

## **Julius R. Dietrich (1858-1910)**

Julius R. Dietrich was born in September 1858 in Heinichen Saxony, Germany. He spent most of his childhood in Germany, where he went to school. In 1878, he moved to the United States and studied at Carthage College in Carthage, Illinois for two years.

In 1887, Julius moved to Streator, Illinois, and got a job at the local German-language newspaper, the *Volksblatt*. While living there, he married Anna Maria Neff on April 12, 1888. Anna Maria was born in 1867 and was the daughter of Peter and Mary A. Neff. They had seven children, six of whom lived to adulthood: Emilia (1890), Anton (1892–1953), Emma (1894), Agatha (1897–1982), Selma (1901), and Julius Jr. (1908).

In 1891, Julius and his family moved to Bloomington, Illinois, where he would live for the rest of his life. He bought the *Bloomington Journal*, the only German-language weekly newspaper in the city, and became its owner and editor. He also created a book called *Bloomington Deutsche in Wort und Bild* (Bloomington Germans in Words and Pictures), which highlighted the achievements of the local German community, including their schools, businesses, churches, and clubs.

Julius was also very active in his community. He was a member of several local organizations and held different leadership roles. One of the best-known groups he joined was the *Bloomington Turnverein*, a German gymnastics club. He became the president of the Turnverein in 1899. Julius also played the card game Skat, a German game, and was elected secretary of the Illinois Skat League in 1904.

Julius strongly opposed the Temperance movement, which wanted to ban alcohol. He believed that alcohol was unfairly blamed for society's problems. As part of his efforts to keep alcohol legal, he joined several anti-Prohibition groups, including the United German Societies of Bloomington. He was also critical of a famous preacher named Billy Sunday, who supported Prohibition.

Aside from his work with newspapers and politics, Julius was known for his love of dogs. He raised Boston Terriers, Great Danes, and especially Dachshunds. He won awards for his dogs, including first prize for his Boston Terriers. He was also the secretary of the Bloomington Kennel Club in 1909.

Julius was a member of many other organizations, including the German Press Federation, the Illinois German Editorial Association, the Odd Fellows, and the German Veterans Society. He also served as a Deputy Game Warden for the Peoria District. He remained very active in the community until his health started to decline.

Julius died on May 13, 1910, at the age of 52 due to complications from surgery. In honor of his support for keeping alcohol legal, all the saloons in Bloomington closed for one hour the day he was buried, May 16, 1910. His funeral was large because he was a respected member of the community. He was buried at Evergreen Memorial Cemetery in Bloomington.

His wife, Anna Maria, lived many more years after his death. She stayed with several of her children and cared for their daughter Emma. She passed away on July 21, 1936, at the age of 68 and was buried next to Julius.