

Louis Hermann Trefflich b. Großhettstedt, Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt, 10 Aug 1870; son of Emma Treffliche; bp. 20 Feb 1934; conf. 20 Feb 1934; ord. deacon 9 Dec 1934; ord. teacher 3 Jan 1937; ord. priest 12 Dec 1937; ord. elder 13 Jul 1941; m. 23 Apr 1923, Friederike Christiane Sander; d. heart attack 7 Mar 1942 (FHL microfilm 68808, no. 431; FHL microfilm 245287; 1935 census)

Walter Paul Voigt b. Erfurt, Erfurt, Sachsen, 12 Nov 1920; son of Paul Karl Voigt and Frieda Verges; bp. 14 Jun 1930; conf. 14 Jun 1930; k. in battle 5 Jul 1944 (FHL microfilm 68808, no. 299; FHL microfilm 245291; 1930 and 1935 censuses)

Willi Carl Georg Voigt b. Erfurt, Erfurt, Sachsen, 28 Feb 1919; son of Paul Karl Voigt and Frieda Verges; bp. 2 Jan 1917; conf. 2 Jan 1917; m. 8 Jun 1942, Dorothea Schöne; k. in battle Eastern Front 28 Dec 1944 (FHL microfilm 68808, no. 297; FHL microfilm 245291; 1930 and 1935 censuses)

NOTES

1. Margot Krummrich Gurney, telephone interview by the author in German, July 10, 2007; summarized in English by Judith Sartowski.
2. *Jahre Gemeinde Erfurt* (2007), 23.
3. The name of the offending family is known, but there is no compelling reason to reveal that name here. Margot expressed no bitterness toward them. The incident simply serves as evidence that even Latter-day Saints can be selfish when under the stress of losing their homes. Margot stated that her family consisted of the parents and seven children at the time; it is not likely that the two branch rooms included a bath, so giving up their apartment to another family would have been a genuine sacrifice.
4. Willi Brachmann to Walter E. Scoville, February 3, 1947, Walter E. Scoville, papers, CHL MS 18613.

GERA BRANCH

The city of Gera is located on the main railroad route from Dresden in eastern Germany to Weimar, Erfurt, Eisenach, and Frankfurt to the west. In 1939, the city had a population of 81,931.¹ No report on the population and constitution of the Gera Branch of the Latter-day Saints was filed in the mission office at the end of 1939, but it can be assumed that the branch numbered fewer than fifty persons.

The branch president in July 1939 was American missionary Harold E. Kratzer. He was serving at the time without counselors. The Sunday School was directed by Hermann Kirst, and the YMMIA by Wilfred Wegener, also an American missionary. The YWMIA was not functioning then, but the Relief Society was led by Emma Zemisch, and the Primary by Else Maiwald. The *Stern* magazine representative was Lottie Sonntag, and the position of genealogical instructor was vacant.²

Sunday School was scheduled for 10:00 a.m., priesthood meeting for 11:30 p.m., and sacrament meeting for 8:00 p.m. The Relief Society members gathered on Tuesdays at 8:00 p.m. Both the Primary and MIA met on Thursdays, the former at 2:30 p.m. and the latter at 8:00 p.m. The meeting schedule shows an “entertainment” program scheduled for Saturdays at 8:00 p.m.

The branch meetings were held in rented rooms at Humboldtstrasse 25 in Gera. As of this writing, no description of the rooms is available. The only eyewitness report related to the Gera Branch comes from Elder Kratzer’s journal. He wrote that in August 1939, Elder Wegener was transferred and replaced by Elder Richard Glade.

On my birthday, August 23, 1939, the Kretchmar family invited my new companion, Elder Glade, and me to dinner. They lived in the outskirts of Gera. The family was more active than the father. He tolerated the missionaries, something was bothering him. He didn’t know how to cope with it. We couldn’t seem to help him. . . . We had a very delicious dinner. Most of all we had an interesting political discussion with Brother Kretchmar. He told us it was just a matter of time before Germany would be at war. He said a boy who has an overabundance of toys would start to play with them sooner or later. Hitler was that boy. When we left the Kretchmars, we were wondering when that would happen. As we stepped out of the door, we saw rows of double blue lights coming over the hill on the local Autobahn. Both lanes of the newly constructed super highways were full of war machines on their way to the Polish front. . . . It was sight to see. Something we had never seen before.³

Two days later, the missionaries received a telegram instructing them to leave immediately. According to Elder Kratzer, “We ordained Brother Kirst a priest the night before we left and made him the branch president. . . . There was no doubt in my mind that he was the right man for that responsibility. He accepted the call.” The missionaries called a meeting of all members and did their best to contact every one of them personally.

The meeting took place on August 27 or 28. The missionaries ordained Hermann Kirst a priest in the presence of the entire branch, and then proposed that he be sustained as the branch president. (They had no authority to ordain him an elder.) There were no opposing votes, and as reported in Elder Kratzer’s journal, “There wasn’t a dry eye in those present. The die was cast. The Gera Branch had new leadership.”

There is currently no way to know how well or how long Hermann Kirst carried out the duties of branch president in Gera. No eyewitness reports for the war years have been located. The city itself was subjected to punishment from the Allied forces. Twelve air raids were recorded during the war, and at least 548 civilians were killed. On April 14, 1945, when the American army arrived, 846 buildings with 1,118 apartments had been destroyed.⁴ It is likely that some Latter-day Saints of the Gera Branch were among those residents who lost their property.

IN MEMORIAM

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

Emilie Pauline Behr b. Crimla, Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach, 13 Jun 1860; dau. of Karl Friedrich Behr and Emilie Augusta Thienemann; bp. 28 May 1907; conf. 28 May 1907; d. old age 7 Apr 1943 (FHL microfilm 68808, no. 47; FHL microfilm 25721; 1930 census; IGI)

Bertha Barbara Bernklau b. Regensburg, Oberpfalz, Bayern, 3 Sep 1864; dau. of Katherine Bernklau; bp. 25 Jul 1924; m. 11 Sep 1916; Ernst Timper; d. old

age 30 Apr 1940 (FHL microfilm 68808, no. 294; FHL microfilm 245286; 1930 and 1935 censuses)

Ernestine Böhme b. Falken, Mühlhausen, Sachsen, 16 Jan 1850; dau. of Franz Böhme and Erdmude Werbahn or Urban; bp. 6 May 1926; conf. 6 May 1926; m. 16 Jul 1872, Heinrich Böhme; d. old age 28 Jan 1940 (FHL microfilm 68808, no. 53; FHL microfilm 25726; 1930 census; IGI)

Pauline Karoline Boxhorn b. Lausnitz, Neustadt Orla, Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach, 14 Nov 1865; dau. of Julius Boxhorn and Pauline Günther; bp. 8 Jun 1921; conf. 8 Jun 1921; m. 22 Dec 1904, Karl Kanis; d. old age 15 Mar 1944 (FHL microfilm 68808, no. 541; FHL microfilm 271376; 1930 and 1935 censuses)

Katharine Filbig b. Marktlegast, Bayern, 9 Oct 1866; dau. of Magerete Filbig; bp. 26 Jun 1926; conf. 26 Jun 1926; m. 4 Jan 1908, Hermann Schröder; d. old age 1944 (FHL microfilm 68808, no. 284; FHL microfilm 245258; 1930 and 1935 censuses; IGI)

Pauline Agnes Hempel b. Gera, Reuß, j. L., 6 Oct 1851; dau. of Karl Hempel and Emilie Dötz; bp. 25 Jul 1924; conf. 25 Jul 1924; m. 25 Aug 1874, Hermann Theilig; d. old age 21 Oct 1939 (FHL microfilm 68808, no. 295; FHL microfilm 245283; 1930 and 1935 censuses)

Erich Kütterer b. Leutzsch, Leipzig, Sachsen, 14 Mar 1910; son of Kurt Friedrich Kütterer and Wilhelmine Eggert; bp. 30 Oct 1920; conf. 30 Oct 1920; rifleman; k. near Cesena, Italy, 7 Nov 1944; bur. Futa-Pass, Italy (FHL microfilm 68808, no. 147; www.volksbund.de; CHL 2458, form 42 FP, pt. 37, 138–39; FHL microfilm 271382; 1935 census; IGI)

Minna Anna Schubert b. Roda, Sachsen-Altenburg, 2 Sep 1881; dau. of Friedrich Karl Schubert and Emilie Pfan; bp. 20 Feb 1926; conf. 20 Feb 1926; m. 24 Oct 1905, Otto Brauer; d. accident 8 Jun 1943 (FHL microfilm 68808, No. 52; FHL microfilm No. 25728 1930 census; IGI)

Sophie Henriette Süssengut b. Lobenstein, Reuß, i. L., 2 Mar 1864; dau. of Ernestine Süssengut; bp. 6 May 1926; conf. 6 May 1926; m. 24 Oct 1886, Adolf Schade; d. old age 1944 (FHL microfilm 68808, no. 282)

NOTES

1. Gera city archive.
2. West German Mission branch directory, 1939, CHL LR 10045 11.
3. Harold Eugene Kratzer, journal, 1937–39, CHL MS 19552.
4. Gera city archive.