
BREMEN DISTRICT

West German Mission



Bremen was the smallest district in the West German Mission in three respects: the number of branches, the number of members, and the area covered. The principal branch was in the port city of Bremen itself. Small branches were found in Wilhelmshaven (forty miles to the northwest) and in Wesermünde-Lehe (thirty-three miles to the north, two miles north of the North Sea port of Bremerhaven). A very small number of Saints lived in Oldenburg (twenty-five miles west of Bremen), but they were not sufficiently numerous to sustain a branch and were asked to travel to Bremen to participate in meetings there.¹ The district territory covered only a few hundred square miles but included areas near the North Sea and the Netherlands where no Latter-day Saints lived.

Bremen District ²	1939
Elders	8
Priests	6
Teachers	4
Deacons	19
Other Adult Males	40
Adult Females	127
Male Children	9
Female Children	8
<i>Total</i>	221

The Bremen District had too few members to provide district leadership in all Church programs when World War II began. Willy Deters was called as the district president on April 7, 1939, and served until after the war.³ Georg Schulze served as the president of the Sunday School and the genealogy specialist, and Auguste Adler was the district Relief Society president. All three were residents of Bremen.



Fig. 1. The Bremen District in the far northwest corner of Germany.

Gerald Deters (born 1934) described his father, Willy, as “a very short man, but a dynamic speaker. He had a loud voice and was well liked by the

members. I was proud to hear him speak in church.” The fact that he was hard of hearing became a benefit to him when the Wehrmacht called him for a physical examination. When he was questioned about his health, he repeatedly asked, “What did you say?” convincing the army doctors that he was not suited for military duty.⁴

The last prewar conference of the Bremen District was held on April 8–9, 1939. A report sent to the mission office in Frankfurt included this comment: “Because of the beautiful weather and the Easter holiday the conference was poorly visited, but the Saints were happy with the messages presented there.”⁵ The first report filed by President Deters after the war began in September 1939 makes it clear that the war had already caused subtle difficulties for the Church in the port cities closest to the bases of the British Royal Air Force:

Sun December 31, 1939: The fall conference of the Bremen District could not be held this year since it was impossible to secure a meeting hall. The conditions in the branches in the Bremen District are generally good. Those members who have always fulfilled their obligations to the Church still do even under these trying circumstances. We have not yet felt any of the effects of the war in Bremen. Whenever possible we hold our meetings. Because of the air-raid danger the windows are shaded and the attendance in our night meetings has dropped. Many of our members dread to go on the streets in the darkness.⁶

The next two reports sent by Willy Deters to the mission office likewise dealt with district conferences:

March 23–24, 1940: The spring conference of the Bremen District was held on this and the preceding day. The visitor was Elder Christian Heck, acting mission president.⁷ Considering the circumstances the conference was well attended, 207 being in attendance. The work in the district and the branches is going forward. Even if there are not too many present in the night meetings, all the meetings are held regularly. On Sunday mornings, even after our members have spent hours in the air-raid shelters, they are present in the Sunday School.⁸

October 24, 1940: The fall conference of the Bremen District was held. Mission counselor Anthon [sic] Huck was the visitor from the mission office. All the meetings were held during the daytime. This was necessitated by the constant air-raid danger. The conference was attended by 180 persons.⁹

The faithful Willy Deters traveled to Frankfurt in February 1941 to participate in a conference for district presidents. He reported that it was unlikely that a district conference could be held due to constant air raids that often interrupted branch meetings. All evening meetings had been moved to daytime. Two weeks later, President Deters called three new district missionaries: Wilhelm Stelzig, Herbert Baarz, and Kurt Menssen. By July 1941, conditions in the Bremen region had improved and a belated spring district conference was held with 147 persons in attendance.¹⁰

In October 1941, a district conference was held and 153 persons attended, including mission supervisor Christian Heck and his counselor Anton Huck from Frankfurt. The same mission leaders returned on May 10, 1942, for the spring conference. Saints from the outlying branches overcame substantial difficulties to travel to Bremen. A total of 144 members and twenty-three friends attended the conference.¹¹

Willy Deters’ report to mission leaders on January 1, 1943, reveals a bit of discouragement:

The fourth year of the war has started. What has the new year in store for us? The conditions in the branches are becoming increasingly more difficult. The lack of food is more and more noticeable. The constant air raids make the people nervous and irritable. There are only the real faithful Saints coming to the meetings now. However, these are in sufficient numbers to carry on the work.¹²

The spring conference in 1943 was held in Lehe, a small town just north of Bremerhaven. Christian Heck was again in attendance and this comment was included in the report submitted to Frankfurt: “In spite of all the sufferings the members showed a

fine spirit of cooperation. The spirit of the Lord was present in rich abundance.”

Willy Deters was one of the most faithful submitters of periodic reports in the West German Mission. Over time, his accounts paint a picture of a Third Reich coming down around him in flames. All three of the branches within his stewardship were located near ports critical to the German war effort and Allied bombers pounded the cities mercilessly for several years. The district president’s last three reports are increasingly bleak, but he firmly believed that the Latter-day Saints were not about to give up:

January 1, 1944: The year 1944 has come and this awful war is still going on. Life is very difficult now. The last bit of strength of the people has to be offered to the frantic war god. The life in the branches is getting increasingly more difficult. The brethren have to work day and night and don’t find the time to visit the meetings. The food rationing is more severe now. The propaganda is talking of a speedy victory but no one believes this any more. Traveling now is connected with great danger. Bombers attack trains day and night. All the meetings of the branches in the Bremen District are held regularly, so far as possible under the circumstances. The attendance has dropped drastically. But the spirit has not suffered.¹³

December 31, 1944: Everything is driving to a climax. The stress on body and soul is gigantic. The air raids are increasing with unbelievable fury. The cities of Bremen, Wesermünde and Wilhelmshaven are just ruins. In spite of all the trials our meetings are still being held, even if they have to be interrupted frequently by air raids. The faithful Saints meet in cottage meetings with only 8 to 10 members present. So closes the year of trials, 1944. But we still know that God lives and that the restored gospel still is the truth.¹⁴

January 1, 1945: Hell has opened its fiery portals. It is almost impossible to visit the branches. Planes attack trains constantly. No rest can be found at night. In the branches of Wesermünde and Wilhelmshaven meetings are held regularly. Sometimes, these are interrupted. It is almost impossible to hold meetings in Bremen. However, meetings are held infrequently. There are no

more members left in Bremen who still have their homes. . . . Many of the brethren are called into the armed services that are either very young, 15, or over 50 in the organization called Volkssturm, so that they might save the fatherland. Reasoning has now changed into madness.¹⁵

These last messages sent to Frankfurt by President Deters reveal his determination to keep his small flocks safe and to see that meetings were conducted. However, reports with such negative wording would have caused Willy Deters great difficulty had government officials or fanatical Nazi Party members seen them. Suggestions that conditions were anything but positive were considered defeatism and treason in those days. On March 1, 1945, Deters reported that communications with the mission office were disrupted and that he could communicate with branch leaders in Wilhelmshaven and Wesermünde-Lehe only by mail. His last sentence that day reads, “Now we have no one to turn to for help except the Lord. I have given instructions to the branches that all the tithing money should be banked.”¹⁶

Willy Deters lost his own home to the Allied bombs in 1944, but he had previously moved his family just south of the city to Verden on the Aller River. Fortunately, he survived the invasion of the British army and was able to return to Bremen in the summer of 1946. There he resumed his work as the district president by gathering his flock and rebuilding the Church in that region.

NOTES

1. See the Bremen Branch chapter for more about the few Latter-day Saints in Oldenburg.
2. Presiding Bishopric, “Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955,” 257, CHL CR 4 12.
3. West German Mission manuscript history, CHL QR 1939:14.
4. Gerald Deters, interview by the author, Bountiful, UT, July 2009.
5. West German Mission manuscript history, CHL QR 1939:15.
6. West German Mission manuscript history, CHL B 1381:4.
7. Heck’s official title was Missionsleiter (mission supervisor).
8. West German Mission manuscript history, CHL QR 1381:4.

9. Ibid.
10. West German Mission manuscript history, CHL B 1381:6, A 2999:6, B 1381:5.
11. West German Mission manuscript history, CHL B 1381:6.
12. Ibid., 6.
13. Ibid., 7.
14. Ibid., 7.
15. Ibid., 8. Had this kind of report reached the police at the time, Elder Deters would have almost certainly been punished for such defeatist comments.
16. Ibid., 8.

BREMEN BRANCH

One of the principal port cities of the old Hanseatic League was Bremen, where 424,351 people lived in 1939.¹ This beautiful city on the Weser River was also home to a relatively strong branch of 158 Latter-day Saints.

The meetings were held at the time in the Guttemplerloge on Vegesackerstrasse. The branch observed the traditional meeting schedule of Sunday School at 10:00 a.m. and sacrament meeting in the evening. Other meetings were held on evenings during the week.

Bremen Branch²	1939
Elders	5
Priests	3
Teachers	2
Deacons	15
Other Adult Males	29
Adult Females	93
Male Children	6
Female Children	5
<i>Total</i>	158

The branch leadership in July 1939 consisted of president Erwin Paul Gulla and his counselors, Georg Friedrich Schulze and Johann Hinrich

Wöltjen. The branch directory shows that an American missionary was the superintendent of the Sunday School but that all other leadership positions were held by members of the branch.³

On Friday, September 1, 1939, the branch history reported numerous challenges faced by the Bremen Branch on the first day of the war:

The meeting hall of the Bremen Branch was confiscated by the German army. All requests, that at least one room [be] made available to the branch, are mockingly denied. "You are only trying to blunt the intellects of the people," President Willy Deters is told. Meetings in Bremen are held again in the Guttemple Logenhaus at Vegesackerstrasse. However, it is only possible to hold one sacrament meeting on Sundays. At this time Brother Albert Adler, Brother Erwin Gulla and Brother Johann Wöltjen are called into the military service. The Bremen Branch is now under the direction of district president Willy Deters.⁴

Helene Deters (born 1904), the wife of the district president, recalled that British air raids over Bremen began almost immediately. Earlier, Hermann Goering, one of Hitler's inner circle and head of the German air force, claimed that if an enemy airplane could drop a bomb on a German city, people could call him Meyer.⁵ Generally a very happy young mother, Sister Deters had reason to be concerned about their safety during the many ensuing air raids against that important city: "There were no [air-raid] shelters at that time, and we huddled in our small cellar for what little protection it offered. Our house was so small that a little bomb could have easily destroyed the whole thing." During one of the first air raids, she and Willy sat in a shelter without their son, who they believed was safe at another location. "Willy and I sat there hand in hand expecting the worst. But we were calm and ready to go [die] if that was the Lord's will."⁶

There is little information regarding the location of the branch meeting rooms after the Saints were required to vacate their rooms on Vegesackerstrasse. However, they indeed had found rooms, as

evidenced by the report sent to the West German Mission office in Frankfurt on January 1, 1941. Some windows in the main meeting room had been damaged by recent air raids, “but the brethren have been able to repair them.”⁷ Young Gerald Deters (born 1934) recalled meeting in the upstairs room of a restaurant. The building was very close to the Deters home at Wiedstrasse 42 and was not particularly impressive.⁸

When the attacks on Bremen increased in frequency and severity, the government recommended that mothers take their children to safer places. In January 1941, Willy Deters sent his wife and their son south all the way across the country to Straubing, Bavaria, where they were taken in by her sister, Emma Suelflow, and her husband, Otto. Life there was much easier in many aspects, but Gerald had difficulty understanding the local dialect, which caused some problems in school, and Otto did not treat them kindly. During their year in Straubing, they were totally isolated from the Church, and Willy was able to visit them only once. In Gerald’s recollection, “It was just great to see him again, and we spent a most beautiful week in the Bavarian mountains, going on many hikes, and enjoying the magnificent scenery of that area. The time went too quickly.”⁹

Back in Bremen in early 1942, the Deters family did their best to weather the storm. In their absence, Erwin Gulla had been released from the military and had served as the branch president in Wilhelmshaven and then again in Bremen. The meeting rooms had been confiscated at least once for a few weeks, then returned to the Saints.

It was good to be together again, but life in Bremen was becoming primarily a question of survival for the Deters family. Helene was working as a bookkeeper, and this allowed the family to enjoy a comfortable lifestyle, but there was rarely time for entertainment, as Gerald wrote: “For the next six months or so our routine was very simple: Mutti and Pappi went to work during the day, and I went to school. We came home, ate our supper, and then

went to the air shelter for the night. It was really something to look forward to every day.”¹⁰

On one occasion, the Deters family was visited by a branch member on leave from the Eastern Front. When Gerald learned of the constant attacks, he said that he had never experienced an air raid and wondered what it would be like. A few hours later, he found out. The roar of enemy airplanes was heard (even though no sirens sounded), and everybody ran for a large concrete bunker down the street. The bombs began to fall even before they reached the shelter, so they took refuge elsewhere. The next morning, the guest stated that it was quieter in Russia and that “he could hardly believe that we were going through this type of experience nearly every night.”¹¹

In early 1943, Willy Deters was transferred to his company’s facility in Verden, twenty miles southeast of Bremen. Helene was fortunate to find employment at the same place, and the family moved into a small home on Brunnenweg. From there it was a short train ride back to church in Bremen, but on occasion the air raids made it impossible for them to make the trip. Gerald Deters recalled enjoying the small-town atmosphere and playing cowboys and Indians with local boys in the forest.



Fig. 1. The Deters family moved into the right half of this two-family home on Brunnenweg in Verden in 1943. They lived there for six years. (G. Deters)

Among the members of the Bremen Branch were several persons living in the city of Oldenburg,

twenty-five miles to the east. Gustav Christmann and his family moved there from Heilbronn (Stuttgart District) in connection with his military assignment. Frida Bock came during the war to join the company of the state theater as a soprano. Other members there were Wübbedina Koeller and Wilhelmine Grunow and her mother and sister. They were able to attend meetings in Bremen until the last months of the war, when crucial railroad bridges were destroyed and the trip became too dangerous.¹²

The Saints in Bremen were in constant danger, as was reflected in the branch history on May 31, 1943:

(Very heavy air raid on Pentecost): One bomb hit the house of the Bornemanns. It dug a deep hole in the middle of the cellar where these Saints and other occupants of the apartment house were staying. Luckily, it was a dud and did not explode so that they were able to leave the cellar unharmed. Here again is a wonderful manifestation of the protecting power of the Lord.¹³

Fortunately, important events in the lives of individual members could still take place in that environment. Gerald Deters was baptized in an indoor pool in the city of Bremerhaven on October 3, 1943. But the years of his childhood passed, and he was automatically inducted into the Jungvolk, the first phase of the Hitler Youth program, in the fall of 1944.

Willy Deters was required to join the National Socialist Party due to his employment. He wore the required swastika pin on his collar but was an outspoken opponent of the party and did not attend meetings. According to Gerald, Willy had to be admonished by his wife on many occasions to keep his voice down when he criticized the government, especially when they were out in public. Because his hearing was bad, he compensated with a voice that he likely did not know was loud. Despite his objections, his son Gerald attended meetings of the Jungvolk that took place at least twice a week.

Gerald was an enthusiastic member of the Jungvolk—very much what the government hoped he would become. He later wrote about marching in parades and going to movies where scenes of heroism under fire were common. Fortunately, his dreams of becoming a tank commander or serving aboard a PT boat or a submarine would never have time to become reality, for the war would soon be over.



Fig. 2. Willy Deters with his wife, Helene, and son, Gerald, after the war. (G. Deters)

The Führer, Adolf Hitler, narrowly escaped an attempt on his life on July 20, 1944, when a bomb was placed in a conference room just a few feet from where he was standing. Gerald Deters recalled being shocked to hear of the assassination attempt in a radio broadcast later that day: “We were so relieved to hear that he was safe. . . . Knowing how my dad felt about Hitler [he disapproved], I think he was not surprised to hear that somebody tried to murder him.”¹⁴

The night of August 18–19, 1944, was a very hard one for members of the Bremen Branch, according to the branch history:

The meeting hall of the Bremen Branch was destroyed on the night of August 18, 1944. Ninety-five percent of the members of the Bremen Branch have lost their homes, including all their belongings. All the property of the branch, chairs, tables, dinnerware, etc., which had been given to the members for safekeeping in their homes, has been completely destroyed. All the homes, where branch property was stored, were destroyed.¹⁵

The Deters family had transferred some of their property from the apartment at Wiedstrasse 42 to the house in Verden by then, but most of their belongings were in Bremen that night and subsequently were destroyed. In those days, it was still possible for German citizens to appeal to the government for reparations payments after air raids, and Willy Deters did precisely that. In a six-page report, he detailed the property lost when an incendiary bomb reduced the home and its contents to ashes. The report lists ninety-eight specific items (or types of items)—including the obligatory portrait of Adolf Hitler, which was valued at 12 Reichsmark. The declared value of the items inventoried was approximately two thousand Reichsmark, even though some items had no listed replacement value.¹⁶

Following the attack, the members of the Bremen Branch could not find rooms in which to hold their meetings. They began to meet in groups of eight or ten wherever they could. By January 1945, Willy Deters reported to the mission leaders that it was almost impossible to hold meetings in Bremen. From Verden, he could hardly ever find a train to take his family to Bremen or to go even farther north to visit the branches in Wesermünde-Lehe and Wilhelmshaven.¹⁷ For the Deters family, church attendance was essentially on hold.

In April 1945, the British army approached Verden and was still encountering resistance from German soldiers determined to defend the fatherland. Gerald recalled that his father took the family to a farm about four miles from Verden, where it appeared to be safer, but his calculations were faulty: the family soon found themselves in the

worst possible position—precisely between the attackers and the defenders. One night, the family huddled in a barn, sitting atop a pile of potatoes and praying for deliverance, while the opposing forces exchanged round after round of artillery fire and rockets. According to Gerald, “that was probably the night when we really learned how to pray, [even though] we had done it before. It was the most horrible night.” A few hours later, the British tanks rolled into view, and the war was over for the Deters family. They moved back to Verden on April 20, 1945—Adolf Hitler’s birthday.¹⁸

Anzahl	Genaue Beschreibung des Gegenstandes mit (Höhe oder sonstigen Angaben mit Gliederung nach Räumen und Sachgruppen)	Ungefähre Höhe des Schadens (RM)	Art des Schadens	Rk. Verrechnung Nr.
1	Beispiele: Schlafzimmer Kleiderschrank, Eiche gestrichen, 180 cm lang	30.—	Türfüllungen eingedrückt	
1	Kokostepich, 2 x 3 m	?	Ecke verbrannt	
1	Patentrollo, Fenstergröße 1,50 x 1,60 m	15.—	schwer beschädigt	
1	Bekleidung und Wäsche Herrenanzug (Konfektion) — Minderwert	30.—	Jacke zerstört	
3	Oberhemden je RM 7.—	21.—	ganz durchlöcher	
4	Paar Socken je RM 2.—	8.—	ganz verbrannt	
1	Handtücher Handtücher 5 1/2 m 90 cm breit	40.—	ganz verbrannt	
1	Velour Faserstoffe 80 x 50 cm	15.—	ganz verbrannt	
1	Stühle, Eichenstuhl, Eiche gestrich	40.—	" "	
1	Korbstuhl	15.—	" "	
1	Korbstuhl	12.—	" "	
1	Wandeschrank poliert, bruch	65.—	" "	
5	Stühle je 7 Stk.	14.—	" "	
1	Wandhor. Mahagoni ca. 100 cm	120.—	" "	
1	Mahagoni Tisch	60.—	" "	
1	Hand. Gardinen ca. 165 cm breit	30.—	" "	
1	Gardinen Vorhang	2.—	" "	
1	Lampenschirm	28.—	" "	
1	Blumenvase	4.50	zerstört	
2	Blumentöpfe je 1.25 6.50	7.50	" "	
	Bücher (im Vorhang eingeklemmt)	ca. 100.—	ganz verbrannt	
1	Fischfig. m. Schale	4.—	" "	
1	Eichentisch	12.—	" "	
2	Bilder (Seitenansicht)	10.—	" "	
1	Bild	10.—	" "	
1	Wanduhren mit Tisch	14.—	" "	
1	Schlafzelle 1.80 breit	220.—	" "	
1	Kleiderkasten 3 Stk. m. Spiegel	28.—	" "	
2	Kleiderkasten ohne Spiegel	28.—	" "	
1	Kleiderkasten m. Spiegel	60.—	zerstört	
2	3 Stk. Aufleger ca. 50.—	150.—	" "	
3	Kopfbedeckung	10.—	" "	
1	Stuhl	10.—	" "	

Fig. 3. Willy Deters submitted an inventory of personal property lost when the family's apartment was destroyed in an air raid. The government compensated citizens in part for their losses. (G. Deters)

Two reports sent from Bremen to the mission office in Frankfurt in the late summer of 1945 reflect the spirit of revival among the Latter-day Saints in Bremen once peace was established:

August 25, 1945, Sunday: Ten U.S. soldiers visited the meeting in Bremen. The joy was great when we found that Elder . . . Robins, a

missionary who had labored in Bremen, was among this group. This was for us, as well as for the brethren from America, cause for great joy. After six years of war and destruction we again had brethren from Zion among us.¹⁹

September 16, 1945, Sunday: With the help of Col. Horace W. Shurtleff, a meeting hall for the Bremen Branch has been secured in the Wilhadistrasse 1. Starting this day regular meetings were held there. This first meeting was attended by 55 persons. The attendance is increasing constantly.²⁰

By April 26, 1945, when the British army entered the city, Bremen had been bombed in 173 attacks that took the lives of at least 4,125 people. Sixty-two percent of the dwellings had been destroyed, and the city had lost 12,996 of its residents in military service.²¹ Although most of the Latter-day Saints were among those who had lost their homes, they had been able to stay in or return to Bremen and were soon busy improving the condition of the branch there.

The suffering of the Saints in Bremen is described in depth in the letters written by Relief Society members to Ellen Cheney of San Diego in the years after the war. Sister Cheney directed a program to provide food and clothing to the surviving members of the Bremen Branch. In their letters of thanks, they told about their experiences and feelings. For example, Elli Ellinghaus wrote the following on December 8, 1946:

The Lehmkuhls lost everything during the war. Even their dearest, there [sic] only 20 year old boy was lost in Russia. Yes the last years of the war were for us very very hard. Many times in our troubles we cried to God for help. . . . We have had help from the Lord many times when we did not know where to turn to, there was some unexpected help for us.²²

Lina Schubert wrote this message to Sister Cheney on November 16, 1946:

Whoever went through the war here with the many bombings, knows how much was lost to the flames. Many nerves are shocked as a result. Many are poor, they have no bed, no home, everything

lost, and for what? Then all the prisoners of war who have not been returned. Why do they keep them? . . . It is a bad place to live here now, the need for food is great, there is nothing at all to buy.²³

Sister Schubert wrote again on April 26, 1947:

I have waited so long for the return of my boy who is still a prisoner of war in Egypt. It will soon be his fifth summer there and I can tell how much he misses his family. We can only hope that his wish will soon be fulfilled. . . . It was two years ago today that our enemies appeared in our city. We spent two full days in the air raid shelters and when we came out, our city looked like a desert. Everything was destroyed. There was no water, no power, no gas, no coal, no food. Nothing but destruction everywhere. The people who didn't believe in God were moaning and groaning. May God bless us if we but stay on the straight and narrow path and do no evil.²⁴

The sadness of these letters and many others with similar content is overshadowed by the gratitude expressed by the surviving Bremen Saints for the protection they received from their God and the brotherhood and sisterhood they shared during the difficult war years.

IN MEMORIAM

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

Heinrich Adler b. Bremen 6 Jun 1926; son of Heinrich Adler and Anna Auguste Drönnner; bp. 22 Jun 1934; conf. 22 Jun 1934; ord. deacon 18 Aug 1940; k. in battle Russia 15 Jul 1944; bur. Orglandes, France (CHL microfilm 2458, form 42 FP, pt. 37, 90–91; FHL microfilm no. 68785, no. 111; www.volksbund.de)

Wilhelm Albert Adler b. Bremen 28 Feb 1913; son of Heinrich Adler and Anna Augusta Drönnner; bp. 19 Dec 1922; conf. 19 Dec 1922; ord. deacon 8 Jan 1928; ord. teacher 1 Jun 1930; ord. priest 23 Apr 1934; ord. elder 6 Sep 1936; m. 30 Jun 1934, Anna Bodnau; rifleman; k. in battle 28 May 1940; bur. Noyers-Pont-Maugis, France (FHL microfilm 68785, no. 2; www.volksbund.de)

Mathilda Andermann b. Geestemünde, Berden, Hannover, 24 Mar 1891; dau. of Friedrich Andermann and Mathilde Behrens; bp. 21 Sep 1934; conf. 21 Sep 1934; m. 24 Mar 1923, Ernst Kassner; d. abdominal cancer 6 Jun 1940 (FHL microfilm 68785, no. 253)

Hermine Katharine Margarethe Behrens b. Neuenburg, Oldenburg, 13 Mar 1863; dau. of Johann Friedrich Behrens and Hella Margarethe Meyer; bp. 26 Apr 1928; conf. 26 Apr 1928; m. 21 Jun 1899, Johann Friedr. Ortgiesen (div.); d. cardiac insufficiency 2 Jan 1942 (FHL microfilm 68785, no. 152; IGI)

Aug. Emilie Karoline Boeck b. Nörenberg, Gaatzig, Pommern, 8 Nov 1863; dau. of Wilhelm Boeck and Karoline Giese; bp. 20 Jul 1918; conf. 20 Jul 1918; m. — Kolbe; d. heart attack 28 Jan 1944 (FHL microfilm 68785, no. 26)

Karoline Elise Minna Dauelsberg b. Stolzenau, Berden, Hannover, 11 Feb 1866; dau. of Christian Gerhard Fr. H. Dauelsberg and Auguste Reymann; bp. 31 Aug 1906; conf. 31 Aug 1906; m. 7 May 1892, Ernst Heinrich Jäkel; d. stroke 5 Apr 1942 (FHL microfilm 68785, no. 29)

Tjaltje DeJong b. Opende, Gröningen, Netherlands, 2 Jan 1893; dau. of Andreas DeJong and Sjonkje Ras; bp. 10 Aug 1922; conf. 10 Aug 1922; m. — Dittrich; d. pneumonia 15 Feb 1942 (FHL microfilm 68785, no. 90; FHL microfilm 25755, 1930 census)

Marianne Hammerski b. Klonia, Konitz, Westpreussen, 2 Jul 1865; dau. of Josef Hamerski and Clara Florentina Zielinski; bp. 20 Aug 1939; conf. 20 Aug 1939; m. Wilhelmsburg, Hamburg, 6 Oct 1894, Johann Hermann Christoph Wesseloh; 7 children; d. senility Bremen 17 Nov 1941 (FHL microfilm 68785, no. 292; IGI)

Mathilde Katharine Rudolfine Klempel b. Valpariso, Metropolitana, Chile, 7 May 1873; dau. of Otto Samuel Klempel and Hanna Ernestine Lina Fleissner; bp. 18 Jun 1926; conf. 18 Jun 1926; d. heart attack 2 Dec 1940 (FHL microfilm 68785, no. 108; IGI)

Hermann Albert Koslowski b. Bremen 22 Feb 1913; son of Max Koslowski and Auguste Schwettling; bp. 28 Jun 1923; conf. 28 Jun 1923; k. in battle Artemowsk, Russia, 1943 (CHL microfilm 2458, form 42 FP, pt. 37, 170–71; FHL microfilm 68785, no. 38)

Emilie Lohwasser b. Neudeck, Österreich, 8 Mar 1868; bp. 31 May 1924; conf. 1 Jun 1924; m. 16 May 1890, Ludwig Fleischer; d. senility 14 Feb 1941 (FHL microfilm 68785, no. 82)

Sophie Marie Mühlenbruck b. Kirchboitzen, Fallingbostal, Hannover, 13 Feb 1872; dau. of Hermann Mühlenbruck and Louise M. Dorothea Grosse; bp. 29 Oct 1907; conf. 19 Oct 1907; m. 6 Apr 1895, Heinrich Thom; k. air raid Bremen 23 Apr 1945 (CHL microfilm 2458, form 42 FP, pt. 37, 122–23; FHL microfilm 68785, no. 64)

Julianne Gesine Wilhelmine Paul b. Spain 14 Jun 1873; dau. of Julius Paul and Sophie von Südwenz; bp. Hamburg 31 May 1924; conf. 1 Jun 1924; d. 22 Jul 1943 (FHL microfilm 68785, no. 79; IGI)

Karl Günter Rau b. Heilbronn, Mittelfranken, Bayern, 6 Oct 1935; son of Gustav Christmann and Else

Rau; k. air raid Bremen 17 Apr 1945 (CHL microfilm 2458, form 42 FP, pt. 37, 122–23; FHL microfilm 68785, no. 286; IGI)

Bruen Schroeder b. Mahndorf, Achim, Hannover, 3 Jan 1883; son of Bruen Schröder and Gesche Kuhlmann; bp. 10 May 1913; d. 18 Mar 1942 (CHL CR 375 8 2458; IGI)

Bruno Gerhard Schulze b. Bremen 5 May 1902; son of Georg Friedrich Schulze and Hermine Wagner; bp. 3 Mar 1911; conf. 3 Mar 1911; m. 5 May 1927, Marichen Dreke; k. air raid Bremen 24 Jun 1944 (CHL microfilm 2458, form 42 FP, pt. 37, 90–91; FHL microfilm 68785, no. 58)

Emmi Eliese von Hefen b. Strohauserdeich, Rodenkirchen, Oldenburg, 1 Mar 1869; dau. of Cornelius von Hefen and Marie Schroeder; bp. 5 Jul 1921; conf. 5 Jul 1921; m. — Freudenberg, d. 2 Jul 1943 (FHL microfilm 68785, no. 16)

Geertje Wagener b. Bunde, Weener, Ostfriesland, Hannover, 27 Aug 1874; dau. of Koene Harms Wagener and Weldelke Bruns; bp. 5 May 1908; conf. 5 May 1908; d. heart attack 17 Oct 1941 (FHL microfilm 68785, no. 67; IGI)

Johann Hermann Christoph Wesseloh b. Fintel, Hannover, 17 Sep 1867; son of Johann Wesseloh and Gesche Windeler; bp. 20 Aug 1937; conf. 10 Aug 1937; m. Wilhelmsburg, Harburg, Hannover, 6 Oct 1894, Marianne Hammerski; 7 children; d. intestinal cancer Wandsbek, Altona, Schleswig-Holstein, 29 or 30 May 1942 (FHL microfilm 68785, no. 293; IGI)

Katharina Wissenbach b. Gundhelm, Schlüchtern, Hessen-Nassau, 24 May 1860; dau. of Franz Wissenbach and Margaretha Hummel; bp. 20 Aug 1938; conf. 20 Aug 1938; m. 12 Aug 1888, Heinrich Lüdecke; d. senility 22 Feb 1941 (FHL microfilm 68785, no. 306; IGI)

Betty Wöltjen b. Rautendorf, Osterholz, Hannover, 18 Mar 1889; dau. of Johann Hinrich Wöltjen and Margarethe Adelheid Viehl; bp. 15 Jun 1929; conf. 15 Jun 1929; m. 27 Apr 1912; 2m. 21 Feb 1921, Ernst Otto Emil Greier; 3m. 25 Jun 1938, Ferdinand Martin Tubbe; k. air raid Bremen 26 Nov 1943 (CHL microfilm 2458, form 42 FP, pt. 37, 58–59; FHL microfilm 68785, no. 154; IGI)

Johann Hinrich Wöltjen b. Rautendorf, Osterholz, Hannover, 25 Apr 1887; son of Johann Hinrich Wöltjen and Margarethe Adelheid Viehl; bp. 6 Jun 1925; conf. 6 Jun 1925; ord. deacon 1 Aug 1926; ord. teacher 28 Oct 1928; ord. priest 1 Jun 1930; m. Bremen 18 Oct 1913, Berta Henschel; six children; d. pleurisy Bremen 11 Mar 1945 (FHL microfilm 68785, no. 96; IGI)

Catharine Marie Wübbenhorst b. Sandhorst, Aurich, Hannover, 12 Mar 1864; dau. of Johann Christian Wübbenhorst and Marg. Folina Götz; bp. 10 Jun 1916; conf. 10 Jun 1916; m. 18 Dec 1893, Heinrich Bengson; d. heart attack 15 Jan 1942 (FHL microfilm 68785, no. 8)

NOTES

1. Bremen city archive.
2. Presiding Bishopric, "Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955," CHL CR 4 12, 257.
3. West German Mission branch directory, 1939, CHL LR 10045 11.
4. West German Mission manuscript history, CHL B 1381:3.
5. Germans would soon be telling countless jokes featuring "Herr Meyer" in an obvious reference to Goering.
6. Helene Albetzky Deters, autobiography (unpublished), private collection.
7. West German Mission manuscript history, CHL B 1381:5.
8. Gerald Deters, interview by the author, Bountiful, UT, July 1, 2009.
9. Gerald Deters, autobiography (unpublished), private collection.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Erwin Büsing, "Beitrag zur Geschichte der Gemeinde Oldenburg von 1946 bis 2007" (unpublished), private collection.
13. West German Mission manuscript history, CHL B 1381:7.
14. Gerald Deters, interview. The incident occurred at Hitler's headquarters for the Eastern Front, near Rastenburg, East Prussia. The bomb was planted by Claus Graf Schenk von Stauffenberg, who was executed for treason later that same day in Berlin.
15. Ibid.
16. *Sachschaden-Antrag*, submitted by Wilhelm Deters to the city of Bremen on September 1, 1944; private collection.
17. West German Mission manuscript history, CHL B 1381:8.
18. Gerald Deters, interview.
19. West German Mission manuscript history, CHL B. 1381:9.
20. West German Mission manuscript history, CHL B. 1381:10.
21. Bremen city archive.
22. Elli Ellinghaus to Ellen Cheney, December 8, 1946; used by permission of George and Lorene Runyan.
23. Lina Schubert to Ellen Cheney, November 16, 1946; used by permission of George and Lorene Runyan.
24. Lina Schubert to Ellen Cheney, April 26, 1947; used by permission of George and Lorene Runyan.

WESERMÜNDE- LEHE BRANCH

The home of the Wesermünde-Lehe Branch was, in general, the city of Bremerhaven. Thirty-eight miles downriver from Bremen, the community is located at the mouth of the Weser River at the North Sea. The members of this branch lived closer to the enemy air bases during the war

than any other Church members in Germany. This fact alone made life in the area very challenging.

The meetings of this branch were held in a building at Poststrasse 123, but no description of the rooms is available. More than one-half of the branch members were females twelve and over and only four members were children. Priesthood leadership was present; there were three elders in the branch. It is also evident from the records of other branches in the district that visitors from Bremen and Wilhelmshaven were seen in this small branch on numerous occasions. The small number of members would explain why the mission directory of August 1939 shows that Mutual and Relief Society were the only groups holding meetings during the week.¹ Sunday School took place at 10:00 a.m. and sacrament meeting at 7:00 p.m. each Sunday.

Wesermünde-Lehe Branch ²	1939
Elders	3
Priests	0
Teachers	1
Deacons	4
Other Adult Males	4
Adult Females	21
Male Children	2
Female Children	2
<i>Total</i>	37

The following comments are taken from the West German Mission manuscript history:

October 29, 1939: Karl Kinast was ordained an elder and called to be branch president following the departure of the missionaries.³

October 25, 1942: A branch conference was held in the Wesermünde Branch which, under the circumstances, was well attended; forty-two persons attended. A wonderful spirit was in all the meetings.⁴

November 29, 1942: In Wilhelmshaven, which is in constant danger of enemy attacks, a branch conference was held. In spite of two air raids that interrupted the meetings, the spirit of God was present in rich abundance. The attendance was seventeen.⁵

June 17, 1944: The Wesermünde Branch meeting hall was destroyed. The Bremen District spring conference had been planned to be held in the Wesermünde chapel on June 25. All the preparations had been made in vain. Since another meeting hall could not be found in Wesermünde, one room in the ruins of this building was used to hold meetings.⁶

The last entry in the branch general minutes referring to the war was recorded on July 5, 1945. President Deters of the Bremen District had found a way to travel again and visited the Wesermünde-Lehe Branch that day. The clerk wrote, "The meetings are still being held in the ruins of the former meeting hall. In spite of this the attendance is constantly increasing. Branch President Kinast has done a wonderful work here. . . . He has stayed on the job and done his best."⁷ The man mentioned was Karl Kinast, who had been serving as the second counselor to the branch president, an American missionary, just before the war began.

The port facilities of Bremerhaven were attacked on a great many occasions during the war by the British Royal Air Force and the U.S. Army Air Corps. It can be assumed not only that the branch meeting rooms at Poststrasse 12 were damaged, but that the homes of several members were damaged or destroyed. Whatever the damage was, they were still holding meetings in the summer of 1945 and were likely joined soon by LDS refugees from the East German Mission.

IN MEMORIAM

The following members of the Wesermünde-Lehe Branch did not survive World War II:

Friedrich August Wilhelm Biermann b. Stadthagen, Schaumburg-Lippe, 13 Oct 1910; son of Heinrich Friedrich Wilhelm Biermann and Sophie Karoline

Wilhelmine Huckemeier; m. Cuxhaven, Hamburg, 1933, Emmy Geimplinger; d. 8 Oct 1943 (FHL microfilm 25723, 1925 and 1930 censuses)

Ludwig Blass b. Trier, Trier, Rheinland, 2 Jun 1876; son of Karl Ernst Gabriel Blass and Klara von Schmoll; bp. 2 Feb 1928; conf. 2 Feb 1928; ord. deacon 4 Sep 1932; m. Johanna Kühn; k. air raid Bremen 24 Jun 1944 (FHL microfilm 68785, no. 130; FHL microfilm 25725, 1930 census)

Dieter Danklefsen b. Friedrichstadt, Schleswig, Schleswig-Holstein, 28 Aug 1940; son of Paul Heinrich Danklefsen and Anita Martha Elisabeth Brassat; d. dysentery 19 Oct 1942 (FHL microfilm 68808, no. 569; FHL microfilm 25751, 1935 census; IGI)

NOTES

1. West German Mission branch directory, 1939, CHL LR 10045 11.
2. Presiding Bishopric, "Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955," 257, CHL CR 4 12.
3. West German Mission history, CHL LR 10045 2; West German Mission manuscript history B 1381:3.
4. West German Mission manuscript history, 6.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., 7.
7. Ibid., 9.

WILHELMSHAVEN BRANCH

The smallest branch in the Bremen District was located in the North Sea port city of Wilhelmshaven. About forty miles northwest of the city of Bremen, Wilhelmshaven could be reached via railroad in an hour. Only twenty-six members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were associated with this branch when the war began.

Brother Rodewald was the branch president in July 1939 and remained in that position until November 10, 1940.¹ On that date, he was released and replaced by Erwin Gulla during a meeting attended by the presidents of the Bremen and Hamburg Districts (Willy Deters and Alwin Brey, respectively). That same day, the following comment

was added in the branch records: “In all cities of the district the conditions brought about by constant air raids grew increasingly worse.”² The proximity to the British air bases across the North Sea had already proved inconvenient and dangerous.

Wilhelmshaven Branch³	1939
Elders	0
Priests	3
Teachers	1
Deacons	0
Other Adult Males	7
Adult Females	13
Male Children	1
Female Children	1
<i>Total</i>	26

Brother Gulla was released as the president and replaced by Alfred Passon on November 11, 1941.⁴ No eyewitness accounts of members in this branch could be located at the time of this writing. The only indications of the status or activities of the branch are found in the general minutes.

Two additional entries in the branch minutes are of particular interest and make it clear that the members of the branch were not simply surviving during the final month of the war. On April 6, 1945, President Alfred Passon requested permission from district president Willy Deters to baptize five persons into the Church. The permission was granted.⁵ Not three weeks later, President Passon requested permission for another baptism, namely for Sister Henny Haubock. It would seem that the few branch members living in the vicinity of Wilhelmshaven were quite willing to talk about their church even while the Third Reich was collapsing around them.

The port and city of Wilhelmshaven suffered an estimated 60 percent damage. The city was home to 103,842 people in 1939, but many left during the war in search of safer living conditions. At least one hundred air raids took place, and 510 residents are known to have been killed in those attacks before Polish troops entered the city as conquerors on May 6, 1945. The toll in military personnel killed (12,996) likely included soldiers and sailors stationed at the port.⁶

IN MEMORIAM

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

Hermine Katharine Margarete Behrens b. Neuenburg, Oldenburg, 13 Mar 1860; dau. of Johann Friedrich Behrens and Hella Margarete Meyer; bp. 26 Apr 1928; conf. 26 Apr 1928; m. 21 Jun 1891, Johann Friedrich Ortgiesen (div.); d. heart failure 2 Jan 1942 (FHL microfilm 68808, no. 1; IGI)

Karl Friedrich Wilhelm Werner b. Kade, Jerichow, Sachsen, 4 Oct 1861; son of Wilhelm Werner and Louise Reck; bp. 3 Jul 1928; conf. 3 Jul 1928; ord. deacon 17 Nov 1929; ord. teacher 7 Apr 1940; ord. priest 22 Feb 1942; k. street car accident 8 Jan 1943 (FHL microfilm 68785, no. 213; IGI)

Katharina Wissenbach b. Gundhelm, Schlüchtern, Hessen-Nassau, 24 May 1860; dau. of Franz Wissenbach and Margaretha Hummel; bp. 20 Aug 1938; conf. 20 Aug 1938; m. 12 Aug 1888, Heinrich Lüdeke; d. 22 Feb 1941 (FHL microfilm 68808, no. 51; IGI)

NOTES

1. West German Mission branch directory, 1939, CHL LR 10045 11.
2. Wilhelmshaven Branch general minutes, vol. 5, CHL B 1381.
3. Presiding Bishopric, “Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955,” 257, CHL CR 4 12.
4. Wilhelmshaven Branch general minutes, 5.
5. Ibid., 9.
6. Wilhelmshaven city archive.