

and we gathered wood from the forest. When the Russians came, we didn't dare collect wood in the forest because they were camped there.

Two of my brothers were killed on the Russian Front. For one of them [Emil Ernst], we received an official notice on July 24, 1944. We never found out what happened to my other brother, Hans Gustav. He was declared dead by a court order on December 31, 1949.

My mother never doubted the gospel—even when she found out that her two sons were dead. She always said that she was looking forward to seeing them again.

Regarding life as a teenager during World War II, Gertrude made the following statement: “I was nineteen years old [when the war ended]. It should have been the most wonderful age for me, but under those circumstances, it was a disappointment.”

#### IN MEMORIAM:

The following members of the Beutha group did not survive World War II:

**Emil Ernst Schettler** b. 28 Feb 1921 in Beutha, Zwickau, Sachsen; son of Gustav Emil Schettler and Melitta Freida Löffler; bp. 11 Oct 1931; non-commissioned officer; k. in battle Lemieszow, Russia 24 July 1944 (Schettler-Sehm; CHL CR 275 8 2458, 1522; IGI; AF; www.volksbund.de)

**Johannes Schettler** b. 23 Nov 1919 Beutha, Zwickau, Sachsen; son of Gustav Emil Schettler and Melitta Freida Löffler; bp. 4 Aug 1929; corporal; d. Romania aft 25 Jul 1944; officially declared dead 31 Dec 1949 (Schettler-Sehm; IGI; AF)



Fig. 3. Emil and Johannes Schettler were both casualties of the war. They are shown here in their sister's photo album. (G. Schettler Sehm)

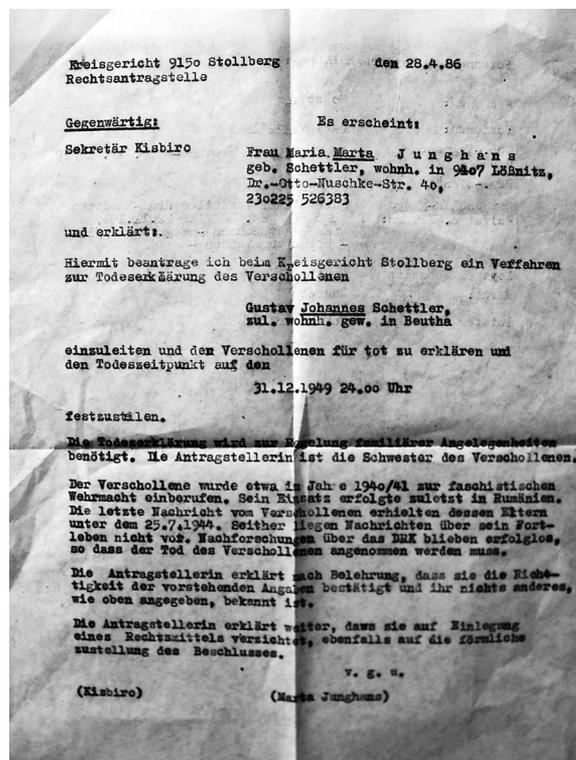


Fig. 2. Johannes (Hans) Schettler was reported missing in action in 1944. This 1986 letter officially established his death effective December 31, 1949—the date used for many missing soldiers in Germany. (G. Schettler Sehm)

#### NOTES

1. East German Mission History Quarterly Reports, 1938, no. 12, East German Mission History.
2. Gertrude Schettler Sehm, interview by the author in German, Beutha, Germany, May 30, 2007; summarized in English by Judith Sartowski.

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## MEERANE BRANCH

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Very little is known about the small branch of Latter-day Saints living in Meerane in 1939. The town is located ten miles north of Zwickau. As of July 3, 1938, the following men led the branch: Erwin Auerbach, president; Hermann Blehschmidt, first counselor; Max Paul Frenzel, second counselor; Kurt Auerbach, secretary.

| Meerane Branch <sup>1</sup> | 1939 |
|-----------------------------|------|
| Elders                      | 3    |
| Priests                     | 1    |
| Teachers                    | 3    |
| Deacons                     | 3    |
| Other Adult Males           | 5    |
| Adult Females               | 34   |
| Male Children               | 3    |
| Female Children             | 2    |
| <i>Total</i>                | 54   |

The Meerane Branch is mentioned on several occasions in the history of the East German Mission before the spring of 1939. The following entries are of interest:

Sunday, August 14, 1938: A branch conference was held and sixty-two members and friends attended.<sup>2</sup>

Wednesday, November 30, 1938: In the Meerane Branch, the members of the priesthood were the guests of the Relief Society at a program and social; the attendance was very good.<sup>3</sup>

Friday, January 13, 1939: A special meeting was held under the direction of the full-time missionaries of the Chemnitz and Zwickau Districts; twenty members and seventeen friends attended.<sup>4</sup>

Friday, March 3, 1939: A social was held in the Meerane Branch, Zwickau District. It was attended by members and friends of the Zwickau, Werdau, and Planitz Branches. The sum of RM 10.00 was collected for the Meerane Branch Welfare Association.<sup>5</sup>

Based on such reports, it appears that the basic meetings were being held in Meerane and that some of the auxiliaries of the Church were also functioning as World War II approached.

At the conclusion of the year 1939, the Meerane Branch was holding its meetings at Marienstrasse 42 on the main floor. The location had changed to Augustusstrasse 99 in the home of the Blechschmidt family by January 1943. However, a note in the mission directory on that date indicates that meetings were sporadic

at best. It may then be that the Meerane Branch was substantially weakened by 1945.

### IN MEMORIAM

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

**Selma Emma Ahnert** b. Niederschindmaas, Chemnitz, Sachsen 3 Dec 1863; dau. of Johann Christian Gottlieb Ahnert and Christiana Johanna Hochmuth; bp. 9 May 1929; conf. 9 May 1929; m. Niederschindmaas 2 or 29 Nov 1887, Hermann Theodor Trummer; 4 children; 2m. Niederschindmaas 23 Sep 1901 or 18 Feb 1904, Ernst Strangfeld; 1 child; d. old age 29 Mar 1945 (CHL CR 375 8 2444, no. 11; IGI)

**Egon Auerbach** b. Glauchau, Zwickau, Sachsen 19 Nov 1938; son of Karl Erwin Auerbach and Anna Elsa Neubert; d. lung ailment 21 or 22 Mar 1940 (CHL CR 375 8 2444, no. 63; IGI; AF)

**Erich Willi Bauer** b. Zschornowitz, Sachsen, Preußen 24 Jun 1919; son of Robert Alfred Bauer and Marie Sophie Wassmus; bp. 30 Jun 1927; m. 21 Aug 1943, Ruth Adina Blechschmidt; lance corporal; d. field hospital Brest-Litowsk, Russia 23 or 28 Oct 1943 (Sonja K. Nesbitt; IGI; www.volksbund.de)

**Karl Hermann Blechschmidt** b. Stangendorf, Chemnitz, Sachsen 18 Jul 1873 or 1875; son of Hermann Alexander Nienhold or Carl Louis Meinhardt and Augusta Amalia Blechschmidt; bp. 29 Mar 1929; conf. 29 Mar 1929; ord. deacon 3 May 1931; ord. priest 2 Apr 1933; ord. elder 28 Nov 1937; m. Marienthal, Zwickau, Sachsen 5 Nov 1898, Klara Hulda Daemmler; 13 or 14 children; d. weak heart Meerane, Zwickau, Sachsen 2 Feb 1940 (CHL CR 375 8 2444, no. 4; IGI; AF)

**Auguste Louise Grundmann** b. Meerane, Zwickau, Sachsen 31 Oct or Nov 1862; dau. of Johann Wilhelm and Christiana Johanna Peterman; bp. 29 Mar 1929; conf. 29 Mar 1929; m. Meerane 4 Dec 1897, Max Paul Frenzel; d. old age 25 Jun 1943 (CHL CR 375 8 2444, no. 9; IGI; AF)

**Elsa Marie Koehler** b. Meerane, Zwickau, Sachsen 18 Jan 1881; dau. of Alfred Theodor Koehler and Bertha Emilie Schwalbe; bp. 3 Apr 1931; conf. 3 Apr 1931; m. Meerane 21 Apr 1900, Paul August Bartko; 2 children; d. liver cancer Meerane 10 Oct 1940 (CHL CR 375 8 2444, no. 28; IGI; AF)

**Anna Therese Scheithauer** b. Ölsnitz, Chemnitz, Sachsen 4 Nov 1859; dau. of Johann Gottlieb Scheithauer and Christiane Johanne Hartel; bp. 3 Apr 1931; conf. 3 Apr 1931; m. 28 Aug 1884, Paul Heinrich Haertel; d. old age 17 Dec 1941 (CHL CR 375 8 2444, no. 31; IGI)

**Erich Gerhard Schirner** b. Bad Kösen, Sachsen, Preußen 8 or 18 Apr 1921; son of Rudolph August Schirner and Elsa Klara Belchschmidt; bp. 21 Apr 1930; conf. 21 Apr 1930; ord. deacon 3 Mar 1935; ord. teacher 5 Dec 1937; ord. priest 23 Jun 1940; d. tuberculosis 22 or 24 Mar 1943 (CHL CR 375 8 2444, no. 37; IGI)

## NOTES

1. Presiding Bishopric, "Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955," CR 4 12, 257.
2. East German Mission History Quarterly Reports, 1938, no. 35, East German Mission History.
3. *Ibid.*, no. 47.
4. *Ibid.*, 1939, no. 53.
5. *Ibid.*, no. 59.

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## PLANITZ BRANCH

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The town of Planitz lies not quite three miles south of the city center of Zwickau, yet the concentration of Latter-day Saints in the neighborhood warranted the establishment of a branch in Planitz.

| Planitz Branch <sup>1</sup> | 1939 |
|-----------------------------|------|
| Elders                      | 6    |
| Priests                     | 1    |
| Teachers                    | 4    |
| Deacons                     | 5    |
| Other Adult Males           | 7    |
| Adult Females               | 38   |
| Male Children               | 4    |
| Female Children             | 6    |
| <i>Total</i>                | 71   |

The meetings were held at Moritzstrasse 13. Manfred Röhlrig (born 1921) described the setting in that building:

It was a large room that had previously been a shoe factory, and there were still iron pillars in the room. One time, I ran into one, and I still have a scar on the left side of my forehead. We also had a coal stove inside so the rooms

would stay warm, but when we came on Sunday mornings, we could not breathe. Some of our members worked in a mine, and they made sure that we never ran out of coal. Next to the large room, there were two smaller ones—one for Sunday School and the Primary and the other for Priesthood meeting and Relief Society. . . . There was a picture of Jesus Christ in front of the room. . . . I think that we had a sign on the side of the building saying that [the Church] met there.<sup>2</sup>

The history of the East German Mission has two entries featuring the Planitz Branch just prior to World War II:

Sunday, July 17, 1938: The Planitz Branch, Zwickau District, held a conference. Attendance was sixty-three members and sixteen friends.<sup>3</sup>

Friday, March 3, 1939: A social was held in the Meerane Branch, Zwickau District. It was attended by members and friends of the Zwickau, Werdau, and Planitz Branches. The sum of RM 10.00 was collected for the Meerane Branch Welfare Association.<sup>4</sup>

According to Manfred Röhlrig, the branch observed the typical meeting schedule, with Sunday School in the morning and sacrament meeting in the evening. Relief Society and priesthood meetings were held on Monday evening and MIA on Wednesday. When the weather was favorable, they often met outside in a field about two miles away. The locals called it "Mormon Field." Manfred recalled an average attendance at Sunday School of about seventy persons. With nearly 10 percent of the branch being elders, this was a strong group of Latter-day Saints.

When World War II began, Manfred Röhlrig was serving in the Reichsarbeitsdienst in the Palatinate (the territory of the state of Bavaria west of the Rhine River). He was inducted directly into the Wehrmacht, receiving his new uniform as soon as he returned to the city of Kaiserslautern following three days of leave. One of his first assignments after the victorious