



Fig. 1. This photograph was taken when missionary Erma Rosenhan visited the Gotha Branch in June 1939. The adults in the back row are (from left) Sister Walter, Sister and Brother Meissinger, Sister Schindler, and Sister Rosenhan. (E. Rosenhan)

GOTHA BRANCH

The city of Gotha in the state of Thuringia had a population of 51,995 when World War II began in September 1939. It is not known how many of those inhabitants were Latter-day Saints, because the necessary reports were not submitted to the mission office at the end of that year.

Meetings were held in rented rooms at Hüneldorfstrasse 9 in Gotha. The Saints in that city met formally only on Sundays, holding Sunday School at 10:00 a.m. and sacrament meeting at 11:00. The branch directory for July 1939 lists only one leader: American missionary T. Frank Swallow as the branch president.¹

Karl Heimburg (born 1924) and his family were members of the Gotha Branch until they moved

to Frankfurt in 1938. He recalled the following about the meeting rooms in Gotha: “We met [in 1938] at Hünersdorfstrasse in a Hinterhaus. There was a big room which was our chapel, and we had some smaller rooms for the different classes of the Sunday School.”²

The only information available about the Gotha Branch at that time is taken from the missionary diary of Erma Rosenhan of Salt Lake City: “Sunday, June 4: Walked from Siebleben to Gotha to attend Sunday School. There were 4 grownups and about 4 children, Bro. Swallow from Erfurt and myself. Bro. and Sis. Meissinger knew father and Sis. Meissinger knew mother. . . . She seems to be a devout Mormon.”³

Because no eyewitnesses or eyewitness testimony could be found at the time of this writing, the fate of the members of the LDS Gotha Branch during World War II is not known.

IN MEMORIAM

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

Franz Stephan Gothe b. Mühlhausen, Sachsen, 10 Mar 1889; son of Christian Gothe and Johanne Genzel; d. 17 Aug 1944 (CHL CR 375 8, no. 2458, 856–57)

Frieda Rose Montag b. Wandersleben, Erfurt, Sachsen, 22 Dec 1903; dau. of Paul Montag and Therese Pachtner; bp. 2 Apr 1927; conf. 2 Apr 1927; m. 8 Jun 1927, Karl August Hering; d. tuberculosis 1 Dec 1940 (FHL microfilm 68808, no. 399; FHL microfilm no. 162782; 1930 and 1935 censuses)

NOTES

1. West German Mission branch directory, 1939, CHL CR 10045 11.
2. Karl Ernst Heimburg, interview by the author, Sacramento, California, October 24, 2006.
3. Erma Rosenhan, papers, CHL MS 16190. Sister Rosenhan had received permission from the mission president to visit the area in order to gather genealogical information about her ancestors. (Siebleben is only one mile east of Gotha.) Her parents had grown up there but had since immigrated to Salt Lake City.

NORDHAUSEN
BRANCH

Perhaps the most isolated of the Latter-day Saint branches in the Weimar District was the branch in Nordhausen. The city is located in the Harz Mountains at a point almost as close to the Hanover District as to the Weimar District.

Clark Hillam, a missionary from Brigham City, Utah, was assigned to work in Nordhausen in early 1938. He had the following recollections:

On a given Sunday, we would have quite a few visitors and about twenty-five people total. Sister Kopp, who was a nonmember, played the organ for us. It was a pump organ. In this branch, we met in the mornings and then again in the evenings. Sunday School was held during the morning hours, and then everybody came back for sacrament meeting in the evening. I remember having Primary and Relief

Society during the week, but as I can recall we didn't have MIA. There were mostly adults in this branch but also a few children. During sacrament meeting, we usually only had adults attending.¹

A year later, the branch president was an American missionary, Louis J. Haws. The only other persons listed in the branch leadership directory in July 1939 were Maria Hoffmann as secretary of the Sunday School, and Maria Helene Schirmer and Augusta Ortlieb as the leaders of the Primary organization.² The meeting schedule showed only Sunday School at 10:30 a.m. and sacrament meeting at 7:00 p.m., with the Primary meeting on Thursdays at 3:00 p.m.

Agnes Fuchs (born 1928) recalled the branch in the early years of the war: "There would have been eight to ten adults in the meetings. We also had many children—sometimes even twenty (many of whom were not members). I liked that atmosphere. Brother [Karl] Brachmann from Erfurt was responsible for us. We really didn't have any [Nordhausen] men in the branch."³

In May 1938, the missionaries had been able to find a relatively nice place for the branch to hold its meetings. Clark Hillam and his companion had secured the new meeting rooms: "We moved from an older building to a newer one, essentially a pub. The missionaries were responsible to find the new building. I was so heartsick because I wanted to be there for the first meeting in the new meeting rooms. I had worked so hard to find those rooms, and they transferred me the day before the first meeting."

Regarding the meeting rooms, Agnes Fuchs recalled the following: "We also had a piano on which we could play some hymns. Most of the



Fig. 1. Clark Hillam took this picture of missionaries and a friend moving chairs into the new meeting rooms at Waisenstrasse 5 in May 1938. (C. Hillam)