

1939: “A district conference for Schleswig-Holstein was held in the Kiel Branch hall. Presiding was Robert Salopiata. A wonderful spirit prevailed among saints and friends.”<sup>2</sup>

It appears that Elder Salopiata of the Flensburg Branch was inducted into the military at the onset of the war, because his availability to serve as the district president ended already in September 1939. The new supervisor of the West German Mission, Friedrich Biehl, wrote to former mission president M. Douglas Wood (then in Stockholm, Sweden) with this message on September 26, 1939: “Brother Kurt Müller of Kiel has agreed to serve as District President of Schleswig-Holstein. Brother Salopiata can now be released.”<sup>3</sup>

It is believed from eyewitness reports that Elder Müller served in that office for the majority—if not the rest—of the war years. Nothing else is known about the men and women who assisted Elder Müller in directing the affairs of the four branches in that district.

According to the history of the Kiel Branch, the district conference held in Kiel on March 31, 1940, was attended by mission supervisor Christian Heck as well as Hamburg District president Alwin Brey. The attendance consisted of 255 members and 28 friends. In November of that year, another district conference was held, to which two hundred persons came.<sup>4</sup>



Fig. 2. Members of the League of German Girls in Kiel marching to an activity. (R. Radack)

## NOTES

1. Presiding Bishopric, “Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955,” 257, CHL CR 4 12.
2. West German Mission quarterly report, 1939, CHL LR 10045 2 16.
3. M. Douglas Wood, papers, CHL MS 10817. The history of the Kiel Branch shows this change of leadership taking place on December 10, 1939.
4. Kiel Branch history; courtesy of Karl-Heinz Goldmund.

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## FLENSBURG BRANCH

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The northern suburbs of the city of Flensburg reached almost to the border of Denmark in 1939. This port city on the Baltic Sea was thus the northernmost city of substantial size (68,042 inhabitants) in Hitler’s Germany when World War II began. With its large port facilities and industry, it was a city crucial to the war efforts of the Third Reich.

The branch of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints met in rooms rented on the second floor of a building at Grossestrasse 48 in Flensburg. According to the branch history, the main meeting hall was complemented by four small classrooms.<sup>1</sup>

A small branch of fifty-four persons called that location home in the summer of 1939. The president of the branch was Max B. Müller, but he was called to be the district president by the end of September. It is not known who succeeded him then. When the war began in September 1939, Otto Schwan was the superintendent of the Sunday School, Friedrich Hansen the leader of the YMMIA, and Constanze Klindt the leader of the YWMIA. The Primary was directed by Elfriede Callesen, and the Relief Society by Margarete Salopiata (who also represented *Der Stern* magazine). Genealogical research was supervised by Max Müller.

The meeting schedule for the Flensburg Branch in 1939 was as follows: Sunday School at 10:00 a.m. and sacrament meeting at 7:00 p.m., entertainment

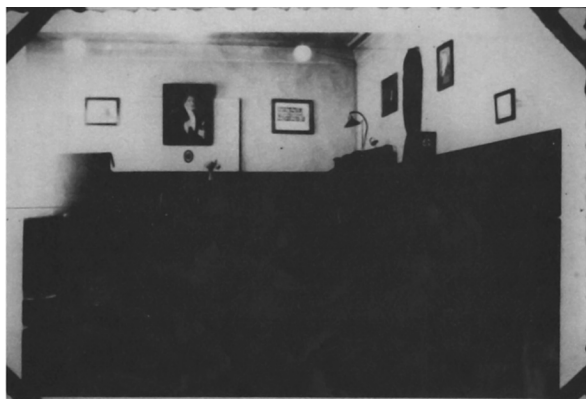


Fig. 1. The main meeting room of the Flensburg Branch in about 1940. (Church History Library)

(of unspecified variety) on Mondays at 7:30 p.m., Primary on Tuesdays at 4:00 p.m., MIA on Thursdays at 7:45 p.m., followed by priesthood and Relief Society meetings at 8:45, and genealogical study on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month at 6:00 p.m.

Flensburg Branch <sup>2</sup>	1939
Elders	6
Priests	1
Teachers	1
Deacons	4
Other Adult Males	11
Adult Females	30
Male Children	0
Female Children	1
<i>Total</i>	54

The surviving manuscript branch history only extends through the end of the year 1940 but includes several comments about life for the Latter-day Saints in the Flensburg Branch during those seventeen months:<sup>3</sup>

August 22, 1939: A special meeting was held in the Kiel Branch hall with Joseph Fielding Smith as the speaker.

August 27, 1939: Margo Karl Klindt and Albert Dittmer were drafted. Beginning on September 5, sacrament meeting was to begin at 6:00 p.m. due to blackout regulations.

October 15, 1939: Sacrament meeting was to begin at 5:00 p.m. due to blackout regulations.

December 24, 1939: A Christmas program was presented; twenty-five persons attended.

The average sacrament meeting attendance since the war began was eighteen persons.

January 14, 1940: Relief Society meetings started again after a hiatus of four months. The Flensburg Sunday School was discontinued until further notice.

March 30–31, 1940: Twelve members of the branch attended the district conference in Kiel.

April 21, 1940: Max Müller and Elisabeth Bräuer [?] were married; “we gave the young couple a fine reception.”

April 20, 1940: Uwe Wischniewski died at the age of 21–22 months; he was buried on April 24 at the Friedenshügel cemetery; twenty-five persons attended the funeral.

May 26, 1940: [Sunday] meeting times were changed: MIA at 10:30 [a.m.], sacrament meeting at 11:45, Relief Society and priesthood meetings at 12:30.

The average attendance at Sunday meetings in April 1940 was twelve to fourteen persons. It is clear from those entries that wartime conditions had interrupted and even temporarily curtailed branch activities. Nevertheless, it is equally clear that the members of the Flensburg Branch carried on as best they could.

Harry Christensen was born in Denmark in 1922 and baptized in the town of Sonderburg, just north of Flensburg in Denmark, in 1933. His father found work in Flensburg in April 1939 and moved his family south into the city to avoid the long bicycle ride to work. Harry, who was sixteen years old and finished with public schooling, recalled finding work for himself at the time as well:

I started job training in a garden market when I lived in Flensburg but I didn't live at home. My boss had all of his trainees stay in his home. We worked every day from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. I had one day off a month and that was usually a Sunday. This was the only time that I could go home and get my laundry done, so I didn't have many opportunities to attend church.<sup>4</sup>

As a citizen of Denmark, Harry could not be drafted into the military nor subjected to other involuntary programs under the National Socialist government. In other respects, Harry and his family found it important to assimilate themselves in Germany. For example, they spoke German at home. In fact, both of Harry's parents were born in Germany, but his father had since become a Danish citizen.

"The first British attack on Flensburg destroyed the branch meeting rooms," recalled Harry. "The young men were drafted, and mothers with their children left town for safer places." Even Danish citizens could not escape the dangers of war, and Harry's life would be interrupted several times by personal loss.

The Flensburg Branch history indicates that changes were made in the Relief Society on September 14, 1940. Margarete Salopiata was called as the new Relief Society leader again, and the following were released: president Paula Thomsen, first counselor Elfriede Callesen, and second counselor Alwine Dittmer. New Sunday School leaders were called: president Franz Luhmann, first counselor Albert Dittmer, and second counselor Thomas Thomsen.<sup>5</sup>

The branch clerk wrote an enlightening paragraph in his record at the conclusion of the year 1940:

So ends the second year of the war. Under the circumstances, the meetings were held for the most part without interruption. All organizations are still functioning well. Sunday School takes place from 11:00 to 12:00, priesthood and Relief Society meetings from 2:00 to 3:00, and sacrament meeting from 3:00 to 4:00. There are 55 members of record: 9 priesthood holders, 11 other males, 29 females, 6 children.<sup>6</sup>

The branch population was constantly in flux, as is clear from an analysis of the above report. Beginning with fifty-four members in 1939, the membership had risen to fifty-five, despite the fact that two members died during 1940. Thus it can be assumed that three persons were baptized that year.

Harry Christensen moved to Kiel and met a nice Catholic girl there. They were married in the civil registry office in 1943 and moved into a modest apartment. In that huge port city, the Christensens were in for very frightening adventures because the city was targeted constantly by Allied bombers. As Harry recalled:

We lost our home three times during the war and lost everything. But because we didn't have anything left, we were given coupons with which to buy the things we were missing. But even though we had the money, those things were not available to buy. I remember one time when my bike was destroyed by a bomb, I received a new one from France that looked really neat. . . . We had four different strollers for our son. We could not take one inside the air-raid shelter, so we left it outside, where it was destroyed.

During the last two years of the war, Harry was assigned duty as an air-raid warden. He recalled many occasions when he watched buildings burn after attacks and wondered about the reactions of residents: "During those times of stress, we often saw people doing things that were not rational. For example, people would throw their belongings out the windows of burning houses but did not think about the fact that the things would break [when they hit the ground]. All they could think about was how to save their property."

After a terrible raid on December 26, 1943, Harry's wife and their little boy were put on a bus and sent to an unspecified location at a safe distance from Kiel. They were eventually assigned a room in the town of Lütjenburg (eighteen miles to the east). The confusion of the times was such that several months passed before Harry found out where his family was and before they found out that he was still alive back in Kiel. Any hope of a normal

life together must have seemed impossible to them under those conditions.

Harry joined his family in Lütjenburg before the British army arrived there on May 5, 1945, and the war ended. The takeover was peaceful, but local residents were subject to a strict curfew. Harry had to sneak around town at night to find a midwife to assist in the birth of his daughter.

Upon finally returning to Kiel in 1946, Harry Christensen established contact with the LDS branch there and met the branch president. “He kept everybody together,” Harry explained.

Back in Flensburg, the branch members likely experienced similar losses as they too tried to survive in a port city. As of this writing, no information is available regarding the location or frequency of church meetings among the Latter-day Saints who remained in Flensburg.

#### IN MEMORIAM

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

**Hellmuth Hermann E. Ahrnes** b. Toftlund, Schleswig-Holstein, 17 Jul 1912; son of Hermann Ahrnes and Margarethe Sören; bp. 17 Sep 1932; conf. 17 Sep 1932; rifleman; k. in battle Jewanowa, Russia, 2 Aug 1941; bur. Korostyn, Russia (CHL microfilm 2448, pt. 27, no. 413; www.volksbund.de; IGI)

**Uwe Andersen** b. Flensburg, Schleswig-Holstein, 4 Jan 1940; son of Albert Andersen and Elly Schröder; d. stroke 20 Apr 1940 (CHL microfilm 2448, pt. 27, no. 505)

**Fritz Ludwig Beuermann** b. Flensburg, Schleswig-Holstein, 18 May 1924; son of Ludwig Friedrich Diedrich Beuermann and Hedwig Luise Schwichtenberg; bp. 17 Sep 1932; conf. 17 Sep 1932; lance corporal; k. in battle north of Podujevo 2 Nov 1944 (CHL microfilm 2448, pt. 27, no. 360; www.volksbund.de)

**Alfred August Dittmer** b. Flensburg, Schleswig-Holstein, 30 Oct 1927; son of Albert August Dittmer and Wilhelmine Johnsen; bp. 1 Sep 1936; conf. 1 Sep 1936; grenadier; k. in battle 8 Jan 1945; bur. Recogne-Bastogne, Belgium (CHL microfilm 2458, form 42 FP, pt. 37, all mission list 1938–45, 137–38; CHL microfilm 2448, pt. 27, no. 359; www.volksbund.de)

**Julius Heinrich Grell** b. Hamburg 5 May 1874; son of Franz Grell and Emilie von Eitzen; d. 28 Jul 1944 (CHL CR 375 8 2458, 840–41)

**Fritz Emil Hansen** b. Flensburg, Schleswig-Holstein, 6 Aug 1921; son of Friedrich Peter Christian Hansen and Elsabe Wilhelmine Johanna Louise von Ehren; bp. 15 Aug 1929; conf. 15 Aug 1929; non-commissioned officer; k. in battle close to Jankapass Peijapolje-Pass-Pleolja, 25 Nov 1944 (CHL microfilm 2448, pt. 27, no. 317; www.volksbund.de; FHL microfilm 162773, 1930 and 1935 censuses; IGI)

**Constanz Klindt** b. Twedterfeld, Schleswig-Holstein, 22 Jun 1922; son of Hans Christensen Klindt and Constanze Amalie Lorenzen; bp. 16 Aug 1930; d. 10 Feb 1945 or 1 May 1947 (SLCGW; IGI)

**Hans Bruno Klindt** b. Twedterfeld, Schleswig-Holstein, 28 Jun 1919; son of Hans Christensen Klindt and Constanze Amalie Lorenzen; bp. 27 Aug 1928; MIA Forst 1 Apr 1945 (SLCGW; www.volksbund.de)

**Walter Rolf Hans Christian Klindt** b. Flensburg, Schleswig-Holstein, 4 Oct 1914; son of Hans Christensen Klindt and Constanze Amalie Lorenzen; MIA Stalingrad, Russia, 1 Jan 1943 (SLCGW; www.volksbund.de)

**Otto Fritz Edward Siegmund** b. Plön, Schleswig-Holstein, 11 Jan 1877 or 1887; son of Johann Heinrich Julius Siegmund and Sophia Dorothea Henriette Genske; bp. 10 Nov 1923; conf. 11 Nov 1923; ord. deacon 2 Jun 1929; ord. teacher 2 Nov 1930; ord. priest 27 Apr 1932; ord. elder 8 May 1934; d. suicide 18 or 19 Oct 1940 (CHL microfilm 2448, pt. 27, no. 227; FHL microfilm 245264; 1925, 1930, and 1935 censuses; IGI)

**Uwe Wischniewski** b. Flensburg, Schleswig-Holstein, 9 Feb 1940; son of Ernst-Walter Nikolaus Tollgaard and Gertraud Irmgard Christensen; d. Flensburg 20 Apr 1940; bur. Friedenshügel cemetery 24 Apr 1940 (CHL LR 2884 11, 230)

#### NOTES

1. Flensburg Branch manuscript history, 230, CHL LR 2884 11.
2. Presiding Bishopric, “Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955,” 257, CHL CR 4 12.
3. Flensburg Branch manuscript history, 232–44.
4. Harry Christian Wilhelm Christensen, interview by the author in German, Murray, UT, March 17, 2006; summarized in English by Judith Sartowski.
5. Flensburg Branch manuscript history, book 2, 10.
6. *Ibid.* 15.