



THE MUELLER RECORD

SPRING 2011 NEWSLETTER



A. FREDERICKA BERNHARDT MUELLER (1839-1911)

This is an appropriate time to pay tribute to Anna Fredericka Bernhardt Mueller, wife of Hieronymus. This year marks the 100th anniversary of Fredericka's death on January 26, 1911. The cause of her death is recorded as a cerebral apoplexy which may have meant a number of things but was most likely a stroke. Funeral services were held at the home of her daughter, Mrs. F. W. Cruikshank, at 346 W William Street in Decatur. Services were attended by a large number of family and friends who were then joined by the factory employees in a march to Greenwood Cemetery. Fredericka was briefly interred at the cemetery mausoleum until the completion of the Mueller family mausoleum.

Fredericka was born in Minden, Prussia (now Germany) in 1839. We have no record of the time or circumstances of her immigration to America, nor of how she came to be introduced to Hieronymus in Freeport, Illinois. She and Hieronymus were married on May 23, 1856 in Freeport, Illinois. This marriage led Hieronymus to follow the advice of his brothers that he should move to Decatur and establish himself and his new family in a town that would grow and prosper. Hieronymus got caught up in the gold fever of the Colorado Gold Rush in 1858 and left for a brief adventure in the West while Fredericka returned to Freeport to stay with her parents while bearing their first child, Henry. The family soon thereafter reunited in Decatur where they remained the rest of their lives.

Fredericka received little formal education but acquired enough knowledge on her own to be considered a good Latin scholar and to follow her husband and sons in their business enterprises. In fact, she often accompanied Hieronymus to water works and plumbing trade conventions and, following his death in 1900, continued attending with her sons. She had little interest in taking her place in society, preferring to remain in her home raising her children. Her motherly instincts extended to the employees of Hieronymus and she enjoyed seeing to their welfare.

It is difficult to judge the impact that Fredericka had on the development and growth of the business – women, including wives, had a different role in the social and business structure of the 19th century. She received little recorded credit for her part, but we know that she was totally committed to the success of Hieronymus and backed him in every possible way. She supported his view that money should be invested into the business with the family taking out only what was needed for a simple living standard. She raised her sons with the understanding that they would follow Hieronymus into the business equipped with the same principles of ethics and caring as their father. It is safe to assume that Fredericka Bernhardt Mueller was as exceptional a woman as Hieronymus was an exceptional man.

MUELLER CAFETERIA IN 1946

For many years, one of the benefits of working at Mueller Co. was the opportunity of a hot meal in the company cafeteria which was located in the lower level of the recreation building. An article in the July, 1946 Mueller Record describes a little detail of this operation which was important to the well-being and morale of the Mueller workforce. In 1946 the cafeteria was serving 375 to 400 meals daily between 11:00 a.m. and noon. During the war years, the number of meals served to workers reached over 1000 daily. Typically, the kitchen prepared 150 pounds of meat, 35 loaves of bread, 75 to 100 pounds of potatoes, and 250 cups of coffee each day. The kitchen had all the modern equipment of the day including an oven that could handle 30 pies at once. The operation was under the direction of the chef, Joe Toth, and manager, Bill A. Bailey. In addition to the regular noon meal, 40 to 50 meals were prepared during the night shift. The cafeteria also provided meals and a meeting place for various civic organizations as a public service.

MUELLER FAMILY FOUNDATION SPONSORS RETIREE LUNCHEON

The annual luncheon for retired employees of Mueller Co.'s Decatur operations will be held on May 19th at the Masonic Temple. Doors will open at 11:00 will lunch served at noon. Retirees, spouses, widows, widowers, and anyone receiving a Mueller Co. pension are welcome to attend. Reservations are required and can be made by calling the museum (423-6161), Betty Wheatley (429-1234) or Ron and Bev Riley (422-0905).

The luncheon has been a longstanding tradition for Mueller Co., but recent changes in company policy have resulted in a decision to drop this event and to exclude retirees from all company activities including picnics and Christmas parties. Of course, those of us in the museum and Mueller Family Foundation are saddened to see this. One of the great traditions of the company through 150 years has been a strong appreciation of its employees. For that reason, the Board of the Mueller Family Foundation has decided to host the retiree luncheon this year. The luncheon will double as the annual party for the museum's volunteers.

MUELLER MUSEUM IS LOOKING FOR "FRIENDS"

The museum is hoping to expand its mailing list by offering a new category of association – technically not members who make an annual membership contribution but rather **"Friends of the Mueller Museum"** who have expressed an interest in what we do and would like to keep in touch. "Friends" would receive the newsletter and be encouraged to join as members although not required to do so. It is difficult for us to expand our membership and will are deeply indebted to those of you who support us in that manner. The reality of today is that younger generations are not "joiners" and that if we wish to continue to reach an audience with the history we are preserving, we have to find other ways. The website, muellermuseum.org, is one way of accomplishing this. The "Friends" program will be another approach to widening our reach. The success of this depends on you, our current readers. If you know someone who might be interested in reading the newsletter, let us know who they are (name and address) so that we can add them to the mailing list. We are looking for retirees, current employees, Mueller family members (especially younger folks that might not be involved) or anyone who simply enjoys history. We will put them on the mailing list along with the option to be taken off if they wish. We do need your help on this project. Please send your suggested "friends" to muellermuseum@aol.com or by mail to Mueller Museum, 420 W Eldorado Street, Decatur, IL 62522.

VISIT THE WEBSITE AT MUELLERMUSEUM.ORG