

CANAWLERS AT REST

DIEDRICH MEYER

b. July 15, 1829

d. January 14, 1911

Find-A-Grave 34879676

Diedrich Meyer was born in Germany on July 15, 1829 to John and Margaret Meyer. He was the youngest of their seven children, all of whom preceded him in death. After receiving a basic education he became a miller.

In 1856, at the age of 27, he emigrated to America and took employment as a circus hand. When the old-time wagon show drove majestically into Fort Wayne, Indiana, Diedrich found the town quite pleasing and abandoned the roving life for a career. He settled in Fort Wayne where he found employment on the Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne & Chicago railroad. After awhile he gave that up and became a boatman on the Wabash & Erie Canal. He only worked on the canal for two years.

In 1853 the Wabash and Erie Canal had been opened from Toledo to Evansville and on July 29 the canal boat "Pennsylvania" arrived in Evansville under the command of Captain Sharra after having completed the 468 mile journey. This was thought to be the heyday for the canal, but shortly thereafter it began to decline. Not only did natural disasters take their toll, boatmen often forgot to close gates and drained off a level or logs rolled into the canal and became a menace to boats. Cheap construction and mismanagement, dynamiting of reservoirs, loss of water by seepage, floods, etc. etc. plus cheaper freight rates by rail became major problems. By 1857 expenditures exceeded income. In March 1859 the entire canal was leased out: the northern portion to the Wabash and Erie Canal Company, the central portion to Chauncey Rose, William P. Griswold, James H. Turner, etc, and the southern portion to the Southern Indiana Canal Company. They were optimistic that under private enterprise they would see immediate improvement. However after a painfully slow decline the last operating sections of the canal closed down by 1874.

In 1866 Diedrich was elected to his first position on the Fort Wayne police force. The 1866-67 Ft. Wayne/ Allen

County Directory shows him living at 55 W. Berry Street and being a laborer. The 1870 U.S. Census shows him living in a boarding house owned and run by Elizabeth Mennewish and her husband, Frederick Mennewish, a carpenter. Diedrich was shown to have real estate valued at \$600 and a personal estate at \$600. He served on the police force for 12 years, five of which he was the "turn key" (jailor).

The 1880 U.S. Census shows Diedrich, a jailor, boarding in the home of the Allen County sheriff, Charles A. Munson, who had earlier been a grain dealer. Living in the same household were Eleanor Cooper, who was Charles Munson's mother, Lucretia Munson, Charles' sister, and William P. Cooper, his step-brother by his father's second marriage, along with three other boarders. Thus Diedrich got to know Lucretia Munson by living in the home of his boss.

On May 12, 1881, when it became necessary to choose a deputy city marshal, Diedrich Meyer was selected. He served in this position for nearly three years. When Marshal Frank Falkner resigned, Diedrich was appointed to fill the vacancy. Diedrich was then elected city marshal in 1881 and re-elected to that position in 1887. His deputy was Henry C. Franke, who later became marshal in 1894.

Diedrich was married on November 16, 1882 to Lucretia Munsen in Allen County, Indiana. Lucretia had been born in 1845 and was 37 years old. Diedrich was 53 years of age. They were members of Trinity English Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne. They did not have any children shown on census records or in their obituaries.

The 1882-83 Ft. Wayne/Allen County Directory shows Diedrich being a carpenter on the P, FW and C Railroad. He was living at 190 E. Lewis St.

Diedrich continued as Fort Wayne's city marshal until 1889. He was able to retire early at age 60 by frugally amassing a comfortable fortune. The 1900 Census shows him as a collector.

In politics he was a democrat. He cast his first presidential vote for Stephen A. Douglas.

In 1908 Diedrich had a severe attack of whooping cough. It left his heart in a weakened condition.

For about two weeks in late December 1910 Diedrich complained that he wasn't feeling well. On January 4, 1911 he had severe chest pains near his heart. Then over the following days he seemed to grow better. On January 14 he felt so much improved that he ate a hearty meal and later that night felt well enough to walk around his house with the assistance of a nurse. While taking a drink of water he suddenly collapsed in his home at 122 West Wayne Street. He was carried to his bed and Dr. Hamilton was called and waited upon him, but he died of heart failure in a



DIEDRICH MEYER
JULY 15, 1829 JAN. 14, 1911
Sec. I Lot 66 Lindenwood Cemetery
Ft. Wayne, Indiana
Photos by Bob Schmidt



ceded her in death. She was laid to rest beside Diedrich in Section 1 Lot 66 of Lindenwood.

few short minutes at 7:45 p.m. He was 82 years old and perhaps one of the best-known citizens of Fort Wayne.

The Rev. Samuel Wagenhals was in charge of the funeral. Diedrich's remains were taken from his home at 10 o'clock on Wednesday morning to Trinity English Lutheran Church, where they laid in state until 2 o'clock, when funeral services were held. Pall bearers were William A. Bohn, George Becker, C. F. Pfeiffer, P. A. Randall, A. E. Melching and G. H. Loesch. He was then laid to rest in Section 1 Lot 66 of Lindenwood Cemetery in Fort Wayne.

Lucretia Munson Meyer died on July 20, 1917 at St. Joseph Hospital in Fort Wayne, Indiana from anemia. She was 72 years, 6 months and 9 days old. She had been a devoted member of Trinity English Lutheran Church and a charter member of the church society. She was survived by a half brother, William P. Cooper of Fort Wayne; two nieces, Mrs. Frank E. Winstrup of Cincinnati, Ohio and Mrs. Ellen Remlin of Covington, Kentucky; and two nephews, William Cady of Los Angeles, California and Brown Copper of Fort Wayne. Her brother Charles Munson had pre-

Sources:
Ancestry.com
Fatout, Paul. *Indiana Canals*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1972.
Find-A-Grave 34879676
Fort Wayne Allen County Directories: 1866-67, 1882-83
Fort Wayne Journal Gazette: January 15, 16, 17, 1911 July 21, 1917
Griswold, B. J. *The Pictorial History of Fort Wayne, Indiana*. Chicago, IL: Robert O. Law Company, 1917.
Indiana Death Records 1882-1920.
Indiana Marriage Records.
Valley of the Upper Maumee River. Madison, Wis: Brant & Fuller, 1889.
U.S. Federal Census: 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910