

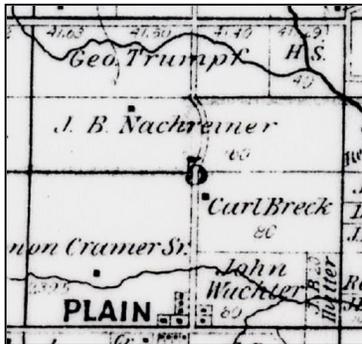
Wachter Avenue in Plain, Wisconsin

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 4.¹ 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.² 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 Breck."³



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."⁴ In 1896, Margaret sold property to the Town of Franklin.⁵

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

² Hildegard Thering, *A History of Plain, Wisconsin*. 1982. Page 66, Reuschlein Brothers.

³ Franklin Township. Plat map from Wisconsin State Historical Society (1970s).

⁴ 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.

⁵ *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."



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."

Hildegard Thering wrote in her 1982 book: "In 1899, the Franklin Town 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."⁶

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.⁷ 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.⁸ 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.

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

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

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

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.⁹ Michael Blau died in 1892, three years before John Wachter.



**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.

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⁹ November 5, 1977, interview with Joseph M. Blau born in 1888.