

Mathilde Franziska Giesler Anneke was born on 3 April 1817, in Lerchenhausen, Westphalia. Today Lerchenhausen is located in Lower Saxony, a short distance from Bremen. Mathilde Giesler Anneke was a writer, suffragist, and teacher. Her parents were Karl Giesler and Elizabeth Hulswitt. Mathilde was the oldest of 12 children. Her father's land and mining interests provided the family with a comfortable income (Selig).

When her family fell on hard economic times, Mathilde married a much older French wine merchant. The marriage was short-lived and Mathilde received custody of their daughter. Forced to support herself and daughter, Mathilde turned to writing, producing two prayer books for Catholic women, a compilation of poetry, and a play (Selig).

In 1847 her life changed dramatically. Her father passed away and she married Friedrich Anneke. Friedrich or Fritz had left the Prussian army to establish the Cologne Worker's Association and to publish a revolutionary journal, the *Neue Kölnische Zeitung*. Fritz soon received an eleven month prison term for conspiracy to overthrow the government. Mathilde continued to publish the working-class paper from her parlor and for a short time, a *Frauenzeitung*. Both were quickly suppressed a subversive by the government. Heaven forbid producing paper that advocated worker's economic rights (Selig).

In 1848, Fritz was released from prison and promptly joined the Palatine People's army during the Revolution of 1848. Mathilde cut her hair short and joined him as an orderly in the army. The revolution failed and along with many others, Fritz and Mathilde were forced to flee Germany as Forty-eighters. After stops in France and Switzerland, they eventually completed their Germany to Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Selig).

Fritz and Mathilde continued their activism in America. In 1852, Mathilde started a suffragist newspaper called the *Deutsch Frauenzeitung*, which used all female typesetters, including her own daughter. In 1853, the family moved to New Jersey, where they started the radical *Newarkzeitung*. Mathilde was asked by Susan B. Anthony to give a speech at the Women's Rights convention of that year (Selig).

In 1859, Fritz moved to Italy to cover the uprising in Italy and Mathilde and the kids soon followed. They lived in Switzerland in near poverty. In 1861, Fritz returned to America to fight for the Union in the Civil War. While they never divorced, they no longer lived together after this time (Selig).

In 1865, Mathilde returned to Milwaukee to open a school for girls. This was called the Milwaukee Tochter's Institute. In 1869, she helped found the women's suffrage movement in Wisconsin, which she often represented at national conventions. In 1876, a scratch on her right hand led to blood poisoning and eventually partial disability. She continued to work with the help of her daughter Hertha (Selig).

On 25 November 1884, Mathilde Franziska Giesler Anneke passed away at the age of 67. Her life's gallant efforts represent a milestone in women's rights and Wisconsin and German-American history (Selig).

### **Bibliography**

### **Works Cited**

Selig, Robert A. & Barbara. "Yesteryears." *German Life* April/May 2008: 58.