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ANNA'S FAMILY HISTORY

FRIEDERIKE LUISE (LOUISE) DORSCH: HERBALIST, MIDWIFE, AND MYSTERY ANCESTOR

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Friederike Luisa (Louise) Schreiter

March 7, 2018, is the 173rd birthday of my great-grandmother and one of my namesakes. She was born Friederike Luise Dorsch, but after her immigration to the United States in 1873 she was generally known as Louise (also my middle name).

She is mostly a mystery to me, as I know she was to her grandchildren and even her children.

She was born and married in Schleiz, Thuringia, Germany (near the border with Saxony), but I know nothing about her family other than her father's name.

She already had three living children (twins had died as infants in Germany) when she immigrated to the United States with her husband, Alvin, and she had six more children after that.

In Germany, Alvin was a carpenter working (unhappily) as an employee. The lure of being own boss and owning 40 acres of farmland in the U.S. were apparently an irresistible draw for him.

However, Louise was apparently not so happy raising nine children in an untamed, frontier environment. Family stories tell of her visiting relatives in Detroit and Milwaukee and getting their commitment to hire Alvin if he was willing to move from to the city. He apparently wouldn't budge from his his beloved farm and the independence it brought him.

Family stories also tell of Louise's crying all of one winter because she thought her mother-in-law was going to come and live with the family in Michigan. Those fears came to nothing, though: the transportation or emigration authorities in Hamburg refused Alvin's mother passage to America.

Louise died of cancer, and young: only 43. She left six minor children to be raised by their father.



Alvin Schreiter family, circa 1868. The mother is Friederike Luise and her daughter is Luise Friederike. In later years, both women were known as Louise.

◀ 2018 ◀ BIRTHDAY ◀ DORSCH ◀ FORESTVILLE ◀ GERMANY ◀ MICHIGAN ◀ SCHLEIZ