

NANZ & NEUNER OF LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

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Early in the year 1850, German horticulturist Henry Nanz immigrated to the United States and settled in Louisville, Kentucky. Nanz came from Stuttgart, in what was then the German state of Württemberg. It was primarily an agrarian state, but in the late 1840s, the country was overpopulated and suffering from political revolution, religious strife between Catholic and Protestant factions, and hunger riots. Political prisoners were often released from jail only on the understanding that they would emigrate to America. American businessmen were also actively recruiting in all the European countries for people willing to come and settle the sparsely populated frontiers of America. The usually well educated, hard-working Germans were popular candidates.

You may wonder why a German immigrant chose Louisville as his new home. In fact, all sections of the United States absorbed a huge population of German immigrants from the 1850s onward. The city of Cincinnati, Ohio was at one time so heavily populated by Germans that the city street signs were in that language and public officials were required to be fluent in German as well as English. Louisville is only about 100 miles downstream from Cincinnati, on the opposite bank of the Ohio River, and it too received a large influx of Germans.

In 1850 it was already a city of some refinement and culture. The University of Louisville was established in 1837. The city had a horticultural society, a racecourse, and a fairground. There were also two theaters, a Mechanics Institute and a Mozart Society. By the 1870s, Louisville had attracted enough German immigrants to support six different chapters of the Independent Order of Redmen, a German benevolent society. Thirteen churches advertised themselves as specifically serving the German population of Louisville, including four Roman Catholic, two Methodist Episcopal, one Baptist, and six Evangelical churches. There were three German banks, four German-language newspapers, and two German musical societies. The town was cosmopolitan enough to warrant the establishment of French, German, Italian, and Belgian consulates.

Though I could not find him in the 1850 U. S. census records, all the old advertisements and catalogues stated that Henry Nanz's business had been established since 1850. As Henry's son later wrote in the 1896 catalogue, the senior Nanz set up his business "in a humble way with one little greenhouse, size 10' x 50'. At that time flowers were in little demand and the wants [of the populace] were supplied from this small establishment." But the business soon grew larger, along with the city. In the U. S. census of 1860, Henry set his worth in real estate owned at \$2,000. The 1861 Louisville city directory places the shop and family residence at 866 Third Street, between Breckinridge and Kentucky Avenues, near the present site of Spalding College. Nanz sold shrubs, ornamental and fruit trees, cut flowers, and hothouse plants. He described himself primarily as a florist, though in those days, that title often had connotations beyond what we think of as a florist today. Most modern florists sell cut flowers, potted plants and small gift items that they buy from other suppliers; florists in the late 1800s often operated their own greenhouse facilities and grew all their plant products themselves.

As the city expanded, the shop address often changed, but cross street listings indicate that the location remained the same; this was just another sign of constant growth as streets were extended beyond their original boundaries. In 1869, Nanz's eldest child, Sarah (Sallie) married Henry A. Kraft, Jr., a native of Prussia. He was a wholesale butcher by trade, and continued on in this and other business ventures after his marriage, though his children and grandchildren would later become more directly involved with the florist business. Sallie went to live with the Kraft family at 1504 Hamilton Avenue. Another Kraft relative, George, lived at 1500 and also worked in the family butcher business.

The city directory of 1871 indicates that Nanz acquired a business partner that year. The commercial listing showed the new firm name of Nanz & Neuner, at 472 Third Street, near Kentucky. Immigration records prove that Carl Neuner and his younger brother Alfred arrived in the United States on 25 April 1868. They too came from Württemberg, though whether the two families had been previously acquainted or simply felt a sense of kinship due to their similar origins is not known. While Alfred apparently remained in New York for a time, Carl came to Louisville and entered into a partnership with Henry Nanz. The exact form this partnership took remains something of a mystery, as sometimes Alfred was listed as partner and sometimes Carl (who anglicized his name to Charles). Sometimes both names appeared with Nanz's in the advertisements and directory listings.

The 1872 directory shows that the partnership brought other changes to the business. For the first time the firm bought a full-page advertisement in the directory, and this stated that the floral shop had been moved to a truly new address — the Weisiger Block, No. 175 Fourth Avenue, between Green and Walnut (today respectively renamed Liberty and Muhammed Ali Boulevard). The greenhouses and outdoor garden at first remained at 473 Third Street, as did Nanz's residence. Charles Neuner resided with the Nanz family on Third Street.

In this same year, the firm offered its first free illustrated and descriptive catalogue. They sold flowers and bouquets for everyday requirements, and floral wreaths and crosses suitable for commemorating interments. Unlike the modern floral business of today, they also offered vegetable and flower seeds, bedding plants, fruit and ornamental trees, and roses. In other words, they had become what we would consider a full-service nursery, or as they described it, a floral bazaar. Henry's son wrote of still another change in their circumstances as follows:

“As, step by step, improvements were made and one house followed another, as the demands increased and means would allow, his flower business grew into a large concern, and in 1872, the [nursery] was...removed from its crowded place on Third Street, out to St. Matthews [then known as Gilman's Point, an area that was largely used for growing potatoes], five miles east of this city, which now is a suburb adjunct to Louisville, although at that time considered the country.”

This expansion out of the city was reflected in the 1873 city directory. Another full page advertisement stated that the plants, roses, trees, seeds and cut flowers were sold at the Fourth Street store, while greenhouses and a flower display garden could be found

at Third Street, and there was a new nursery and additional greenhouses located at Gilman's Point, the second station on the Short Line Railroad. The firm now had listings under two commercial headings: Florists and Seed Stores. The name of the firm was changed to Nanz, Neuner & Company, and showed three names as partners: Henry Nanz, Alfred Neuner, and Edward Wachendorff, yet another émigré from Württemberg. Why Alfred, who was still living in New York at that point, was listed as a partner and Charles was not remains an unsolved puzzle. Possibly Alfred had been more successful financially and had more to invest. Charles married Nanz's younger daughter Louisa in 1874, and the company listing showing him as partner, rather than Alfred, may have been a reflection of that change. However, Alfred's name appeared again a year later, by which time he had actually moved to Louisville with his wife and two young children, all born in New York.

Henry Nanz and Charles Neuner changed their place of residence to the Gilman's Point property. The above catalogue engraving of their property shows what appear to be two separate residences as well as three smaller structures that probably housed other employees. Edward Wachendorff was also living at Gilman's Point with his wife and two children, probably on the nursery property. Note the windmill and storage tanks. In a telephone interview, Mr. Edward Ramsey Kraft advised me that a system was developed for collecting and storing rainwater from the roofs of the greenhouses. The circled rose bouquet was their company trademark and the three-story building at far right was the town shop.

In 1878, the town address became 192 Fourth Avenue, still with the same cross streets of Green and Walnut. Nanz's son, Henry Jr., made his first appearance, as a "clerk" for the firm. The business now had listings under three commercial headings: Florists, Seeds, and Nurserymen. While Charles Neuner remained with Nanz at Gilman's Point, Alfred lived in town, at 124 Jefferson, near Fourth Avenue. Henry Jr. was living in town too, at a boarding house on Ormsby Avenue. It seems apparent that Alfred was running the store with Jr.'s assistance, while the others managed the nursery out at Gilman's Point.

In 1878, the company name changed again, becoming simply Nanz & Neuner. Once again, only Henry Nanz and Alfred Neuner were listed as partners, though Charles' name would reappear later. Mr. Wachendorff left the firm to work for a competitor, A. Lauer, who had a shop in town, on Baxter Avenue, opposite the Cave Hill cemetery. A few years later Wachendorff left the state to settle in Atlanta, GA. In 1879, there was a listing for Herman Neuner, a clerk for Nanz & Neuner. Since he resided at Alfred's Walnut Street address in town, there was undoubtedly some blood relationship, but he didn't remain beyond that year.

The 1878 catalogue mentioned that it was twice as large as the year before, and "We are also compelled to add four more greenhouses to meet the demand for choice bedding and ornamental plants. This shows very plainly that the people in the Southern and Western States appreciate our efforts, and instead as heretofore sending East for every thing buy in their own or neighboring state, saving at the same time express charges and loss of time." Clearly the company was doing a great deal of mail order

business by this time, and the proximity of both rail and river transport facilitated this expansion. Catalogues were issued twice yearly, in the spring and fall.

“We now turn out plants and roses by the thousands and millions, and our customers come from every part of the United States...Twenty-five greenhouses stand crowded with Plants and Roses, awaiting distribution.” As premiums — rewards for orders of a certain size — the firm offered two roses, the Tea, ‘Sombreuil’, and the Hybrid Perpetual, ‘John Hopper’. “We cultivate 500 varieties of Roses, but have no hardier, no better Ever-blooming Tea Rose in our collection. The color is creamy-white, habit vigorous, blooming constantly, and needs, in this latitude [zone 6a, -10 degrees] hardly any protection during winter...[while ‘John Hopper’ is] a first-class Rose in every respect; color rosy-crimson, bark of petals [reverse] lilac; large and double; extra fine.” Seventy other varieties of “ever-blooming” Tea roses were listed in this catalogue, from ‘Adam’ to ‘White Tea’ and the large number of Hybrid Perpetuals also indicated the growing demand for repeat-blooming roses.

The write-up for ‘Maréchal Niel’ was extensive: “beautiful deep sulphur-yellow; very full and large and exceedingly fragrant. We have an extra fine stock of this variety. We sell the medium-sized plants at same price as other varieties; two-year-old plants, extra strong, that will certainly bloom, 75 cents each. Of this variety only we keep also budded plants on the manetti stock, which will grow three times more freely than those on their own roots, will prove more hardy and will bloom more profusely. These budded plants we offer for \$1 each. We would advise our customers to spend a little more money in order to procure a strong two-year-old Plant or a budded one, because a small one-year-old Plant dies on your hands almost every year. The ‘Maréchal Niel’ is naturally a climbing Rose, and should not be pruned too short. When you plant out a budded Plant be sure and plant sufficiently deep, so that the junction of the bud with the stock is two inches below the surface of the earth.”

In 1880, Henry Jr. moved from his boarding house on Ormsby to live with his sister Sallie and the Kraft in-laws at 1504 Hamilton Avenue near Baxter. A listing in *The Nurseryman’s Directory* of 1883 shows that the proprietors were still Henry Nanz, Sr., and Alfred Neuner. The directory reported that the firm owned 30 acres of land for growing plants. Thirty-one greenhouses occupied 2.5 acres of this land. They employed 16 men, and the land, stock, and houses were valued at \$50,000. The advertisement in the same publication indicated they did both wholesale and retail business. And roses were their stated specialty.

The catalogue provided much information about proper plant care as well as descriptions of each rose. With regard to pruning, customers were advised to wait until March and April to avoid injury due to late frosts. “Moderate pruning insures more vigorous growth and more bountiful blooms.” As to winter protection, “Do not protect too early; give the wood a chance to ripen out. Cover six to eight inches deep of sawdust, tanbark, straw, manure, or leaves around the Plant, and remove the covering in spring after all danger of hard freezing is over.” And as for insects, “In respect to all the enemies of the Rose a golden rule may be offered — ignore them! Do full justice to the Plants in

respect of soil, planting, watering, manuring, etc., and you will not be troubled by any of the insects.”

In the 1884 city directory, Henry Jr. described himself not just as a mere clerk, but a bouquettière, a specialist in designing floral bouquets. Henry Jr. married in 1884 or '85, and left the Kraft household in 1887 to set up his own residence just down the street at 1510 Hamilton Avenue. The directory of the following year showed that Henry Nanz Sr. had moved back into town, and was living with Jr. on Hamilton. Possibly his health was failing and he could no longer live alone out in the country. (Since his wife, Christina — also listed in various census records as Christiana and Catharena — never received the conventional widow's listing in the directories, it is presumed that she died before her husband.) The year 1890 is the last that Henry Sr. was still in the directory. In 1893, the firm's partners were published as Henry Nanz Jr., Alfred A. Neuner, and Charles Neuner; they contributed 15 varieties of Tea roses and 17 varieties of Hybrid Perpetuals to decorate the rose garden and grounds at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago that year. The catalogue indicates they were offering design services to customers as well as plants. “We are prepared to furnish plans and specifications for laying out, sowing and planting gardens, private and public parks at shortest notice.” Henry Nanz Sr. died in 1895. That same year, the suburb of Gilman's Point was renamed St. Matthews.

In 1896 there came a most unexpected change. Alfred left the family firm and struck out on his own. His new business, of which he was both president and manager, was called The Neuner Floral Company, Inc., “growers of choice cut flowers and plants,” located at 1218 East Broadway, and with greenhouses and gardens near the Cave Hill cemetery. The advertisement stated “formerly of Nanz & Neuner.” Why Alfred suddenly broke with the family remains uncertain, though one may suspect he was probably disappointed in the provisions of Henry Nanz's will or the reorganization that followed that death. Sadly, Alfred's new venture did not last even two years, though his name was apparently immortalized in two plants, a lilac (*Syringia vulgaris* ‘Alfred Neuner’), and *Bouvardia jasminiflora* ‘A. Neuner’, a double white sometimes tinged with rose, and described by L. H. Bailey as “an old variety of great merit and good constitution.” Both plants were introduced to commerce by Nanz & Neuner prior to Alfred's departure from the family firm. The lilac, which originated from the French firm, Lemoine, is mentioned prior to 1892, (Goemans, *Jardin* 1892) though it was not listed in any of the Nanz & Neuner catalogues available at Cornell (1894-1913). However, the bouvardia was listed in the catalogues for 1894-1907 and 1913, though it may have been introduced prior to 1894.

Henry Nanz Jr. wrote a short history of the firm in the 1896 catalogue and it is clear that this sudden departure was not expected, and left him at least temporarily in the lurch financially. He mentioned “unfortunate circumstances” and “embarrassment,” then stated that, with the help of “friends,” he took over “active management of the firm's affairs and re-established its hold on the public and the good-will of the people, and... succeeded in keeping the entire plant intact and up to date, which is now considered one of the largest and best establishments in the South.”

The firm's new company officers were Henry A. Kraft, President, and Henry Nanz, Secretary & Manager. Nanz's brother-in-law was the "friend" who had come to the rescue. The company was re-incorporated as Nanz & Neuner, Inc., now operating a total of 60 greenhouses at the St. Matthews nursery. Charles Neuner was not specifically named as an officer or partner in the newly reorganized firm, yet the Neuner name remained in the firm's title, possibly a matter of customer recognition. Since the 1900 census shows Charles as "insurance agent" one assumes that he too was eventually bought out of the firm, even though he and his family continued to live at St. Matthews.

While the naming of Henry Kraft, as President suggests a large infusion of cash, aside from that, he was apparently content to remain a "silent" partner. He and his sons continued their wholesale butcher business at the Kentucky Market in Louisville, as did his nearby relatives, George Kraft and family. Henry Kraft also served as Vice President of the Louisiana Butchers Hide & Tallow Company for a time, and he was later V.P. and Treasurer of the New Southern Malting Company, all while maintaining his position at the Market. The connection with the firm of Nanz & Neuner appeared nowhere except in the listings for that company.

The continued importance of roses in the firm's business was demonstrated by the color illustrations on both the front and the back covers of the catalogues, as well as the extensive list of roses offered for sale inside. In 1895, an engraved bouquet of 'Souvenir de Wooten, 'Duchess of Albany' and 'Mrs. W. C. Whitney' decorated the front, while the back showed, 'Crimson Rambler', all relatively new roses that year. In 1896, a cluster of 'Maman Cochet', introduced just three years before in France, was the featured cover rose.

Also found in the 1896 catalogue, was an offer of "Five Beautiful New Roses" starting with 'Belle Siebrecht' (aka 'Mrs. W. J. Grant'), a Hybrid Tea introduced by A. Dickson of Ireland the previous year. Next was 'Mrs. Pierpont Morgan', a sport of Guillot's 'Mme Cusin' discovered by H. B. May of Summit, New Jersey and introduced that same year by Dingee & Conard. Then came 'Mrs. W. C. Whitney', an 1894 H. T., also from Mr. May. 'Climbing Meteor', a Hybrid Tea sport of Bennett's 1887 bush rose (not the Geschwind Noisette of the same year), was another Dingee & Conard introduction. *MR 7* says this happened in 1901, but clearly it was available from Nanz & Neuner five years earlier. Rounding out the list was 'Princess Bonnie', yet another 1896 introduction from Dingee & Conard. It was a Tea rose advertised as being "sweeter than 'La France', color solid crimson, positively the best rose for [indoor] winter blooming. We offer strong, well-rooted plants, from 3-inch pots, at reduced price, 25 cents each, five for \$1." The contents of these catalogues make it very apparent that new varieties from Europe were immediately acquired and propagated, available for sale in the U. S. as soon as two years after their introduction. A list of 30 roses was titled "New Roses. Introduction of 1894" and many of these originated in France or England. The firm also offered to "furnish roses, suitably prepared for winter blooming, during fall and winter months" for immediate display in conservatories.

The 1896 catalogue numbered 116 pages in all, thirteen of those devoted to roses. "Roses are our great specialty, and over 500,000 in all sizes await distribution this spring.

Our roses are celebrated for their health and vigor, choice selections giving quick and constant bloom at once. We grow them in the following sizes: (1) In 2-inch pots, especially prepared for mail trade and light packing by express; (2) In 3, 4, 5 and 6-inch pots, to be sent, in bud or bloom, by express, to any distance.”

Plants grown in 5 and 6-inch pots were offered at \$5 per dozen or 50 cents apiece. The 3.5 to 4-inch pots went for \$3 the dozen or 30 cents each, one-year-old plants in 3-inch pots were \$1.50 per dozen and 15 cents apiece. “Young plants for bedding out, in 2-inch pots, \$1 per fifteen; 10 cents each, six for fifty cents. Let us make the selection of sorts and we will send you eighteen sorts all labeled.” There were also special rates offered for unnamed roses. “Twenty roses, well sorted, without names. To parties not caring for the name of each variety this will be a welcome variety.” The price? One dollar plus shipping. For \$4 (including shipping by regular mail service), a customer could acquire an entire garden of tiny plants — ten monthly (China) roses, two fuchsias, six tuberoses, two lemon verbenas, six other verbenas, six coleus, six heliotropes, six geraniums, three scarlet salvias, three cupheas, three lobelias, three railroad ivy, three maderia vines, four achyranthes, three gladioli, and four lantana vines.

The catalogue mentioned their nursery collections of 100 Tea roses and 200 sorts of Hybrid Teas. They listed 14 Bourbon roses and 17 Noisettes, though the latter carried the warning that, “Formerly hardy, they have been hybridized with Tea Roses so as to lose much of their former character. They have been much improved in color and form, and to obtain large, perfect flowers, ought to be trimmed well every spring, and some during the early summer. In the Southern States, or cultivated under glass in colder climes, they are magnificent climbers. They all need protection here.” None of the hardier, small-flowered white or blush-pink types were listed.

A scattering of “New and Old Climbing Teas,” “Bengal, or China Roses,” and Polyanthas followed. Then there was another long list of Hybrid Perpetuals, a few Moss roses and Hybrid Setigeras, still being offered as the best choice “for covering walls, trellises, buildings, etc.,” though the wave of the future could be found under “Miscellaneous Roses.” *Rosa wichurana*, introduced in 1891, was still a novelty five years later. “Of the Rose Wichuriana we can say that it must become one of the most popular plants for parks and private places; as a covering and for growing among shrubbery and rocks it has no equal. Its almost evergreen character makes it acceptable at all seasons of the year. But it is especially beautiful when it is covered with its long, showy bunches of white blossoms when most other roses are gone. A great improvement over the old Cherokee rose.” No mention was made of its hardiness.

Of the Banksiae roses (only the double yellow and white were offered) the catalogue said, “South of Kentucky the Banksias are perfectly hardy.” The last page offered standard roses of ‘Maréchal Niel’. “We make a specialty of them, and our stock is large and well established this year. Price, 4 feet high, \$2 each, 5-7 feet high, \$3 each.” And of weeping forms, they offered “Noisette and Climbing Tea varieties grafted on standards four to six feet in height...especially adapted for cemetery planting or isolated on the lawn, where the branches can droop freely to all sides. Sorts like Glorie de Dijon, Lamarque, Maréchal Niel, etc., etc., thus grafted will bloom the entire season. Price, four

feet high, \$1.50 each, six feet high, \$2 each.” No mention was made of the rose stock employed for the roots and trunk.

According to the Louisville directories and U. S. census records, Henry Nanz continued in his position as Secretary and Manager of the firm through 1913, though his two sons chose different careers for themselves. I could not find a notice of Nanz’s death, but by 1914, the Kraft family had assumed full control over the business. Another reorganization was required, and thus The New Nanz & Neuner Company, Inc. was established, with Robert A. Kraft as President, Henry C. Kraft as Vice President, Edward A. Kraft as Treasurer, and D. E. Weller as Secretary and Manager. However, the 1920 census still listed the Kraft family’s trade as wholesale butchers, not florists. Mr. Weller was a lawyer by trade, and was no longer named in the business ads by 1920.

About 1918 the Fourth Avenue store and office in Louisville were closed and all business was thereafter conducted from the St. Matthews property. After the deaths of Henry Nanz and Henry A. Kraft, the latter’s grandson, Edward A. Kraft Jr., ultimately assumed ownership of the business. In 1945, the heirs put up a modern building on what is now Breckinridge Lane, a block south of Shelbyville Road. In 1958 the name of the firm was changed to Nanz & Kraft Florists, and in 1967, ownership passed to Edward Ramsey Kraft. The 1945 building plus subsequent additions was completely destroyed by fire on November 22, 1976. The next day, the family leased temporary space in the front part of the Rasmussen & Son’s greenhouse on Hubbards Lane and reopened for business there immediately, until the new 20,000-square-foot store was built at 141 Breckinridge Lane. It opened in November 1977.

Today Nanz & Kraft no longer operate their own nursery, nor do they grow all their own plants from seeds and cuttings. Roses are no more a specialty of this business than of any other modern-style florist. The firm employs a work force of 35 (45 during the holiday season) to handle flower orders and special floral designs of all types. The main store contains a showroom, design room, sales office, gift shop and one greenhouse (a 20' x 80' structure on the second floor, used for holding plants and flowers), a room for preparing fruit baskets and wreaths, plus refrigeration and cold storage space. In addition to the Breckinridge Lane store, the company now has branches on Hurstbourne Lane, Brownsboro Road, and the Dixie Highway. “We offer a full range of services: cut flower arrangements, fruit baskets, wedding planning, plants, silk flowers, indoor plant maintenance and design, and a wide assortment of giftware in our gift shop.” Nanz & Kraft ranks in the top 100 nationally in volume of orders to other cities. Three of Edward Ramsey Kraft’s sons, Edward R., Michael A., and David L. Kraft, have joined him in the business. He believes that his numerous grandchildren will ensure the business remains in the Kraft family for yet another generation.

Nanz & Kraft Florists, 141 Breckinridge Lane, Louisville, KY 40207. To place an order, call 502.897.6551 or toll-free 800.897.6551. Website: www.nanzandkraft.com/.

[Ed. Note: The differentiation in the spelling, capitalization and use of single quote marks around rose names in this article stems from the retention of the spelling and botanical conventions of the day in all quotes taken from old sources.] My sincere thanks to the Sherry Vance of the L. H. Bailey Herbarium of Cornell University in New York, the Kentucky Historical Society, the Louisville Free Library, and to

Edward Ramsey Kraft, each of whom very kindly provided me with valuable information towards this article. The Sutro Library in San Francisco and the website, Ancestry.com were also immensely helpful in determining the history of Nanz & Neuner's Floral Establishment.

Following publication of this article, three mistakes were noted in the text.

(1) There apparently never was a lilac named for Alfred Neuner. This was a mistake made by Goemans, possibly a translation error. However, I also later discovered that the Bouvardia 'Alfred Neuner' was introduced prior to 1889, pre-dating Goemans' listing of 1892. It was mentioned in the February 1889 issue of California Florist and Gardener, a monthly journal published in San Francisco. "In some of our gardens are representative collections of Bouvardias, such as B. Davidsonii, B. Alfred Neuner, (double white), B. President Garfield, (double pink), B. Leiantha and the beautiful and fragrant B. Humboldtii. These plants, when well cared for in sheltered places, are very satisfactory"

(2) Alfred Neuner did not arrive in Louisville in 1875 as stated above. The correct date of arrival is 1877 per the city directory.

(3) Herman Neuner lived with his brother Alfred for at least two years and possibly three, not one year as stated in the article, again as proven by listings in the city directory and the US Census.]