

Jacob Tobler and Anna Barbara Staheli Family

Wives--Barbara Hafen, Rosina Reber

Jacob Tobler Family

By Cecilia Hulda Ence Tobler

In a beautiful village in Switzerland named Shonengrund, in the County of Appenzell, lived a family whose father's name was Christian Tobler and the mother was Anna Buhler. Fifteen children were born to this family – seven girls and eight boys. The sixth child was a boy Jacob, born 15 January 1833, who is the hero of the history. He grew up with the companionship of his brothers and sisters and developed the peaceful disposition he was credited with. He loved his parents, brothers and sisters. It was necessary, as each child reached the age of twelve, (this was factory age) to go to work in a factory. Jacob became a weaver of cloth, and did this kind of labor to help his parents provide for the family. Jacob also had other talents which I will disclose as I proceed.

When he reached the age of 18 years, it was the rule for boys to be drafted into the armed forces. When he was examined they found he had flat feet which would be a handicap in marching as soldiers must do. They discovered Jacob's musical talent and had him as one of their drummers while he was in the army.

It seemed that he had to go to another town for this training, perhaps it was during this training that he became acquainted with a girl by the name of Anna Katherina Preisig. She was from Schwellbrum, a different



Jacob Tobler



Anna Barbara Staheli

place than where he lived. They were married on the 16th day of May 1854.

No children were born to this union. They joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and were on their way to Zion in the year 1861. While traveling on the plains they reached Florence, Nebraska.

Here they remained for a few days to get some much needed rest. One evening after this good lady had helped prepare the evening meal, she was weary and went into the tent where they were to sleep for the night. When Jacob went in, to his great surprise and terror he found his good wife had passed away. A great sorrow filled his soul. We can all imagine. No other relatives so far from home, but he was among friends. They were all so sympathetic and kind and helped in every way they could to comfort and sustain him. Barbara Staheli, a young convert from Amerswill, Switzerland, became acquainted with Jacob and Anna in Liverpool, England. She was very kind and helpful to Jacob through the trying journey to Salt Lake City.



Anna Katherina Preisig

These immigrants remained in Salt Lake City for two weeks. No doubt Brigham Young, gave them work during this time. Barbara Staheli had been employed by an English couple at Mill Creek. This was a rather difficult time for her as she spoke German and they English, so they had to make each other know by motions of the hands. She was very lonely here and longed to be with the other Swiss emigrants.

President Young, after a two weeks rest, called the Swiss company to go to Dixie or southern Utah and asked that all men be married, or if single to take wives on this journey. So Jacob went to Mill Creek and asked Barbara to be his wife. She gladly accepted his proposal and they were married in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City, 18 October 1861. President Young desired them to do this as it would have necessitated them to return in a short time for this purpose. This is the only place where they could obtain their endowments at this time.

They were advised to come down into southern Utah and grow grapes and cotton as it had been found they would grow here.

The Swiss group left Salt Lake City under the leadership of Daniel Bonneli. Jacob and Barbara had few belongings and little means. Barbara stated how she had taken the full skirts of his other wife who had died to make coverings for their beds. They would use brush for the mattress and with these coverings would make their beds. When they reached St. George, Anthony Ivins' father brought them over to Santa Clara in November 1861` and they were dumped out here among greasewood and sage brush which was frequented by the Indians. Here is where these noble Swiss began to make this little valley blossom as the rose. At first they commenced by living in a fort which was built by Jacob Hamblin and others, but not for long as a great flood came down and washed the fort away necessitating them to move to the present site, where the town of Santa Clara is.

Of course, the first homes were dugouts, until they had time to collect materials to build log cabins and some made willow huts.

In the beginning the town site was surveyed and each settler was given a lot in town and acre plot beyond the lot as a vineyard and then they obtained other land as they were able to buy it. Jacob Tobler's lot was in the southeast part. It was the lot which later Jacob Frei owned. Later Father Tobler traded it to Bishop John G. Hafen for the lot now owned by son Ernest. No doubt he desired to be more in the center of town. At both places he built a log room. His two daughters Barbara and Bertha were born here.

Father Tobler came with very little means and so it necessitated him to begin in a very humble way. He had to rely on those who had more than he did and exchanged labor for the use of tools. These pioneers were a wonderful group. Always helping each other out in work and when sickness or death hit they were there to help.

Their house furnishings were very crude. Split logs for tables and chairs, clean chips for dishes. Posts driven into the ground for beds and limbs for stringers and the thinner limbs for cross bars. Their mattresses were of brush until grain was raised when they filled their ticks with straw. Later when sufficient corn was raised the shucks from the corn was used and each year this was replaced with clean shucks. This continued for many years even down to the years of 1909, and even later people still had these kind of beds. Their first pillows were filled with cattail fur and the fur from milkweed. Of course, as soon as chickens became plentiful the pillows were filled with feathers and feather beds were also made. The Swiss were accustomed to having these on their beds in the homeland.

The Swiss people soon began to till their ground. Gardens were planted into cotton. Father rented a piece of land up at three mile, as it was called, where he raised cotton. He also had other land. Polygamy was the order at this time so Jacob consulted his wife Barbara and she consented for him to marry Barbara Hafen Willie, the widow of Ignatz Willie. These two women lived in the same one-room log house until father Tobler rented a house on the lot where John and Barbara Staheli lived.



Barbara Hafen

To this good woman four children were born – two boys and two girls. The girls died young. William Ignatz and John Albert grew to manhood and were married the same day, having a double wedding on 12 January 1898. William married Mary Magdalena Wittwer and Albert married Barbara Stucki. These two couples moved to Washington, where they lived and raised their families. Albert passed away 15 November 1915 from pneumonia, leaving a large family who are a credit to him. William is still living and 93 years of age. He lost his wife, Mary, on 13 January 1951. He also lost four children. He has been spending his time working in the St. George Temple and has a wonderful family.

Jacob Tobler has filled many positions in the Priesthood. He was Ward Clerk for many years and he was first counselor to Bishop John G. Hafen and remained for many years in this capacity. He filled this position very efficiently. Often the greater part of the time the responsibility fell on his shoulders as Bishop Hafen was away from home peddling and the second counselor Samuel Wittwer had a family in Bunkerville, Nevada. He always took care of the fast offerings which came in produce such as flour, potatoes, wood and what not. He was very honest and upright. Always doing the Lord's work first and then considering his as secondary.

While he was in the Bishopric, George Staheli, the band leader died leaving a wife and two children. She lived neighbors to Father Tobler and in her sadness, often had father called to comfort her. She was of a melancholy disposition. It occurred so often that no doubt he decided he could help her more if he married her, so he consulted his wife Barbara and the children and it was decided agreeable, so he married Rosina Reber Staheli. She continued to live in her home. To this union were born six children – three boys and three girls. These were Alfred, Edward, Vernon, Josephine, Lillie, and Rhoda. This good woman died from appendicitis when Rhoda was only 14 months old. Father Jacob and mother Barbara were beginning to be old but they accepted the responsibility of this family and did a wonderful job.



Rosina Reber

Father Tobler was no great financier, but with the help of his families and wives they made a living and were satisfied with their lot. They never had many material comforts of life, but I know they no doubt are possessors of mansions in Heaven which they were able to send the building materials up through their diligence and sacrificing natures while here.

Jacob and Barbara had a family of eleven children – eight of whom grew to adulthood – three dying in childhood. They were Bertha, Barbara, Jacob, Hermina, George, Harmon Christian, John Henry, and Ernest. Jacob, the son, passed away in his 19th year of appendicitis.

Jacob Tobler was a source of comfort in this community. He was a man of great faith and went among the sick, blessing them, and in many instances people were healed through his faith and blessing. He also possessed a musical talent. He played the big bass horn in the Staheli band. He had a rich bass voice and used it singing in the assemblies. Father Tobler lived so near the church that he was responsible for the ringing of the bell for all gatherings. He had a good clock which he obtained from some of the gold seekers in 1864, who went to California. His son Ernest and family were given this clock and it is still in good running order. It has now been in the Tobler possession for 86 years. It could be 100 years old.

In his later years, he with members of Rosina's family took care of the church as janitors. Father Tobler has a large posterity and an honorable one. At this writing I know of none who have ever been sent to prison and none that are not members of the church and in good standing. Many have filled missions and served their country well in the armed forces.

I, as his daughter-in-law, do honor and revere his memory and feel I was highly privileged to become the wife of one of his noble sons. To be counted among his posterity. May the Lord help all his posterity as we strive to emulate his example and prove worthy to meet him in that Heavenly Home and hear him say "Welcome" to them all, is the desire of his daughter-in-law, Cecilia.