

Katerina Marie Louisa Bode Fienning
November 1844 - April 11, 1927

Katherine Fienning was born in Wissingen, Germany, married John Henry Fienning there, and sailed to the United States from Bremen on the North German Lloyd ship SS America in 1888 with her husband (Stewart) and three living children. They landed in Baltimore and settled in Richmond. They lived in the same Wissingen home Uncle Bob and Aunt Rosamond visited in 1974 (in disrepair), the two level cottage they shared with the Henry Tiemann Family. The Tiemann's emigrated to Richmond in 1884 and sponsored the Fienning family's immigration in 1888.

A photograph of Katherine and Henry is contained in the fine 2006 account Dana wrote after visiting Osnabruck and Wissingen early in 2006. (Each family of the Original 10 was given an copy of this report.) (One of you has the original photo. Who?) Dana explains that such photos were often taken before a family emigrated so the folks in the home country could remember them. The distances were so great it was unlikely they would see them again. At lest three children were born to Katherine and John in Wissingen who did not survive: a boy and fraternal male twins (Source: Edith and Dan).

Katherine's husband, John, worked at Gaar Scott, a local manufacturer. About 1½ years after their arrival, John drank water from a spring, contracted typhoid fever, and died. This left Katherine a widow who did not speak English and who had no income to raise her three children—Charles 15; Elizabeth 11; George 7. Dana's report also contains a photo of Katherine and her children shortly after the death of John Fienning.

This family was fortunate to be part of the "South-End Deutsch" Community, usually referred to as the "South-End Dutch Community," composed of families who came from the Osnabruck area in Germany. "As early as 1875, persons of German origin comprised one-third of Richmond's population of around 12,000 (Royer 5). By 1900, when Fred Bartel (see Sources) studied German settlers in depth, he concluded that "they made up over thirty-percent of the population12")

Royer, a sociology professor at Earlham, did extensive research on the German immigrants who came to Richmond and wrote an intriguing 141 page pamphlet, "The German-American Contribution to Richmond's Development: 1833-1933." (I remember seeing a copy given to each of the Original 10 at a FFReunion, but there is no date of publication. Robert Fienning's copy is in the FFHB.)

Royer points out:

The history of migration indicates that migrants from a given county (Kries), usually find their way to the same locality in the States. Such was the case with the Germans who came directly to Richmond in the 19 and 20th centuries. Almost all of them came from Kreis Osnabruck. (6)

Royer adds that the early migration of German settlers (1833- 1850) consisted of immigrants who arrived in Cincinnati by way of Baltimore with little knowledge of the Whitewater Valley until arrival (Royer 3). So the Von Pein brothers had good reason to come to Richmond seeking employment and a probable place to settle.

More pertinent to Katherine was that about two-thirds of the German immigrants in Richmond were Lutheran and spoke Platt (low) Deutsch (German) as one of their languages. Katherine belonged to St. John's Lutheran Church where services were conducted in low German, the language Katherine spoke.

So the cultural context was more welcoming than many places the family could have lived, but this does not mean that their life was anything but a struggle. They had no family to help them out and Katherine had no special skills with which to earn a living. She had to start out by taking in washings. Remember the laborious process of washing described in the 1991 FF History: shave a bar of soap into the wash tub, put clothes into boiling water tub to wash, rinse in three tubs, then hang the clothes on the line to dry (1991, 11). Later, the family doctor noticed that Katherine was very good handling new mothers and babies. He would recommend her as a midwife. This also was very hard work because in those days. The midwife not only took care of the mother and baby, but also the entire family including cooking and keeping house. (This paragraph and the section which follows is paraphrased from what Edith recalled in the 1991 FF History. It is repeated here in order to honor Katherine.)

This work took her away from her children for long periods of time. Her oldest, Charles, was learning a trade in the foundry at the Gaar-Scott Company where he eventually became superintendent and taught many young men this vocation. Charles married Elizabeth Klute and had five children. (Elizabeth's brother, George Klute, married Aunt Mattie Von Pein sister to Frances, and Elizabeth's sister married Oscar Nolte, George Fienning's business partner.) [There will, of course, be a quiz on this in honor of our school-teacher ancestor, Lena.]

Katherine moved her family to three rooms at the back of the Hieger house. Elizabeth, 11, kept the home and took care of George. They had a vegetable garden and raised potatoes, turnips, carrots, and cabbage, vegetables, food that would keep through the winter. Grandpa George would sometimes say he could hardly bear to eat turnips and carrots because, at times, that was all there was to eat. He knew what it was to be hungry.

Katherine enjoyed participating in the church life at St. John's Lutheran. The women who were her own age who were church members were her friends. She always wore black with a white frill around her neck. In winter, she wore a heavy plush cape and a heavy wool shawl. In summer, she wore a bonnet with white flowers. She always parted her hair in the middle with a bun at the back. Her children attended St. John's Lutheran Church Parochial School.

Katherine was usually free on Sundays to come home, be with her family, and go to church. On Sunday afternoon, she often had German women over particularly widows for a Kaffeeklatch (coffee and coffeecake) to enjoy fellowship with other women like herself who spoke the same language.

She always enjoyed people as well as delightful moments. Edith recalled "when she was at least 75, we were having a family party in our home. My mother was playing waltzes on the piano, and Katherine danced waltzes with my father."

In later years when she did not have to make a living for herself, she would come to 1011 two days a week to do mending. She enjoyed being with her children and grandchildren. After the church service on Christmas Day, the Fienning children would go to Aunt Lizzie's home where Grandma Katherine lived and sing Christmas carols with her (perhaps each in their own language?).

She lived with Aunt Lizzie (her daughter) in later years, and she died there April 12, 1927 at age 82. Dr. Elton Trueblood, Quaker professor of religion at Earlham and friend of Robert Fienning, called her work as midwifery, "a ministry." A woman of integrity, she faced difficult circumstances with courage, faith, and imagination.

Written by Edith Fienning Morris Croake
Daughter of Edith Louise Fienning Morris
July 2015



Born: Nov. 21, 1844 -Germany

BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS

Father B: Ger.

RICHMOND, INDIANA

Mother: Unknown

Husband: Henry (John)

Informant: Geo. Fienning

Certificate of Death

I, Francis B. Warrick, MD Wayne County Commissioner of Public Health, do hereby certify the following to be a true and correct COPY of the CERTIFICATE OF DEATH OF Marie K. Fienning (Katherine)

on file with the Wayne County Bureau of Vital Statistics.

Year 1927 Volume City 9 Page 32 Certificate 1756

1. PLACE OF DEATH:

County Wayne
City or town Richmond
(If outside city or town limits, write RURAL)

Street address, hospital, or institution:

522 South 8th

2. USUAL RESIDENCE (HOME) OF DECEASED:

(For newborn infants give residence of mother)

State Indiana County Wayne
City or town Richmond
Street No. 522 South 8th
(If outside city or town limits, write RURAL)

(If rural give LOCATION)

2. (a) IF VETERAN, NAME WAR --

3. (a) FULL NAME

Marie K. Fienning

3. (b) Social Security Number

4. Sex Fe 5. Color or race White 6. (a) Single, married, widowed or divorced. Married

7. AGE: Years 82

8. Burial Date thereof 4-14-27
(Burial, cremation, or removal. Which?) (month) (day) (year)

Cemetery or crematory LutheranLocation Richmond, Ind.9. Funeral director Ora StegallAddress Richmond, Ind.Francis B. Warrick, MD

Health Officer

MEDICAL CERTIFICATION

10. DATE OF DEATH April 11, 1927,

Immediate cause of death myocarditis
asthma Duration

11. VIOLENCE: If death was due to external causes, fill in the following:

Accident, suicide, or homicide _____ Date of _____

Where did injury occur? _____
(City or town) (County) (State)

Injured at _____
home, farm, industry, public place (where?) _____

Injured at work? _____ Means of injury _____

12. SIGNATURE S. C. Markley, MD
M. D. or other

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto subscribed my name and caused my seal to be affixed at Richmond,

this 13th day of April in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and 78
ATTESTED:

Francis B. Warrick, MD

Wayne County, Indiana, U. S. A., Health Commissioner