

MARIA SOPHIA (KOEHLER or KAHLER) BACH (1836-1917) and William Bach Sr. (1829-1911).

Maria Sophia Bach was married to William Bach Sr., a pressman and political activist. Both were immigrants from Germany, and they met in Philadelphia, marrying in 1855. When the American Civil War started, William joined the Union Army, leaving Sophia and their three children behind.

Sophia (Koehler or Kahler) was born on October 12, 1836, in Gelnhausen, Germany, near Frankfurt, to Conrad and Sophia Koehler. Her family immigrated to the U.S. in 1839. Sophia had seven siblings, including a twin sister named Susan. Ten years later, her future husband, William Bach, also moved to the U.S. from Germany, arriving in Philadelphia after a long, 70-day journey across the Atlantic. The couple's travel was by wooden ships, which was a common way to cross the ocean at that time.

William, born February 26, 1829, in Wurttemberg, Germany, was very educated and studied law at the University of Stuttgart. In 1848, he joined the revolutionary movement in Germany, which aimed to change the political system. After the revolution failed, William had to leave Germany to avoid punishment, and he decided America would be a good place to start over. When he arrived in Pennsylvania, he worked as a pressman at a printing business owned by his cousins.

Prior to the outbreak of the war, William met Sophia in Philadelphia and the couple was married in 1855. While in Pennsylvania, Sophia and William had three children: two daughters, Emma and Louisa, and one son, Frederick. After they moved to Illinois, they had four more children: William Jr., Katharine (Katy), Clara, and an unnamed child.

William served in the Union Army from 1862 to 1865 during the Civil War. He worked on a military newspaper and was stationed in Virginia. He even had the chance to guard Jefferson Davis, the President of the Confederacy, for a short time. After the war, William returned to his job as a pressman.

Sophia's memories of the war have been described "as interesting as those of her husband, but of a different nature." In an interview with Mme. Annette of *The Daily Bulletin*, Sophia is quoted as saying that images of Fort Delaware made her "heart ache for the rebel prisoners." Though her support was in favor of the Union men with whom her husband was fighting, she recounts that when she would go out with her young son Frederick, she was "frequently accosted by rebel soldiers, who would say, 'Oh madame, do let us see your little son; let us speak to him; hold him by the hand, for I have little ones at home whom I will probably never see again.'" Sophia did not deny the soldiers the opportunity to dote upon Frederick, for she "would not deprive even a rebel the comfort of speaking with a child." According to Sophia, "[i]t did [Frederick] no harm and them much good, and those were the times when a little ray of brightness shone a long time and was valued accordingly." In keeping with her evident willingness to show compassion and sympathy for those who aligned themselves with the enemy camp, as well as her personal dedication to furnishing supplies for the soldiers, the description of Sophia as "a woman of unusual character and endowment. ...intensely patriotic in her makeup and remarkable in her energy and industry" is seemingly justified.

After the war, the Bach family moved to Chicago for a while. In January 1869, the Bach family moved to Bloomington, IL. They lived at 311 E. Mulberry Street. William worked at a local newspaper, *The Pantagraph*, for over 25 years. Sadly, the family faced the loss of two of their daughters. Clara died from poisoning in 1878 after eating a toy that had been painted with a toxic substance. Katharine, their other daughter, died suddenly in 1885 at the age of 16.

Sophia lived with her daughter, Louise, after William passed away in 1911. She died peacefully in 1917 at the age of 80. She was a member of the First Methodist Church, the National Women's Relief Corps, and several other local organizations. She was buried alongside her husband and children in Evergreen Memorial Cemetery.