

Elisabeth Robrecht

1823-1873

Spouse:

William Mönighoff 1820-92

Children:

Joseph 1849-87
 Elisabeth 1850-82
 Marianna 1852-55
 Carolina Theresia 1854->70
 Marie 1858-59
 Henry 1859-68
 Charles 1863-86
Minnie 1867-1928

Parents:

Anna Maria Lenz 1778-1846
 Franz Robrecht 1777-1844

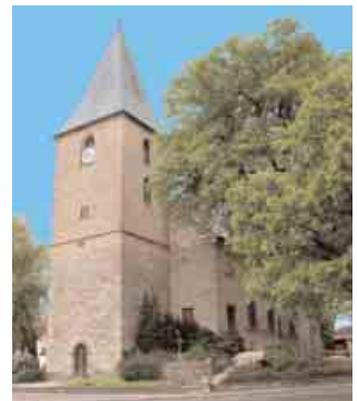
Siblings:

Clara 1804-61
 Johannes 1807-36
 Carolina 1810-73
 Ignatius 1813-88
 Anton 1816-1905
 Joseph 1819-26

Maria Theresia Elisabeth, born 2 March 1823, was the youngest of seven children born to Anna Maria Lenz and Johannes Franciscus Robrecht. Elisabeth and her brothers and sisters were born in the village of Bühne in the state of Westphalia, Prussia (north central Germany). Elisabeth was baptized on 5 March 1823 in St. Vitus Catholic Church.

Elisabeth's parents were married 4 May 1803 in St. Vitus Catholic Church in Bühne, where they were both born and raised. Elisabeth's father worked as a tailor to support his wife and seven children. Elisabeth was the ninth of 63 children born in Bühne in 1823 when Bühne's population was about 1,000.

The large Robrecht family lived on the outskirts of Bühne in a farm house owned by Elisabeth's maternal grandfather, farmer George Lenz.



St. Vitus Catholic Church in Bühne, Germany



Interior of St. Vitus

The Schwartz Family History



1981 aerial photograph of Bühne, Germany. The red dot marks the site of Elisabeth's childhood home (no longer standing). Compare with the 1831 map on the next page.



Elisabeth Robrecht's birth is recorded above in the Bühne Parish Church Book. In general, there were no government vital records kept in Germany. Vital records were maintained by town churches until the twentieth century.



This stamp appears in the Bühne parish record books where the vital records were found for the Robrecht family in Germany.

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When Elisabeth was a child, Bühne was comprised of 135 homes and several large manor houses. The villagers “owned” hereditary leases to homes and farms as long as they kept current on their taxes.

Bühne was then in the possession of a family of the lower nobility, and taxes were levied on the villagers by the nobles, according to their needs. Tax payment was made in the form of goods and services, such as eggs, chickens, bushels of grain, and labor. Village

houses were located on half an acre or so of land that was subsistence farmed, even by those who were not farmers by profession. People and animals lived in the same dwelling.

Children at play in 2002 on the Bühne school ground, which is on the site of the old Rotenburg Manor House. St. Vitus church is seen in the background.



Rotenburg manor house. The village bought this building in 1893 and used it as a school. Building on right is the old fire house.



Boys Grammar School in 1831

Eight year-old Elisabeth Robrecht lived here with her parents in 1831

Home of Elisabeth's maternal grandparents, Georg Lenz and Maria Weber. Elisabeth and her brothers and sisters were born here.

Home of Elisabeth's paternal grandparents, Leopoldus Robrecht and Margaretha Hengst. Robrechts continue to occupy a house on this site as of 2003



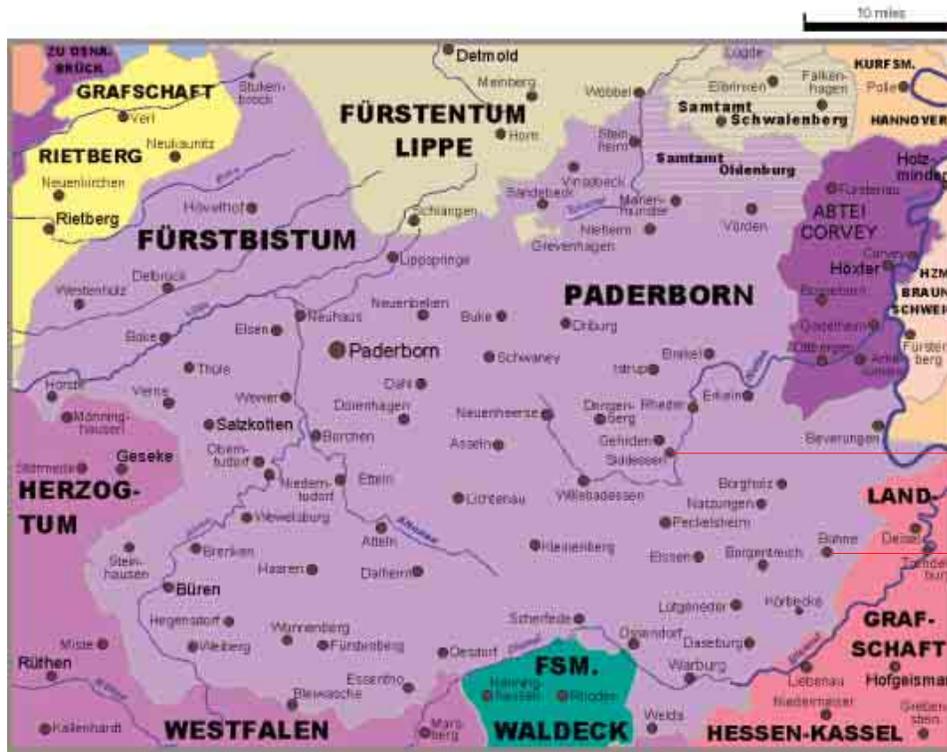
St. Vitus Church



Kannenhof manor house. Bühne was once in the possession of various families of the lower nobility. Kannenhof was one of their local residences.

This 1831 map of Bühne was drawn for a state-wide (Westphalia) tax survey.

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

Siddessen, Germany, where Elisabeth Robrecht's husband, William Mönighoff, was born in 1820

Bühne, Germany, where Elisabeth Robrecht was born in 1823



Modern-day Germany

The map above shows the area of Germany formerly known as the Prince-Bishopric of Paderborn (an ecclesiastic state), which was one of 300 independent political entities that formed a patchwork within what is now Germany. A Catholic Bishop ruled the Bishopric of Paderborn both temporally and spiritually, and all those who lived there were Catholic.

The historic city of Paderborn, which is 35 miles northwest of Bühne, is the site of one of Charlemagne's 14 Castles. Read more about Bühne plus historic events and legendary characters in the Bühne History section at the end of this chapter.

At Elisabeth's birth, her sisters were 18 and 12 years old, and her brothers were 15, 9, 6, and 3. When Elisabeth was three weeks old, her father's sister, Sophia, died. Sophia was married to the Bühne village policeman and they had eight children. Also in 1823 Elisabeth's paternal grandfather died at age 77.

The Lenz farm house, where Elisabeth and her siblings were born, was also home to her Lenz grandparents and Elisabeth's Aunt, Eva Lenz, her husband, and their six children. For a detailed account of the Lenz farm house and German farm life, see the Anna Maria Lenz biography, chapter fourteen.

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By 1831, eight year-old Elisabeth and her family were no longer living in The Lenz farm house. Around 1829 they moved into the village and lived in a house owned by Conrad Deventer, Elisabeth's oldest sister's husband.

When Elisabeth was three years old, her youngest brother, Joseph, died from a fever at age five. Ten years later, in 1836, her 29 year-old brother, Johann, died of tuberculosis. He was unmarried and a tailor like his father and grandfather.

Later that year, Elisabeth's unmarried sister, Carolina*, gave birth to a son, Charles*. Carolina later married Wilhelm Temme* in 1845. When Elisabeth* was 19, in 1842, her brother, Ignatz*, married and moved to Beverungen, a neighboring village, where he and his wife* started a family*. Elisabeth's brother, Anton*, who was also a tailor, married in 1847 and had four children*.

Elisabeth's older sister, Clara Robrecht, married Conrad Dewender in Bühne in 1828. They had seven children, including a son, Christian*, who later became our ancestor Minnie Mönighoff's godfather. Dewender and Robrecht families still live in Bühne as of 2003.

* Immigrated to America and settled in Newark, NJ. See the Franz Robrecht biography, chapter fourteen, for complete information about Elisabeth's siblings.

According to German emigration records, 25 year-old Elisabeth sailed to America in 1848 with her 11 year-old nephew, Charles Robrecht, son of Elisabeth's sister, Carolina. Elisabeth claimed to be



This photo shows Bühne much as it looked when Elisabeth lived there.



This photo of Bühne was taken in 2003.

Charles's mother in the emigration records. However, Charles's "real" mother sailed to America several years later with her husband and their infant daughter.

Robrecht means:
"fame shining"

*In old high German
"hruot" means fame and
"break" means shining.*

Elisabeth left Germany after the deaths of her parents in 1844 and 1846. Although the youngest child, Elisabeth was the first of four Robrecht siblings to sail for America. Her sister and two brothers followed within the next 10 years. This type of chain immigration was common among poor immigrant families.

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This ship is similar to the one on which Elisabeth Robrecht sailed with her nephew to America in 1848.

MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN

Elisabeth, 25 years old, and 28 year-old William's marriage took place in mid 1848, probably in New York, shortly after Elisabeth's arrival in America. Their families knew each other in Germany and Elisabeth's home village was only 12 miles southeast of Siddessen, where William grew up. William left Germany in 1839 and was the youngest of 11 children.

Their first two children were born in NY in June 1849 and November 1850. A third child was born in Newark, NJ in October 1852. The Mönighoffs moved from New York to Newark in 1851. Newark was a rapidly growing industrial city during this time and offered many factory jobs to unskilled immigrants.

Elisabeth's husband operated a grocery store in the "Germantown" neighborhood

of Newark for 40 years. His business listing first appears in the 1851-52 Newark City Directory. (See the Rudolph Schwartz biography, chapter two, for descriptions of life in old Newark)

By 1852 William Mönighoff's grocery business was established in booming "Germantown" Newark, and Elisabeth and William were the parents of three children: three year-old Joseph, two year-old Elisabeth, and infant Marianne. Theresia was born in 1854. In 1855 scarlet fever claimed the life of three year-old Marianne. Marie was born in 1858 and lived only one year. Henry was born in 1859 and Charles in 1863 during the Civil War. Our ancestor, Minnie Mönighoff, was their eighth and last child, born in 1867. Death came again in 1868, claiming nine year-old Henry.

Elisabeth and Minnie were the only children who had children of their own.



Elisabeth Robrecht's husband, William Mönighoff



Elisabeth Robrecht and William Mönighoff's youngest child, our ancestor Minnie Mönighoff. Photograph taken about 1868 when Minnie was about 18 months old.

The Schwartz Family History

The three-masted sailing ships that brought immigrants to America carried letters home to Germany telling of life in the new world. These letters were read with great interest and often shared with the entire village. Owners of the sailing fleets produced pamphlets and posters that attracted a growing number of passengers and turned emigration into an industry by the late 1840s.

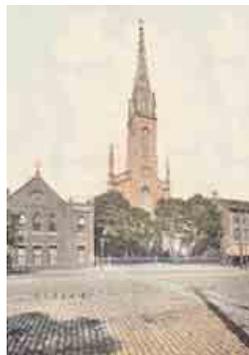
After William and Elisabeth were established in Newark, Elisabeth's brothers and sister began to arrive from Germany. Carolina Robrecht and her husband immigrated in 1851. Ignatz and Anton Robrecht and their oldest sons sailed from Bremen to New York on the ship *Jeverland* in 1857, arriving on 14 May.

According to the Newark City Directories, Ignatz 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. Anton was a 41 year-old widower and father of two when he arrived in Newark. He later married Apollonia Bachman and they had eight children.

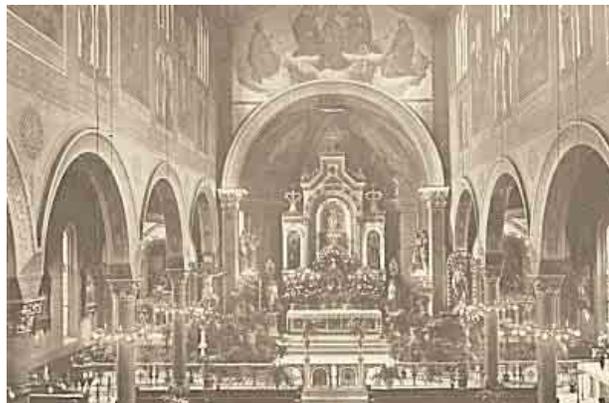
Except for Clara Robrecht Dewender, who remained in Germany, the four surviving Robrecht siblings all sailed to the new world and lived out their lives

in Newark. Their gravestones remain in the old St. Mary's German Catholic Cemetery in Newark.

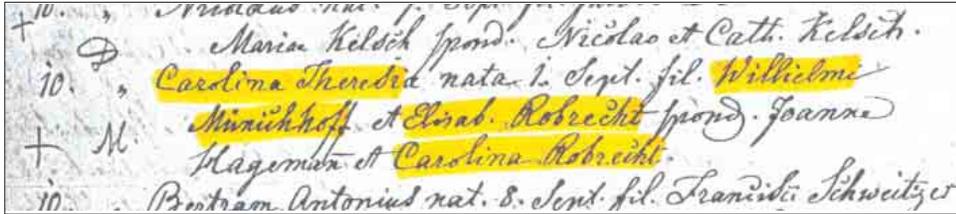
According to the 1870 U.S. census, Elisabeth, William, and their four children lived at 310 Academy Street in "Germantown" Newark, NJ. 21 year-old Joseph worked in a trunk factory, 15 year-old Theresia was employed as a domestic servant, seven year-old Charles attended school, and baby Minnie was three years old. Living next door was Elisabeth and William's oldest daughter, Elisabeth Mönighoff Spicker, her husband, and their infant daughter, Rosa. Their family eventually grew to seven children.



Photos of St. Peter's (top) and St. Mary's German Catholic Churches where Elisabeth Robrecht and William Mönighoff worshiped and baptized their children in Newark.



The Schwartz Family History



The 1854 birth record of Elisabeth Robrecht's daughter Theresia. The child's godmother, Carolina Robrecht (Elisabeth's sister), is the mother of Carl Robrecht, who sailed to America with Elisabeth Robrecht in 1848.

The Robrecht and Mönighoff families worshiped at several German Catholic Churches in Newark, carrying to America nine centuries of Catholic tradition from Germany. St. Mary's, St. Peter's, and St. Augustine's parish books in Newark, NJ, tell the story of a close-knit immigrant family, worshiping together and serving as godparents and sponsors at baptisms and marriages for decades in the large extended Robrecht family.

Elisabeth Robrecht Mönighoff was the first of the four immigrant Robrecht siblings to die. She succumbed to *dropsy* on 2 February 1873, one month short of her fiftieth birthday. Daughter Minnie was six years old and son Charles was nine at the time of their mother's death. After Elisabeth died, her 17 year-old daughter, Theresia, took over housekeeping duties and cared for Minnie, Charles, and her father for four years until William remarried in May 1877.

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

Three days after her death, Elisabeth was buried in St. Mary's German Catholic Cemetery in Newark, NJ. 19 years later her husband joined her in death and was buried beside her. Their gravestone reads:

*Our Mother Elisabeth Mönighoff,
born Robrecht, died 1 February 1873
at age 50*

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



What is dropsy?

Dropsy is a symptom and not a disease and refers to the accumulation of body fluids in the tissues or the organs. The simplest cause of dropsy is purely mechanical, blood pressure being raised beyond a certain point owing to venous obstruction.

100 years ago 50 percent of the cases of general dropsy were due to heart and aorta disease, and 25 percent to kidney problems.