

Alexander Neibaur

By Mrs. Mazie Bohi

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Alexander Neibaur, the first dentist in Utah, was born January 8, 1808, in Germany, the son of a Hebrew physician and surgeon. Alexander was to have entered the Jewish ministry, but instead studied dentistry in the University of Berlin, beginning practice in Preston, England. While there he married Ellen Breakel. He was the first Jew to be converted to the Mormon faith and was baptized April 9, 1838.

Young Dr. Neibaur emigrated to Nauvoo, Illinois in 1841 where he became an active member of the Church, and prominent in Free-masonry, while setting himself up in the practice of dentistry. He advertised as follows in the (Mormon) Times and Seasons. "Nauvoo, August 2, 1841: ALEXANDER NEIBAUR-SURGEON DENTIST, from Berlin, in Prussia, late of Liverpool and Preston, England. Most respectfully announces to the ladies and gentlemen and the citizens of Nauvoo, as also of Hancock county, in general, that he has permanently established himself in the city of Nauvoo, as a dentist, where he may be consulted daily, in all branches connected with his profession. Teeth cleaned, plugged, filled and scurva effectually cured, children's teeth regulated, natural or artificial teeth from a single tooth to a whole set inserted on the most approved principles.

Mr. Neibaur having an extensive practice both on the continent of Europe, as also in England, for the last 15 years, he hopes to give general satisfaction to all those who honor him with their patronage.

"Mr. B. Young having known Mr. N. (in England) has kindly consented to offer me his house to meet those ladies and gentlemen who wish to consult me. Hours of attendance from 10 o'clock in the morning to 6 at evening.

"My residence is opposite Mr. Tidwell, the cooper, near the water. Ladies and gentlemen attended at their own residence if requested. Charges strictly moderate."

Alexander Neibaur spoke and wrote fluently in Hebrew, French, and German languages, read Latin and Greek, and spoke some Spanish. He came to Utah September 20, 1848 and erected his own house on which he hung his professional shingle as Utah's First Dentist.

The first number of the Deseret News, published in Salt Lake City, June 16, 1850 carried the following: "A. Neibaur, Surgeon Dentist, 3rd street east, 2nd south of the Council House, will attend to all branches of his profession. The scurvy effectually cured."

Alexander Neibaur's daughter, Mrs. Sarah Ellen Neibaur O'Driscoll, 93, Kamas, Utah, recently said: "In addition to countless extractions my father had about one hundred and fifty patients in Utah, including Brigham Young and family and the families of other Church leaders; he also filled the teeth of Elisa, daughter of Bishop Hunter, and those of the daughter of Governor Frank Fuller.

"He usually used a dental turnkey, an implement with a hinged claw on a gimlet-shaped handle, for extracting teeth by twisting; but he later obtained forceps. These instruments were subsequently turned over to Dr. Washington F. Anderson. Cavities in decaying teeth were cleaned with a suitable pick and filled with alum and borax and then sealed with beeswax; the only anesthetic was laudanum. He was seldom paid in money; but accepted beet molasses, corn meal and pigweed greens. Much of his work was donated to widows and to others who could not pay."

Dr. Alexander Neibaur passed away December 15, 1883 after a long and distinguished career.