

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY



In light of the monumental accomplishments of Johann Huber, it is remarkable not only that nobody has written his biography yet but that his role in the emergence and spread of the LDS Church in Austria has been treated without fanfare by modern Austrians who have written histories of the Church in that country. On the other hand, perhaps nothing more could be expected without the discovery of hundreds of documents seemingly hidden away in obscure archives.

The story of the emergence of the first LDS congregation in Austria through the person of Johann Huber could be presented here only because of the massive documentation that provides such extensive details. The current study began with the collection of documents assembled by Huber himself; many are originals he received from various offices and agencies, but he also made copies of several of the letters he wrote in response. Those papers have always been in the Michlmayr farmhouse in Parz and now belong to the heiress and owner, Gerlinde Huber Wambacher

(the daughter of an adoptive grandson of Johann Huber). She allowed me to copy all of those papers (eighty pages), as well as images from the family Bible and all of the photographs in her possession.

LDS history enthusiast Wilhelm Hirschmann of Vienna, one of Huber's grandsons, lived in Haag am Hausruck for several years and collected many documents. He too allowed me to copy all of them (more than sixty pages).

Perhaps the most valuable collection of documents regarding Michlmayr Huber is found in the archive of the province of Upper Austria in Linz. It is stored in several boxes under the designation "*Mormonen in Rottenbach*." This massive collection contains more than 500 pages generated by churches, police offices, schools, government offices on three levels, various courts, school boards, and even Huber himself. I was allowed to copy all of those documents and to use them without restriction. One can see from this collection just how extensive the Austrian bureaucratic system can be. Many documents feature signatures and initials of government and church officials who authored or reviewed and forwarded them. Even receipts of documents delivered by postal employees have been carefully preserved. The Linz documents are all originals in excellent condition; it is very likely that nobody else has seen them since their initial circulation. At the very least, nobody has ever shown them or even quoted from them in publications.

The Austrian National Library in Vienna has an enormous collection of newspapers—both as originals and as digital images available online. I located notices about the LDS Church in Austria in newspapers published in Vienna, Salzburg, Linz, and Ried; those articles add valuable color to the perception of the Mormons on the part of readers of local newspapers. We know from many documents that the newspapers published in Linz and Ried were read all over Upper Austria and cited often by officials involved with Huber and his fledgling religious group.

The archive of the Catholic diocese of Linz also has an excellent collection of documents relating to Johann Huber and his activities.

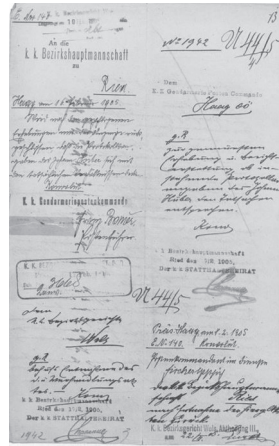
Those files are organized by pastor and parish, so it was a simple matter to review the correspondence carried on between the clerics in Rottenbach and Haag and their supervisors in Linz. I was allowed to study and copy any documents I wanted and in so doing collected more than eighty pages and several photographs there.

A small but substantial collection of historical documents, photographs, and artifacts has been established in the Starhemberg Castle for the towns of Haag am Hausruck and Rottenbach. Several of those photographs allowed the depiction of persons and places in this book.

The Church History Library in Salt Lake City has a small collection of documents that aided me in the search for details about Johann Huber's conversion and church service. Unfortunately, very few records of the LDS missions in Germany and Switzerland for the period 1890 to 1910 have survived. Only rare mention is made of missionary activities in Austria, and none of the records tell of the decade-long struggles of Johann Huber.

An attempt was made to find diaries or reports written by a dozen missionaries who baptized or confirmed new members in Munich, Germany, or various towns in Austria before 1910. Only one such record was found: Frederick G. F. Huefner, the man who baptized Huber in 1900, was the subject of a five-page biography written by his son, John, in 1955. The diary mentioned in that short story still exists, and its holder, great-grandson Jeffrey Huefner of West Bountiful, Utah, provided copies of the entries in which Huefner told of his association with the Austrian farmer.

Three unofficial histories of the LDS Church in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and modern Austria have appeared



This document (two-sided) is a cover sheet and bears the signatures or initials of eleven government officials. ©Upper Austrian State Archives.

over the years. The first was written in 1955 by LDS Vienna branch president Anton F. Körbler. Based on the testimonies of surviving eyewitnesses, it involved no research in documents and thus has not been cited here.¹ A more extensive history was written by Heinrich M. Teply for the LDS Austrian Mission in 1965 and bears the title *Die Geschichte der Mormonen in Österreich*.² Teply expanded that history through research in the LDS Church History Library and the study of family documents in possession of Hans Huber (adoptive son of Johann Huber Jr.) and Wilhelm Huber, but he apparently was unaware of the archival collections of Huber documents in Linz and Ried. His book was finished in 1994 under the title *Das Licht Scheint in der Finsternis* but remains unpublished.³ Teply's works mention Johann Huber prominently and accord him the leading role in the introduction and early growth of the Church, while Köbler inaccurately identifies Vienna as the first LDS branch in Austria.

NOTES

1. Anton F. Körbler, *Geschichte des Österreichischen Distriktes der Kirche Jesu Christi der Heiligen der Letzten Tage* (1955), Wilhelm Hirschmann private collection.
2. Heinrich M. Teply, *Die Geschichte der Mormonen in Österreich* (Vienna: LDS Austrian Mission, 1965).
3. Teply, *Das Licht Scheint in der Finsternis*, 99.