

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 X. Nachreiner farm home

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



Nachreiner home in Waldmünchen

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.

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.



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.



Beck & Nachreiner store
circa 1900

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



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

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 excelsior¹ 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.”

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 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.



Store in White Mound
about 1906-1908

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

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

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. 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.



Joe M. & Mary Nachreiner with daughter Alma

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.

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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 Hildegard Thering, 1982; pages 61, 65, 91, 170, 139, 182
- Hildegard 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:

3 men in back: Alois Brückl, Albert Nachreiner (hat), Joseph Nachreiner (far right).

Middle adults: 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.

Far left in front: Daniel Nachreiner (was not yet married).

Children with dolls: 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!