Research Paper
History 300
For Dr. Roger Warlick

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History 300
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ABSTRACT

Louisa Kamil was born in 1827 in Germany. In 1860, she immigrated to the United States, settling in Savannah. Louisa was married to August Kohler, a merchant, with whom she raised four children. After August's death in 1880, she took charge of his estate. During this time, she had the houses on Barnard Street built. After the children were grown, Louisa lived in her home on Barnard Street as head of the family. She died in 1906 at the age of 78 and is buried in Laurel Grove Cemetery.
HER LIFE

Louisa Kohler was born Louisa Hamil in the region of Wurtemburg, Germany sometime between 1828 and 1834. Her exact date of birth was impossible for me to track down because while her death certificate gives her age as 78 years old at the time of her death (making year of birth 1828), the 1870 census gives her age as 39 (year of birth-1831) and the 1880 census gives her age as 46 (year of birth-1834). I had hoped to find confirmation of one of these dates by looking at Louisa’s tombstone at Laurel Grove, but this proved to be futile. The tombstone that should have been there wasn’t. I attempted to locate her in the 1900 census, but didn’t. She is there, but I probably just missed her in the sheer volume of material. (I wish that I had found her since the 1900 census has most of the information I still need.)

I know that Louisa emigrated from Germany to the United States, but I could find no references to her in the passenger lists as either Louisa Hamil or as Louisa Kohler. There is a possibility that she had been married before her marriage to August Kohler. In her will, she makes mention of a daughter, Mrs. Rosa Mayer, who is not mentioned anywhere else in the material I have examined. (see WILL).

By the time Louisa arrived in Savannah (around 1860), she was married to August Kohler of Grabau, Mecklenburg, Germany. They had a 4-year old daughter, Johanna, and a son, Louis, born in 1860. August was a merchant some ten to sixteen years older than Louisa. By 1866, August had a good liquor and tobacco
shop on the corner of Broughton and Jefferson Streets. There were also two more children, Charles and Louise, at the family residence on Bryan Street.

The 1870 census for Chatham County lists the Kohler family as "Residence 20, Family 22." As of 1 June, 1870, the family consisted of August (55), Louisa (39), Jane (Johannah, 14), Louis (9), Charles (7), and Louise (5 months). August's occupation was given as "Liquor dealer" while Louisa's was given as "keeping house." The older children were at school. All children are listed as Georgia-born while August and Louisa are listed as foreign-born (with general birthplace). At the time of this census, the Kohlers had a black married couple, Mary and Henry Harris, as their live-in servants. Real (estate) value was $1650 and personal property value was $2500.

Between 1872 and 1874, August moved his business from the Broughton Street address to "178 St. Julian and 177 Bryan." His residence is listed as the same, so it is probable that the liquor business was being run from the family residence on Bryan Street. From 1876-78, the business was only listed under the St. Julian address. In 1879, August ran a saloon at the Bryan Street address.

It was during this period in the city of Savannah that a yellow fever epidemic raged. The older Kohler son, Louis, fell victim to the disease and died on the 21st of September, 1876. (Note: the tombstone lists his date of death as 22 September, 1876. According to all keepers' records, this was his date of interment. The mistake was probably made when he was moved from lot 865, his original burial site at Laurel Grove.)
of yellow fever was probably why August did not conduct his business at home during the period mentioned above.

With the death of her son, the house was getting emptier for Louisa. The girls were in Washinton, D.C., Louise attending school and Johannah married to a man named Balster. By 1880, Charles was the only child left at home, working in his father's business.\textsuperscript{14}

In 1880, August died in Effingham County of "phthisis pumoniae"\textsuperscript{15} at the age of 62 (another discrepancy if he was 55 in 1870). The death of August in itself was a blow, but adding to the pain was the fact that August had signed the Effingham property over to a woman by the name of Sophanstenah Sperber for "services rendered", for care given him during his illness, and for "her faithfull(sic) attendance" during the three years preceding the gift.\textsuperscript{16} This gift gave Miss Sperber title to the property and all the contents thereof.\textsuperscript{17}

For obvious reasons, the estate (Chatham and Effingham properties, as well as a piece of land in Milten County) were placed in administration with Louisa as administratrix. For six years the estate was held until the youngest child (Louise) was of age (21 years).\textsuperscript{18}

The time that Louisa spent running the estate was her most visible. She improved the Barnard Street property acquired in the 1870's, having houses built. Together with Charles, she ran August's business gradually shifting the emphasis from liquors to groceries. In 1884, Louisa and Charles ran a restaurant in addition to the liquor store and a new market.\textsuperscript{18,19}
However, once the children were given their shares of the estate and she was released from her obligations to the estate, Louisa settled down to be the staid Widow Kohler. Indeed, the city directories list her primarily as the "wid. A." after 1882.

Louise, her daughter, returned home briefly in 1883, then returned to her sister in Washington, D.C. for several years. Charles took over his father's business, but left it in 1900 for his brother-in-law Frank E. Purse's printing business. Frank Purse was the man Louise married when she returned to Savannah in the 1890's.

Louisa lived at 1116 Barnard, one of the houses she had built, until her death of "senile asthenia" on October 2, 1906 at the age of 78 years. She was buried in lot 1909, Laurel Grove, the following day.

As I stated earlier, Louisa's most active period was during her administration of August's will and thus this period is where most references to her are found. It was very difficult to research a woman of this period (late Victorian) due to the low profile women were expected to maintain. Very few women worked outside the home unless, like Louisa, it was for the benefit of husband or children. When in charge of her husband's estate, Louisa proved to be a good businesswoman. She successfully fought off challengers to the estate and improved it a great deal. But true to the image of the time, it was done for the benefit of her family more than herself.

I would have liked to have spoken to some living descendants but it proved difficult to find one. Johannah's children
for the most part stayed in Washington, D.C. Louise's daughter
died an infant, while a second child's name eluded me. Son
Charles never married. I am sure that there are descendents
of Louisa's in Savannah, but the only relatives I found were
in Washington.
When August Kohler died on February 19, 1880 it was not at the Bryan Street residence as the Keepers' Record seems to suggest. In fact, he died on his "plantation" in Effingham County. It was this plantation that, on February 11 of the same year (one week earlier), August signed over as a gift to Miss Sophanstenah Sperber.

This property consisted of a tract of some 650 acres bordered in part by the #2 station of the Central Railroad in Eden and by the Big Ogeechee River. The gift also included "all the livestock, cattle, hogs, mule, poultry and all other livestock that may be found on the premises." The household goods were included, as well. Sophanstenah was to receive all "household and kitchen furniture, also all bedding together with all plantation tools to have and to hold the above said premises together with all buildings..." An addition to the deed was a piece giving Sophanstenah all furniture brought onto the premises "in the year 1880" or anytime after.

The deed itself is quite interesting. It appears to have been written in a hurry, with several ink splotches, cross-throughs, and phrases squeezed in between lines. Consistently, August's name is misspelled as "Augus" while Sophanstenah is alternately as "Sophjanstenah". One of the witnesses, Aron Branch, could not write and instead made his "X" mark. Another witness, J.E. Crawford, seems to be related to the the J.P. who transcribed the deed (Allen Crawford). August's signature on the document is very shaky and appears to have been guided.
The way the document was made coupled with the fact that August was very close to death at the time of the writing made me think that perhaps a quick shuffle was being conducted over the still-living man. I'm sure that thought crossed Louisa's mind when she first filed for letters of administration on the estate on February 25th of the same year.  

After posting a bond of $500, Louisa received temporary letters. On January 31, 1881, Louisa filed another request for regular letters. On that same day, a citation was issued to Louisa requesting her to appear in court the first Monday in March of that year to answer a motion filed by Sophanstenah Sperber to vacate Louisa's letters of administration.

This motion was heard during the May 1881 term of the Ordinary Court and officially filed at that time. One month later, Louisa answered the motion with a letter questioning August's mental state at the time the deed of gift was made. Meanwhile, after posting an additional $2000 bond, Louisa was given the regular letters of administration. Apparently, Miss Sperber gave up her battle for the Effingham property because, after the initial court action, nothing more was heard of her.

Louisa managed the estate well in the six years she was administratrix. While the Milten County property was disposed of quickly, the other properties were improved and held until the youngest child reached the age of majority.

In 1886, Louisa and the children filed for a division of the property. The property to be divided consisted of lots 21 and 23 Gallie Ward and improvements (two frame dwelling houses), two tracts of land in Effingham County totalling about 1200 acres,
stock in trade and merchandise of 178 St. Julian Street real estate and personal property. The request also asked the court to release Louisa from her responsibility to the estate. The request was granted, although Louise did not take possession of her share for another ten years.

The only problem Louisa seemed to have with the estate was her failure to file the annual accounts of said estate, as prescribed by law. The omission was discovered and an audit was made by the court of the property. No wrong-doing was found, however. Louisa explained her failure to file on ignorance of the law and not an intentional omission.

END SECTION TWO
The property itself is most often described in the following manner: "being in Oglethorpe Town (now Gallie Ward), city of Savannah, County and State (Chatham, Georgia) aforesaid and known in the plan of said city and town as lot number nineteen (19) bounded south by Duffy Street, west by Barnard Street, north by New Houston Street Lane (now an unnamed dirt alley), and east by lot number twenty-one (21) said lot being sixty-six (66) feet on Duffy Street and one hundred and five (105) feet running through from Duffy Street to New Houston Street Lane."

August Kohler gave lots 21 and 23 of the same ward to his son Louis in August of 1875. The property became part of August's estate, however, when Louis died the next year.

In November of 1875, August signed over lot 19 to Louisa. This gift included a stockpile of lumber and bricks to be used for the purpose of putting a house on the lot. But there was a catch—Louisa, on receipt of the gift, was expected to have the mortgage put into her name. (In the deed, there is also a vague reference to other property that may either be the store or perhaps the Effingham property. Louisa is supposed to have title to this as well.)

In September of 1879, Louisa entered into an agreement with one Susan Santina for a private mortgage. In exchange for a loan of $400 (in addition to $1100 already borrowed) for improvements, Louisa signed a collateral deed for the western half of lot 19. In 1880, Louisa filed to have this deed vacated as she had paid back the $1100 and Mrs. Santina never advanced the other $400 as
promised. For the consideration of the premises and $5 to be paid to Mrs. Santina, the agreement of 1879 was cancelled. Two years later, Louisa again put her property up as collateral. This time it was in exchange for an advance of $1000 on stock she owned in the Southern Mutual Loan Association (according to the agreement, five shares.) For some reason, Susan Santina's name is included as part owner of the property; this despite her loss of title in 1880. Louisa, according to the agreement, was expected to pay back the advance at $5 a month principle and $5 a month interest. This debt was paid off in 1886.

In 1886, when August's property was divided up, Louis' was divided up as well (see footnote 44). The eastern 1/3 of lot 21 and all of lot 23 were to be split between Charles and Louisa while the other 2/3 of lot 21 went to Louise. Since both girls were in Washington at the time the property came into their ownership, a separate notation was made in the deed books showing that they had been informed of their inheritance.

Charles, living in Savannah, took possession of his share immediately. Johannah took her share in 1893 after giving her mother the sum of $500; Louise took hers three years later for $10.

Houses stood on all three properties by the time Louise took over her lot. The first house (1116 Barnard) had been built in 1882, the second (1120) in 1885, and the third (1112) in 1893. All of these houses were actually on lot 19, but all the Kohler properties had houses standing on them and every house but 1116 Barnard was rented out. Louisa, Charles, and
Louisa and her family all lived in the original family house, 1116 Barnard. 54

In addition to the Barnard house, Charles and Louise had more houses between them. Charles owned and rented out 112 and 116 W. Duffy while Louise owned and rented out 118 and 120 of the same street. Louise's were built in 1887 and Charles' were built in 1891. In 1904, Louise had a house built on 111-13 Park Avenue. 54

END SECTION THREE
CHILDREN

Johannah married in Washington, D.C. and remained there all of her adult life as Mrs. Balster. She died in late 1906, leaving four children. Her youngest son, Norris, was placed in the care of Charles until he reached twenty-one.\textsuperscript{55}

Charles never married. After disposing of the store, he went to work for the Purse Printing Company, eventually becoming its president. He was a member of the Union Society and of the Society of Georgia Authors, having compiled a book on the Monroe Doctrine which had been well-received.\textsuperscript{56} He is buried in lot 1909 at Laurel Grove Cemetery.

Louise married Frank E. Purse on May 12, 1898 in St. Paul Catholic Church in Savannah. Purse was part-owner in the Purse Printing Company. Frank and Louise had two children, one of which died in 1901 of an unspecified illness at less than one year.\textsuperscript{57, 58} Eight years later, Frank died in Atlanta, Georgia of arsenic poisoning.\textsuperscript{59} Louise then moved in with Charles, dying in 1941. Frank, Louise, and the baby (Elise) are also buried in Laurel Grove Cemetery, lot 1909.\textsuperscript{60}

END SECTION FOUR
Louisa's will was a very simple document written in 1896, ten years before her death. In her will, Louisa leaves her house on Barnard Street and all its contents to her son Charles. She also makes a provision of $1000 to a Mrs. Rosa Mayer of Washington, D.C. Charles was administrator of the estate.

Note: This Rosa Mayer has been driving me crazy ever since I first saw her name in the will. Louisa refers to her as "my daughter", but nowhere else in Louisa's life have I found this girl. As I mentioned earlier, it could be possible that she is Louisa's daughter from a previous marriage, but I am beginning to think not. Indeed, it is just as likely that Rosa and probably Johannah are children of a previous marriage by August. Otherwise, why would Johannah have to pay Louisa so much for her share of Louis' estate? Even the sign-over deed reads less like family than business. See Additional Information... for the information that leads to this particular conclusion.

END SECTION FIVE
I gave the 1900 census one more try after being introduced to the Soundex index. (Resource 15). Once I found Louisa in there, I looked her up in the census. There, I discovered her birthdate (Nov. 1827) and the first clue that Johannah might not be her daughter. In the census, there is a column for children had and children living. Louisa is listed as having three of the former and three of the latter. Louis, Charles, and Louise make up the former and Charles, Louise, and Johannah would make up the latter. The 1900 census gives Louisa’s year of immigration as 1860. Johannah was four at that time and is listed in the 1870 census as being born in Georgia. Now, if Louisa was still in Germany in 1856, the year of Johannah’s birth in Georgia, she couldn’t possibly have been her mother. I never found a wedding date for Louisa and August, but it must have been between 1858 and 1859 in Germany. This allows for Johannah and also the birth of Louis in 1860.

Louise’s living child’s name was Marie. 65

Louise’s birthname is Louisa, but to differentiate, most records refer to her by the former.

I finally was able to get a line on a possible living descendent, but I could never reach the man to find out for sure. His name is Homer F. Feeples, Jr. I believe he is Marie’s son.

The End
Source 1: Chatham County Census Records, year as indicated
Source 2: General Index to Keepers' Record Books
Laurel Grove Cemetery
Savannah, Georgia
1852-1938 Volumes 2 & 3
WPA Official Project No. 465-34-3-148
1939
Source 3: A. Kohler Estate
File 126
Probate Records
Chatham County Courthouse
Source 4: Will, Louisa Kohler
File 275
Probate Records
Chatham County Courthouse
Source 5: Savannah City Directory, date as given
Source 6: Tombstones
Lot 1909
Laurel Grove Cemetery
Savannah, Georgia
Source 7: Original Record Books, year in question
Laurel Grove Cemetery
Savannah, Georgia
Source 8: Deed Records SCCC
Volume and folios as indicated
Chatham County Courthouse
Source 9: Guardianship, Norris J. Balster
File 965
Ordinary Court Records
Chatham County Courthouse
Source 10: Death Certificate, Charles Kohler
Volume 78, page 770
Vital Records
Chatham County Health Department
Source 11: Obituary, Charles Kohler
13 June, 1938 Page 10, column 4
Savannah Morning News
Source 12: Frank E. Purse Papers
1900-02
Manuscript Collection 641, Item 1
Georgia Historical Society
Source 13: Marriage Records
CCC
Chatham County Courthouse
Source 14: Historic Savannah
2nd. Edition
Edited by Mary L. Morrison
Historic Savannah Foundation
Junior League of Savannah
1979

Source 15: Soundex System Index for Georgia Census
Available for 1880 and 1900
Savannah Public Library
Bull and 36th
Codes names by sound, giving information
about where to find the person in the
original census. Summarizes main points
of census.
Louisa is on Reel 107, Number K160. One
has to go through all the 460's to find
her, but she is there.

Source 16: Passenger and Immigration Lists Index
Volume 2 H-N
Edited by P. William Filby with Mary K. Meyer
Gale Research Company
Book Tower
Detroit, Michigan 48226
Note: The strange footnoting is my own fault. I didn't notice the fact that I forgot to cite certain references until final typing and there was no time to change all the notations. Numbers are cited here as they appear in text and in same order.

1. Source 10, item concerning mother's maiden name
2. Source 1, page 3-4, 1870
62. Source 1, page 3-4, 1870
63. Source 1, 1880, page 173 #215-342
4. Source 16
5. Source 6; This is now in East Germany.
6. Source 1, page 3-4, 1870; Source 6 for ages
7. Source 6, birthdate 8 January 1818
8. Source 5
9. Source 1, page 3-4, 1870
10. Source 5, 1874
11. Ibid, 1876-77, page 173
   1877-78, page 130
12. Ibid, 1879, page 294
13. Source 6 and Source 7
14. Source 1, 1880, page 173 #215-342
   Source 5, 1880
15. By looking up the separate words in Webster's, I determined that this disease seems to be a kind of TB affecting the lungs.
16. Source 3, item #329-30, Deed of Gift (Enclosed)
17. Ibid
18. Source 5, 1884, page 204-05
19. Source 5, 1881-1899
20. Source 5, after 1882
21. Source 5, 1883, page 422
22. Source 5, 1901, page 425
23. Source 13, Book M, page 85
24. Source 7; Senile Asthenia is basically old age and senility.
25. Source 2
26. Source 11
27. Source 2
28. Source 3, items #829-30
29. Ibid
30. Ibid
31. Ibid
32. Source 3, item #814
33. Source 3, item #812
34. Source 3, item #826
35. Source 3, items #817, #824
36. Source 3, item #817
37. Source 3, item #823
38. Source 3, item #821
39. Source 3, item #813
40. Source 3, items #834-37
41. Source 3, items #840
42. Source 3, item #841
43. Source 8, 4S, folios 165-67
44. Source 8, 4R, folios 554-55
45. Source 8, 4S, folios 165-67
46. Ibid
47. Source 8, 4X, folios 227-28
48. Source 8, 4Y, folios 321-22
49. Source 8, 5E, folios 231-35
50. Source 8, 6L, folios 217-18
51. Ibid
52. Source 8, 7G, folios 102-03
53. Source 14, page 265
54. Source 14, pages 262, 264
55. Source 9
56. Source 11
57. Source 6
58. Source 12, pages 89-90, letter of 25 June 1901
59. Source 2
60. Source 6
61. Source 4
62. Source 1, 1900, Volume 11, E.D. 51, Sheet 10, line 23
65. Ibid
LOT 1909
Laurel Grove Cemetery

Not to Scale.
Note of Agreement

This 11th day of February 1850, between Angus Kobler of the first part of the County of Effingham, and Sophyann Stengel of the second part of said county, above Montana. Witnesseth, that the said Angus Kobler, and in consideration of $400.00 paid by said Sophyann Stengel, as follows:

1. The said Sophyann Stengel to attend the said Angus Kobler for the last three days of March, and April, and May in the said Effingham, and do all such other services as may be necessary for the said Angus Kobler.

2. The said Sophyann Stengel to do all such other services as may be necessary for the said Angus Kobler.

3. The said Sophyann Stengel to do all such other services as may be necessary for the said Angus Kobler.

This 11th day of February 1850, Sophyann Stengel.

Georgie and Said to contain by the Survey, 630 feet long and 95 feet wide, being land bounded North by lands of Enoch E. Smith, East by Big Ogoeshee River, and Smith Smith, Bothwell & Survey west Big Ogoeshee River & Henry E. Smith, to have a dock or slip as far right and
And to the heirs and assigns
Sara Arkle of Sylva, to be of full age
at any death or separation with all the
live stock, cattle, horses, mules, poultry,
and all other live stock that they
shall own or hereafter own or shall
remain in their premises together
with all slaves and servants.
I also give to the said Sylvan
Soper, all my house hold and
Kitchen Equipment also all beds
together with all plantation tools.
To have and to hold the above
premises together with all Benleigh
Dwelling house Kitchen and horses
or the same Slaves, horses, sheep,
and all farm animals and
agreed upon aforesaid.
And to the said Angs. Hooper
will and devise the above.
Administration shall the said
properties to the said Sylvan
Soper, and Angs. Hooper, and
Administration forever secure and
defend against the claims
and demands of all persons whatsoever.
In testimony whereof the said
Angs. Hooper has written this his
and sealed this the day of year above
written.

Further the said Sylvan Soper
is to have and to hold
at the farm houses that are brought
in the town or on the place, in se
Year 1830 and all that may be
brought on the farm in the
same way above after
further the said August Hillam
has her entry set this farm.
This Feb. 11th 1830

August Hillam
L.S.

J. E. Bowden
Wm. Hillam

A. B. Bowden Tis executed Wm. Hillam

Offered to presence of
This Feb. 11th 1830

Allen Crawford
L.S. 11th 2. 3rd

The Geo.