

## My Immigrant Ancestors – The Rathsacks

Carl Christian Rathsack was the first of my ancestors to come to the United States, arriving nearly five years before the start of the Civil War.

He was born on January 27, 1811 in the village of Alt Kentzlin in Prussia, close to the border with Mecklenburg. His parents were Fritz (Friedrich) Rathsack and Maria Schmidt. In April 1838 he married Maria Louisa Timm at Vilmnitz on Rügen, Germany's largest island. She had been born at Campe in *Kreis* (County) Putbus, Rügen on December 10, 1813. I know only her mother's name: Maria Volling. The Rathsacks lived for a time on Rügen where their first child, Carolina Maria, was born on December 10, 1838, then moved to Alt Kentzlin. There seven more children were born, including my great-grandfather, Carl Ludwig, one of a set of twins. Of these eight children, five died before the age of nine.<sup>1</sup>

I confess I don't know how Carl Christian Rathsack made his living in Germany. The passenger list of the vessel that took him to the United States in 1856 is mute on this point and the LDS (Church of Latter Day Saints), which filmed millions of civil and ecclesiastical records in Europe during the 1940's, 1950's and 1960's, seems not to have filmed the records of Alt Kentzlin. It was a very small town, too small even to have its own church, and may have been entirely agrarian. Even today Alt Kentzlin (2003 population: 259) has no businesses. Years later, in a biographical sketch of Carl Christian's son (and my great-grandfather's twin brother) William<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Louis Falge claimed that the former had been mayor of his village in Germany; but, if true, that could only have been an honorific position and paid no wages. Dr. Falge also wrote that Carl Christian first worked as a blacksmith when he came to the U.S. and this is repeated in William's obituary in 1921.<sup>3</sup> The censuses and city directories of Manitowoc, Wisconsin, where he settled, don't mention the fact, naming his occupation variously as laborer, farmer or teamster, but it must be true. William became a tinsmith and eventually opened a hardware store in Manitowoc, so it's likely the father had some skills along that line which he passed along to the son. Again, Dr. Falge claims that Carl Christian had "only" \$1,100 in his pocket when he came to the U.S. in 1856. In fact this was a tidy sum, roughly equivalent to \$26,000 today.<sup>4</sup> Evidently he was a man of property, probably a farmer who did some blacksmithing or vice versa. He may well have been one of the larger fish in Alt Kentzlin's tiny pond.

Doctor Falge in his biography of William Rathsack states that William's father "determined to come to America because of the revolution in Germany." Presumably he meant the Revolution of 1848-49 which began when the exciting news reached Germany that the French king Louis-Phillipe had been driven into exile by riots in Paris. These inspired sympathetic riots in various German cities (some, as in Berlin, bloody), driving Prince Metternich from power in Austria and frightening the



Alt Kentzlin (red arrow) with Rügen Island above

authorities into granting liberal concessions. Action then moved to a National Assembly at Frankfurt where delegates from the various German states (there were then nearly 40) met to hammer out a constitution for a free, united Germany which, after much argument, they achieved in the spring of 1849. But when the Assembly offered the crown of the new constitutional monarchy it had devised to Frederick William III of Prussia he declined, later remarking that he would not accept a crown “from the gutter.” His rejection destroyed the revolution’s last chance for success. A conservative reaction rescinded the liberal measures, arrested many of their supporters and drove others into exile (not a few to the United States) where they became known as the “Forty-Eighters.”

Today it is difficult to imagine how these events affected the inhabitants of little Alt Kentzlin, or why they are offered as an explanation for an emigration that took place seven years later. Of course, as a working man, as mayor of his village (if, indeed, he ever held that position), as a *thinking* man, Carl Christian’s sympathies may have been with the revolutionaries, especially with the radicals (or *Demokrats*) who drew their members from the same social and economic class as his own. And the crushing of the Revolution in 1849 may have so disappointed him that he “determined” then and there to leave Germany even though he had not the means to carry out his decision until years later. Be that as it may, Dr. Falge’s statement looks to me like a convenient explanation, one that was easily understandable to outsiders and even conferred honor, for motives that were more complex and perhaps less altruistic. One has only to look at the following list for one of them:

Carolina Maria Friedericka, age 5, died June 1844, Alt Kentzlin  
Louisa Maria Ernestina, age 7, died December 1848, Alt Kentzlin  
Wilhelmina, age 8, died April 1851, Alt Kentzlin  
Ludwig Albert, age 1, died May 1853, Alt Kentzlin  
Alwine Maria Friedericka, age 1, died Spring 1855, Alt Kentzlin

The 1840’s were known as the “Hungry Forties” in much of Europe. Serious crop failures led to famine and, in some states of Germany, to food riots and open rebellion. Epidemics swept through the lower classes thus weakened by hunger. Serfdom had been abolished a generation earlier, but the landed squirearchy (Junkers) owned most of the arable land and exercised a near monopoly on agriculture. Despite disease and famine, the population had grown, but additional farm land was not to had or only at prohibitive prices.

There were other reasons for discontentment. The first stages of industrialization in Germany led to a shift in population from rural areas to cities where wages were low and working and living conditions deplorable. In 1830 the Prussian king, Frederick William III, had issued the Proclamation of Union, uniting the Lutheran and Reformed churches under one liturgy. Peasants, who were mostly Lutheran (as opposed to the king and the Junkers who were Reformed), were forced at gunpoint to break down their churches and attend Union services. Add to these Prussian militarism and universal military conscription: the Schuette family of Oldenburg (which would later become prominent in Manitowoc<sup>5</sup>) allegedly emigrated because the mother feared her sons would be drafted into the army.

These were among the factors that constituted the “push” to emigration: the willingness of people to leave their homeland, their language and customs, their parents, the graves of their ancestors. The “pull” came above all from across the Atlantic. America had abundant land and relatively few people. Taxes were low and, in comparison with Germany, government small and weak. Political enfranchisement, though still restricted to white males (and to white male landowners in some states), was more widespread. There was more personal freedom, and religious freedom was guaranteed by the

Constitution. There was no military conscription before the Civil War nor for another 50 years afterward. These assets were promoted by American communities seeking hard-working, God-fearing citizens and by land-agents seeking profits. Shipping companies that carried bulk products eastward from America to Europe, but had half-empty holds on the return trip, saw in the passenger trade an opportunity to fill ships. So brochures were printed, books written and agents for shipping companies traveled through Europe selling the idea of a new life abroad. Letters from emigrants were eagerly read and discussed in villages across Germany. The trickle of emigration before the 1840's became a flood. Between 1846 and 1856 more than a million Germans entered the United States. Carl Christian Rathsack and family were among them.

On June 14, 1856 they boarded the bark *Elise Rübcke* in Hamburg. Besides himself and his wife, the party consisted of daughter Johanna, 10; sons Carl and Wilhelm, both 7; and mother-in-law Maria Lorenz (nee Volling), then about 78<sup>6</sup> although the Passenger List gave her age as 55. The Rathsacks may have lied about her age since ships' captains were sometimes reluctant to take old or infirm passengers on long and arduous voyages; or they may have feared she would be denied entry into the United States for the same reason. Twice a widow when she left Germany, Maria Lorenz would live to the ripe old age of 91.

Fellow passengers included several people from Malchow, Lindenberg and Neu Kentzlin, towns close to Alt Kentzlin. One, Johann Rathsack, 38, from Lindenberg may have been Carl Christian's brother or cousin. He was accompanied by his wife Emilie, 46, and sons Oscar, 9, and Ernst, 8. They would eventually settle in Chicago.



A bark in the 1850's

The *Elise Rübcke* had been built in Denmark in 1842 and christened the *Norden*. In 1850 she was sold to the Hamburg firm of C. Rübcke & Woellmer and renamed the *Elise*. She was “bark-rigged” which meant she had two square-rigged masts and one (the mizzen or rear mast) rigged fore and aft, enabling her to sail closer to the wind than a “ship” which was all square-rigged. Her length was 103 feet, her beam 27 feet and the depth of her hold 14 feet. Into this space were crammed 300 passengers for this trip in addition to crew. She also carried freight. Captain R. Roysen was her master.<sup>7</sup>

Passengers brought their own food on board. Water (in casks) was provided by the shipping company. Voyages could last months, depending on the strength and direction of the wind. Sanitary facilities were primitive, privacy nonexistent, deaths (and births) en route common. For a good description of the ordeals our ancestors faced during these transatlantic crossings by sail, I recommend Vilhelm Moberg's *The Emigrants* (Book 1 of the series by the same name). It's a fictional, but meticulously researched, account of a voyage in the early 1850's.

On August 1, 1856 the *New York Times*, in its Marine Intelligence column, reported that the *Elise Rübcke* had been “spoken” (sighted and hailed by another vessel) on July 16th at Latitude 47° 43' Longitude 29° 50'. This was roughly mid-Atlantic. It had taken the vessel about a month to complete slightly more than half her journey. After that she must have made better time, for in its August 4, 1856 edition, the *Times* reported she had arrived in New York on Sunday, August 3rd, with 300 passengers after a voyage of 46 days.<sup>8</sup>

Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty were still decades in the future. The Rathsacks would have debarked at Castle Garden on the southern tip of Manhattan, in present-day Battery Park. Built as a fort

in 1807, and originally an island connected to Manhattan by a narrow causeway, it was ceded in 1824 by the U.S. Army to the City of New York which used it as a theater and cultural center until 1855 when it became America's first immigrant receiving center. Before it was closed in 1890, more than eight million immigrants had passed through it.

Having assured the authorities they were solvent and carried no infectious diseases, the immigrants would have been loosed upon the streets of lower Manhattan. In later years Castle Garden provided such services as currency exchange, railway tickets, mail and luggage forwarding, a jobs market and even an information desk, but it is not certain that these were yet in place when the Rathsacks passed through in 1856, just a year after it had opened. After nearly a month at sea, their first priorities must have been to find fresh food and drink (especially fruits and vegetables), baths and clean, dry beds that did not move beneath them. New York in those days had over 700,000 people, more than five times as many as Hamburg, the largest conglomeration of humanity they'd seen thus far, but it was probably not difficult for the immigrants to find food and lodging in the teeming, polyglot city. We may imagine that a crowd of shills and touts awaited them outside the Castle Garden gates, pitching cheap hotels and boarding houses in their own language. Agents for railway and steamship companies with routes to the "West" may also have been present, as well as land agents representing communities or themselves. In the 1840's and 1850's even little Manitowoc (1850 population: 756) had a land agent in Buffalo, New York, a frequent entry point for immigrants debarking at Quebec.



Immigrant boarding house near Castle Garden  
Maggie Blanck Collection

No record survives of the Rathsacks' stay in New York or of their journey westward. Tales of these adventures which, like their crossing of the Atlantic, must have been high points in their lives (and would have interested us so much), were probably passed down for one or two generations, becoming altered with each retelling, but are now forgotten.<sup>9</sup> One thing seems certain: the Rathsacks knew their destination in the U.S. before ever setting foot on the *Elise Rübcke* in Hamburg.

Proof of it is the fact that there was already a Rathsack in Manitowoc with whom they'd almost certainly corresponded. This was Karl Rathsack (born Feb. 3, 1826) of Hasseldorf, Prussia, a town just two miles east of Alt Kentzlin.<sup>10</sup> He had emigrated with his wife, Maria Stahl, aboard the vessel *Vorwärts* in June 1852, sailing from Hamburg to Quebec and entering the U.S. through Buffalo in August. Karl was a tailor (like that Johann Rathsack who had sailed with Carl Christian aboard the *Elise Rübcke*). I haven't discovered how Karl and Carl Christian Rathsack were related but some close relationship is indicated by the fact that they lived in the same neighborhood and attended the same church in Manitowoc. On November 3, 1856 Karl Rathsack filed for U.S. citizenship there and Carl Christian Rathsack did the same a day later.

How did the Rathsacks travel from New York City to Manitowoc? In the 1840's the usual route was by steamer up the Hudson River to Albany, then either by boat through the Erie Canal or by railway to Buffalo where the immigrants boarded Great Lakes steamers. The trip took about ten days and cost less than \$10 per person.<sup>11</sup> By the early 1850's some sort of railway service seems to have been established between New York and Chicago via Detroit, but it may not have been one continuous line or operated by one company. There may have been several railroads along the route, each with its

own rolling stock and even different gauges of track. In any case, if the Rathsacks did take a train (or trains) to Chicago, there was no railroad between Milwaukee and Manitowoc until the 1870's, and no regular stagecoach service until 1859, so they would have had to complete the last 100 miles or so of their journey either by ship or on foot. However they traveled, they did not dawdle because, as already noted, we have documentary proof of their presence in Manitowoc just three months after their arrival in New York.

Manitowoc County was settled by whites in the mid-1830's. Benjamin Jones, a Chicago merchant and land agent, purchased much of the land within the present city of Manitowoc in 1835 and built a log cabin there the following year. Growth was slow at first: ten years later the settlement had only 87 people. Craving neighbors, Frederick Borchardt, a German-born sawmill owner in Neshoto, had brochures printed up that extolled the advantages of life in his new home which he sent to friends and family in Germany. He even traveled to Detroit to meet ships carrying German immigrants whom he tried to persuade to join him in Manitowoc County. Wisconsin's accession to statehood in 1848 had not passed unnoticed in Germany and several books were published there commenting favorably on the new state. In one of them, *The Free State of Wisconsin*, Gustav Richter especially recommended Manitowoc.<sup>12</sup> By 1856 the city had just over 2,000 inhabitants, more than half of them foreign-born, but life was hard. The following is a quote from an early history of the city:

“It is said that people coming to Manitowoc between the years of 1848 and 1857 suffered more from hard times than those that came at any previous time. Money was almost unknown. There was one butcher shop, but fresh meat was a very rare luxury. Most of the people used salted meat. Salt pork could be purchased in Chicago at two or three cents a pound. Flour, which varied in price was quite high at times, especially before wheat raising became an important industry, but on an average was about \$12 per barrel. It was not until 1859 that Manitowoc raised enough wheat to produce sufficient flour for its own use. Vegetables were quite cheap because each man generally planted enough for his own use, and as the soil is fertile, vegetables grew well. In 1859 the first flour mill in Manitowoc was built. Land was cheap, being valued only at three dollars and seventy-seven cents per acre in the city.”<sup>13</sup>

In those days the city's only industries were wood products and fishing. Cedar posts, shingles and fish (pickerel, trout and whitefish) were its only exports. In the absence of money, bundles of shingles were used as currency and there's an amusing story of how some boys gained admission to a dance, the price of which was a bundle of shingles each, by presenting the host with the same bundle over and over. Fishing shanties lined the swampy shores of Lake Michigan and Indians camped beside them, subsisting on fish heads and offal. Every summer cholera swept through the village, killing many, and did not subside until the arrival of the first frost. An Indian girl charged a penny to ferry pedestrians across the Manitowoc River in her canoe as there was no bridge then. When a wooden one was built in 1851 it was not a drawbridge since the river was unnavigable anyway because of sandbars at its mouth. Unable to enter the river, vessels had to anchor in the open bay where they were at the mercy of storms. Yet almost all domestic necessities were carried over water from Chicago or Milwaukee because there were no roads until the late 1850's and no railroad until the mid 1870's. Local farmers could barely feed themselves and produced no surpluses until the late 1860's. Horses and wagons were rare; oxen pulled sledges, even in summer. Before the 1850's there were no regular Sunday church services; the faithful were served, if at all, by itinerant ministers trudging from settlement to settlement. The first newspaper, the weekly *Manitowoc County Herald*, appeared in 1850, the first brick house (a local

wonder) in 1854, the first library in 1855 and the first graded school in 1857.

The Rathsacks must have reached Manitowoc in the late summer or early fall of 1856. As noted above, both Karl and Carl Christian Rathsack filed petitions for citizenship on successive days in November of that year. The filing dates – Nov. 3rd and 4th – may not have been coincidental. A presidential election was held on Nov. 4, 1856 and the filing of first citizenship papers gave the two men the right to vote. Unless they sold their votes to the highest bidder (not an unusual practice then), they probably cast them for John Charles Fremont of the newly organized Republican Party who opposed compromise on slavery and would have been perceived by them as the more “liberal” of the three major candidates (James Buchanan and Millard Fillmore, who opposed immigration, were the others). Fremont won Wisconsin but lost the presidency to Buchanan who had the solid support of the southern states.

On Jan. 3, 1857 a daughter, Lucinde Maria Friedericka<sup>14</sup>, was born, putting the mother's emigration into a new light for us; Louisa Timm had endured the rigors of an Atlantic crossing and the journey to the Midwest while pregnant. Lucinde was baptized at the First German Evangelical Lutheran Church on March 23, 1857. This church had been founded two years earlier by 71 Manitowoc families, Karl and Maria Rathsack among them.

The Eighth Census of the United States captured a snapshot of the family on June 8, 1860. The census taker, Assistant Marshall Jeremiah Crowley, rendered the surname as “Rat Roch,” not the last time it would be mangled by a record keeper but certainly one of the most creative. The Rathsacks were living in the First Ward, that is: south of the Manitowoc River and close to the Lake. This was considered the “German” part of town (it had three breweries) and dense woods still covered parts of it. The story is told of how a lady got lost in them and only found her way out by walking toward the sound of waves breaking on the Lake Michigan shoreline. The Census records names, ages and places of birth with reasonable accuracy although Marshall Crowley added a year to the ages of Louisa, Johanna, Charles and William. Carl Christian is described as a “laborer” and the column labeled *Persons Over the Age of 20 Who Cannot Read Or Write* is checked for him (but not for Louisa), presumably because he couldn't read or write *English*. No figure is entered opposite his name in the column labeled *Value of Real Estate*, suggesting that the family rented its dwelling or was living with relatives or friends. The column labeled *Attended School Within the Year* is checked for Charles and William but not for Johanna who was 14. Louisa's mother, Maria Volling, is enumerated as Mary Laurence, an anglicized version of Lorenz, her second husband's last name.

13	323	324	John Stauhl	29	M	V	German	1	200	Mecklenburg
14			Wilhelmina	22	F	La				Prussia
15	324	325	Christian Rat-Roch	49	M	V	German	1		"
16			Louisa Rat-Roch	47	F	V				"
17			Johanna	15	F	La				"
18			William	13	M	V				"
19			Charles	12	M	V				"
20			Lucinda	3	F	V				Wisconsin
21			Mary Laurence	87	F	V				Prussia

A snapshot of the Rathsacks in the 1860 Census

Directly above them are the names of John and Wilhelmina Stahl (here rendered as “Stauhl”).

The Stahl and Rathsack families were closely connected. Karl Rathsack's wife's maiden name was Stahl and they had emigrated in 1852 with Carl and Sophie Stahl who now lived next to them in Manitowoc. The Stahls were from Pribbenow in Mecklenburg, six miles from Alt Kentzlin. John Stahl had real estate valued at \$200 (the average on this Census page). Perhaps it was he who rented or otherwise shared his dwelling with the Christian Rathsack family.

The Census gives no street names or house numbers (if the latter even existed then) but we may surmise from later evidence where they lived in 1860. The 1868 city directory listed both John Stahl and Christian Rathsack on 9th Street, the former “near brewery” and the latter “near Madison [St.]”. Subsequent directories place him on 9th Street between Hamilton and Madison until the early 1890's when, twice a widower, he apparently went to live with his son Charles. The 1921 obituary of Charles' twin brother William states that the latter died at 1235 South 9th Street, “the residence which had been the home of Mr. Rathsack since his boyhood days.” This, then, must have been the house number of the Christian Rathsack family.

Soon after the 1860 Census the family began to split up. Johanna was the first to leave. In 1863 or 1864 she married Julius Meyer, a carpenter, and went to live with him in Chicago. Julius, who was about 14 years older than Johanna, had immigrated in the same year as the Rathsacks and may have been known to them in Germany: there's evidence that he was from Hasseldorf, the town just a few miles from Alt Kentzlin from which Karl Rathsack (the tailor) also hailed. By the end of 1880 they had six children, all of them girls. The 1910 Census states that Johanna had had nine children in all, five of whom were then alive. This is the last census in which she and Julius, then 78, appear together. She may be the Johanna Meyer who died August 17, 1920 at age 74 in the German Old People's Home in Forest Park, Illinois, but this is not certain.

Next to leave was my great-grandfather, Charles Rathsack, who married Lizetta Lenz (1851-1927) in Chicago on April 6, 1869 in a ceremony performed by the Rev. John H. Raggatz at the German New Jerusalem Church. The newlyweds lived with Lizetta's parents for awhile at 185 Rucker, Charles working as a trunk maker for H. Vogier & Co., then moved to Manitowoc either before or just after the Great Fire of October 1871. There, between 1872 and 1892, they had nine children, seven of whom survived childhood.<sup>15</sup> When the Milwaukee, Lakeshore & Western Railroad extended its line to Manitowoc in 1874, Charles got a job with the company (bought out in 1893 by the Chicago & Northwestern RR) and for 17 years served as a conductor on the Manitowoc-Two Rivers line. In 1902, after 27 years of employment and just three years short of retirement, he quit his job with the railroad and moved to Butternut Lake in Price County, Wisconsin, where he had previously purchased 80 acres of land. Family lore relates – I don't know how accurately – that he purchased a team of horses and a wagon in Milwaukee, loaded it with the tools and hardware he'd need to clear a building site and build a house on his land, and drove it to Price County. Lizetta died there in 1927, Charles in 1930. Both are buried in Evergreen Cemetery in Manitowoc.

William, Charles' twin brother, drove a stage coach (probably for the Wisconsin Stage Company which made day-and-a-half trips between Milwaukee and Manitowoc) as a young man, then apprenticed as a tinsmith. After working for several employers, he opened his own tinsmithing business in 1893, gradually expanded it into retail hardware and in 1910 opened the William Rathsack & Sons Hardware store in a new building on Jay Street. He married Anna Weber on October 25, 1875 and fathered seven children.<sup>16</sup> Her death in 1908 was a severe blow to him. As noted above, he died in 1921 at the residence on 9th Street which had been his boyhood home. Both he and Anna are buried in Evergreen Cemetery.

Lucinde married Andrew Christofferson, a blacksmith, in Manitowoc on Nov. 6, 1876. She appeared with him (as “Lucy”) in the 1880 U.S. Census for Racine, Wisconsin, but after that I’ve lost her. She was the first owner of the Rathsack family bible and, since the page titled “Births” was left blank when it passed after her death to her brother Charles, it appears that she and Andrew had no children. None were enumerated with them in the 1880 Census. Probably she was already dead by January 1901, when her father died, for a newspaper obituary states that he was survived by two sons (i.e. Carl and William) and one daughter (i.e. Johanna).<sup>17</sup>

Louisa Timm died on Sept. 28, 1873 at the age of 59 and was buried in the family plot at Evergreen Cemetery. Her mother, Maria Volling, had preceded her in death four years earlier. On July 7, 1879 Christian Rathsack married for the second time: Louisa Messmann, née Kuhfeld, was about the same age as he and, like him, had been born in Prussia. The 1880 Census described her as suffering from “lung fever” (i.e. pneumonia). I have no exact date of death for her but it’s possible she was the “Mrs. Rathsack” whom the Evergreen Cemetery record mention as being buried on Nov. 2, 1886. It’s likely that it was soon after this that the old man went to live with his sons, each of them caring for him in turn. He may have suffered from some form of Parkinson’s disease in his later years, for it is told of him that he shook so badly he had to eat his meals from a small wooden trough.<sup>18</sup> He was living with son William at the old family home on South 9th Street when he died on Jan. 21, 1901, a week short of his 90th birthday.



Tombstone of Louisa "Rahtsack"

His newspaper obituary stated that he “operated a blacksmith shop for many years, until old age made him give it up and retire.” Dr. Falge, writing a decade later, was more expansive:

“He worked at the blacksmith’s trade in early manhood but later purchased a farm in Manitowoc and subsequently divided the property into lots. He possessed only eleven hundred dollars at the time of his arrival in this country, but met with prosperity in his undertakings and eventually became a wealthy man.”

How much of this is true? So far as I know, Christian is only twice described in the records as a farmer (and never as a blacksmith): in the 1875 city directory and on his 1879 marriage certificate. The 1868 directory and the 1880 Census described him as a teamster; the 1860 Census and the 1880 city directory as a laborer. (I have not found him in the 1870 Census.) Yet there was a Rathsack farm in Manitowoc,<sup>19</sup> though I’m not sure it was the one referred to by Dr. Falge in the quotation above. And there is circumstantial evidence that Christian was at least moderately wealthy when he died. How else to explain the surprising decision of his son Charles, within a year of his father’s death, to throw up his job (and pension) just three years short of retirement and purchase a “tract of valuable hardwood land” in northern Wisconsin?<sup>20</sup> Even William’s handsome new hardware store on Jay Street may have owed something to his father’s passing, though that was not built until several years later.

Today no stone marks Christian Rathsack’s grave in Manitowoc’s Evergreen Cemetery. Louisa Timm’s tombstone is broken, the dates inscribed on it wrong and her last name misspelled. The fact that even her date of death is in error suggests that it was not erected until long after her demise. Christian’s missing marker seems to me a more serious matter. Why did his children not place a stone over his



grave? They may have inherited his wealth and, as Dr. Falge's hagiographic essay makes clear, they were proud of his achievements. But did they love him while he was alive? What sort of man was he? Was he kind and generous or tyrannical and mean? Despite all the names and dates in the preceding paragraphs, I feel I know nothing of his character or his relationships with his wife and children. Had they been bitter or scornful when, at the age of 68, he remarried? After years of caring for him, did they perhaps feel toward the end that he had worn out his welcome on earth and had better go? Of course there may be an innocent explanation for the missing marker. A tree may have fallen upon it and it was carted away as rubble. But I don't think so. I think a deeper mystery lurks under plot W2-124 at Evergreen. Unfortunately, there's no one left alive today who can explain it.



Plot W2-124, Evergreen Cemetery, Manitowoc, WI in June 2003

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## End Notes

- 1 My source for these dates and places is the Rathsacks' *Familie Historie Register*. This remarkable document is a single sheet of paper, a pre-printed form in the German language, with spaces arranged in columns for the names of parents and children and their dates of birth, marriage and death. The entries appear to have been made all at one time and by the same hand: probably in the mid-1860's by Maria Louisa Timm. Several of the vital dates of children who died in Germany are only approximate—e.g. “Herbst [Fall] 1851” and “Fruhjar [Spring] 1855”—suggesting they were recalled from memory. The latest date recorded is that of Lucinde's birth in Manitowoc on 3 Jan 1857. The latest event (undated) is Johanna's marriage to Julius Meyer which occurred in 1863 or 1864. Neither Carl's marriage in 1869 nor William's in 1875 is recorded.
- 2 Dr. L. Falge, *A History of Manitowoc County Wisconsin*, 1911-12, vol. II, pp. 104-09. Dr. Falge's short biography of William Rathsack contains many factual errors. He writes that William was married in 1876 (it was 1875); that he emigrated in 1854 (it was 1856); that his mother died in 1893 at the age of 74 years (it was 1873 at the age of 59); and that his father died in 1898 (it was 1901).
- 3 *Manitowoc Herald News*, Manitowoc, Wisconsin, June 23, 1921, p. 1.
- 4 *The Inflation Calculator* (web site), S. Morgan Friedman, <http://www.westegg.com/inflation/>
- 5 John Schuette (1837-1919) was an alderman, five-times mayor of Manitowoc, State senator, bank president, mill owner and founder of the Manitowoc Electric Company. His wife, Rosa Stauss (1845-1904), was godmother to my paternal grandmother, Rose T. Rathsack (1886-1974).
- 6 The 1860 U.S. Census gives her age as 81. The records of the First German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Manitowoc, Wisconsin report her death at the age of 91 on 27 May 1869.
- 7 The *Elise Rübcke* made the news again soon after this voyage. In November 1856 she rescued 18 people adrift in an open boat, the only survivors of the sunken French steamship *Lyonnais*. For this act, her captain, A. Neilsen, received a gift of money and a silver speaking trumpet from the Consul-General of France.
- 8 If the *Elise Rübcke* departed Hamburg on June 14, as stated in the Hamburg Passenger List, and arrived in New York on August 3rd, then her voyage lasted 50, not 46 days. But perhaps her captain only counted days on the open sea. Hamburg is a port on the Elbe River by which it is connected to the North Sea at Cuxhaven, 68 miles away.
- 9 Even the *Elise Rübcke's* arrival in New York on 3 Aug 1856 is not recorded in the New York Passenger Lists available on Ancestry.com. Apparently only the Hamburg Passenger List, made upon her departure, and the reports of the *New York Times* survive.
- 10 His given name is variously spelled Carl, Karl or Charles in documents and inscriptions. I am using “Karl” to distinguish him from Carl Christian Rathsack and the latter's son Carl (aka Charles) Rathsack.
- 11 In 1848 the Kremer family paid \$6.00 per head for the steamer that took them from Buffalo to Sheboygan, Wisconsin. However, they were charged an exorbitant amount to unload their luggage at their destination and declared that it would have been cheaper to debark in Manitowoc.
- 12 Following his own advice, Richter settled in Manitowoc. He was the village's first Treasurer.
- 13 Caroline Hubbard, *History of the City of Manitowoc from 1850 to 1860*, 1904.
- 14 I use the name entered for her in the *Familie Historie Register* (see End Note 1 above). The Pre-1907 Wisconsin Birth Index transcribes her name as Lusiner M. Rathsack. Her baptism was recorded by the First German Lutheran Church under the name Levina Maria Louisa. By the time of her marriage to Andrew Christofferson in 1876 she apparently went by the name Louise. She appears with him in the 1880 U.S. Census for Racine, Wisconsin as “Lucy.”
- 15 One of the nine, Lena, may have been born before her parents left Chicago. If so, any record of her birth was destroyed with all other Cook County records in the Great Fire of 1871. Her existence is attested only by the Charles Rathsack family bible which has bound pages for marriage, births and deaths. Lena appears on the “deaths” page: “Lena Rathsack - Born Oct. 16 - Died March 1868 —”. This would place her death over a year before her parents' marriage. However, the entry directly below hers, written by the same hand, contains a demonstrable 10-year error which was later corrected by overwriting one number with another. Was a similar error made in Lena's death date as well?
- 16 Four of them before they were married, apparently. I use the date for their marriage found in the Wisconsin Pre-1907 Marriage Index. In his biography of William Rathsack, Dr. Falge states they were married on August 1, 1876.
- 17 *Der Nord Western*, Manitowoc, Wisconsin, Jan. 24, 1901.
- 18 Related to me in 1999 by my father, Archie W. Johnson, who had heard it from his mother, Rose T. Rathsack.
- 19 I have a photograph taken around 1907 of Lizetta Lenz Rathsack and several of her children (my grandmother Rose among them) on the front porch of a farmhouse. Inscribed on the back in Rose Rathsack's hand are the words: “Out on the farm in Manitowoc.”
- 20 “Conductor Rathsack Resigns,” *The Manitowoc Citizen*, March 13, 1902, p.1.