Old Franklin Township Historical Society Newsletter

Joseph M. Nachreiner
by Marian Ruhland Burmester

Joseph Michael Nachreiner was a husband, father, businessman, store owner, embalmer, undertaker, and very active in the community. At the time, he was just trying to get by in life. It likely never crossed his mind how important his work would one day be to genealogists with ties to the Franklin Township and Plain, Wisconsin, area. His undertaking record books (Volumes 1 and 2), filled with data now treasured by family historians, were donated by his grandson Rev. Joseph H. Haas of West Allis, WI, to the library in Plain long before the Kraemer Library was built. Gary Haas digitized and indexed each burial record to enable more people to have access to these records.

Joseph was born March 8, 1873, to Joseph Xavier Nachreiner and Theresia Brückl on a farm in Franklin Township, Sauk County, Wisconsin. He was the oldest of their nine children. The other children were Robert, Daniel, Otilia, Albert, Lidwina, Carl, Margaret and Rudolph

Joseph X. Nachreiner farm home

Joseph Xavier Nachreiner was 8 years old when he left Waldmünchen, Bavaria, Germany, with his parents, Franz Michael Nachreiner and Franziska Frank, and his three brothers Alois, Johann Baptist, and Johann Michael. Their ship "Republik" left from Bremen and arrived in New York on August 16, 1854. They settled on 120 acres of unimproved land in Franklin Township.

Nachreiner home in Waldmünchen

In 1899, at age 26, Joseph M. left the family farm and went to work at Lins and Hood in Spring Green, WI. This business sold hardware, farm implements, furniture, and also housed a funeral parlor. It was there that Joe was introduced to the embalming and undertaking business. About April 1905, "Jos Nachreiner left for Milwaukee to attend school for embalming."

Sometime in the fall of 1902, he partnered with John Beck in the general merchandise business in Plain. At that time, the store handled windmills, barbed wire, buggies, farm implements, paint, oil, heaters, threshing machines and Royal sewing machines.

Beck & Nachreiner store circa 1900

Joseph married Mary Bettinger (left), daughter of Franklin Township farmers Ludwig "Louis" and Augusta (Hutter) Bettinger, on Oct. 28, 1902, at St. Luke's Catholic Church in Plain. Portrait by E. Ostrander of Spring Green.

In the Nov. 17, 1992, issue of *Sauk Prairie Star*, was a feature article, "*Adella Hetzel shares memories of a 'Plain' lifestyle*" by Doris Litscher Gasser. Adella was the youngest daughter of John Beck and Elizabeth Borget and shared the following memories.

"My dad's partner J. B. Weiss sold to Joe Nachreiner… As one entered the central part of the store from Main Street, there were groceries. The store also served as a post office. Behind the grocery section was the general department, which stocked household items and clothing. On the east side there was a hardware section and to the west a warehouse, and in the back there was a mortuary. This section also housed horses and buggies. There was a little outside convenience

house for customers and salesmen. . . Joe Nachreiner sold caskets and did embalming. Joe was a good undertaker. You wouldn't think it to look at him. He learned how when he worked for Lins and Hood in Spring Green. The caskets were kept in the shed behind the store. They were made of pine wood covered with black cloth, no handles or anything extra. The people would come and select the inside material. It was so much a yard, you know, the fancy part. My mother took excelsior[1] and made a bed and a pillow and covered it with muslin and did all of the inside trimmings. Most of the caskets were black. The children's were white. Some of the caskets were $30, some $50. The records are down at the library.

Joe Nachreiner went to the homes to embalm and put them into the casket. The wake and everything was done in the home. He put up a black wreath near the door. I think he took the wreath from home to home. We had a wonderful hearse and a team of new horses. The hearse was fancy. It had glass sides. It had black trimmings with gold fringes. It had curtains, you know, drape-like. Nachreiner would go out to the country with the hearse and load the casket and bring it to the church. There was singing by a mixed choir and Mass done in Latin. The relatives were in the front pews and walked behind the casket. Oh, my, they were sorrowful. They wore black and a black veil. They wouldn't think of going in colors like you do today. Yes, there were flowers. We could get flowers from Spring Green – those who could afford them."

Joseph M. Nachreiner is the first man standing behind the horse-drawn hearse

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[1] Excelsior definition - fine curled wood shavings used especially for packing fragile items.

The Beck and Nachreiner store had another name change after Charles Carpenter joined the business in 1903. It became Beck, Nachreiner & Carpenter. The three partners expanded their business in 1904

Store in White Mound about 1906-1908

by purchasing the stock of William Welch at White Mound, with Charles Carpenter taking over the management of the store.

Joe M., Mary Nachreiner Alma and Marie

Joseph and Mary's first child Alma was born on Nov. 2, 1903. Their second child Marie was born on May 21, 1910. They lost a daughter, Katherine Mary (1917) and a son, Joseph Lewis (1923) in infancy.

Due to illness in the spring of 1912, John Beck sold his interest in the store to his nephew Lawrence Beck. The store took on another name change to "Nachreiner and Beck." In 1918, Albert Kraemer joined the partnership of Nachreiner and Beck. Eventually they expanded and reorganized the business. As new partners, Albert Kraemer and Mike A. Ring conducted the general merchandise and hardware departments. Nachreiner and Beck erected a tile building north of Peter Peters' saloon, taking over the plumbing, heating and farm machinery. Joe Kraemer and his son, Alois, purchased the Nachreiner and Beck farm implement and plumbing business.

Meanwhile, Joseph M. Nachreiner continued his undertaking business at Plain. Joseph was not only a businessman in the Plain and Franklin Township area, he was also very active in his community. At the first election on June 4, 1912, to secure a charter for the Village of Plain, Joe was elected as a trustee for two years. In 1914, J. M. Nachreiner served as a member of the Sauk County Supervisors for the Village of Plain.

Joe M. & Mary Nachreiner with daughter Alma

When the Plain fire company was organized in 1916, Joseph M. was listed as a member and officer, and in 1917, he was chosen as Vice Chief. He held the position of Supervisor of the Village of Plain for about ten years.

In those days, church was a very important part of community life. Shortly after the Catholic Knights of Wisconsin had their first meeting at Reuschlein Hall in 1915, Joseph was listed as Vice President. After St. Luke's School Chapel was built in 1920, Joseph was very instrumental in the plans for organizing the high school in the same building.

On Oct. 5, 1943, Joseph died at age 70 at a Richland Center Hospital after undergoing an operation the week before. Funeral services were held in St. Luke's Church at Plain, with the Rev. P. A. Beschta officiating, with burial in St. Luke's new cemetery. His wife, Mary, died on Sept. 5, 1953, at the age of 72 in a Sun Prairie nursing home and was also buried at Plain.

Sources for the Nachreiner story are as follows:
- OFTHS photos and files of Phyllis Liegel Dearborn
- "*Germans to America*" by Glacier & Filly, Vol. 8 State Historical Society, Madison, WI
- "*A Standard History of Sauk County*" by Harry Ellsworth Cole, 1918; pages 242, 944 & 945
- "*A History of Plain, Wisconsin*" by Hildegarde Thering, 1982; pages 61, 65, 91, 170, 139, 182
- Hildegarde Thering notes digitized by Gary Haas, image htbc0026

"NACHREINER GANG"

This photo of the "Nachreiner Gang" eating watermelon circa 1910-1911 is from OFTHS files. Attempts were made to identify everyone, from left to right:

<u>3 men in back</u>: Alois Brückl, Albert Nachreiner (hat), Joseph Nachreiner (far right).
<u>Middle adults</u>: Lidwina (Liddy) Nachreiner (Mrs. George Alt), Mary Bettinger (Mrs. Joseph Nachreiner), Rudolph Nachreiner, Margaret Nachreiner (Mrs. William Ring), Mary Magli (Mrs. Albert Nachreiner), George Alt.
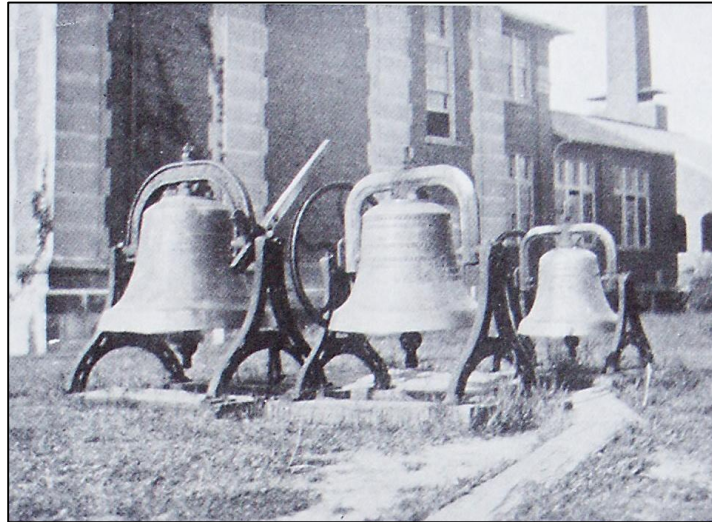<u>Far left in front</u>: Daniel Nachreiner (was not yet married).
<u>Children with dolls</u>: Alma Nachreiner (Mrs. James McCarville, daughter of Jos. & Mary Nachreiner), Daniel Alt and Wilhelmina "Helmie" Alt (children of George Alt & Lidwina Nachreiner), Marie Nachreiner (Mrs. Joseph F. Haas; daughter of Jos. & Mary Nachreiner).

Notes: Wilhelmina Alt was born in 1908 and died in 1916. Marie Nachreiner, the baby on the photo, was born in May 1910. Alois Nachreiner would have been age 62 in 1910; Alois Brückl would have been age 55.

Please feel free to help identify this photo by email plainofths@gmail.com*. Thanks!*

Church bells at St. Luke's Catholic Church in Plain, Wisconsin

THE STORY OF THE BELLS OF ST. LUKE
May 21, 1885 - The Times
A bell weighing 600 pounds was taken from this station to Plain last Thursday for the Catholic church about to be built. The name of the donor, Ignatz Bindl, and the name of the official priest, Rev. (F. J.) Shimonick, are cast on the bell in raised letters. A Mrs. Theresa Weishan is donating a bell weighing 400 pounds. The church will then have three bells weighing 800 pounds, 600 pounds, and 400 pounds respectively. It may seem strange to some that a country church should have so many bells, but it is the custom with large congregations of Catholics to have two or more bells to be rung on various occasions. The ringing of each bell is understood by the members. The Franklin (Plain) church is to be a very fine, costly one. Work will commence on the new catholic church next week.

April 6, 1977 – The Home News
The higher tower of the church (the present church) contains three bells - the largest named Luke, the medium one Mary for the Blessed Virgin, and the smallest John. The John bears the inscription to "Johann Weishan - the first white settler in Franklin, Sauk County, Wisconsin, in 1847." The Luke and John bells are inscribed with the date "1885" and note a "25th Jubilee."

Ringing the Bells of St Luke
By Harold & Anita Frank
When the cyclone demolished the old church in 1918, only the steeple containing the bells remained. The steeple was dismantled, and the bells moved to the site of the present church. They were rung at ground level to announce the church services which were held in the school building at that time. In 1939, they were hoisted to their present location in the bell tower of the new church. There are three bells - large, medium, and small. Since the primary purpose of the bells is to alert people of' an impending church service, they are always rung at the start of the Mass. Some years ago, on weekdays, the ringing of all three bells indicated a High Mass, the two smaller bells a Low Mass, with Sundays and Holy Days always utilizing all three bells. Until a few years ago, the medium bell was run briefly, one half-hour before the beginning of all Masses.

Above articles are from *The Home News* (Spring Green, WI), October 13, 1982, page 9, with the title "Hear them ring." The 3 bells pictured above from the 1935 "Chimes" yearbook were located on the north side of the Catholic school and Chapel building which was dedicated in 1920.

ST. LUKE'S CHIMES

Sometimes sad, sometimes glad
Sometimes just a calling clear;
Oft with glee, happy free,
Sounding far and near.

Jubilant ringing, exultant singing
On each high feast day;
Sweet joy shedding, gladness spreading,
By their happy lay.

Sometimes groaning, sometimes moaning
Calling sinners to repent;
Now extoling, then consoling,
Giving hope when they relent.

Sometimes tolling, sadly rolling
Telling of a loved one gone;
Hearts are bleeding, bells are pleading,
Begging prayers for wrong.

Zita Schmitz '35

(Above is from *St. Luke's Chimes*, Volume II, St. Luke's High School, Plain, Wisconsin. 1935. Poem and photo of 3 bells on page 11, and Zita's photo on page 21)

Zita Schmitz was a Senior in the Class of 1935 when her poem was published. She was born August 5, 1918, in Bear Valley, Richland Co., WI, to Peter Anthony and Anna Margaret (Bissen) Schmitz. She married Harold Robert Nachreiner. Zita died April 2, 1963, Plain, Sauk Co., WI.

Dean Blau (1933-2015) recalled hearing St. Luke's church bells toll once for each age of a person that had recently died. The Blaus could hear the tolling bells from their farm 2-1/2 miles north of Plain and counted the tolls to try to figure out who died if they knew someone had been sick. The bells also rang at noon each day, and people would stop their work in the fields and bow their heads in prayer.

From *St. Luke Catholic Church, Plain, Wisconsin Bicentennial Memories*, 1976: "When there is a death in the parish the large bell is rung approximately 50 times, then the same bell tolls the age of the person who died. On the day of a funeral the bell is again tolled until the casket enters the church, when all three bells are rung. After the mass, the bell again tolls until the funeral procession reaches the gravesite. . . . St. Luke's has had many dedicated bell ringers over the years. Among them are: Joseph Laubmeier, lgnatz Schreiner, Clem Frank (whose sons, Harold, Gordon and Victor took over the bell ringing chores each summer), Gerhard Dischler, Mrs. Christine Voelkel, Thomas Bindl, George Weitzel, Alphonse Alt, Josie Hetzel, Harland Bladl and presently Ed Frank."

From the President's desk....

2019 was another historic year at the OFTHS Museum. During Plain's Fire & EMS Celebration parade on July 28, the OFTHS recognized Mercille Reuter Floerke and the late Gary Weiss as "Man and Woman of the Year" for their many contributions to the community.

In October, we had the opportunity to display an historic exhibit of Women's Suffrage. In 1919, Wisconsin was one of the first states to vote to ratify the 19th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution which allowed women to vote for the first time in the 1920 presidential election. Mary Jayne Liegel did a great job researching and assembling the exhibit at the museum.

On November 24-25, the museum held an open house during Plain's Christkindlmarkt, a Bavarian-style celebration of Christmas with events held throughout the village. Mary Jayne Liegel read "A Christmas Story" to children, and the museum featured Christmas cards dating back to the early 1900's. Visitors enjoyed reflecting on Christmas traditions of the past.

OFTHS is thankful to the membership and to the community for their many donations of both monetary and archival items to our museum during the past year.

Wishing everybody well during our holidays, and a Happy New Year.

Until next time...... Eugene Hausner   email: eugenehausner@gmail.com

MERRY CHRISTMAS
Beck, Nachreiner & Carpenter
General Merchandise
PLAIN, WIS.
1908 plate calendar
owned by Marian Ruhland Burmester

If you cannot get rid of the family skeleton, you may as well make it dance.
~George Bernard Shaw

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