
FRANKFURT DISTRICT

West German Mission



Twenty-five miles east of the confluence of the Rhine and Main Rivers, the city of Frankfurt am Main lies in a significant position to support transportation and commerce in southwestern Germany. Around Frankfurt are clustered several major cities, and this concentration of population may have attracted the first missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to the region in the 1840s. The Lutheran Church has dominated in the region since the mid-1500s, but the Reformed Lutheran and Catholic Churches are also present, as well as many small synagogues and several Huguenot congregations.

As World War II approached in 1939, the Frankfurt District was relatively strong, consisting of six congregations and a total of 551 members. The principal branch was, of course, in the city of Frankfurt, with others located in Bad Homburg (nine miles to the west), Offenbach (six miles to the east), Michelstadt (twenty-five miles to the southeast), Darmstadt (eighteen miles to the south) and Mainz (twenty-five miles to the west). Indeed, the branches were grouped so closely that the leaders of the Frankfurt District could travel by train within one hour to every branch except Michelstadt, which was situated deep in the Odenwald Forest.

Frankfurt District ¹	1939
Elders	31
Priests	11
Teachers	8
Deacons	36
Other Adult Males	88
Adult Females	332
Male Children	27
Female Children	18
<i>Total</i>	551

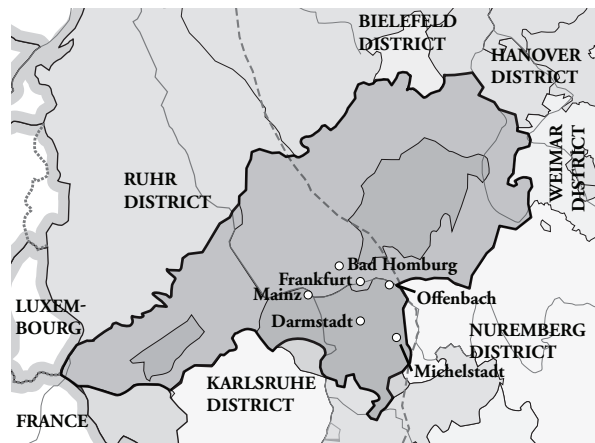


Fig. 1. The territory of the Frankfurt District in southwest Germany. No Latter-day Saints lived in the southwest and northeast areas of this district.



Fig. 1. The circles show (from left) the locations of the West German Mission home at Schaumainkai 41, the Frankfurt Branch meeting rooms at Neue Mainzerstrasse 8–10, and the town of Bad Homburg.

The territory included within the district was extensive and covered many regions where no Latter-day Saints were known to have lived when the war began, including all of the state of Hesse-Nassau to the North (with the exception of Kassel County), all of the state of Hesse, the district of Rhine-Hesse to the southwest, and all of the Rhineland south of the city of Cologne (bordering on France, Luxembourg, and Belgium). There had probably never been any missionary activity in the area west of the city of Mainz, and no branches had existed in that territory.

The average number of elders in the district was only five per branch, while there was probably an average of thirty adult women in each branch. These five branches were certainly not rich in children, with an average of only eight each. As was the case all over the West German Mission at the time,

the Saints in this district tended to be older people, but most represented families that had not been acquainted with the Church for more than two generations. Many of the members on the rolls in 1939 had joined the Church since the end of World War I.

The district president in early 1939 was Anton Huck (born 1872), a member of the Frankfurt Branch. A modest man by occupation (a retired streetcar operator), he was likeable and by all reports very dedicated to serving in the kingdom of God on the earth. With the departure of the American missionaries on August 25, 1939, President Huck became the second counselor to the new mission supervisor, Friedrich Biehl of Essen. His replacement as district president was Friedrich Wagner. The next district president was Hans Förster, also of the Frankfurt Branch, who was called on July 9,

1944. He apparently was still serving in this office when the war came to an end in May 1945.

District conferences in Frankfurt were important to the Saints, as they were all over Germany. Those conferences were held at least through the fall of 1944, despite the increasing lack of rentable rooms. In 1943 and 1944, conferences were held in Darmstadt and even in Strasbourg, to the south and west and well beyond the borders of the district. The influence of Kurt Schneider was likely a factor there, because he served as a counselor to Anton Huck in the last year of the war.²

When Germany began to pick itself up as a conquered territory in the summer of 1945, the only Saints in the Frankfurt District who still had meeting rooms of their own were those in Michelstadt. The other five branches had been bombed out, burned out, or turned out and were holding meetings as groups in the homes of various members. It would be many months before all of the branches had adequate meetings places again.

A conservative estimate would have at least 50 percent of the members of the Church in this district homeless when the war ended. Hundreds more had been compelled to leave the larger cities due to air raids, and many of them would not be able (or allowed) to come home for another year or two. Dozens left during the war for reasons unknown and were never seen again, as reflected in the efforts of branch clerks to establish their locations as late as 1950. At least a few of the Saints were killed at home or abroad, and the news of their deaths simply never reached the ears of other Latter-day Saints who survived.

As sad as the state of affairs in this district was, the Saints there went about the task of rebuilding their lives and their branches as soon as the gunfire subsided and the smoke cleared. Contributing to the effort were hundreds of refugee Saints who had arrived from as far east as Königsberg and Danzig (areas soon ceded to Poland and Russia). By the fall of 1945, a Mormon colony had formed and was growing steadily in the city of Langen (on the road

between Frankfurt and Darmstadt). In just a few years, the Saints there would number more than three hundred.

NOTES

1. Presiding Bishopric, "Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955," 257, CHL CR 4 12.
2. Having both an automobile and a chauffeur, President Schneider was likely the most mobile leader in the West German Mission at the time. He visited Saints all over his own Strasbourg District and in the Karlsruhe and Stuttgart Districts. He also made it to Frankfurt on several occasions.

BAD HOMBURG BRANCH

The Taunus Mountain range begins just a few miles northwest of Frankfurt and runs to the west and north for fifty miles. At the eastern edge of those mountains, just eight miles from downtown Frankfurt, is the city of Bad Homburg, known for the curative powers of its fine mineral water springs. When World War II began, 18,541 people called this small city their home.¹ Only twenty-three of those were members of the LDS Church.

With only a few deacons in the branch, the Saints in Bad Homburg depended on the missionaries from the United States for priesthood leadership. The last prewar branch president was Leland B. Blatter. He and his companion, Douglas N. Thompson, were likely the heart of the branch, but they departed with all other Americans serving in the West German Mission on August 25, 1939. The only local member of the Church whose name is included in the branch directory of July 1939 is Marie Molitor, the secretary of the Sunday School.²

In August 1939, this small branch held its meetings in rented rooms on the second floor of a building at Luisenstrasse 26. No description of the venue is available. Sunday School began at 10 a.m. and

sacrament meeting at 8:00 p.m. The only other meeting held at the time was MIA on Wednesdays at 8:00 p.m.

Bad Homburg Branch³	1939
Elders	0
Priests	0
Teachers	0
Deacons	4
Other Adult Males	3
Adult Females	13
Male Children	0
Female Children	3
<i>Total</i>	23

The minutes of meetings in the Bad Homburg Branch have survived and offer important information about the activities of the branch during the war. On the first Sunday after the departure of the missionaries, Anton Huck, the president of the Frankfurt District, conducted the meetings and made assignments for ongoing service in the absence of adult priesthood holders. He called Sister Gertrud Glaser to be the temporary leader of the branch and the other members sustained the assignment. Sister Karoline Müller was asked to assume leadership of the adult class, and Sister Marie Gerecht was to support Sister Braun in teaching the children's class. Average attendance at meetings in those days was fifteen persons.⁴

During the fall of 1939, meetings of the Bad Homburg Branch were conducted by Anton Huck, Hans Förster, Valentin Schlimm, and a Brother Faust from Frankfurt. The average attendance at sacrament meeting in the first months of the war was six persons. The Christmas program was a great success with thirty-five persons attending.⁵

Gertrud Glaser (born 1919) had only been a member of the Church since April 1938. Her call to "lead" the branch could be interpreted as an indication that

she was faithful in attending her meetings and in carrying out assignments. In her autobiographical writings, she described the reasons why the three adult males in the branch were not called to lead: one was in the military, one had seizures, and one had problems with the Church's health code. "We were a very small branch," she explained.

Gertrud's prime responsibility was to see that meetings took place in Bad Homburg on a regular schedule. Because the brethren could not come from Frankfurt every week, she likely saw to it that the sisters of the branch met to sing, pray, and study the scriptures and other Church literature together. Sister Glaser was a domestic servant in the home of the Hermann and Lieselotte Rüdiger family. The Rüdigers apparently did nothing to prevent Gertrud from attending church meetings on Sundays.⁶

Apparently no records of meetings in Bad Homburg were kept from October 1940 to January 1944, since no pages are missing from the minutes book. As of January 28, 1944, Kerna Kraus was serving as the clerk but explained in her record that she was doing so as a substitute (*in Vertretung*).⁷ The entry made one month later offers significant detail regarding branch activities:

February 28, 1944: Monthly report for February 1944; tithing funds totaling 30 RM were collected, 25 RM forwarded [to mission office] and 5 RM returned to Sister Luise Rück. Mission leader Anton Huck visited the Bad Homburg Branch on February 29, most of all for Sister Rode. She is again in the hospital after a very serious accident. She is recovering and her faith is *extremely strong*. Her time will soon be completed.

Alwine Rode passed away on March 24, having been a member of the Church since 1923. Her funeral was conducted by Pastor Ohli of the local Lutheran Church. August Gerecht had been asked to go to Frankfurt and bring back one of the elders to conduct the service, but air raids prevented him from fulfilling the request. Apparently this led to ill feelings among the sisters, who believed that Sister Rode had been neglected. Marie Gerecht

chose not to attend meetings for awhile, offended by the negative comments made about her husband. Fortunately the matter was settled soon thereafter.⁸

Several members of the Bad Homburg Branch traveled to district conferences in Frankfurt and Darmstadt during the war. The branch records show that six members participated in a district conference in Darmstadt in early 1944, and two even made the long trip (150 miles) to Strassburg in occupied France for the district conference on June 3–4, 1944. One month later, four brethren came to Bad Homburg from Frankfurt to present a program commemorating the death of Joseph Smith one hundred years earlier.⁹

In the spring of 1944, Gertrud Glaser's service in the Rüdiger home was terminated after six and one-half years, and the government assigned her to work for a dentist named Sofie Beil in Oberursel. Although Dr. Beil also allowed Gertrud time off on Sundays to attend church, Gertrud did not worship with the Saints in Bad Homburg (just two miles to the northeast), but rather traveled about seven miles to Frankfurt. Gertrud recalled that the Bad Homburg Branch was closed when she moved to Oberursel, and the lack of branch minutes after July 1944 confirm this.

Events of the summer of 1944 included a rare treat—the baptism of three persons. Emmilie Vogt was baptized on July 22 along with her daughters, Gertrud and Lieselotte, at the Main Bath House in Frankfurt/Main near the Eisener Steg Bridge. It must have been a happy occasion for the members of this small branch.¹⁰

If the reasons for the long trip to church in Frankfurt on Sundays included spending time with the branch president, nobody need assume anything untoward. Hermann O. Ruf, a native of Stuttgart, had moved to Frankfurt with his military employment and was a widower.¹¹ In the fall of 1944, Gertrud and Hermann began to discuss marriage, but his military commitments prevented the plan from being carried out until December 9. Gertrud wrote the following about her feelings at the time:

Because of [Hermann's] military service, we were able to spend only a short amount of time together [after the wedding]. But those were hours of happiness, peace and joy. The war brought times of sacrifice and deprivation. Toward the end, the streetcars were no longer in service and I had to walk from Ginnheim [in northwest Frankfurt] to the meetings in the mission home on the south side of the Main River.

Gertrud Glaser Ruf's story does not indicate when Hermann left Frankfurt, but he was a POW under the Americans for at least seven weeks before returning to his young wife on June 22, 1945. She was living at the time with the Schlichtegroll family (also members of the branch). Regarding the wonderful reunion, Gertrud wrote, "Now we could begin our life together with the few earthly possessions we had."

The branch minutes do not include any information for the crucial last months of the war. The first postwar comments are dated September 1945 and describe the reorganization of the branch:

Mr. Schrott found a beautiful room for the branch. We will move in on September 1 at Höhestrasse 12 (main floor). The lessor is the Red Cross of Bad Homburg. For the next six months the rent will be 60 RM per month. For the summer half-year, 50 RM. Elders from the Frankfurt/Main branch will conduct our meetings.¹²

The survival of this small branch during World War II can be attributed to two groups of members—the sisters of the branch who carried out their duties in the absence of local priesthood leaders, and the brethren from Frankfurt who made many trips to Bad Homburg to see to the needs of the few Latter-day Saints there.

IN MEMORIAM

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

Hans Johann Ludwig Gerecht b. Köppern, Bad Homburg, Hessen-Nassau, 30 Dec 1921; son of August Gerecht and Maria Elisabeth Günther; bp. 28 Aug 1937;

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.¹

Darmstadt Branch ²	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.³ 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.”⁴ 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.⁵

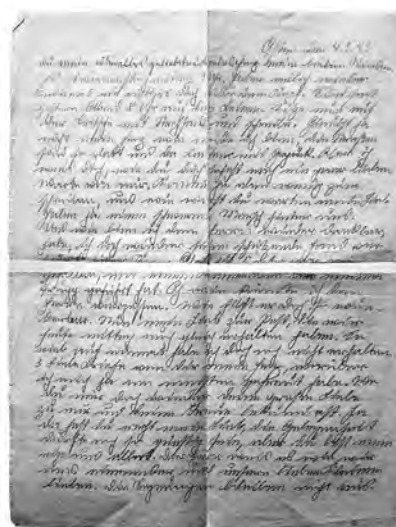


Fig. 1. Soldier Karl-Ludwig Sommerkorn wrote this letter to his wife on March 4, 1943. He was killed in battle two days later. (K.-H. Sommerkorn)

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.

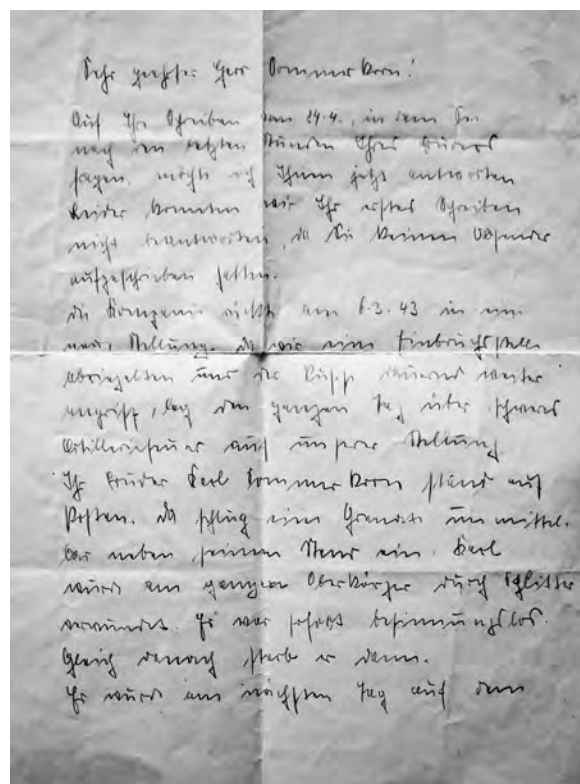


Fig. 2. The company commander sent this letter to Karl-Ludwig Sommerkorn's brother soon after the battle. "He was struck by shrapnel all over his upper body, was immediately unconscious and died in a matter of minutes." (K.-H. Sommerkorn)

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.⁶

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.”⁷ 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.⁸

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.⁹

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.¹⁰

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.¹

Frankfurt Branch ²	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

was true in most Church units, more than half of the members were females over the age of twelve.

Since its inception in 1894, the branch in Frankfurt had moved time and again in an attempt to find suitable rooms in which to meet and worship. The history of the branch indicates that the rooms at Neue Mainzerstrasse 8–10 were in a Hinterhaus by a photography store. Erna Huck (born 1911) recalled that the meeting rooms were on the second floor and that there were several classrooms for children and teenagers.³ Photographs of the rooms show a picture of Jesus Christ flanked by pictures of the prophets Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. The branch sang hymns accompanied by a pump organ. Several eyewitnesses recalled a modest sign on the street indicating the presence of the branch at that address.

Maria Schlimm (born 1923) recalled the following about the building at Neue Mainzerstrasse 8–10 and the schedule of the meetings:

It was a large building with many offices. [We rented] a large room and four smaller rooms for other classes. Upon entering the main door, you could see the wardrobe and some benches where we waited until the meeting started. There was a large painting in the [chapel] showing Christ and Joseph Smith in the first vision. The member who painted it worked in an art museum. . . . There was a rostrum at one end of the chapel; it was not large enough for the choir but we used it for theatrical plays on special occasions.⁴

“Those were very nice rooms, and they reminded me of an office,” recalled Hannelore Heck (born 1929). Her description continues:

The rooms were a fairly good size, and it was nice for us to have Sunday School and sacrament meeting in different places. I think it was more of an office than an apartment building. We used the building often, holding MIA on Wednesday nights, Relief Society on the first Sunday of the month, genealogy class on the second Sunday, and Primary on Tuesdays at 2 p.m. We walked to church so many times during the week.⁵

According to young Hermann Walker (born 1929), “We had a lot of fun in that building because

it had two entrances. One was just the regular entrance upstairs. We had to walk through several classrooms and then enter what we called the chapel. We also had a stage up in the front and behind that stage was another door that led to the stairs again. We used this door for socials and whenever we performed plays. . . . None of the rooms we met in [at various addresses] looked like chapels we use today.”⁶

Carola Walker (born 1922) recalled that perhaps one hundred persons attended church meetings on a typical Sunday.⁷ Her parents, Friedrich and Martha Walker, had a little apartment on the outskirts of the city, so it was not easy for them to attend church. Otto Förster (born 1920) recalled an attendance of perhaps fifty to sixty people. His family walked to church from Koblenzerstrasse, about thirty minutes away. According to Otto, “The Church had use of the rooms all week long. We didn’t have to share the rooms with anyone.”⁸

A native of Gotha in Thuringia, Karl Heimbürg (born 1924) moved with his family to Frankfurt in 1938. Moving from a small branch in a small city to a very large branch in one of Germany’s largest cities, Karl noticed a distinct difference: “When we came to Frankfurt, there was a big branch; it was a totally different church with a complete Church organization. There was sacrament meeting, Sunday School, priesthood meeting, Relief Society, MIA, Primary—everything. It was like a big family.”⁹

At the age of fourteen, Maria Schlimm joined the League of German Girls. “I always liked it because nothing bad happened there. We did handwork, crafts, gymnastics, and choir. But there was nothing political attached to it. Whenever Hitler came to town, we had to wear our uniforms and stand by the side of the street so that he could see us.”

Annaliese Heck (born 1925) had a very different experience in the Hitler Youth program: “I had resisted the program a lot because they also met on Sundays some times.” Fortunately for her, she was invited to join an orchestra because she played the violin and the viola. “At least we didn’t have to march around.”¹⁰

When the West German Mission conference was held in 1939, the members of the Frankfurt Branch were called upon to help set up the meeting venues. As was the custom for mission and district conferences all over Germany in those days, members of the local branch also took into their apartments members who were close friends or had traveled from far away and lacked the funds to stay in hotels. On the Monday following the last conference sessions on Sunday, several hundred Saints joined together for a cruise down the Rhine River.¹¹

Otto Förster had spent two and a half years in the Hitler Youth but discontinued his involvement when he became an apprentice electrician working in Königstein (about ten miles west of Frankfurt). His work with the Siemens Company was critical to the war effort, so he could not be drafted by the Wehrmacht early in the war. This protected status allowed him to remain at home, attend church, and pursue a relationship with a young lady in the mission office—Ilse Brünger of the Herford Branch in the Ruhr District.

Just before the war, newlyweds Hermann and Erna Huck purchased a small grocery store at Rotlinstrasse 53 and operated it under the name *Lebensmittel Huck*. Their customers were the residents of the apartment buildings within a few blocks and included several Jewish families. The store featured such expected products as coffee and wine, but when asked about the quality of such products, the Hucks had to admit that they had no idea how such items tasted. The customers knew that the shop's owners did not drink coffee or alcohol.

As the persecution of the Jews intensified, the Hucks came under pressure from certain neighbors to stop allowing Jews in their store. One woman made it a point to greet the Hucks with a hearty "Heil Hitler!" each time she entered the store, and it was likely that woman who applied the greatest pressure. However, Hermann Huck was not to be intimidated, and he continued to sell to Jews. To avoid endangering both himself and his customers, he met them after hours and provided them

whatever he could. This was a difficult undertaking, because he was only allowed to sell items in exchange for ration coupons, and Jews had a very hard time obtaining ration coupons from city authorities.

After the American missionaries departed Germany on August 25, 1939, the only full-time missionaries still in service were in the mission office at Schaumainkai 41.¹² That preparations for war were underway among the populace is clear from a letter written by secretary Ilse Brünger to President M. Douglas Wood on August 28 (just after he arrived in Copenhagen, Denmark, with his evacuated missionaries): Sister Brünger had given the Frankfurt Branch 47.60 Marks to pay for blackout paper to cover the windows of the meeting rooms as required under civil defense laws.¹³

Hans Mussler (born 1934) lived in the spa city of Baden-Baden when the war began. With his mother, Frieda, and his sister, Ursula, Hans first attended church in the Bühl Branch a few miles distant. When his father, Franz Schmitt, was offered a choice for his next assignment, he selected Frankfurt over a small town near Lake Constance. According to daughter Ursula (born 1929), Herr Schmitt wanted to assure little Hans a "proper education."¹⁴ Hans became not only a member of one of the largest LDS branches in all of Germany but also a member of another important institution—the *Musisches Gymnasium*. Admission was only via recital, and competition was stiff. According to Hans, there were two such state-run schools—one for boys in the Frankfurt suburb of Niederrad and another for girls in the city of Leipzig.¹⁵ Both schools were exclusive, and the pupils were required to live in the buildings.

After the fall of France in the summer of 1940, Otto Förster was sent by his employer to Dunkirk, where the Germans were repairing harbor facilities damaged by the retreating British and French. As he recalled:

They had blown out the hinges of the two main gates of a lock. When I got there the gates were just hanging in the water. The first gates were

operated by hydrometrical motors. So they sent me out there to check out the controls. I was part of a construction unit. When the British left, they also just dumped all they had left (such as vehicles) into the locks. That gave them a little more time. We used cranes to get them out, and it took us about a week. I was there for twelve to fourteen days. Then I went home and found an order to report to the military. I had gone to Dunkirk as a civilian because it was a work assignment.

Otto's first assignment with the air force was in Thuringia, where he was to be trained for work with anti-aircraft guns. However, a call went out for drivers, and he already had a driver's license (a rare possession in those days; his premonition a few years earlier that he might need one someday paid off). "While others had to practice shooting cannon, I was driving around Thuringia sightseeing, which was much easier."

Hermann Huck was the son of Anton Huck, then the president of the Frankfurt District and later the supervisor of the entire mission. As typical store owners, the young Huck family lived in rooms just behind their business that fronted the street on the ground level of the building. They enjoyed their lifestyle, but it did not last long. By September 1940,

Hermann was drafted into the Wehrmacht, and they had to close down their store. Erna was allowed to stay in the building but lost the kitchen and had to make do with one bedroom in the apartment, where her son was born later that year.

The first tragic loss of life among the Latter-day Saints in Germany and Austria during World War II involved the Frankfurt Branch. Corporal

Willy Klappert (born 1914), a deacon in the Aaronic Priesthood, was killed on September 2, 1939—the second day of the war—in the town of Jegiorgive, Poland. He was therefore the first of hundreds of LDS men to lose their lives while wearing the uniform of the German armed forces. By the time the war was finally over and German POWs were released from camps all over the world, several other members of the Frankfurt Branch had perished.

The minutes of meetings held by the Frankfurt Branch during the years 1939–45 give valuable insights into the life of the branch and its members. In those minutes we read that Ludwig Hofmann assumed the role of branch president when the missionaries left town. The average attendance at Sunday meetings in 1940 was fifty-five members and friends. The clerk indicated that the winter of 1939–40 was long and hard and that the members endured shortages in coal supplies.¹⁶

According to the branch records, a "severe air raid" over Frankfurt on July 8, 1941, resulted in "great damage" within the city. There is no mention of damage to the meeting rooms at Neue Mainzerstrasse 8–10. However, on March 8, 1942, the meetings had to be cancelled because there was no heat in the rooms. For the year 1942, the average attendance had decreased to forty. On August 2 of that same year, branch president Ludwig Hofmann died; he was buried in the Rödelheim Cemetery in northwest Frankfurt in a ceremony over which district leaders presided. New branch leaders were called on August 16, 1942: Hermann Ruf (a native of Stuttgart) was the president, Hans Förster was the first counselor, and Valentin Schlimm was the second counselor.¹⁷

In 1941, Otto Förster was again in France. Due to long hours of stressful driving and poor nutrition, he became seriously ill and spent several months in field hospitals before being sent to a hospital in Brussels, Belgium. Eventually, his condition was considered sufficiently serious to merit him a release from active duty. For the rest of the war, he was classified as "fit for domestic [non-combat] duty only."



Fig. 1. Hermann Huck as a Wehrmacht soldier. (E. Wagner Huck)

Heiratsurkunde		F 1
(Standesamt)	Frankfurt am Main III	Nr. 424
Der <u>Bräutigam</u> <u>Otto Förster</u>		
<u>wohnhaft zu</u> <u>Frankfurt am Main</u>		
geboren am <u>22. März 1930</u>		
in <u>Schönberg bei Brandenburg, Preußen</u>		
(Standesamt)	<u>Oberklosterstadt</u>	Nr. <u>18</u>
und die <u>Braut</u> <u>Ilse Brünge</u>		
<u>geboren am</u> <u>11. Dezember 1941</u>		
in <u>Herford, Westfalen</u>		
(Standesamt)	<u>Stadt</u>	Nr. <u>648</u>
haben am <u>20. Dezember 1941</u> vor dem Standesamt		
<u>Frankfurt am Main</u> die Ehe geschlossen.		
Vater des Mannes: <u>Ernst Wilhelm Förster</u> , wohnhaft zu <u>Bad Hamburg</u> Mutter des Mannes: <u>Elm. Beys, geb. Wärschmann</u> , wohnhaft zu <u>Frankfurt am Main</u> Vater der Frau: <u>Ernst Julius Förster</u> , wohnhaft zu <u>Herford</u> Mutter der Frau: <u>Elm. Beys, geb. Wärschmann</u> , wohnhaft zu <u>Herford</u> Vermehte: _____ Stadt <u>Frankfurt am Main</u> , den <u>20. Dezember 1941</u> Gebühr <u>0,80 Mark</u> am <u>20. Dezember 1941</u> Der Standesbeamte <u>Graf</u>		
Zur Vervollständigung und Vereinfachung der Familienbuchführung wird empfohlen, die Familienohrentafel, Seiten 36 bis 44, auszufüllen und beglaubigen zu lassen.		
Eheschließung der Eltern: des Mannes am <u>1. 11. 1902</u> (Standesamt <u>Dresden</u> Nr. <u>742</u>) der Frau am <u>1. 10. 1909</u> (Standesamt <u>Herford-Stadt</u> Nr. <u>159</u>)		

Fig. 2. Marriage record of Otto Förster and Ilse Brünge on December 20, 1941 (O. Förster).

Ilse Brünge was eight years older than Otto and later wrote of her feelings during the courtship: "I liked him too, but since he was younger, I was not too serious at first. I prayed about him and then I felt that God approved of him. . . . Then he was drafted. Only those who went through the same agony of not hearing, not knowing where he was, if he was still alive or not, can understand the fear and terrible thing war brought to nearly every family." Ilse had many friends in the branch, which was helpful because her family was very close to disowning her due to her membership in the Church.¹⁸

By November 29, 1942, the branch meetings had been moved up the street to rooms at Neue Mainzerstrasse 68; a district conference held at that location featured a full-house contingent of members

from the six branches.¹⁹ This address apparently remained unchanged until January 1944.

"I remember vividly that our parents always made sure that we knew that whatever we talked about at home should not leave home," recalled Hannelore Heck. "Our beliefs were our beliefs, and my father didn't think it was wise that the Nazi Party would find out about those. From the time I was very small, I realized that the less I said, the better off I was. We knew that they would take our daddy away from us if we said anything and that he would get killed." At the age of ten, Hannelore was inducted into the Jungvolk with her classmates, but she did not like the activities, which she described as "boring and stupid." It appears that her particular group was disorganized, because nobody came to the Heck home to learn why Hannelore missed so many meetings.



Fig. 3. The main meeting room of the Frankfurt Branch in 1939. Future mission supervisor Christian Heck is seated front right. (E. Wagner Huck)

Cooler heads prevailed in Hannelore's school. She recalled:

I had wonderful teachers—especially my history teacher. She would put up a huge map of the world, and Germany would be marked with a distinct color. But what we learned from that was not how special Germany was but how small it really was compared to the world. She never said a word but only hung up the map at the beginning of class and then again at the end. We didn't have to be told what she was thinking—we knew it. Her message was that some insane man was trying to fight the entire world.

Erna Huck enjoyed her life as a stay-at-home mother in Frankfurt until the air raids over the city became more severe and frequent. With the public air-raid shelters too far away to be convenient, the Hucks joined their neighbors in the basement of their apartment house when the sirens began to wail. She recalled,

There was only one small room about twelve by fifteen feet in size, and there were fourteen of us. It felt like we were in a mousetrap. My little boy was the only child in the group. Usually the raids came late at night when it was totally dark [under blackout conditions], but later they also attacked in broad daylight. Sometimes we went downstairs two or three times in a single night. We always took our important papers along—our marriage certificates, photographs, financial papers, etc.

Hans Johann Uhrhahn had served as a full-time missionary in Germany in the 1930s. After returning to Frankfurt, he married Luise Haug, and they had two children—Wolfgang (born 1936) and Vera (born 1941). By the time Vera was born, Walter was well established in a large construction firm that was nationalized just after the war began. Brother Uhrhahn soon found himself traveling to many locations all over eastern Europe, where his company carried out contracts for road and bridge

construction. Wolfgang recalled, “My mother told me later that I had been in thirteen countries including Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Greece. My father worked with payroll matters and also functioned as the liaison between the company and the local government. He was never in the military but often wore a uniform because he was representing the German government.”²⁰ As conquerors, German civilians and paramilitary operatives were usually treated poorly by the occupied peoples, but Wolfgang recalled vividly that “people in countries like Romania, Bulgaria, and Ukraine welcomed us with open arms.”

The Uhrhahn family rented an apartment on the main floor of a building at Waldschmidtstrasse, a few blocks east of the center of town, but the family was usually far from home. Luise Uhrhahn was

determined to travel with her husband in order to spend as much time with him as possible, and because of his civilian status the government did not object. Wolfgang and Vera received their schooling at home, wherever home happened to be. Brother Uhrhahn was so successful in employment that the family often stayed in expensive hotels in large cities. This was not typical of a German family at the time, nor was it common for Germans to have several weeks of vacation each year, as the Uhrhahns did. It became their habit to spend vacations in alpine winter sports locations.

Karl Walker (born 1935) had vivid memories of the radio in his home during the war: “My mother listened to BBC quite a bit although it was forbidden. One time, I was home alone and turned it on. I remember how angry she was when she found



Fig. 4. Priesthood brethren of the Frankfurt branch. (E. Wagner Huck)

out, and I never did it again. She also stopped listening to it—maybe because she was afraid that I would talk to somebody about it outside the home.” Regarding the incessant national broadcasts, Karl recalled, “The radio always aired special reports of victories everywhere. People got more and more excited about the whole thing. The reports were called *Sondermeldungen* (special announcements), and they always started with [military] music. I also remember hearing Hitler talk on the radio. He always pronounced the word *Soldat* (soldier) very distinctly. The sentence was always “*Wir kämpfen bis zum letzten Soldat!* (We’ll fight to the last soldier!).”²¹

After doing an apprenticeship as a mechanic, Karl Heimbürg was drafted into the Wehrmacht on October 10, 1942, and assigned to a motorized unit:

We were classified as forward reconnaissance; in other words, we had to move ahead of the tanks quickly. We were kind of like the gypsies, we would escort convoys someplace because they didn’t know the way. We would protect them from surprise attacks; we would open up the ways for the tanks to break out [if they were surrounded]. When the tanks broke through, we pulled out and went elsewhere. We were in the middle of a mess all the time.

By January 1943, Karl was on the Eastern Front. It was the aftermath of the crushing defeat of the German Sixth Army at Stalingrad, but Hitler was determined that his army was not to retreat from the interior of the Soviet Union. Karl was part of several offensive and many defensive campaigns all year long. Beginning in May, he was trained as a driver for the Mark IV tank. “It weighed twenty-eight tons and was a good tank,” he explained. The action on the Eastern Front that year was so frequent and so intense that “our days were thirty-six hours long, not twenty-four, and that was that.”

Karl was wounded on several occasions. Once he had seven pieces of shrapnel removed from his leg. On another occasion a bullet penetrated his side but did so little damage that he did not notice it during the heat of battle. Once a bullet pierced his right hand. Fearing that he would lose touch with

his comrades, he refused to be sent to a hospital. However, a serious infection set in, and he was compelled to go to the hospital after all. Later there was no problem in rejoining his unit.

Everywhere he was stationed while away from home, Karl Heimbürg was the only LDS soldier around. He found that most German soldiers had no interest in discussing religion. “It was always a neutral thing. Sometimes a Lutheran pastor presided over the service, sometimes a Catholic priest.” On the matter of prayer, he stated,

You said your prayers whether you wanted to or not. Sometimes they were very short. It was not only me but almost everybody [who prayed]. There were times when you saw people actually sitting down in prayer. You knew they were praying. And sometimes they’d be in the middle of a battle; in fact, in the middle of a mess it was actually easier to pray. To me it was the only thing we could get help from. At the moment, it was all you really needed.

While in the Soviet Union, Karl noticed the devout faith of the older generation. “I didn’t see a single home that didn’t have a prayer altar. There was always a little candle burning and a picture of Jesus and his mother. You could tell that the [older] people still had faith.”

Karl’s belief in the Word of Wisdom came in quite handy when he sold his tobacco and alcohol rations to other soldiers. “I never saw a [German soldier] who didn’t drink and smoke,” he recalled.

After a year of furious action, Karl Heimbürg contracted malaria and yellow jaundice in November 1943. While he languished in a hospital in Vienna, Austria, for ten weeks, his weight dropped from 180 pounds to 98. When his mother arrived from Frankfurt to visit him, his comrades hurried to dress him in many layers of clothing in an attempt to hide his emaciated condition from his mother. “She never knew,” he recalled.

In January 1943, bombs struck Sister Huck’s neighborhood as she and her three-year-old son huddled with neighbors in the basement shelter underneath her apartment. The building across the street

burned to the ground, as did the building behind theirs. For a while, it seemed as if they would not be able to exit the shelter that night, but they were able to crawl through an escape hole into the basement of the adjacent building and eventually made it out into the street. All of the windows in their building were broken, but the building survived. Nevertheless, Sister Huck decided to evacuate Frankfurt with her son. Along with her father, Friedrich Wagner, she took her son to the home of her aunt in the small town of Hirsau near Pforzheim, about one hundred miles south of Frankfurt. She was allowed to store her furniture in one room at her Frankfurt address.

Anneliese Heimbürg recalled the precautions taken by city officials to protect residents from disaster in the case of air raids. Each apartment building was to have a barrel of water in the basement along with a supply of blankets. In the case of a fire in the building or the neighborhood, each person was to soak a blanket in the water and put it over his or her head before leaving the shelter. This tactic proved successful in the prevention of suffocation. In addition, a small hole was to be cut into the wall of each adjacent building to allow for additional escape routes.²² Annaliese recollected that “the government carried out a big rat-extermination program before the war because they figured that if bombings started, there would be corpses and pestilence, and they wanted to prevent that.”

Home on leave from Braunschweig, Otto Förster returned just two days before the birth of his daughter, Ilse, on March 9, 1943. Because Otto’s wife, Ilse, was still an employee of the West German Mission and was living in the office building at the time, the baby was born in Ilse’s bedroom. The air raids over the city at the time were so dangerous that Sister Förster chose to take her baby home to her family in Herford, where the child stayed in relative safety until the end of the war. The mother returned to the mission office to continue her tireless service to mission leaders Christian Heck and Anton Huck.²³ Fortunately, she was allowed to quit her job in the military censorship office.

Otto Förster was next transferred to Steyer, Austria, where he supported antiaircraft crews defending automobile factories against American aircraft based in Italy. As he recalled, “I had to go to Linz to get supplies for our group. Whenever I was in Linz, [the enemy] bombed Steyer; and when I was in Steyer, they bombed Linz. The Lord was watching out for me.”²⁴

In 1943, Elsa Heinle (born 1920) was working a second job as a streetcar conductor. She had been trained in tailoring, but her country needed her and other young women to take over the civilian jobs of men called into the military. Operating the streetcar under total blackout conditions was challenging. Because Elsa could not see the passengers, she called out to them to ask if anybody else wanted to get on or off. Then she rang a bell to signal the driver that he could start.

Elsa was still living with her parents, Karl and Lena Heinle, in 1943. When the air-raid sirens sounded, they each carried a small suitcase downstairs to join their neighbors in the basement shelter. As the war went on, they found it easier to simply go to bed with their clothes on rather than to get dressed and undressed several times within a few hours. In the basement they had just enough light to see, but Elsa recalled once knitting a little jacket for her friend’s baby. She clearly recalled a momentous air raid just before Christmas in 1943:

I was a streetcar conductor and rode line 16. On December 20, 1943, I worked the late shift until 1:00 a.m. . . . We arrived at the last station when the sirens went off, and it was a blessing that there was a shelter we could go into. [Afterwards] I walked around the corner to see if my house [at Neuer Wall 19] was still standing. All I saw was that it was destroyed. I knew that my parents were in the [public] shelter, but I still started screaming at the top of my lungs. Somebody came up to me and told me that my parents were still alive and that I should stop screaming. In that [basement] shelter, four people died. I was told that the bomb hit the basement and then lifted up the house, which then collapsed.²⁵



Fig. 5. This clock belonged to the Heinle family of the Frankfurt Branch. When their apartment building collapsed, the clock fell two stories into the basement. Upon locating it amid the rubble, the family found that the clock showed only a few scratches from the experience. (R. Minert, 2008)



Fig. 6. Another piece of furniture rescued from the rubble by the Heinle family. (R. Minert, 2008)

After air raids, survivors often went around the neighborhood to see if anybody needed help. With this in mind, Elsa once went down the street to look for her friend's mother. The woman's body

was found in the rubble underneath a huge cabinet. When Elsa told somebody that she had to write to her friend about the death of her mother, she was admonished by police to state that her friend's mother had "died for Germany."

From the branch records it appears that the new leaders felt the need to improve attitudes and behavior among the Saints there. On July 11, 1943 (eleven months after they were called to lead the branch), the presidency introduced these "new rules for the branch":

1. Know that you are in a holy place where the word of God is spoken by His servants.
2. Loud laughter and inappropriate conversations have no place here.
3. There should be no talking at all in the chapel—before or after the meeting.
4. Find a seat in the front rows; pray in silence for divine inspiration that His servants will proclaim the word of the Lord.
5. If you are called upon to pray, then pray concisely and seriously without using many words.
6. In the testimony meeting, keep it short; do not rob your neighbor of his time.
7. In the discussion classes, keep your comments short and to the point; political statements are not allowed.
8. If you are talented, take part in the program and inspire the rest of us.
9. Be dignified when partaking of the sacrament and remember the Lord, our Savior.
10. After the benediction leave the room with gratitude in your heart. Other rooms may be used if conversations are absolutely necessary.
11. Be punctual for all worship services and leadership meetings.
12. Be sure that your name is on the roll for each class so that you will take part in the Kingdom of God.
13. Only priesthood holders are to handle the sacrament trays.
14. Value and support the priesthood holders because they have a weighty responsibility.
15. Only call upon the elders if you are seriously ill.

16. Do your very best to live a life pleasing to God and do your best to apply what you hear here in your daily life, then you will receive a crown of glory.²⁶

The clerk noted that “the above principles were accepted by all attendees by the raising of the right hand.”

It would appear that the focus of the new rules was the improvement of worship services. The new branch leadership must have felt that reverence in the meetings needed to improve and that prayers, testimonies, and comments were becoming unnecessarily long. Item 7 suggests that members were making political statements, but no eyewitness accounts substantiate this; perhaps the guideline was made as a preventative measure. At the time, the average attendance in Sunday meetings was holding relatively steady at forty-five.

Being loyal to the Church and to the government at the same time was not an easy task for many Latter-day Saints, and there were discussions about politics within the walls of the church on occasion. Maria Schlimm recalled that in one such discussion, her mother expressed her opinion. Another member, who supported the government and the Nazi Party, remarked that if Sister Schlimm were not a member of the Church, he would have reported her to the authorities. On the other hand, Maria did not recall that the government caused the branch any problems at all.

Sometime in 1943, the Uhrhahn family lost their apartment to an air raid. Fortunately, the family was away from home at the time. Sister Uhrhahn’s father called her at their vacation apartment and informed her that all of their belongings had been lost. When Hans Johann Uhrhahn returned to work following their vacation, his wife took the children to her mother’s ancestral village of Hohenfeld in Bavaria. From there they continued to follow him to work sites in southeastern Europe. It was a nomadic lifestyle, but they preferred it to that of many of the families in the Frankfurt Branch, who were separated for months or even years at a time.

Hans Mussler’s music school was damaged in an air raid on Christmas in 1943, and he was allowed to leave town until the school could be called into session again. His mother and sister had left the city a few

months earlier after their apartment was destroyed and were then living in Mühlacker near Pforzheim, two hours south of Frankfurt. Hans joined them there. In early 1944, the school reopened at a different location—the former convent at Untermarchtal, near Ulm in southern Germany. Hans was then isolated from both his family and his church, but he was enjoying his musical studies nonetheless.

By the end of the year 1943, air raids over Frankfurt were beginning to threaten the branch with increasing frequency. The clerk indicated in December that “the members were spared,” and on January 2, 1944, many expressed their gratitude to God for surviving “heavy raids” in recent attacks.²⁷ Conditions deteriorated just weeks later, as reflected in the minutes: “January 29, 1944: In one of the worst raids on Frankfurt, the branch rooms at Neue Mainzerstrasse 68 were burned to the ground. It happened on Saturday at 10 a.m. Due to the many raids, many members have moved out of town.”²⁸ There is no indication in the record just when the Saints began holding meetings at that address, but for the next while, they met in the mission home.

The clerk made the following sad entry in March 1944: “9/10ths of the city has been destroyed in air raids. The majority of the members lost their homes and the branch records were destroyed in the fires.” As is clear from subsequent entries in the minutes, not all branch records were lost. The comments of March 24, 1944, demonstrate the determination of branch leaders (and members alike) to preserve the life and function of the branches, as well as Church property:

March 24, 1944: Branch President Hermann Ruf was staying in the hotel Deutscher Hof and had left his briefcase with the branch records there. The terrible fire that began downtown at 8 p.m. on March 23 became a fire storm and [eventually] spread to that hotel. The next day at about 10 a.m. Brother Ruf ran into the hotel that was already burning and got to the second floor, where he was able to rescue from the flames the briefcase with the membership records. This was only possible with the help of the Lord.²⁹

The year 1944 may have been a very long one for Hermann Ruf, because his fortunes vacillated from sorrow to happiness. In January or February, his family's apartment was destroyed. On April 4, his wife, Frida, died of a kidney ailment after giving birth to a daughter on March 31. Frida was buried in Frankfurt on April 11 and her newborn daughter, Dorothea Gisela, died two days later. On December 20, President Ruf married Gertrud Glaser, whom he had met while attending meetings as a priesthood visitor in the nearby Bad Homburg Branch. Following the obligatory marriage ceremony in the city hall, mission supervisor Anton Huck presided over a modest church ceremony that was described by the branch clerk in these words: "Despite air-raid alarms that delayed the ceremony, it was a spiritual and uplifting occasion." At the time of his wedding, Hermann Ruf was in uniform but at home between assignments. Valentin Schlimm had been designated temporary branch president on November 15.³⁰



Fig. 7. Hermann Ruf was the president of the Frankfurt Branch for much of the war. (G. Ruf)

Following a recuperation furlough in Frankfurt, Karl Heimburg was shipped to his unit, which was temporarily stationed in Munich. From there it was back to the Eastern Front, which had since moved from Russia west into Poland. Karl arrived just in time to participate in an intense enemy counterattack that resulted in serious losses to the German side. It was August of 1944. "We had super, super equipment, but the [soldiers] didn't know how to use it properly. They were all young kids. We had 120 recruits in our company who had never seen live guns fired. I wasn't afraid of the Russians, but I was afraid for our own guys if the Russians ever attacked us." The Red Army did attack—on January 17,

1945. Karl was separated from his unit for seven hours. Given a motorcycle and told to catch up with his unit, he headed in what he thought was the right direction, but he never saw his comrades again. "All of a sudden there were all of these people around me, a handful of whom spoke a foreign language. They said 'Come on!' and they liked me so much that they kept me for four years and seven months!" Karl joked. He became a Soviet POW, and life changed immediately in many ways.

A great number of German schoolchildren lost school time due to air raids. Finishing the eight years of public school was crucial for boys and girls, so the city government went to great lengths to replace damaged or destroyed schools. In the case of Hermann Walker, this meant sending his entire class to the village of Lollar, forty miles north of Frankfurt. As with so many children in Hitler's Germany, Hermann was isolated from his family and his LDS friends for about a year. In his case, school attendance was particularly important, because he had developed talents in physics and chemistry and hoped to continue his education.

"My father had lots of inspiration," recalled Annaliese Heck. Christian Heck had been the mission supervisor since the drafting of Friedrich Biehl by the Wehrmacht in 1939. In about 1943, he was offered employment by the government in occupied territories such as Czechoslovakia, possibly



Fig. 8. This monument near Frankfurt's city hall reminds pedestrians of the thousands of residents who were killed in air raids over the city and as soldiers at the front (R. Minert, 1979).

because he knew English and had also studied French and Italian. He apparently recognized this as a dangerous job, because several Nazi Party leaders and military officials had been killed by partisans in that area. He ultimately turned down the offer, then went home and told his wife that the party would get back at him by having him drafted. He was correct in his assumption and was in uniform in early 1943.

Before leaving for military service, Brother Heck decided to rent an apartment for his family in Kelkheim, about twelve miles west of Frankfurt and far from major industries and population centers. The family was able to move some items of great value (such as documents) to that location before their apartment was destroyed on March 18, 1944. By that time, his second daughter, Hannelore, had been moved with her school class to

the town of Bensheim, about thirty-five miles south of Frankfurt.

Hannelore Heck recalled seeing bright skies over Frankfurt from Bensheim after major air raids. “The city was burning, and I knew that my family was in jeopardy.” After one terrible raid, she had to wait for an entire week before she learned that they were safe. On the other hand, she happened to be home the night their neighborhood was hit and their apartment destroyed. She recalled their escape from the burning building:

We threw wet blankets over our heads so that we wouldn’t get burned. We ran to the river [a few blocks south] to get some fresh air and to be near the water just in case we were in danger [i.e., if the flames came nearer]. . . . The entire downtown burned—it was not the first air raid on the city, but one of the first big ones. We lost all of our possessions except for what we carried in our



Fig. 9. This public air-raid shelter in northwestern Frankfurt was painted to represent an apartment house that had been attacked and was burning, apparently in an attempt to deceive enemy dive-bombers looking for targets. (R. Minert, 1973)

suitcases. We had some clothing and some other valuable personal items like genealogical papers.

As was the case with other Wehrmacht soldiers, Christian Heck was granted a furlough of two weeks to help his family resettle after they lost their home. He took them to Bensheim, where Hannelore was, and they began to look for rooms. The housing shortage in Germany at the time was acute and it seemed as if nothing was available to refugees. At one point, Brother Heck stood for a moment deep in thought and then said, "Let's go ask at that house," pointing to a building near the railroad station. Sure enough, the owner had rooms to rent. They were assigned one large room and one small room with a bathroom downstairs. Annaliese attributed the discovery to her father's inspiration.

As a POW of the Soviets, Karl Heimburg had some terrifying experiences. He and his comrades were marched as far as seventy-five miles in a day, and some of them made the trek with no boots. They were robbed of their valuables and any good articles of clothing. For days on end, they consumed nothing but snow. Those prisoners who fell down were simply shot. On one occasion, their captors drove by in American vehicles, dumped gasoline on some of the prisoners and set them on fire. On another occasion, Karl watched as Soviet tanks veered off the road now and then to run over and crush German POWs. During one stint in a camp in Estonia, only seven thousand of eighteen thousand German prisoners survived.

Back in Frankfurt, Karl's mother was not aware that her son was a prisoner in Russia. In fact, she received an odd letter from Karl's company commander stating that Karl was missing and asking her to contact the army if she knew the whereabouts of her son. The letter did not suggest that Karl was dead. It would be nearly three more years before Sister Heimburg learned that her son was alive.

Babette Rack (born 1909) was the mother of five little children when the war began. Like so many

other mothers, she essentially raised her children alone after her husband was drafted into the army. In 1944, Sister Rack's situation changed drastically, as she recalled:

I was bombed out on March 18, 1944. All we had left were the clothes on our backs—not even a teaspoon or bedding. For seven hours, we sat in an air-raid shelter on Schwanenstrasse in the Ostend neighborhood, unable to get out; the exit was blocked by debris. By the time we got out, the entire neighborhood along the Zeil [street] was burning. That afternoon, they put us up in the prison on Starkestrasse—not in the cells but in the hallways. We spent two days there. Then they sent us to the Liebfrauen School gymnasium. From there I was evacuated to Birklar in Giessen County. There was no place to attend church nearby and that was my situation for quite a while.³¹

For the Rack family and many other families all over Germany and Austria, one of the worst aspects of the war was their isolation from the Church.

Several families in the Frankfurt Branch experienced close calls during air raids. For example, Hermann Walker recalled, "One time, my mother and sister went upstairs again after [the raid] was over and found the bedroom on fire. Our furniture was damaged. The bomb had gotten stuck. They poured two buckets of sand over it and that [put it out]." Fortunately, the family had followed government instructions and prepared to fight fires on their own. Professional firefighters were rarely available under such circumstances.

The air raid of March 22, 1944, was not as merciful to the Walker family or to Hermann personally, as he recounted: "Our house was hit very badly. I lost my friend in that air raid. Three houses totally collapsed. There were two bombs—one fell on the street, and the other one hit the house in which my friend lived. It went all the way down to the basement and exploded there. My friend was not a member of the Church, but he was a very good friend."³²

In about 1944, Maria Schlimm was sent to live with her mother's friends in Sprendlingen, a small town about seven miles south of Frankfurt.

She had already spent two years away from home with relatives and was twenty when she arrived in Sprendlingen. Wanting very much to continue attending church meetings, she rode her bike back to the city on several Sundays.

The meeting rooms at Neue Mainzerstrasse 8–10 were destroyed during one of the many air raids after 1939, but the branch had already been asked to leave. The Saints met at several different locations near the center of town, such as in an unknown location on Hochstrasse, in a building on the corner of Neue Mainzerstrasse and Neuhofstrasse, in the Weissfrauen School on Gutleutstrasse, in the Rumpelmeier Kaffeehaus next to the city theater, and finally in the West German Mission office at Schaumainkai 41 on the south bank of the Main River.³³

In Hirsau, refugees Erna Huck; her son, Jürgen; and her father, Friedrich Wagner were far from their home branch, but there was a branch of the Church in Pforzheim, twelve miles to the south. There was no direct public transportation to Pforzheim on Sundays, and it was too far for little Jürgen Huck to walk. However, Friedrich Wagner (an elder and former president of the Frankfurt District) was undaunted and made the trip to Pforzheim on foot, walking three hours each way. This connection to the Church ceased when the inner city of Pforzheim was reduced to rubble in a single air raid in April 1945. The Hucks and Friedrich Wagner could not attend another LDS Church meeting until 1947.

Still working in the mission office in 1944, Ilse Brünger Förster was informed by the government that she was required to take on additional employment. She was fortunate to find a job just around the corner, one requiring her to work only three hours per day for a transportation company. “The owner of the company soon found that he could trust me,” recalled Ilse, “so I did all the correspondence on my own and he paid me a good salary. In everything I did, I felt God’s hand.”³⁴

Otto Förster’s unit was transferred to the Netherlands in September 1944 to help defend the

region near Arnhem against the Allied invasion launched under the code name Market Garden. Arriving after the Germans had crushed the invasion, Otto was moved into Germany. Driving his truck to transport supplies to German defenders during the Battle of the Bulge in December, he was attacked from behind by dive bombers. He saw people at the sides of the road scatter in all directions, but he did not know that they (and his truck) were under attack until his soldier passengers told him about it a few minutes later.³⁵

At Christmas time in 1944, Otto found himself close to Herford and stopped in to see his daughter and his relatives. They had been bombed out and moved to another town a dozen miles away, where he was fortunate to find them. His arrival came as a total surprise, which was the case a few days later when Ilse arrived from Frankfurt, also unannounced. They were thrilled to spend a day or two together before he returned to his post west of the Rhine River.³⁶

Toward the end of 1944, the Uhrhahn family was together again in Serbia, living well out of town in a small railroad shed. As the German lines began to crumble, partisans in the region became increasingly bold, and one day the entire Uhrhahn family was surrounded by combatants. Several of the men spoke German and it was apparent that they were bent on destroying a railroad tunnel and capturing a large payroll shipment. Wolfgang recalled that day’s events as follows:

The partisans put [Mother, Vera, and me] in our house and made my father and his workers carry dynamite about one-half mile to the tunnel. They put a box of dynamite on the tracks by the tunnel entry and wanted to run over it with a locomotive and blow up the train and the tunnel. My father pushed the dynamite off to the side and the locomotive got through and somehow word went out to the local German army command to come help us. They got there in time to save us. I even kicked a partisan in the shin because he was trying to molest my mother or something like that. The story of my resistance made it all the way up to the German high command, and my mother got a letter about me being such a brave boy.

Luise Uhrhahn and her children were then sent off to Hohenfeld, Bavaria, and her husband's working conditions continued to deteriorate. In a hectic surprise attack, Hans Johann Uhrhahn and all of his office staff were captured by the enemy. His last letter was somehow smuggled out of the area and reached his wife, and then all communications were cut off. One of the secretaries later escaped and eventually told the story to Luise; apparently there was a break-out and Walter and his comrades scattered in all directions. The secretary saw Walter running toward a forest and he may have escaped, but nothing was ever heard from him again. Despite the desperate hopes and prayers of a loyal wife and adoring children, no word of Walter's condition ever reached the family.

In the last year of the war, some Latter-day Saints in Frankfurt held meetings in their homes on Sundays. Carola Walker recalled doing so in their apartment on the outskirts of town. "Later on, we met in the mission home."

After losing their apartment, Martha Walker and her children stayed with relatives in Frielingen, about eighty miles northeast of Frankfurt. According to her son Hermann, it had taken fully three days in March 1944 to make the relatively short trip to Frielingen after their house was destroyed. "We packed everything we could carry and left [Frankfurt]. The trains moved only at night; they didn't want to be seen by enemy airplanes." Although she saw no fighting on the ground, Carola Walker watched American airplanes over Frielingen: "Whatever wasn't destroyed yet got destroyed then," she explained.³⁷

Younger brother Karl Walker did not feel at home in Frielingen: "[Our relatives] were like strangers to me. Even their dialect was different and they made fun of how I talked." The small-town schoolteacher was an ardent supporter of the Nazi Party and required the children to greet her with "Heil Hitler" every morning. "We also had to pray that the Führer might be safe and well and that Germany would gain the final victory," Karl explained. That teacher died and was replaced

by one who had to ride the train every morning. "Sometimes she would fall asleep and miss her stop. By the time she got to the classroom, we were usually gone."

The foreign soldiers held as POWs in homes and barns near Frielingen apparently represented a particular fascination for Karl. "We were very curious about the American soldiers, because they indicated that they were hungry and wanted food. They traded things for food. I remember that once when we gave them food, we got a football in return. For us kids, a ball was a ball, so we played soccer with it, but it didn't work too well." Karl explained that there were also French and Russian POWs in the area, but the children did not talk with them. "We were scared of them. The Americans were friendlier."

Louise Hofmann Heck was as dedicated to the Church as her husband, Christian. In Bensheim she was miles from the nearest branch and did her best to keep the faith alive in their little apartment. Then she learned that the Marquardt family of the Darmstadt Branch lived just seven miles away, but those were uphill miles into the Odenwald Forest to the town of Gadernheim. According to Annaliese, "Brother Marquardt was an old man. We knew him because he had a beard and he gave a prayer at every conference. There were no buses operating on Sundays, so we walked to his home. It took about three hours each way. Even though my youngest sister, Christa, was only about four years old, she walked all the way. She didn't have to be carried."

As a soldier, Christian Heck became seriously ill in Russia and was sent to a hospital in Germany. By the time he had recovered, it was early 1945 and he was sent to a unit in southwestern Germany, where they faced the invading French army. In April, he was shot in the stomach and was carried by a comrade to a Catholic hospital, where he was given excellent care. Although he survived major surgery, he died of heart failure on April 19, 1945. That same comrade eventually made his way to Bensheim, where he informed Louise Heck of the death of

her husband. Hannelore recalled one of her father's last comments at home: "He said something to me once that stuck with me. 'I'm not going to kill anybody—but somebody will have to kill me.'"

The minutes of the Frankfurt Branch meetings include the following statement on February 7, 1945: "A bomb landed in the yard behind the mission home; there was no real damage."³⁸ Indeed, the mission home survived the war with only a few broken windows. By the spring of 1945, several families of the Frankfurt Branch had moved into the mission home after losing their own homes. The building was quite large, and there was plenty of room for refugees. The branch clerk added the following statement to the record as the war drew to a close: "March 8 to April 14, 1945: The mission home was occupied by American soldiers. Foreigners got into the basement and stole many valuable items. Later we determined that some important records were missing, leaving significant gaps."³⁹

Otto Förster seemed to be leading a charmed life. When his truck broke down in late February 1945, he had to leave it in a repair shop in Bonn. He recalled,

They told me they would need at least a week to fix it. For a week, with nothing to eat, I decided to go home. I went home to Frankfurt and carried all my papers with me. I went to the main train station, where the military checkpoint was located, and reported there because I wanted to make sure they knew that I wasn't running away.

While he spent the next few weeks in the mission office with his wife, he learned that the invaders had crossed the Rhine, and his return to Bonn was impossible. Changing to civilian clothing, he stayed with his wife and awaited the arrival of the Americans.⁴⁰

Maria Schlimm recalled that in the last months of the war, families whose homes were destroyed or damaged often suffered from shortages or outages of utilities: "Large trucks came to bring water and people waited in long lines. During the night, the water was running at a trickle, and we used the

opportunity to fill pots and pans. By the end of the war there was no electricity, and sometimes it was turned on for just an hour."

When the American army approached Frankfurt in March 1945, Maria went with her family east to Hanau to the farm of a branch member's brother. There they hid until they saw black GIs searching the homes for German soldiers. "I had never seen dark skin in my life before but I knew that it existed. I was not scared of them."

Luise Uhrhahn and her two children spent the last months of the war near Hohenfeld. Life in the small town was very quiet in the spring of 1945, but Wolfgang recalled two events of significance. On one occasion, an enemy fighter plane zoomed down toward him while he was playing with friends. In his words, "We were kids, so we thought he wouldn't shoot at us, but we were wrong. I suppose fighter planes can't tell whether you are kids or adults."

Once, a railroad train plunged off of a damaged bridge, and Wolfgang and his friends went out a few days later to see what treasures they might find in it. Wolfgang pulled on the handle of a door, and the entire door came off the hinges. "The door fell on my back. They had to carry me back to our raft and float me back across the river because I couldn't walk." Fortunately he was not badly injured.

Hohenfeld was so quiet that the invading American army caught the local residents totally by surprise. Sister Uhrhahn and Wolfgang were inside the small Gasthaus, where they had been given a room, and four-year-old Vera was playing outside. An enemy tank came around a corner and headed downhill toward the Gasthaus, where the road curved. When the tank's treads began to slide on the wet road, the tank missed the turn and slid off the road straight ahead toward the Gasthaus. The tank's long cannon barrel pierced the wall of the Gasthaus, and the vehicle came to a halt when the treads hit the building's outside wall—with little Vera standing precisely between the treads against the wall, safe and sound.

The war ended in Hirsau with the arrival of French and Moroccan troops in the spring of 1945, but the hardships for refugee Erna Huck did not end. For weeks, the locals were subjected to abuse at the hands of the conquerors. According to Sister Huck,

The Moroccans raped every female from teenagers to eighty-year-olds. My cousin and I were spared because there was a French woman working in my aunt's home. She went out and offered the home to the French officers [as a place to live] so the common soldiers couldn't come in. The soldiers took our bicycles, cameras, jewelry, etc. (they had watches all up and down their arms) but they didn't harm us. I worked in the house as a cook and served meals [to the French] until they got too "touchy," and then I quit.

When American soldiers inspected the building in which the mission office was housed, they liked both its location next to a major Main River bridge and its condition (being one of the few intact structures in the neighborhood). They commanded the inhabitants to leave within thirty minutes. Otto Förster and his wife found a place to live with several other families in a one-room apartment down the street. Nearly two months later, they were allowed to return to their rooms at Schaumainkai 41. In the interim, Ilse had been hired by the American army to work as a translator because she spoke English and French. With a secure place to live and employment (soon for Otto as well), the Försters retrieved their daughter from Herford and began a new life together in the mission home.⁴¹

With the war over, Hans Mussler's music school was closed and the pupils simply dismissed. Amid the confusion of the end of the Third Reich and the military occupation, each boy was expected to find his own way home. Although only ten years of age, Hans was ready for adventure and boarded a train headed west toward Ulm. At one point on the journey, he rode atop the train with his little suitcase. "That was very dangerous. There were power lines up there, and you had to keep your head down," he explained. The train did not take him to Pforzheim,

so he got off at Heidelberg and went looking for his aunt. Walking past the main cemetery, he saw a sight that could not easily be forgotten: the body of a German soldier hanging upside down from a tree. "It was shocking to see that." Hans did not know at the time that summary executions of suspected traitors were happening all over Germany at the whims of fanatics.

While living in Heidelberg with his aunt, Hans came into contact with several LDS soldiers from the United States, and one of them baptized Hans in the summer of 1945. He was united soon thereafter with his mother, his sister, and his adoptive father, Franz Schmitt, who was eventually released from a POW camp in Great Britain.

Karl Heinle was inducted into the home guard at the end of the war, though he was over sixty at the time. His wife suggested that he leave his nice pocket watch at home because she felt that he would not need it. However, he took it along, and it served a crucial purpose: near Bad Mergentheim he was struck by shrapnel, a piece of which hit the watch and then ricocheted into his stomach. Fortunately he was not badly wounded, but the watch was ruined nonetheless.

When Elsa Heinle learned that her father was in a hospital in Bad Mergentheim, she tried to get there on the train. When this proved to be impossible, she got on her bike and rode there, a distance of nearly eighty miles. American army officials allowed her to visit her father in the hospital, and both were overjoyed at the reunion. When Brother Heinle was released, his wife's relatives in the town took him in until he could safely travel back to Frankfurt.

When the American invaders approached Bensheim, some dangerous things happened. Dive bombers searched for local targets, and on one occasion a pilot shot at Annaliese Heck. She was hurrying to find a place to hide as the sirens wailed but was still in the open when the airplane's guns opened fire. Huge .50-caliber rounds drilled a line of holes in a wall just above her head. "I was the only one near that spot, so I know that he was

shooting specifically at me. I have no idea how he could have missed me when I [later] saw all of the holes in the wall.”

The Hecks were told by neighbors to flee to the Odenwald Forest. Fearing that looters would take what little property they had left, the Hecks chose to stay in their Bensheim apartment and were fortunate to learn that the conquerors were not bent on destruction. They had previously dropped flyers encouraging the people of Bensheim to surrender without a fight, and the Hecks were determined to do so. However, if they hung out a white flag, they could be accused of treason and shot by local fanatics. Annaliese had the clever idea of washing their white sheets and hanging them out to dry at precisely the right time. “It wasn’t my idea,” claimed Annaliese Heck. “You know where that idea came from.”

Hannelore also clearly remembered the arrival of the Americans:

I was not scared to see the Americans. We knew that they were approaching. The shooting finally stopped and we were wondering why we could not hear them anymore. But then they [suddenly] came in—and we knew why [we didn’t hear them]. They were wearing rubber soles, which made it impossible for us to hear them walking. But there was no fighting. . . . When they came in, we were in the house and waiting to see what would happen, but we were not afraid. Fortunately, I spoke English, which I had started learning when I was ten years old. Some of the soldiers came into our home, and they were quite startled to find English-speaking German girls like my sister and me.

Regarding the war experience in general, Hannelore Heck made this comment: “You pulled yourself together for the sake of others. We tried to be strong for each other so that the other person, and especially our parents, would not feel bad. . . . I didn’t want my mother to suffer more than she already had to because of the war and my father being gone.”

As in most branches of the West German Mission, the Saints in Frankfurt did their best to

continue holding meetings when the war ended. On May 27, the meetings were visited by two American soldiers named Cannon and Taylor. At the time, only about fifteen persons were gathering on Sundays. On July 1, Hermann Ruf was again called to serve as the branch president. The search for a new meeting place also began.⁴²

Looking back on the war years, Elsa Heinle recalled that her family often could not get to the meetings until the last months of the war. “There were always priesthood leaders on hand to preside over meetings and to administer the sacrament, but the number of members present declined steadily. We took care of each other and visited each other to see what we could do to help. . . . I had a strong testimony of the gospel and the war did nothing to change that.”

Carola Walker, who had been baptized at the age of eight, recalled, “I was always active in the Church. I did whatever I could to help in the branch. That helped me to keep going through the difficult conditions.”

At one point during his Soviet captivity, Karl Heimburg heard a call for mechanics. He volunteered and was assigned to drive a truck. This activity took him all over the region as he hauled lumber, coal, cement, “and you name it!” Because he was always good at learning new languages, he picked up Russian quickly and got along quite well in the camps. He even earned a bit of money during his last year as a prisoner. “I fed a lot of people with that money,” he said.

Toward the end of June 1949, Karl was released from prison and transported to Frankfurt an der Oder—in eastern Germany, just across the river from Poland. He recalled, “They gave us each ten East German Marks, a pound of sugar, and a telegram to send home.” He immediately sent the telegram and then made his way back to his mother and siblings in Frankfurt am Main. Soon after his return, he saw his friend Annaliese Heck for the first time in more than seven years. According to her, “I had never asked his mother whether he was alive,

because I was afraid that it might open old wounds.” Karl and Annaliese married soon after this reunion.

Hermann Huck had been taken prisoner by the Americans just before the war ended and was later turned over to the French. For quite a while, he could not contact his wife to tell her that he was still alive. He finally learned of his family’s whereabouts and joined them in Hirsau. In 1947, they returned to Frankfurt and attempted to claim their previous apartment. They were refused, but then were given twenty-four hours to move their remaining furniture to a different location in the city. They made the move successfully and began a new life in their hometown.

A German court declared Hans Johann Uhrhahn officially dead in the early 1950s. The date established for his death was September 30, 1944. No place of death was specified.

IN MEMORIAM

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

Alfred Ausserbauer b. Buer, Buer, Westfalen, 1 Mar 1924; son of Georg Ausserbauer and Katharina Bach; bp. 14 May 1932; conf. 14 May 1932; k. in battle Normandy, France, 22 Jun 1944 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 6; CHL microfilm 2458, form 42 FP, pt. 37, 289–99; branch membership record book 2)

Sophie Ausserbauer b. Merlenbach, Forbach, Elsaß-Lothringen, 27 Apr 1914; dau. of Georg Ausserbauer and Katharina Bach; bp. 17 Jul 1922; conf. 17 Jul 1922; m. 20 Mar 1937, Ernst Wilhelm Clemens; d. meningitis 4 Aug 1943 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 350; book 1)

Olga Amalia Bachmieder b. Weissenhorn, Memmingen, Bayern, 29 Jan 1874; dau. of Joseph Bachmieder and Rosina Viedmann; bp. 16 Sep or Oct 1920; conf. 16 Sep or Oct 1920; m. — Yoos or Fost; d. stomach cancer 5 May 1940 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 162; branch membership record book 1; FHL microfilm 68791, no. 279; IGI)

Herbert Brandelhuber k. in battle (E. Wagner)

Wilhelm Breitwieser b. Dieburg, Hessen, 29 Jun 1867; son of Konrad Breitwieser and Katharina Heil; bp. 14 Jul 1914; conf. 14 Jul 1914; d. senility Oberkochstadt, 30 Dec 1944 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 21; branch membership record book 1; IGI)

Eugen Dommer b. Offenbach, Hessen, 14 Dec 1910; son of Alfred Dommer and Barbara Klesius; bp. 16 Jun 1929; conf. 16 Jun 1929; m. 30 Apr 1935, Erna Maria Becht; k. in battle Hermsdorf, Apr 1945; bur. Halbe, Teltow, Brandenburg (CHL microfilm 2458, form 42 FP, pt. 37, 284–85; FHL microfilm 68791, no. 293; www.volksbund.de; IGI)

Christine Karoline Graf b. Jagsthausen, Neckarkreis, Württemberg, 29 Feb 1856; dau. of Johann Georg Graf and Magdalene Henriette Platscher; bp. 15 Jun 1903; conf. 15 Jun 1903; m. — Waibel; d. senility 3 Feb 1943 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 160; branch membership record book 1; IGI)

Maria Grebe b. Caldern, Marburg, Hessen-Nassau, 7 Jul 1874; dau. of Johann Peter Grebe and Katharina Junk; bp. 12 Jul 1923; conf. 12 Jul 1923; m. Braunschweig 1 May 1893, Johann Heinrich Jung; d. 29 Mar 1942 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 85; branch membership record book 1; see Frankfurt District book 1; LR 2986 11, 153; FHL microfilm no. 271375, 1925 and 1935 censuses)

Frida Maria Haagen b. Buenos Aires, Argentina, 29 Jan 1907; dau. of Friedrich Otto Edward Haagen and Anna Margarete —; m. Frankfurt/Main, Hessen-Nassau, 9 Jul 1940, Hermann Otto Ruf; d. kidney ailment after birth of daughter 4 Apr 1944; bur. Frankfurt/Main 7 or 11 Apr 1944 (LR 2986 11, 174; IGI)

Karl Hermann Haug b. Frankfurt/Main, Hessen-Nassau, 17 Jan 1916; son of Hermann Gottlieb Haug and Christina Lieb; bp. 28 Feb 1925; conf. 28 Feb 1925; ord. deacon 29 Nov 1931; noncommissioned officer; k. in battle Am Swir bei Gorka, Kuuttilahti, Russia, 24 Oct 1941 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 45; LR 2986 11, 149; www.volksbund.de; branch membership record book 1; IGI)

Christian Karl Henry Heck b. Frankfurt/Main, Hessen-Nassau, 31 Mar 1902; son of Josef Heck and Anna Katharina Steinbach; bp. 4 May 1912; conf. 4 May 1912; ord. deacon 8 Apr 1923; ord. teacher 7 Dec 1924; ord. priest 1 May 1927; ord. elder 21 Mar 1937; supervisor of WGM 1940–1943; m. Frankfurt/Main 16 May 1923, Louise Johanna Hofmann; three children; corporal; k. in battle Imnau, Sigmaringen, Hohenzollern, 19 Apr 1945 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 47; LR 2986 11, 178; www.volksbund.de; branch membership record book 1)

Josef Heck b. Mainz, Rheinhessen, Hessen, 16 Jul 1871; son of Karl Josef Heck and Margarete Knaf; bp. 13 Mar 1898; conf. 13 Mar 1898; ord. elder 26 Feb 1905; m. Frankfurt/Main, Hessen-Nassau, 28 Dec 1894, Anna Katharina Steinbach; 6 children; d. Frankfurt/Main 5 or 6 Mar 1945 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 215; branch membership record book 1; IGI)

Georg Heil b. Stuttgart, Neckarkreis, Württemberg, 1 Oct 1918; son of Johann Wilhelm Heil and Friederika Luise Hohlweger; bp. 29 Mar 1935; corporal; k. in battle Ljadno, Tschudowo, Russia, 3 Apr 1942 (CHL microfilm 2458, form 42 FP, pt. 37, 1949 list, 2:44–45; www.volksbund.de; IGI)

Ludwig Hofmann b. Bürgstadt, Aschaffenburg, Bayern, 3 Oct 1892 or 1894; son of Adalbert Hofmann and Marie Rosine Eckert; bp. 25 May 1925; conf. 25 May 1925; ord. deacon 11 Apr 1926; ord. teacher 24 Apr 1927; ord. priest 7 Oct 1928; ord. elder 22 May 1932; m. 20 Mar 1915, Emilie Katharina Auguste Wolf; two children; d. stomach cancer Rödelheim, Frankfurt am Main, Hessen-Nassau, 2 Aug 1942; bur. Rödelheim, Frankfurt am Main (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 65; LR 2986 11, 155; branch membership record book 1)

Emma Höll b. Achern, Baden, 22 Aug 1879; dau. of Ludwig Höll and Viktoria Oberle; bp. 22 Jun 1912; conf. 22 Jun 1912; m. Frankfurt/Main, Hessen-Nassau, 29 Mar 1901, Christian Albert Vosseler; two children; d. frailty Frankfurt/Main, 23 Apr 1944 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 154; branch membership record book 1)

Frank Heinrich Thomas Humbert b. Frankfurt/Main, Hessen-Nassau, 27 Aug 1903; son of Wilhelm Humbert and Wilhelmina Elisabeth Stuber; bp. 25 Sep 1915; m. 31 Dec 1926; k. in battle near Minsk, Belarus, 2 Jul 1944 (CHL microfilm 2458, form 42 FP, pt. 37, 298–99; FHL microfilm 68791, no. 183; LR 2986 11, 175; www.volksbund.de)

Waldemar Herbert Kalt b. Seckenheim, Mannheim, Baden, 6 Aug 1911; son of Adam Kalt and Wilhelmine Amalie Luise Frank; bp. 22 Oct 1921; conf. 22 Oct 1921; d. work accident 28 Nov 1939 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 88; branch membership record book 1; IGI)

Willy Klappert b. Ferndorf, Siegen, Westfalen 25 Jul 1914; son of August Heinrich Gustav Klappert and Auguste Dickel; bp. 1 Sep 1929; conf. 1 Sep 1929; ord. deacon 1 Nov 1938; corporal; k. in battle Jegiorcive 2 Sep 1939; bur. Mlawka, Poland (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 298; www.volksbund.de; branch membership record book 1; IGI, AF)

Camilla Meta Lorenz b. Pirna, Dresden, Sachsen, 13 or 15 May 1893; dau. of Gustav Adolf Lorenz and Klara Walther; bp. 31 Jul 1937; conf. 31 Jul 1937; m. Georg Böhm; k. in air raid Frankfurt/Main, Hessen-Nassau, 25 Sep 1944 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 291; branch membership record book 1; CHL microfilm no. 2458, 298–99; IGI)

Marie Therese Mellinger b. Bockenheim, Frankfurt/Main, Hessen-Nassau, 8 Jun 1867; dau. of Peter Mellinger and Margarethe Lenz; bp. 8 May 1899; conf. 8 May 1899; m. Frankfurt/Main, Hessen-Nassau, 4 Mar 1891,

Ludwig Johann Wilhelm Lehwald; nine children; d. heart attack 27 Apr 1942 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 116; branch membership record book 1; FHL microfilm 271386, 1935 census; IGI)

Paula Merle b. Frankfurt/Main, Hessen-Nassau, 29 Jul 1894; dau. of Johannes Merle and Emilie Sophie Nahrgang; bp. 25 Sep 1919; m. 5 Feb 1929, Karl Kühnly; d. asthma and heart condition 21 Jul 1942 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 93; FHL microfilm 271381, 1930 and 1935 censuses; IGI)

Anna Barbara Müller b. Hütten, Neustettin, Pommern, 28 Apr 1870; dau. of Niklaus Müller and Elisabeth Knauf; bp. 30 Sep 1927; m. — Makko; k. air raid Frankfurt/Main, Hessen-Nassau, 19 Mar 1945 (CHL microfilm 2458, form 42 FP, pt. 37, 1949 list, 2:44–45; FHL microfilm 245224, 1930 and 1935 censuses; IGI)

Walter Münkkel b. Frankfurt/Main, Hessen-Nassau, 10 Jan 1913; son of Jakob Münkkel and Emilie Elenore Hartung; bp. 12 Nov 1923; conf. 12 Nov 1923; ord. deacon 29 Nov 1931; d. kidney disease or nervous condition 1 Jun 1942 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 125; LR 2986 11 154; see Frankfurt District book 1; IGI)

Maria Katherina Rosina Naumann b. Hanau, Hanau, Hessen-Nassau, 8 Aug 1868; dau. of Stephan Naumann and Eva Rosenberger; bp. 16 Oct 1928; m. Johann Glock; d. 31 Oct 1940 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 330; book 1, IGI)

A. Margarethe Noll b. Simmern, Koblenz, Rheinprovinz, 30 Jan 1861; dau. of Karl Noll and Anna Sahl or Sabl; bp. 26 Jun 1912; conf. 26 Jun 1912; m. Josef Elter; d. senility 26 Jun 1940 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 39; book 1; IGI)

Heinrich Ludwig Persch b. Kassel, Hessen, 1 May 1879; son of Johann Georg Persch and Theodora Helm; bp. 4 Aug 1932; conf. 4 Aug 1932; d. 12 Oct 1944 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 388; Frankfurt District book 2)

Margarethe Katharina Emma Repp b. Fischborn, Unterreichenbach, Hessen-Nassau, 15 Mar 1890; dau. of Heinrich Repp and Maria Schärpf; bp. 1 Feb 1926; conf. 1 Feb 1926; m. — Krieg; d. pulmonary tuberculosis 19 Apr 1942 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 107; book 1; FHL microfilm 271381, 1925 and 1935 censuses; IGI)

Dorothea Gisela Ruf b. Frankfurt/Main, Hessen-Nassau, 31 Mar 1944; dau. of Hermann Otto Ruf and Frida Maria Haagen; d. Frankfurt/Main, 13 Apr 1944 (Gerhard Ruf; LR 2986 11, 174)

Wilhelm Heinrich Melchior Scheel b. Frankfurt/Main, Hessen-Nassau, 10 Nov 1911; son of Heinrich Scheel and Katharina Krebs; bp. 26 Jan 1924; conf. 26 Jan 1924; m. 8 Feb 1939; noncommissioned officer; k. in Talankino, Russia, 22 Jul 1941 (FHL microfilm 68791,

no. 213; LR 2986 11, 145; www.volksbund.de; branch membership record book 1)

Ludwig Schiffler b. Uchtelfangen-Kaisen, Ottweiler, Rheinprovinz, 20 May 1867; son of Johann Valentin Schiffler and Katharina Henriette Ulrich; bp. 15 Mar 1910; conf. 15 Mar 1910; ord. elder 29 Nov 1931; d. senility 15 Feb 1941; bur. Frankfurt/Main, Hessen-Nassau (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 310, branch membership record book 1; IGI)

Elisabeth Schönhals b. Friedberg, Gießen, Hessen 16 Dec 1865; dau. of Johannes Schönhals and Marie Kimball; bp. 7 Nov 1924; conf. 7 Nov 1924; m. — Bilz; d. senility Köppern, Wiesbaden, Hessen-Nassau, 14 Feb 1943 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 16; branch membership record book 1; IGI)

Ernst Albert Schubert b. Treuenvolkland(?), Frankfurt/Main, Hessen-Nassau, 8 Feb 1874; son of Karl Schubert and Augusta Paul; bp. 16 Oct 1920; conf. 16 Oct 1920; d. 14 Sep 1939 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 140; branch membership record book 1; IGI)

Elisabeth Seng b. Hochstein, Rockenhausen, Pfalz, Bayern, 25 Jan 1868; dau. of Heinrich Seng and Magdalena Sauer; bp. 25 May 1925; conf. 25 May 1925; m. — Kretzer; d. heart failure 10 Feb 1941 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 106; book 1)

Wilhelm Friedrich Steingrand b. Würzburg, Bayern, 27 Mar 1914; son of Katharina Wagner; bp. 1 Feb 1926; conf. 1 Feb 1926; k. in battle 4 Jan 1941 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 205; LR 2986 11, 151; book 1)

Wilhelmina Elisabeth Stuber b. Laufenselden, Untertaunuskreis, Hessen-Nassau, 9 Aug 1863; dau. of Johann Philipp Stuber and Catharina Louise Kalteyer; bp. 22 Mar 1903; conf. 22 Mar 1903; m. 27 Sep 1881, Peter Hermann Schuessler; two children; 2m. Frankfurt/Main, Hessen-Nassau, 4 Mar 1903, Wilhelm Humbert; six children; d. Frankfurt/Main, 12 Jan 1941 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 62; FHL microfilm 162793; 1935 census; Frankfurt District book 2; IGI)

Hans Johann Uhrhahn b. Essen, Essen, Rheinprovinz, 22 Jul 1904; son of Heinrich Uhrhahn and Wilhelmine Kunz; bp. 5 Apr 1919; conf. 5 Apr 1919; m. Frankfurt/Main, Hessen-Nassau, 22 Jul 1929, Cecilie Sophie Lola Louise Haug (FS); two children; d. South of Belgrad, Bulgaria, 30 Sep 1944 (Wolfgang Uhrhahn interview; FS)

Alfons Wahl b. Ruldingen, Sigmaringen, Hohenzollern, 5 Apr 1890; son of Joseph Wahl and Josephine Oft; bp. 12 May 1920; conf. 12 May 1920; k. air raid Frankfurt/Main, Hessen-Nassau, 29 Jan 1944; bur. Waldfriedhof, Frankfurt/Main (CHL microfilm 2458, form 42 FP, pt. 37, 298–99; FHL microfilm 68791, no. 230; www.volksbund.de; IGI)

Augusta Wicki b. Westerhof, Osterrode/Harz, Hannover, 11 May 1871; son of Heinrich Wicki and Eleonora Görgons; bp. 30 Sep 1936; conf. 30 Sep 1936; m. 2 Apr 1912, Friedrich Wöll; d. arteriosclerosis 25 Feb 1940 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 488; Frankfurt District book 2)

NOTES

1. Frankfurt city archive. The autobahn route ran from Frankfurt eighteen miles directly south to Darmstadt. Finished in 1937, it was hailed far and wide as the finest highway in Europe. The autobahn construction was begun between Munich and Salzburg, but that stretch was not finished until 1938.
2. Presiding Bishopric, "Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955," 257, CHL CR 4 12.
3. Erna Wagner Huck, interview by the author, Salt Lake City, July 6, 2006.
4. Maria Schlimm Schmidt, interview by the author in German, Frankfurt, Germany, August 18, 2008; unless otherwise noted, summarized in English by Judith Sartowski.
5. Hannelore Heck Showalter, telephone interview with the author in German, March 9, 2009.
6. Hermann Friedrich Walker, telephone interview with Jennifer Heckmann in German, March 6, 2009.
7. Carola Walker Schindler, telephone interview with Jennifer Heckmann in German, March 6, 2009.
8. Otto Förster, interview by the author, Salt Lake City, UT, November 28, 2009.
9. Karl Heinz Heimbürg, interview by the author, Sacramento, CA, October 24, 2006.
10. Annaliese Heck Heimbürg, interview by the author, Sacramento, CA, October 24, 2006.
11. See the photograph by Erna Rosenhan in the Offenbach Branch chapter.
12. See the West German Mission chapter.
13. Ilse Brünger to M. Douglas Wood, August 28, 1939, M. Douglas Wood, papers, 1927–40, CHL MS 10817.
14. Ursula Mussler Schmitt, telephone interview with Jennifer Heckmann in German, March 31, 2009.
15. Hans Mussler, interview by the author, Preston, ID, November 22, 2008. See the Bühl Branch chapter for more on Hans's experience in the Church.
16. Frankfurt Branch general minutes, 144, 151, 155–56, LR 2986 11.
17. Frankfurt Branch general minutes.
18. Ilse Wilhelmine Friedrike Brünger Förster, autobiography (unpublished, about 1981); private collection.
19. Offenbach Branch general minutes, CHL LR 6389 11.
20. Wolfgang Uhrhahn, interview by the author, Cottonwood Heights, UT, February 6, 2009.

21. Karl Walker, telephone interview with Jennifer Heckmann in German, March 13, 2009.
22. See the introduction for more details about such precautions that were carried out all over Germany and Austria.
23. See the West German Mission chapter for more details about Ilse Brünger Förster's work at Schaumainkai 41.
24. Otto Hugo Förster, autobiography (unpublished, 1998); private collection.
25. Elsa Heinle Foltele, interview by the author in German, Frankfurt, Germany, August 19, 2008.
26. Frankfurt Branch general minutes, 167.
27. *Ibid.*, 173.
28. *Ibid.*, 173.
29. *Ibid.*, 174.
30. *Ibid.*, 174–76.
31. Babette Rack, *110 Jahre (1894–2004) Gemeinde Frankfurt*, 112–13, CHL.
32. This was a common occurrence with explosive bombs. In older homes, the roofs and floors on the various levels were often not solid enough to activate the fuse, so the bomb went off only when it hit the concrete floor of the basement; then the entire structure collapsed.
33. Rack, *110 Jahre Gemeinde Frankfurt*, 9.
34. Ilse Brünger Förster, autobiography.
35. Otto Förster, interview.
36. Otto Förster, autobiography.
37. Hermann's sentiments about church attendance were similar to those expressed by many eyewitnesses in this study: "Whoever really wanted to attend church meetings found a way to do it."
38. See the West German Mission chapter for details about that specific air raid. Eyewitness Otto Förster recalled much more damage: all exterior and some interior windows were broken, and two bombs bounced off of the exterior walls without exploding. An artillery shell entered the corner office, tore through the floor into the basement, and exploded.
39. Frankfurt Branch general minutes, 177–78.
40. Otto Förster, interview.
41. *Ibid.*
42. Frankfurt Branch general minutes, 178–79.

MAINZ BRANCH

The city of Mainz, which had 154,003 residents, was home to a very modest branch of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1939.¹ The branch president in July was an American missionary who served without counselors. After his departure on August 25, the Saints there were

dependent upon elders visiting from other cities—principally the leaders of the district of Frankfurt.

According to mission records, the meetings of the Mainz Branch were held in rented rooms at Pfaffengasse 13 in the first Hinterhaus. The Sunday School met at 10:00 a.m. and sacrament meeting began at 7:00 p.m. There were enough active members in 1939 to have Mutual on Thursday evenings, Relief Society on Wednesday evenings, and Primary on Tuesday afternoons. The monthly schedule also included a genealogical class, choir practice, and teacher training.²

Mainz Branch ³	1939
Elders	0
Priests	0
Teachers	0
Deacons	2
Other Adult Males	12
Adult Females	39
Male Children	1
Female Children	0
<i>Total</i>	54

As of this writing, no eyewitnesses or documents could be found to tell the story of the Saints in Mainz during the war. Only two civilian members of the branch are known to have died from 1939 to 1945, which is remarkable given that the city suffered fifty-five attacks from the air in which 60 percent of the city was destroyed and 2,800 civilians were killed. According to city records, several thousand soldiers from Mainz lost their lives. The war ended there for all practical purposes when the American army arrived on March 22, 1945.⁴

IN MEMORIAM

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

Elisabeth Philippa Fischler b. Mainz, Mainz, Hessen, 23 Jan 1892; dau. of Johann Philipp Fischler and Margareta Beck; bp. 27 Jan 1928; conf. 27 Jan 1928; m. Mainz about 1919, Karl Klothöhn; 3 children; d. lung disease 12 or 13 Dec 1941 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 268; FHL microfilm 271380, 1930 and 1935 censuses; Frankfurt District book II)

Emma Karolina Philippi b. Wiesbaden, Hessen-Nassau, 9 Dec 1865; dau. of Heinrich Ludwig Wilhelm Philippi and Caroline Luise Charlotte Hartmann; bp. 22 Mar 1914; conf. 22 Mar 1914; m. Frankfurt am Main, Hessen-Nassau, Preussen, 17 Apr 1889, Friedrich Adam Philipp Fach; 4 children; d. senility Nauroth, Wiesbaden, Hessen-Nassau, 2 Jan 1945 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 39; FHL microfilm 25764, 1925, 1930, and 1935 censuses; Frankfurt District book II; IGI)

NOTES

1. Mainz 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. Mainz city archive.

MICHELSTADT BRANCH

The charming little city of Michelstadt is located in the Odenwald Forest about thirty-five miles southeast of Frankfurt. Its main attraction is the beautiful city hall that dates to at least 1484, one of the oldest in all of Germany. The Büchler family brought the gospel to this small city just after the turn of the century, but the branch was not officially established there until 1932.¹

When World War II began, the Latter-day Saints in Michelstadt were holding meetings in a modest building at Horst Wessel Strasse 22. Annaliese Büchler (born 1929) described the meeting place in these words:

There was a large room and one smaller classroom, a cloak room, and a restroom. In the large room . . . there was a large table, and behind

that, the branch presidency sat. On the side was a smaller table for the sacrament. We made music with a pump organ. With everybody there, we might have been twenty people in all. The building was right by the street, and there was a sign saying that [the branch] met there.²

Surnames represented among the branch leaders in the directory dated June 1939 were Walther, Büchler, Megner, Leopold, and Jakob.³ Eleven of the thirty-seven registered members at the time held the priesthood.

Michelstadt Branch ⁴	1939
Elders	2
Priests	2
Teachers	1
Deacons	6
Other Adult Males	2
Adult Females	19
Male Children	3
Female Children	2
<i>Total</i>	37

The meeting schedule for the Michelstadt Branch was similar to that of other branches all over Germany: Sunday School began at 10:30 a.m. and was followed by Relief Society. Sacrament meeting was held at 8:00 p.m. Mutual met on Tuesday evenings at 8:00 p.m., and a genealogy class was held on the third Sunday of the month at 8:00 p.m. There was no Primary at the time. When the war began, the branch president was Jakob Walther, and his counselors were Martin Büchler and Heinrich Büchler.

When Germany attacked Poland on September 1, 1939, Annaliese Büchler was a member of the Jungvolk. About her membership in the Jungvolk, she recalled:

I liked it. For me it was a wonderful time because we learned new things and had fun with all of our friends. Although we had to wear a uniform

(a skirt with a white blouse), it was a good time for us. When there was a parade going on, I normally didn't attend, but it also didn't feel like we had to. Sometimes the leaders complained about us missing the meetings. . . . It even occurred that they slapped me because I missed the last meeting. They even came to our home and picked me up.

For Anna Elise Hosch (born 1924), the war was not a serious concern in the little city of Michelstadt. She belonged to the League of German Girls and enjoyed that, but the war was far away until she began to attend school in Darmstadt. She happened to be home on vacation the night her school was destroyed, as she recalled: "I cried because I couldn't comprehend how they could destroy the city in which I went to school. I couldn't go back to school for a while. Later, we could see the fires in Darmstadt from our home [twenty miles distant]."⁵

The year-end report of the Relief Society for December 1940 lends an interesting description to the work done by the sisters in Michelstadt: "Our Relief Society is small but fine. Unfortunately, we have had to restrict our meetings a bit, but otherwise all is in order. We hope that our Heavenly Father will continue to bless, support, and protect our society in the coming year so that we can have a lot of success."⁶

One year later, the same organization submitted this report: "Our Relief Society is still operating. Due to the war and illnesses, only two reports have been submitted. On November 9, 1941, the Relief Society meeting was merged with the priesthood meeting because only two brethren were in attendance. We hope that our Heavenly Father will bless us in all of our efforts."⁷

The war was difficult for a little girl to understand, according to the recollections of Annaliese Büchler:



Fig. 1. The Megner family home in Michelstadt before the war. (O. Megner)

As a ten-year-old child, I tried to understand what it meant to be in a war. I knew through the propaganda of Adolf Hitler that he wanted to make Germany a greater country.

Even in school we learned that all the countries that had belonged to Germany before should now come back to [the Reich]. Who did not dream of owning a large property in East Prussia somewhere? This was taught to us over and over again.

According to the branch history written in 2007, the meeting rooms were confiscated by the city for use by refugees, but the branch was assigned some empty storerooms in which they met until 1947.⁸ Otto Megner (born 1926) recalled that the new rooms were in the basement of the city hall and that his family had to sneak past Hitler Youth gatherings on Sunday mornings on their way to church. He had to apologize for missing the Sunday meetings, but his leaders were not fanatics who complained about his absence.⁹



Fig. 2. The building at what was Horst Wessel Strasse 22. The arrow points to the room in which the Saints met in the early years of the war. (M. Esterl 2008)

While Otto did not have to answer to fanatical Nazis in the Hitler Youth, the same was not true at school. He recalled beginning each day with the singing of the national anthem. “The teacher always came in his SS uniform and often made fun of the members of the Church.” Fortunately, the Megners’ neighbors did not cause them any problems. Otto had other interesting memories of

Michelstadt during the war: “In Michelstadt, we did not feel much of the war. The mailman brought the obituary notices for the families whose sons or husbands had died in the war. [The mailman] was an old man who could not hear very well anymore. People would walk out to the street to find out who had died.”

In 1943, seventeen-year-old Otto was called into the Reichsarbeitsdienst and sent to work in the Saarland province bordering occupied France. As he recalled:

I was working in the Reichsarbeitsdienst in the Saarland, and one day I received orders to report to Frankfurt/Main to be tested to see if I was needed for the air force. I took the train from Saarbrücken to Frankfurt in full uniform. Just as we were entering Frankfurt, the train stopped and could not go on. I had to fight my way [through the aftermath of an air raid] to the army post. The houses next to me on the way were burning. During the examination, I was freezing. There was no heater and I had to stand naked in front of everybody. When that was over, everybody went their way and I had to go back to the train station. I took a train to the [Saarland] again.

In July 1944, Otto Megner was drafted and sent to France for training. In six weeks he was prepared for infantry action and had also learned Morse code. By that time, however, the Allied forces had already landed at Normandy and were making their way eastward through France. Fortunately for Otto and his young comrades (seventeen and eighteen years old), they were not sent to the front but moved slowly in the other direction. Dying for the fatherland had lost much of its appeal by that time. According to Otto, “I would not describe myself as a soldier who really stood behind what the war was about. I did what I was assigned to do without much conviction. Back then, I did not even understand everything that was happening.” The war came to an end for Otto when he was taken prisoner on September 11.

“It seemed like we were far away from the happenings in Darmstadt and Frankfurt,” recalled Annaliese Büchler back in Michelstadt:



Fig. 3. A wartime photograph of the members of the Michelstadt Branch. (O. Megner)

We knew about the attacks and heard the sirens. Later in the war, we felt the earth quake and saw the fires, although we were 25 miles away. During the day, we could see the planes fly over us and during the night we could hear them. . . . Once an airplane crashed in a nearby forest. We went out to look at it—it was a horrible sight. It was a British plane with Polish soldiers in it. The dead are buried in the Michelstadt cemetery. They could still be identified.

Although the citizens of Michelstadt were quite safe, the same was not true of their relatives elsewhere. Annaliese Büchler's aunt was killed in an air raid on Frankfurt: "My mother went there with my oldest sister so they could identify her. It was a terrible thing for us to deal with." She remembered that the Michelstadt Saints sent food and other items to the members of the branches in Darmstadt and Frankfurt and that members of those branches came to Michelstadt after losing their homes in air raids. "We knew each other well, having attended district conferences together."

Anna Elise Hosch recalled that her family's home was not destroyed during the war. They were grateful for the Lord's protection and were willing to share their rooms with some of the many refugees who arrived in Michelstadt from Darmstadt and Frankfurt. Her mother was one of the many devout members who had no trouble introducing the Church to strangers. As Anna Elise recollected, "Whenever my mother talked to someone for more than five minutes, she would find a way to talk about the gospel."

Life for POW Otto Megner in France was not pleasant, as he recalled:

We were all put into a camp and when we arrived, five hundred to a thousand other prisoners were already there. It was an old post of the Foreign Legion in Langres. When I think back to my time in the POW camp, one word still comes to mind: hunger. I also think about lice, not having enough clothing, and seeing no soap for weeks on end. We also did not have medical services. It was a French camp. They really did not like the Germans at all.

When the American army tanks rolled into Michelstadt on March 29, 1945, they were greeted by a sea of white flags and sheets hanging out of windows. The Hosch family was evicted by American officers but restored to their home after a few days by an American soldier who became their friend and intervened on their behalf.

American soldiers searched the Büchler apartment, as Annaliese recalled: “The soldiers looked through our home to see if we owned weapons or hid soldiers anywhere. I remember how they opened our closets and looked through our things. I was pretty angry at them for doing that! But all in all, they were nice and did not take anything from us. My father even hid his binoculars because he was scared that they would be taken.”

The final branch report for the year 1945 reads: “With the changes in government it was not possible for us to hold regular meetings. Otherwise there is unity in the organization and we are grateful for the blessings of our Heavenly Father. We hope to make improvements next year.”¹⁰ It is interesting to note that whereas the discussion topics in Relief Society meetings at the beginning of the war included “Goethe and the Gospel” and other cultural themes, the topics in the last war year included “Obedience” and “Receiving Blessings from the Lord.”¹¹

In 1947, Otto Megner ceased to be a POW and became a guest worker. With no jobs available at home, he chose to stay in France. He prospered there and was able to send valuable items to his mother in Michelstadt. He remained in France until 1952. Looking back on the war, he made the following observation: “The entire time I was [in France], I never met another soldier who was LDS. . . . I also did not have the scriptures with me. I relied on prayer and the Spirit. There were many occasions in which it was obvious that I was guided by the Spirit and even angels in order to make the right decisions. I was always a member of the Church at heart.” Otto’s twin brother and two elder brothers were fortunate to survive their years in the German military and eventually return to Michelstadt.

The city of Michelstadt had 4,093 inhabitants in 1939. Almost all civilians survived World War II unscathed, but 238 men lost their lives in the service of Führer, Volk, and Vaterland.¹² The members of the small but strong branch had fared quite well during the war; none lost their homes and only two (one soldier and one infant) died during those difficult years. The Saints were in a good condition to begin life in a new post-Hitler Germany and looked forward to the day when they would have their own meetinghouse.

IN MEMORIAM

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

Georg Arzt b. Michelstadt, Erbach, Hessen, 7 Jun 1911; son of Peter Arzt and Elisabeth Rausch; bp. 20 Dec 1931; conf. 20 Dec 1931; m. 21 Aug 1940, Anna Grenz; k. in battle 19 April 1945. (CHL microfilm 2458, form 42 FP, ft. 37, 298–99; FHL microfilm 68801, no. 1; IGI; FHL microfilm 68791, no. 384)

Peter Ross b. Gadernheim, Bensheim, Hessen 22 Jul 1941; son of Peter Ross and Eva Marquart; d. intestinal surgery 16 Mar 1942. (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 622; Frankfurt District Book II; IGI)

NOTES

1. Michelstadt Branch, “Seventy-Five-Year Anniversary” (unpublished manuscript, 2007).
2. Annaliese Büchler Pils, interview by author in German, Darmstadt, Germany, August 19, 2008; unless otherwise noted, summarized in English by Judith Sartowski.
3. West German Mission branch directory, 1939, CHL 10045 11.
4. Presiding Bishopric, “Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955,” 257, CHL CR 4 12.
5. Anna Elise Hosch Egly, telephone interview with Jennifer Heckmann in German, January 14, 2009.
6. Michelstadt Branch Relief Society minutes, CHL LR 5518 14.
7. Ibid.
8. Michelstadt Branch history.
9. Otto Megner, interview by Jennifer Heckmann in German, Darmstadt, Germany, August 22, 2007.
10. Michelstadt Branch Relief Society minutes.
11. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe was possibly Germany’s greatest writer and philosopher.
12. Michelstadt city archive.

OFFENBACH BRANCH

Just a few hundred yards from the southeast boundary of the city of Frankfurt, Offenbach lies on the south bank of the Main River. Famous as the center of the leather industry in Germany, the official population of 85,128 in 1939 included 95 members of the LDS Church.¹ The branch was established there in 1900.

Church meetings were held in rented rooms at Ludwigstrasse 38, near the city center. Rosel Goeller (born 1927) recalled the conditions: “Our first meetings were in factories, and I didn’t like that because [the rooms were] too old. I didn’t like telling my friends where I went to church because everybody else who went to church went to nice chapels or large beautiful buildings. I think there was a sign outside saying that we met in those

rooms. There were not many people who attended the meetings—maybe around fifty.”²

Offenbach Branch ³	1939
Elders	4
Priests	2
Teachers	0
Deacons	6
Other Adult Males	25
Adult Females	51
Male Children	4
Female Children	3
<i>Total</i>	95

The directory of the West German Mission shows a full complement of branch leaders at work in June 1939.⁴ Arthur C. Reis was the branch



Fig. 1. A Fasching (Carnival) celebration in the Offenbach Branch in February 1939. (E. Rosenhan)



Fig. 2. Members of the Offenbach Branch joined with other Saints of the West German Mission for a Rhine River cruise at the conclusion of the mission conference on May 19, 1939. (E. Rosenhan)

president and was assisted by counselors Wilhelm Rau and Johann Göller. Elly Wolf was the Young Women leader, Bertha Reis the president of the Primary, and Klara Weilmünster the president of the Relief Society. The meeting schedule was quite typical, with Sunday School at 10:00 a.m. and sacrament meeting at 7:00 p.m. All auxiliary meetings took place on Wednesday evening, with the exception of the Relief Society gatherings on Monday evenings.

Thanks to a dedicated clerk, the minutes of branch meetings in Offenbach were kept with great precision through most of the war. The average attendance at sacrament meetings was twenty-eight in 1939. As in other branches throughout the mission, the clerk noted the number of attendees in several categories: priesthood holders, women, children, and friends.⁵

A rare indication of interaction between local police and branch leaders is reported under the date June 28, 1940: Gestapo agents visited President Reis

at an unidentified location (possibly in his home) and asked him the following questions:⁶

Name of the sect: KJC [*Kirche Jesu Christi*] etc. and *Mormonen*

Address: same [as before] [had there been a previous inquiry?]

Members: 93

Preachers: none (any male member can be asked to speak)

Leader: Arthur C. Reis, warehouse manager, born in London in 1897

Meeting times: during the war only Sundays 10–12 and 4–5

Address of worship: Ludwigstrasse 32 in Offenbach⁷

Any youth groups? No

Who is the youth group leader? Nobody

Any publications? None

What kinds of meetings are held? Worship services.

A copy of the record was sent to Anton Huck at the mission office on July 20, 1940. Apparently there was no further action during the war on the part of the Gestapo in Offenbach.

In late 1940, the meeting schedule was changed such that all meetings took place on Sundays, “giving all members a better opportunity to attend the meetings.”⁸ The activities of the branch during the year 1941 suggest that the Saints in Offenbach were doing well in sustaining the programs of the Church. On April 6 they celebrated the anniversary of the Church, “and lots of photographs were taken” by the thirty-nine attendees. On July 24, Karoline and Brigetta Ledermann were baptized in Frankfurt, and a festival for the MIA was held on September 14. That event was especially noteworthy because forty-seven persons attended in a year that saw MIA groups discontinue meetings in branches all over Germany. In contrast, the average attendance at sacrament meeting was holding steady in 1941 at twenty-eight persons. The average declined to twenty-five during 1942.⁹

The Göller family was fortunate to live in an apartment house that survived the war. They were also fortunate that Rosel’s father was too old to be drafted (in his seventies) and could stay home with his wife. Some of their nine children had already grown up and left the home. Brother Göller was not a friend of the government, but he and his wife rarely spoke of politics in the presence of their children.

Calendar year 1943 brought significant challenges to the branch in Offenbach. President Arthur Reis became quite ill and was given blessings on several occasions by mission leaders such as Anton Huck. President Reis’s extended absence from the meetings may have led to some miscommunication, as reflected in an indignant letter written to him by Wilhelm Humbert on August 26, featuring these lines:

I have read your letter in great astonishment. I know full well that you are the branch president, but I did not know that you listen to such gossip and thus make accusations against me. You are extremely misinformed. A sister had indicated that you wanted to have certain hymns sung in order to make the meetings more spiritual. Is that my fault? To this date, I have done nothing without your permission. I would have visited

you had I not suffered an accident on Monday. We were told that nobody should visit you because it might upset you (that is what they told us on Sunday). In order to avoid this gossip and backbiting, I ask that you immediately release me from all callings. In my office as an elder I do not answer to any women. I want you to understand this very clearly. I have also informed Anton Huck of this matter.

Your brother in the gospel

Please excuse my poor handwriting.

Please read “*Evangeliumslehre*” pages 263–264: I have always acted accordingly

The reference to “women” in Brother Humbert’s letter apparently included Sister Elly Wolf, who was president of the YWMIA when the war began and had since been called to work in the Relief Society. She wrote the following to President Reis on October 4:

Dear Brother Reis,

I am enclosing the book for the Relief Society with the copies sent to me as well as the bank book and wish to be released from all of my callings in the branch. Should anything remain unclear, please write me about it. I have a happy home and thus forbid visits by branch members and will not allow my home to be destroyed by the gossip and backbiting of the branch. I hope you understand this so that I do not have to use legal means to prevent visits. I will send all visitors away, regardless of who it is! . . . I will be sending you my monthly report in the next few days. I am not at home much, because I work for the welfare services. Should there be any unresolved matters with the lesson manuals, you may do with the money what you feel is correct. The balance of the MIA funds and the Gleaner funds should be the same when they are opened again. I will close now and wish you best regards for your life.

Heil Hitler!

Sister Elly Wolff

The reader is left to speculate as to the origin of the conflict, but at the very least it would seem that some amount of gossip had approached the level of slander, and the writers of the letters quoted above felt that they had been victimized and their reputations sullied. There is no indication in the branch

records through 1946 that Sister Wolf attended church meetings in Offenbach again, but Brother Humbert returned by 1944.¹⁰

Shortly after the climax of the crisis, President Reis died following a lengthy illness; branch membership records indicated that his illness was somehow related to air raids. In the apparent absence of a qualified replacement, Brother Valentin Schlamm of the Frankfurt Branch was called to preside in Offenbach. He encountered difficulties within a month when the meeting rooms were damaged and he had to cancel meetings. The average attendance at sacrament meeting for the year 1943 had already declined to twenty-two persons.¹¹

The Allied air offensive against Frankfurt and Offenbach intensified in 1944 and the branch clerk made many notations regarding this problem. The meeting rooms were slightly damaged on March 18 and four days later were totally destroyed. By May, the Saints were meeting in the home of a Sister Sorawia at Grosse Marktstrasse 13. Air-raid alarms caused interruptions in meetings on five different Sundays from July through November.

Rosel Goeller recalled the following about the constant air raids and false alarms:

Air raids were terrifying. I took my Book of Mormon with me when we went into the basement. I would say that we were not completely safe there; it was not like a regular concrete bunker. We sat in the basement until they told us [via the all-clear siren] that we could go back upstairs. It wasn't usually all night long. . . . It was dark in those basements; there was no light. Sometimes, when we came out of the basement, we saw buildings burning.

The report dated August 30–31, 1944, includes a sad event: "Sister Margarethe Leutenbach nee Göller died on the way to the air raid shelter. She will be buried in the new cemetery."¹² Margarethe's younger sister, Rosel, recalled that Margarethe "was running to the bunker from her home, and she collapsed and died." The trip to the shelter was not a simple walk. City dwellers had to deal with inclement weather,



Fig. 3. This branch history book survived for more than six months in the rubble of a building that was destroyed by bombs in November 1944. (Church History Library)

rubble from damaged buildings on damaged streets, the drone of the engines of approaching airplanes, and the worst hazard of all—being under stress or in panic under blackout conditions.

The branch clerk did not identify himself in the detailed accounts of meetings in the Offenbach Branch, but a careful study of the records from 1941 to 1945 suggests that he was Rudolf Buchmann. We have him to thank for his diligence, evidenced perhaps best by his comments under the date November 5, 1944:

House service and fast meeting:

Branch President Brother Schlamm presided. Opening hymn 221; invocation by Brother Humbert; hymn no. 12; sacrament blessed by President Schlamm and passed by Brother

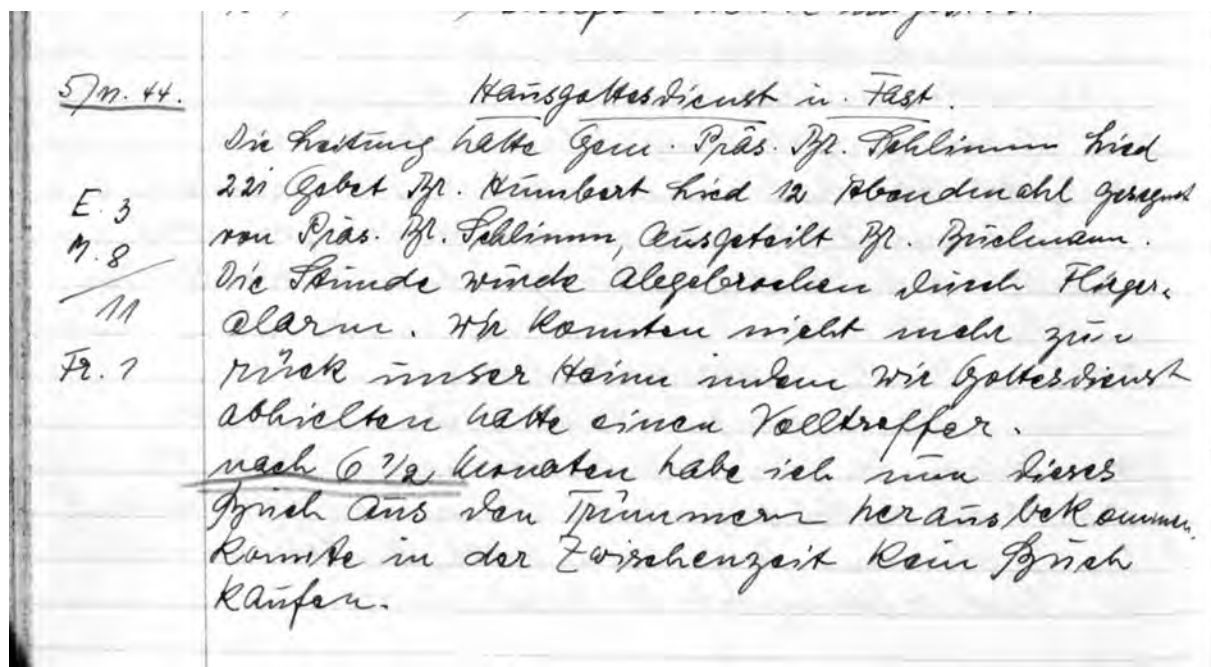


Fig. 4. This entry in the Offenbach Branch history explains how the book shown above came to be buried under the rubble of a collapsed building from November 1944 until May 1945. (Church History Library)

Buchmann. The meeting was interrupted by air-raid sirens. We could not come back after the air raid. Our home in which we had conducted the meeting received a direct hit.

After 6 ½ months [May 20, 1945] I was able to rescue this book from the ruins. I had not been able to purchase a new book in the meantime.

While it is clear that the branch clerk was dedicated to his calling of keeping records for all meetings, this man did much more. He must have been very discouraged that his record book was buried in the rubble during the air raid. He tried unsuccessfully to replace the book and found no source of even individual sheets of paper since wartime shortages were acute. During the twenty-eight weeks the branch record book lay buried within the ruins of the building where Rudolf Buchmann lived, the ruins of the building would have been subjected to the winter weather. Germany traditionally receives a minimum of five inches of precipitation per month, and one would assume that the book would be wet or even soaked and rotting from water seeping through the wreckage. The record book may

have been kept in a cabinet or a desk drawer that remained intact and watertight. One can imagine that the clerk was overjoyed when his search for this record (and likely other items of branch or personal value) was a success.

Rosel Goeller's recollection of the end of the war is as follows:

When the Americans came into Offenbach, I was there. I watched the tanks and the soldiers coming in and going from house to house while we were hiding. I was afraid because we had heard rumors [about the American soldiers]. But in the end, the Americans were not too bad to us. It was mostly the [Nazis] who told us that we should not believe the Americans. The soldiers did not come into our home to look for anything.

It is apparent that the members of the Church in Offenbach did their best to continue holding meetings. On June 7, the following report was made:

[Mission leader Anton] Huck visited the meeting and blessed our temporary branch pres. Wilhelm Humbert. Later he visited the secretary's [Rudolf Buchmann's?] house: "I told him that we had

a chance to buy a building in which we could meet and bombed-out members could live. He replied that the mission does not purchase buildings, based on the fact that our prophet, Heber J. Grant, had died on May 15 of this year and that he said on his death bed that the Second Coming of Christ will happen very soon, it could not be far away.”¹³

It should come as no surprise that after the cataclysmic events of World War II, some Church members believed that the end of the world was approaching. The veracity of such a statement likely cannot be confirmed.

The records of the city of Offenbach indicate that only 467 people died in air raids there, but approximately 40 percent of the city was destroyed during twenty-eight air raids. At least 2,229 soldiers lost their lives. The war ended there for all practical purposes when the American army entered the city on March 26, 1945.¹⁴

A brief history of the Offenbach Branch offers only one sentence regarding the experience of the members of the Church there during the war years: “Due to the severe lack of living space after the war, the branch had no suitable meeting rooms for one year. Branch meetings and worship services were held in the apartment of Sister Sorawia at Grosse Marktstrasse 13 in Offenbach.”¹⁵

The final comment in the branch records connected with the war was made on July 29, 1945: “A memorial program for the fallen heroes: The new branch president is Valentin Schlimm [of Frankfurt]; Anton Huck was also there.”¹⁶ No names of the soldiers are recorded, but lists compiled by the office of the West German Mission include the names of four soldiers from this branch who lost their lives while serving in the Wehrmacht.

IN MEMORIAM

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

Margarethe Göller b. Offenbach, Hessen, 17 May 1913; dau. of Johann Martin Göller and Elisabeth Fr.

Tron; bp. 27 May 1921; conf. 27 May 1921; m. 12 Oct 1938, Wilhelm Lautenbach; k. in air raid Offenbach 30 Aug 1944 (CHL microfilm 2458, form 42 FP, pt. 37, 298–99; IGI; FHL microfilm 68802, no. 31)

Albert Hausch b. Leimen, Heidelberg, Baden, 10 May 1909; son of Johann Hausch and Katharine Kalbeck; bp. 24 Aug 1934; conf. 24 Aug 1934; k. in battle France 21 Dec 1943 (CHL microfilm 2458, form 42 FP, pt. 37, 298–99; IGI; FHL microfilm 68802, no. 134; FHL microfilm 68791, no. 496)

Johann Karl Hausch b. Leimen, Heidelberg, Baden, 10 May 1909; son of Johann Hausch and Katharine Kalbeck; bp. 1 Oct 1932; conf. 2 Oct 1932; ord. deacon 22 Apr 1934; m. 16 Dec 19—, Anna M. Jacob (Löffel); corporal; k. in battle France 17 Dec 1944; bur. Daleiden, Prüm, Rheinland (FHL microfilm 68802, no. 128; CHL microfilm 2458, form 42 FP, pt. 37, 298–99; FHL microfilm no. 68791, no. 400; www.volksbund.de; IGI)

Otto Kallenbach b. Offenbach, Hessen, 12 Mar 1916; son of Michael Kallenbach and Dorothea Kath. Jacobi; bp. 8 Oct 1925; conf. 8 Oct 1925; lance corporal; k. in battle Dubrowka, Wjasma, Russia, 2 Oct 1941 (FHL microfilm 68802, no. 64; FHL microfilm 68791, no. 949; www.volksbund.de)

Rudolf Kallenbach b. Offenbach, Hessen, 25 Aug 1910; son of Michael Kallenbach and Dorothea Kath. Jacobi; bp. 20 Jun 1925; conf. 20 Jun 1925; ord. deacon 11 Feb 1929; m. 21 Dec 1932 or 1933, Katharina M. Trapp; corporal; k. in battle France 9 Jun 1940; bur. Noyers-Pont-Maugis, France (FHL microfilm 68802, no. 65; FHL microfilm 68791, no. 910; www.volksbund.de; IGI)

Katharina May b. Weiten Gesäß, Erbach, Hessen, 20 May 1861; dau. of Georg May and Dorothea Kropp; bp. 22 May 1941; conf. 22 May 1941; m. Frankfurt/Main, Hessen-Nassau, 15 Mar 1884, Heinrich Koob; four children; d. old age Offenbach, Hessen, 13 Aug 1943 (FHL microfilm 68802, no. 158; FHL microfilm 68791, no. 601; IGI)

Anna Marie Rall b. Offenbach, Hessen, 27 Sep 1861; dau. of Karl A. Rall and Katharina Z. Diez; bp. 31 Jul 1900; conf. 31 Jul 1900; m. — Hübner; d. senility 28 Mar 1943 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 76; Frankfurt District book II; IGI)

Albert Rau b. Offenbach, Hessen, 10 Apr 1929; son of Wilhelm Waldefang Rau and Ida Esswein; bp. 10 Oct 1937; conf. 10 Oct 1937; d. injuries from incendiary bomb, Offenbach, 25 Mar 1944 (CHL microfilm 2458, form 42 FP, pt. 37, 298–99; PRF; FHL microfilm 68802, no. 79)

Emma Waltraut Rau b. Offenbach, Hessen, 26 Jul 1941; dau. of Wilhelm Waldefang Rau and Ida Esswein; d. Offenbach cramps, 28 Mar 1942 (CHL LR 6389 11, 156)

Arthur Charles Reis b. London, England, 31 Aug 1897; son of Charles A. Reis and Betha H. Steuck or Steuch; bp. 17 May 1926; conf. 17 May 1926; ord. deacon 13 Feb 1927; ord. teacher 15 Sep 1930; ord. priest 7 Apr 1935; ord. elder 22 Mar 1936; m. 12 May 1928, Minna Frieda Richter (div.); 2m. 28 Mar 1934, Elisabeth K. Heck; d. health complications due to air raid 24 Oct 1943, bur. 28 Oct 1943 (FHL microfilm 68802, no. 84; FHL microfilm 68791, no. 995; IGI)

Kathinka Weber b. Offenbach, Hessen, 21 Oct 1870; dau. of Wilhelm Weber and Maria Geider; bp. 11 Aug 1907; conf. 11 Aug 1907; d. 1941 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 145; Frankfurt District book II; IGI)

Pauline Mathilda Bertha Zacharias b. Langensalza, Erfurt, Sachsen, 11 Nov 1867; dau. of Christian Heinrich Rudolf Zacharias and Therese Eleonore Klara Wiegand; bp. 27 Jan 1927; conf. 27 Jan 1927; m. Langensalza 12 Aug 1911, Philipp Ludwig Reinhard Houy; d. senility 26 Oct 1943 (FHL microfilm 68791, no. 191; FHL microfilm 162790, 1935 census; Frankfurt District book II; IGI)

Margarethe Zintel b. Worms, Rheinhessen, Hessen, 8 May 1875; dau. of Katharina Zintel; bp. 28 Jun 1939; conf. 28 Jun 1939; m. 25 Mar 1930, Hieronymus Blumöhr; d. cancer 9 Jan 1941 (FHL microfilm 68802, no. 156; FHL microfilm 68791, no. 566)

NOTES

1. Offenbach am Main city archive.
2. Rosel Goeller Meyer, interview by the author, Salt Lake City, November 3, 2006.
3. Presiding Bishopric, "Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955," 257, CR 4 12.
4. West German Mission branch directory 1939, CHL 10045 11.
5. Offenbach Branch general minutes, CHL LR 6389 11.
6. *Ibid.*, 140.
7. Apparently the branch had moved three buildings down the street in the previous eight months, confirming what Rosel Goeller said about various locations.
8. Offenbach Branch general minutes, 143.
9. *Ibid.*, 152–56.
10. The fact that Brother Humbert was asked later during the war to serve as the temporary branch president suggests that he harbored no ill will toward the gossipers.
11. Offenbach Branch general minutes, 170–72.
12. *Ibid.*, 178.
13. *Ibid.*, 182.
14. Offenbach am Main city archive.
15. Johann Ludwig Schneider, collected papers, CHL MS 13829.
16. Offenbach Branch general minutes, 184.