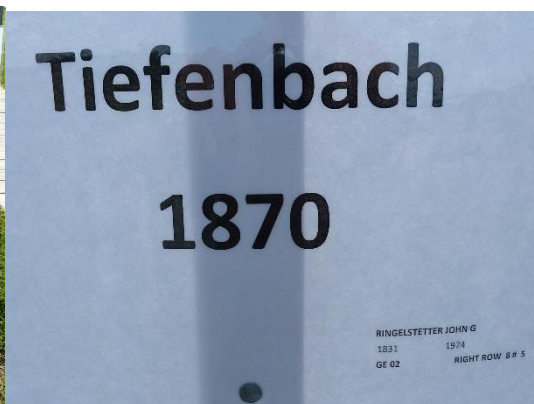
After breakfast Saturday morning, the host families, along with their guests, attended a reception at the old cemetery on old Highway 23 south of Plain. At the cemetery, which was recently completely renovated by Kraemer Brothers, visitors were able to see signs by grave sites of their ancestors, with information of the towns they had left in

Bavaria to settle here in the Sauk County area. A program was given by Joe Wankerl, Tom Kraemer, and Gary Haas with information on the close link between our area and Bavaria.

The first sign below identifies John Weishan who emigrated from Schönau, Bavaria to Plain in 1847. Weishan served in the Civil War as indicated by the American flag and bronze star. The "Tiefenbach 1870" sign is for the John and Franziska (Huber) Ringelstetter family. Philipp and Mary (Joerg) Volk were from Würzburg, Bavaria in 1871.



John Weishan grave



Tiefenbach 1870 John Baptist Ringelstetter



Würzburg 1871 Philipp & Mary Volk



Gary Haas, genealogist



Old St. Luke Cemetery, ready for Bavarian visit



Father Ludwig Bumès, Bavaria

Many Plain families opened their homes to the Bavarian visitors: Robert & Joann Schanke, Ray & Marcia Ring, Fr. Mike Resop, Tom & Sondra Kraemer, Karl Kraemer & Kris Forseth, Ed & Mary Jane Liegel, Dick & Janis Marino, Dolores Liegel, Henry & Judy Ferstl, Darrell & Mary Kraemer, Duane & Gwen Kraemer, Bill & Sue

Meise, Jack & Mary Schluter, Joe & Lucille Wankerl, Robert & Ann Cunningham, Dave & Carol Lins, Georg & Rita Brey, Dan & Teresa Lins, Richard & Mary Frances Nachreiner, Gene & Georgene Hausner.



Some host families and Bavarian guests at the cemetery on June 2, 2012



"Old St. Luke's Cemetery 1865" gate and sign

Creation of the cemetery directory

Around 2018, after the physical restoration of the cemetery was complete, it was decided to create a directory of the people interred in the cemetery. An aerial photo of the cemetery was taken with a drone, and then each grave marker in the photo was given a unique number so that families could find their relatives' name, birth and death dates, immigration year, and place from which they emigrated. Data from Gary Haas was used, and new information collected when missing. With the directory in hand, Marty Kraemer walked the site again and again checking marker numbers, names, and dates. The directory information was then assembled by Kraemer Brothers office staff and

printed for installation. Marty even dug the hole for the base of the directory, installed the vertical posts for the table, poured the foundation, and assembled the directory and table. He was "hands on" all the way through the process.



Marty with cemetery directory, May 7, 2020

As with Tom and Soni, people like to visit the cemetery, look for their relatives' gravesites, and perhaps say a prayer. They come from all over the U.S. and Bavaria to do so. So, the restoration project is a great contribution to the community. It is also an example of "give back" to the community. Even though very little of the Kraemer Brothers' revenue comes from Plain, these men chose to give back from their success elsewhere.

The community needs more people to give back locally. Hopefully this story will encourage others to do so. The Old Franklin Township Historical Society is a good place for others to start. It is a 501c charitable organization.

Sources:

Mary C. Uhler, Restoration of old cemetery was “labor of love”, *Catholic Herald*, Special supplement, November 1, 2020, page 1A.

JoAnn Liegel Schanke, Visit to Plain from Bavarians detailed, *Weekly Home News*, 4/4/2012

“Bavarians visit Plain, other spots in area”, *Weekly Home News*, June 13, 2012, page 3 has a photo of June 12 event.

Gary Haas, “German Visitors – June 2012” Plain History Genealogy Group Newsletter, June 2012, Volume 67, page 6.

Notes and cost information from Tom Kraemer, 2021.

Interviews with Tom and Marty Kraemer, 2021.

Photos from Marty Kraemer, Ann Neviasher, Gary Haas, Brenda Blau, Tom Kraemer and Ken Kraemer.

Some visitors of St. Luke's old cemetery before restoration

By Debbie Blau



In September 1981, Michael "Mike" Blau of Gleissenberg, Bavaria, Germany, traveled alone at age 75 to visit distant Blau relatives in Wisconsin. He didn't know much English and was pleased to find out that some Americans knew German. It was one of his greatest joys to meet his relatives across the ocean, and he was especially interested to see familiar names in the Plain cemeteries. He traveled two more times to Wisconsin in 1983 and 1986. Pictured here in 1981 at St. Luke's old cemetery, left to right, is Clara Blau of Plain, Mike Blau, Dean Blau of Waterloo, and George Blau of Plain. They are standing at the grave of the American Blau's forefather, Michael Blau, who was born in 1825 in Gleissenberg. Michael's wife Barbara Dobmeier, also born in Gleissenberg, was buried in the new St. Luke cemetery.

Granddaughters of Barbara Ringelstetter Giesen came from far and wide in September 2003 to visit the grave of their great-grandparents, Johann (John) Baptist Ringelstetter and Franziska Huber at St. Luke's old cemetery at Plain. Barbara, daughter of Johann and Franziska, and her husband Jacob Giesen had moved from Bear Creek Township in Sauk County, Wisconsin, to South Dakota in 1885. Their family spread further into Montana and Canada. Pictured are Canadian sisters Helen Giesen Lewis of Calgary, Alberta, and Elsie Giesen Mathews of Brighton, Ontario.



Final resting place - Old St. Luke's Cemetery

by Debbie Blau



John George Lehner was born on Feb. 12, 1903, in Franklin Township to Bartholomew Lehner and Frances Sturm, their 7th child. Their farm was north of Plain off Highway 23 on Peak Lane. Little John's left hand was damaged after being caught in a rope pulley, and an operation was planned for when he became of school age. Unfortunately, John became ill with diphtheria and succumbed to the disease on December 18, 1909. The 6-year-old boy was wrapped in a cloth covered in a strong-smelling disinfectant and was buried on the evening of the same day. His parents were not allowed to attend the private funeral services held by Rev. George Pesch, but his 15-year-old sister Lizzie watched to see where he was buried. John's older brother Joseph was ill with diphtheria at the same time and recovered.



The original marker is on the right. In 1998, Lehner relatives chipped in to buy a new marker to replace the old marker.

Visit the museum at Plain! It is filled with interesting displays of items from days long ago. The historical society has a large collection of family history books, portraits, snapshots, schoolbooks, scenes of the area, documents, and much more. Open House dates and times will be posted at the Old Franklin Township Historical Society Facebook group.



Georg J. Blau of Bavaria visits the museum in 2015

Send us your stories and memories!

We welcome new stories for our newsletters. Contact us if you would like to contribute.

Let others know about our society!

We enjoy helping genealogists and researchers discover more about area families, history of the village and township including businesses, farms, schools, and religious life.

Check out our website for more history! Links are on the last page of this newsletter.

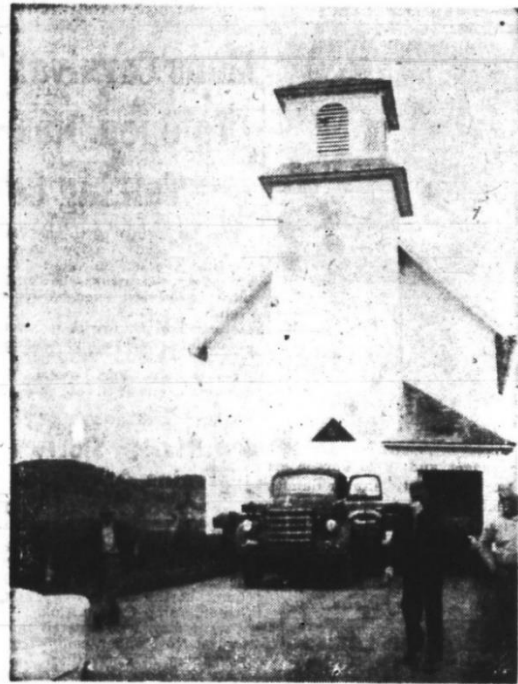
Building movers

by Debbie Blau

A house can be disassembled log by log or brick by brick, and then rebuilt, or it can be moved as one piece. You may have seen the dramatic pictures of a round barn that was recently moved near Lancaster in Grant County. Imagine all the work and skill required to move a building. Following are some buildings that were moved in the Plain area.

In October 1944, Herman Ostermeyer hired a house mover named Johnny Townsend from Soldiers Grove to move the Ostermeyer farmhouse located 6 miles north of Plain (turn right on Highland Rd near Hwy. GG to Loreto), today's address of S8282 Highland Drive. The house was relocated to 1110 Oak Street in Plain where Herman and Margaret Blau Ostermeyer resided. Townsend wanted to retire and asked Herman if he would like to take over the house-moving business. Herman agreed. From Herman's obituary on August 31, 1977, "*Mr. Ostermeyer worked as a white washer of barns, but will be more readily be remembered as a building mover. The house he lived in on Oak Street in the Village of Plain for the past 35 years was moved to its present location from a farm north of the village.*"

After their marriage in October 1935, Herman Hetzel and wife Althea Riek built a new brick house at S11850 Raymer Drive in Lower Wilson Creek in Spring Green Township (former farm of George and Barbara Pfeiffer Hetzel). The old wood frame house was moved to Plain by Herman Ostermeyer. The house was divided into two houses with one of the houses located on Reservoir Avenue.



After half-a century or more in its rural setting northwest of Spring Green, the Big Hollow Lutheran Church moves along County Highway G to its new location in the village. Moving operations, in charge of Hermann Ostermeyer of Plain and aided by members of the congregation, began Monday morning and by nightfall the building rested on a country lane near the Gordon Baken home. Next day the church was spotted beside its enlarged basement excavation to await finishing of the foundation walls. Church officials hope the project may be completed within another 30 days. September 24, 1953 *Home News Photo*

Big Hollow Lutheran Church moving down the road in 1953

Schools are also moved. A one-room schoolhouse built in 1906, Pleasant View School, Jt. District #10 in Franklin Township, was originally located on Highway B about 3 miles east of Plain. About 2006, the school was moved to Wilson Creek onto the former property of Frank & Amelia Gruber Feiner just west of the intersection of Hwy WC and Wilson Creek Road.

If anyone knows of other buildings that were moved in the Plain area, let us know!

Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is a mystery. Today? Today is a gift. That's why we call it the present.
~B. Olatunji

The OFTHS and/or author copyright © all articles contained in this newsletter; permission must be obtained from them prior to any further use.



Old Franklin Township Historical Society

915 Wachter Ave.

P.O. Box 218

Plain, WI 53577

[https://www.facebook.com/groups/OFTHS/
plainofths@gmail.com](https://www.facebook.com/groups/OFTHS/plainofths@gmail.com)
<http://oldfranklintownshiphistoricalsociety.weebly.com/>
PRESERVE OUR HERITAGE

OFTHS Officers and Board Members

President: Eugene Hausner

Vice President: Marian Burmester

Treasurer: Mary Jayne Liegel

Secretary: Georgene Hausner

Directors: William Bergman, Lucille Herbrand & Mary Prem

Honorary Directors: Debbie Blau, Kenneth Kraemer, Gary Haas

Newsletter Editor and Website Manager: Marian Ruhland Burmester

Newsletter Proofreader: Debbie Blau