

# Old Franklin Township Historical Society Newsletter

December 2014 - Volume 7, Issue 2

With the success of our "Swing With The Bands" event on August 15th, we are planning do so again next year. Thanks to all the community for their support. A special thanks to the bands (and their families) that played that evening. Since it was such a big outdoor event we had been worried about the weather, but were blessed with a terrific night. Below are a few photos from the event and the band display at the town hall.



Plain Hot Shots



Judd and Alan Blau



Blau family, Plain Hot Shots and Joe (Sepp) Lechner guitar with case

# Armed Bank Robberies in Plain - 1936 and 2014

*THE OSHKOSH NORTHWESTERN*  
Oshkosh, Wis., Thursday Evening, September  
10, 1936 (price of this newspaper two cents)

**STATE BANK AT PLAIN  
IS HELD UP TODAY**

Plain, Wis.—(A)—Two armed men robbed the Plain State Bank of about \$400 shortly after 1 p. m. today and fled in an automobile toward Spring Green on Highway 23.

Cashier Joseph Brickl was alone in the bank when the two men entered and drew pistols. They scooped up all the currency at the bank counter, but found the bank vault locked and left hurriedly, Brickl said, without asking him to open it. He said they drove away in a black car with red trimmings, bearing Minnesota license plates. Brickl described one man as of medium height and weight and wearing a dark blue suit. He was unable to give a description of the other man.

Plain is a village in southwestern Sauk county.

2014

On October 7, 2014, at about 9:59 AM, two masked men entered the Peoples Community Bank in the Village of Plain, Sauk County. Armed with what appeared to be handguns, they forced the employees to turn over an undisclosed amount on money.

The men are suspected to be African-American. They were wearing dark colored clothing with the majority of their facial features covered.

The men escaped with an undisclosed amount of money.

All bank employees were transported to Sauk Prairie Hospital for treatment for exposure to the suspected pepper spray and were released.

The Wisconsin Bankers Association and The Peoples Community Bank of Mazomanie are offering a reward up to \$50,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the persons responsible.

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*Note: THE OSHKOSH NORTHWESTERN, Oshkosh, Wis., Friday Evening, September 11, 1936 updated the amount stolen in the robbery to \$228.25*

## Any ideas on the location of this painting?



In our newsletter of March of 2007 we posted a question on the location of this Seifert painting of a farmstead in the vicinity of Plain, Wisconsin. It is a watercolor, oil, and tempera on cardboard, 15 ½ x 28 inches, and is in possession of the Fenimore Art Museum (Cooperstown, NY). Folk artist Paul Seifert, painted many farmsteads in the Sauk and Richland County area. Thanks to Sandy Stiemke and Joseph E. Kapler (Curator at the Wisconsin Historical Society), we have an answer as to the location of the farm. Per an email from Joseph E. Kapler to Sandy: "I'm 99% sure that it is the Herman Wegner farm located at 29439 Wallace Lane in Richland County (just south of County Hwy O). It is owned by Bill and Amy Bindl; they rent the house but live nearby."

## Wachter Avenue in Plain, Wisconsin

Wachter Avenue is on Highway 23 and is the main street that runs through Plain from north to south. In the June 2014 issue of our newsletter, there was a query about why a street in Plain was named for a Wachter family. The following research by Debbie Blau may provide the answer to the question.

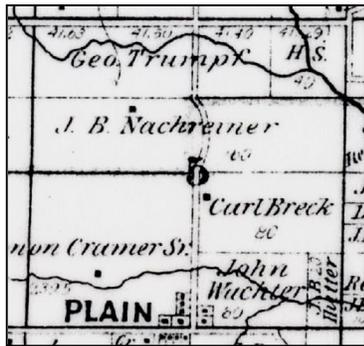


Johann "John" Wachter was born in 1821 in Irlach, Gemeinde Tiefenbach, in the Oberpfalz region of Bavaria. At about age 45, he emigrated to America in June 1866 on the same ship as the Paulus Kraemer family. He was the only Wachter listed on the ship manifest. At some point (either in Germany or in America), John married Margaret (last name not known, but also born in Bavaria).

John owned quite a bit of land in Franklin Township at various times. 1870 and 1880 US Federal Census records show he was a farmer and lived in Franklin Township. The 1877 plat map shows he owned property in section 17 south of Plain. In December 1884, John sold 100 acres to "Karl Prech" (Carl Brech) in Town 9, Range 4.<sup>1</sup> Carl Brech had married Elizabeth Wachter on January 24, 1884. In 1892, John Wachter sold one-half acre of land to Gilbert E. Sliter who started building a store on the property. The store was finished by Dave Morgans.<sup>2</sup> This store building later became the residence of Frank and Evangeline Reuschlein Haag, and was located on the east side of Wachter Avenue, south of the Franklin Town Hall.

John and Margaret Wachter lived in a brick house at what is now 905 Cedar Street in Plain (see photo on the right showing the Wachter home on the left and town hall on the right). The 1893 Franklin Township plat map above shows that John Wachter owned 60 acres of land in Section 5 which included his home on Cedar Street. Just north of that land was property owned by "Carl Brech."<sup>3</sup>

John died at age 74 on December 5, 1895. In Wachter's final decree, he stated, "It is also my wish for my widow Margaret Wachter to dispose of the property to the best advantages and as soon as she possibly can."<sup>4</sup> In 1896, Margaret sold property to the Town of Franklin.<sup>5</sup>



### New Town Hall

A new town hall was built at the current address of 915 Wachter Avenue on the southeast corner of Cedar Street and Wachter Avenue. A cornerstone in the town hall building is inscribed: "Est. 1898."

Hildegarde Thering wrote in her 1982 book: "In 1899, the Franklin Town

<sup>1</sup> Land Record, Sauk County, Baraboo, Wisconsin. December 11, 1884. Volume 51, page 357 of Deeds.

<sup>2</sup> Hildegarde Thering, *A History of Plain, Wisconsin*. 1982. Page 66, Reuschlein Brothers.

<sup>3</sup> Franklin Township. Plat map from Wisconsin State Historical Society (1970s).

<sup>4</sup> Johann Wachter, Last Will and Testament; Probate; September 8, 1890, Sauk County, Wisconsin. Microfilm: Sauk Series 85, Reel 40 (original box 99), located at shelf AP93-2197 in the 4th floor archive of the Wisconsin Historical Society in Madison, Wisconsin. Sauk County Register of Deeds, Vol G, Misc., pp. 524-525, #118886. Box 99 at the Sauk County Historical Society at the Van Orden Mansion.

<sup>5</sup> *Home News*, July 20, 2005, page 10, "Plain keeps tie with town to maintain historic building." Quote by town chairman, Joseph Prem: "The real estate was bought from John Wachter's widow in 1896."

Hall was built by Rob and Albert Nachreiner who received \$84 for their labor. Rob was paid \$1.25 per hour and his brother Albert received 50 cents per hour. This building replaced the wagon shop of Moses Tunstall, wagon maker, which had been built, part log and part frame, in earlier years. The upstairs of the new building was for the use of the Town of Franklin, with a jail and fire station downstairs for the village use. Occupancy of the jail was not very frequent, except during the Great Depression of 1936. The alarm bell in the tower was the only warning system that the village possessed in the earlier days. In the fall of 1979, the alarm bell was removed by a group of workers and placed upon a concrete base in front of the new fire station."<sup>6</sup>

In 2005, the town hall became the home of the Old Franklin Township Historical Society and museum. So far, nothing specific was found that states the reason Wachter Avenue was named for the Wachter family, or in what year. But through circumstantial evidence, one may conclude that the reason the street was named Wachter Avenue is because John and Margaret Wachter owned the land that was sold to Franklin Township where the town hall was built.

Margaret Wachter died on June 7, 1900. The Wachters were buried in St. Luke's Old Cemetery. The burial place of "Johan" and "Margaretina" Wachter is today marked with newly restored iron crosses, with inscriptions written in German

### **John Wachter's children**

John's will bequeathed \$100 "to my daughter Barbara Schnellvenegel [Schnellboegl] now living in Germany." A baptism record shows Barbara's mother was Walburg Schnellboegl.<sup>7</sup> A baptism record has not yet been found to show that Elizabeth Wachter (Mrs. Carl Brech) was also a daughter of John Wachter. However, she was living in the Wachter household in Franklin Township according to the 1870 and 1880 US Federal Census; her birth place was listed as Bavaria. To complicate things, John's will decreed, "After the death of my widow Margaret Wachter one half of the remainder, or remaining property shall be given to my *nephew* John Brech son of Elizabeth Brech the other one half shall be equally divided his brother and sisters." The word "nephew" changes the relationship of Elizabeth and John Wachter. They may not have been father and daughter, but were siblings. Having been siblings is unlikely due to their 31-year age difference. However, wording in wills can be misleading, and it was common to list grandchildren as nephews.<sup>8</sup> Further evidence to support that Elizabeth was a daughter is her marriage certificate which lists her parents as John Wachter and Margarethe Wachter. Around 1902, Elizabeth and Carl Brech and children left Franklin Township and moved to Parkston, South Dakota.

### **A memory of John Wachter**

Mr. Wachter used to play cards quite often with Michael Blau, who emigrated in 1862 from Gleissenberg. Bavaria. Being from the same area of Bavaria, they spoke the same Bavarian dialect. Michael's wife was Barbara Dobmeier Blau, also born in Gleissenberg. Barbara told her grandson, Joseph M. Blau, that when Michael and Wachter died, she wanted to put a pack of cards under their coffin so they could play cards on the other side.<sup>9</sup> Michael Blau died in 1892, three years before John Wachter.

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<sup>6</sup> Hildegard Thering. *A History of Plain, Wisconsin*. 1982. Page 74, Franklin Town Hall.

<sup>7</sup> Baptism record, Tiefenbach parish (Oberpfalz, Bavaria, Germany), December 1, 1842, baptism of Barbara Schnellboegl.

<sup>8</sup> "Nephew may be grandchild." Elizabeth Shown Mills. "Analyzing Wills for Useful Clues," *OnBoard 1* (May 1995): 16. <http://www.bccertification.org/skillbuilders/skbl955.html>

<sup>9</sup> November 5, 1977, interview with Joseph M. Blau born in 1888.



Reply to a question in June 2014 newsletter:  
What other streets in Plain were named after local residents? Answer: Alma Street named after Alma Nachreiner McCarville (b.1903 - d.1968)

*Photo: 1931 Chimes*

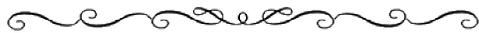
*THE CAPITAL TIMES, Thursday, Feb. 22, 1968, page 34*

SPRING GREEN - Mrs. Alma McCarville, 64, Spring Green, died in a Sauk Prairie hospital Wednesday.

Madison survivors include a son, James Jr., 3822 Sycamore Ave.

She also is survived by her husband, James; two other sons, Raymond, Oregon; and Philip, Janesville; a daughter, Mrs. James Schlagheck, Cedar Rapids, Ia.; a sister, Mrs. Joseph Haas, Milwaukee; and five grandchildren.

The funeral will be at 8 a.m. Saturday in St. Patrick's Catholic Church, Loretta. Friends may call after 7 tonight at the Richardson Funeral Home, Spring Green, where the rosary will be said tonight and Friday at 7:30 p.m.



Would you like to submit articles for our newsletter...?



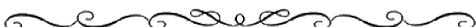
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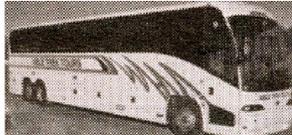
## Some of our recent donations:

- Ring collection: Anna Marie Schmitz Ring's pictures from her grandmother (Bissen Family). Books, crystals, pictures from Ring side. Clete Ring service pictures - news article of World War II.
- Father Jim Lins Extreme Unction (Last Sacrament) box.
- Donald Gelhouse Collection: Pictures of the Joe Wimmer family (Donald's Dad's first marriage).
- George Liegel (b. 1858): pocket watch & homestead oval picture. Son, George F. Liegel, wedding picture framed with Mary Laubmeier Liegel along with their framed wedding license written in German.
- *Kraemer in Amerika: History and genealogy of the Kraemers from Tiefenbach, Bavaria, Germany, who immigrated to Stearns County, Minnesota, and to Los Angeles, California.* Authors Debra Blau and Kenneth Kraemer, 2014.



## Email List...

Due to the costs of printing the OFTHS newsletter, members who receive the newsletter by mail will be sent a black and white version. For those members who have an email address, the newsletter will continue to be sent as a color PDF file. If you have an email address, please help us cut printing and postage costs. Let us know your email address at [plainofths@gmail.com](mailto:plainofths@gmail.com).

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*When visiting these sponsors mention that you saw the advertisement in the OFTHS Newsletter.*



*From the President's desk . . .*

2014 was a successful year for the Old Franklin Township Historical Society (OFTHS). We celebrated our "10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary" since our establishment under the leadership of our first President, Phyllis Liegel Dearborn.

Each year, the OFTHS museum features a new exhibit which focuses on people with special talents from our community. The display theme for our museum was "History of Area Bands." We decided to celebrate our tenth anniversary with a new fundraising event, "Swing With The Bands." The event was highlighted with three bands of past years, the Blau Family Band, Hank Dederick and Ken Reider from the Plain Hot Shots, and the Delta Routine. Based on the feedback from all the people who attended this event, we plan to feature this event again, in 2015.

At the Plain EMT/Fire Department celebration on Sunday, July 27th, the OFTHS honored Jerry Kraemer and Caroline Schweiss as community "Man/Woman of the Year" for their many years of community service.

Please note in this newsletter there are articles identifying two persons who once lived in the community of Plain. Two streets are named in their honor.

As the OFTHS reflects back on 2014, we want to thank our sponsors of the "Swing With The Bands" event, and all the persons who have donated items to the OFTHS for our children and grandchildren to enjoy and reflect back on the early challenges of their ancestors.

Wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Until next time! í Eugene Hausner email: hausnergp@frontier.com



*"The Present is the living sum-total of the whole Past."*  
~Thomas Carlyle

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*Old Franklin Township Historical Society*

915 Wachter Ave.

P.O. Box 218.

Plain, WI 53577

[plainofths@gmail.com](mailto:plainofths@gmail.com)

<http://www.townoffranklinhistoricalsociety.com/>

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