

Johann Rudolpph Frei and Anna Margaretha Naegeli

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Written by Elsie Frei, granddaughter, for the English Department of the Dixie Normal College during the winter of 1916-17. This project was sponsored by the Genealogical Committee of the St. George Stake Relief Society with Sister Josephine J. Miles as Chairman. Copied by Ella J. Seegmiller, County Historian of the DUP in January 1945

Johann (John) Rudolph Frei was born in Leutsburg, St. Gallen, Switzerland. His father and mother were both Swiss. They belonged to the Protestant Church and were staunch followers of Zwengh.

The father was an invalid for years, and died in 1859 just one year before his family joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Leutsburg was a very small town. The houses and farms were scattered over a number of rolling hills and all the farm work was done with cows. The farm owned by the Frei family was small so that Rudolph often hired out in neighboring towns to help keep up living expenses. They were very poor and had to work hard to keep the wolf from the door. In 1858 they heard the Gospel and the mother, two sons and one daughter all joined, and began to save means to make the trip to Zion. The emigrated in 1860; while crossing the ocean, the mother became ill and died, leaving her three children orphans. Had it not been for the Gospel and its teachings this would have been a greater tragedy for them seeing their mother buried in the surging ocean. The responsibility then fell on Rudolph as he was the oldest child.



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When they landed in the U.S. they had no means of going on, fortunately they found a man who had outfits but no drivers. So they drove an ox team for the privilege of coming along, they felt very humble and thankful for this opportunity and faced the trials and hardships of the journey with a feeling that they had been blessed to have a chance to endure them. They arrived in Salt Lake City in 1860. The two boys remained there one year then were called to come to Southern Utah with the Swiss move. The sister married and remained in the north.

Rudolph met Margaret Naegle and after three weeks of acquaintance, married her and brought her to Dixie with him in 1861. They owned a yoke of oxen and an old wagon. While making the trip they got behind the company and took the wrong road. It was several days before they got back with their friends. After traveling three weeks, they reached the little valley of Santa Clara where they made their home.

The first years in Southern Utah were filled with trials and hardships. After the town was laid off each family was given a lot in town and a few acres of land for farming. During the time they prepared this land for use, they lived in a dugout or in any sort of a home they could prepare hurriedly, usually a wagon box. Rudolph and his wife lived in a dugout. Their lot was two blocks from the creek, which was the only source of drinking water, this made the water carrying a task, especially in stormy seasons. Perhaps the most distressing trial was the lack of food. Pigweeds and other roots were largely hunted up early in the spring before the garden stuff was ready. Molasses was used instead of sugar until they could hardly eat what they sweetened with it.

The Indians also gave those early pioneers much trouble. Rudolph never had to follow them or fight with them, but he was called several times to help guard the town against their attacks. At one time an Indian stole a horse he had hobbled out on the hills. He hunted it for days and finally gave it up for lost, when one day, he saw the Indian drive through town with the horse so poor and jaded he hardly recognized it. After a dispute in which the Indian wanted money for the horse and hobble, he finally got them back again.

Such necessities and luxuries of today, as meats, creams, pastries, and candies were never thought of only as something to be enjoyed in the future. Many years of hard and strenuous labor were placed into the farms and homes before they were at all comfortable and during this time seven children were born to them; three of whom died in their infancy, two sons and two daughters grew to manhood and womanhood, when death again claimed the youngest girl. There were then other demands on the father, both boys filled missions in Germany and Switzerland, where they visited old friends and the old home of the parents.

When a youth Rudolph had no reason to believe he would ever leave his old home in Switzerland and because of poverty he was unable to obtain an education. After accepting the Gospel message his course in life was changed, the experiences he had reaching what became his home and his trials and hardships along with the association of all classes of people proved a greater education than he ever could have gained in the old country.

Anna Margaretha Naglie (Naegeli) was born in February 1830 in Lanschlacht, Canton Thurgau, Switzerland. She belonged to the Protestant Church and was of a very religious disposition. There were three children in the family – two girls and one boy. The boy and one girl died with Infantile Paralysis. Her father was a fisherman and being the only child she helped him in his work. They would go out on the Boden Lake in the evening and make their catch. Then in the morning early she would take the fish to Romansborn, a distance of three miles to market in a basket on her head. For the basket of fish she would receive 25 francs (equal to \$5.00)

She was converted to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints about 1860 by a missionary names Woodard. She imigrated to America in 1861 on a sailing vessel. They had a terrible voyage and their supplies ran very low. The wind blew so hard that many times it turned them clear around and started them back in the opposite direction.

They arrived in Salt Lake City about the middle of October, 1861, and there she met her future husband, Rudolph Frei. He had come over a year before

and during the year had earned himself a wagon and an ox team. After they had known each other about two weeks they were married on suggestion of Brigham Young. He made this suggestion to all the Swiss people, "If any of you anticipate getting married soon, get married now so you won't have to come back to Salt Lake City."

They spent their honeymoon coming to Santa Clara in their wagon. All they had to eat was a little bacon. They would cut off a thin slice and boil it to make soup three times a day. They arrived in Santa Clara about the 15th of November. There was just a wagon space through Santa Clara Bottoms which was covered with Mesquite and greasewoods. Israel Ivins and his son, Anthony Ivins were surveying the lots and blocks. After the survey they drew lots for themselves.

Their first home was a dugout with a dirt roof over it. Here their first child was born on November 27, 1862, and he was my father, (Jacob Frei). Right after my father was born it started to rain and didn't quit for 21 days. The roof leaked so bad that they had to take all the dishes out of the cupboard and put them on top of the bed and all around the room to keep the mother from getting wet.

Their next home was a log house and here she gave birth to twins two years after father was born. One was a boy and one a girl. The boy died and the girl was Aunt Mary Reber who is still living in Santa Clara. When her next child was born she had a terrible time. The baby just wouldn't come and the midwife had done all she could do and was almost beside herself. They sent Jacob Tobler over to St. George twice to get a doctor but neither time could he get one to come. When he was coming back from the second trip, he knelt down on the white hills between Santa Clara and St. George and prayed to the Lord and said, "If men won't help – you help." When he got back the baby was born and they found that it had been born just after he finished praying out on the hill. All together they had seven children – four lived and three died. Often times they had nothing to eat but molasses and corn meal ground in a coffee mill. The nearest place to buy supplies was Cedar City – 65 miles away. The first crop they raised was cotton, molasses and corn.

In 1874, thirteen years after they came to Santa Clara, they built their first adobe house. In this home they were quite comfortable with four rooms. Margaret had poor health all the time but always helped with the farm such as stripping cane, picking cotton and taking care of the garden.

One time when they were all together in the field picking cotton, her heart started to pound very hard and she was sure she was going to die. She called her husband and all her children around her and said she knew she was dying and she put her arm around father and told him that he was the oldest and he would have to help his father raise the younger children and take care of everything. Father said he would never forget when they all helped put her into the wagon and took her home. They put her to bed and took good care of her and in a few days she was able to get up again. She was used to having heart attacks but this was by far the worst she ever had.

Another incident my father told me about was how she (his mother) had to carry all the water they used from the creek in buckets. During the winter time she would have to go through mud so thick that it would cling to her shoes in big hunks and she would have to stop every little ways and scrape it off. Father said the memory of this would stay with him always.

Margaret didn't care to learn the English language and demanded that her children always answer her in Swiss. She thought the Mother's place was in the home and taught her children to be honest, truthful, and virtuous – to say their prayers and pay their tithing.

I will have to tell you one more little incident about my father. She wouldn't let anyone cut his hair and he was getting so big that he was really embarrassed about it. One day the whole family were on their way to Church and father was struggling along behind when Bill Lay, a boy older than father, came up to him and told him he certainly should get his hair cut and that he would cut it for him if he would go home and get him a quart of wine. So father ran home and got a comb and scissors and took the key to the collar and got a quart of wine and ran back and got his hair cut. By then it was too late to go to Church so he went down in the fields with some boys and shot birds, and when he came home it was nearly dark and his Mother was waiting

at the gate for him. She screamed, and her husband came running out when he saw Father he said, "Well, he had a right to have his hair cut", and then they started to quarrel. Father said he slipped through the gate and got the milk bucket and ran down to milk the cows and that was the last he heard about it.

In 1903, her husband died and she was left alone to raise her children. She wouldn't go live with any of her children and lived alone for the next ten years. She used to walk up to see her daughter, Mary, nearly every day but not until five months before she died, when she couldn't walk any more, would she consent to move up to her daughter's home to live.