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## III.

### Case Studies in Early Swiss Immigration to Utah: The Mathis and Bryner Families

Paul K. Savage<sup>6</sup>

Hans Ulrich could not see his own hand waving in front of his face--that is, ever since the accident. Hans Ulrich Bryner, Jr., was a talented and prosperous young man. His father's family had moved to Wiedikon, a small village just a stone's throw across the river Sihl from Zürich,<sup>7</sup> and in 1839 they had purchased a large home near the Center of town.<sup>8</sup> Hans Ulrich Bryner, Sr., was a farmer by day, and a shoemaker by night, and through thrift, industry, and piety, the family had gained the respect of their neighbors. In 1846, Hans Ulrich, Sr., was granted citizenship in Wiedikon. The Bryner home was less than a hundred meters away from another prosperous family named Mathis. Johannes Mathis was not only a successful farmer but also the president of the village council.<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps it was inevitable that Hans Ulrich Jr. would take a fancy to the twenty-one year old and attractive Anna Dorothea Mathis, daughter of Johannes Mathis. And perhaps Anna Dorothea was impressed with twenty-two year old Hans Ulrich, Jr.'s, skills as an artist, or with his musical abilities as a member of the village's Men's Choir.<sup>10</sup> Or maybe it was Hans Ulrich, Jr.'s, promising future as a

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<sup>7</sup> In 1820, Zürich boasted a population of 20,000 inhabitants, with an additional 180,000 living in the surrounding territory. For an excellent overview of conditions in Zürich during the nineteenth century, see Frederick S. Allen, *Zürich, the 1820's to the 1870's: A Study in Modernization* (Lanham, New York, London: University Press of America, 1986), and also Gordon A. Craig, *The Triumph of Liberalism: Zürich in the Golden Age 1830-1869* (New York, London: Collier Macmillan, 1988). On the history of Wiedikon, see Paul Etter, *Geschichte von Alt-Wiedikon: von den Anfängen bis zum Umsturz 1798* (Zürich: Stäubli Verlag, 1987) and Paul Etter, *Wiedikon Selbständig! 1798 bis 1892: Vom Bauerndorf zum Stadtquartier* Zürich: Stäubli Verlag, 1992).

<sup>8</sup> See Paul Etter, *Wiedikons Hausgeschichten* (Zürich: Stäubli Verlag, 1994) 44, 78. The Bryner family, also sometimes spelled Briner, came from the Bassersdorf area, where it was known for centuries. Hans Ulrich Sr. appears to have been orphaned at an early age.

<sup>9</sup> As had been his father-in-law, Hans Heinrich Meyer, before him. For an excellent look at the life and public service of Hans Heinrich Meyer, see Etter, *Wiedikon Selbständig*, 29-36

<sup>10</sup> In its 75th anniversary commemoration, the Choir recorded that after Bryner's unfortunate blindness, he attempted

butcher. In 1849, they married, and in short order were joined by two children. Little could the happy young couple have known that of the twenty children that would eventually be born to Hans Ulrich, Jr., these two little children of his would be the only ones that he would ever see.

In the winter of 1853, Hans Ulrich, Jr., was dressing a hog; the hoof slipped off of the gamble pin and struck him in the left eye, bursting the pupil. His brother, Casper Bryner, was working nearby and saw the accident. He led Hans Ulrich, Jr. to the hospital on the banks of the Sihl River.<sup>11</sup> His recovery seemed to be going well, for in six weeks he could once again read with his left eye, but then a high fever set in causing total blindness in both eyes. Hans Ulrich, Jr., and his wife and parents seemed inconsolable. Many tears were shed by all over the prospects of a life of blindness.<sup>12</sup>

The family provided for Hans Ulrich, Jr., as best they could. Four months later, he called his family together to report that he had had a vision in which he had been led to America by a man with grey whiskers and peculiar eyes. The man held open a book and he crossed out Hans Ulrich, Jr.'s sins and was shown the road to a place called Zion. He crossed the sea with his wife and child, passed through Boston and New York, then into the mountains and across the prairie. A neighbor lady who heard him tell his vision said that it meant that he would go to America to "hunt a physician," but that interpretation did not satisfy Hans Ulrich, Jr. Hans Ulrich, Sr., said that he would be willing to make the trip if he knew the reason for it.<sup>13</sup>

On 28 August 1852, George Mayer attended a special conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City, Utah. If Mayer's whiskers had not already been gray, he probably would have gone gray soon after the meeting, for that day Mayer became one of

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to resign from the choir, but they would not allow it, insisting that he remain with them as an honorary member (*Ehrenmitglied*).

<sup>11</sup> Rosella B. Anderson and Lilly B. Frandson, "Story of Hans Ulrich Bryner, Jr. Family." (unpublished manuscript, n.p.: n.d.) 1. The document lists the authors as daughters. This "hospital" may have been the St. Jakobs Spital, which appears to have been the only hospital actually on the banks of the Sihl. Technically, by the nineteenth century, one would not refer to it as a hospital *per se*, although it did still have beds for the sick. In the Middle Ages, it was particularly notable as a convenient place to house people sick with the plague, and was long also a place to bury the poor. It was undoubtedly the closest medical facility available. Being on the western bank of the Sihl, it was only a short ride from Wiedikon, and indeed had long been within the old boundaries of the community.

<sup>12</sup> Only Bryner's mother-in-law remained in good spirits. Her words were later recounted in poetic verse:

You can do nothing but pray, Maybe the Lord will open a way.

I believe the Lord had his hand in that, It is something we cannot understand yet.

She says, "It is always a whispering voice says to me, Don't feel sorry that Bryner took blind, he is not left,

It's good for you all but you don't know it yet. She went out and came in again and repeated over again,

"Don't feel sorry that Bryner took blind, he is not left, It's good for you all but you don't know it yet.

[Hans Ulrich Bryner, Jr.] "In Memory of the Seventy Sixth Birthday of Ulrich Bryner: -April 22nd. 1903."

This unpublished document is written in the first person in poetic verse and is about eight typed pages in length. Hereafter referred to as Hans Ulrich Jr.



over one hundred men to receive mission calls to all parts of the earth. It was the most extensive missionary effort the Mormon Church had yet undertaken. Those who were called scurried to make ready. George Mayer, a Pennsylvania-born convert to Mormonism during the early 1840s, was obedient, and he took his call to be a missionary seriously. Mayer records that he took leave of his family and "left them shedding tears. I walked off with a heavy heart to see them the last time for a long time. Yet I had a great joy that God was mindful of me, and had called me to so high and holy a calling to go and preach the gospel..."<sup>14</sup>

Within months, Mayer was preaching in Germany, where he met with some native Swiss, and--perhaps because of his limited success in Germany--he began to desire and pray that a way might open up for him to bring the Mormon Gospel to Switzerland. Shortly, his wishes were fulfilled and he was transferred to Basel, becoming the first German-speaking missionary to labor full-time among the Swiss.<sup>15</sup> After experiencing mixed success in the Basel and Birsfelden area,<sup>16</sup> Mayer received instructions from his church leaders to move to the Zürich region, leaving another missionary in Basel to start the work afresh. On 3 December, Mayer traveled by stage to Baden, and then took the one hour train ride to Zürich, arriving at six in the evening. In Zürich, as in Basel, his preaching created a significant stir among the people. His first visit in the Zürich area was to the family of Heinrich Hug in Weiningen, to whom Mayer was referred by a convert in Basel. He was well received by the Hugs, although a local Baptist minister did his best to intercede and prevent them from believing Mayer's message. But they did believe, and on 31 January 1854, Mayer baptized five souls in the Limmat River a mile away--one of whom, a servant of the Hugs, he later excommunicated for lying. Mayer kept busy preaching in Zürich and the surrounding communities and was reportedly instrumental in several healings. Word spread quickly that a minister from America was

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<sup>13</sup> Hans Ulrich Jr., 2-3

<sup>14</sup> George Mayer, *A Diary of George Mayer* (Alpine, Utah: Myer's Family Organization, 1967) 8. Americana Collection, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University. This is a private published typescript version of the Mayer Diary with corrected spelling (except for names). A Microfilm copy of the original diary is in the LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah. Regarding the conference, see also James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1976) 280; and, *Journal History of the Church*, 28 August 1852, 1 (LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah).

<sup>15</sup> On Mayer's ministry in Switzerland and Mormon missionary efforts in general, see Paul-Anthon Nielson, "Sending the Gospel to the Swiss" *Die ersten zehn Jahre des Mormonentums in der Schweiz, 1850-60*. (Bern: Unpublished manuscript, 1989) 15. See also Amos K. Bagley, "Historical Sketch of the Swiss-German Mission" (Basel: Unpublished manuscript, 1931) 2, and Dale Z. Kirby "History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Switzerland." M.A. Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1971.

<sup>16</sup> Mayer baptized a number of converts, but most were excommunicated before he left the area. One group, for instance, was cut off from Church for making plans to emigrate to the United States despite the instructions by Church leaders that converts not emigrate yet. These converts seemed more converted to America than to the gospel that Mayer taught. Others were excommunicated for dishonesty, etc. Mayer, 26.



preaching a new gospel. Among those who heard of him were the Bryner and Mathis families in nearby Wiedikon.

On Sunday, 19 February 1854, six members the Mathis and Bryner families heard George Mayer preach for the first time. When they returned home that Sunday, Hans Ulrich, Jr., was asked by his mother-in-law to once again describe the man from his visions. The description fit the American as they had suspected. Mayer left this record:

On Monday [20 February 1854] I was called to visit a family in Wiedikon, that one of his sons was blind for better than a year. He had dreamed that he had seen a man that healed his eyes and he had a book in his hands and taught him and prayed for him and he could see. So he described the man, that the man was a tall man and had a large gray beard round his chin. His parents heard of me and came to see me and they said that I filled the description that he gave of me.<sup>17</sup>

Mayer went to visit the family and taught them his message about the restoration of the ancient gospel of Jesus Christ through Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon; although some of his teachings were new to them, they found that his message was in harmony with their understanding of the Bible. Mayer also blessed Hans Ulrich Jr., and "told him that he should see in the name of Jesus Christ." Hans Ulrich, Jr. mentions that his eyes improved for a time. The promise of sight appears to have created quite a stir in the community. The newspaper reported that "if this man gives Bryner his sight, they would believe and be baptized." He never did regain his sight.

On 19 March 1854, George Mayer baptized Hans Ulrich Bryner Jr., his wife Anna Maria, and his sister, Barbara Bryner--in a small stream--the Sihl, which ran through the property of Heinrich Bär and was covered with "a fine bath house." In the following three months, nine additional members of the Bryner and Mathis families were baptized into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Mayer continued to prosper in his missionary endeavors, and the Bryner home came to be a gathering place where the people often heard him preach. Mayer frequently stayed in the Bryner home in the uppermost room. But Mayer's preaching did not go unopposed.<sup>18</sup> Mayer was

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<sup>17</sup> Mayer, 29-30

<sup>18</sup> Opposition took several forms, including harsh editorials in the popular press, disparaging sermons from local clergy disrupting meetings and small mob activity such as breaking windows in the Bryner home where Mayer lodged. The most persistent opposition was legal in nature. Already by 24 March 1854 he received notice from the police that he should leave Zürich immediately. On 31 March 1854, Mayer appeared before the mayor, a Mr. Ferse, to inquire why he must leave. The reply was simply that he had to leave and if he did not leave willingly, he would be forced to leave. When Mayer refused, Ferse then called 12 or 15 police, ready to force him to leave. Mayer responded:

frequently called before the civic authorities several times to answer for his actions, and was frequently threatened with deportation. Still, George Mayer returned to his labors. On 22 April 1854, George Mayer baptized additional members of the Mathis and Bryner families. Mayer had baptized many souls in the Zürich area, despite the months of legal difficulty, and in May 1854 a branch of the LDS Church was organized. Some of the local men were ordained to various offices of the priesthood, with Heinrich Bär appointed to preside over the small congregation. They also organized a branch in Weiningen, ordaining Heinrich Hug a priest to teach the members there. July found George Mayer preaching in the Bryner home on several occasions to a full house of forty or more, and he also preached at a hall called the Sign of the Lion.

However, the greater the success that George Mayer experienced, the greater the opposition from the local ministers, who began to speak and write more frequently against the Mormons. One such preacher even visited the Bryner household in July and tried--unsuccessfully--to win the family back to his fold.<sup>19</sup> On 9 September 1854, seven more souls were baptized, bringing the total numbers of baptism in Zürich to one hundred since George Mayer arrived the previous December. Mayer spent early December traveling through the eastern parts of Switzerland, meeting with converts, preaching the gospel, settling disputes, and otherwise putting the affairs of the Church in order. Upon his return, he stayed at the Bär residence. One Saturday evening, Hans Ulrich Bryner, Sr., came to speak with him and while they were talking, the police came to ask Mayer to

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I told them that they did not know what they were doing and that they were putting their best friends out of Zurich, and God knew it and the holy angels knew it, and if they were all against me that God was my friend. They then appeared confounded and left me and said that I should leave on Sunday morning.... We then went to a lawyer and he sent us to another and Brother [Bryner] told him the he was willing to give bond for my good behavior of a thousand dollars if required, and that I must remain here, and that they had no right to make me leave Zurich, that I was a good and honorable man, and he demanded him to do all he could for me to remain in this country, and he didn't care what it cost.

The lawyer said that he would do all he could, and he made "an instrument of writing" for Mayer to show the High Council for them to act on it. The High Council gave Mayer a receipt to show the police. "The writing cost 12 francs; the brothers and sisters paid for me freely." But on Sunday, 2 April, Mayer was once again called to appear before the police; he went willingly and was asked to take a seat in the police room: "Then there came a police to me and told me in a rough way to stand up. He asked me several questions in an insulting way, whether that blind man could see now, and said that he could see rage in my eyes. I said nothing, but thought probably my eyes were a looking glass to his, but he could not look me in the face much." Mayer was then stripped, searched, and told that he was going to America. But Mayer did not pass up the opportunity to preach a little, and not without affecting some; one of the policemen even exclaimed "that it was damn hard that a man hadn't a right to his own faith, and that faith would remove mountains."

Soon Mayer found himself jailed on half rations. Although they treated him roughly at first, he gradually softened the hearts of the jailor and his wife, and they treated him kindly after that. The Mormons in Zürich labored in his behalf; some brought him food, and Schilling made contact with the American Consul. The Consul interceded for him and he was freed the following Sunday, but not without first having made some in the prison wish to come and hear him preach after his release. Mayer, 32-33

<sup>19</sup> For one account of the debate between Mayer and the minister, see Mayer, 37.



appear before the mayor again. Bryner accompanied him. Mayer was jailed overnight. When the jailor saw him he exclaimed, "Oh, my God, here you have brought that man again."<sup>20</sup> The next morning, he was put on the train for Baden, but from Baden he immediately returned to Weiningen. There he found waiting a letter from Church leaders instructing him to lead a group of Saints to Liverpool, England, and from there they would receive further direction for passage to America.

By 25 January 1855, a group comprising fifteen Swiss Saints was ready to go; and they met secretly a few miles outside of Zürich to begin the trek. Among their number were Casper Bryner, Barbara Bryner, and John Mathis (ages 21, 25, and 23 respectively), a number of members of the Hugs family, Catherine Wehrly, Carlena Abderhalden, and several others.<sup>21</sup> They traveled through Winterthur and Frauenfeld to Romanshorn. From there they sailed over Lake Constance to Friedrichshafen. Arrangements had been made for the group to travel up the Rhine River--an agent had promised to transport the group for one hundred francs. But the Rhine was frozen and the steamboats could not move, so they were forced to make alternate plans, losing their unused boat fares in the process.

It took nearly three months for the group to make it to Liverpool. Later emigrants would find the trip lasting just a few days because of dramatic improvements in the rail systems throughout Europe. But this first group of Swiss-German Mormons spent most of their time just waiting: in Beverdock, Germany until 15 February, in Mannheim until 5 March. Finally they were able to sail down the Rhine, arriving in Rotterdam on 12 March 1855. They traveled by rail and boat to get to Liverpool, arriving on 16 March 1855. The Mathis and Bryner families had thus far financed the trip for Barbara, Casper, and John, and had helped pay the passage for George Mayer.

Over seventeen thousand European Mormon converts had already emigrated to the United States between 1840 and 1854, and 1855 showed a continued increase.<sup>22</sup> John, Barbara, and Casper were among the 4,225 souls that emigrated that year through the efforts of a unique Mormon emigration institution, the Perpetual Emigration Company,<sup>23</sup> almost all of them through Liverpool.

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<sup>20</sup> Mayer, 43.

<sup>21</sup> Mayer, 44. On the Mormon immigration generally, see Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (New York: Knopf, 1979) 127-130; William Mulder, *Homeward to Zion: The Mormon Migration from Scandinavia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1957); P.A.M. Taylor, *Expectations Westward: The Mormons and the Emigration of their British converts in the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1965).

<sup>22</sup> Milton R. Hunter, *Brigham Young the Colonizer* (Santa Barbara and Salt Lake City: Pergine Smith, 1941, 4th edition, revised, 1973) 106.

<sup>23</sup> The Perpetual Emigrating Fund (P.E.F.) was organized in 1849 under the direction of Brigham Young to assist the poor in emigrating, yet the Church's organization served all the Saints who wanted to emigrate, the system benefitting even those who were not in need of financial assistance. Despite the money they had brought with them, and which they turned over to Church leaders in Liverpool, John Mathis and Barbara and Casper Bryner were



Within two weeks after their arrival in Liverpool, arrangements were made for immediate passage of the Swiss immigrants to America aboard the American square-rigger, *Juventa*.<sup>24</sup>

The prospects of a long voyage across the Atlantic generally invoked a great deal of fear among prospective travelers: "To the emigrant inexperienced on the water, the fear of the ocean itself often overshadowed all other hardships on shipboard."<sup>25</sup> Although the ships chartered by the LDS Church generally fared well, tales of shipwrecks and numerous deaths by disease on the high seas were generally well-founded. It was likely an exciting thirty-five day voyage for the young Swiss emigrants for other reasons as well; they saw several whales, blackfish, and porpoises, all of which would have been quite new to these native Swiss citizens. Most of the passengers experienced a great deal of seasickness throughout the voyage, although conditions generally improved over time as the passengers got their "sea legs." The wind was usually favorable, and the ship sailed at a good rate. About mid-way through the journey, a "child [was] found to be in the measles. The ship was cleaned out from stern to stern," and no large outbreak of disease of any kind was experienced on board. By and large, the passage was remarkably successful with no deaths and no serious illness. Indeed, the company actually grew during the voyage with the birth of at least one girl who was appropriately named *Juventa*.<sup>26</sup>

Finally, after more than a month at sea, the coast of America came into view on the morning of 4 May 1855. The voyage was finally concluded with a leisurely tow by a tug-boat up the Delaware River, finally anchoring the *Juventa* in Philadelphia on the evening of 5 May. In Philadelphia the company was met by the LDS Church's over-worked representative, John S. Fullmer, who was hard-pressed to make arrangements for an unprecedented number of emigrants. Fullmer accompanied the group for the next portion of their journey.<sup>27</sup> From Philadelphia, the company traveled by train to Pittsburgh. On the way, they experienced a jarring train wreck, resulting in a

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among the Saints who drew upon the P.E.F. Journal History of the Church, 31 March 1855, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.

<sup>24</sup> See Conway B. Sonne, *Ships, Saints, and Mariners: A Maritime Encyclopedia of Mormon Migration 1830-1890* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987) 127. The three-decker ship, commanded by Captain Alfred Watts, set sail 31 March 1855 with a company of 573 British, Swiss, and Italian Mormons. Because the *Juventa* carried such a large number of passengers, they were arranged into twelve wards (congregations) and assigned chores and duties accordingly, whether that meant cooking or, for the men, getting up at 4:00 a.m. to begin washing and scraping the deck. Taylor, 190.

<sup>25</sup> Conway B. Sonne, *Saints on the Seas: A Maritime History of Mormon Migration 1830-1890* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1983) 57.

<sup>26</sup> On the voyage generally, see Henry Clog, Diary, 1855 Mar.-Aug; Sylvester Henry Earl, Diary, 1852-1856; Robert Hazen, Reminiscences and journal [1853] - 1857, all located in the LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City.

<sup>27</sup> Taylor, 214.

"great bewailing among the women."<sup>28</sup> Several of the train's cars had to be left behind, but the rest of the train moved ahead. In Pittsburgh, they boarded on the steamboat *Equinox* which carried them to Atchison, Kansas, with a brief layover in St. Louis.

A place called Mormon Grove--situated just outside Atchison--had been recently selected to serve the Church as the launching point for crossing the plains.<sup>29</sup> An Englishman, Richard Ballantyne, had been appointed by Apostle Erastus Snow--whose headquarters were in St. Louis--to lead the fourth company to Salt Lake City; Ballantyne's P.E.F. company consisted of 402 people in 45 wagons. Within the company, Ballantyne appointed George Mayer as captain of the third group, which consisted of ten wagons, eleven persons per wagon. Mayer kept Casper and Barbara Bryner and John Mathis in his wagon, while the rest of the Swiss immigrants formed an additional wagon team.<sup>30</sup>

The Ballantyne company left Mormon Grove 2 July 1855, having been preceded by three companies; an additional three companies were to follow.<sup>31</sup> Each morning the company rose to the sound of the bugle, gathered for prayer, and sang a church hymn. The company progressed, according to daily estimates by Henry Clegg, between five and twenty-five miles per day, with an average day being twelve to fifteen miles, which was quite typical for companies crossing the plains. As the journey progressed, the company supplemented their meals with fresh meat--usually buffalo--and fish when they could. On the trail they also saw many wolves, bears, snakes, hares, and other desert wildlife, including on one occasion a snapping turtle, which made a tasty soup for the group.

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<sup>28</sup> Mayer, 46.

<sup>29</sup> For arriving Latter-day Saints, Mormon Grove "presented the appearance of a city of tents and wagons beautifully arranged in the open woodland. . . ." Erastus Snow, quoted in *Journal History of the Church*, 16 June 1855. For an excellent description of Mormon Grove generally, see *Journal History of the Church*, 31 March 1855.

<sup>30</sup> Mayer, 46. Ballantyne was formerly the Church's first superintendent of the Sunday School and now a missionary who was returning from India. See Melvin L. Bashore and Linda L. Haslam, *Mormon Pioneer Companies Crossing the Plains (1847-1868): Narratives--guide to Sources in Utah Libraries and Archives* (Historical Department, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989 revised edition).

<sup>31</sup> A company from Texas had camped with them in the Grove and preceded them onto the plains by a few days--but then came the cholera. The Ballantyne company soon passed by their graves, "five and six in one grave; the entire family of some passed away; things were put out of the wagons and left behind; they were lovely things too, but no one was allowed to pick them up." Mary Ann Simmons Ford "Life Sketch of Mary Ann Simmons Ford," 2, Mormon biographical sketches collection, LDS Church Archives. These deaths had a sobering effect on the company, but they were determined to continue on. Disease was typically the main cause of death on the emigrant trail, "accounting for nearly nine out of ten deaths." Joseph D. Unruh, Jr., *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-60* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1979) 408. Although the Ballantyne Company saw evidence of the toll that disease could take, they were spared remarkably from much disease within their own camp, but among those who died in one of the companies preceding Ballantyne's was Jacob Secrist, who had also labored as a missionary in Switzerland for a time. See *Journal History of the Church*, 3 August 1855.



Next to disease and drowning, accidents with guns proved to be one of the most frequent causes of death on the plains. With the Ballantyne Company, guns seem to have been one of the major sources for trouble,<sup>32</sup> mostly due to inexperience with firearms. As a group, they carried about eighty guns. But hardships came from other sources as well. Carlena Abderhalden, who had been baptized by George Mayer in Switzerland, stepped on her dress while climbing out of a wagon and fell. The wagon wheel ran over her, "cutting across her groin and breast."<sup>33</sup> It took her three days to die, becoming the first of several Swiss travelers along the Mormon trail to die *en route*.<sup>34</sup>

After two months on the journey, the company began to run low on supplies and began "to feel a little blue about it." But they were met by wagons from Salt Lake City that were sent out to meet them. This raised their spirits, and soon they found themselves within fifteen miles of their destination.<sup>35</sup> The next morning, 25 September 1855, the camp moved as fast as they could into Salt Lake Valley where they camped on a spot near the mouth of Emigration Canyon. The spot appropriately came to be known as Emigration Square. With their arrival, they officially became part of a massive movement that brought over 85,000 converts to Utah between 1847 and 1890, yet for the newly arrived Saints the most important emigration was finally over. During the long trek across the plains, many of the emigrants found that "most of [their] clothes were worn out and [their] shoes

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<sup>32</sup> Unruh, 410. One woman, for example, was making a bed and while dragging her husband's shotgun across the bed, accidentally set it off. It "mangled her arm in a shocking manner." "She ran out into the camp with her arm swinging by a piece of flesh." They tried to take her to Fort Laramie to see a surgeon, but she died on the way. The camp considered her husband responsible for having left the percussion cap on the gun. Mayer, 40; Simmons, 2; Ballantyne, 13.

On another occasion, while camped in Laverne, Mary Ann Ford Simmons recalled, "[W]e was surrounded by indians, heeps of them; they were dressed up with paints and feathers, going to some great meeting, they wanted to trade ponies [*sic*] for white girls." Simmons, 2. Ballantyne exercised all caution and instructed the men to keep their guns with them--and loaded. While the Indians were in the camp, one young Saint accidentally shot off his gun, shooting a Sister Palmer in the knee. The gunshot alarmed the Indians; they scattered and were almost instantly mounted and "prepared for battle." But as soon as the Indians learned of what happened, they returned to the camp and "seemed very sorry for the sister." Palmer was taken to Fort Laramie, where her leg was cut off above the knee, "but they had to cut above again and again and [she] finally died. This caused a sad feeling in the company as she was a beautiful singer and the life of the camp." Mayer, 48; Ballantyne, 15; Charles Ramden Bailey, *Autobiography*, 11. In the Joel E. Ricks Collection, Church Archives.

<sup>33</sup> Mayer, 48

<sup>34</sup> Bailey numbered the total accidents to persons on the trip at eleven: eight were run over by wagons and three were shot, resulting in five deaths. Bailey, 11. Whether deaths also occurred by other causes has not been determined, but the company seems to have been especially fortunate to have fallen below the average death rate of four to six percent for emigrants on the plains.

<sup>35</sup> Bailey, 12. Here they were met by a brass band from Salt Lake City. William Pitt, one of the captains in the Ballantyne company, had formerly been the leader of the Nauvoo Brass Band, and the band came out to honor him at the return of his mission. The company danced all night to celebrate their imminent arrival.



worn off [their] feet."<sup>36</sup> Barbara Bryner Mathis, in one of her two existing letters, summarized the entire journey by saying that on the trek across the plains, "we suffered from heat, cold and hunger, but were always of good cheer. We sang and were happy. We arrived well and safely."<sup>37</sup>

John Mathis and Barbara Bryner married in 1856--becoming, after Hans Ulrich Jr., and Anna Dorothea, the second tie by marriage between the two families--and lived out the remainder of their long lives in Utah, Barbara being the last to die in 1920. Most of the members of their immediate families followed over the next several years. Hans Ulrich Jr., and Anna Dorothea arrived in December 1856 on the heels of the famed, but ill-fated Martin and Willie Handcart companies, which saw great loss of life from exposure. Hans Ulrich Jr., and his family followed in a wagon company behind the handcart companies, but by the time they reached Wyoming, oxen were dying at such a rate that there were too few available to pull the wagons, so the Bryners were compelled to leave theirs on the wayside. Despite the assistance that was sent by Brigham Young to rescue the immigrants on the last part of the journey, Bryner arrived with his feet frozen. Brigham Young came to bless him, to which Bryner attributed the healing of his feet.<sup>38</sup> Hans Ulrich Sr., and his wife Verena Wintsch Bryner and others arrived the next year in 1857, but Hans Ulrich Sr., died as the result of an injury from falling off a wagon less than five years later.<sup>39</sup> Henry Mathis, brother of John and Anna Marie, joined the family in Utah in 1862. Mother Mathis's dying wishes for her husband in 1859 were that Johannes marry her younger sister and take her to "Zion." Johannes did so, but died shortly after his arrival in Utah in 1865 before he was able to join his children who had since relocated in Southern Utah. His widow buried him in Lehi and then proceeded south to join the family.<sup>40</sup> Two female members of the Mathis family never converted to the Mormon faith; they

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<sup>36</sup> Archibald McFarland in *Our Pioneer Heritage*, vol. 9, compiled by Kate B. Carter, 382.

<sup>37</sup> Barbara Bryner Mathis, letter to the *Beobachter*, 1913. The First Presidency of the Church--Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball and Jedediah Grant--came to welcome the Saints upon their arrival at Emigration Square, where the company set up temporary camp. Brigham Young greeted the Saints and took George Mayer by the hand, saying, "You are welcome home again." He "seemed much pleased to see the Swiss Saints." Mayer, 48. The newly arrived emigrants received counsel from Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball: "Brigham and Heber spoke to us telling [us] what to do and what we might expect being in a new country and unacquainted with things that [we] may find it difficult for a time until we got acquainted with the country and people." Charles Ramden Bailey in *Our Pioneer Heritage*, vol. 5, compiled by Kate B. Carter, 171. These were appropriate words for the Swiss immigrants, who knew only the people in their company.

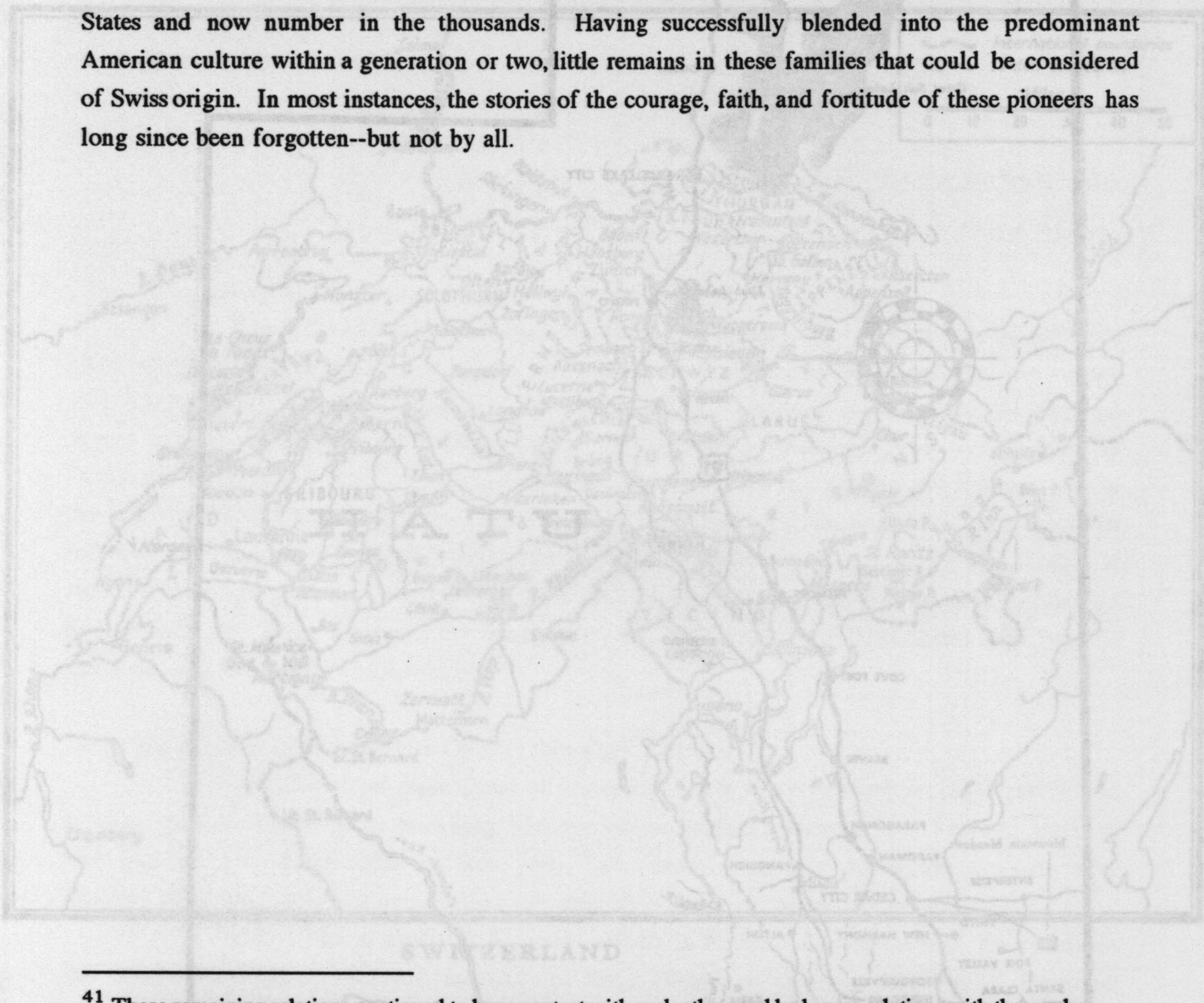
<sup>38</sup> Hans Ulrich, Jr., 5.

<sup>39</sup> Laura Redd, "Life Story of Hans Ulrich Bryner, Sr. and Wife Verena Wintsch." Salt Lake City: unpublished, n.d.. See also James G. Bleak, *Annals of the Southern Utah Mission*, Book A, Tms, p. 100. Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

<sup>40</sup> J. Cecil Alter, *Utah the Storied Domain: a documentary History of Utah Eventful Career Comprising the Thrilling Story of Her People from the Indians of Yesterday to the Industrialists of Today* vol. III (Chicago and New York: The American Historical Society, 1932) 471. See also Hans Ulrich, Jr., 6.

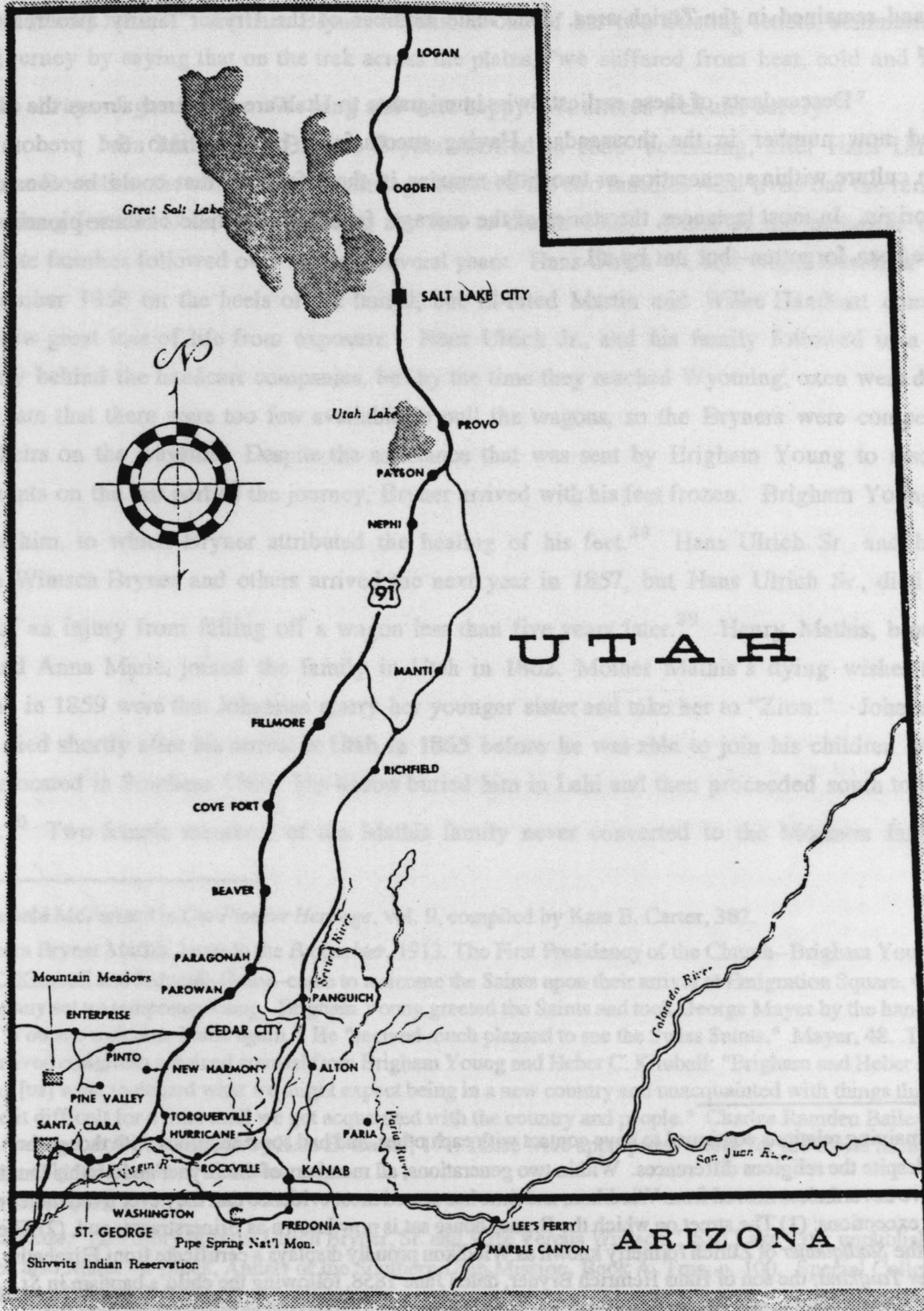
married and remained in the Zürich area. One male member of the Bryner family also remained behind.<sup>41</sup>

Descendants of these earliest Swiss immigrants to Utah are scattered across the United States and now number in the thousands. Having successfully blended into the predominant American culture within a generation or two, little remains in these families that could be considered of Swiss origin. In most instances, the stories of the courage, faith, and fortitude of these pioneers has long since been forgotten--but not by all.

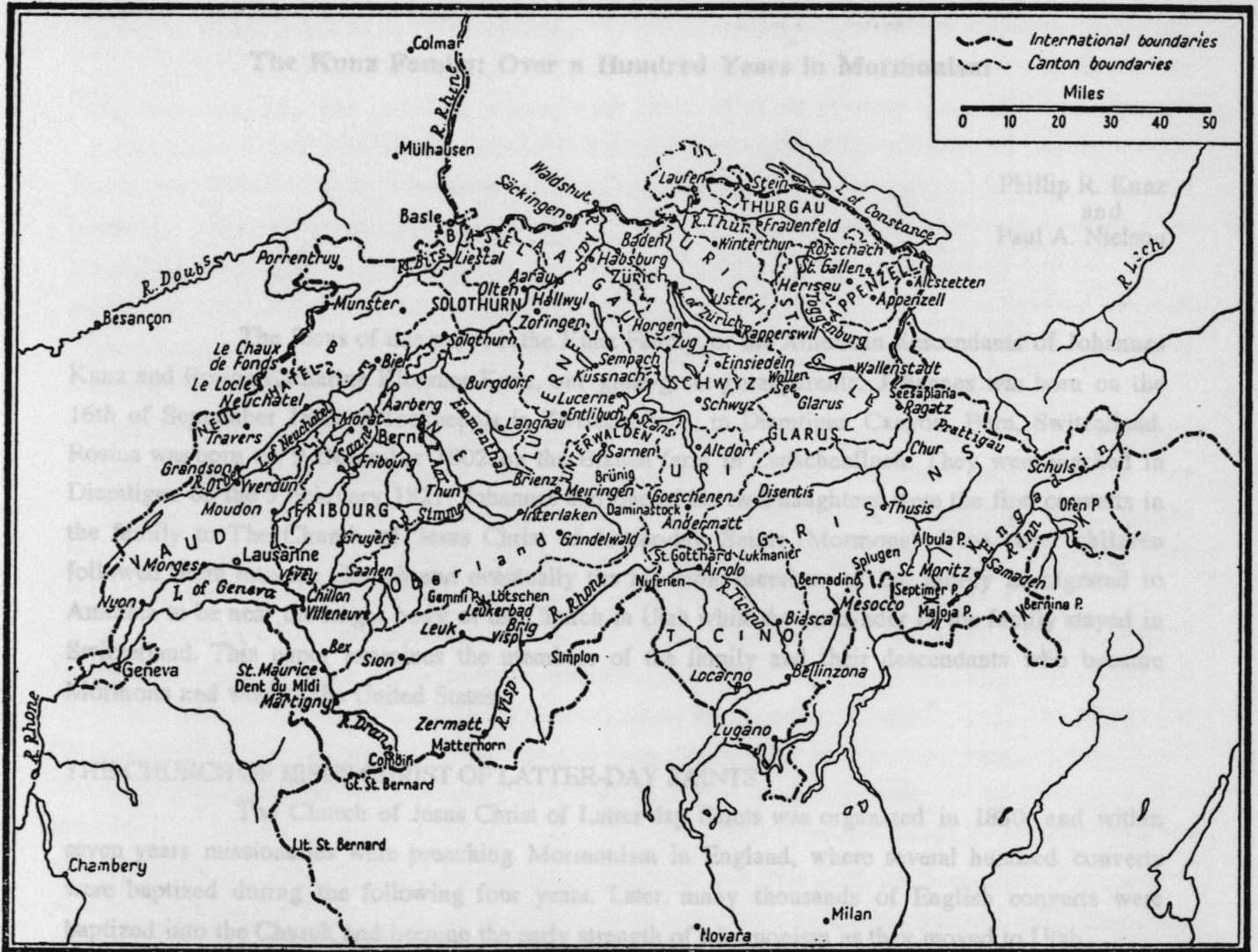


<sup>41</sup> These remaining relations continued to have contact with each other, and had some relations with those who emigrated, despite the religious differences. Within two generations, all members of the Bryner and Mathis families appear to have nevertheless moved from Wiedikon, and time has erased most evidence that they ever lived there, with two notable exceptions: (1) The street on which the Bryner house sat is now known as Brinerstrasse; and, (2) The museum in the *Stadtquartier* of Zürich formerly known as Wiedikon proudly displays a certificate from Elisabetha Mathis to her *Taufkind*, the son of Hans Heinrich Bryner, dated June 1858, following the child's baptism in *St. Peterskirche*. Several Mathis and Bryner descendants in Utah returned to Switzerland as missionaries over the following years, and enjoyed visiting with relations there. Pauline Mathis married Jakob Bosshard from Kilchberg, and at least one of their descendants later traveled to visit the Utah relatives in the late nineteenth century, joined the Mormon church and subsequently stayed in the United States.









SWITZERLAND

... in England ripped through the continent and became a concern sufficient enough that Swiss clergymen complained about it. Reverend Abraham Samuel Rastbach of the Wetzwil Parish in Switzerland warned the General Synod of Canton Bern in June 1841 of the new religious discrimination. "It is necessary that the clergy maintain a watchful eye over this dangerous cunning form of the selling of souls."<sup>12</sup> However the

<sup>12</sup> "Minutes of the General Synod of Canton Bern, June 22nd and 23rd, 1841, 1841," *Cantonal Synod Minutes 1839-1855*, vol. 1, pp. 58-59 (Bernese State Archives, Synodal Council Archives, B 11). In Kurt Guggisberg *Bernische Kirchengeschichte*, Bern, 1938, p. 621, the year is erroneously given as 1840.