

The following material was kindly provided by Dr. Christian Wolfsberger, Director of the Municipal Archives in Mönchengladbach, North Rhine-Westphalia. A word of gratitude must also be extended to Dr. Günter Krings, Christian Democratic Union MP for the Mönchengladbach constituency, who forwarded my request for information to Dr. Wolfsberger.

LUISE FÖRSTER:

Born October 1, 1847 in Münstereifel, Administrative District Rheinbach; died November 23, 1911 in Wickrathberg.

From 1876 until her death in 1911, she resided in Wickrathberg 59, the schoolhouse; now Auf dem Damm 7 in 41189 Mönchengladbach. (Wickrathberg was incorporated into Mönchengladbach).

Information from the Wickrathberg *Schulchronik* (StadtAMG 33/30/1):

On April 20, 1876 Miss Luise Förster, who up to that time had been a teacher at the Hamminkeln Elementary School by Wesel, accepted the position of a third grade teacher at the Lutheran Elementary School in Wickrathberg.

On April 27, 1876, she began her teaching duties.

On May 30, 1876, her appointment was confirmed.

Her mother, Caroline Förster, whose maiden name was Graubner, died on February 11, 1893, at the age of 84. She had been "ailing for years and required the most solicitous care, which she received in full measure from her two daughters." (In order to care for her mother, Luise Förster was granted a lengthy leave of absence in the winter of 1892/1893.)

"Miss Luise Förster applied for early retirement in August 1893. Medical certification provided by the District Physician substantiated her application. Miss Förster had long been suffering from a heart complaint; as the malady seemed to have intensified since her mother's death, she no longer felt wholly capable of fulfilling her duties as a teacher. Her petition was approved by the local School Board and by the Municipal Council and was confirmed by the Royal Government, so that Miss. Förster was retired as of November 1. Her pension amounted to 764 marks.

Miss Förster was allowed to keep her residence in the schoolhouse for a yearly rent of 120 marks. Her sister, Miss Bertha Förster, was allowed to continue offering lessons in Sewing and Needlework. (Remuneration: 110 marks).” [Page 99]

Newspaper article reporting her death (source not provided but printed in the *Schulchronik*, StadtAMG 33/30/1):

Yesterday, on November 24<sup>th</sup>, here in Wickrathberg, following a lengthy ailment, the former teacher Luise Förster passed away. She was well known both as a poet and a writer and highly esteemed. From 1876 until 1893 she was a teacher at the local elementary school. She was a protégé of the poet Emil Rittershaus, who, impressed by her great poetic gifts, encouraged her to make her poetry available to a wider public rather than confining it to the modesty of her tranquil surroundings. Under the pseudonym Ada Linden, she then published a number of highly pleasing and popular short stories in, for example, the *Elberfelder Zeitung*, the *Duisburger Sonntagsblatt* and in the *Kinderbote*, a publication for children. Her first lengthier stories “The Miners” [“Die Grubenarbeiter”], “Brandtkäthe,” and her collection of poems entitled “Sound of Silence” [*Aus der Stille*] aroused particular interest. In her later years, she wrote a large number of outstanding children’s stories and folktales, several of which were published by the C. Hirsch Publishing House in Constance, for instance, “The Daughter of the Hungarian Duke,” “The New Light,” “The Parsonage on the Rhine,” and “The Mountain’s Secret.” In a larger work, entitled *Winter Corn* (C. Hirsch Publishing House, Constance), she published a collection of five thrilling tales dealing with the Lutheran religious upheavals in the Eifel, in Cologne, in Pfalzdorf by Cleves, and in Trebnitz in Bohemia. Her final work is entitled *How I Sought Happiness: A Country Teacher: How I Lived, What I Taught, and What I Loved* (O. Nemnich Publishing House, Leipzig). The author called this book her “dearest child.” The attentive reader of this book will not fail to notice that Luise Förster presents a poetic autobiographical portrayal of her own life and struggle, and of her own thoughts about life, love and happiness. All the works by Luise Förster bear witness to a noble and profound poetic nature, which with eyes wide open and with warmth of heart understands the art of conveying the reality of her homeland, the doings of its people and the heartbeat of history in a manner both stirring and refined, yet poetically transfigured. Her reader is also agreeably moved by a profoundly pious touch and a genuinely patriotic aspect, which can be discerned throughout all her stories and poems, and which commend her works for both young and old. A large circle of friends, whom she has served so well with her poetic gifts, will long after her death both cherish and preserve the legacy of her work and the memory of the deceased, whose final resting place is the serene cemetery at Wickrathberg.”

In the margin of the newspaper article, there is a note jotted down in pencil:

“Also a song praising the village of Wickrathberg: ‘Greetings to Wickrathberg’ [‘Gruß gen Wickrathberg’] has remained a favorite poem recited by senior students to this very day.”

The obituary notice given by her sister Berta Förster: “Burial Monday, November 27, 1911.”

Berta Förster was born on August 24, 1849 in Münstereifel, Administrative District Rheinbach, and died on September 5, 1929 in Wickrathberg.