

## **Steel Magnolia...**

### **Eine sehr wohlwollende Beschreibung von amerikanischen Fans**

Born in 1776, Queen Luise of Prussia is one of history's most significant female figures. Here, in the Charlotte, NC USA, she would be called a Steel Magnolia. There are actually interesting relationships between Queen Luise and Mecklenberg, County North Carolina: Her daughter was born in Castle Mecklenberg and became Princess Caroline.

Queen Luise, famous in her time as one of the great beauties in royal circles, is now credited by historians as being the Iron Fist behind Prussian opposition to the French Empire's Imperial intentions.

Her parents were Herzog Karl Friedrich von Mecklenburg-Strelitz, Governor-General of Hannover and Friedericka von Hessen-Darmstadt. The Queen's mother died when she was only six. Europe was buzzing with tension over the French Revolution.

As was in style at the time, Luise was educated by French scholars but the young girl was certainly no Francophile. She was saddened and outraged by the gruesome Reign of Terror and the regicide of Queen Marie Antoinette.

Later in life Luise was married to Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia. At court in Berlin she often had to be corrected for speaking German when French was considered fashionable. In 1797 King Friedrich Wilhelm II died and Luise was crowned Queen of Prussia along with her husband who became King Friedrich Wilhelm III. Eventually the couple would have 10 children. However, domestic bliss was often overshadowed by politics. Napoleon Bonaparte had declared himself Emperor of France and had set out to conquer Europe. Soon Prussia came under attack and the nation's leaders were often frustrated at the king's indecisiveness. Rumors began to spread that if you wanted something done, go to the Queen. When Napoleon set out to conquer the German states Queen Luise went to meet the French warlord face to face. Although she could not convince the power-hungry man to spare her nation she did move Napoleon to remark that the Queen was, "the only man in Prussia".

When the French attacked Queen Luise was adamant that they fight on until Napoleon was defeated, even after Prussia was overrun and many were advising cooperation. The people adored her for her courage and determination. For King Friedrich Wilhelm, his wife was his best councillor. Her arguments were successful, but sadly Queen Luise did not live to see the final victory. After 17 years of marriage, Queen Luise died in 1810. Napoleon himself said, "The King has lost his best Minister."

### **THE SUDDEN DEATH OF THE YOUNG QUEEN**

On June 25th, 1810 at 6 o'clock in the morning she said goodbye to the King, entered her travelling carriage and joyously drove away. At Fuerstenburg she found her whole family there to welcome her. Only the grandmother, who was not well, was missing. When she spotted her father, she flew into the Duke's arms. In the evening they all arrived in Strelitz. At the castle door she greeted her grandmother, whom she had not seen in over four years. On the 28th, the King too arrived. Now Luise's happiness was complete. She rejoiced at receiving her husband for the first time in her father's house, where she was still the daughter. Spontaneously she sat down at the Duke's desk and scribbled on a scrap of paper, "Dear father, today I am very happy as your daughter and as the wife of the best of men." These were her last written words.

That afternoon the entire family went to the Duke's country residence at Hohenzieritz. The weather was uncomfortably warm. Luise felt feverish and the following day remained in bed. She was too ill to take part in an excursion Frederick William had planned to Rheinsberg, the estate where Frederick the Great had spent the early years of his marriage, and which later was the home of his brother Henry. Luise was still in bed when her husband left for home after a three-day visit, but he felt no great anxiety for her at that time. Alone in Sans Souci he wrote cheerfully of household matters to Luise and enclosed letters from the children. Countess von Voss, who had expected to take a holiday during Luise's visit to Mecklenburg, hurried to Hohenzieritz when told of Luise's illness. Even when word came of pains in her chest, the King was not alarmed. Luise had had these symptoms before and they had always disappeared, but he sent a doctor from Berlin. On the night of July 18th, he received a message to come at once. Suddenly the full horror of what might lie at the end of his journey struck him.

The King had always thought he was a child of misfortune, but he had never imagined that Luise might be taken from him. While waiting for his carriage to come to the door, he prayed from the depth of his soul, that all would turn out well. Another messenger arrived at that time, and the King quickly got his two eldest sons. They reached Hohenzieritz at dawn, and not wishing to arouse curiosity, got out of the carriage near the village church and walked to the house. Frederica and Caroline von Berg shared the night duty in the sickroom. The doctor told the King to go in at once, for Luise had been asking for him. He was shaken to see how greatly she had changed. "I am so happy to have you here", Luise said. The doctors wanted a word in private with the King. Luise had asked them if she was dying and they thought they had re-assured her. But they thought the King should find out if she had any last wishes. He tried to do so, but broke under the task. "I only want your happiness and the children be well brought up", she said. Frederick William had fallen on his knees beside the bed. It was impossible that God should want to part them, he cried. When Frederick William sobbed out that he would go with her, if she had to go, she drew him down and kissed him. "Don't make such a scene, or I really will die", she chided. Don't be afraid..I am not going to die." A few minutes later her breath became labored and then it was all over. Shortly before 9 o'clock two more of the children, Charlotte and Karl arrived from Berlin, they were met by their father's despairing cry..."You no longer have a mother." Luise was thirty-four years old.

When the news reached Berlin, every church bell in the city tolled for hours. Crowds rushed to the Palace and just stood there in silence, numb in disbelief. On Sunday, every place of worship was packed from wall to wall. On the same Sunday, the slow-paced return from Hohenzieritz began. An entire regiment, The Prussian Royal Guard, met the funeral procession at the border. In the garden of her father's house, and at every spot where her coffin had rested on its journey to Berlin, a monument to Luise would rise. Thousands were waiting at the Brandenburg Gate. For three days the closed coffin lay in state at the Palace. Then it was taken to the cathedral, where it remained for six months, while one memorial service followed the other and while a mausoleum was being built in the park of the Charlottenburg Palace. On December 23, 1810, the dual anniversary of Luise's advent in Berlin, first as bride, then as Queen returning from exile, her casket was moved to the chapel and buried beneath its pavement, room being left for Frederick William to be buried at her side. Eventually a recumbent statue topped Luise's grave. It was the work of one of the many she helped with an education. Christian Daniel Rauch had been a Palace lackey. Luise came upon him one day at work on a bust of herself in wax and sent him to the Art Academy in Berlin. Later he migrated to Rome, and it was there the marble replica of Luise was carved. The Mausoleum in Charlottenburg has become a place of pilgrimage where people to this day will come and leave a bouquet of flowers.

(Aus einer eBay-Beschreibung)