

# *Old Franklin Township Historical Society Newsletter*

June 2015 - Volume 8, Issue 1

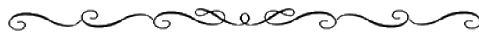
*Swing With The Bands  
Friday, August 14th - 5 pm to 10 pm*



Location: Plain Park Pavilion  
925 Parkview Avenue  
Plain, Wisconsin 53577

One block north of Hwy B, and two blocks east of Hwy 23

*Everything is still in the planning stage.  
Watch for postings & updates.*



Our museum will be open every Sunday,  
June through September from 1 to 3 p.m.

# The Michael and Catherine Weishan Tragedy

Kenneth L. Kraemer

We all know about the people who came to Town of Franklin, Sauk County and thrived, leaving generations of descendants to carry on their name and legacy. But what about those whose flame died out too soon and have been lost in the rubble of history?<sup>1</sup> In a recent issue of this newsletter, Debbie Blau told the story of John Wachter after whom the main street of Plain -Wachter Avenue – is named. The story gave life to a mystery person in the history of Plain and Town of Franklin.

## Michael and John Weishan

Michael Weishan is also an early pioneer of the area. His story had been lost due to an accident of history – his untimely death in the Civil War, which left his family destitute. Michael emigrated from Germany in late 1852, arriving in New York on 10 Jan 1853 from Bremen, Germany. At age 32, he traveled alone on the ship *Johanne*.<sup>2</sup>

Michael's brother, John, had emigrated in 1847<sup>3</sup> and obtained 80 acres under a homestead land grant from the Mineral Point Land Office. In 1855, John sold half of the 80 acres to Michael. The location of their lands are shown on 1859 plat map<sup>4</sup> below. That same year Michael married Catherine (Eva



Catherina ) Reuschlein and began to build their life together on what is now the Allen Kraemer farmer on Butternut Road east of Plain. Catherine was the daughter of Heinrich Joseph Reuschlein and Elizabeth Vath who had emigrated from the state of Baden-Wurttemberg, Germany.<sup>5</sup>

## Michael and Catherine Weishan<sup>6</sup>

Over the next ten years Michael and Catherine developed the farm by building a log cabin and barn, clearing land, raising crops and tending farm

animals. The value of real property was reported at \$600 and personal property at \$200 in the 1860 U.S. Census. In 1864, they took out a mortgage for \$320 from Georg Pronold, Jr., to buy another 60 acres (Mortgages, Vol. O, Register of Deeds, Sauk County). By the end of 1864, they had accumulated 140 acres of land, had 15 acres fenced and under cultivation, owned livestock including horses, oxen, calves and sheep and also had a buggy and sleigh, as well as many farm implements and hand tools. The

<sup>1</sup> The "rubble of history" refers to the people, memories, stories and diverse materials which have been forgotten and/or discarded in the official narratives such as county histories and textbooks, which tend to focus mainly on the large events, institutions and people in history.

<sup>2</sup> Ancestry.com, New York Passenger Lists, 1820-1957

<sup>3</sup> A *History of Plain, Wisconsin* by Hildegard Thering, page 4

"John Weishan, born February 23, 1823, emigrated from Schonau, Baden, to America on May 23, 1847."

<sup>4</sup> Michael Weishan homestead on 1859 plat map of Franklin Township

Source: Sauk County Historical Society, Baraboo, WI. Note: The beautiful stone quarry is shown in the wrong location.

<sup>5</sup> Danielski and Pulvermacher, *The Genealogy and History of the Reuschlein Family*, Vol I & 2, 2006

<sup>6</sup> Michael and Catherine married on Aug. 19, 1855

Weishans also had four children by this time – Maria, Amelia, Johan and Elizabeth; and Catherine was pregnant with Caroline. Johann died as a child while the girls grew to adulthood.

On November 19, 1864, Michael and his brother, John Weishan, signed up to fight in the Civil War for one year with Company K of the 18<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment of Wisconsin. John came back from the war a year later, but Michael died of chronic diarrhea in Stanton military hospital in Washington DC on May 29, 1865. He is buried in Site 8248 in Arlington Cemetery (Descriptive roll of Company K, 18<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Wisconsin Infantry Volunteers, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI).

Catherine Weishan was suddenly destitute with five children. Phyllis Dearborn, a former tireless volunteer at the Old Franklin Township Historical Society, found that Catherine had filed for a widow's military pension and obtained the documents, but we have been unable to determine whether Catherine ever received it. Whether she did or not, the pension did not arrive in time to save her and her family from years of separation.

After receiving the news of her husband's death, Catherine requested probate of the estate in August 1865 probably in the hope that the farm assets would be greater than the liabilities. Probate documents from the Sauk County Court show the estate was valued at \$392.70, while debts totaled \$465. In September 1866, the Sauk County Court ordered the real property to be sold at auction in order to pay the debts.

A variety of early settlers around Plain were at the auction in October and bought things – mostly implements and tools but also a wagon, sleigh, and farm animals. The list of items and the buyers are shown in an Appendix available from the author, and include well-known family names such as:<sup>7</sup>

Ignatz Bindl	Joseph Reuschlein	Frank Frank	John B. Hooter
W.G. Alt	Joseph Beck	P. Shriner	Michael Hooter
Berhard Pronold	Jost Volkel	Michael Bindl	A. Beck
Georg Pronold	Ulrich Schoneman	John Weishan	Michael Nachriner
Fred Schonemann	John Cramer	Paul Luther	Henry Bear

Imagine the anguish of Catherine Weishan, who had just lost her husband, as she witnessed each piece of property that had been part of her and her husband's life for the last ten years put on the auction block. Having attended farm auctions as a child in the early 40s, I saw the anguish on the faces of husband and wife who lost their farms, and remember it vividly. The Weishan children most certainly felt it, too.

Even after auctioning off everything she could in the estate, Catherine was in still in debt, had a mortgage on the farm and no means of earning an income. As a result, she was unable to care for her children. One daughter, Elizabeth, was taken in by relatives, Joseph and Sara Reuschlein, in nearby Troy Township. The other daughters, Mary, Caroline and Emelia, became wards of Sauk County for a while, but were later reunited with their mother who remarried to Caspar Briar from Ithaca in Richland County.

Catherine and Casper Briar had several children of their own; Briars live today in the Ithaca area. The 1880 U.S. Census shows the Weishan children were single, Emelia as 21, single and Caroline as 15. Both were living in Ithaca with Caspar and Catherine. We do not know what happened to Mary. The girls do

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<sup>7</sup> Variation of surnames from auction papers: Schonemann/Schoneman (Schoenman), Frank (Franz) Frank, Shriner (Schreiner), Hooter (Hutter), Nachriner (Nachreiner)

not show up in later Richland County census records. The other daughter, Elizabeth, who was raised by Joseph and Sara Reuschlein, married George A. Patterson who lived on a nearby farm in neighboring Troy Township.

**Paul and Walburga Kraemer buy the Weishan farm**

Paul and Walburga had emigrated from Irlach, Bavaria in May 1866 traveling on ship *Teutonia* with George Pronold, Sr., his son Bernhard Pronold and John Wachter (see December 2014 OFTHS newsletter for his story). Paul and Walburga were living in Fredonia, Ozaukee County near Milwaukee at the time, and probably learned about the farm from the Pronolds. So Paul and Walburga came to Sauk County in May 1867 and bought the farm from the Briars with a mortgage in June 1867. In turn, the Briar’s paid off their mortgage to George Pronold, Jr., who had come to Franklin several years before his father and brother.

Paul Kraemer is the bridge between the old world of Bavaria where the Kraemers originated and the new world of America where the Kraemers of Plain, Town of Franklin have flourished and grown to a large family spread around the United States and the world. The farm that the Kraemers bought was not a 40-acre homestead of wild lands as some have suggested (Clair Geesaman, *A Kraemer Chronicle*, 1985). Over the ten years that the Weishans lived there, they had purchased more land and grown the farm from 40 to 140 acres as shown in the table below.

**Inventory of Michael Weishan lands<sup>8</sup>**

Acres	Description	Value
40	Forty acres of land known as the homestead farm and being the NW ¼ of NE ¼ of Section 15, town no. 9 North of Range 4 East, <b>fifteen acres fenced and under cultivation.</b>	\$150
40	Forty acres of land known as wild land being the E ¼ of NE ¼ Section No. 15 town 9 North of Range 4 East <b>uncultivated.</b>	\$10
40	Forty acres of land known as <b>wild land</b> and being the NW ¼ of NE ¼ Section 15 Town 9 North of Range 4 East.	\$60
20	Twenty acres of land known as <b>marsh and timber</b> lot being the E ½ of SW ¼ of the NE ¼ of Section No. 10 Town 9 North of Range 4 East.	\$40

And as indicated above, the Weishans had built log structures, cleared land, planted crops and raised livestock. In other words, it had been a working farm although much of it was still wild lands (see descriptions in the table above). The key point is that Paul and Walburga bought a property that was already developed, which they could move into right away, and which they could work during the summer and fall of 1867. They would have to buy some things that had been sold at the Weishan auction and they probably had to repair some parts of the farm right away (e.g., fences, roofs, doors, windows), but they had shelter and could plant summer and fall crops immediately, lay up wood for heating and cooking and mend or make some new clothes.

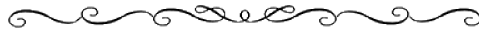
Over the next thirty five years, Paul Kraemer grew the farm to 280 acres, which he then split between sons Joseph and John. In turn, Joseph sold the farm to Sylvester and today the farm is owned by Sylvester’s youngest son Allen Kraemer. Similarly, John Kraemer sold the farm to Vincent Kraemer whose eldest daughter Evonne lives there today.

<sup>8</sup> Source: Sauk County Court, In probate In the matter of the estate of Michael Weishan deceased, 8 September 1865. Baraboo: Sauk County Historical Society, Probate Box W, Michael Weishan.

But the Kraemer family history, both in Bavaria and in Wisconsin, is another story. Some of it will appear in future issues of this newsletter. The full story of the Kraemers in Bavaria will appear in a book due out in September 2015 called *Wisconsin Kraemers in the Old World of Bavaria: History and Genealogy of the Kraemers of Tiefenbach, Bavaria who immigrated to Sauk County, Wisconsin*. A second volume, *Wisconsin Kraemers in the New World of America* will be out later.

A related book, called *Kraemer in Amerika*, is already published and can be checked out of the libraries in Plain and Spring Green. This book tells the story of another branch of Kraemers with the same roots, who emigrated from Tiefenbach, Bavaria, to Minnesota and later to California.

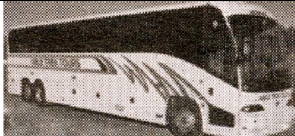

**Author's request:** The Weishan story is not complete and so we would appreciate hearing from anyone who knows what happened to the children of Michael and Catherine Weishan, and whether there are descendants living today. We would also like a picture of Michael and Catherine and/or their children. If you desire a copy of the Appendix mentioned above, or have any information about the Weishan family, please write to Kenneth Kraemer, 12 Harvey Court, Irvine, CA 92617 or email [kkraemer@uci.edu](mailto:kkraemer@uci.edu). We would greatly appreciate your help. You could also call 949-466-7588.



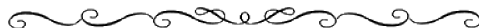
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*When visiting these sponsors mention that you saw the advertisement in the OFTHS Newsletter.*



On the following page is a condensed version of a story "**A Fateful Day in World War II ~ Cleve Ring Remembers**" written by **Ken Kraemer**. The longer version of the story can be viewed at our museum or you can contact Ken at the above address on this page. Visit our museum during the open houses that are scheduled every Sunday, June through September from 1 to 3 p.m. Check out our display on members of the Plain and Franklin Township that served in the armed forces during our nations wars.

## A Fateful Day in World War II ~ Clete Ring Remembers

Kenneth L. Kraemer



In 1943 at the age of 17 before completing high school and with the reluctant permission of his parents Clete Ring enlisted into the Navy. If he would have waited to be drafted it would have been the army, but he preferred the Navy.

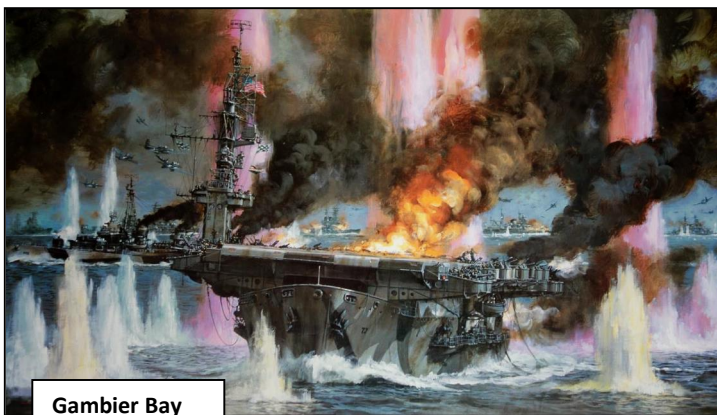
After training, Clete eventually was assigned, to the *Gambier Bay* which was to support General Douglas MacArthur's return to the Philippines. The *Gambier Bay* was a light escort carrier, which meant that it was not heavily armored. Clete characterized where he worked on the ship as "down deep in the bowels of the ship where it was very hot and very noisy."

" On October 25, 1944 a Japanese fleet struck our fleet about 90 miles from land.

The *Gambier Bay* was hit 28 times and sunk after helping to turn back a much larger attacking Japanese force. Early in the battle, the planes on the carrier were pushed off the deck of the ship to reduce fire hazard. Several destroyers and cruisers were also hit and sunk during this battle."

Clete's memory of what happened to him is frightening: "I was in the bottom of the ship when the attack began and knew something was happening because the lights and power went out. I was trying to find my way up and out when I saw that an entire deck of the carrier was gone and water was filling up the ship where the deck had been. I also saw holes in both sides of the ship where big shells – about 16 inch - had entered, exploded and blown a hole on the other side of the ship. This was the most terrifying moment for me. I did not know whether to jump into the water below me and try to swim out the holes, or go up top, or what I should do. Then someone tapped me on the shoulder and said "Follow me." We climbed up the steel ladders to the hanger deck (where planes are stored during maintenance and repair). There was a plane sitting on the hanger deck, and just as we approached the deck, the plane was hit and exploded sending shrapnel into my back and legs. I decided I had to get off the ship and went to the front end where I jumped off - about 35 feet above the water.

When I jumped from the carrier, I saw the Japanese battleship Yamato bearing down on the carrier and firing its big guns. When I hit the water, I was caught in the swirl of the sinking carrier and the wash from the Yamato's propellers and I felt myself being drawn down deeper in the water. I struggled something awful and finally came up for air. I tried to swim away from the ships and saw a life raft in the distance. Somehow I swam to it and found about 24 men hanging on to it.



Gambier Bay

They saw that I was wounded and pulled me into the raft. It had water in it and I thought it might sink with so many people hanging on to it. I must have passed out because I woke up in a hospital ship several days later. When I was stable enough, they sent me to a hospital on land where they did some surgery on me."

After he recovered sufficiently, Clete was sent back to sea duty until the war was over. He participated in other sea battles and received a number of awards for his service. The most significant was the Purple Heart, which is awarded for serious injury or death during war. The other medals were in recognition of his participation in the battle of Samar near Leyte Gulf and other battles in the Pacific.

In the years since the war, he has participated in various reunions of survivors of the *Gambier Bay*. Today, he is one of only six living survivors of that fateful day in the Pacific when the ship went down.



*From the President's desk . . .*

The month of June signals the lengthening of the daylight hours and the beginning of Summer. The OFTHS officers are busy preparing for their special 2015 exhibit; that of honoring the veterans of Franklin Township and the Plain community.

On a special note, the OFTHS museum will be open every Sunday, 1-3:00 p.m., in June through September, to provide an opportunity to view the special exhibits featuring the soldiers from our OFTHS community who served in the armed forces during our nations wars.

As we direct our focus to the Veterans of our OFTHS community area, we are focusing on those special persons who served in the Civil War, World War I and World War II. In this current newsletter, Ken Kraemer has written about two veterans who served from our area in the Civil War and World War II.

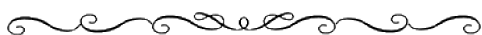
In the war memorabilia at the museum are letters received from the veterans to their spouses. We can only appreciate the communications avenues of today, but to window back to those times, makes you appreciate all the hardships the men in uniforms went through, and the anxious spouses waiting for letters from their loved ones.

The OFTHS will again plan to carry out their fundraiser of 2015 with the "Swing With The Bands" event, which is scheduled for Friday, August 14<sup>th</sup>, 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. Look for posters featuring the planned event in the near future. This is our major fundraiser to generate the necessary funds to maintain the OFTHS museum, and the storage and filing of the memorabilia currently at the museum.

We want to acknowledge the gift of filing cabinets recently donated from Kraemer Brothers, Inc. This will enable the museum to maintain files for many individuals and families who settled in our area and contributed to the community in one way or another. We also want to acknowledge; two sponsors of the recent newsletter; Richardson-Stafford Funeral Home, and Able Trek Tours of our recent newsletter.

For one of your summer outings, you are invited to visit the OFTHS museum during one of the Sunday afternoons, 1-3:00 p.m., open from June through September.

Until next time í í Eugene Hausner      email: [hausnergp@frontier.com](mailto:hausnergp@frontier.com)



*The historian must serve two masters, the past and the present.*

~Fritz Stern

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