

1944. He apparently was still serving in this office when the war came to an end in May 1945.

District conferences in Frankfurt were important to the Saints, as they were all over Germany. Those conferences were held at least through the fall of 1944, despite the increasing lack of rentable rooms. In 1943 and 1944, conferences were held in Darmstadt and even in Strasbourg, to the south and west and well beyond the borders of the district. The influence of Kurt Schneider was likely a factor there, because he served as a counselor to Anton Huck in the last year of the war.²

When Germany began to pick itself up as a conquered territory in the summer of 1945, the only Saints in the Frankfurt District who still had meeting rooms of their own were those in Michelstadt. The other five branches had been bombed out, burned out, or turned out and were holding meetings as groups in the homes of various members. It would be many months before all of the branches had adequate meetings places again.

A conservative estimate would have at least 50 percent of the members of the Church in this district homeless when the war ended. Hundreds more had been compelled to leave the larger cities due to air raids, and many of them would not be able (or allowed) to come home for another year or two. Dozens left during the war for reasons unknown and were never seen again, as reflected in the efforts of branch clerks to establish their locations as late as 1950. At least a few of the Saints were killed at home or abroad, and the news of their deaths simply never reached the ears of other Latter-day Saints who survived.

As sad as the state of affairs in this district was, the Saints there went about the task of rebuilding their lives and their branches as soon as the gunfire subsided and the smoke cleared. Contributing to the effort were hundreds of refugee Saints who had arrived from as far east as Königsberg and Danzig (areas soon ceded to Poland and Russia). By the fall of 1945, a Mormon colony had formed and was growing steadily in the city of Langen (on the road

between Frankfurt and Darmstadt). In just a few years, the Saints there would number more than three hundred.

NOTES

1. Presiding Bishopric, "Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955," 257, CHL CR 4 12.
2. Having both an automobile and a chauffeur, President Schneider was likely the most mobile leader in the West German Mission at the time. He visited Saints all over his own Strasbourg District and in the Karlsruhe and Stuttgart Districts. He also made it to Frankfurt on several occasions.

BAD HOMBURG BRANCH

The Taunus Mountain range begins just a few miles northwest of Frankfurt and runs to the west and north for fifty miles. At the eastern edge of those mountains, just eight miles from downtown Frankfurt, is the city of Bad Homburg, known for the curative powers of its fine mineral water springs. When World War II began, 18,541 people called this small city their home.¹ Only twenty-three of those were members of the LDS Church.

With only a few deacons in the branch, the Saints in Bad Homburg depended on the missionaries from the United States for priesthood leadership. The last prewar branch president was Leland B. Blatter. He and his companion, Douglas N. Thompson, were likely the heart of the branch, but they departed with all other Americans serving in the West German Mission on August 25, 1939. The only local member of the Church whose name is included in the branch directory of July 1939 is Marie Molitor, the secretary of the Sunday School.²

In August 1939, this small branch held its meetings in rented rooms on the second floor of a building at Luisenstrasse 26. No description of the venue is available. Sunday School began at 10 a.m. and

sacrament meeting at 8:00 p.m. The only other meeting held at the time was MIA on Wednesdays at 8:00 p.m.

Bad Homburg Branch³	1939
Elders	0
Priests	0
Teachers	0
Deacons	4
Other Adult Males	3
Adult Females	13
Male Children	0
Female Children	3
<i>Total</i>	23

The minutes of meetings in the Bad Homburg Branch have survived and offer important information about the activities of the branch during the war. On the first Sunday after the departure of the missionaries, Anton Huck, the president of the Frankfurt District, conducted the meetings and made assignments for ongoing service in the absence of adult priesthood holders. He called Sister Gertrud Glaser to be the temporary leader of the branch and the other members sustained the assignment. Sister Karoline Müller was asked to assume leadership of the adult class, and Sister Marie Gerecht was to support Sister Braun in teaching the children’s class. Average attendance at meetings in those days was fifteen persons.⁴

During the fall of 1939, meetings of the Bad Homburg Branch were conducted by Anton Huck, Hans Förster, Valentin Schlimm, and a Brother Faust from Frankfurt. The average attendance at sacrament meeting in the first months of the war was six persons. The Christmas program was a great success with thirty-five persons attending.⁵

Gertrud Glaser (born 1919) had only been a member of the Church since April 1938. Her call to “lead” the branch could be interpreted as an indication that

she was faithful in attending her meetings and in carrying out assignments. In her autobiographical writings, she described the reasons why the three adult males in the branch were not called to lead: one was in the military, one had seizures, and one had problems with the Church’s health code. “We were a very small branch,” she explained.

Gertrud’s prime responsibility was to see that meetings took place in Bad Homburg on a regular schedule. Because the brethren could not come from Frankfurt every week, she likely saw to it that the sisters of the branch met to sing, pray, and study the scriptures and other Church literature together. Sister Glaser was a domestic servant in the home of the Hermann and Lieselotte Rüdiger family. The Rüdigers apparently did nothing to prevent Gertrud from attending church meetings on Sundays.⁶

Apparently no records of meetings in Bad Homburg were kept from October 1940 to January 1944, since no pages are missing from the minutes book. As of January 28, 1944, Kerna Kraus was serving as the clerk but explained in her record that she was doing so as a substitute (*in Vertretung*).⁷ The entry made one month later offers significant detail regarding branch activities:

February 28, 1944: Monthly report for February 1944; tithing funds totaling 30 RM were collected, 25 RM forwarded [to mission office] and 5 RM returned to Sister Luise Rück. Mission leader Anton Huck visited the Bad Homburg Branch on February 29, most of all for Sister Rode. She is again in the hospital after a very serious accident. She is recovering and her faith is *extremely strong*. Her time will soon be completed.

Alwine Rode passed away on March 24, having been a member of the Church since 1923. Her funeral was conducted by Pastor Ohli of the local Lutheran Church. August Gerecht had been asked to go to Frankfurt and bring back one of the elders to conduct the service, but air raids prevented him from fulfilling the request. Apparently this led to ill feelings among the sisters, who believed that Sister Rode had been neglected. Marie Gerecht

chose not to attend meetings for awhile, offended by the negative comments made about her husband. Fortunately the matter was settled soon thereafter.⁸

Several members of the Bad Homburg Branch traveled to district conferences in Frankfurt and Darmstadt during the war. The branch records show that six members participated in a district conference in Darmstadt in early 1944, and two even made the long trip (150 miles) to Strassburg in occupied France for the district conference on June 3–4, 1944. One month later, four brethren came to Bad Homburg from Frankfurt to present a program commemorating the death of Joseph Smith one hundred years earlier.⁹

In the spring of 1944, Gertrud Glaser's service in the Rüdiger home was terminated after six and one-half years, and the government assigned her to work for a dentist named Sofie Beil in Oberursel. Although Dr. Beil also allowed Gertrud time off on Sundays to attend church, Gertrud did not worship with the Saints in Bad Homburg (just two miles to the northeast), but rather traveled about seven miles to Frankfurt. Gertrud recalled that the Bad Homburg Branch was closed when she moved to Oberursel, and the lack of branch minutes after July 1944 confirm this.

Events of the summer of 1944 included a rare treat—the baptism of three persons. Emmilie Vogt was baptized on July 22 along with her daughters, Gertrud and Lieselotte, at the Main Bath House in Frankfurt/Main near the Eisener Steg Bridge. It must have been a happy occasion for the members of this small branch.¹⁰

If the reasons for the long trip to church in Frankfurt on Sundays included spending time with the branch president, nobody need assume anything untoward. Hermann O. Ruf, a native of Stuttgart, had moved to Frankfurt with his military employment and was a widower.¹¹ In the fall of 1944, Gertrud and Hermann began to discuss marriage, but his military commitments prevented the plan from being carried out until December 9. Gertrud wrote the following about her feelings at the time:

Because of [Hermann's] military service, we were able to spend only a short amount of time together [after the wedding]. But those were hours of happiness, peace and joy. The war brought times of sacrifice and deprivation. Toward the end, the streetcars were no longer in service and I had to walk from Ginnheim [in northwest Frankfurt] to the meetings in the mission home on the south side of the Main River.

Gertrud Glaser Ruf's story does not indicate when Hermann left Frankfurt, but he was a POW under the Americans for at least seven weeks before returning to his young wife on June 22, 1945. She was living at the time with the Schlichtegroll family (also members of the branch). Regarding the wonderful reunion, Gertrud wrote, "Now we could begin our life together with the few earthly possessions we had."

The branch minutes do not include any information for the crucial last months of the war. The first postwar comments are dated September 1945 and describe the reorganization of the branch:

Mr. Schrott found a beautiful room for the branch. We will move in on September 1 at Höhestrasse 12 (main floor). The lessor is the Red Cross of Bad Homburg. For the next six months the rent will be 60 RM per month. For the summer half-year, 50 RM. Elders from the Frankfurt/Main branch will conduct our meetings.¹²

The survival of this small branch during World War II can be attributed to two groups of members—the sisters of the branch who carried out their duties in the absence of local priesthood leaders, and the brethren from Frankfurt who made many trips to Bad Homburg to see to the needs of the few Latter-day Saints there.

IN MEMORIAM

The following members of the Bad Homburg Branch did not survive World War II:

Hans Johann Ludwig Gerecht b. Köppern, Bad Homburg, Hessen-Nassau, 30 Dec 1921; son of August Gerecht and Maria Elisabeth Günther; bp. 28 Aug 1937;

conf. 28 Aug 1937; m. Frankfurt/Main, Hessen-Nassau, 24 Jul 1943, Gerda Berta Rode; k. Albania, April 1945 (NFS; www.volksbund.de)

Heinz Edler Gottlieb von Hayn b. Frankfurt/Main, Hessen-Nassau 15 or 19 Apr 1915; son of Albert Philipp von Hayn and Mathilde Luise Schick; bp. 7 Nov 1924; conf. 7 Nov 1924; lieutenant; k. in battle north-east of Kriwoi Rog, Ukraine, 15 Nov 1943 (CHL microfilm 2458, Form 42 FP, pt. 37, all-mission list 1943–46, 186–87; district list 298–99; FHL microfilm 68791, no. 837; www.volksbund.de)

Alwine Morenz b. Elberfeld, Wuppertal, Rhein-provinz, 17 Sep 1885; dau. of Gustav Theodor Moranz and Anna Maria Catharina Alwine Klein; bp. 15 Apr 1923; conf. 15 Apr 1923; m. Elberfeld 30 Mar 1912 to Heinrich Jakob Rode; 2 children; d. cardiac asthma, Bad Homburg, Hessen-Nassau, 24 Mar 1944 (NFS)

Mathilde Louise Schick b. Bad Homburg vor der Höhe, Hessen-Nassau, 14 May 1882; dau. of Johann Heinrich Schick and Marie Elisabeth Engel; bp. 7 Nov 1924; conf. 7 Nov 1924; m. abt 1900, Albert Philipp von Hayn; 7 or 8 children; d. stroke Bad Homburg vor der Höhe 27 Nov 1939 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 841; Frankfurt District Book I; IGI; PRF)

NOTES

1. Bad Homburg city archive.
2. West German Mission manuscript history, CHL MS 10045 2.
3. Presiding Bishopric, “Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955,” 257, CHL CR 4 12.
4. Bad Homburg Branch general minutes, 89, LR 10901 11.
5. Ibid, 96.
6. Gertrud Glaser Ruf, autobiography (unpublished, 2003), private collection.
7. Bad Homburg Branch general minutes, 96.
8. Ibid., 108, 120–21. Hermann Ruf, president of the Frankfurt Branch, dedicated Sister Rode’s grave on November 12, 1944.
9. Ibid., 109.
10. Ibid., 125.
11. See the Frankfurt Branch chapter for details about the service of Hermann O. Ruf. His brother, Erwin, was the president of the Stuttgart District.
12. Bad Homburg Branch general minutes, 132.

DARMSTADT BRANCH

The annual summer festival of the city of Darmstadt is called *Heinerfest*, a reminder of the historically high frequency of the name

Heinrich (nickname Heiner) among local males. The city had been home to the capital of the Grand Duchy of Hesse for several centuries and is located at the northern end of the Bergstrasse, the road that runs south to Heidelberg along the western edge of the Odenwald Forest. Darmstadt had 110,552 inhabitants when World War II began.¹

Darmstadt Branch ²	1939
Elders	6
Priests	3
Teachers	3
Deacons	2
Other Adult Males	7
Adult Females	50
Male Children	8
Female Children	2
<i>Total</i>	81

With six elders and eight Aaronic Priesthood holders, this branch was quite strong. As was true throughout the Frankfurt District, adult women constituted the majority (62 percent) of the membership of the Darmstadt Branch. However, the six elders may have been inactive at the time, because the branch president in June 1939 was a missionary from the United States. The first counselor, Christian Lang, became the branch president when the missionaries left on August 25, 1939.

Church meetings were held in rented rooms at Wilhelm Glässing Strasse 9, just a few blocks south of the city center. Georg Marquardt (born 1918) recalled going up a staircase in the back of the building to the meeting rooms on the second floor.³ Karl-Heinz Sommerkorn (born 1931) recalled that as a child, he climbed a winding staircase to the meeting rooms above in what he called “a long building.”⁴ Sunday School began at 10:30 a.m. in those days, and the members returned to church at 7:15 p.m. for sacrament meeting. On Wednesday evenings,