Early Years
Julius Johann Friedrich Graf was born on November 22, 1851, at Lobsens, in the Province of Posen, Prussia (now Łobżenica, Poland), to parents Wilhelm Graf and Caroline née Hinz. Julius was the oldest of six children. The family immigrated to the United States about 1869 and settled in the area of Good Thunder, Minnesota.

Marriage
On November 20, 1874, Julius Graf married Bertha Marie Antonia Meilicke. Bertha was born on January 9, 1855, at Waldenberg, Prussia, one of five children of Friedrich Christian Meilicke and Wilhelmine née Schmidt. The family had immigrated to the United States in 1866. The Meilickes were earnest students of the Bible and devout members of the Moravian Church. On his death bed, Bertha’s father told his children that he had hoped to see Jesus coming again and that certainly his children would live to see that glorious event.

Julius and Bertha Graf had three children, two sons and one daughter: Alma J. (1876-1932), Otto Julius Graf (1879-1950), and Carl Herman (1883-1968). Due to Bertha’s ill health, Alma had to care for her mother and the home from her early teens. Later, she served as dean of women at Emmanuel Missionary College from 1908 to 1918 and Pacific Union College from 1920 to 1932. Otto, who received a M.A. from the University of Nebraska, became widely known as president of Emmanuel Missionary College where he exerted a molding influence from 1908 to 1917.

Work and Ministry
Julius was a merchant, dealing with hardware and machinery. In the fall of 1884, the Graf family encountered the Seventh-day Adventist faith through the labors of William Brown Hill. It may have been the remarks of Bertha’s father on his death bed that helped to prepare the way for their acceptance of the Adventist faith. When a church was organized in Good Thunder, Julius was chosen as an elder. From 1889 to 1893, Julius served as a member of the executive committee of the Minnesota Conference. Eventually the family sold their possessions, donated most of the proceeds to the church, and Julius entered the ministry. In 1892, he received a ministerial license from the Minnesota Conference. On March 6, 1893, Julius was ordained to the gospel ministry by Stephen Nelson Haskell and Alonzo Trevier Jones at Battle Creek, Michigan. The General Conference decided to send him as a missionary to South America, yet he seemed to continue working among the German-speaking people in North America. In the summer of 1894, he was found laboring among interested people in North Dakota and Manitoba, Canada, baptizing new members and organizing churches. From 1896 to 1897, he was vice-president of the Minnesota Conference.

About 1900, the family moved to College View, Nebraska, to provide a better education to their children by allowing them to attend Union College. Julius began to work among German-speaking people in the vicinity. In 1904, he became a member of the executive committee of the
Nebraska Conference and a counselor of the International Publishing Association at College View, Nebraska. The following year he served as vice-president of the Nebraska Conference and became a trustee of the Publishing Association. Starting in 1906, he was a member of the Committee on Foreign Literature (for German) of the Publishing Association and served on the editorial committee of Der Deutsche Arbeiter, an eight-page monthly periodical, and Christlicher Hausfreund, a sixteen-page weekly periodical. On account of failing health, he settled upon a farm at Plateau, Roosevelt County, New Mexico, shortly afterwards. From 1908 to 1910, he served as treasurer of the New Mexico Mission. In the spring of 1910, he accepted work as a minister in the Kentucky Conference to work among the German population in Louisville.

In 1913, Julius and Bertha moved to Berrien Springs, Michigan, where both their daughter Alma and their son Otto worked at Emmanuel Missionary College. Julius believed in the importance of Adventist schools and in supporting them. While he believed that God could run them without human support, he felt that giving could help develop a character in us akin to that of God who “gives us life and truth and all things and His Son” (Graf, “Church School Maintenance,” pg. 14). During that time the West Michigan Conference granted him honorary ministerial credentials. He continued to hold evangelistic meetings with the German-speaking churches. Thus, in 1916, he spent some time at different places in the Manitoba Conference in Canada.

Later Years
Bertha died of cancer on February 4, 1916, after forty-two years of marriage, in Berrien Springs, Michigan. Two years later Julius moved to his youngest son Carl in Arlington, Tarrant, Texas. There he died of a stroke on February 12, 1927, at the age of 75.

Contribution
Julius Johann Friedrich Graf is a prime example of someone who was a missionary at heart. He was already in his thirties when he accepted the Seventh-day Adventist faith and in his forties when he entered the ministry. He nevertheless sacrificed his possessions and security to share the good news of salvation with fellow Germans in North America. Julius and Bertha further felt the need to grant their children an Adventist education and at least two of them put their lives in the service of the church, following the self-sacrificing example of their parents.
Sources


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