



William Mönighoff

Spouse:

Elisabeth Robrecht 1823-73

Children:

- Joseph 1849-87
- Elisabeth 1850-82
- Marianna 1852-55
- Carolina Theresia 1854->75
- Marie 1858-59
- Henry 1859-68
- Charles 1863-86

Minnie Mönighoff 1867-1928

Step-daughters:

- Barbara 1860
- Hannah 1866
- Caroline 1870

Parents:

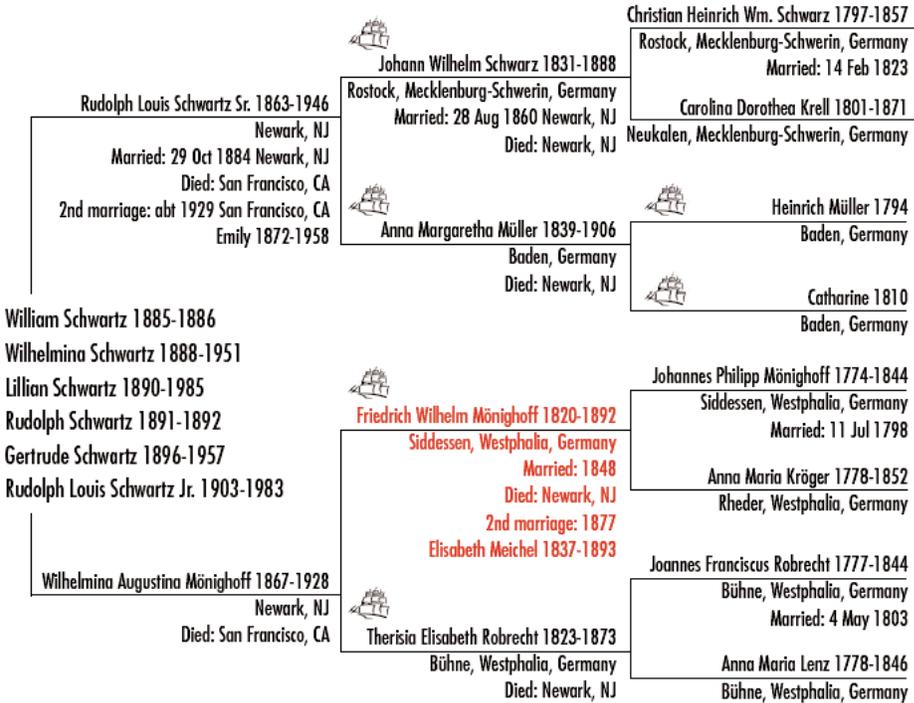
- Anna Maria Kröger 1778-1852
- Philipp Mönighoff 1774-1844

Siblings:

- Joseph 1799
- Maria 1801
- Johann 1803-65
- Elisabeth 1805-65
- Agnes 1808
- Franz 1810-76
- Henricus 1812-95
- Unnamed stillborn 1814
- Ferdinand 1816
- Theorodus 1818-93

Occupation:

Retail and Wholesale Grocer



William Mönighoff

1820-1892



St. Agatha's old Catholic Chapel in Siddessen, Germany, where William Mönighoff was baptized in 1820. 1668 drawing.

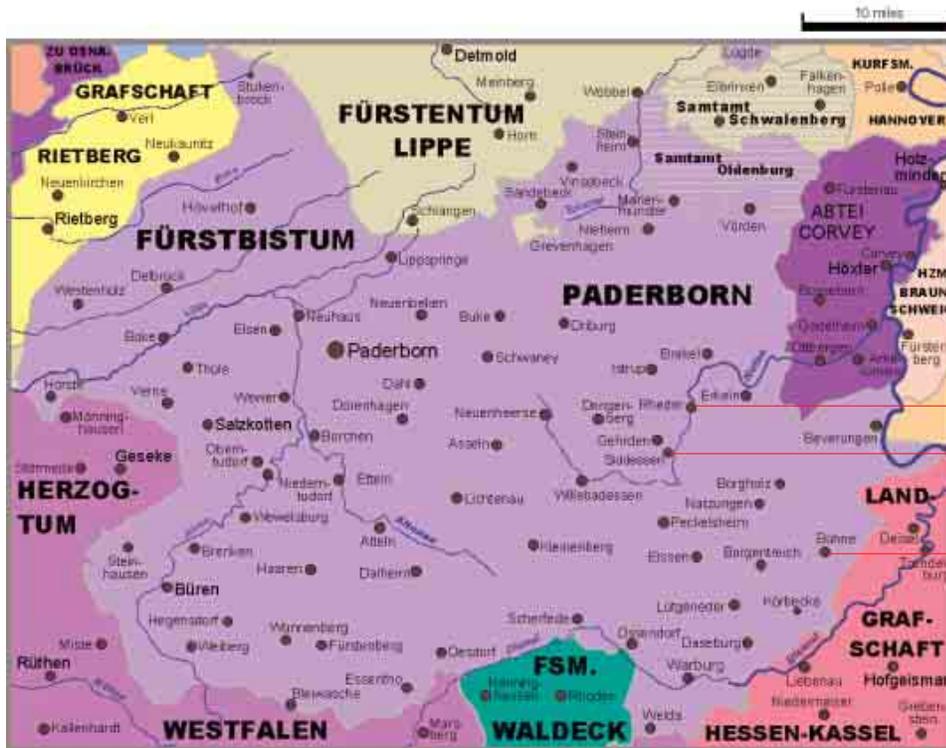
Freidericus Wilhelmus Mönighoff, born 14 July 1820, came into the world three days after his parent's 22nd wedding anniversary. Baby William was baptized two days latter, on his father's 46th birthday. William's baptism took place in St. Agatha's Catholic Chapel in Siddessen (rhymes with citizen), Germany.

William was the youngest of 11 children born to Anna Maria Kröger and Johannes Philipp Mönighoff. William's father worked as a peasant farmer to support his large family.

The Mönighoff name means "the monk's fields." For many generations the Mönighoff family farmed the fields belonging to the Benedictine Monks at the Monastery in Gehrden, located 1.5 miles northeast of Siddessen, a small farming village.

Peasant surnames were first used in the late Middle Ages (1200-1400). So the Mönighoff name indicates that our ancestors farmed the monk's fields for hundreds of years before record keeping began in Siddessen in 1641.

The Schwartz Family History



1789 map of the Prince-Bishopric of Paderborn (Fürstbistum Paderborn)

- Rheder, Germany, where William Mönighoff's parents were married in 1798.
- Siddessen, Germany, where William Mönighoff was born in 1820.
- Bühne, Germany, where William Mönighoff's wife, Elisabeth Robrecht, was born in 1823

William's parents were married on 11 July 1798 in St. Katharina Catholic Church in Rheder, where William's mother was born and raised. Rheder, a small farming village on the Nethe River, is located four miles north of Siddessen.



St. Katharine's Catholic Church in Rheder, Germany, where William's parents were married in 1798.

The map above shows the area of Germany formerly known as the Prince-Bishopric of Paderborn (an ecclesiastic state ruled by a Catholic Bishop), which was one of 300 independent political entities that formed a patchwork within Prussia, now Germany.



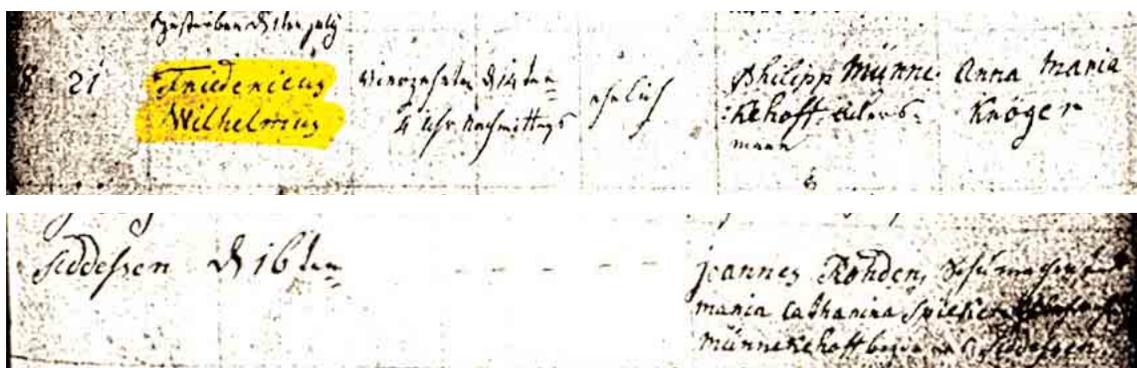
Modern-day Germany

The historic city of Paderborn, 25 miles northwest of Siddessen, is the site of one of Charlemagne's 14 Castles. Read more about the historic events and legendary characters that molded this area of Germany in the Bühne History section at the end of Elisabeth Robrecht's biography.

The Schwartz Family History



Siddessen, located in the Nethe River Valley, is well hidden by the surrounding hills when viewed from the main roads. "Blink and it's gone," report our cousins who visited the village. 20-30 buildings pre-dating the 20th century are located along the river bottomlands, above which newer houses comprise the modern village.



William Mönighoff's baptism record (spelled Munnechoff).

William Mönighoff's baptism record is located in church record books (Kirchenbücher), kept in the neighboring town of Gehrden, where the main church (drawing at right) and the Benedictine Monastery were located.



St. Peter and Paul's Catholic Church (built in 1142) in neighboring Gehrden.

The Schwartz Family History



City crest of Gehrden, Germany, where the Benedictine Monastery is located and the Siddessen parish record books are kept.

Christianity came to central Germany in 750, followed shortly thereafter by the first monasteries. During the Middle Ages, in 1142, a Benedictine Monastery was built in present day Gehrden. In 1153 Heinrich von Gehrden donated all of his land to the monastery. Around the year 1200, farmers began migrating to this area, cleared the donated land, and named their village Gehrden, for the man whose land it was.

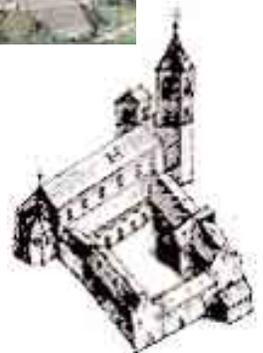
The village Siddessen is named for the family who owned land in the area of the Gehrden Monastery when it was established in 1142. Originally the name was “Sidushousen” (home of Sidus) but over the centuries its pronunciation and spelling evolved to Siddessen, which rhymes with “citizen.”



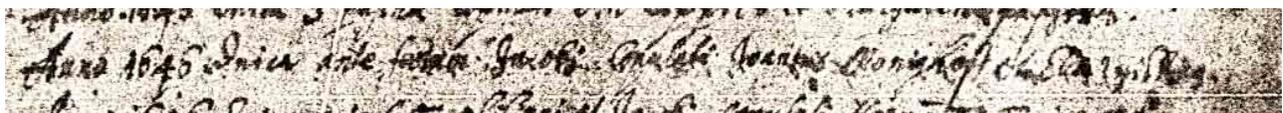
Siddessen's old chapel door now serves as a portal to the new St. Agatha's church built in 1912.



The fortified, medieval Gehrden Monastery was constructed for protection as much as for worship and cloistered life. Originally four sided, as shown in the drawing on the right, two wings were later torn down. Today the chapel is used for worship, but the remaining monastery buildings house a health spa.



Old German village scene of dancing and celebration, possibly similar to the marriage feast for the record shown below.



1646 marriage record of Johann Mönighoff, which is the first appearance of a Mönighoff in the Siddessen parish record book. The day of the marriage is recorded as “feastos Jacobi”, the feast day of St. James, rather than month and day. Feast days varied from year to year, so reference guides are necessary to calculate the week and month. Feasts of the saints took place on the day of the saint's death.

The Schwartz Family History



Siddessen is located on the east edge of the German state of Westphalia, an area of rolling hills, broad valleys, and fertile farmland. Cultivated fields are interspersed with forested groves, and every few miles villages dot the landscape. Above painting depicts a harvest scene much as it was when William was a boy.

In the summer of 1820 when William was born, his oldest brother, Joseph, celebrated his 21st birthday. The other Mönighoff children were sons – ages 2, 4, 8, 10, and 17, and daughters – ages 12, 15, and 19.

The week of William's fourth birthday, his 23 year-old sister, Maria, married Anton Sander. They had seven children and later emigrated to the United States and settled in Newark, NJ. Four years later another sister, Agnes, married Arnold Guentermann. They lived in Siddessen and four of their ten children survived to adulthood.

Sister Elisabeth married in 1836. She and her husband, Franz Drecker, had seven children and four survived to adulthood. Ten years later, brother Franz married Margaretha Hille in the neighboring village of Erkeln where they raised nine children.

In the span of years during which William and his siblings were born, Napoleon's Army conquered and occupied Prussia (northern Germany) and was defeated and driven back to France. During this time Napoleon's brother ruled the area of Prussia where the Mönighoffs lived.

During Napoleon's rule, German farmers were freed from serfdom (ownership by landowners), but were too poor to enjoy their new mobility. The nobility were no longer obliged to care for sick and old serfs who were left to fend for themselves. Many serfs fell into a state of extreme poverty and worked as day laborers.

It was into this social and economic climate that William Mönighoff was born. When William reached age 19 in 1839, there were no opportunities in Germany for him to better his life.



The Mönighoffs, like peasants (serfs) throughout Germany, didn't own the land on which they farmed, but they owned the leasehold, which was hereditary as long as their taxes were current.

Also, peasants could not move from village to village without permission from the parish priest. German peasants were bound to the land of their birth, and to the nobels who owned the land.



This 1820 coin was circulated in the area of Germany where William was born.

The Schwartz Family History

German peasant farmers existed on the bottom rung of the financial ladder, and without inheriting or marrying into a farm leasehold, William only could work as a day laborer.

William Mönighoff's name next appears in the Minden Archives as one of many young men who "emigrated secretly" from Germany in 1839.

Secret Emigration

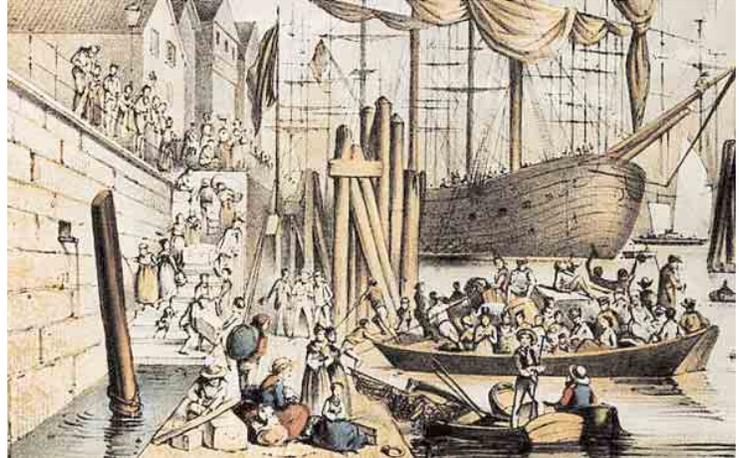
When the following two requirements were met, a man was granted permission to emigrate. Otherwise, a man leaving Germany (Prussia) was recorded as having "secretly immigrated."

1. Released from the Military Draft

The German (Prussian) military draft was administered by the local ruling nobility, who compiled a list of men (from village birth records) and horses to be drafted in the event of war. The names of boys were added to this list when the boys were from ages 3 to 15, and they were subject to military service from ages 15 to 25. When a young man reached age 25, the local noble usually released his name from the draft eligibility list unless a war was being waged or was brewing. When a man wanted to legally leave the country, he had to be released from draft eligibility by his local noble.

2. Debts Paid

A man had to post his intention to emigrate on the local courthouse door or equivalent public place in the village. During this posting period, anyone to whom the man owed money came forward to collect. Once debts and obligations were cleared, he was "released" by his local noble to emigrate from village.



Siddessen is located on the the Öse River, which flows into the Nethe River, which eventually joins the Weser River, a major waterway that ends at the Atlantic Seaport of Bremen. This is likely the route taken by William Mönighoff. The scene above depicts immigrants off loading from riverboats for the Atlantic voyage to America.

19 year-old William followed in the footsteps of his three older brothers: Ferdinand (born 1816) "emigrated secretly" in 1836, according to the Minden, Germany, Archives. Brother Johann (born 1803) initially settled on a Missouri farm and later moved to Newark, NJ. Brother Henry (born 1812) settled on an eastern Pennsylvania farm and later changed his name to Moninghoff. William's sister, Maria Catharina (born 1801), also emigrated and settled in Newark, NJ, with her husband, Franz Sander, his parents, and his brother and his wife, all from Frohnhausen, a village a few miles from Siddessen.

This "chain immigration" was common among poor immigrant families such as the Mönighoffs and the Robrechts. Ships that transported Germans to the new world also carried letters to Germany, telling of a better life in America.

When William stepped onto the dock in New York City in 1839, no immigration procedures existed. Ellis Island opened in 1892 and its predecessor, Castle Garden, opened in 1856.

The Schwartz Family History



This is the type of ship on which William Mönighoff sailed to America. He was one of 21,028 Germans emigrants who made the Atlantic crossing to the U.S. in 1839.

(William's first nine years in the United States, 1839-48, are being researched)

In 1848 William Mönighoff married Elisabeth Robrecht, probably in New City where he was a grocer, according to the 1850 New York City Directory.



Letters written from immigrants to their relatives in Germany were read with great interest and often shared with the entire village.

Elisabeth grew up just 12 miles from William's village in Germany, and their families knew each other. She was 16 years old when William sailed to the United States.

Elisabeth left Germany after the deaths of her parents in 1844 and 1846. She sailed to America in 1848 with her nephew, 11 year-old Charles Robrecht. Elisabeth was the first of four siblings to emigrate from Germany to the United States and she was the seventh and youngest child of a village tailor.

William and Elisabeth's first two children were born in New York: Joseph A. in June 1849 and Elisabeth in November 1850.

William and Elisabeth moved their small family to the "Germantown" neighborhood of Newark, NJ, sometime between late 1850 and mid 1851 when William's Newark grocery business first appears in the 1851/52 city directory. William operated his "Germantown" grocery store for 40 years. (See pages 4 and 5 in the Rudolph Schwartz chapter for a description of "Germantown".)

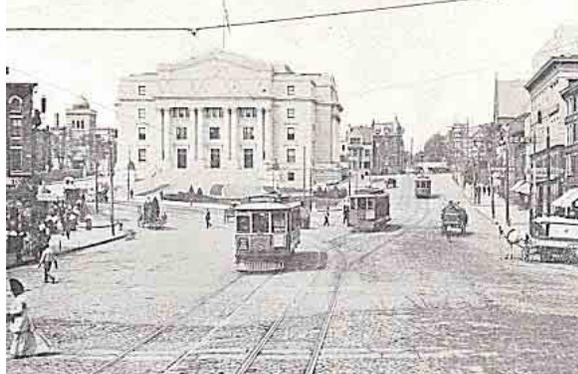


St. Mary's German Catholic Church in Newark where Elisabeth Robrecht and William Mönighoff worshiped and baptized some of their children.

From 1646 to 1892, the name Mönighoff appeared with the following spelling variations:

Menighoff
 Moenighoff
 Monichhoff
 Moninghoff
 Monkhoff
 Monnighoff
 Monninghoff
 Muenchhoff
 Muenichhoff
 Muenickhof
 Muenickhoff
 Muenkhoff
 Muennickhoff
 Muenninghoff
 Münchhof
 Munchhoff
 Munichhoff
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The Schwartz Family History

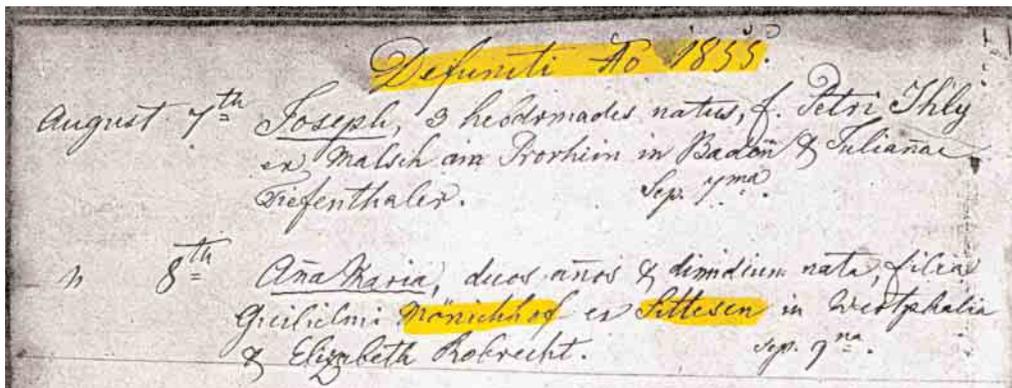


When William Mönighoff and Elisabeth Robrecht arrived in Newark, NJ, in 1850/1, the streets were not yet paved and city sewers were non-existent. Above left illustration shows a Newark street scene and the old county courthouse in 1855. Photo (right) shows electric trolley cars running past the new county courthouse (same corner) around 1892, the year of William's death. Newark's first city street was paved with round stones in 1853, the same year as the first city sewer was constructed.

Newark was a boomtown when the Mönighoff family arrived in 1851. Two railroad lines recently linked Newark's many factories to larger consumer markets, and great numbers of unskilled German and Irish immigrants flocked to fill factory jobs. Newark was the largest industrial area in the United States in the 1860s.

By 1852 the Mönighoff grocery business was well established, and Elisabeth and

William were the parents of three children: 3 year-old Joseph, 2 year-old Elisabeth, and infant Marianne. Theresia was born in 1854. In 1855 scarlet fever claimed the life of 3 year-old Marianne. Marie was born in 1858 and lived only one year. Henry was born in 1859 and Charles in 1863. Minnie, our ancestor, was the eighth and last child born in 1867. Death came again in 1868 claiming 9 year-old Henry.



The highlighted word "Sittesen" (misspelled) in this old Newark church record provided the valuable clue that identified the German village of "Siddessen" as William Mönighoff's birthplace. Siddessen also appears on William's gravestone.

The record above is William's daughter's 1855 death entry. It reads: August 8th, Anna Maria (sic), two years and three quarters, daughter born to Guilielmi (Latin for William) Mönichhof (sic) from Sittesen (sic) in Westphalia and Elisabeth (sic) Robrecht. This record is written in Latin, the language used in older U.S. German Catholic church record books.

The Schwartz Family History



Elisabeth Robrecht and William Mönighoff's youngest child, Minnie Mönighoff. Photograph taken about 1868 when Minnie was about 18 months old. There are no known photos of the other Mönighoff children.

After William's grocery business was established in Newark, Elisabeth's sister and two brothers arrived from Germany. William helped Elisabeth's brothers, Anton and Ignatz, establish their businesses in Newark.

According to the Newark City Directories, Ignatz Robrecht operated a shoemaking business in the Mönighoff Grocery store from 1858 to 1862. In 1863 Ignatz moved his business several stores away to Bank Street. That same year Anton Robrecht set up business as a tailor in the Mönighoff Grocery Store. Two years later Anton moved his tailor shop to Boston Street in the same neighborhood.

According to the 1870 U.S. census, Elisabeth, William, and their five surviving children lived on Norfolk Street in "Germantown" Newark. 21 year-old Joseph worked as a trunk maker; 15 year-old Theresia was employed as a domestic servant; 7 year-old Charles attended school and baby Minnie was 3 years-old. Living next door was Elisabeth and William's oldest daughter, Elisabeth Spicker, her husband, and their infant daughter, Rose.

The Mönighoff family worshiped at St. Mary's, St. Peter's, and St. Augustine's German Catholic Churches in Newark, carrying from Germany ten centuries of Catholic tradition.

On February 2, 1873, William's wife, Elisabeth Robrecht, died four weeks short of her 50th birthday. Daughter Minnie (our ancestor) was 6 years old and son Charles was 10 at the time of their mother's death. After Elisabeth died, William's 17 year-old daughter, Theresia, took over housekeeping duties and cared for Minnie, Charles, and their father for four years until William remarried in May 1877.



William Mönighoff's second wife, Eliza Meichel (1836-93), was born in Marktlegast, Bavaria, Germany.

The site of William Mönighoff's grocery store, located on the corner of Academy and Chatham, is now a Rutgers University parking lot!

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William's second wife was Eliza Meichel Georg, a German immigrant from Bavaria. Eliza was the widow of Frank Georg, also a Newark grocer from Germany. Eliza and Frank's three daughters came to live in the Mönighoff home after William and Eliza's marriage. In addition to William and Eliza, the Mönighoff house was now home to Minnie Mönighoff age 10, Charles Mönighoff 14, Caroline Georg 7, Hannah Georg 11, and Barbara Georg 17.

William's oldest daughter, Elisabeth, died in 1883 at age 32, leaving a husband and seven children, ages 1 to 12 years. Her widower, Henry Spicker, remarried several months later to an Irish immigrant, Kathleen Walch. Kathleen and Henry later had two children, not long after which Henry Spicker died.

The following year, 1884, William's youngest daughter, our ancestor Minnie Mönighoff, married Rudolph Schwartz in a civil ceremony in Newark. Their son William was born the following year in 1885. He was baptized in 1886, and William Mönighoff was named as the child's godfather, and his wife, Eliza, was his godmother, as recorded in St. Augustine's Catholic parish book. 1886 also brought death to both Charles Mönighoff, William's 23 year-old son, and 18 month-old grandson, William Schwartz. William Mönighoff's oldest son, 38 year-old Joseph, died the following year in 1887.

1888 and 1890 brought William two more grandchildren, Minnie and Lillian Schwartz. In 1891, grandson Rudolph Schwartz was born and died seven months later.

William Mönighoff was the grandfather of 13 children, 11 of which were born before his death in 1892.

According to Newark City Directories and William Mönighoff's death certificate, William and his second wife, Eliza, lived with William's daughter and son-in law, Minnie and Rudolph Schwartz, on Norfolk Street in Newark for several years before William's death in February 1892. Eliza died in 1893, also in the Norfolk Street home in Newark, NJ.

William was buried next to his first wife, Elisabeth Robrecht, in St. Mary's German Catholic Cemetery in Newark, NJ, and their gravestone reads:

Wilhelm Mönighoff, born Siddessen, Westphalia, 11 July 1820, died 2 February 1892.

Our Mother Elizabeth Mönighoff, born Robrecht, died 1 February 1873 at age 50.



The weathered gravestone of Elisabeth Robrecht (left) and William Mönighoff. The gravestone is a four-sided limestone obelisk with Elisabeth and William's inscriptions (in German) carved on opposing sides; the remaining two sides are blank.