

Collection #  
SC 3660

**NATHAN AND JACOB FRETZ  
COLLECTION, 1877-1910**

Collection Information	1
Biographical Sketch	2
Scope and Content Note	3
Contents	4

Processed by

Matt S. Holdzkorn  
March 2023

Manuscript and Visual Collections Department  
William Henry Smith Memorial Library  
Indiana Historical Society  
450 West Ohio Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

[www.indianahistory.org](http://www.indianahistory.org)

\*

## **COLLECTION INFORMATION**

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 2 manuscript folders, 1 photograph folder, 1 OVA photograph

COLLECTION DATES: 1877-1910

PROVENANCE: Madeline Mesplay, 2016

RESTRICTIONS: None

COPYRIGHT:

REPRODUCTION RIGHTS: Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained from the Indiana Historical Society.

ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: Thomas Beeson Papers (M0016)

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2016.0349

NOTES:

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Nathan Fretz was born on 3 May 1834 in Pennsylvania. As a young man he traveled west, and in 1855 he married Catherine Longenecker in Medina County, Ohio. The couple had six children by 1870 and Nathan was working at a sawmill in Clay County, Indiana. In 1877 Nathan purchased a recipe for a morphine-based cough remedy from Dr. Charles A. Voorhies in Pennsylvania. Thereafter, he sold the preparation under the name “White Star Cough Remedy.” The medicine’s label claimed that it was used in “all the large hospitals throughout this country and Europe for coughs, colds, influenza, consumption (tuberculosis), asthma, sore throat, spitting of blood, [...] &c., &c., &c.” However, the remedy does not seem to have been very popular, and Fretz never seems to have advertised it in newspapers. However, for nearly thirty years, Nathan Fretz pushed White Star. In the 1889 Indianapolis city directory, his occupation is listed as “medicines.” His wife Catherine passed away in 1884, and Nathan lived in a boarding house at the turn of the century. The 1900 census, too, listed his occupation as “patent medicines.” However, his death certificate in 1908 suggests that he also worked as a wagon builder. He was 74 years old. His cause of death was pulmonary tuberculosis.

Jacob Fretz, a son of Nathan and Catherine, followed somewhat in his father’s footsteps. Born near Clay City in 1867, Jacob moved to Sharpsville, Indiana in 1895. There he established himself as a grocer and worked in that capacity for 35 years. In 1894, he purchased the right to sell a patent medicine within Tipton County. Called “Glenn’s Peace in the Family,” the medicine had its origins in Connecticut. Jacob evidently sold the medicine to some degree for at least fifteen years. After his father’s death in 1908, he may have also handled White Star. Jacob died at the age of 93 in 1961.

Sources:

Ancestry.com

Findagrave.com

“Former Sharpsville Grocer Succumbs,” *Tipton Daily Tribune*, 6 April 1961

Materials in the collection

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of materials related to Nathan Fretz and Jacob Fretz, and mainly their involvement selling “patent” medicines. The original White Star recipe from Dr. Voorhies is included, with detailed instructions on how to prepare the various parts of the medicine. Also included are three examples of the White Star paper wrapper and two letters requesting the medicine. One cabinet card, showing Nathan Fretz circa 1905 holding a bottle of White Star is included. On verso, somebody has written the names of his children. Birth and death dates for Nathan were added at some other time, and the death date is incorrect. Another man with the same name was evidently born in the same Pennsylvania county in the same year but did not leave that state and died there in 1896. Also included is a larger group photograph which includes Nathan Fretz, labeled Clay City, Indiana.

The Jacob Fretz material consists of his Deed of Agency for selling Glenn’s Peace in the Family and a related letter from E. R. Glenn. Finally, a 1909 letter from the Indiana State Board of Health replying to Jacob’s inquiry about registering a medicinal preparation and a 1910 letter from the U.S. Department of Agriculture designating him a number of guaranty.

## **CONTENTS**

### CONTENTS

Nathan Fretz material, 1877-1878, n.d.

Jacob Fretz material, 1894-1910, n.d.

Nathan Fretz cabinet card, circa 1905

Group photograph including Nathan Fretz, circa 1900

### CONTAINER

Folder 1

Folder 2

Photographs,  
Folder 1 of 1

OVA Photographs  
Folder 1 of 1