



HUGO BROICH,
➤ PHOTOGRAPHER, ◀
116 and 118 Grand Avenue,
MILWAUKEE, - - - WISCONSIN
- - -
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Carbon Alberttype and Artotype.

An advertisement from the 1895 edition of Wright's Milwaukee City Directory. Broich 's two-story photographic studio across from the Plankinton House was then a well-established firm employing several photographers and assistants. (Photo courtesy of Milwaukee County Historical Society).

HUGO BROICH: PORTRAIT ARTIST AND PHOTOGRAPHER IN EARLY MILWAUKEE

The career of Hugo Broich is interesting for several reasons. An immigrant from Germany, Broich settled in Milwaukee before the Civil War and was for several years involved in the lithography business. He is mainly remembered as a portrait photographer, though he later turned increasingly to portrait painting. Through a network of professional and family ties, Broich was brought into contact with the circle of German-American lithographers and art printers in nineteenth-century Milwaukee. Finally, his life appears to have been punctuated by capricious turns of fate, so that his name more than once found its way into the local newspapers and his life story possesses a certain intrinsic interest.

Broich was born on April 9, 1831 at Berghcim, a small community on the Erft River about fourteen miles west of Cologne. His full name was Hugo Anton Hermann von Broich, though he dropped the aristocratic von from his name after immigrating to America. His father, Hermann von Broich, was a tax collector. After receiving a classical education, Broich served for several years as an officer in the Prussian Army. Although interested in drawing and painting from an early age, there is no evidence that he ever received formal training as an artist. He left Germany in October 1856, and by December had arrived in Wisconsin. After spending a year at Ripon, Wisconsin, he settled in Milwaukee, where he found employment as a photographic painter and learned the trade of photographer, though the 1861 city directory gives his occupation as artist.¹ At that time he had a studio of his own at 359 Third Avenue near the corner of Third and Juneau. Later his business was located at 365 West Water Street near the present corner of Plankinton and Juneau, but in 1869 he moved into a spacious and handsomely furnished establishment at 116-118 Spring Street (later Grand Avenue and now Wisconsin Avenue).² Located in downtown Milwaukee across the street from the Plankinton House Hotel, Broich's studio had a carpeted reception room and picture gallery on

the ground floor as well as skylighted working rooms on the second floor. The premises continued to serve as Broich's place of business until 1897, by which time he was employing five photographers and several other assistants.

Among the photographers who were associated with Broich were Louis Hagedorf and Frederick A. Luettich. Hagedorf, born in Hamburg in 1848, came to the U.S. in 1869 after learning the trade of photographer in Europe. He worked for Broich until 1876 and later established his own studio. Luettich, who was born in Prussia around 1833, was both an artist and photographer. He left Broich's employ in 1874 to become associated with the photographer William H. Sherman and still later formed a partnership with Edwin D. Bangs in the firm of Bangs and Luettich. One of the younger Photographers who served an apprenticeship at Broich's establishment was Henry S. Klein, who was employed by Broich in 1883 and later established the Klein Studio in the "Iron Block" neighborhood.

The local press frequently reported on the changing exhibits at the picture gallery of Broich's establishment. In 1873, for example, the *Milwaukee Sentinel* encouraged its readers to see an exhibit of autotypes of Paris.³ Landscape paintings by both German and American artists were also exhibited.

In 1872 the *Milwaukee Sentinel* reported that Broich was one of the principal associates of the American Oleographic Company, a lithographic publishing firm, and that he had recently completed three chromolithographs in collaboration with the Austrian-born lithographer Louis Kurz (1833-1921).⁴ The photographer John Kremer was also associated with this enterprise. Lithographs produced by the company were sometimes exhibited at Broich's gallery and studio on Spring Street. In 1873 the *Milwaukee Sentinel* gave a full description of "The Wolf and the Shepherd," a chromolithograph by the local artist Charles Stoecklein. The same year Broich and his associates produced a lithograph entitled "Jolly Priests in Wine Cellars,"

possibly adapted from a painting by the Munich artist Edward Grtüzner (1846-1925).⁵ The American Oleographic Company was still in existence in 1874, but by the following year the business was known as Broich, Kurz and Company and operated out of Broich's Spring Street establishment. The name was changed to Broich and Kremer when Kurz withdrew from the firm in 1876. Soon afterwards the partnership of Broich and Kremer became a photography business. By 1880 Kremer had quit the partnership so that Broich was once more at the head of his own photographic studio. Kremer later had a successful career in the brewing business while Kurz had a notable career as a lithographer in Chicago.

In 1857 Broich had married Hedwig von Cotzhausen (1834-1932), a member of a socially prominent Milwaukee family which, like Broich's own family, had aristocratic antecedents.⁶ They subsequently had two sons and two daughters. Through his wife's family Broich had additional contacts with the local lithography industry. Broich's wife was an aunt of Alfred E. von Cotzhausen (1866-1941), a corporate officer in several Milwaukee lithography firms, including the Beck and Pauli Company. Alfred E. von Cotzhausen's grandson, Alexander Mueller (1872-1935), began his career as a lithographer, but later, after training in Europe, became an important local artist and art teacher. In addition to being involved with the lithography business, Broich was also one of the founders of the Standard Art Glass Manufacturing Company, a firm incorporated in 1885.⁷ This company was presumably in the business of designing and manufacturing stained glass windows.

Broich was a prosperous local businessman who could afford to maintain an impressive household. His family mansion, now demolished, had a staff which included a cook, laundress, housemaid, and even a full-time seamstress. There were horses and carriages and presumably a groom to take care of them. Not surprisingly, such an establishment was more than once the target of burglars. In 1874 a burglar entered Broich's home through a window and made off with more than a

hundred dollars in cash. Other burglaries of Broich's residence occurred in 1877 and 1880. Several hundred dollars worth of equipment was stolen from Broich's studio in 1890, and in 1875 a horse and light wagon were stolen. The horse thief was apprehended three days later in Racine and the property was recovered.⁸

Broich's career was also enlivened by two separate fires at his business premises. The first of these occurred on the morning of January 6, 1864, when his studio at 365 Third Street was completely destroyed by a fire which had started in a nearby cigar store. In 1887 a fire at Broich's studio on Grand Avenue caused damage to the extent of several hundred dollars.⁹

Broich died at Lakeside Hospital in Milwaukee on May 16, 1905. The 71-year-old artist and photographer had been brought to the hospital three days earlier after having been struck by a streetcar at the corner of National and 21 Avenue. He was buried at Forest Home Cemetery in Milwaukee. Obituaries in the local German-language press drew attention to the fact that he had been involved in various German-American activities such as the organization of a German Day celebration.

Broich's work as both a photographer and artist can be judged as competent but not outstanding. It is probably fair to say that his work in both areas possesses mainly an historical rather than artistic interest. Broich's main income presumably came from his photography business, though the city directories reported his occupation as artist rather than photographer during the last eight years of his life. By this time he was financially well established and was certainly in a position to delegate much of the work of his photography business to others. Only a few examples of Broich's work as an artist are known to have survived. Of these, the best is a fine portrait at the Milwaukee County Historical Society of William Parks Merrill, a pioneer settler and a successful land speculator. The historical society also has a small charcoal portrait by Broich of an unidentified man. A number of other works are in the possession of Broich's descendants, including seven oil paintings, three watercolors, and two oleograph prints.

The oil paintings include a large self-portrait in uniform, an oriental street scene, a harbor scene, and several landscapes. The water-colors include a portrait of Broich's daughter Eugenia, a landscape showing a lake at sunset, and a picture of ships on a stormy sea. None of these works is signed. One of the oleographs, "Love Letters," shows two young ladies reading a letter. The other, entitled "The Man with the Meerschaum Pipe," shows an old man with a brightly colored tasseled cap and a parrot. He is also reported to have done a number of drawings and sketches.¹⁰ Although Broich left only a few paintings and only one drawing which are known to have survived, he left a substantial legacy of photographic work, for the most part competently executed studio portraits.

—Peter C. Merrill
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NOTES

¹*History of Milwaukee*, Wisconsin (Chicago: The Western Historical Company, 1881), 1543. *Milwaukee Herald*, May 17 1905, p. 4. Naturalization documents also confirm that he arrived in the United States in late 1856.

²*Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 21, 1869, p. 1.

³*Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 17, 1873, p. 8.

⁴*Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 11, 1872, p. 4.

⁵*Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 18, 1873, p. 4 and August 8, 1873, p. 8.

⁶I am indebted to the artist's granddaughter, Mrs. R.J. Cory of Mequon, Wisconsin for much information about Broich's ancestry and relations. I am also indebted to Udo Bungard of Hennef, Federal Republic of Germany, who shared with me extensive information about the Broich and von Cotzhausen families.

⁷*Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 26, 1885, p. 8.

⁸*Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 31, 1874, p. 8; February 23, 1877, p. 8; January 8, 1880, p. 5; July 29, 1890, p. 2; May 17, 1875, p. 8 and May 18, 1875, p. 8.

⁹*Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 7, 1864, p. 1 and January 12, 1887, p. 3.

¹⁰*Milwaukee Herald*, May 17, 1905, p. 4.