

## **Louise Rittenhouse Barber's Difficult Life**

Last week we learned about the early life of Louise Rittenhouse Barber from the time she was born until she had attended the university for three years. Louise then returned to Monroe where she was married to Joseph C. Barber on January 25, 1866 in what was later known as the Twining home, 1423 15th Avenue, where their five children would be born.

Mr. Barber had come here from the East in 1860 and had a produce business that operated from an office near the Milwaukee station on Smokey Row. At that time those "luxuries" were almost unknown here, so locals had to travel to Rockford or Galena to purchase their fruit and flour. A double spring wagon was a means of conveyance and travel, and frequently an ox team was seen. The 1870 census showed that Joseph, 37, and Louisa, 25, lived in Monroe with their two children, Mary, 3, and Lucretia, 1. Ida Lean, 18, who had been born in Norway also lived with them, probably to help with the home and the children. At that time, he owned real estate worth \$31,000 and had personal property valued at \$25,000.

The couple lost daughter Emma of diphtheria on November 9, 1878 at the age of seven. It was related that, "at the moment before her spirit took its flight, the little hands reached out and the dear voice said, 'come with me mama.' No wonder that such an appeal should reach the inner soul and draw deep from the wellspring of affection." She "was a bright, beautiful child and the household is greatly afflicted and many kind friends deeply sympathize with them in this great sorrow." She was buried at Greenwood cemetery two days later.

The couple's fifth child, and only son, was born in February 1880, when the youngest daughter was six years old. This meant they had four children at home with the oldest being 12 years old. Life was to get more complicated in the home when Joseph had the final of three strokes of paralysis on September 16, 1880. Doctors hoped that he might partially recover, but he died on Wednesday, September 22. The funeral then took place from the home on Friday with the Odd Fellows and Ancient Order of United Workmen attending in a group. As a show of respect, and to allow a larger attendance at the funeral, all stores were closed for three hours.

This left the 35-year-old mother with the seven-month-old son and three daughters to raise on her own. Unfortunately, Louise had to again bury her youngest child when little Joe passed away in February 1885 at the age of five and a half.

Mrs. Barber announced on July 15, 1891 that she was making arrangements with the Monroe Planing Mill "to build a handsome, modern dwelling upon the vacant lot" next to her residence [1417 15th Avenue]. This new home was well under way by October 14 and was to be "a neat, convenient home" for her daughter Mary, and her husband, C. W. Twining.

Sometime before 1895 Louise moved to the newer house and the Twining family moved to the corner house. I had worked on this column for quite some time before I realized that Louise was the grandmother of the Twining Generals.

Mrs. Barber suffered a partial stroke of paralysis of her right arm in June 1896 at the age of 51. The Sentinel said that it was "from over work at the church supper and a sudden cold." She was admonished to keep very quiet and rest to avoid serious consequences. She evidently healed well as she lived an active life for many more years.

The couple's youngest daughter, Jennie, married Dr. Charles Chandler here in Monroe in the same year that her mother had the stroke. Jennie gave birth to a son one year later. Louise received a telegram on the forenoon of November 20, 1900 that Jennie gave birth to her second son in Milwaukee at 8:15 that morning. Another telegram arrived about noon with "a heavy burden of sorrow" that Jennie had passed away at 11:30. Her funeral was held from the Twining home, the same home where she had been born and married. Rev. Varney of the Universalist Church officiated at the funeral, as he had at her wedding four years earlier. "Flowers in their sweet fragrance, bearing to grieved ones the message of love and comfort from friends, had been sent in abundance and were very beautiful."

At this time, Louise had buried three children, but her grief had not ended. Mary "Mazie" Twining became ill with pernicious anemia three years later. She battled bravely for two years, but passed away on the evening of November 20, 1905. "The transition came as she slept and the pain of death was mercifully put aside. She had suffered so long and patiently that when death came, it took her gently without waking." She died in the same home where she was born and the funeral was also held there.

Louise and her granddaughter, Phoebe Twining Chadwick, made a two-month visit to Portland and the coast in 1915, returning in July. Phoebe returned to Monroe before Louise because Louise visited her sister (who passed away four months later) for a week in Milwaukee on the way. Louise went on a two-week auto trip, traveling more than 1,500 miles, with others in October 1916.

Mrs. Barber passed away on March 15, 1936 at the age of 90 in the Chadwick home, 903 22nd Avenue, with whom she had lived for at least seven years, and the funeral was held there. Only one child, Katherine Griswold, of Syracuse, New York survived her. It sounds like she made the most of her life - in spite of all of the heartbreaks she experienced.