
KARLSRUHE DISTRICT

West German Mission



In the summer of 1939, the Karlsruhe District consisted of the entire historic territory of Baden (a former grand duchy), the Palatinate (a district of Bavaria west of the Rhine River), and the city of Worms on the left bank of the Rhine. The adjacent Church districts were Frankfurt to the north, Nuremberg to the northeast, Stuttgart to the east, and Strasbourg (German-occupied France as of 1940) to the southeast.

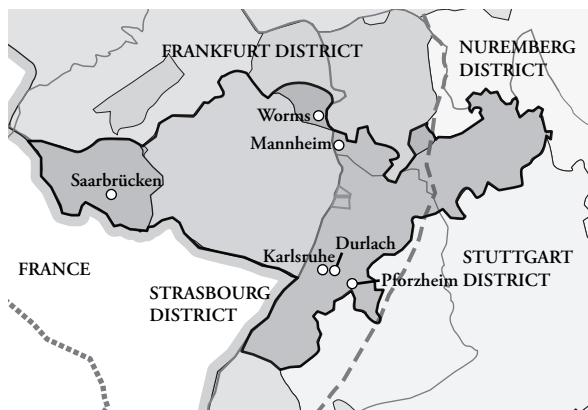


Fig. 1. The Karlsruhe District territory included large areas where no Latter-day Saints lived.

While the district was named after the city of Karlsruhe, in 1939 it was administered from the city of Mannheim, forty-five miles to the north. Other branches were located in Saarbrücken (seventy miles west of Mannheim) and Worms (twelve miles north

of Mannheim). To the south, there were branches in Durlach (a suburb of Karlsruhe), Pforzheim (fifteen miles southeast of Karlsruhe), and Bühl (twenty-two miles southwest of Karlsruhe). A group of Saints lived in Freiburg/Breisgau, seventy-five miles south of Karlsruhe toward the Swiss border.

Karlsruhe District ¹	1939
Elders	28
Priests	19
Teachers	11
Deacons	21
Other Adult Males	97
Adult Females	265
Male Children	30
Female Children	22
<i>Total</i>	493

Eugen Hechtle (born 1906) was the district president when World War II began. From his home in Mannheim, he traveled to the various branches on a regular basis.² The district auxiliary leaders (all of whom served without counselors) represented various branches: George Stehle, Sunday School president and YMMIA leader (Pforzheim),

Hedwig Stapperfend, YWMIA leader (Pforzheim), Johanna Block, Primary president (Durlach), Berta Stapperfend, Relief Society president (Pforzheim), and Karl J. Fetsch, genealogical specialist (Bühl).

After the German conquest of France in June 1940, the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine (just across the Rhine River from Karlsruhe) were added to the territory of the Karlsruhe District. The branches of Saints meeting in the cities of Strasbourg and Mühlhausen (French: Mulhouse) were then added to the district. In 1943, a new district was created consisting of the Alsace-Lorraine territory, the Bühl Branch, and the few Saints (principally the Becker family) in Freiburg.

Only one report sent by President Hechtle to the mission office is preserved in the archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City:

Saturday–Sunday, 22–23 April 1939

District conference of Karlsruhe in Karlsruhe branch hall. Pres. Eugen Hechtle. Total attendance was 643. The attendance was not as large as it [was] last conference because of the number of Saints having to attend the mission conference in Frankfurt in May.³

Apparently, some of the Saints in the Karlsruhe District lacked the time or the money to attend both conferences and chose the mission conference over the district conference.⁴

The following details regarding activities in the Karlsruhe District are found in the general minutes of the Bühl Branch:⁵

November 26, 1939: several members attended the district conference in Stuttgart.⁶

November 1940: district fall conference in Karlsruhe. 289 attendees included four priests and five members of our branch.⁷

March 9, 1941: district conference in Karlsruhe; ten of our members and one friend attended.⁸

Eugen Hechtle was activated from the reserve police force of the city of Mannheim the day the war began. He was one of the replacements for the

regular police who were sent to war. He wrote this description of his duties: “Only old policemen were still there; and we, mostly businessmen, were put into the reserve police. We had to do city work, and when the air raids started, then slowly we had to watch what was going on, where there was damage, and where there was a fire that we had to call in.”⁹



Fig. 2. District president Eugen Hechtle and his family in about 1940. (R. Hechtle)

President Hechtle was allowed eight days of vacation in 1941, and he planned it carefully, making arrangements for eight specific days. However, when his authorization papers were issued, he found that the dates were off by two days. His complaint was ignored. He took his vacation and, upon returning, learned that during the last two days of his absence (when he had originally planned to be home again) the Mannheim police had to take the Jewish people out of their homes and put them in trucks and take them away. “And terrible stories my colleagues told me of what they experienced. I know that the Lord had heard my prayers and prevented that I should be involved in this terrible business. . . . I [had been] praying every day that the Lord might help and protect me, that I would not have my hands in anything that was directed against the Jewish people. I knew that the police would have to do the dirty work . . . against the Jews.”¹⁰

In early 1942, one of the first air raids against the city of Mannheim could have ended tragically for Eugen Hechtle. He was in a basement hallway of the police building downtown when bombs

began to fall very close by. At one point, an officer called, came by, and requested that he go to a different room. Arriving there, he found that nobody needed him or understood why he had been summoned. At that moment, the building shook violently and he was showered with dust. He later discovered that a huge bomb had crashed through the building and landed where he had previously been sitting and that “all of the people that were in that hallway were buried.”¹¹

In the summer of 1942, Eugen Hechtle was sent to the Eastern Front and became a regular infantry soldier. As he recalled, “I had my scriptures with me. I was reading when I could, and I was keeping the Word of Wisdom all the way.” His combat experience ended with a serious wound on January 11, 1943, when an artillery shell landed close enough to him to shatter his left heel. His foot was amputated in a field hospital, and later surgeons removed his leg at about five inches below the knee. As he later concluded, “This was the only way I could come back [from the war alive]. Still my mission was not fulfilled.”

His route back to Mannheim was a long one that featured stops in hospitals in Kharkov, Ukraine, in Krakow, Poland, and in Brünn and Prague, Czechoslovakia. In the last two cities, he was successful in contacting local Latter-day Saints, who were equally pleased to meet him. He was even able to contact the leaders of the East German Mission in Berlin, who were allowed to travel to those Czech cities and visit the members there.¹²

Eugen Hechtle did not see Mannheim again until October 1943 but instead was sent to a hospital in the town of Schriesheim, ten miles east of Mannheim. There he was fitted with an artificial limb and assigned to keep records for physicians. He was still there when the war ended with the arrival of American soldiers in April 1945.

In January 1944, Paul Prison of the Saarbrücken Branch replaced Elder Hechtle as the president of the Karlsruhe District.¹³ Elder Prison was able to continue district conferences throughout the war, apparently in the city of Karlsruhe. Again, the

indications of this are found in the records of the Bühl Branch:

April 11–12, 1942: spring district conference in Karlsruhe; 5 members attended.¹⁴

October 17–18, 1942: district conference in Karlsruhe; eight members and 1 friend attended.¹⁵

March 27–28, 1943: district conference in Karlsruhe; 8 members went.¹⁶

April 23, 1944: district conference in Karlsruhe; 12 of us went; all meetings were conducted in good order, but there was one interruption when an air raid siren (impending danger!) was sounded. All attendees were able to leave for their homes in time, filled with the spirit to continue the fight against sin.¹⁷

The first time Eugen Hechtle had any contact with mission leaders after Germany’s surrender occurred in the summer of 1945. He had finally come home to his family who had moved to the suburb of Feudenheim after their apartment was destroyed in 1943. Anton Huck, mission supervisor, came with an American army officer in a jeep, and they drove Elder Hechtle to a district conference in Karlsruhe.¹⁸ The war was over and most of the cities severely damaged, but meetings in all branches of the Karlsruhe District were still being held.

NOTES

1. Presiding Bishopric, “Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955,” 257, CHL CR 4 12.
2. West German Mission manuscript history, CHL MS 1004 2.
3. West German Mission quarterly reports, 1939, no. 15, CHL LR 10045 2.
4. See the West German Mission chapter for details on that most ambitious conference that lasted for three days and involved hundreds of Saints from all over the mission.
5. Bühl Branch general minutes, CHL LR 1180 11.
6. *Ibid.*, 55.
7. *Ibid.*, 82.
8. *Ibid.*, 96.
9. Eugen Hechtle, *Recollections of My Life* (unpublished autobiography, 2001), 20.
10. Hechtle, *Recollections*, 20, 21–22.

11. Hechtle, *Recollections*, 20, 22–23.
12. Roger P. Minert, *In Harm's Way: East German Latter-day Saints in World War II* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2009), 30n32.
13. Mannheim Branch general minutes, CHL LR 5244 21.
14. Bühl Branch general minutes, 121.
15. *Ibid.*, 132.
16. *Ibid.*, 142.
17. *Ibid.*, 167.
18. Hechtle, *Recollections*, 28–29.

DURLACH BRANCH

The German-language publication of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Der Stern*, included the following announcement dated Monday, May 1, 1939:

The Durlach Branch of the Karlsruhe District, that had been dissolved some time ago, was again organized. A beautiful, small meeting hall, well decorated, is available to the few members and the many friends of the branch and the blessing of holding meetings is again made available.¹

Durlach Branch ²	1939
Elders	1
Priests	1
Teachers	0
Deacons	1
Other Adult Males	7
Adult Females	19
Male Children	3
Female Children	2
<i>Total</i>	34

The town of Durlach is located just a mile east of Karlsruhe and is now a suburb of that major city. In 1939, the population of the city (18,658) included only thirty-four members of the Church. American missionary George Blake was serving in Durlach

when the branch was organized and recalled the setting of the meetings:

When the war started they were meeting in [rented rooms] at Adolf Hitler Strasse 34. It was right on the main street, in the backrooms of a beer hall. We had two rooms and put a sign out front, and we went around the back through an alley to get in. We built a podium in the Durlach chapel. The owner of the building had a swastika in the room and we didn't fight it; that would have been more hassle than it was worth.³

Establishing a new branch of the Church can be a substantial challenge, and Elder Blake described the assignment in these words:

This was a very small group, but we worked it up to as many as thirty-two members and a few friends. Many of them were inactive because they didn't want to travel to Karlsruhe, and it was our job to reactivate them. So we got a local place, and they came out in greater numbers. One brother and his sister said they wouldn't come if the other was going to be there. We smoothed that over and called them to repentance; even though they had been living in the same town, they hadn't spoken in 16 years. . . . I don't know how long they [remained active].



Fig. 1. American missionaries built a rostrum for the new rooms of the Durlach Branch in the summer of 1939. From left: Paul Nichols, George Blake, Myron Seamons, and John Wesche. (G. Blake)

The members of the new Durlach Branch had some very pleasant characteristics, as Elder Blake described in his diary on Thursday, August 3, 1939:

These Durlacher Fraus are good [to the missionaries]. We are fed practically every day of the week, and then are given large sweet bread loaves, gooseberries, plums, jam etc. for between times. We really almost have too much, but to refuse it is an insult so we have to take it and be tickled over it. . . . We seldom buy anything at the store for we have breakfast with the rent, dinner invitations about every day, and coffee in the afternoons which leaves no room for supper. In the last fourteen days I have spent around 7,00 RM for meals—around \$1.50.⁴

A few days later, Elder Blake was transferred to the mission office in Frankfurt. The directory of the West German Mission showed Elder Whitney D. Hammond as the branch president on August 18, 1939—just two weeks before the war started. He and his companion, Myron Seamons, were evacuated from Germany on August 25, and it is not known whom they designated as the leader of the small branch. As of this writing, there are no records of the branch to be consulted, and no eyewitnesses can be found.



Fig. 2. Elder Blake recalled that baptisms were performed in this creek at a location known as Hagsfeld, near Durlach. (G. Blake)

IN MEMORIAM

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

Maria Ederer b. Weißenburg, Mittelfranken, Bayern, 2 Feb 1876; dau. of Franz Ederer and Franziska

Gebhardt; bp. 13 Oct 1929; conf. 13 Oct 1929; m. 24 Oct 1875 [*sic*], Karl Bauer; d. 1944 (FHL microfilm 68788, no. 1; IGI)

Maria Kistler b. Schussenried, Donaukreis, Württemberg, 15 Jul 1879; dau. of Anton Kistler and Karolina Maier; bp. 23 Sep 1930; conf. 23 Sep 1930; m. — Knodel; d. asthma 5 Feb 1945 (FHL microfilm 68797, no. 423; FHL microfilm 271380, 1930 and 1935 censuses; IGI)

Wilhelm Heinrich Sauter b. Aue Durlach, Karlsruhe, Baden, 29 Jan 1921; son of Georg H. Sauter and Luise Schäfer; bp. 23 Sep 1930; conf. 23 Sep 1930; noncommissioned officer; d. in field hospital 28 Nov 1944; bur. Cernjachovsk, Russia (FHL microfilm 68788, no. 22; www.volksbund.de; IGI)

NOTES

1. *Der Stern*, May 1, 1939, 145.
2. Presiding Bishopric, "Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955," 257, CHL CR 4 12.
3. George R. Blake, interview by the author, Provo, UT, April 1, 2009.
4. George R. Blake, journal, CHL MS 17781. The coffee mentioned was malt coffee, such as Pero in the United States, and thus did not represent a departure from the Church's standards of health. Such drinks were common among the Saints all over Germany at the time.

KARLSRUHE BRANCH

The city of Karlsruhe was laid out in a beautifully symmetrical way, such that the streets of the downtown ran from the city palace to the south like rays from the sun. The city was home to 184,489 people in 1939 and hosted a substantial branch of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Although the record shows that the Karlsruhe Branch had eight elders in June 1939, an American missionary, Robert Kunkel, was serving as the branch president. His counselors were Johann Fauth and Eugen G. Bauer. Another missionary, John Wesche, was the leader of the YMMIA, but all other callings in the branch were entrusted to local branch members; Max Klotz was the president

of the Sunday School, Johanne Block the leader of the YWMIA, Adleheid Schulz the president of the Primary, and Dorothea Bauer the president of the Relief Society.¹

The branch meeting rooms were rented in a building at Waldhornstrasse 18, very close to the palace. Sunday School began at 10:00 and sacrament meeting at 3:00 p.m. The Primary met on Mondays at 6:00, the Relief Society on Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m., and Mutual an hour later.

Karlsruhe Branch ²	1939
Elders	8
Priests	3
Teachers	2
Deacons	2
Other Adult Males	21
Adult Females	69
Male Children	5
Female Children	2
<i>Total</i>	112

The facility at Waldhornstrasse 18 had been secured by the branch in 1936. The following description is taken from the branch history:

The branch moved into the building that belonged to a fraternity and was located near the corner of Kaiserstrasse. The peaceful location and a garden in front gave the building a dignified appearance. From a broad foyer the stairs led up to a large, bright hall with a painted ceiling. Three additional broad and spacious rooms had large windows. The main floor of the building housed the studio of an artist named Heil.³

Heini-Werner Seith (born 1930) described the meeting rooms in these words:

The rooms were very comfortable and could easily fit about 120 people. We had a podium in the front where the branch presidency could sit. Three other rooms next to the large one were used

for Primary, MIA, and Sunday School. We had decorations on the wall because the art students had left them there. We did not have to share the rooms during the week because the fraternity was not allowed anymore after Hitler came to power. . . . We had a pump organ. (The first one we owned, we still had to pump with our feet.) There was no sign at the door saying that we met there. During the war years, there were about forty people who attended regularly. . . . In the main room, we had single chairs so that we could move them around as needed. A room next to the large room also had a sliding wall, which made it possible for us to make the smaller rooms bigger. That was fantastic even back then. We could fit up to sixty people in the small rooms then. We never really celebrated anything in the “chapel” (the large room) but used the smaller rooms for those occasions. We also had a piano in the large room.⁴

Heini-Werner was only eight years old when he saw action taken against the Jewish community in Karlsruhe:

On the day of the crystal night [November 9, 1938], I looked out of the restroom window in the branch building and saw the synagogue burning just one street over. My family was very connected to Jewish people because they were our customers in our store. Doctors and professors often came to us, and I went to see them a lot also. One family told us that they would have to leave for Israel in order to be safer.

Heinrich and Elsa Seith operated a delicatessen store and owned a small car as part of the business—“an Opel Super 6. It was a very nice car!” according to son Rolf (born 1932).⁵ However, that car was not used to transport the family to church. Sister Seith and her sons took the streetcar or walked. According to Rolf, his mother sometimes did not go along but gave the boys money for the streetcar. They soon discovered that if they walked fast or ran to church, they could save the money and use it for the movie theater.

At the age of nine years, Heini-Werner had two experiences in the fall of 1939 that would remain clear in his recollection many decades later. The

first was the departure of the American missionaries from Germany on August 26, 1939: “Elder [Robert] Kunkel left me a bicycle, which I never used because I was afraid that I would break it. It was so special to me. . . . After they found out that they had to leave, they came to us, took the most important things with them, and my father took them to the Karlsruhe West railroad station.”

The second memorable experience took place just weeks after the missionaries departed. He described it in these words:

About one hundred meters away from our home was a large army post. Karlsruhe was known for that, since we are located so close to France. We stood next to the post with flowers in our hands and put those flowers on the jackets of the soldiers as they left for duty. That is how we said good-bye to them. The soldiers then told us that they would be home in a month.

Fearing bombardment or invasion from the French just across the Rhine River, authorities in Karlsruhe ordered the evacuation of women and children. Sister Seith took her sons to the town of Sinsheim, near Heidelberg. Both boys recalled sleeping with other evacuees in a barn, but the conditions were not bad. The property owner was a Catholic priest who invited the newcomers to attend Mass; when all of them declined the offer, they were politely asked to leave. With nowhere to go, Elsa called her husband, and he picked them up in his car. He first smuggled them back into Karlsruhe, then drove them to a town in faraway Bavaria. Schaftlach was twenty miles south of Munich, and the three family members lived there under comfortable circumstances until the end of 1940. By then, the French had capitulated, and it was safe for them to return to Karlsruhe.

As a trained technical designer, Johann Albert Dahl (born 1912) had already worked for important industries such as Maybach and BMW when his draft notice arrived in December 1940. A veteran of the Swiss-German Mission, he spoke excellent English and was married to Betty Baer of the

Nuremberg Branch. They both left Karlsruhe in December—he to Halle for training and she with their daughter Helga to stay with her parents in Nuremberg. Johann’s assignment had its advantages, as he soon learned:

Once you went through [the] Halle [training program], you were almost certain not to be called to the fighting front line. As a matter of fact we had a special paragraph in our military pass that no soldier of [our unit] FNR 601 could be transferred into any other unit of the German army. While in Halle, I had the opportunity to go and be active in my LDS Church each Sunday.⁶

Johann’s service took him from Halle to Cologne, Brussels, and Paris, where he enjoyed three weeks of spring air and the pleasures of the French capital. Back in Brussels, he worked with telecommunications until May 1941, when his unit was transferred to Suwalki, on the Polish-Soviet border. By June, he was in Vilnius, Lithuania. It was there that he encountered something about the German occupation that shocked him: a Jewish man offered him and his comrades a great deal of money to drive him to a secret place in Lithuania. Johann’s account reads as follows:

We all felt sorry for this man, but we could not help him. . . . The risk for him and us to loose [*sic*] our lives was too high. He was sadly disappointed, and so were we. The next morning, a security man dressed in a green uniform, came to the hotel, telling us that last night they, the security service, had again killed 4000 Jews somewhere outside of Vilnius. They buried them in a mass grave. We were so upset that we asked him to leave us alone. This was the first time in my life that I learned firsthand about the final solution or extermination plan against the Jews and other ethnic groups.

In 1942, Rolf Seith was inducted automatically into the Jungvolk. He had this to say about the experience:

I both liked it and disliked it. There are nice memories of things I learned during that time that I enjoyed—for example, first aid or how to

make a fire when camping. We also played games that I would call military exercises. We had to go to an abandoned railroad track to learn how to guard it. We had to hide, and the goal was to not be seen. Another group had to try to put a barrel on the tracks. If they succeeded, we lost since the barrel represented a bomb. We were also trained in using hand grenades and small-bore rifles. These were all things that I liked doing. Except for the plays since they always ended up in huge fights until somebody won. Sometimes we could not determine a winner so we had to get in a line and the more people of the 70–80 people in one group got beaten down lost.

The Jungvolk experience went sour when the boys began fighting. Rolf was not interested in knocking others down, so he chose to skip the meetings. Soon a letter came to his home promising penalties if he did not return. Fortunately, he was able to discuss the matter with a reasonable leader who helped him transfer to a music group in the Jungvolk organization. “My new group was known for the plays they performed,” Rolf recalled. “We learned songs and even recorded them. Those songs were then heard on the radio on most Sundays. I liked that much better; I didn’t have to hit anybody, and I liked singing. I was still able to attend all church meetings even though I was in the Jungvolk.”

During his years on the Eastern Front, Johann Dahl did indeed avoid spending time in a combat zone. He was even privileged to use the communications network he serviced to make infrequent calls home to his wife in Karlsruhe (although such calls were not allowed). His lifestyle was so unlike that of a combat soldier in the same area that he apologized somewhat in his autobiography: “While all this sounds more like a vacation, it was not. We were separated from our loved ones, had no chance to attend church, and most of the time were very lonesome . . . especially those of us with families at home . . . with their lives endangered by a terrible air war.”

While in Saparje, Russia, Johann was hospitalized with malaria for six weeks. He had just passed an advanced training course with excellent marks and was designated for a promotion, but the

promotion was blocked: it turned out that officials had learned of his membership in an American church and suspected him of being a spy for the United States. He recalled, “Even though I did not care much about the promotion, yet I felt very much humiliated because I was on top of the class and the advancement would have meant more money for me and my family at home.” An officer later chastised him for even mentioning his association with the Church, saying that Johann would have been promoted at least to corporal if the army had not known about his religion.

Religious instruction was standard in most German schools of the era, but classes were only available for Catholics and Lutherans. Heini-Werner Seith recalled his interaction with other religions as a schoolboy:

Our neighbors in the Goethestrasse knew about us being members of the Church. It did not matter much to us because we lived in accordance with the eleventh article of faith.⁷ We accepted them and they accepted us. I even attended the religion course at school until my teacher got really nervous because I already knew so much. I had gone to Primary and [Sunday School] classes and used all my knowledge in school. The teacher then told my mother that it would be better if I did not attend religion class anymore so somebody else would get the chance to learn.

Both of the Seith boys recalled air raids and alarms that disturbed the life of the inhabitants of Karlsruhe. They told of single airplanes that flew around over the city and generally harassed the people. Quite often, the planes did no damage, but on other occasions they dropped a bomb here and there or even swooped low over the streets and fired at vehicles and pedestrians. Sometimes the boys would watch the airplanes from the attic rooms of their apartment building. If the planes flew low, it meant a probable attack, and the youngsters raced for the basement shelter. As Rolf recalled, “Then we nearly jumped down all the stairs to the basement. It was like flying because we had to hurry so fast. It didn’t take us more than twenty seconds to

get to the basement from the seventh floor.” As was the practice all over Germany, a nighttime air raid meant that school would begin one or two hours later the following morning.

Johann Dahl’s four years at the Eastern Front included time in the city of Odessa on the Black Sea, where he enjoyed sightseeing, the opera, and purchasing rare items on the black market. However, most of his time was mundane, and the terrible cold of the winters provided sufficient opportunities for suffering. The ravages of war were also very depressing, as he noted while describing a transfer trip by rail:

The [route] to the depot was filled with destroyed tanks and black burned house ruins. As mute witnesses of a senseless war they offered a cruel picture of destruction. The train crossed, slowly rumbling, over a squeaking emergency bridge destroyed by the Russians and reconstructed by German engineer troops just recently. Looking down into the frozen river made me dizzy. It revealed a picture of dead life and living death. I could have cried with heaven!

Eventually, the war came home to Karlsruhe in all its ferocity, as Heini-Werner recalled: “On September 27, 1944, we were bombed out for the first time. I will never forget that day. It was a nighttime air raid by the British.” His family got out of the building in time but lost most of their possessions. A worse fate befell their relatives. “One of my aunts owned birds which she wasn’t allowed to take into the shelter with her. She loved those birds a lot so [she and her children] decided to stay in their basement. A bomb hit the house, and my aunt was killed instantly; her daughter was badly burned, but her son was not injured.”

Rolf’s recollections were more detailed: he described how the building burned for several days and attempts were made to save both the structure and its contents. The residents were able to carry out many pieces of furniture, but the building inevitably fell victim to the flames. “It was not possible to take out the piano from the first floor. But then again, we did not need it in order to survive.” When the fires died out, the basement was intact, and it

was there that the Seith family took up residence again. According to Heini-Werner, “We lived in our basement for five years after that. Whenever it rained, there was so much water on the floor that our slippers would just float away.”

Another attack struck the neighborhood of the Waldhornstrasse. Rolf described an experience that happened just a week before that attack:

I found a cabinet in one of the smaller [meeting] rooms. I opened it and found the utensils for the sacrament. I opened the upper drawer and only found paper rolls. I took one out. In that moment, I heard my mother look for me and say my name. She had seen that I walked into that room. I put the small roll into my pocket, closed the drawer, and walked home with her. At home, I opened the paper roll and found three sacrament glasses in it. I hadn’t meant to take those home. A week later, the meeting rooms were destroyed, and the only thing that was preserved were those three little glasses.⁸

Although all furnishings in the church meeting rooms were destroyed, the members still had their scripture books and hymnals, which were usually kept in the home. The branch membership records also survived the destruction, because those were kept in the home of the clerk or a member of the branch presidency.

According to the branch history,

It was not possible to rent another place to meet after our rooms were destroyed, but a temporary solution was found: Sister Rosine Dahl, a widow and long-time member of the Church, invited us into her living room on the fourth floor of the apartment house at Tulla Strasse 74 in the eastern part of the city. It was a crowded situation but an offer we appreciated very much.⁹

Sister Dahl’s son, Johann, was pleased to spend a week with his family in Karlsruhe in 1944. When informed of his orders to return to the Eastern Front, he told his commanding officer that he wanted a transfer to Munich instead. When asked for a justification, he explained that he had friends in Munich and that his wife was expecting their second child.

He recalled making this bold proclamation: “I explained to him that I did spend nearly four years in Russia and that I had enough of it and would not go [back].” Against all logic, he was assigned to go to Munich the next morning and recognized that his prayer had been answered.

Upon arriving in Munich, Johann Dahl immediately contacted district president Johannes Thaller. He asked if President Thaller could take him in along with his pregnant wife and their daughter, Helga. President Thaller did indeed have room, having evacuated his own wife and children to Haag am Hausruck in Austria. Brother Dahl found that, in many respects, life went on in Munich, the capital of Bavaria and a center of history and culture. “We went to church as we did before the war, even on the Sunday afternoon when Munich was taken at the end of the war,” he explained. His wife returned to Karlsruhe, where their son, Rainer, was born on August 11, 1944.

Heini-Werner Seith had been in the Jungvolk since he was ten and advanced into the Hitler Youth at the age of fourteen. It was a mixed bag of positive and negative experiences in the last year of the war, as he explained:

I was interested in vehicles and everything that I could drive, so I joined a motorized Hitler Youth unit. We were trained to drive and operate tanks. They did not tell us where they were taking us for the training, but we knew that it would be a camp somewhere. I was transported to Alsace-Lorraine near Strasbourg and I knew that I was now in a combat zone. Our task was to clean all the trenches although there were air raids constantly. It seemed like we were always on the move to a safer location. This eventually led to us to come back to Germany after all.

Heini-Werner was fortunate that his Hitler Youth experience never evolved into a Wehrmacht experience. His father was equally fortunate, mostly because he was diabetic and not fit for duty. For a short time, he served in a communications unit, then was sent home and assigned to be a neighborhood watchman. His duty consisted of making

sure that no looting took place among the ruins of bombed-out apartment buildings and stores. The members of the Seith family all survived the war unscathed, but they lost several relatives, according to Heini-Werner: “I had three cousins who died while serving in Russia.”

The people of Karlsruhe saw both French and American invaders in the spring of 1945. Whereas the Americans treated the populace humanely, the French were awarded the province of Baden as their occupation zone, and their behavior was far less kind, as Heini-Werner recalled: “When the French came, a lot of things changed. They raped women and did not treat us well. Even though the town square wasn’t [previously] damaged, they burned it down and filmed it in order to show their families and friends at home how they had fought to take over the city.”

The day after the American army entered Munich (encountering no resistance), Johann Dahl’s commanding officer dismissed the unit, instructing them to find civilian clothing if possible. Johann did so and thus avoided being taken prisoner. Soon he was confronted by GIs who were surprised to learn that he spoke excellent English. Immediately, he was employed by the American occupation forces and paid well. In September 1945, Johann was able to find a way home to Karlsruhe. His wife had arrived there after spending four months in a small town near Nuremberg as a refugee. They were pleased to be home in Karlsruhe, safe and sound; his mother, Rosina Dahl, had also survived the war in her apartment.

Heini-Werner had become so accustomed to good treatment at the hands of the Americans that he was shocked by the actions of one GI: “An American officer attended church with us once [after the war], and he mentioned that he was happy and laughed when he saw Karlsruhe burning. This statement hurt us very much. He was a member of the Church, and we really did not expect that from him.”

Looking back on his experiences as a member of the Karlsruhe Branch during World War II,

Heini-Werner summarized his impressions in these words:

Back then, all we had was church. We weren't involved in any sports activities and people didn't go on vacations as much. The church was the place we always went. We met very often together as Church members. We held little conferences, had dances, or met for cake in the afternoon. The Primary organized carnivals and we had Christmas parties in December. It seemed like we were in church a lot during the week. We were one big family. We also all lived relatively close to each other, which made it easier for us to get together and strengthen one another.

Shortly after the war ended, the branch leaders were able to rent space in the music hall of the Munz Conservatory on Waldstrasse. The facility was large enough for sacrament meetings and district conferences. The Relief Society continued to meet in Sister Dahl's apartment, and the youth met in the home of the Böhringer family, but "only Mother Nature had room enough for the Sunday School meetings."¹⁰

IN MEMORIAM

The following members of the Karlsruhe Branch did not survive World War II.

Eugen Gottlob Bauer b. Möttlingen, Schwarzwaldkreis, Württemberg, 3 Jan 1884; son of Friedrich Nikolaus Bauer and Christine Dorothea Gackenheimer; bp. 6 Oct 1923; conf. 6 Oct 1923; ord. deacon 1 Jun 1924; ord. teacher 6 May 1928; ord. priest 30 Sep 1930; ord. elder 11 Oct 1931; m. Heimsheim, Calw, Schwarzwaldkreis, Württemberg, 25 Mar 1912, Dorothea Walz; 4 children; d. multiple sclerosis Baden 18 Oct 1944 (FHL microfilm 68797, no. 152; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 152; FHL microfilm 25719, 1930 and 1935 censuses; IGI)

Juliane Eicher b. Bühl, Baden, 2 Oct 1903; dau. of Adolf Eicher and Magdalene Schleif; bp. 19 Jun 1939; conf. 20 Jun 1939; m. 6 Aug 1935, Ignaz Gerber; missing as of 20 Dec 1946 (FHL microfilm 68797, no. 627)

Lina Katharina Gehreg b. Mannheim, Baden, 29 Jan 1886; dau. of Karl Gehreg and Katharina Baur; bp. 13 Oct 1929; conf. 13 Oct 1929; m. ——— Deininger; d. kidney disease 23 Nov 1941 (FHL microfilm 68797, no. 339)

Christiana Grimmer b. Lippoldswiler, Neckarkreis, Württemberg, 29 Aug 1864; dau. of Johannes Grimmer

and Christiana Waibel; bp. 12 Oct or Dec 1894; conf. 12 Oct 1894 or Dec 1894; m. 29 Nov 1894, Ludwig Eckert; d. old age 2 Jan 1943 (FHL microfilm 68797, no. 139; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 139; FHL microfilm 25759, 1930 and 1935 censuses; IGI)

Marie Magdalena Heck b. Kippenheimweiler, Freiburg, Baden, 21 Aug 1866; dau. of Michael Heck and Katharina Zipf; bp. 29 Jun 1901; conf. 29 Jun 1901; m. 29 Apr 1893, ——— Deser; d. heart attack 26 Mar 1944 (FHL microfilm 68797, no. 88; FHL microfilm 25754, 1930 and 1935 censuses; IGI)

Friederika Hirschbühl b. Hornberg, Wolfach, Karlsruhe, Baden, 31 Mar 1876; dau. of Karl Hirschbühl and Christine Haas; bp. 19 Jan 1914; conf. 19 Jan 1914; m. Hornberg 28 Dec 1901, Gottfried Moser; 1 child; d. tuberculosis Karlsruhe, Karlsruhe, Baden, 12 Oct 1940 (FHL microfilm 68797, no. 117; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 117; FHL microfilm 245238, 1930 and 1935 censuses; IGI)

August Kary b. Dumersheim, Baden 9 Sep 1874; son of Joseph Kary and Josephine Abath; bp. 8 May 1928; m. Louise Knappschneider; 1 child; d. 31 Mar 1946 (FHL microfilm no. 271376, 1930 and 1935 censuses; IGI)

Christina Klebsattel b. Spiegelberg, Neckarkreis, Württemberg, 29 Dec 1864; dau. of Jacob Klebsattel and Elisabeth Andres; bp. 6 Aug 1903; conf. 6 Aug 1903; d. old age 15 Jan 1940 (FHL microfilm 68797, no. 155, CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 155; FHL microfilm 271380, 1930 and 1935 censuses; IGI)

Ernst Max Klotz b. Pforzheim, Karlsruhe, Baden, 16 Mar 1912; son of Friedrich Ernst Klotz and Emma Bonnet; bp. 8 Apr 1934; conf. 15 Apr 1934; ord. deacon 7 Jun 1934; ord. teacher 7 Aug 1938; m. 20 Oct. 1939, Dorothea Bauer; k. in battle 5 Apr 1944 (FHL microfilm 68797, no. 467; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 573; IGI)

Maria Magdalene Kraus b. Karlsruhe, Baden, 27 Feb 1875; dau. of Jakob Kraus and Maria Magdalena Neuweiler; bp. 2 Feb 1904; conf. 4 Feb 1904; m. Karlsruhe 12 Feb 1898, Philipp Schmieder; 5 children; d. lung cancer Karlsruhe 28 Feb 1941 (FHL microfilm 68797, no. 161; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 161; IGI; AF)

Georg Johann Leyer b. Mannheim, Baden, 3 Jan 1918; son of Georg Johann Leyer and Anna Hess; bp. 1 Feb 1931; conf. 1 Feb 1931; m. 16 Mar 1940, Antonie Margarethe Wenzel; d. lung ailment 14 Dec 1942 (FHL microfilm 68797, no. 458; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 458)

Ernst Lichtenberg b. Herrensohr, Rheinprovinz, 3 Mar 1864; son of Georg Friedrich Lichtenberg and Louise Rosental; bp. 22 Nov 1901; conf. 22 Nov 1901; ord. priest 30 Aug 1903; ord. elder 11 Oct 1931; m. Kassel, Hessen-Nassau, 23 Mar 1889, Philippine Geldmacher; 4 children; d. heart attack and senility Karlsruhe, Baden,

11 Apr 1941 (FHL microfilm 68797, no. 92; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 92; FHL microfilm no. 271387, 1930 and 1935 censuses; IGI)

Anna Long b. Beihingen, Neckarkreis, Württemberg, 6 Dec 1877; dau. of Adam Long and Friederike Bötznner; bp. 1 Aug 1909; conf. 1 Aug 1909; m. 7 Jul 1900, Karl August Nagel; d. heart condition 18 Mar 1941 (FHL microfilm 68797, no. 97; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 97; IGI)

Lydia Lund b. Kappeln, Schleswig-Holstein, 29 Dec 1899; dau. of Johann August Lund and Anna Agnes Hampkens; bp. 20 May 1938; conf. 20 May 1938; m. Aug 1919, ——— Halit; missing as of 20 May 1941 (FHL microfilm 68797, no. 661; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 661)

Karl Paul Müller b. Merseburg, Bitterfeld, Sachsen, 4 Jul 1869; son of Karl Ludwig Theodor Müller and Johanne Friedrike Pauline Meyer; bp 15 Mar 1913; conf. 15 Mar 1913; ord. deacon 25 Jan 1925; ord. teacher 17 Apr 1927; ord. priest 4 Jan 1931; ord. elder 11 Oct 1931; m. 4 Oct 1894, Emilie Steffen; k. in air raid 25 Apr 1944; bur. Karlsruhe, Karlsruhe, Baden (FHL microfilm 68797, no. 110; www.volksbund.de; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 110; IGI)

Luise Müller b. Ettlingen, Karlsruhe, Baden, 1 Oct 1905; dau. of Wunibald Müller and Josefine Lachner; bp. 13 Jun 1939; conf. 13 Jun 1939; k. in air raid 25 Apr 1944 (FHL microfilm 68797, no. 681; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 681; IGI)

Christiana Ott b. Oberrheinsbach, Schwarzwaldkreis, Württemberg, 15 Mar 1874; dau. of Gottlieb Ott and Barbara König; bp. 3 Oct 1909; conf. 3 Oct 1909; m. 27 Aug 1898, Karl Deuchler; d. dropsy and heart attack 9 Jan 1941 (FHL microfilm 68797, no. 99; IGI)

Edgar Schmieder b. Lauda, Mosbach, Baden, 26 Dec 1917; son of Phillip Schmieder and Maria Magdalene Kraus; d. 2 Aug 1942 (FHL microfilm 68797)

Gerald Fritz Schmieder b. Karlsruhe, Baden, 1 Feb 1924; son of Friedrich Philipp Schmieder and Sophie Elisabeth Clemens; bp. 16 Jun 1933; conf. 16 Jun 1933; ord. deacon 5 Sep 1937; k. in battle Kaukasus, Russia, 11 Nov 1942 (FHL microfilm 68797, no. 278)

Anna Maria Schwartz b. Machern, Elsaß-Lothringen, 25 Dec 1858; dau. of Michael Jean Schwartz and Elisabeth Lux; bp. 15 Jun 1909; conf. 15 Jun 1909; d. old age Oct 1939 (FHL microfilm 68797, no. 48; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 48; FHL microfilm no. 245260, 1930 and 1935 census; IGI)

Karl Emil Zapf b. Mannheim, Baden, 26 Aug 1878; son of Johann Casper Zapf and Katharina Hasslinger; bp. 13 Feb 1927; conf. 13 Feb 1927; ord. priest 16 Oct 1929; ord. elder 11 Oct 1931; m. Mannheim, Baden, 15 Sep 1900, Anna Maria Schott; d. heart attack Mannheim 10 Jan 1942 (FHL microfilm 68797, no. 343)

NOTES

1. West German Mission branch directory 1939, CHL LR 10045 11.
2. Presiding Bishopric, "Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955," 257, CR 4 12.
3. *Chronik der Gemeinde Karlsruhe* (Karlsruhe, Germany: Karlsruhe Ward, 1997), 328.
4. Heini-Werner Seith, telephone interview with the author in German, May 5, 2009; unless otherwise noted, summarized in English by Judith Sartowski.
5. Rolf Seith, telephone interview with the author in German, May 19, 2009.
6. Johann Albert Dahl, "Vier Jahre im Verhassten Feldgrau" (unpublished autobiography).
7. "We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may." Articles of Faith 1:11.
8. The fact that Rolf took the paper home should not be considered theft. In those days, paper was a rarity, and he likely thought that any paper found in the cabinet could be put to better use. The implements used in the sacrament in Germany during the war were in fact small glass cups. Neither paper nor plastic was available for that purpose until many years after the war.
9. *Chronik der Gemeinde Karlsruhe*, 330.
10. Ibid.

MANNHEIM BRANCH

The city of Mannheim is situated on the east bank of the Rhine River at the northern extent of the old province of Baden. The Neckar River flows along the city's northern border into the Rhine. The city was home to 280,365 people in the summer of 1939, only 121 of whom were members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In fact, the percentage of Church members among the city's residents was even smaller because some members of the Mannheim Branch lived across the river in Ludwigshafen, a city half the size of Mannheim. Ludwigshafen had enjoyed its own branch in the 1920s, but emigration had caused its demise. The members living there rode the streetcar across the Rhine to Mannheim to participate in meetings and branch activities.



Fig. 1. Youth of the Mannheim Branch in 1939. (L. Deininger Harrer)

Mannheim Branch¹	1939
Elders	5
Priests	6
Teachers	4
Deacons	2
Other Adult Males	33
Adult Females	55
Male Children	7
Female Children	9
<i>Total</i>	121

The status of the leaders of the Mannheim Branch in the summer of 1939 is somewhat unclear. Reed Oldroyd, a missionary from the United States, was serving as the branch president. Despite the fact that the mission statistics show five elders and twelve Aaronic Priesthood holders as members of the branch, none are listed as counselors or secretaries to Elder Oldroyd.² Johann Martin Scholl, who had

been the branch president for decades beginning in 1902, was still present and serving as the leader of the Sunday School. With the departure of the American missionaries on August 26, 1939, Brother Scholl likely was called to preside over the branch.

When the war broke out on September 1, 1939, the Mannheim Branch was meeting in rented rooms at D2–5. In the unique numbering system used in Mannheim, this notation means building number 5 on block D2, just a few hundred yards from the city's center.³ The branch rented rooms in a Hinterhaus at that location. According to Elfriede Deininger (born 1921), "It was a large room connected to three smaller rooms on the side. There were about sixty members [attending]."⁴ The meeting schedule included Sunday School at 10:00 a.m. and sacrament meeting at 4:00 p.m. Mutual was held on Tuesdays at 8:00 p.m., and the Primary and Relief Society meetings were held on Wednesdays at 3:30 and 8:00 p.m. respectively.

Gottfried Leyer (born 1927) recalled making the long trek from his home in a suburb of Mannheim

north of the Neckar River downtown to church. “It took about an hour to walk to church and it was too far to go home for lunch and back for sacrament meeting, so we stayed in the church rooms or went with friends to their homes between meetings.”⁵

Walter E. Scoville of the United States had served in the West German Mission before the war and kept up his correspondence with several families of the Karlsruhe District. He received the following letter from Elfriede Deininger of the Mannheim Branch dated March 6, 1940:

It was such a nice time while you were here [in 1939]. Things have changed since then. It’s really lonely around here. The men are all in the army and we women and children have lots of work. We are still holding meetings, but for how long? And our dear Father Scholl died [29 Feb 1940, age 78]. We held his funeral yesterday. This is a terrible loss for each of us, for the entire branch. The only men left are Brother Dönig, Brother Ziegler, and Andreas Leyer (but he is leaving soon). . . . Helene, Kläre, and I will also be leaving in the fall. We have to serve our “duty year” and this year they are calling up the girls born in 1920–1921 so the three of us have to be ready to leave. We are looking forward to this time when we too can serve Germany. The day before he died, Brother Scholl said to us, “Hitler will lead Germany to a marvelous and lasting peace and victory, even if it takes years. Every German is of this opinion nowadays. Actually, it is not an opinion but a sincere belief. We believe that God is with him, or else he would not have been able to accomplish such great things in the past and the present. And we know that God will be with our Führer in the future as well. The greater the pressure from foreign nations, the tighter the bond between our Führer and the people. No power on earth can break that bond, not even the English. Conditions in the branch are still very good, but we are short on priesthood holders.”⁶

Spirits were high in Germany at the time. The Polish campaign had lasted less than a month, and Germany’s enemies had not yet attacked. It appeared indeed as if Germany would be victorious. Although Elfriede’s letter suggests that all of the members of the Mannheim Branch were convinced of Hitler’s good standing with God, this certainly cannot be

said about the German Latter-day Saints in general, as is clear from many eyewitness reports. The letter was written two months before the German army invaded France and before air raids on German cities became frequent and deadly.

Elfriede Deininger was a young woman dedicated to the Church. She later wrote of the problems in the branch after the priesthood holders left: “It was a lonely feeling to have no priesthood holders in our midst. But even with our men gone we could still have a prayer.”⁷ In her personal life, things were looking up in 1940 when she began dating Horst Prison, a soldier from the Saarbrücken Branch. He wrote her often from the Eastern Front, where he went through very difficult trials for the next three years.

Manfred Zapf (born 1930) was inducted into the Jungvolk through his school when he turned ten years of age:

We had uniforms, and I attended the meetings. In a way, it was just like the Boy Scouts, so we enjoyed it. We played little games, like war games, and for Christmas we made toys for other children. We also marched around and did service projects. But really we were just kids and enjoyed being together. Sometimes my father would write an excuse because I had to help in the garden, but I never got into trouble [for missing meetings].⁸

“The first bombing of Mannheim was in about September 1941,” recalled Gottfried Leyer. “Mannheim had a big airfield for fighter planes. When the first bomb came down on this one Sunday, all the people living nearby went out to see [where it landed]. I can picture it there, between houses, right in the garden, a big crater. That was probably the first bomb that fell on Mannheim.”

Regarding the air-raid shelters available to city residents, Manfred Hechtle (born 1928) provided this description:

The basements were made in such a way that they had a large room there where people could gather. And then, since apartment houses have one common firewall between them, it was required that

they be broken through in the basement from one to another so that if something happened on one side, people could go through and to the [adjacent] basement. It could go for a whole block that way. But they bricked it back up. The bricks were set sideways, so then a sledgehammer was set next to it so it could easily be broken through.

Ludwig Harrer married Lina Deininger and was drafted soon after the war started. In February 1942, he came home on leave and told his sister-in-law Elfriede that he had disobeyed an order and was being punished; he had captured two black French soldiers and was commanded to execute them rather than to guard them as prisoners of war with the usual rights. He had refused to carry out the order and was punished with a transfer to the Eastern Front. He told Elfriede that he would soon join her deceased mother. Two weeks later he was killed in Russia.⁹



Fig. 2. The family of Ludwig and Lina Harrer in 1941. (L. Deininger Harrer)

Manfred Hechtle had been a member of the Jungvolk since the age of ten and advanced to the Hitler Youth when he became fourteen. He recalled that although his participation was required, he was given the choice of various kinds of activities, and he chose the air force training program: "I started out learning how to fly a glider. We practiced with the glider on the ground, learning how to keep it level and land it straight. We did this on a grassy meadow."¹⁰

As air raids caused increasing destruction in the city, the situation with schools became more challenging, as Manfred recalled:

The school that I went to was only a block away from where I lived. In those days, of course, half of the school was for girls and half for boys. And they were physically separated in the building. My school was hit one night by [incendiary] bombs; the fourth [top] floor was actually eliminated. It was not in use anymore, but they put a roof over fast enough to continue school, so we were only off or transferred for a few weeks and then went back in.

According to Gottfried Leyer, "They had to combine classes; sometimes we had three classes combined as one. We didn't learn much." Manfred Hechtle indicated that younger teachers were replaced by older ones as the war dragged on and the amount of National Socialist propaganda preached by the teachers diminished.

Although air raids were frightful experiences, life went on afterward (as long as one's home was intact), and children found ways to entertain themselves. Gottfried recounted how he and his friends went out right after the all-clear siren to search for metal fragments lying in the streets. The larger ones were from enemy bombs and the small pieces from local antiaircraft fire. "Once I found one that was still hot because we went outside right away."

"I was an adventuresome kind of person," Ralf Hechtle (born 1929) explained:

To me, an air raid was a great adventure where everybody ran to the shelters. I had to stand outside and watch. . . . In fact, once I saw an airplane that was shot down and barely missed hitting a house. It was coming down, and the sad thing was this: as it crossed the Neckar River I guess all the guys tried to jump out, but because the plane was so low they couldn't use their parachutes and they all ended up dead on the beach on the other side. I didn't actually see it crash, but I went right over there and saw it right after and saw the dead soldiers laying there. It was a big bomber.¹¹

Manfred Hechtle recalled having regular youth activities in and around Mannheim until the



Fig. 3. *The youth of the Mannheim Branch in 1942. (R. Hechtle)*

middle of the war: “We met with young people from around the mission in the forests once or twice a year. Sometimes we went to a castle nearby. But as the war progressed, it became practically impossible to have any gatherings out of town. People were too nervous.” Much of his free time was spent with his younger brother, Ralph, and his LDS friends, Gottfried Leyer and Manfred Zapf, “until about 1943 when things went topsy-turvy.”

The program of evacuating children from high-risk cities was popular in Mannheim, as Manfred Zapf recalled:

We went to the countryside just as everybody else did. My parents had to stay in the city while my brother and I were sent away. We got little cards with our names on them that we hung around our necks [indicating our destination] and we were sent to Kenzingen, near Switzerland. We stayed with a very nice family; the father was the chief surgeon in the Kenzingen hospital. We stayed in the building in which his maids also stayed. It was close to the actual home, though. We didn’t know

that family at all before we got there. [The government] just sent us there. I was very happy there because we had so many wonderful opportunities. I felt like a little king. My brother returned to Mannheim early because he had to attend high school, which was not available in Kenzingen.

Life in Mannheim in 1943 was becoming increasingly challenging for Elfriede Deininger, who described the situation in these words:

I was working all day for a company, assembling small electrical motors, and at the same time I was a firefighter. As soon as we heard the alarm we had to change clothes and be ready to go out. We never knew which direction the air raids would come from. We would hear the sound of the falling bombs, then the building would shake and smoke would fill the air. We found whole housing blocks on fire. Some houses would remain standing, so we had to spray the water on the burning places of those houses. The people in the basements, can you imagine? They died when the scalding water came down on them. As buildings collapsed, people were crushed. . . .

The constant bombing frazzled our nerves, our spirits, and left us exhausted.¹²

Ralf Hechtle remembered that the frequency of air-raid alarms without attacks was so great that it became a burden to go downstairs to the shelter. He was simply too tired to get out of bed each time (even though a friend had been killed in the basement of the building just across the street). “I think my mother got gray hair worrying about me during alarms. . . . One time in particular I remember I got to the top of the stairs in the cellar, where you go [down] to the cellar and a bomb hit just in the next block. And it just lifted me up and threw me all the way down the stairs, and I hit a chair at the bottom.”



Fig. 4. Mannheim Latter-day Saints during the war.

Horst Prison was granted leave in January 1944, and he went to Mannheim to marry Elfriede Deininger. As she explained, “In preparation for our wedding day my sisters Paula and Helen obtained extra food stamps and were able to cook a nice dinner and make a cake. That evening the sirens went off, and we had to go to a bomb shelter.”¹³ The next day, they made the trip to Saarbrücken where mission leader Anton Huck performed a wedding ceremony and ordained Horst an elder. Within days, he returned to duty on the Eastern Front.

As pleased as Elfriede was to be married, her trials soon became much worse. She saw Horst in France a few months later and had the premonition

that they would not be together again for a long time. She was pregnant, but after the day in August when she received word that Horst was missing in action, she did not feel the baby moving any more. A woman doctor confirmed her suspicion that the baby had died, and the discussion that followed became intense, as Elfriede recalled:

The doctor was insolent: “There is no hospital open for you, but there is a midwife nearby who has a private clinic, and in an emergency I will come down, but you will have to pay in advance, for I doubt you will pull through.” I was furious. I screamed at her, “If I have to die like an animal, so be it, but you dirty pig, you will not get my money!”¹⁴

The child was delivered stillborn two days later—a boy weighing six and one-half pounds. “During my recovery it was hard for me to watch the new mothers as they nursed their babies,” Elfriede recalled. A crisis of faith ensued, but a friend from church explained an important principle to the heartbroken mother, who was wondering why God would let her child die: “Elfriede, that little word ‘why’ is the biggest tool in the devil’s workshop. God loves you and will comfort you if you will let him. He knows ‘why’ and all about your heartache, but it is best for you. Someday you will understand.”¹⁵

Manfred Zapf was still only fourteen years old and a member of the Hitler Youth when he came very close to the war in 1944, as he recalled:

I was sent to France to help out with the military—for example [servicing] tanks. I remember that I stayed there for a little over a year and that we had to sleep on concrete with just a bit of straw underneath and it was the middle of winter. The regular soldiers didn’t like us and wanted us to leave. We were too young for them and they had to watch us on top of everything else. Some of us were injured and that placed a greater burden on the soldiers. Some of my friends even got killed while we were there. It was a dangerous place to be. We eventually walked home from France—all the way back to Kenzingen.¹⁶ We were able to travel in a vehicle only part of the way home.

The Hechtle family lost their apartment twice. The first one was located at Augartenstrasse 39 (east of the downtown) and the second on block S6. “There we had an underground bunker across the street,” Manfred Hechtle explained. Not every bomb that fell on an apartment house during the war meant destruction. Manfred recalled how the Hitler Youth boys were trained to nullify the effect of an incendiary bomb. “We had to keep a bucket of water and sand in the attic so that we could [smother] the bomb. We actually did that once when we found an incendiary bomb stuck between the attic and the top floor [of the building]. It had just barely ignited. We always had somebody there standing guard.”



Fig. 5. The ruins of the Hechtle apartment in 1943. (R. Hechtle)

On the day when the second Hechtle apartment building was struck by incendiary bombs, Ralf had an unforgettable experience. He had delayed seeking shelter when the attack began, and it nearly cost him his life:

I looked up and saw countless airplanes up in the sky. And so I figured I’d better run to the shelter, because I was closer to the shelter than I was to my house. And so I ran, . . . and I could hear the bombs coming down, whistling like crazy. And [the air pressure] knocked me down and something hit me across the back, and I thought, “I’m gonna die here.” And I looked up and I saw all these buildings collapsing around and fires starting, and I realized that I was hit by a branch of the tree which was lying by me. Through experience, I knew that the firebombs would [be dropped] after the big explosive bombs would

come down. Because they’re lighter, they take longer to come down. [The enemy] just dropped them like matchsticks. And I knew I had to get out of there, because they’d just drop everywhere. And people had been hit by those things and burned to death. So I ran to the entrance of the shelter, and of course, they wouldn’t open the shelter during an attack. So I was standing there in the front of the door, and I watched all these firebombs drop. And as I looked across the street, I saw our house on fire.

After finishing public school, Ralf began an apprenticeship in a pastry shop. His work had interesting but unsettling aspects to it:

My boss owned the building, and our shop was in the basement. Every time there was an attack, the shingles got destroyed on top of the roof, and he sent me up to reshingle—on top of a six-story building. I was fourteen years old. Well, I couldn’t go up there and look down or I’d fall off. At first it didn’t seem to bother me, but I got kind of disgusted with him after a while, and I said, “I’m here to learn the trade, and I don’t want to be a roofer!”

In Gottfried Leyer’s neighborhood on the outskirts of town, the situation was different. They lived in a two-family home that did not have indoor plumbing. “We kept four or five buckets of water lined up by the pump.” One night an incendiary bomb struck the house and began to burn. Emerging from their hiding place in the basement, family members were able to extinguish the flames before too much damage was done.

Gottfried was drafted into the Wehrmacht at the age of sixteen. There was no longer time for service in the Reichsarbeitsdienst in those days; the army needed soldiers. Trained to serve at an anti-aircraft



Fig. 6. Andreas Leyer died of wounds suffered in Lithuania in August 1944. (G. Leyer)

battery, he was stationed near several cities in Germany and even in France for a few months. He was fortunate never to carry a gun or be involved in combat on the ground. When the Allies invaded Germany, Gottfried was in no real danger.

When Manfred Hechtle was still sixteen, he began training to become a pilot in the Luftwaffe and was sent to a small town northwest of Frankfurt. His training did not include flying, because airplanes were a rarity in Germany in the last year of the war. "We had more pilots than airplanes. They would draw lots to see who would fly. You can imagine what happened. They would go up and shoot down three planes and then be shot down themselves. A lot of them didn't come back." Eventually there was no fuel to fly the few airplanes left. Manfred was just barely tall enough to qualify for pilot training, but he never left the ground. Eventually, he was sent home, and the war ended before he could be given another assignment.

The general minutes of the Mannheim Branch illustrate the challenges faced by the members in the last eighteen months of the war:¹⁷

January 30, 1944: Karl Josef Fetsch [of Bühl, currently working in Ludwigshafen] was sustained as the branch president. Paul Prison [of Saarbrücken] was called as district president.

March 1, 1944: Air raids destroyed the home of the branch president and the branch meeting rooms; all church property and all records were destroyed. A new minutes book was started by Elder Karl Josef Fetsch. All possible records will be restored in this book. Meetings were held in the home of Sister Lina Harrer on Kappelerstrasse. Her home was also destroyed, so no meetings were held for a while. Then meetings began again in the home of Sister Luise Vokt at Ludwig Jolly Strasse 67.

March 12, 1944: Georg Dönig, officially branch president, returned from the war severely wounded and decided to go to his wife's home in Grossgartach, Württemberg and thus joined the branch in Heilbronn.

April 22–23, 1944: Ten Saints from Mannheim attended the district conference in Karlsruhe.

December 10, 1944: Meetings were canceled due to air-raid alarms. Two weeks later, meetings were again canceled.

January 6, 1945: Attacks damaged the downtown severely; no members were killed but some have slight property damage.

January 14, 1945: Meetings were canceled again.

January 21, 1945: More attacks, but no major damage among members. Meetings were canceled.

February 18, 1945: The two worst attacks of the war happened today. Again the members suffered little damage and none were killed. Again the Lord has preserved their lives. Average attendance on recent Sundays is twelve.

March 1, 1945: The worst attack of the war hits Mannheim and Ludwigshafen. The entire city is on fire. The Hechtles lose their home for the second time, but a few days later the Lord provides them a nice new place to live in Feudenheim at Talstrasse 67. The rest of the Saints (as far as we know) do not suffer any substantial damage.

March 4, 1945: Meetings are canceled.

March 22–29, 1945: There is fighting in Mannheim; American troops occupied the city. Those members who stayed in the city survived the fighting.

April 15, 1945: Today we were able to hold the first meetings again.

In March 1945, Elfriede Deininger Prison was living with her parents-in-law in a town near Stuttgart. One day, they noticed enemy troops coming toward the house. "They wore gray-green corduroy coats, a hood, and turbans on their heads. . . . We retreated from the windows, too frightened to say anything. We told the children to quietly pray for the Lord's protection." The soldiers were either Algerians or Moroccans serving under French command and were feared by German civilians. Elfriede had already heard stories about atrocities committed by those troops in neighboring villages.

The next day, an enemy soldier entered the Prisons' house, and the situation was instantly tense. Fortunately, he was not searching for victims but rather for somebody to wash his clothes. Without

speaking German, he made it clear that the women of that house were to feed his men and wash for them. Soon, he brought them food, and he and his four Moroccan comrades ate their meals with the household. His name was Rachau, and Elfriede's family was safe with him around.¹⁸



Fig. 7. The city of Ludwigshafen was included within the Mannheim Branch. Because of its critical chemical industry (BASF), the city was under attack at least 125 times. Huge bunkers such as these were constructed to protect the citizens, but more than 1,800 people (including several Saints) were killed.¹⁹ (R. Minert, 1971)

When American tanks rolled into what was left of Mannheim, they fired a few shots, but little resistance was offered, and it was soon calm. The Hechtles had managed to find an apartment in a suburb of Mannheim called Feudenheim. When American soldiers came looking for housing, the Hechtles and many of their neighbors were evicted and not allowed to take anything with them. They spent the next two days at a lumberyard owned by their landlady. As Ralf recalled, the landlady—a beautiful young woman—was able to “charm” the Americans into letting the Hechtles return to their apartment.

According to Manfred, “[the GIs] liked to make friends and stand around talking, but in the evenings we weren’t allowed to look out the window or we would be shot.” As in all other occupied areas of

Germany, curfew regulations were strictly enforced in Mannheim.

Just before the Americans arrived in Mannheim, Manfred Zapf and his mother had decided to go to Epfenbach (about twenty miles to the east and far from large cities).

We had a little cottage in that town from which my father came. While we were on our way, it was just our luck that an air raid would happen. There were no German soldiers around anymore and nothing else to shoot at, so the [pilots] used us as target practice. Two fighter planes were chasing us around a big oak tree, and the tree was so thick that the bullets did not go through it. They were also in each other’s way and had to be really careful not to fly into each other.

Manfred and his mother returned to Mannheim soon after this incident. Despite the fact that their home in the suburb of Käfertal was very close to several large industries, the building had suffered no more damage than a few broken windows during several attacks on those factories.

The end of the war for Ralf Hechtle was certainly enough to satisfy this adventuresome boy. Shortly before the Americans arrived at the end of March, he had been persuaded by a friend to see what items local German antiaircraft crews had left behind when they abandoned their positions.

So we went to the outskirts of town. And we took our wagons and found all kinds of stuff in those antiaircraft batteries—typewriters, phonographs, rifles, hand grenades—and we loaded our wagons. As teenagers we thought that was pretty cool. . . . We put a blanket over the wagon and pulled it home. Just as I got to the corner near where we lived, I saw a tank coming up the street. I didn’t pay that close attention, thinking, “Well, they’re Germans.” And pretty soon some soldiers came up with their ambulance, and they weren’t Germans! I looked a little closer, and there was a [white] star on the tank, and I said, “Uh-oh.” So [a GI] told me to stop, and he wanted to know what I had in my wagon. Well, he threw the blanket off, and there was all this stuff. He started throwing the things into an empty lot next to us. So I thought I’d help him. I picked up a hand grenade, and when he turned

around and saw me, I thought he was going to shoot me right then. I was just thinking I'd help him unload the wagon.



Fig. 8. It is hard to imagine that in 1945 Ralf Hechtile looked old enough to be mistaken for a soldier. (R. Hechtile)

The next thing he knew, Ralf was a prisoner of war, pushed onto a truck with German soldiers headed west. For three days, the truck wandered around with no apparent goal, and during that time the men were given nothing to eat. Finally, they were unloaded at what appeared to be a construction site near the city of Kaiserslautern. They had no roof overhead, and it was cold and wet, but at least they were given some K-rations to eat. It was there that Ralf met a boy who was sixteen and also should not have been treated as a POW. The two were young but understood that they might be handed over to the French; that could only be a bad development, so they devised a plan to escape. At one end of the compound was a brick wall separating the camp from another camp that housed civilians. The boys scaled the wall, mingled among the civilians, and then found a way out of the camp. Unfortunately, they were caught that evening—not knowing about the new curfew regulations. This time they were not treated as soldiers but rather as civilians who had violated curfew. Locked up in the police station, Ralf finally had a decent place to sleep—on a bench. The next day he was interrogated, and his future looked a bit brighter, as he recalled:

The American officer asked me if I knew the Boy Scout Oath. I recited it to him, and he said: "I'll give you a pass that's good for twenty-four hours. You'll have to make it home in twenty-four hours." And he gave me a package of gum and a little candy bar and sent me on my way. I was in my aunt's riding boots that had high heels. I had twenty miles to walk in twenty-four hours, because there was absolutely no transportation. And he told me, "American vehicles will not pick you up; they're not permitted to pick up anybody."

Along the way, Ralf spent a short night in a barn, and then moved on toward the Rhine. French soldiers detained him for a while, suggesting that his papers were not valid, but finally allowed him to pass. When he reached the Rhine, the only way to cross was on a pontoon bridge constructed by the Americans, but they refused to let him do so.

I retreated a little ways and looked across the river. I said to myself, "Well, it's too cold to swim that river." (I'd done it before, but it was too cold at this time of year). And so I was praying and praying, and all of a sudden I was moved to walk. And I walked, and then a truck went across the bridge, and I walked behind that truck and nobody saw me—it was like I was invisible. Nobody said anything.

A few minutes later, he reached his home—barely within the time limit. His mother was thrilled to see him, having had no idea of his whereabouts.

When the war ended, Gottfried Leyer avoided becoming a POW. He was only seventeen and looked young for his age. Before the invaders arrived, he found some civilian clothing and volunteered to work for a farmer. The enemy soldiers moving farther into Germany paid him no mind. He remained on the farm for several months and then began working his way back toward Mannheim. "We would stop in at a farm and offer to work for a while, sleep there, and get something to eat. Then we would move on again. That's how we worked our way home." He was back in Mannheim toward the end of the summer of 1945.

For Elfriede Deininger Prison, the war would not truly end until Horst came home, but she returned to Mannheim in the summer of 1945. She described the conditions there in these words:

The city had nearly been destroyed, but I found my sisters alive and well. It took considerable time, but slowly life began to return to normal. Our branch was reorganized, and some of our brethren returned, so we had the priesthood in our midst again. Some of the men had been killed in the war. All those bitter years brought us closer together.²⁰

One Sunday, an American soldier knocked on the door of Sister Vokt's apartment, where the Saints had gathered. He had been a missionary in Mannheim before the war and wanted to determine the condition of the branch members there. The reunion was a joyous one, and a spirit of love and peace prevailed. According to Elfriede, "My anger at the Americans for bombing us disappeared in that meeting."²¹

The general minutes of the branch read as follows on June 4, 1945:

Elder Eugen Hechtle [again district president] met with Major Warner, the representative of the [American] military government for church and educational affairs, and was treated very correctly. He was given two signs to be posted at the homes of Sister Vokt and the Hechtle family (where meetings are held), reading "Off limits to military personnel by order of the commanding general." Major Warner promised us all possible assistance and expressed his hope that the church may soon conduct all of its activities again. Because we have no contact with the mission office, he promised to establish contact for us there. He also requested that we report to him every month regarding our activities, our progress and our finances.²²

Former missionary Walter E. Scoville worked hard to establish contact with Latter-day Saints in Germany after the war. He received this response to a letter to Helene Deininger of the Mannheim Branch on January 30, 1947; she offered a summary of the war's effect on the branch:

In the beginning, it was terrible for us to think about being at war, and we hoped that it would end soon. But we learned little by little to deal with it and to be patient. . . . Before he died in 1941, I used to pick up old Brother Scholl and walk with him to church and back. He had a little lantern and it was too dangerous for him to go alone during black-outs. . . . My own dear mother died a year after him. . . . She had a terrible kidney disease and wished to be relieved of her sufferings through death. . . . But she comforted us and encouraged us to remain faithful to the Church. . . . I would like to tell you about our experiences during the war. I would like to avoid the very sad things, but I really can't do that, because there were sad events. My sister, [Lina] Harrer, lost her husband and her home. I lived with her at the time. Elfriede [Deininger] married and her husband was missing in action in Russia for two years. Last year we were thrilled when she finally heard from him. They have been writing each other often and she hopes that he will return soon. . . . Paula has been waiting for five years for her fiancé to return. . . . After the first few air raids, we lost our beautiful meeting rooms at D4 [sic]. The sisters in the branch had to leave town with their little children and the brethren had to serve in the military. We could only meet on Sundays. There were only a few of us. We first met in the home of Sister Harrer, but she was bombed out so we met in Sister Vokt's home. . . . Life was hard but we enjoyed our church meetings. We often had to walk there because the streetcars were not running. . . . It took about 1½ hours each way. We really miss dear Brother Ziegler. We last heard from him just before the war ended. I still believe that he is alive and I always pray for him. Of all of the brethren, he stayed home the longest. After every air raid, he went out looking for the branch members. That was very encouraging for us. . . . Brother Andreas



Fig. 9. Max Ziegler (shown here as a civilian in 1942) was one of several young men of the Mannheim Branch to die as soldiers.

Leyer was killed in battle. He did a lot of work in the branch and was a great man. Brother Dönig died with a strong testimony of the truth. We lost track of him three years ago. Among the few items we could rescue are the holy scriptures you gave us. Shortly after Mother died, I worked in the mission office until I was called to a *Pflichtjahr* for ten months in 1942. My sister [Lina] and I took those books with us.²³

Perhaps the last soldier of the West German Mission to return from a POW camp after World War II was Horst Prison, who arrived in Saarbrücken on December 31, 1949. His wife, Elfriede, had been living with his parents for some time and vividly recalled their reunion:

I was at the market with my mother-in-law one day, and I had heard on the radio that [Horst] was on his way home. Everybody else thought I was crazy because I was still waiting for him to come home. The next morning at 2 a.m., I got a telegram telling me that I should pick him up at the Saarbrücken railroad station the next day. See, I was not crazy! But when I saw him, I realized that he was no longer the man I had married. The war had changed him. For a while, it was very difficult [to be with him]. He only said yes and no—nothing else. He did not want to see anybody. After quite a long time, he got back into our routine. I needed a lot of patience.



Fig. 10. Surviving Mannheim Branch members in 1945. (R. Hechtle)

Elfriede offered this summary of her spiritual status after so many challenging experiences: “My testimony was strengthened through prayer. I found peace because I prayed. I have to say that all these

things, although they might have been terrible and difficult to bear, made me a stronger person. There were so many instances in which I felt the help of my Heavenly Father. I knew he protected me—absolutely.”²⁴



Fig. 11. The ruins of downtown Mannheim in 1945. (R. Hechtle)

During the war, the members of the Mannheim Branch had been scattered to the four winds and suffered heavy losses in many respects, but the testimonies of survivors were strong and the future of the branch among the ruins of Hitler’s Third Reich was promising.

IN MEMORIAM

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

Susi Maria Bentz b. Mannheim, Baden, 29 Jul 1910; dau. of Theodor Bentz and Eva Pfeiffer; bp. 19 Dec 1926; conf. 19 Dec 1926; m. — Braun; missing as of 20 Mar 1946 (FHL microfilm 68799, no. 37; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 386)

Johann Billian b. Mannheim, Baden, 25 Jun 1894; son of Johann Billian and Therese Weigert or Weigart; bp. 27 Jun 1908; conf. 25 Jul 1908; missing as of 20 Mar 1946 (FHL microfilm 68799, no. 1; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 345)

Katharina Burkart b. Hagenbach, Pfalz, Bayern, 25 Jan 1872; dau. of Franz Burkart and Katharine Gehrlein; bp. 13 Feb 1927; conf. 13 Feb 1927; m. 18 Jul 1927, — Mai; missing as of 20 Mar 1946 (FHL microfilm 68799, no. 44; FHL microfilm 245225; IGI)

Elsa Frieda Fink b. Ludwigshafen, Pfalz, Bayern, 2 Nov 1917; dau. of Johann Fink and Frieda Emma Scharpf; bp. 22 Nov 1925; conf. 22 Nov 1925; missing

as of 20 Mar 1946 (FHL microfilm 68799, no. 4; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 7; FHL microfilm 25766)

Eugenie Elisa Fink b. Rheinau, Mannheim, Baden, 12 Jun 1912; dau. of Johann Fink and Frieda Emma Scharpf; bp. 24 Sep 1921; conf. 24 Sep 1921; missing as of 20 Mar 1946 (FHL microfilm 68799, no. 3; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 5; FHL microfilm 25766)

Karoline Fresch b. Vellberg, Württemberg, 28 Sep 1879; dau. of Georg Fresch and Margarethe Wolpert; bp. 2 Apr 1920; conf. 4 Apr 1920; m. Otto Bruno Hätscher; missing as of 10 Dec 1944 (FHL microfilm 68797, no. 350; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 350; FHL microfilm 68799, no. 7)

Friedrich Hätscher b. Mannheim, Mannheim, Baden, 14 Feb 1913; son of Otto Bruno Hätscher and Karolina Fresch; bp. 1 Oct 1921; conf. 2 Oct 1921; missing as of 10 Dec 1944 (FHL microfilm 68799, no. 9; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 351)

Otto Bruno Hätscher b. Lissa, Posen, Preussen, 20 Mar 1876; son of Otto Hätscher and Ann Schwank; bp. 21 Aug 1920; conf. 22 Aug 1920; missing as of 10 Dec 1944 (FHL microfilm 68799, no. 6; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 349)

Ludwig Wilhelm Harrer b. Mannheim, Mannheim, Baden, 13 Sep 1912; son of Wilhelm Christian Harrer and Elisabeth Eck; m. Mannheim, Mannheim, Baden, 27 Oct 1934, Lina Deininger; Waffen-SS sergeant; k. Kutilicka, near Wassiljewschtschina, Russia, 22 Feb 1942 (Prison; www.volksbund.de, IGI)

Gustav Wilhelm Emil Herzog b. Mannheim, Mannheim, Baden, 23 Jan 1922; son of Jakob Herzog and Maria Eva Schulz; bp. 1 Feb 1931; conf. 1 Feb 1931; missing as of 20 Mar 1946 (FHL microfilm 68799, no. 66; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 456; FHL microfilm 162782, 1930 and 1935 censuses)

Heinrich August Herzog b. Mannheim 6 Dec 1926; son of Jakob Herzog and Maria Eva Schulz; bp. 8 Sep 1935; conf. 8 Sep 1935; missing as of 20 Mar 1946 (FHL microfilm 68797, no. 598; FHL microfilm no. 162782, 1930 and 1935 censuses)

Ludwig Daniel Höflich b. Ludwigshafen, Pfalz, Bayern, 4 May or Sep 1909; son of Ludwig Höflich and Philippine Kratz; bp. 24 Sep 1921; conf. 25 Sep 1921; m.; missing 10 Dec 1944 (FHL microfilm 68799, no. 11; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 355)

Ludwig Höflich b. Ludwigshafen, Konstanz, Baden, 2 Aug 1881; son of Wilhelm Höflich and Charlotte Hassel; bp. Ludwigshafen, Pfalz, Bayern, 11 Feb 1930; conf. 11 Feb 1930; m. Philippine Kratz; 1 child; k. air raid 1943 (FHL microfilm 68797, no. 402; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 402; IGI)

Wilhelm Martin Rupprecht Höflich b. Mannheim, Mannheim, Baden, 13 Mar 1915; son of Ludwig Höflich

and Philippine Kratz; bp. 26 May 1923; k. air raid 10 Dec 1943 or 1944 (FHL microfilm 68799, no. 12; FHL microfilm 68797, no. 356; FHL microfilm 162786, 1935 census)

Karl Josef Hoffmann b. Sinsheim, Heidelberg, Baden, 2 Jan 1886; bp. 16 May 1919; conf. 16 May 1919; d. 1943 (FHL microfilm 68799, no. 39; IGI)

Andreas Johann Leyer b. Mannheim, Mannheim, Baden, 14 Jul 1920; son of Johann Georg Leyer and Anna Hess; bp. 1 Feb 1931; conf. 1 Feb 1931; ord. deacon 3 Feb 1935; ord. teacher 30 Oct 1938; lance corporal; d. of wounds Akmene, Lithuania, 18 Aug 1944 (G. Leyer; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 460; FHL microfilm 68799, no. 65; www.volksbund.de; IGI)

Johann Georg Leyer b. Mannheim, Mannheim, Baden, 3 Jan 1918; son of Johann Georg Leyer and Anna Hess; bp. 1 Feb 1931; conf. 1 Feb 1931; home guard; d. tuberculosis Mannheim (G. Leyer; FHL microfilm 68799, no. 62)

Georg Müller b. Altleiningen, Pfalz, Bayern, 2 Aug 1870; son of Johann Müller and Juliana Alebrand; bp. 8 Aug 1927; conf. 8 Aug 1927; missing as of 20 Mar 1946 (FHL microfilm 68799, no. 47; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 5)

Gertrud Scharf b. Mannheim, Baden, 26 Oct 1914; dau. of Alois Scharf and Martha Wolf; bp. 21 Jun 1931; conf. 21 Jul 1931; m. — Kohl; missing as of 20 Mar 1946 (FHL microfilm 68799, no. 68; CR 275 8 2441, no. 460)

Wilhelm August Heinrich Scharrer b. Karlsruhe, Karlsruhe, Baden, 31 Aug 1900; son of August Scharrer and Emilie Wolf; bp. 21 Jun 1916; conf. 21 Jun 1916; ord. priest 22 Jan 1918; missing as of 20 Mar 1946 (CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 330; FHL microfilm 245258, 1930 and 1935 censuses)

Johann Martin Scholl b. Fränkisch Crumbach, Hessen, 12 Jan 1862; son of Johann Jakob Scholl and Margaretha Elisabeth Klinger; bp. 18 Feb 1899; conf. 19 Feb 1899; ord. elder 17 Sep 1916; m. Mannheim, Mannheim, Baden, 7 Jul 1888, Elisabeth Ültzhöfer; 4 children; d. cancer or heart ailment Mannheim, Baden, 29 Feb 1940; bur. Mannheim 4 Mar 1940 (Prison; Stern 1940, nos. 5–6, pg. 95; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 361; IGI, AF)

Karl Friedrich Scholl b. Mannheim, Mannheim, Baden, 25 Mar 1895; son of Johann Martin Scholl and Elisabeth Ültzhöfer; bp. 25 Nov 1906; conf. 25 Nov 1906; m. 4 Dec 1921 or 1927, Maria Berta Littic; d. insanity 30 or 31 Jan 1943 (FHL microfilm 68799, no. 15; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 362; IGI)

Emil Hermann Schulz b. Frankenthal, Pfalz, Bayern, 1 Jan 1911; son of Emil Friedrich Herm Schulz and Anna Maria Maltry; bp. 4 Dec 1921; conf. 4 Dec

1921; k. in battle 1942 or MIA 10 Dec 1944 (FHL microfilm 68799, no. 19; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 367; IGI)

Peter Schulz b. Mannheim, Mannheim, Baden, 24 Dec 1912; son of Emil Friedrich Hermann Schulz and Maria Maltry; bp. 4 Dec 1921; conf. 4 Dec 1921; ord. priest 10 Feb 1935; missing as of 20 Nov 1945 (CR 375 8 2451, no. 683; FHL microfilm no. 245260, 1925 and 1935 censuses)

Wilhelm Peter Schulz b. Frankenthal, Pfalz, Bayern, 7 Jan 1905; son of Emil Friedrich Hermann Schulz and Anna Maria Maltry; bp. 25 Oct 1922; conf. 25 Oct 1922; missing as of 20 Mar 1946 (FHL microfilm 68799, no. 18)

Friedrich Süss b. Ludwigshafen, Pfalz, Bayern, 21 Dec 1876; son of Johann Süss and Anna Maria Sophia Moritz; bp. 7 Aug 1891; conf. 7 Aug 1891; missing as of 20 Mar 1946 (FHL microfilm 68799, no. 13)

Minna Wagner b. Neuenburg, Württemberg, 22 Aug 1880; dau. of Karl Wagner and Karolin Röck; bp. 13 Feb 1927; conf. 13 Feb 1927; m. — Hofbauer; missing as of 20 Mar 1946 (FHL microfilm 68799, no. 43)

Franziska Viktoria Weber b. Raschlovke or Raschlovko, Preussen, 15 Dec 1873; dau. of Christian Weber and Olga Goschalandschie; bp. 30 Aug 1925; conf. 30 Aug 1925; m. — Max Vogelmann; missing as of 20 Mar 1946 (FHL microfilm 68799, no. 31; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 10)

Else Wessa b. Ludwigshafen, Pfalz, Bayern, 10 Nov 1907; dau. of Georg Wessa and Anna Klara Bissantz; missing 20 Mar 1946 (FHL microfilm 68799, no. 48)

Anton Ziegler b. Mannheim, Mannheim, Baden, 19 Mar 1905; son of Markus Ziegler and Anna Müller; bp. 17 Nov 1929; m. 17 Aug 1929; d. as a soldier crossing a river in Russia 1943 or 15 Feb 1945 or MIA Ostpreußen 1 Jan 1945 (Prison; www.volksbund.de; IGI)

4. Horst Peter Prison and Elfriede Deininger Prison, telephone interview with Jennifer Heckmann in German, October 24, 2008; summarized in English by Judith Sartowski.
5. Gottfried Leyer, interview by the author, Hyrum, UT, July 29, 2008.
6. Walter E. Scoville, papers, CHL MS 18613; translated by the author. Scoville's ambitious correspondence with German friends was interrupted when the United States entered the war on December 8, 1941.
7. Paul H. Kelly and Lin H. Johnson, *Courage in a Season of War* (2002), 264.
8. Manfred Zapf, telephone interview with the author in German, April 7, 2009.
9. Kelly and Johnson, *Courage in a Season of War*, 268–69.
10. Manfred Hechtle, interview by the author, Hyrum, UT, July 29, 2008.
11. Ralf (Ralph) Hechtle, interview by the author, Brigham City, UT, October 21, 2006.
12. Kelly and Johnson, *Courage in a Season of War*, 266.
13. *Ibid.*, 266–67.
14. *Ibid.*, 268.
15. *Ibid.*, 268
16. He had been living in Kenzingen (south of Karlsruhe) for some time after being evacuated from Mannheim.
17. Mannheim Branch general minutes, CHL LR 5344 21.
18. Kelly and Johnson, *Courage in a Season of War*, 270–71.
19. Ludwigshafen city archive.
20. *Ibid.*, 271–72.
21. *Ibid.*, 272.
22. Mannheim Branch general minutes.
23. Walter E. Scoville, papers.
24. Kelly and Johnson, *Courage in a Season of War*, 272.

PFORZHEIM BRANCH

NOTES

1. Presiding Bishopric, "Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955," 257, CR 4 12.
2. West German Mission branch directory 1939, CHL LR 10045 11.
3. The map of the city's interior shows approximately 150 blocks within a huge half circle. The house numbers on each block run consecutively around the block in a clockwise direction. Before the war, there were essentially no street names in that part of the city. The landlord to whom the branch paid rent was Albert Speer, at that time Hitler's personal architect and a rising star in Nazi Germany. He later became the minister of war production and was sentenced to twenty years in prison at the trial of the major war criminals in Nuremberg in 1945–46. His address on Schloss Wolfsbrunnenweg in Heidelberg in 1939 was the same location where the author interviewed Speer in October 1975.

Famous for its jewelry industry, the city of Pforzheim had 78,320 inhabitants in 1939.¹ The branch of the LDS Church in that city numbered seventy persons, more than two-thirds of whom were females twelve years and older. There were only two elders in the branch at the time, but ten men or young men held the Aaronic Priesthood. Pforzheim is only fifteen miles from Karlsruhe, and the cities were connected by rail in those days, so it was a simple matter for Pforzheim Saints to attend district conferences in Karlsruhe.

Pforzheim Branch²	1939
Elders	2
Priests	3
Teachers	2
Deacons	5
Other Adult Males	9
Adult Females	49
Male Children	0
Female Children	0
<i>Total</i>	70

The branch rented meeting rooms at Nagoldstrasse 3, on the left bank of the Nagold River and only a few blocks from the center of town.³ As the war approached, the branch was holding its Sunday School meeting at 10:00 a.m. and sacrament meeting at 7:00 p.m. The Primary organization met on Mondays at 5:30 p.m., the Relief Society on Wednesdays at 8:00 p.m., and the MIA on Thursdays at 8:00 p.m.⁴ A genealogical course was given every third Thursday of the month.



Fig. 1. The Pforzheim Branch Primary children in 1936. (Der Stern)

During the weeks before World War II began, the branch president in Pforzheim was an American

missionary, Sylvan Burgi. The mission directory of July 22, 1939, shows no counselors, but George Stehle led the Sunday School and Fritz Hermann the YMMIA.

Marianne Kappenstein (born 1928) describing the meeting rooms: “We had several rooms on the ground floor of an apartment building where we held the meetings. When you first came in, there were coat hangers all around the first room where you hung up your coats. And then you went to the back where there were chairs set up. . . . We had a piano in the room. There were not very many people in attendance.”⁵ The setting was so unimpressive that she was hesitant to tell her friends where the church met. After all, just a few houses down the street was a beautiful Lutheran church (“You could almost call it a cathedral”).



Fig. 2. The Pforzheim Branch held its meetings in house no. 3 on Nagoldstrasse, the white four-story building to the left of the Lutheran church. (H.-P. Metzner)

At the age of ten, Marianne had been inducted into the Jungvolk, and she recalled participating in a number of very worthy activities. For example, at Christmas time she and her friends “would cut out wooden dwarfs or dolls and paint them as gifts for needy children.” Regarding the question of political training, she claimed, “I cannot say that we were mistreated or brainwashed; we were never indoctrinated or involved in unwholesome activities.”

According to young Marianne, several prominent



Fig. 3. Missionary George Blake took this photograph of Pforzheim Branch members on an outing in the forest in 1939. (G. Blake)

families comprised the majority of attendees at church meetings in the Pforzheim Branch. One of those families was named Frei. One Sunday morning, Elsa Frei and her two children, Doreanne and Karl Heinz, came to church very upset; they had just learned that Karl Gustav Frei (not a member of the Church) had passed away after being consigned to an asylum due to some kind of mental illness. “They didn’t say it in so many words, but they let on that *they* had done away with him,” according to Marianne Kappenstein. “We could guess who *they* were.” Apparently Sister Frei believed that her husband had become a victim of the infamous Nazi euthanasia program.

Ursula Mussler and her mother, Frieda, were bombed out in Frankfurt in 1943 and moved to the town of Mühlacker, ten miles east of Pforzheim. Ursula said:

There were about forty people in attendance in the Pforzheim branch. I always felt welcome in

whatever branch I was on Sundays. We tried to attend the meetings as much as we could. Usually, we went every two weeks and whenever there was a conference. Those were held in Karlsruhe, so we went there by train. We always had enough priesthood holders to preside in sacrament meetings.⁶

The only information found regarding the leadership of this branch during World War II comes from the general minutes of the Bühl Branch (also in the Karlsruhe District): on February 26, 1944, the funeral of Maria Kappenstein took place under the direction of Friedrich Hermann, the branch president in Pforzheim.⁷ Marianne and her sisters were then orphans, having lost their father the previous year.

As had happened in quite a few major cities in Germany during the war, the Allies mounted one massive attack to destroy Pforzheim in April 1945. Marianne Kappenstein recalled with clarity the event. She had already lost both parents and was

under the guardianship of her elder sister, Ella. Early on that fateful day, Marianne watched Allied airplanes flying very low over the city, back and forth, following the course of the three rivers that flowed through the town. However, the planes dropped no bombs, and the all-clear was sounded. Marianne then left town and walked to a small factory outside of town. At sixteen, she was considered capable of watching out for bombs at the factory after a raid and either trying to put out fires or reporting them to the authorities. She and friend sat around for a while, but then the sirens sounded again just before dusk. They hurried into a cave dug in the mountainside to serve as a shelter. A terrible air raid was unleashed, and when Marianne emerged from the cave, "the city was totally destroyed and everything was burning."

Somehow, Marianne was able to ride a streetcar toward the city, but they could not get into the interior of Pforzheim. She then began a desperate search for her sisters. "Everybody was looking for everybody." At about four in the morning, somebody tapped her on the back, and it was Ella. She had attempted to save some of the family's property by carrying it down to the basement, but the fires destroyed the entire apartment house, and they lost everything. Fortunately, another sister had gone to the suburb of Wurm and was thus safe during the attack.

Following the catastrophic raid on Pforzheim, Marianne found herself with nothing but her sisters and the clothes on her back. In fact, she was wearing her old shoes, thinking it unwise to wear her good shoes to go to the factory the day before. Now she had no home, no church (the rooms at Nagoldstrasse 3 were likewise burned out), and no parents.

"When the war came to an end, we were staying in Mühlacker," explained Ursula Mussler. "The British came into our area first, later also the Americans. [Eventually] we moved to Bad Homburg near Frankfurt." Soon, Ursula's brother Hans joined them, and they looked forward to happier times. Ursula had this to say regarding the

spirit of the Latter-day Saints during the war, based on her membership in the Frankfurt and Pforzheim Branches:

The members helped each other out a lot during the entire war. We got along well and were striving for the same goal. We were grateful for the clothes that were shared and for the members who were there in difficult situations. My faith kept me going during the war. And also the fact that we attended Church whenever it was possible for us helped us very much.

Stan Clift, an American Latter-day Saint soldier, was stationed in a small town just south of Pforzheim in July 1945 and went in search of the members of the Church there. He wrote this account of meetings held in the home of the Stahl family:

Nelly Stahl lived at [Hirsauerstrasse] 135 with her elderly parents. I would guess that the father was in his 70s. The church service was held in a home along side of the road through town, just a short walk north of the school building where I was bunked. There were about ten women, perhaps two or three small children and I vaguely recall one very elderly man. The women were in their 50s or so for the most part. Nelly was in her 30s I think. . . . She and one other lady spoke English. At the first service another LDS soldier and I blessed the sacrament and passed it to those present. We were asked to speak, which we did briefly, with our thoughts being translated into German by Nelly. They were appreciative of being able to partake of the sacrament. . . . After the service Nelly told me that they would like us to come back next Sunday and bless the sacrament in German. She volunteered to teach me how to pronounce the words. . . . Nelly indicated that the men in the church had been taken into the German army and were not back home yet.⁸

Whereas it is clear from Brother Clift's report that the Pforzheim Branch had survived the war, it is not known precisely when local priesthood holders were finally present to direct the activities of that branch.

Just before the war ended, the Kappenstein sisters had fled Pforzheim for Kassel, a city in northern Germany. As Marianne recalled, it took some

railroad travel and lots of hitchhiking to get there. After returning to Pforzheim during the summer, she was finally baptized on October 20, 1945, by Johann Albert Dahl (of Karlsruhe) along with her younger sister.

The Pforzheim City Archive estimates that 17,600 people were killed during twenty attacks on the city. The entire downtown was destroyed as well as approximately 70–80 percent of the rest of the city. There was truly very little left when the French army entered the city in April 1945. On July 8, the French left the city, and it became part of the American occupation zone.⁹

IN MEMORIAM

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

Alois Arnegger b. Stuttgart, Stuttgart, Württemberg, 6 Jul 1915; dau. of Luise Arnegger; bp. 2 Aug 1924; conf. 2 Aug 1924; missing as of 20 Nov 1945 (CR 375 8 2451, no. 684; FHL microfilm 25713, 1930 census)

Elise Blombach b. Barmen, Rheinprovinz, 28 May 1900; dau. of August Karl Blombach and Amalie Lina Pauline Weinreich; bp. 20 Jan 1913; conf. 20 Jan 1913; m. Pforzheim, Karlsruhe, Baden, 2 Jan 1920, Eduard Sittel; k. air raid Karlsruhe, Karlsruhe, Baden, 22 or 23 Feb 1945 (CHL microfilm 2458, form 42 FP, pt. 37, all-mission list 1938–45, district list 250–51; CR 275 8 2441, no. 529; FHL microfilm 245266, 1935 census; IGI, AF)

Marie Gayde b. Pinache, Neckarkreis, Württemberg, 16 Aug 1888; dau. of Wilhelm Gayde and Rosine Pauline Huppenbauer; bp. 5 Aug 1932; conf. 5 Aug 1932; m. Pinache 9 Aug 1917, Karl Heinrich Kappenstein; 5 children; d. heart and kidney diseases Pforzheim, Karlsruhe, Baden, 24 Feb 1944 (FHL microfilm 68797, no. 519; IGI)

Elsa Paula Girrbach b. Dillweissenstein, Karlsruhe, Baden, 31 Jan 1912; dau. of Johann Georg Girrbach and Emma Mayer; bp. 15 Feb 1924; conf. 15 Feb 1924; m. 9 Dec 1933, Otto Renz; k. air raid Karlsruhe, Karlsruhe, Baden, 24 Dec 1944 (CHL microfilm 2458, form 42 FP, pt. 37, all-mission list 1938–45, district list 250–51; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 238; FHL microfilm 271401, 1935 census; IGI)

Willy Georg Girrbach b. Niefern, Karlsruhe, Baden, 27 Nov 1907; son of Johann Georg Girrbach and Emma Mayer; bp. 15 Feb 1924; k. Auray, Morbihan, France, 7 Aug 1944; bur. Mont-de-Huisnes, France

(CHL microfilm 2458, form 42 FP, pt. 37, 1949 list 2:444–45; CHL CR 375 8 2458; www.volksbund.de; FHL microfilm 25774, 1930 and 1935 censuses; IGI)

Charlotte Ihle b. Pforzheim, Karlsruhe, Baden, 13 Jun 1925; dau. of Herman Heinrich Braun and Maria Theresia Ille; bp. 8 Apr 1934; conf. 22 Apr 1934; m. 1943, Walter Adolf Ratzenberger; m. — Schmiedt; k. air raid Pforzheim 23 Feb 1945 (CHL microfilm 2458, form 42 FP, pt. 37, all-mission list 1938–45, district list 250–51; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 572; FHL microfilm 271364, 1935 census; IGI, AF)

Lina Maria Knodel b. Neuenbürg, Calw, Württemberg, 10 Dec 1874; dau. of Ernst Theodor Knodel and Elisabeth Friederike Burkhardt; bp. 25 Mar 1917; conf. 25 Mar 1917; m. Pforzheim, Karlsruhe, Baden, 25 Aug 1906, Leopold Christian Maleck; 4 children; d. dropsy Pforzheim 29 or 30 Jan 1940; bur. Pforzheim 1 Feb 1940 (*Stern* 1940, nos. 5–6, 95; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 247; IGI)

Bertha Elisabeth Maleck b. Pforzheim, Karlsruhe, Baden, 2 Apr 1909; dau. of Leopold Christian Maleck and Lina Maria Knodel; bp. 22 Jul 1919; conf. 22 Jul 1919; d. brain disease 11 Jun 1940 (FHL microfilm 68797, no. 250; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 250; FHL microfilm 245225, 1930 and 1935 censuses; IGI)

Emma Girrbach Mayer b. Elfringen, Bilingen, Karlsruhe, Baden, 24 Mar 1887; dau. of Meinrad Mayer and Katharina Preschler; bp. 15 Feb 1924; conf. 15 Feb 1924; m. 26 Feb 1927, Jacob Mangold; k. air raid Karlsruhe 24 Dec 1944 (CHL microfilm 2458, form 42 FP, pt. 37, all-mission list, 1938–45; district list, 250–51; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 235; FHL microfilm 245225, 1935 census; IGI)

Amalie Johanna Schwarz b. Gonsenheim, Mainz, Hessen, 3 Nov 1914; dau. of Phillipp Schwarz and Frieda Stahl; bp. 15 Feb 1924; conf. 15 Feb 1924; m. 30 or 31 Mar 1934, Otto Friedrich Elfner; k. air raid Karlsruhe 24 Dec 1944 (CHL microfilm 2458, form 42 FP, pt. 37, all-mission list, 1938–45; district list, 250–51; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 264; IGI)

Frieda Stahl b. Pforzheim, Karlsruhe, Baden, 18 Feb 1892; dau. of Ludwig Stahl and Friederike Zeeb; bp. 28 Aug 1920; conf. 28 Aug 1920; m. 14 Nov 1914, Phillipp Schwarz; 1 child; d. heart ailment 13 Dec 1943 (FHL microfilm 68797, no. 263; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 263; FHL microfilm 245260; IGI)

NOTES

1. Pforzheim city archive.
2. Presiding Bishopric, "Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955," 257, CHL CR 4 12.

3. West German Mission branch directory 1939, CHL LR 10045 11.
4. With no children listed among the members at the time, one wonders if the Primary was not meeting then or if non-LDS children were being taught.
5. Marianne Kappenstein Gubler, telephone interview with Jennifer Heckmann, October 3, 2008.
6. Ursula Mussler Schmitt, telephone interview with Jennifer Heckmann in German, March 31, 2009; summarized in English by Judith Sartowski.
7. Bühl Branch general minutes, CHL LR 1180 11.
8. Stan Clift to the author, July 11, 2007.
9. Pforzheim city archive.

SAARBRÜCKEN BRANCH

The city of Saarbrücken lies astride the Saar River, which forms part of the boundary between Germany and France. Located in the middle of an important iron-ore region, the city's value to Germany caused it to be contested in several wars over the centuries. In 1939, the city had 131,000 inhabitants.¹ The local LDS branch was truly a frontier outpost, because the nearest branches to the west were deep inside Belgium and France.

With twenty-two priesthood holders among its 111 members, this branch was in very good condition as World War II approached. The branch president was Paul Prison. His family and several others lived in the town of Dudweiler, two miles east of Saarbrücken. According to the directory of the West German Mission, most Church programs were operating in this branch in July 1939.² Meetings were held in rented rooms at Kronprinzenstrasse 9 in Saarbrücken. As was true all over the mission, Sunday School began at 10 a.m. Sacrament meeting was held at 3:00 p.m., preceded on the last Sunday of the month by a genealogical meeting. The Relief Society met on Tuesdays at 6:30 p.m. and the MIA at 8:00 p.m. No Primary meetings were being held at the time, despite the fact that the branch membership included eighteen children.

Saarbrücken Branch ³	1939
Elders	8
Priests	4
Teachers	3
Deacons	7
Other Adult Males	21
Adult Females	50
Male Children	10
Female Children	8
<i>Total</i>	111



Fig. 1. The wedding of Elisabeth Klein and Hans Reger in 1937 was celebrated in the chapel of the Saarbrücken Branch. Note the pictures of Joseph Smith (left) and Christ in Gethsemane (right). (H. Reger)

In August 1937, Elisabeth Klein married a fine non-LDS man, Hans Reger. A year later, she was the mother of a baby girl and he was away from home in the service of his country. Elisabeth lived in an apartment at Metzgerstrasse 25 and continued to enjoy her association with the Saints in Saarbrücken. As she recalled, "We branch members were all friends. We didn't have any friends elsewhere. The Church was all of our activity. About forty or fifty people came to church in those days."⁴

Paul Prison (born 1925) described the building in which the branch met:

The room was about thirty feet long and thirteen feet wide. It was kind of a Hinterhaus with an empty garage in front and a big door where we parked our bicycles. And then there were two steps to go into it and there was kind of a potbelly stove that we heated in the wintertime. There was a sign with the church's name on it, maybe three by four feet out where everybody could see it. Our building was across the street from a big Catholic church with a tall steeple. We had a pump organ and behind that was a door and there was a little room where the children went and we had another room on the right side (they took that away during the war because they needed room for the people to live there). There were four chairs on the left side and three on the right side of each row, maybe ten to twelve rows. I don't think we had more than thirty-five to forty people in there because some lived very far away.⁵

Paul recalled going with his father (branch president Paul Prison) to visit members who lived many

miles from town. "They didn't come to church very often. I would say we had about fifteen to eighteen people out of town [as far as fifty miles away]."

Branch president Paul Prison was a coal miner. By the time the war was well under way, he was required to work seven days a week. However, according to his son, Paul, there were ways to avoid that in order to attend church. "My father told his boss that he was sick on Sunday. When they asked for a note from his doctor, he told them that the doctor's office was closed on Sunday. If you were productive (and my father was) and they needed you, you were safe. Wherever he worked, there was never a cave-in."

Even before the war began, a member of the Saarbrücken Branch became a victim of the Nazi regime. Harald Ludwig Adam (born 1931) was taken from the family when he was six years old. According



Fig. 2. This prewar photograph of members of the Saarbrücken Branch includes American missionaries. (G. Blake)

to his elder brother Max (born 1927), Harald was mentally handicapped and could not learn,

but his body was in perfect shape. . . . When school time came and he was six years old, two devils came to my parents and told them of a wonderful hospital which was created by Hitler for people like my brother, and they would help him. He was taken to the hospital just north of Frankfurt. Idstein is the name of the town. . . . My parents always got a letter every two months that he was doing well and was happy. They said that we could not see him because if we saw him it would destroy what he had learned. Then we got a telegram that he passed away; it said that he died of the flu and a heart condition. But there is no [history of] heart condition in our family at all so I always wondered what happened. Mother in her heart knew what had happened.⁶

Harald was one of tens of thousands of victims of the government's infamous euthanasia program.⁷



Fig. 3. Youth of the Saarbrücken Branch with missionaries in 1938. (C. Hillam)

When France and Germany issued mutual declarations of war in September 1939, Elisabeth Klein Reger and her daughter were evacuated from Saarbrücken under the assumption that the border city would soon be under attack by the French. While living in Landstuhl, Elisabeth gave birth to another daughter. After the surrender of France in June 1940, Sister Reger and her two daughters (Isolde, born 1938, and Ingrid, born 1940) were allowed to return to Saarbrücken, where she lived in her widowed mother's apartment.

Young Paul Prison avoided associating with the Hitler Youth and somehow got by without punishment. However, the war inflicted pain on this fifteen-year-old early on when a bomb hit the home of a friend across the street from the Prison home in Dudweiler:

My friend died in 1940, my good friend. He lived just kitty-corner across the street from us. He was my age. It was about 9 or 10 p.m. and I heard an airplane flying around and around very low, and then I heard a big explosion. That big explosion threw me right out of my bed, and I looked out the window, and my best friend's house was on fire. I got my clothes on and went there, and the house was completely collapsed, and there were already several people. We took our shovels and started digging people out. Eight people lived in that house, and my friend was the first one we could see, but he had a big beam right on top of him, and he was still alive. We couldn't get it off of him, so somebody went and got a big saw, and we had to saw it in three places. By the time we lifted the beam off, he was dead. Then we got the others out; we got his mother out, but she had no head anymore. Then we got his father out, and he was dead. Then we got the others out. Eight people, we laid them all out across the street on the grass. And while we were shoveling them out, the airplane came around several times and shot at us with machine guns.

At the age of ten, Max Adam had been inducted into the Jungvolk with his classmates at school. At fourteen, he was advanced into the Hitler Youth and the Sunday meetings of that organization conflicted with the branch meeting schedule. Max's father, master cabinet-maker Max G. Adam (not a member of the Church but a kind supporter of his wife and



Fig. 4. Max Adam in the uniform of the National Labor Service in 1942. (M. Adam)

sons), came up with a fine plan to allow young Max to miss the Hitler Youth meetings. One of the organization's programs collected gifts for children each Christmas. The leaders fell for Max's idea: if the boy could produce fifty toys for Christmas, he would be exempt from attending meetings. This allowed Max to continue to attend church meetings on Sundays.

At the age of fifteen, Max was assigned to work on a farm for a year. The farm was located several hundred miles from Saarbrücken, so Max was unable to visit his family at all during this year of service. Living with other boys in a camp, he participated in a flag-raising ceremony every morning before walking to the farm to which he was assigned. He was totally isolated from the Church while there. Back at home in 1942, he found that Saarbrücken was harassed by air-raid alarms quite often. Allied bombers rarely attacked, but every time they flew to other cities and passed within a certain number of miles of Saarbrücken, the alarms sounded and another night's rest was disturbed.

One night, the airplanes that had so often passed Saarbrücken on their way to other targets unloaded their bombs there. Within minutes, apartment houses were burning in the neighborhood of the Adam home. Max recalled being part of a bucket brigade as local residents worked feverishly to prevent a fire on the top floor of the building from spreading downward and to adjacent structures. In that same attack, the top floor of the Adams' apartment building was damaged, but the family's apartment was still inhabitable. They replaced broken windows with cardboard and were grateful to still have a place to live.

Horst Prison (born 1920) was drafted in 1940 and sent to nearby France. By June 1941, he was on the Eastern Front and participating in the invasion of the Soviet Union. His experiences there were extremely challenging, beginning with a bout of frostbite. The doctors wanted to amputate his feet, but he prayed intensely to his Father in Heaven, and within a few days he was able to walk again.⁸ By the end of the first winter, he had received the combat

infantry medal, which denoted three occasions of close-quarters combat with the enemy.

Paul Prison was called into the national labor force in 1942 and assigned to work on a farm in Bavaria. Back home, he was working as a payroll clerk in a small construction company when he received a notice to report for military service on January 3, 1943. Assigned to an artillery unit, he was trained as a radio man and learned Morse code. A few months later, he was stationed in France. In June 1944, he was a forward observer on the coast of Normandy.

Hans Reger was wounded in Russia in 1942 and spent a year in hospitals recuperating. Then he was sent home and resumed a somewhat normal life as a printer working for the post office. His presence was appreciated by his wife and two daughters, especially when a terrifying air raid took place over Saarbrücken in September 1944. As Sister Reger ran down the stairs with her husband and her elder daughter, Isolde, she was worried about her younger daughter, Ingrid, who was staying with her grandmother just two houses down the street. Fortunately, Ingrid and her grandmother were also able to reach the air-raid shelter, where the five were united. Signal flares were coming down around them, and some structures were already ablaze. When they emerged from the shelter, the scene was totally different; some structures had been destroyed and their own apartment house was burning. In the aftermath of the attack, they learned that they had lost everything but the clothes on their backs. About 90 percent of the city had been destroyed. Hans Reger's place of employment was also gone, and the family took up temporary residence on the outskirts of town in a building owned by another Church member. Soon they were given permission to move to a town not far from Saarbrücken, where they spent the remainder of the war in the home of Elisabeth's aunt. They were safe there but totally out of contact with the Church.

"It's funny—the things you remember," said Dieter Jung (born 1937). "Since my dad was a

Latter-day Saint he didn't smoke, so he would trade his cigarette rations for candy bars. When he was at the front, he would send the candy bars back home."⁹ Richard Jung, a tailor, was a social democrat when Hitler came to power, but that political party had a short life under the National Socialist government. He had joined the Church in 1936 and was a priest when he volunteered for service in the Wehrmacht. According to young Dieter, "He volunteered so that Hitler wouldn't have the satisfaction of drafting him."

Dieter Jung was only six when he saw his father for the last time. Richard Jung had been sent home after suffering from frostbite on the Eastern Front. Soon after returning to his unit, he was killed. Back at home, his wife, Elfriede, had a premonition that he had been killed and was thus not shocked when two men knocked at her door with the sad news. They presented her with Richard's personal effects. According to Dieter, "They were sorry that my father had been killed, but on the other hand, he had died for the fatherland, and that's supposed to be an honor."

In 1943, a draft notice arrived for Max Adam. Because both father and son used that name, the family at first feared that the father would be required to serve. However, the call was directed to sixteen-year-old Max, who had been agonizing about serving in the army of an empire he did not support. He described the situation:

I knew that Hitler was bad, period. The Church teaches you one thing and [the Nazis] teach you another. I had a hard time going to war. How could I fight for such a man? I can't do that! I talked to the [branch president] and he said,

"Max, you've just got to go!" I said, "But I can't!" So I was brave enough to go. . . . I prayed for a month about that. Then I got a distinct answer: "Go. You will come home safe."

Horst Prison was shot cleanly through the calf in Russia in 1943, but he escaped a potentially lethal bullet shortly thereafter despite what he later admitted was a reluctance to listen to the Holy Ghost. He was on guard duty, and somebody told him to take cover. He looked around and could not see anybody. Again he was told to take cover but did not heed the warning. The third time somebody literally pushed him down a hill. At that very moment, a bullet struck his shoulder but did not penetrate his uniform. Had he remained standing, the bullet might have pierced his heart. He never determined who pushed him down that hill, because there was nobody close enough to do so. However, from that time on, he always listened to what others said and listened to the Spirit. That dangerous incident was not his last in Russia. A tank once drove over him while he lay in a trench. After a comrade helped dig him out from beneath the mammoth vehicle, Horst determined that only his watch was broken.

When the Allied forces stormed the beaches of Normandy on June 6, 1944, Paul Prison was atop the slopes overlooking Utah Beach attempting to send radio messages back to his commander.¹⁰ "I couldn't send the message [at first] because the airwaves were jammed [by music]. Finally, I used Morse Code to send the message. I told them that the invasion had started and they said it was just a bluff." He and his surviving comrades retreated from the fighting early on because they had quickly run out of ammunition. On August 17, Paul was wounded in three places by mortar fragments—one each in his abdomen, his thigh, and his arm. He made his way to an aid station and was sent to a monastery in Liege, Belgium. He could have died from loss of blood, but an observant elderly physician came to his aid and moved him from the floor onto a bed. After several months in German hospitals, he recovered and returned to his unit in time to



Fig. 5. Richard Jung had a wife and two sons when he was killed in the Soviet Union in 1943. (D. Jung)

celebrate Christmas not far from the area where the Battle of the Bulge was raging.



Fig. 6. This letter announced the death of Richard Jung to his wife and their two sons. "You may be comforted by the fact that your husband did not suffer even one second. Comrades who were at his side determined within moments that he died instantly." (D. Jung)

Elfriede Jung, now a war widow with two little boys, eventually lost her home in an air raid over Saarbrücken. Dieter, by then seven years old, recalled that the three of them had often gone to the air-raid shelter with their pillows and a few other items. Their apartment house "was totally destroyed—right down to the ground." His younger brother, Herbert (born 1939), also recalled air-raid experiences: "We went to this big mountain with a cave [as a shelter]. When the bombs hit the mountain, the lights went out. I put my pillow over my head because I thought that would protect me. A couple of days later, we came back out."¹¹

Both boys recalled staying in various towns after their apartment in Saarbrücken was destroyed. For

the rest of the war, Sister Jung and her sons were veritable refugees, eventually finding a place to stay in a small Bavarian town near the Austrian border. Herbert recalled how the local residents resented taking in refugees: "Nobody wants to have refugees [in their homes], so it was kind of tough." Dieter recalled being hungry and was therefore quite pleased one day when a farmer gave them a dozen eggs. Unfortunately, a Russian soldier took those eggs and ate them raw. "He was really reprimanded by an officer," Dieter recalled. While in that town hundreds of miles from Saarbrücken, the Jungs watched the American army come through in a peaceful takeover of the area in the last weeks of the war.

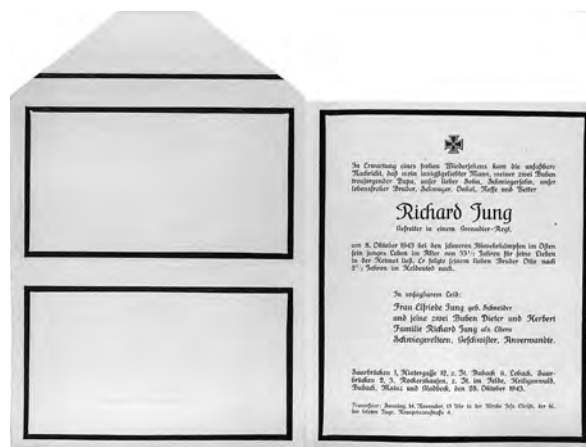


Fig. 7. The standard format for a death notice was still in use in Germany in 1943. A single sheet bore the message and was folded into an envelope. This one was sent by Elfriede Jung to family and friends to inform them of the death of her husband, Richard. The recipient knew by the black border that the contents of the letter would be tragic. (D. Jung)

Herbert Jung had the following recollections:

I remember well when the Americans came. They came with their tanks and their trucks and all that. They liked the fresh fruit; they liked their chicken cakes, and they gave us canned goods. So basically that kind of took us away from [our dependency on] the farmers. They liked the fresh stuff; they didn't like the canned goods. And they gave us chocolates and gum. . . . And then of course we had never seen black people before. Oh, they were something else. We

couldn't believe it. There were no black people in those days in Germany. So that was a big deal for us when we saw those black people.

In January 1945, Paul Prison and his friend Martin were riding on a truck just a few feet apart when an artillery round exploded nearby. Paul was not hurt, but Martin was struck by shrapnel just below his left armpit. Paul caught him as he fell from the truck. "I couldn't stop the bleeding," recalled Paul.

A horse cart came along and we put him in it and took him to the first aid station. By four o'clock the next morning he was dead. Even if he had been on the operating table we couldn't have saved him. . . . Martin was a very fine person. I always said he was a better person than I am. He was always calm, and he was an altar boy at the Catholic Church, and he really believed in his church and was one of the best men I ever met.

In March 1945, the American army moved through Germany. Elisabeth Klein Reger recalled that there was no fighting when they reached her town and that the conquerors treated the locals with respect. The family soon returned to Saarbrücken, where the French had replaced the Americans as the military occupation force. The Regers were able to rejoin their LDS friends and bring the Saarbrücken Branch back to life. Before long, Hans Reger (who had attended church meetings on many occasions) became the newest member of the Church in Saarbrücken.

In the last months of the war, Max Adam was serving with an anti-aircraft battery near the city of Leipzig. As a member of a five-man crew, Max was responsible for setting the vertical angle of the barrel of an 88 mm howitzer as directed. A second crew member moved the barrel left and right. Two other crew members loaded the shells and removed the casings while the fifth member gave the orders. In Max's recollection, "the men who carried the shells were muscle-men. We had 500 rounds at each station, 250 on the one side and 250 on the other side.

We could fire a round in thirty seconds or less. Our duty lasted for two hours, then another crew took over." No kind of ear protection was used. The howitzer was situated in an area about thirty feet square surrounded by a thick wall of earth.



Fig. 8. The Reger girls, Isolde and Ingrid, in the ruins of the building in which the Saarbrücken Branch held its meetings before September 1944. (H. Reger)

Max was nearly killed one night while he and his four comrades were off duty. Sitting just a few feet from the howitzer during their two-hour break, they were stunned when an enemy artillery shell landed about ten feet from them. Although there was no barrier between the bomb and Max, he was not hurt but was knocked out. He regained consciousness to find another soldier shaking him and yelling that they had to get out of the area at once; the ammunition supply was on fire. He and his friends were already outside of the enclosure

when approximately 125 unused rounds began to explode. “The fire in the air was unbelievable!” he recalled. “That was the first big experience when I was protected.”



Fig. 9. The building on Kronprinzenstrasse where the Saarbrücken Branch had held its meetings was still a ruin a few years after the war. (H. Reger)

In March 1945, Max Adam was captured by the Americans and was a prisoner of war for three months. “I was in three different camps in three months, and I could not stand it! We sat there all day long with absolutely nothing to do. The soldiers picked fleas out of each other’s hair. That was all we had to do. And wait for a small bowl of watery soup. That’s all we had to eat.”

Paul Prison’s unit retreated slowly through central Germany before the advancing American army. In April 1945, he was captured and transported to a camp by Remagen on the Rhine River. There he lived in squalid conditions that he described as “worse than a concentration camp.” He and his comrades drank filthy water from the river and a dozen men died every day. When they were given small quantities of clean water, they were forced to drink it all at one time, and any remaining water was poured onto the ground by their American guards.

For about one week, the prisoners were forced to run up and down hills while being yelled at and beaten by guards. Toward the end of June, Paul was released and transported home to Saarbrücken.

A priest in the Aaronic Priesthood, Paul Prison never met another LDS soldier while away from home. He had lived for three years without reading Church literature, taking the sacrament, or praying with other Latter-day Saints, but he had a testimony and prayed daily. His weight dropped from 152 pounds to 97, but he maintained his allegiance to God and the Church. “We have our own agency; we can have our own testimony and can lose it; that is up to us. I chose to keep it many times. And I wondered why I was still alive; I think it was the hand of God that kept me alive.”

One of the dubious honors accorded Horst Prison as a POW in the Soviet Union was the opportunity to march with thousands of German soldiers through Moscow as the Red Army celebrated its victory over Nazi Germany. The prisoners were starved and mocked as losers in a long and terrible war as they were paraded through the Soviet capital. At the same time, he was likely aware of the sufferings of the Soviet people that had led them to punish German soldiers and civilians long after the war was over.

In June 1945, Max Adam was lining up with other POWs to be released when he realized that the guards might have lied to the prisoners. Instead of being sent home, they might be sent to Belgium or the Netherlands for a year to clean up war damages. Not interested in any such extension of his POW term, he devised a plot to escape. After he successfully sneaked behind the latrines, he managed to scale a ten-foot chain link fence and join a group of POWs who had already been released. When guards checked his papers, he carefully placed his thumb over the area where the release stamp should have been and thus safely exited the camp.

Not far from the camp where Max had made his escape, his parents were living with relatives near the city of Halberstadt. Still just eighteen, he did not expect to see them and was simply walking down the

road in the direction of Saarbrücken (hundreds of miles away) when he heard a familiar voice. It was his father yelling to him from a passing truck. Max G. Adam had recognized his son and told the truck driver to stop. As the young soldier recalled, “He jumped [off of the truck] and ran towards me. It was my father. It was a happy reunion, and I had a ride now. We went back to the evacuation town to pick up his suitcases, and then we headed home.” They arrived in Saarbrücken in late May 1945. The first church meeting they attended was held in a school.

Elfriede Jung and her sons returned to Saarbrücken in June 1945. The city was under French military occupation at the time. Dieter recalled a clear distinction between the French soldiers in his hometown and the Americans he had seen in Bavaria: “The French soldiers didn’t have much more than we had as far as food was concerned. American soldiers would treat the kids very nice, give them candy bars and stuff like that. It seemed like they were throwing things away and we were picking them up and eating them.”

Until December 31, 1949, Horst Prison suffered many trials as a POW in the Soviet Union. During his more than nine years of military service and imprisonment, he had never had contact with Latter-day Saints except when on leave, which was rare. He had been ordained an elder in connection with his wedding in 1944 and carried his scriptures with him whenever possible, but he never participated in any Church meetings while he was away from home. Nevertheless, he maintained his testimony and his loyalty to God and the Church.

The members of the Saarbrücken Branch had been bombed out and scattered far and wide during the long years of the war and its aftermath, and at least ten of them did not survive the conflict. Little by little, the survivors returned to the city and reconstructed their branch. Peacetime would try them severely as they waited for years to find out whether the province of Saarland would remain in Germany, but their Latter-day Saint lives continued with optimism.¹²



Fig. 10. A German officer ponders his future among the ruins of Saarbrücken in May 1945. (Wikimedia)

IN MEMORIAM

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

Harald Ludwig Adam b. Saarbrücken, Rheinland, 27 Jul 1931; son of Max Gabriel Adam and Ella Sophie Adam; d. euthanasia Idstein, Hessen-Nassau, 4 Apr 1939; bur. Saarbrücken 1939 (M. Adam; IGI)

Wilhelmine Biehl b. Saarbrücken, Rheinprovinz, 29 Jun 1875; dau. of Heinrich Biehl and Katharina Greis; bp. 9 Jul 1939; conf. 9 Jul 1939; m. Saarbrücken 12 Sep 1896, Heinrich Paul; d. during the evacuation of Saarbrücken in the Allied invasion 1945 (CHL microfilm 2458, form 42 FP, pt. 37, district list, 250–51; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 682; IGI)

Erich Debschütz b. Breslau, Schlesien, 7 Aug 1903; son of Olga Debschütz; bp. 25 May 1920; conf. 25 May 1920; missing as of 1946 (FHL microfilm 68797, no. 523; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 523; FHL microfilm no. 25753; 1930 and 1935 censuses)

Peter Ferdinand Flach b. Ebringen, Freiburg, Baden, 2 Jun 1882; son of Peter Flach and Katherina Graff; bp. 7 Jul 1908; conf. 7 Jul 1908; m. Louise Bach; d. 2 Jan 1941 (FHL microfilm 68797, no. 521; CR 275 8 2441, no. 521; FHL microfilm no. 25767; 1930 and 1935 censuses; IGI)

Richard Jung b. Saarbrücken, Rheinprovinz, 22 Apr 1910; son of Richard Jung and Elise Georg; bp. 10 or 20 Apr 1934; conf. 10 or 20 Apr 1934; ord. deacon 25 Nov 1934; ord. teacher 16 Feb 1936; ord. priest 3 May 1938; m. 5 May 1934, Elfriede Schneider; 2 children; corporal; k. in battle 3 km east of Dubowik 8 Oct 1943; bur. Sologubowka, St. Petersburg, Russia (Jung; FHL microfilm 68797, no. 575; www.volksbund.de; IGI)

Phillippine Knapp b. Frankfurt, Hessen-Nassau, or Mainz, Hessen, 9 Nov 1866; dau. of Margarethe Knapp;

bp. 10 Jul 1901; conf. 19 Jul 1901; m. 30 Mar 1887, Ludwig Neuenschwander; 1 child; d. old age 30 Dec 1940 (FHL microfilm 68797, no. 38; CHL CR 275 8 2441, FHL microfilm no. 245241; 1930 and 1935 censuses; no. 38)

Valentin Krämer b. Herrensohr, Rheinland, 15 Jul 1924; son of Valentin Krämer and Elisabeth Lina Rasskopf; bp. 15 May 1933; k. in battle 15 Jan 1943 (IGI)

Richard Friedrich Krämer b. Herrensohr, Rheinland, 31 Dec 1926; son of Valentin Krämer and Elisabeth Lina Rasskopf; bp. 13 Jun 1935; d. 1945 (IGI)

Peter Prison b. Dudweiler, Rheinprovinz, 3 Oct 1867; son of Jakob Prison and Maria Katharina Linnenbach; bp. 7 May 1922; conf. 7 May 1922; ord. deacon 19 Sep 1922; ord. teacher 20 Jan 1924; ord. priest 1 Jan 1934; ord. elder 1 Nov 1936; m. 20 Sep 1890, Theresia Trockle; 8 children; d. pneumonia Dudweiler 19 Dec 1943 (FHL microfilm 68797, no. 42; CHL CR 275 8 2441, no. 42; IGI)

Johannes Zimmer b. Karlsruhe, Baden, 16 Jul 1921; son of Albert Zimmer and Maria Magdalena Stahl; bp. 28 Aug 1930; conf. 28 Aug 1930; corporal; d. Orleans, France, 15 Jun or 23 Jul 1943; bur. Fort de Malmaison, France (CHL microfilm 2458, form 42 FP, pt. 37, district list, 250–51; FHL microfilm 68797, no. 59; FHL microfilm no. 245307; 1925 and 1935 censuses; www.volksbund.de)

veteran) compared descriptions of the area and determined that they had been at the same location, serving in opposing armies.

11. Herbert Jung, interview by Michael Corley, Salt Lake City, October 30, 2008.
12. It was not until 1957 that the question of nationality for the Saarland was resolved and France gave up its claims to the valuable territory.

WORMS BRANCH

The small branch of Latter-day Saints who called Worms their home strove in 1939 to maintain the programs of the Church. Of the thirty-three members of record, eighteen (55 percent) were females over twelve years of age and only four men and boys held the priesthood. The solitary elder was Friedrich Tisch, and his wife, Karoline, was the Relief Society president. The only other surname listed on the branch directory of June 1939 was Hammerle (Ellen, the leader of the YWMIA).¹

NOTES

1. Saarbrücken city archive.
2. West German Mission branch directory, 1939, CHL LR 10045 11.
3. Presiding Bishopric, "Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955," 257, CHL CR 4 12.
4. Elisabeth Klein Reger, interview by the author, Salt Lake City, July 19, 2007.
5. Paul Prison, interview by the author, Richmond, UT, November 22, 2008.
6. Max Adam, interview by the author, Bountiful, UT, April 18, 2007.
7. Harold died in the Kalmenhof Hospital in Idstein (as recorded in the margin of his official birth record in Saarbrücken). The book *Euthanasie im Nationalsozialismus* by Dorothea Sick (Frankfurt: Fachhochschule, 1983) shows that well over seven hundred persons of all ages were murdered in that hospital and buried nearby. Most murders were done by the injection of lethal drugs, but death was usually not instantaneous.
8. Horst Peter Prison and Elfriede Deininger Prison, telephone interview with Jennifer Heckmann in German, April 13, 2009; summarized in English by Judith Sartowski.
9. Dieter Jung, interview by the author, West Valley City, UT, June 20, 2006.
10. He did not know the name of the landing site until he lived in Utah years later. He and a neighbor (a GI and Normandy

Worms Branch ²	1939
Elders	1
Priests	0
Teachers	0
Deacons	3
Other Adult Males	6
Adult Females	18
Male Children	5
Female Children	0
<i>Total</i>	33

In the fall of 1939, the Worms Branch held meetings in rented rooms at Renzstrasse 5. Sunday School began at 10:00 a.m. and sacrament meeting at 8:00 p.m. MIA was held on Thursdays at 8:00 p.m., and the Relief Society met on Tuesdays at the same hour.

As of this writing, the only surviving member of the wartime Worms Branch is Renate Tisch (born 1924). Her family lived at Gaustrasse 64 in the northern Worms suburb of Neuhausen. Friedrich Tisch was an employee of the Reichsbank and had moved his family to the city in 1926. Renate recalled the meeting location and the members:

Before we moved in, another religious group had used the rooms. We met in the back. There was one small room and a nice, big room. We were able to hold all our meetings there but had to be careful about what we taught and said and what hymns we sang. Our branch wasn't very big—it consisted of my family, Sister Müller's family, and the Spengler family. I would say that we were about fifteen people in attendance. We did not have any pictures or special decorations on the wall or in the room. But there was a sign at the street that indicated that we met in those rooms. We didn't have any Primary class because there were no children.³

Upon completing her schooling at age fourteen, Renate was called to work for one year on the Spindler farm, only about twenty minutes from her home, and she was allowed to go to church on Sundays. Her pay was only 5 Reichsmark (about \$1.50) per month.

American missionary Walter Scoville had served in Worms just before the war and maintained correspondence with the Tisch family before the United States entered the war in December 1941. He received an encouraging letter written by Friedrich Tisch on March 4, 1940, that included these lines:

Brother Scoville, you needn't worry about us. We are not in need in any way. We have enough to eat and drink, more than we need. After all, we can't do more than eat until we're full every day. . . . More news: Sister Hammerle had a baby boy on September 21 last year. . . . And Sister Müller had a baby boy just before Christmas to keep the family name alive. Other than that, nothing is different. We still hold our meetings as always. . . . We still have the clothes we washed for [Elders] Kuhn and Oldroyd [when they left the country in August 1939]. We could not send it to them in Holland because there wasn't enough time, . . . and they haven't written to us. We will keep the clothes here until the missionaries come back.⁴



Fig. 1. The building at Renzstrasse 5 as it appears today. (P. W. Ehl)

Young Renate Tisch was destined to serve her country in several capacities away from home during the war, but she was still in Worms when an air raid left the branch meeting rooms in rubble. In her recollection, “We went to church every Sunday, and when we went that one day our building was gone. Everything was lost that we had in our meeting rooms. But we kept our songbooks at home. Since we weren't many people in the first place, we organized meetings in our living room.” For the duration of the war, worship services in the Worms Branch took place in the homes of the members, usually the Tisch family's apartment.

“We covered our windows with something similar to black blankets in the evening,” Renate explained:

If there was a light, the [air-raid wardens] would come after us. We would always go into the air-raid shelter together, and I would make sure that I sat next to my family. If we died together, it would be all right. We had light in the air-raid shelters and took our flashlights. We also took a suitcase with us, with maybe a dress and underwear in it. My dad had important papers in his suitcase. When the alarm came, we grabbed our belongings and went. Our home was damaged during air raids, but we were still able to live in it.

At age eighteen, Renate answered the call of the Reichsarbeitsdienst and was sent south to the town of Zell, in the Wiesenthal valley in Baden. She described the situation in these words:

That was quite a long ways away from home for me. [Our leaders] taught us everything we should know about the Allies. They told us from which side each country would come and how we could conquer America. I lived in a brand-new house during that time. It was built just for us girls. Upstairs it had five big rooms and downstairs, we had other rooms. By 10:00 a.m. we had to go out to work for the farmers or families with many children where the husband was serving in the military. During the year I was there, I did not have the opportunity to attend church. But I was able to go home for a couple of weeks once.

Renate had been fortunate to meet a fine young LDS man at a mission conference. She recalled that Anton Huck carried photographs of young people in the mission. ("It seemed that he wanted us to fall in love.") Paul Eysser was a member of the Nuremberg Branch and was serving in the military near Worms. This allowed him to attend church meetings in the home of the Tisch family. "I got to see him quite a lot for a few weeks, and he wrote letters too," recalled Renate.

Renate and Paul were married at city hall in Worms on October 9, 1943, and then traveled to Nuremberg where the branch (the second largest in the mission) celebrated with them. Renate recalled:

All the branch members were there, and it was a big feast. My parents supplied geese, rabbits, and

chickens. We also had dumplings and vegetables. At least forty people were there.

We found somebody to take the pictures and to bring some flowers. We had about one week together before Paul had to go back to his military duty.

With her husband gone again so soon, Renate went back to work. Her next assignment was as a civilian in an army office in Bensheim, only ten miles east of Worms. For a while, she was able to commute to work on the train, but eventually Allied bombers destroyed the bridge over the Rhine River, and Renate could not often make the longer trip south to Mannheim, across the river to Ludwigshafen and north to Worms. She spent the nights in Bensheim. All the while, her father (who was too old to be drafted) was conducting church meetings in his home, trying to keep the branch intact despite increasing absenteeism among the branch members.

"I worked in the payroll office. Soldiers weren't paid much, but it was more than the 2,40 Reichsmark [60 cents] I was paid each month, along with room and board," Renate explained. During the final months of the war, she was sent to Munich in Bavaria; her office was transferred there to stay out of the way of the invading Allied troops. She located a cousin in the Bavarian capital and was able to live in her apartment. "Munich was bombed terribly, and we spent a lot of time in the basement shelters," she recalled.

Renate Tisch Eysser was still in Munich when the American army entered the city and the war ended. "There were many black soldiers who we had never seen before. I turned to my coworker and said: 'My goodness! Look at that!' But I wasn't afraid of them. They were nice to us." Shortly after the war ended, Renate looked for a way to return to Worms. That way was by rail in a coal car. She made it as far as Mannheim, where the American forces occupied the city. The French controlled the area across the river and initially made matters difficult for the young woman. Fortunately, she ran into Anton Huck, who directed her to the home of Eugen

Hechtle, the district president, where she spent the night. The next day, Renate convinced the French guards to allow her to cross the river and proceed to her home in Worms.

Paul Eysser had been taken prisoner by the Americans at the end of 1944 and was sent to Missouri as a POW. He was released in 1946 and made his way first to Nuremberg and then to Worms, where he was reunited with his wife, as she recalled: “He came home in April 1946. Nobody knew that he was alive. No messages could be sent through the Red Cross. Not even his parents knew where he was. The last thing that I had heard from him was that he was headed for Russia.”

Renate had the following summary comments about some of the spiritual trials that occur in wartime: “My mother always used to tell us that we have to have faith. That stuck with me. We had to believe that Heavenly Father would be with us. We prayed a lot. When we went into the air-raid shelters, the neighbors would feel relief and be happy that we were there. They believed that we brought some kind of peace and that made them less afraid of the situation to come.”

On December 26, 1946, President Tisch wrote a letter to his missionary friend, Walter Scoville, in the United States. The war had been over for eighteen months, and Brother Tisch was finally able to offer some good news about the conditions in Worms:

We have survived this terrible war, though there were several occasions when we were close to being killed. We lost our meeting rooms and were forced to hold meetings in our apartment. . . . The members of the Worms Branch were able to stay in their homes for the most part. Sister Mink lives in a different part of Worms, but was able to rescue her property. Our beautiful city became a victim of the air raids. . . . You know how close our home is to the railroad station. There are 22 bomb craters in the gardens around our home. But our home still stands and the damage it suffered has already been repaired. We have gone through very painful times, and every day we are still moving rubble out of our way. . . . We want to live as faithful Latter-day Saints and be prepared to bear testimony of the truth of the Restoration. . . . By the way, our daughter Renate married an elder [Eysser] from the Nuremberg Branch back in October 1943. He was a POW in Missouri for a year and just returned in April [1946].⁵

The Worms Branch had survived World War II and the members were looking forward to gathering together to worship in peacetime.

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

NOTES

1. West German Mission branch directory, 1939, CHL LR 10045 11.
2. Presiding Bishopric, “Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955,” 257, CHL CR 4 12.
3. Renate Tisch Eysser, interview by the author, North Salt Lake, UT, May 20, 2009.
4. Walter E. Scoville, papers, CHL MS 18613.
5. Ibid.