

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 Gertrud Glaser Ruf, autobiography (unpublished, 2003), private collection.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.<sup>1</sup>

Darmstadt Branch <sup>2</sup>	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.<sup>3</sup> 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."<sup>4</sup> 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,

they met again—for MIA and genealogy classes at 8:00 p.m. and for Relief Society and priesthood meetings at 9:00 p.m.

The Marquardt family lived on a small farm near Gadernheim, about ten miles south of Darmstadt. The route to church was a challenging one because public transportation did not connect the two locations directly. Members of the Marquardt family often walked the entire distance to church over country roads through the Odenwald Forest. Georg's father, Johannes Marquardt, had joined the Church in 1903, and his mother joined after World War I. When it was not possible to make the trek to Darmstadt, the family held meetings in their home.

The Wehrmacht called Georg Marquardt just after Poland was conquered in the fall of 1939. Following training in nearby Heidelberg, he was sent home for the winter and called up again in July 1940. Among various domestic stations was Schwetzingen, a town close to Mannheim, and Georg took advantage of the opportunity to attend the branch there. The fact that he had a driver's license may have played a role in his assignment to a tank unit, and further duty saw him in Amiens and Versailles, France, before he was moved to Italy.

Georg was fortunate to avoid injury from the enemy during the war, but his own troops accidentally shot him during a New Year's Eve party in France. According to his recollection,

Somebody upstairs was playing with a gun. Suddenly we heard a shot; it went through the thin ceiling and hit me just when I was about to go to bed. They transported me to the military hospital and told me not to move because the bullet hit me near my spinal cord. But when I moved a little, we saw that the bullet was lying on the floor. It was a harmless ricochet. It was unbelievable.

The Sommerkorn family lived in Arheilgen, a northern suburb of Darmstadt. The father, Karl-Ludwig Sommerkorn, was employed in the construction of the new Autobahn from Frankfurt to Darmstadt. Because he worked for the government,

he was required to be a member of the Nazi Party and to attend regular meetings. "But that was too hard for my father, since he was working all day long," recalled Karl-Heinz.

At age ten, Karl-Heinz was inducted into the Jungvolk along with his classmates. However, this only lasted a few years, because his father was killed in Russia, and the family left Darmstadt. Karl-Ludwig Sommerkorn was drafted into the Wehrmacht in February 1942 and sent to the Eastern Front. Two of the letters he wrote from a location near Leningrad in early March 1943 have been preserved:

Eastern Front, March 4, 1943

My dearest sweetheart and children,

It is Thursday at 3 p.m. Finally I have a real roof over my head again. I have been running around since eight last night. Now I am sitting on my bed that has only a straw sack for a mattress. Sweetheart, you could hardly imagine how tired I am. The roads are frozen over and we have to walk on them with our baggage.<sup>5</sup>

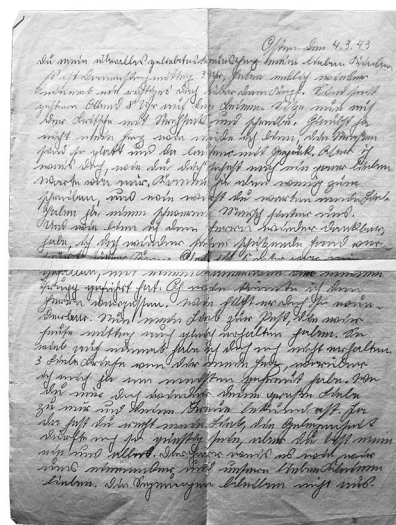
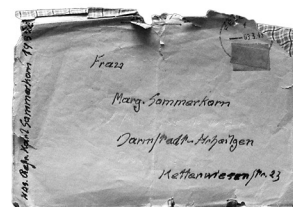


Fig. 1. Soldier Karl-Ludwig Sommerkorn wrote this letter to his wife on March 4, 1943. He was killed in battle two days later. (K.-H. Sommerkorn)

This letter contains many references to Karl-Ludwig's faith, such as the following: "Oh, how could I ever forget my Lord? He has helped me so very much. . . . The Lord knows how much we love each other and our children. His blessings are ever-present." One of the main themes (as with most soldiers' letters) is that he wants nothing more than to go home to his family. A tradition among German soldiers was to acknowledge the arrival of packages from home. In order to know which packages arrived and which did not, the families numbered them. In this letter, Brother Sommerkorn gave his report: "The following packages have arrived: 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 21, 23, 25, 27, 28, 29 and 30. So several are missing. But I'm fortunate that we are here. Had they arrived yesterday evening, I wouldn't have been able to take them all with me."

The very next day, Karl-Ludwig Sommerkorn wrote to his wife again. He expressed anew his sadness about being so far from home, his concerns for the welfare of his family, and his desire to see them all again soon. He repeated his sentiments about God: "My dearest wife, sometimes I think I can't stand it anymore. But you know that I trust in the Lord and He gives me more strength. Every day He holds His protective hand over me. . . . And I know that you too will not forget the Lord. . . . I know that the Lord will give us the opportunity to be together again."

The following day, March 6, 1943, Brother Sommerkorn was at his post during a Red Army artillery barrage that lasted all day. His commanding officer wrote this report a few days later: "An artillery shell landed right next to him and Karl received shrapnel wounds all over his upper body. He was immediately unconscious and died soon thereafter. The next day, he was buried at the Gulren Utschif Cemetery not far from Naraja, Russia. We have taken a picture of his grave and will send it to you as soon as it is developed."

Margarethe Sommerkorn took her children and left Darmstadt in January 1944 to live with an aunt,

Marie Grünewald, in Schönau, Saxony (in eastern Germany). She lost all contact with the branch until after the war and was not able to attend church in Saxony. The surviving Sommerkorns were sad at the loss of their husband and father, but they were fortunate to have left Darmstadt before another tragedy struck.

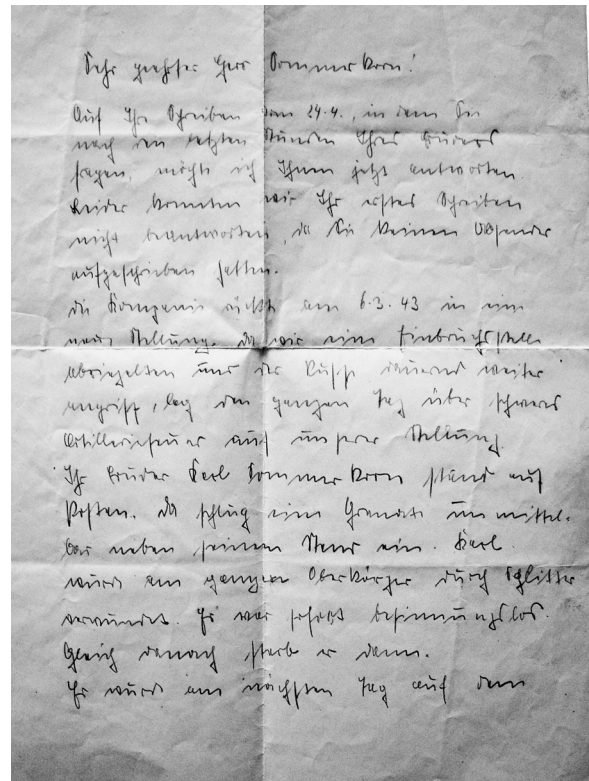


Fig. 2. The company commander sent this letter to Karl-Ludwig Sommerkorn's brother soon after the battle. "He was struck by shrapnel all over his upper body, was immediately unconscious and died in a matter of minutes." (K.-H. Sommerkorn)

Although there had already been thirty-four air raid alarms in Darmstadt, the world seemed to come to an end in that city when the British Royal Air Force attacked during the night of September 11–12, 1944. Chosen as a prime target for a firebombing, the city still had a downtown featuring many very old wood structures lining narrow streets. A combination of explosive and incendiary bombs dropped that night produced a holocaust that lasted several days and took the lives of more than eleven thousand people. The core of the city of

Darmstadt essentially disappeared overnight, and 80 percent of the rest of the city was destroyed.<sup>6</sup>

A short history of the Darmstadt Branch was written in connection with the dedication of the new church building in 1965. In an apparent attempt to avoid negative images at a time of celebration, the history offers only one substantive statement about the war: “The terrible air raid on Darmstadt on September 11, 1944, cost the lives of several members of the branch, including branch president Christian Lang.”<sup>7</sup> Brother Lang had sought refuge in the basement of his home along with his wife, Anna Barbara, and reportedly one or more daughters. It may be that several other members of the branch were with them when their apartment house was destroyed and the Langs were killed. Annaliese Heck of the Frankfurt Branch was in Darmstadt shortly after the catastrophic air raid and remembered seeing the body of Sister Lang:

Those were horrible, horrible attacks. And I had to climb over bodies [afterward]. One of them was Sister Lang, the older Sister Lang. I could not believe it. Those people had stayed in their basements too long, and fumes developed there, and when they came out, they were overwhelmed, and they dropped dead [from asphyxiation]—right in the street.<sup>8</sup>

While stationed near Nattuno, Italy, Georg Marquardt was pleased to meet another LDS soldier, Eugen Keller of the Stuttgart Branch. They had become acquainted quite by chance when Eugen noticed that Georg was holding a church book and asked him where he got it. Georg explained his religious affiliation, and the two were immediately good friends. For the next while, they met as often as the situation permitted and maintained their friendship after the war. This is one of the rare instances when soldiers of the West German Mission were able to spend time together away from their home branches.

Georg also had opportunities to speak with others about his church while in Italy. He was once invited to visit a local family. The hostess inquired

about his religion. “She wanted to know what we believed in, and I tried to recite as many articles of faith as I could remember from my childhood and youth. I knew that being an example to the people was very valuable [But] we could not talk much about the Church because I knew that people were watching me.”

While on leave near Mannheim and Darmstadt, Georg continued to attend Church meetings whenever possible. He recalled that there were always adult priesthood holders in attendance to see to all necessary ordinances.

When the American army invaded the Odenwald Forest, there was slight action near the Marquardt farm at Gadernheim. One artillery shell fell into their home but fortunately did not explode. A member of the Church living there as a refugee safely removed the shell from the home. The Marquardts did not lose any property and were not forced to leave their home. The American Third Army entered Darmstadt on March 25, 1945, and encountered nothing but white flags and deserted streets.<sup>9</sup>

The war ended peacefully for Georg while he was stationed in the Po River Valley in Italy. He was not taken prisoner officially but was interned at an airfield a few days after the cease-fire on May 8, 1945. For some reason, his captors released him after a very short time, and he was able to return to Gadernheim in July 1945. Regarding his experiences away from home and church for four years, he commented, “My testimony was my comfort in those years. Having the Church in our lives was the highest and most positive feeling, and it kept us alive.”

Just before the war came to an end, Margarethe Sommerkorn decided to take her children and flee the oncoming Soviet soldiers by heading from Saxony south into Czechoslovakia. According to her son, Karl-Heinz:

We had not heard many good things about the Russians, and we were scared. My aunt did not want to go with us, but my mother took her children and left. We were walking through



the [Erzgebirge] mountains and ran right into the Russians. They didn't bother us, but we turned around and went back to my aunt in Schönau. Later we learned that the people in Czechoslovakia were even worse [to Germans] than the Russians.<sup>10</sup>

Sister Sommerkorn later acquired a small wagon and her family began the journey on foot back to Darmstadt (nearly three hundred miles). They found that the church rooms had been destroyed, but they were able to join with the surviving Latter-day Saints who were holding meetings in schools. The branch was alive, but had been seriously weakened through the loss of at least a dozen of their members, nearly all of whom had been killed in that one terrible air raid.



Fig. 3. Only the walls of this Lutheran church remained after the night of September 11–12, 1944. The plaque reads, "In memory of our dead: May they rest in peace." (R. Minert, 1971)

### IN MEMORIAM

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

**Philipp Becker** b. Fränkisch Crumbach, Hessen, 17 Sep 1867; son of Johann Jakob Becker and Maria Elisabeth Daum; bp. 23 May 1897; conf. 23 May 1897;

ord. deacon 18 Sep 1904; m. Darmstadt, Hessen, 18 Mar 1893, Elisabeth Kessel; 5 or 6 children; d. nephritis Darmstadt 23 or 25 Jul 1941 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 7, Frankfurt District Book II; IGI, AF)

**Edith Bossecker** b. Darmstadt, Hessen, 28 or 29 Jul 1942; dau. of August Walter Otto Eduard Bossecker and Johanna Jährling; k. air raid Darmstadt 11 or 12 Sep 1944 (CHL microfilm 2458, form 42 FP, pt. 37, 298–99; IGI)

**Emma Albertine Dassmann** b. Herborn, Limburg/Lahn, Hessen-Nassau, 1 Feb 1883; dau. of Johannes Christian Dassmann and Emilie Haas; bp. 31 May 1913; conf. 31 May 1913; m. Philipp Jährling; k. air raid Darmstadt, Hessen, 12 Sep 1944 (FHL microfilm 68787, no. 18; CHL Microfilm 2458, form 42 FP, pt. 37, 298–99; SLCGW, IGI) Anna Maria Emig b. Roßdorf, Darmstadt, Hessen, 20 Oct 1863; dau. of Nikolaus Emig and Maria Keller; bp. 15 Aug 1920; conf. 15 Aug 1920; m. — Reitz; d. senility and stomach complications 13 Nov 1940 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 243; IGI, AF, PRF)

**Melani Franke** b. Gröna, Chemnitz, Sachsen, 10 Apr 1892; dau. of Franz Emil Franke and Pauline Fleischmann; bp. 8 Nov 1908; conf. 8 Nov 1908; m. — Stauss; k. air raid Darmstadt, Hessen, 12 Sep 1944 (FHL microfilm 68787, no. 75; IGI)

**Anna Waldburga Jäger** b. Steinbach, Gießen, Hessen, 7 Dec 1872; dau. of Johann Adam Jäger and Anna Waldburga Schäfer; bp. 17 Apr 1925; conf. 17 Apr 1925; m. — Egner; k. air raid Darmstadt, Hessen, 12 Sep 1944 (FHL microfilm 68787, no. 13; IGI, AF, PRF)

**Maria Anna Jäger** b. Zürich, Switzerland, 21 Mar 1911; dau. of Anna Jäger; bp. 15 Oct 1925; conf. 15 Oct 1925; k. air raid Darmstadt, Hessen, 12 Sep 1944 (FHL microfilm 68787, no. 20)

**Johanna Jährling** b. Darmstadt, Hessen, 19 May 1912; dau. of Philipp Jährling and Emma Albertine Dassmann; bp. 5 Aug 1920; conf. 5 Aug 1920; m. Darmstadt 24 Dec 1938, August Walter Otto Eduard Bossecker; 1 child; k. air raid Darmstadt 11 or 12 Sep 1944 (FHL Microfilm 68787, no. 19; CHL microfilm 2458, form 42 FP, pt. 37, 298–99—lists mother's name as "Lehmann"; IGI)

**Christian Lang** b. Pfungstadt, Hessen, 11 Jun 1870; son of Christian Lang and Margarethe Meyer or Meier; bp. 14 Jun 1908; conf. 14 Jun 1908; ord. deacon 19 Oct 1922; ord. teacher 6 Oct 1924; ord. priest 13 Dec 1925; ord. elder 14 May 1933; m. Darmstadt, Hessen, 26 Jun 1895, Anna Barbara Löb; 5 children; k. air raid Darmstadt 12 Sep 1944 (FHL microfilm 68787, no. 25; CHL microfilm 2458, form 42 FP, pt. 37, 298–99; SLCGW)

**Katharina Lang** b. Pfungstadt, Hessen, 26 or 27 Jan 1872; dau. of Christian Lang and Margarethe Meyer or Meier; bp. 18 Nov 1924; conf. 18 Nov 1924; m. 10 Oct 1931, Johannes Mahr; k. air raid Darmstadt, Hessen, 12 Sep 1944 (FHL microfilm 68787, no. 46; CHL microfilm 2458, form 42 FP, pt. 37, 298–99; SLCGW; AF)

**Anna Barbara Löb** b. Unter Schönmatte, Seppenheim, Hessen, 24 Sep 1875; dau. of Peter Karl Löb and Maria Cramlich; bp. Darmstadt, Hessen, 11 Jun 1907; conf. 11 Jun 1907; m. Darmstadt 26 Jun 1895, Christian Lang; 5 children; k. air raid Darmstadt 12 Sep 1944 (FHL microfilm 68787, no. 26; CHL microfilm 2458, form 42 FP, pt. 37, 298–99; SLCGW)

**Karl-Ludwig Sommerkorn** b. Arheilgen, Darmstadt, Hessen, 29 Sep 1908; son of Heinrich Philipp Sommerkorn and Philippine Gilbert; bp. 15 Mar 1923; conf. 15 Mar 1923; ord. deacon 2 Apr 1928; ord. teacher 2 Nov 1930; ord. priest 29 Nov 1931; ord. elder 24 Nov 1937; m. Darmstadt, Hessen, 18 Oct 1930, Margarethe Dieter; 3 children; corporal; k. in battle Nagatkins 6 Mar 1943; bur. Korpovo, Russia (FHL microfilm 68787, no. 71; www.volksbund.de; IGI)

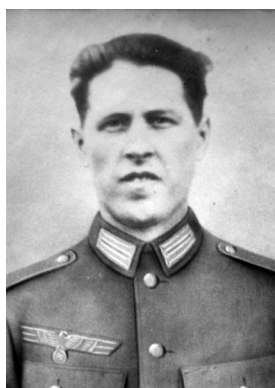


Fig. 4. Karl-Ludwig Sommerkorn was killed in Russia on March 6, 1943. (K-H. Sommerkorn)

10. Many thousands of German soldiers and civilians would later testify to inhumane treatment at the hands of Czechs and people of other nations conquered and occupied by German forces before and during the war.

## FRANKFURT BRANCH

For centuries, the city of Frankfurt am Main in southwestern Germany has played an important role in commerce and transportation among the German states. It was also the center of politics in the Holy Roman Empire, and dozens of emperors were crowned in the cathedral there (though they ruled elsewhere). As World War II approached, this city of 548,220 was the home of the nation's largest railroad station and the largest airport and was the point of departure for the first completed stretch of the new autobahn highway system.<sup>1</sup>

Frankfurt Branch <sup>2</sup>	1939
Elders	19
Priests	4
Teachers	4
Deacons	16
Other Adult Males	39
Adult Females	160
Male Children	11
Female Children	8
<i>Total</i>	261

### NOTES

- Darmstadt city archive.
- Presiding Bishopric, "Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955," 257, CHL CR 4 12.
- Georg Marquardt, telephone interview with Jennifer Heckmann in German, January 14, 2009; summarized in English by Judith Sartowski.
- Karl-Heinz Sommerkorn, interview by Michael Corley, South Jordan, UT, February 29, 2008.
- Karl-Ludwig Sommerkorn to his wife, March 4, 1943; used with the permission of Karl-Heinz Sommerkorn.
- Data provided by the Darmstadt city archive.
- Darmstadt Branch, "Ein Plan . . . Wird Wirklichkeit!" September 12, 1965.
- Annaliese Heck Heimburg, interview by the author, Sacramento, CA, October 24, 2006.
- Darmstadt city archive.

The Frankfurt Branch met in the summer of 1939 in rented rooms at Neue Mainzerstrasse 8–10, just a few blocks north of the Main River and very close to the office of the West German Mission at Schaumainkai 41 (on the south side of the river). Among the 261 members of the branch were nineteen elders—a wealth of leadership when compared to other branches in the mission in those days. As