

Christian and Mary Magdalena Pfister Wittwer

- Samuel Wittwer

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Written by Josephine Wittwer, a granddaughter

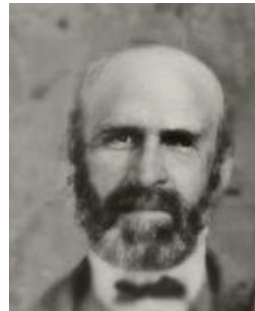
Christian and Mary Magdalena Pfister Wittwer were born in Switzerland. Their parents were Mathies and Anna Maria Siegenthaler Wittwer and Samuel and Barbara Raeber Pfister. After their marriage, 28 March 1846, they lived in the village of Shangnau which was surrounded with beautiful mountains. They had a farm where they raised cattle and milk cows and made lots of cheese.

Christian had a sister named Elisabeth, born April 28, 1828. She married Samuel Egli, a quiet, religious man. Elisabeth died April 2, 1868.

Christian and Magdalena's only child, Samuel, was born March 10, 1847 in Shangnau.

They joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when Samuel was about eleven years old. They wanted to be near the Saints in Utah so they sold their property which gave them enough money to make the long trip.

Early in 1860 they came with the Swiss Company and landed in New York City. On the train to the Missouri River they traveled with John Stucki, his wife, daughter Mary Ann, son John S., and daughter Rose.



Christian Wittwer and Mary Magdalena Pfister

Christian had an accordion and a harmonica which he played while the Saints sang. This helped them to keep up their spirits when they became discouraged. Near Omaha, Nebraska they purchased a good ox team and wagon and crossed the plains with the Swiss Company. Every night and morning would find them praying to the Lord for safe protection and giving thanks for their many blessings. Christian and Magdalena slept at night in the wagon.

When they arrived in Utah they first settled in the city of Payson. Here they lived until they were called by President Brigham Young to leave and go to southern Utah. They lived in New Harmony and then Rockville, but they were not happy in either place. They arrived in Santa Clara November 28, 1861. They bought two lots across the street from the public square and built a rock house.

Christian was able to secure property in several places in Santa Clara where he made farms. He was a strong man and could work hard. He would cradle the grain and bind it with his hands.

In the Ward, he helped with all their entertainment, playing the hand organ and the accordion and harmonica. On special holidays he would serenade the town with his music. The young people enjoyed going to his home to have him entertain them in the evenings. They would sing and play and enjoy themselves.

Magdalena loved to cook and made egg bread, fritters, apple cakes, etc., to treat their visitors. Magdalena did lots of sewing. Of course this was all done by hand as she did not have a sewing machine.

Christian had a good team of horses and a buggy and often went to the Temple in St. George. They would always take anyone who wanted to ride with them.

At one time Christian and Magdalena made a trip to Salt Lake City in their covered wagon. It was a long, hard trip and they had

many experiences. They took a widow lady, a Sister Carpenter, and her five year old son, Alfred, who rode with them from Richfield. Little Alfred would try to drive the team some of the way so he could feel like he was helping to pay their way.

In 1874 when Brigham Young was in St. George he asked the people to live the United Order. It was formed in Santa Clara. Crops were raised and harvested and shared in common, but it lasted only a short time.

Christian and Magdalena, their son, Samuel, and his wife, Anna Mary, and their three oldest children, Samuel, Harmon, and Mary moved to Price, a few miles south of St. George when people were called from different towns to go to Price and live the United Order. Sam Reber and his second wife and family were also there from Santa Clara. They all worked hard and had a good spirit among them for some time. Anna Mary was appointed to take full charge of the cooking with all the other sisters assisting her. They all ate at one big table. The practice of the United Order was discontinued because of difficulties that arose and there was no longer peace and harmony among the men and women. The families all moved back to their homes.

Christian had put quite a lot of money in the United Order which he lost, but this did not affect his faith. He had a strong testimony of the Gospel and trusted in the Lord at all times.

In November of 1873 Christian Wittwer and widow, Anna Elizabeth Frehner went to Salt Lake City with a team and wagon outfit along with John George Hafen and Mary Ann Stucki. Both couples were married in plural marriage in the Endowment House on November 24, 1873.

After Magdalena died January 10, 1884, Christian lived with his son, Samuel and his family. Later in life he had trouble with rheumatism and had to use crutches.

He died in his son, Samuel's home in Santa Clara on January 12, 1894.

Samuel Wittwer

Samuel Wittwer, the only child of Christian Wittwer and Magdalena Pfister, was born on the 10th day of March, 1847 at Shangau, Canton Bern, Switzerland. His early childhood was spent in this beautiful narrow valley located in the majestic Alp mountains. Some fruit trees were grown there, but it was mostly pasture land, and fields of hay and grain for feed for their dairy cattle. From this valley came the big round cheese as large as big wagon wheels, weighing 500 pounds. So we can imagine that Samuel's childhood was spent in helping with chores, herding cows, and helping make cheese. He had the fun, played the games and explored the hillsides the same as other Swiss lads. There was love and harmony in the home, love for each other and for their Father in Heaven. Great was the joy in their hearts when the Elders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints came into their valley and to their home telling of the restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. With the acceptance of the Gospel and their baptism, there came also the desire to be with the main body of the Saints that had made the historic trek to Utah. They sold their property and taking with them the necessities and a few treasured belongings, they joined a group of Swiss converts who were sailing to America.



Samuel Wittwer

From two records I have seen there is a conflict in the date that he came to America. From one record it states that Christian Wittwer, Samuel's father, went to America in 1860. In another it says that Samuel was eleven years old when they left Switzerland, making it the year of 1858.

The ship docked at the harbor in New York City, and with John Stucki and family and others of the Swiss Company they boarded

the train to go to Florence, Nebraska. Samuel's father, a lover of music played his accordion and harmonica to pass away the time and for the enjoyment of all as they traveled. On their arrival at Florence, Nebraska they bought an ox team and wagon and traveled across the plains, for sometimes their supplies were very low and they would cook raw hide and make soup from it. No matter what the day brought, whether problems or troubles or a very successful day, they always held their family prayer to thank the Lord for their blessings upon them and to ask for encouragement and help and guidance and protection.

When they arrived in Utah, they traveled about sixty miles further south of Salt Lake City and settled in the pleasant community of Payson, Utah where they stayed until October 1861.

In General Conference at Salt Lake City in October 1861, President Brigham young called the Swiss Company of three hundred and nine saints to settle southern Utah. Samuel and his parents went with others to settle Santa Clara. They arrived there the 24th of November 1861. They got two lots in the middle of the block across the street west of the public square. There they built a two-room rock house which was to be Samuel's home until he married. The young folk as well as the older ones gathered to this happy home to enjoy the music. On holidays, Samuel could remember his father going through town playing and singing. This was expected every year.

Samuel's father was a strong man and worked hard on the farms. His mother was a very good seamstress and a wonderful cook. They taught him the beauty and a love of the good earth. The Gospel was very important in the lives of his parents and this love was instilled into Samuel's heart and the desire to serve.

The land in Santa Clara had to be leveled and cultivated. They had to make roads and canals to bring the water to the fields. Samuel was especially interested in making the best use of the

water for the soil. He made the head-gates to turn the water into the various fields.

In 1864, Brigham Young called for teams to go to the Missouri River to help bring the converts to Utah. This trip required men to be gone for six months and there were to be twenty-eight outfits. Each town was to furnish teams, wagons, and necessary supplies. Samuel Wittwer was chosen as the teamster from Santa Clara.

To cross the Missouri River they made a raft with poles that were held together by chains. From what I read, Samuel made four trips to the Missouri River to help bring emigrants to Utah. He was very tender and had much compassion for his fellow men, as is shown in the incident that happened on the first tri when he was bringing Samuel Judd's family to Utah. Their eight year old boy became very sick and Samuel helped to care for him and to entertain him during his sickness and convalescence. The Judd family really appreciated his consideration for them. After that there was always a bond of friendship between the two families.

In the early days in Southern Utah the Saints had to help in keeping peace with the Indians. Samuel had a horse bridled and saddled, always ready to go when it was necessary. Forts had been built in Santa Clara, Kanab, and Pipe Springs to protect the Saints from the Indians. Samuel, who was a mason, carpenter and plaster, besides a farmer was sent in company with some other men to Kanab by team to make chimneys for the fort there. On their way they were caught in a bad storm and broke a wagon wheel. They went to the mountains and found cedar posts to take the place of the broken wheel. When they reached Pipe Springs, they were able to get the wheel taken care of so they could go on their way.

On November 22, 1869 Samuel married Anna Mary Gubler, daughter of John Gubler and Mary Ursula Muller, in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City, Utah. To this union were

born twelve children, eight boys and four girls. They were John Samuel, Harmon, Mary Magdalena, Joseph, Anna Rosella, John Hyrum, Henry who died as a baby, George, Theodore who also died as a baby, Josephine, Alice and Julius. All of these children were married in the Temple and have been and are active in their church duties.

Samuel built his own home, the first two-story house in Santa Clara. The lower floor was one large and one small room. The upstairs had two good-sized bedrooms. He also built a cellar which was filled every fall for their winter food supply. Later on he had a rock living room and a kitchen added on. He had good tools and ability, so he was able to make some of his furniture.

In 1874, when Brigham Young was in St. George, he told them of the United Order. The people of Santa Clara organized and began living the way it was taught to them. Crops were raised and shared in common. The men shared their work, and helped each other. At this time Christian Wittwer, Samuel's father, was in Bloomington, his mother was appointed to take charge of the women who were to do the cooking. They all ate at the same table. They had an enjoyable friendly spirit, but soon difficulties arose out of selfishness and jealousies and the Order was broken up. Christian and Samuel lost considerable means when this was changed but their faith did not waver. They returned back to their various homes.

The authorities of the Church had advised the Saints to consider the law of plural marriage which had been revealed to Joseph Smith. Samuel and his wife, Mary Gubler, prayed to the Lord whether he should take another wife, and they felt that it was right that he should do so.

On November 18, 1881 Samuel married Bertha Tobler, daughter of Jacob Tobler and Barbara Staheli, in the St. George Temple. To this union also were born ten children, three sons and seven daughters. They are Bertha Barbara, Albert, Willamina (Mina),

Rhoda, William, Lillian, Ida, Eldon, Myrtle, and Vera. Two daughters, Bertha Barbara and Ida died in infancy. All of these children were also married in the Temple and are active members of the church.

Samuel and his two wives and children lived in the home he built in Santa Clara until 1887. Mary, his first wife, and Bertha, his second, treated each others children as if they were their own. In May 1884, when Mary had seven children and Bertha had two, Samuel was called on a mission to the North Central States in Michigan and Minnesota. He left May 15, 1884. While he was gone Mary and the oldest boys, Samuel Jr. and Harmon, took care of things in the fields. When it came time for the harvest, Hermon Gubler, a brother to Mary, helped the boys with the crops so that Mary didn't have to work so hard in the fields. Bertha, Mary, the oldest daughter, and her sister Rosella, took care of the house and the children. They all worked together in harmony and love.

Samuel's missionary companions were Brother Christensen from Richfield, Utah and Theodore Brandley. They went without purse or script and in one town where they labored, the people were very much against the Mormons and they had many trials, but after praying and fasting they were able to accomplish what the Lord had for them to do. The winters were cold and there was much snow, sometimes it would be piles as high as the top of the doors, making it hard to travel on foot.

One time Samuel and Brother Brandley had an appointment to hold a meeting in a town a distance of thirty miles. They were walking toward this town when Samuel became very sick. He had hemorrhoids which were causing him so much pain he could go no further. He sat down on a log and told Brother Brandley to continue alone so he could hold the meeting. Brother Brandley felt that he shouldn't leave, so he administered to Samuel and asked the Lord to bless him that he would be able to attend the meeting.

Samuel got up and began walking. At first he was in great pain, but as he kept walking the pain gradually stopped and he was able to attend the meeting. He was never troubled with that disorder again while on his mission.

In the year 1887, after the Manifesto, Samuel and Bertha, his second wife, and their children, Albert and Mina, moved to Nevada by team and wagon, a distance of fifty miles. Anna Mary and children continued to live in the home at Santa Clara and Samuel would travel back and forth, living with one family for a while and then with the other. When Samuel and Bertha and their children moved to Nevada, Joseph went along also to help. They camped at Spring Flat, ten miles distant from Santa Clara. Here Mina and Albert had picked some flowers which were poison. The next morning the children had turned black and blue, and looked as if they might die. Samuel administered to them and they were instantly made well. This shows how great his faith was.

During their trip to Nevada, they crossed the Virgin River many times and arrived at the Mesquite Flat. They lived here for a short time in an old deserted adobe house which had no doors nor windows, and only a dirt floor. In the fall they moved to Bunkerville where Samuel got a lot in town, around which he built a fence. This was the first fence in town. Later he built a home there for Bertha and their children. He had twenty acres of land in Bunkerville, which took a lot of work to get in shape to help make a living for his family. Samuel was the first to pipe the water into his home in Bunkerville. He made a cement tank in his lot where it was high enough to give the pipe a good fall to the house. How good it seemed to them not to have to carry the water any longer. This was truly a luxury. Some time later a few other families also piped the water into their homes.

Samuel loved the good earth and seemed to have a green thumb in the way the earth responded to his touch both in Bunkerville and in Santa Clara. He raised crops of wheat, alfalfa and corn.

Also many kinds of vegetables and had berries, currants, raspberries and gooseberries—he had a grape vineyard at both of his places. He had his own bees and beehives where he got the honey for his families. He raised cane for their molasses and also raised some almonds and walnuts along with many fruit trees. This shows how resourceful he really was. With the surplus they would produce, Samuel and some of his sons would peddle out to Delamar and Pioche. They hauled it in covered wagons, sometimes it would take them many weeks to complete a trip.

Samuel and his family dried their peaches and apples as all people did in those days. He was always looking for the best way to do things for himself and his family, to make it easier and quicker for them to accomplish their tasks. So it was only natural that again he was the first to use sulphur to dry the fruit. In the year 1887 they got their first glass bottles to use in canning fruit.

Samuel was a man of many trades, besides those mentioned he also made shoes for the younger children and the boys work shoes. He secured the leather from a tanner in St. George, who had treated the leather. He made his tacks of hard wood.

Samuel's love for his wives and children were equal. One was as great in his sight as the other. He tried to be fair and honest with both of them as well as being the same with all his children. He had high ideals and standards which he expected them to live up to, and he also expected them to follow through in any thing that was asked of them whether in work or play. He gave praise where praise was due and gave encouragement where he could see that it was needed.

Samuel was very much interested in giving his children the opportunity for the education that was possible. Many of his children attended the high school that was held in St. George, and some pursued their education further. Six of his children became teachers, several went on missions.

Samuel loved the Gospel and always had the desire to serve the Lord in whatever way that he was called, whether in offices or everyday service to his fellow men. He served as YMMIA President, the very first in Santa Clara, and as a counselor in the Sunday School Superintendency. He was president of the 6th Quorum of Elders, and a counselor to Bishop John Hafen for seventeen years. During his later years he spent much of his time doing endowment work in the St. George Temple. He and Bertha moved to St. George and built a home close to the Temple, so they could spend as much time as possible in the Temple. He worked on his house when he was around seventy-five years old and lived in it two years before he died.

His wife, Anna Mary, died in Santa Clara, Washington Co., Utah on June 15, 1926 after a lingering illness and was buried in Santa Clara.

Samuel died on the 5th of June 1927 in St. George, Utah. The day he died his wife, Bertha, hadn't felt good, so he helped her with the washing, and had walked up town to get some supplies to finish the bathroom, which he did when he got back. Later in the day some of his children had stopped in to visit. All seemed well when they went to sleep that night, but during the night he died very suddenly in his sleep. He was buried in Santa Clara, Washington County, Utah.

The following is taken from his funeral services: The speakers paid strong tribute to the many virtues of the deceased, speaking of him as a real Latter-day Saint, praising his resourcefulness and exemplary life. He was honest, frugal, very industrious, and he was never known to break his word. A faithful husband and father, he was a good citizen and leaves a noble posterity to carry on the work he began and to perpetuate his good name.

His wife, Bertha Tobler Wittwer, died the 26th of November 1937 in Logandale, Clark County, Nevada and was buried November 28, 1937 in Santa Clara, Washington County, Utah.

Though his parents were blessed with only one child, I'm sure that their joy and happiness was complete, that their hearts were filled to overflowing with gratitude that they were blessed with such a choice soul. I'm sure that he lived up to their desires and expectations and honored the heritage and name that they gave him. May we all do the same.