

November 29, 1942: In Wilhelmshaven, which is in constant danger of enemy attacks, a branch conference was held. In spite of two air raids that interrupted the meetings, the spirit of God was present in rich abundance. The attendance was seventeen.⁵

June 17, 1944: The Wesermünde Branch meeting hall was destroyed. The Bremen District spring conference had been planned to be held in the Wesermünde chapel on June 25. All the preparations had been made in vain. Since another meeting hall could not be found in Wesermünde, one room in the ruins of this building was used to hold meetings.⁶

The last entry in the branch general minutes referring to the war was recorded on July 5, 1945. President Deters of the Bremen District had found a way to travel again and visited the Wesermünde-Lehe Branch that day. The clerk wrote, “The meetings are still being held in the ruins of the former meeting hall. In spite of this the attendance is constantly increasing. Branch President Kinast has done a wonderful work here. . . . He has stayed on the job and done his best.”⁷ The man mentioned was Karl Kinast, who had been serving as the second counselor to the branch president, an American missionary, just before the war began.

The port facilities of Bremerhaven were attacked on a great many occasions during the war by the British Royal Air Force and the U.S. Army Air Corps. It can be assumed not only that the branch meeting rooms at Poststrasse 12 were damaged, but that the homes of several members were damaged or destroyed. Whatever the damage was, they were still holding meetings in the summer of 1945 and were likely joined soon by LDS refugees from the East German Mission.

IN MEMORIAM

The following members of the Wesermünde-Lehe Branch did not survive World War II:

Friedrich August Wilhelm Biermann b. Stadthagen, Schaumburg-Lippe, 13 Oct 1910; son of Heinrich Friedrich Wilhelm Biermann and Sophie Karoline

Wilhelmine Huckemeier; m. Cuxhaven, Hamburg, 1933, Emmy Geimplinger; d. 8 Oct 1943 (FHL microfilm 25723, 1925 and 1930 censuses)

Ludwig Blass b. Trier, Trier, Rheinland, 2 Jun 1876; son of Karl Ernst Gabriel Blass and Klara von Schmoll; bp. 2 Feb 1928; conf. 2 Feb 1928; ord. deacon 4 Sep 1932; m. Johanna Kühn; k. air raid Bremen 24 Jun 1944 (FHL microfilm 68785, no. 130; FHL microfilm 25725, 1930 census)

Dieter Danklefsen b. Friedrichstadt, Schleswig, Schleswig-Holstein, 28 Aug 1940; son of Paul Heinrich Danklefsen and Anita Martha Elisabeth Brassat; d. dysentery 19 Oct 1942 (FHL microfilm 68808, no. 569; FHL microfilm 25751, 1935 census; IGI)

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. West German Mission history, CHL LR 10045 2; West German Mission manuscript history B 1381:3.
4. West German Mission manuscript history, 6.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., 7.
7. Ibid., 9.

WILHELMSHAVEN BRANCH

The smallest branch in the Bremen District was located in the North Sea port city of Wilhelmshaven. About forty miles northwest of the city of Bremen, Wilhelmshaven could be reached via railroad in an hour. Only twenty-six members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were associated with this branch when the war began.

Brother Rodewald was the branch president in July 1939 and remained in that position until November 10, 1940.¹ On that date, he was released and replaced by Erwin Gulla during a meeting attended by the presidents of the Bremen and Hamburg Districts (Willy Deters and Alwin Brey, respectively). That same day, the following comment

was added in the branch records: “In all cities of the district the conditions brought about by constant air raids grew increasingly worse.”² The proximity to the British air bases across the North Sea had already proved inconvenient and dangerous.

Wilhelmshaven Branch³	1939
Elders	0
Priests	3
Teachers	1
Deacons	0
Other Adult Males	7
Adult Females	13
Male Children	1
Female Children	1
<i>Total</i>	26

Brother Gulla was released as the president and replaced by Alfred Passon on November 11, 1941.⁴ No eyewitness accounts of members in this branch could be located at the time of this writing. The only indications of the status or activities of the branch are found in the general minutes.

Two additional entries in the branch minutes are of particular interest and make it clear that the members of the branch were not simply surviving during the final month of the war. On April 6, 1945, President Alfred Passon requested permission from district president Willy Deters to baptize five persons into the Church. The permission was granted.⁵ Not three weeks later, President Passon requested permission for another baptism, namely for Sister Henny Haubock. It would seem that the few branch members living in the vicinity of Wilhelmshaven were quite willing to talk about their church even while the Third Reich was collapsing around them.

The port and city of Wilhelmshaven suffered an estimated 60 percent damage. The city was home to 103,842 people in 1939, but many left during the war in search of safer living conditions. At least one hundred air raids took place, and 510 residents are known to have been killed in those attacks before Polish troops entered the city as conquerors on May 6, 1945. The toll in military personnel killed (12,996) likely included soldiers and sailors stationed at the port.⁶

IN MEMORIAM

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

Hermina Katharine Margarete Behrens b. Neuenburg, Oldenburg, 13 Mar 1860; dau. of Johann Friedrich Behrens and Hella Margarete Meyer; bp. 26 Apr 1928; conf. 26 Apr 1928; m. 21 Jun 1891, Johann Friedrich Ortgiesen (div.); d. heart failure 2 Jan 1942 (FHL microfilm 68808, no. 1; IGI)

Karl Friedrich Wilhelm Werner b. Kade, Jerichow, Sachsen, 4 Oct 1861; son of Wilhelm Werner and Louise Reck; bp. 3 Jul 1928; conf. 3 Jul 1928; ord. deacon 17 Nov 1929; ord. teacher 7 Apr 1940; ord. priest 22 Feb 1942; k. street car accident 8 Jan 1943 (FHL microfilm 68785, no. 213; IGI)

Katharina Wissenbach b. Gundhelm, Schlüchtern, Hessen-Nassau, 24 May 1860; dau. of Franz Wissenbach and Margaretha Hummel; bp. 20 Aug 1938; conf. 20 Aug 1938; m. 12 Aug 1888, Heinrich Lüdeke; d. 22 Feb 1941 (FHL microfilm 68808, no. 51; IGI)

NOTES

1. West German Mission branch directory, 1939, CHL LR 10045 11.
2. Wilhelmshaven Branch general minutes, vol. 5, CHL B 1381.
3. Presiding Bishopric, “Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955,” 257, CHL CR 4 12.
4. Wilhelmshaven Branch general minutes, 5.
5. *Ibid.*, 9.
6. Wilhelmshaven city archive.