

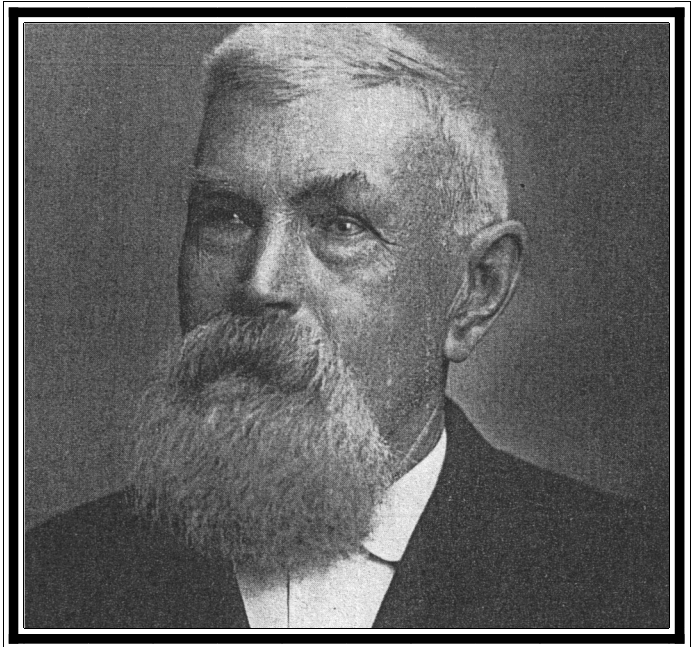
CANAWLERS AT REST

FRANK F. SCHMIDT

b. November 21, 1830

d. November 5, 1910

By Carolyn I. Schmidt



Frank F. Schmidt

Frank F. Schmidt was born to Mr. and Mrs. John Frederick Schmidt in his father's hotel in Bismarck, Prussia, Germany on November 21, 1830. John Frederick Schmidt was a well to do businessman. In connection with his prominent hotel he operated a large brewery and distillery in Germany. The Schmidt's had four children Carl, August, Frank and another whose name we do not know.

Frank was reared and attended school in Bismarck until he was fourteen years old. He had attained a fair education by that time and his father's friend, a German army officer, suggested that Frank should learn the trade of a machinist so that he might secure a position in the army as chief in that department. This idea sounded good so Frank entered a three year apprenticeship program specializing in the edged tools trade. However, the original plan was never carried out.

In the meantime Carl Schmidt, Frank's brother, had sailed to America about 1846. It was either due to Carl's being in America or to the revolutionary uprising in Prussia in 1848 that John Frederick Schmidt decided to take his other two sons, August and Frank, to America. They left Germany on November 4, 1848, and after a fifteen-week-long, terrible voyage they landed in New Orleans in February 1849. From there they went up the Ohio river to Cincinnati, Ohio. August contracted cholera and died in Cincinnati. John was not pleased with the prospects he saw in America and returned to Germany taking Carl back with him. In June 1849 Frank proceeded on to Terre Haute, Indiana and lived there all of his life.

Upon his arrival in Terre Haute Frank was unable to do any work for about two years or so because he, like his brother August, had contracted cholera in Cincinnati

and his health was impaired. After a rather long recovery he found employment on the Wabash & Erie Canal as a boatman and he was called Captain Schmidt throughout his life.

Although his father, John Frederick Schmidt, had purchased a farm for him in Clark county, Illinois, Frank must not have been interested in farming, for in 1851 he began an eighteen year stint working on the railroad for what became the Vandalia Railroad Company. Six years of that time he was their foreman. In later years he had the distinction of being the only man in Terre Haute who was among the employees of the first railroad in town. He helped run the first locomotive, which arrived by canal boat. It was called a "pony" and had two drive wheels.

In 1849 many families including the distinguished Carl Schurz came to America because of the revolutionary uprising in Prussia. On June 10, a few months after the Schmidts arrived, Bertram Nonnenbrunch, who also had been involved in the uprising, came to Cincinnati, Ohio with his family. A miller by trade, he planned to build a mill in Parkersburg, West Virginia, but he also contracted cholera at Cincinnati and died on July 4, 1849. His wife had to change their plan and find a home for their seven children. She purchased Frank's farm south of Marshall, Illinois and moved her family there.

Frank F. Schmidt fell in love with Ida, the Nonnenbrunch's daughter, who had been born on June 10, 1837 near Cologne, on the Rhine River in Prussia, Germany.

On November 15, 1855 Frank married Ida in Terre Haute, Vigo county, Indiana. They had four children: Rose Louise Schmidt, who later became the wife of William A. Peker a farmer of Terre Haute; Frances Otello Schmidt, who later became the wife of Henry F. Schmidt, the deputy sheriff of Vigo county; Edgar B. Schmidt, who was the city engineer in Terre Haute; and Edwin F. Schmidt, who died at age five. They reared all their children in Terre Haute in the German Lutheran faith.



Ida N. Schmidt

\$700. His wife Ida is age 33, keeping house, the children are Rosa, Otteelia, and Edgar ages 13, 12 and 1 respectively.

In 1873 Frank F. Schmidt was elected a member of the Terre Haute city council and served for six years/three terms. That same year of 1873, Frank, along with others, established the Terre Haute Mutual Savings Association. The Annual Report of the Auditor of the State of Indiana shows Frank as the president of this association in 1898, 1902, 1905, 1906, 1907 and, according to his obituary, was still president at the time of his death. It became one of the leading institutions of Terre Haute.

The Federal Census of 1880 shows Frank as F. M. Schmidt, age 49, a merchant. Living with him are his wife Ida, son E. B., a domestic, and two boarders.

Frank was somewhat involved with the fire insurance business and then, about 1896, he was a prime mover, along with Joseph Frisz, in instituting the Terre Haute Mutual Fire Insurance Company. He served as its president from the time of its inception. He also dealt in real estate. He and O.L. Brown were among the twelve who organized the first Republican club in Terre Haute and was a Republican for several years, but later he became an independent.

Being a prominent factor in the development and progress of Terre Haute, Frank's name was interwoven in

Frank F. Schmidt's Family						
Name	Birth	Place	Death	Place	Marriage	Place
John Frederick Schmidt		Prussia				
? ? Schmidt						
Children (4)						
1. Carl Schmidt		Prussia				
2. August Schmidt		Prussia	1849	Cincinnati, OH		
3. ? Schmidt		Prussia				
4. Frank F. Schmidt	11-21-1830	Bismark Prussia	11-05-1910	Terre Haute, IN	11-15-1855	Terre Haute
Ida Nonnenbrunch Schmidt	6-10-1837	Cologne Prussia	1-16-1909	Terre Haute, IN	11-15-1855	Terre Haute
Children (4)						
A. Rosa Louise Schmidt	8-30-1857	N Terre Haute, IN			4-17-1877	Terre Haute
William A. Peker	8-27-1848	Bismark, Ger.	1918		4-17-1877	Terre Haute
Children (6)						
1. Otelia Peker						
2. ? Peker						
3. Eda Peker	1879					
4. Carl Peker	2-??-1881					
5. Frank F. Peker	1-??-1887				6-??-1921	Terre Haute
Bessie M. Brown					6-??-1921	Terre Haute
6. Louise R. Peker	3-??-1893					
Earl Stephens						
B. Frances Otello Schmidt	1858				2-06-1878	Vigo County
Henry F. Schmidt					2-06-1878	Vigo County
C. Edgar B. Schmidt	3-12-1869	Terre Haute, IN			6-15-1904	Terre Haute
Emma Kenens					6-15-1904	Terre Haute
D. Edwin F. Schmidt	died at age 5					

its advancement. His many business interests promoted the prosperity of the city. He was a well known, progressive, public-spirited pioneer, who was universally respected and honored for these sterling characteristics.

Ida Nonnenbrunch Schmidt died on January 16, 1909. About two years later Frank F. [Frederick?] Schmidt passed away on November 5, 1910 at 6 p.m. according to the Terre Haute Health Office and his obituary, which appeared in the *Terre Haute Tribune* on November 6, 1910. He was almost 80 years old. At the time of his death he was "the oldest German citizen of Terre Haute in point of continuous residence, having been prominently identified with its business, political and social life since 1849, when the city was a small town, of scarcely 2,300 inhabitants."

Frank F. Schmidt had a private funeral at his residence at 1239 Chestnut street at 10 a.m. on Wednesday morning. He had a private burial as well. We do not know where he was buried.

Sources:

Ancestry.com

Birth, Marriage, Death Records

Federal Census 1870, 1880, 1900

Bradsby, H. C. *History of Vigo County, Indiana*. Chicago, IL: S. B. Nelson & Company Publishers, 1891.

Cronin, William F. *An Account of Vigo County From Its Organization*. Dayton, OH: Dayton Historical Publishing Co., 1922.

"Death Ends Career of Leading German," *Terre Haute Tribune*. Nov. 6, 1910.

Oakey, C. C. *Greater Terre Haute and Vigo County Closing the First Century's History of City and County*. Chicago, IL: The Lewis Publishing Company. 1908.

Special thanks to Connie McCammon, CSI member from Terre Haute, IN, for locating Frank's obituary in the *Terre Haute Tribune* and attempting to find his grave.

RACE FOR THE TOWPATH

After the Wabash & Erie Canal was no longer used as a transportation canal, it had other uses such as helping to supply Ft. Wayne with water and having tracks laid upon the towpath for interurbans. The following articles from the *Wabash Pain Dealer* of August 14 and 28, 1902 concerning the towpath being used by the interurban were sent by Pete Jones, CSI member from Wabash, Indiana.

RACE FOR THE TOWPATH

Attorneys for Rival Roads File Condemnation Proceedings.
Wabash-Logansport Line Wins Out and May Build North of River — Ft. Wayne-Lafayette the Rival

There was a pretty coup made by the Wabash-Logansport Traction line Wednesday afternoon that is worthy of comment as showing the close fight that is being made for the towpath on which to run interurban cars.

About three o'clock in the afternoon N. G. Hunter, local attorney for the Wabash-Logansport Traction line, filed the suit briefly referred to Wednesday on behalf of his company against the Wabash Valley Traction company, Shirk, Dues, et al.

Along about four o'clock in the afternoon Sherman King, local attorney for the Fort Wayne, Logansport and Lafayette Traction company, appeared at the court house, and to express it mildly, was chagrined to find that a complaint about identical with the one he was to file, was on the docket.

Both companies filed petitions in which they seek to have the towpath from this city to the west county line appropriated to their own individual use.

As mentioned on Wednesday the Fort Wayne, Logansport and Lafayette Traction company was organized this week to build and operate a traction line over the towpath from Fort Wayne to Lafayette. It is supposed to be composed of both the Union Traction company people and the Fort Wayne & Southwestern people.

Tuesday they were shrewd enough to have complaints filed by which they seek to gain control of the towpath from Logansport to Lafayette.

RELICS OF CANAL ERA.

Workmen on River Traction Line Find Many Mule Shoes Along The Old Towpath

The workmen who are grading for the track of the Wabash-Logansport company between Wabash and Logansport are unearthing scores of mule shoes, which have been covered with earth since the abandonment of the old Wabash & Erie canal many years ago. The Traction company acquired the towpath for its line, and it is supposed that the right of way is lined with the shoes cast by the gentle mules that drew canal boats in the long ago, and which were never picked up. They are being preserved as relics.

