

m. 22 Jul 1923, Marta Zillmann; d. asthma 13 Dec 1942 (CHL LR 537 21, no. 69)

**Hertha Martha Thesenvitz** b. Stralsund, Pommern 20 Dec 1918; dau. of Paul Wichmann and Hertha Thesenvitz; bp. 11 Jul 1933; conf. 11 Jul 1933; m. — Wunna; d. tuberculosis 5 Sep 1939 (CHL LR 537 21, no. 28; NG-IGI, AF, PRF)

**Anna Marie Johanna Ziems** b. Barth, Franzburg, Pommern, Preußen 1 Nov 1871; dau. of Johann Heinrich August Ziems and Johanna Karoline Wilhelmina Freese; bp. 5 May 1929; conf. 5 May 1929; m. 9 Jul 1909, Otto Zajek; m. Friedrich Carl Linck; 2 children; d. lung ailment 23 Nov 1941 (CHL LR 537 21, no. 20 and 65; IGI)

NOTES

1. Presiding Bishopric, "Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955," CR 4 12, 257.
2. East German Mission Quarterly Reports, 1938, no. 48, East German Mission History.
3. Karl Werner Langer, "Ostdeutsche Mission" (unpublished history), 96; private collection.
4. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Geschichte der Gemeinde Rostock, 1893–1944* (Rostock, Germany), January 26, 1942; trans. the author.

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DEMMIN  
BRANCH

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Demmin is located thirty-five miles west of the city of Rostock and had about fifteen thousand inhabitants when war broke out in 1939. This small Pomeranian town was located along the main railway line from Neubrandenburg to Stralsund on the Baltic Sea. The branch meetings were held in rented rooms in Reuterstrasse 13 in the first Hinterhaus. Annaliese Ahlwardt Dieckmann (born 1915) recalled the meeting rooms:

We went through a corridor and outside, and then we entered the Hinterhaus. We had a large room and a smaller one. Outside was a toilet we could use. These rooms had been a candy factory before, and we then separated the large rooms by a portable wall so that we could have

two smaller classrooms. There was a picture of Joseph Smith and a picture of Jesus Christ and his disciples at the Last Supper. There was an organ. I played the organ for a very long time in our branch.<sup>1</sup>

Demmin Branch <sup>2</sup>	1939
Elders	2
Priests	2
Teachers	0
Deacons	7
Other Adult Males	7
Adult Females	27
Male Children	3
Female Children	3
<i>Total</i>	51

Jutta Ruetter recalled that there were some benches in the church rooms and some very old chairs that had come to Demmin from the Neubrandenburg Branch. "Somebody always crashed to the floor each Sunday, since the chairs were old. . . . We did not have many pictures on the wall, but I remember a banner reading "The Glory of God Is Intelligence."<sup>3</sup>

Annaliese married Franz Dieckmann in 1937. The official ceremony took place in the civil registry office in city hall, as was required by law. Then there was a second marriage ceremony in the church. Her friend, Helmut Plath of the Stettin Branch, conducted the ceremony. "All of the branch members celebrated with us," she recalled.

The Demmin Latter-day Saints were few in number, but the missionary spirit was strong in that branch. Jutta Ruetter recalled how Elisabeth Ahlwardt (Annaliese's mother) encouraged her to bring other children her age to church. Sister Ahlwardt was both Relief Society president and Beehive leader.

Regarding the Church meetings in the years just prior to the war, Annaliese later explained:

We had a very large Sunday School. Even children who were not members attended because

we knew each other well. Sunday School was in the morning. Sacrament meetings depended on the season; in the summer it was in the evening hours, during the winter we held it in the afternoon. We had three Sunday School classes based on age. For Sunday School, we had about thirty-five people attending.

Annaliese's father, Max Ahlwardt, served as branch president for several years. The walk to the church from their home on Luisenstrasse took about ten minutes.

In 1940, Anneliese Dieckmann's lifestyle began to be somewhat nomadic. She followed her husband, Franz, with his military employment, visited her parents, and hardly stayed anywhere for more than a few months at a time. Her two sons were born in 1937 and 1941. She had her hands full with them all during the war.

Franz Dieckmann was a civilian employed by the Luftwaffe. His first move with the family was to Stargard, a town twenty-five miles east of Stettin and fifty-five miles southeast of Demmin. Annaliese was just ninety miles from her parents' home and was able to visit them relatively often. Thus she did not often attend Church meetings in Stargard and did not get to know the members of that small branch very well. "We lived on Zarziegerstrasse, which was about twenty minutes from the meeting rooms at Radestrasse 31 in the first Hinterhaus."

Soon after moving his family to Stargard, Franz was required to travel to France, where he was responsible for aircraft security.

The burdens on a young mother are difficult under any circumstance, but Annaliese was alone by 1941 when her second son arrived. Years later, she described this crisis:

My youngest son was sick with diphtheria. I had to take him to the hospital, and the doctor gave him the serum right away, but I was not allowed to stay with my son. I paced in front of the door all night. . . . I then remembered a regulation or law that allowed having someone with diphtheria

stay at home when the neighborhood was without children or the nearest child was very far away. The person at the health office had to give me the paper. Now I was alone with both children, and I had all the responsibility. How often did I find myself on my knees praying for help!

A neighbor lady felt compelled to leave her own little girl in the hospital, and the child died just days later. Annaliese learned an important lesson from the experience: "This is something that has made me strong—this has made my testimony stronger. This feeling that you have to do something different than what other people tell you to do has helped me."

From Stargard, Annaliese could take the train home to Demmin without buying a ticket because the distance was less than one hundred kilometers [sixty miles].<sup>4</sup> This allowed her to see her family with some regularity. Her mother also went to Stargard to visit her.

During the fall of 1944, Franz Dieckmann was stationed just south of Berlin and was able to visit his family on weekends. In early February 1945, he was sent to Breslau in Silesia. Annaliese was given permission to take winter clothing to him there; she left her children with her mother. However, the Red Army invaders were advancing on Breslau, and Franz insisted that his wife turn right around and go back to her children. "We even heard [the army] shooting at night," she explained. She was able to find a place aboard a hospital train headed west.

The war had left Stargard in relative peace for years, but things were changing fast. As Annaliese recalled, "When I got back to Stargard, my apartment was already filled with German soldiers and refugees. In my children's room there lived a mother with two little children; she must have been from somewhere in the East."

Annaliese found railroad travel to be increasingly difficult in the late winter of 1945.

She had left practically everything in Stargard, hoping to return, but soon realized that this was not possible. Because Demmin had a large airfield, the town was subjected to air raids in the last few months of the war. She described her next move in these words:

In April 1945, I took my mother and my children and followed my husband's letters that came from the west [near Hanover]. He, at the same time, looked for a way to come back to Demmin and managed to arrive there. All he could see was that the whole city was destroyed and burning for three days. I was so happy that I had made the decision to [go west], although my father stayed in Demmin.

When the war ended on May 8, 1945, Annaliese, her children, and her mother were safely at Timmendorfer Strand in what became the British Occupation Zone. Franz Dieckmann left Demmin in search of his family and located them with the help of Annaliese's cousin in Hamburg. He took them back to Demmin in the fall of 1945.

Jutta Ruetter and her mother did not leave Demmin when the invaders came. According to her recollection:

The women had to hide very often, but [the Russians] were always very friendly to us children and strangers. They never did anything to us. One cousin of mine was allowed to sit on a tank once, and my aunt was afraid that something would happen to her. As children, we did not worry much about [the events of the war].

The Ahlwardt home in Demmin had been destroyed, but Max Ahlwardt was able to procure building materials and start over again. To his new little home, he added a small room for the Dieckmann family. They had survived the war in good health and were pleased to be together again. Their story of being separated and having to live in different places is not at all a rarity among Latter-day Saints in Germany at the time.

No members of the Demmin Branch are known to have died during World War II.

### NOTES

1. Anneliese Ahlwardt Dieckmann, interview by the author in German, Kassel, Germany, June 17, 2007; unless otherwise noted, summarized in English by Judith Sartowski.
2. Presiding Bishopric, "Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955," CR 4 12, 257.
3. Jutta Ruetter Meyer, telephone interview with Judith Sartowski, April 14, 2008.
4. To purchase a ticket for a longer journey, the passenger had to justify the trip. This requirement allowed officials to regulate long-distance traffic.

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## NEUBRANDENBURG BRANCH

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Just a few hundred feet south of the famous "Baker's Wife" monument on the main street of the city of Neubrandenburg, the small but vibrant Neubrandenburg Branch met in rented rooms next to the post office. The address at the time was Adolf Hitler Strasse 12, and the rooms were on the main floor at this very central location in town.

Neubrandenburg Branch <sup>1</sup>	1939
Elders	4
Priests	5
Teachers	4
Deacons	4
Other Adult Males	21
Adult Females	49
Male Children	4
Female Children	4
<i>Total</i>	95

The city of Neubrandenburg in the historic province of Brandenburg, Prussia, is located fifty miles west of Stettin. It was decided in December 1938 that the Neubrandenburg Branch of the Stettin District should be shifted