



The Reber Family
John and Barbara Stucki Reber
Samuel Reber

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Christian Reber (b. 1800) of Shangnau, Canton Bern, Switzerland, was the father of a large family. Three of his sons, Johannes (John), Samuel (Sammy), and Fredrick, joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and immigrated to Utah.

John Reber (1828-1873) and his family joined the Church in 1859; immigrated to Utah in 1860; and settled at Santa Clara, Utah.

Samuel (Sammy) Reber (1839-1925) joined the Church with his brother, John. As his family did not want him to emigrate, he ran away from home and worked to passage to Utah. He settled first at Santa Clara, and later lived in Nevada and Arizona. He died at Littlefield, Arizona.

Frederick Reber (1835-1925) joined the Church in 1872 and immigrated to Utah in 1873 with his family. They settled in Santa Clara, Utah, but were not in the original Swiss Company.

JOHN AND BARBARA STUCKI REBER

John Reber was born in Schangnau, Bern County, Switzerland, on 20 April 1828, the son of Christian Reber and Maria Gerber. There he grew to manhood and on 3 December 1847 he married Anna Maüsli. A child, John, was born to them on 18 March 1849. Soon after his birth Anna died.



John and Barbara Stucki Reber

John then married Anna Barbara Stucki in 1850. To them were born two children, a daughter Rosina on 4 August 1851, and a son, Christian, on 19 September 1854, who lived only 16-months, dying on 3 January 1855 from cancer.

Barbara the daughter of Johannes and Elisabetha Schenk Stucki and sister to Samuel and John Stucki, who were original settlers of Santa Clara, was born on 1 February 1829. Barbara's mother, Elisabetha, a religious woman, predicted that in the early eighteen hundreds that men would come from the west that would have the true gospel to preach.¹ This experience had a great influence on the family in light of subsequent events. John, over an eleven year period became crippled with rheumatoid arthritis. He was all bent over and had a hump on his back. He had spent all of his money on doctors who were unable to help him. When the family heard of Mormon missionaries in their neighborhood they were anxious to hear them. They wondered if they might be the men from the west as foretold by their mother. After listening to the missionary's message, they all believed that they had the true gospel and asked to be baptized. On a cold February night (22 February) in 1859,² they went to the Emma River where the baptism was to take place. After chopping a hole in the ice they helped John, 31, into the water where he was baptized as were his wife Barbara, and Barbara's brother, John. All were baptized by Ulrich Loosli, a local Swiss elder. On coming out of the water John was confirmed a member of the Church and given a healing blessing.³ Of interest is the fact that John's brother, Samuel, 20, was not baptized until 12 days later and another brother, Peter, 28, thirteen days later.⁴ Peter did not remain active in the Church, never married and died in Switzerland on 15 July 1891. This is the same Peter Reber who was visited by his brother Frederick's son, Fredrick Jr., while on his mission to Switzerland. Fredrick Jr on attempting to tell Peter that his father, Fredrick, was alive and well in Utah caused Peter to become so upset that he told him that Fredrick had been killed by the Indians or the Mormons and ordered him out of his house and locked the door behind

him. Peter's brother Fredrick was baptized in Switzerland in 1872, and came to America the following year.

When John Stettler Stucki, Rebers nephew and son of Samuel, came to see John, he couldn't find him. Turning to his aunt Barbara he said, "Where is Uncle John?" His aunt replied that the man whom he passed in the field who was standing straight and tall was his Uncle John.⁵ John remained straight and tall the rest of his life.

Filled with the spirit of the gathering the Reber family, including John's brother, Samuel also desired to come to Zion. They joined with a group of Swiss saints who left Switzerland to come to America in the spring of 1860. From Basel they went by rail to Rotterdam, Holland. There they boarded a steamship and arrived in Hull, England, where they took a train to Liverpool, England. Arriving in Liverpool, they boarded the sailing vessel Underwriter and on 30 March, 1860 began their journey to America.

They landed at Castle Garden, New York, on 1 May 1860.⁶ From there they boarded a river steamboat which took them to Albany. Then they traveled by rail to Buffalo and thence to Niagara Falls by the great suspension bridge and along the southern coast of Canada to Windsor where they crossed the Detroit River and went to Detroit, Chicago, and Quincy. There they crossed the Mississippi River and went by rail to St. Joseph where they boarded another river steamboat which took them to Florence, Nebraska, the outfitting post for that year.

After joining the James Darling Ross Wagon Train they began their thousand mile journey across the plains,⁷ arriving in Great Salt Lake City on September 3, 1860.⁸ In this wagon train was a Verena Reber, age 50 who was with the Reber family. However she did not cross the Atlantic in the Underwriter, or if she did she is not listed on the passenger roster. In the fall of 1861, after spending the past year in Millcreek, located in the southeast area of Great Salt Lake Valley, John and Barbara were among the Swiss called at the October

Conference of the Church to settle in Santa Clara where they would be a part of the Southern Utah Mission. John and Barbara began their over three hundred mile journey to Santa Clara on 28 October. They arrived at Fort Clara with their children John, 12, (from his first wife Anna Maüsli) and Rosina, 10. John's brother, Samuel traveled with them. They were greeted by the 20 families of English Saints, and were struck by the contrast between the stark red hills and the barren desert of Santa Clara and the lush green of their homeland in Switzerland.

Here John built a dugout of braided willows with a dirt roof and then began to eke out a subsistence living by raising corn, grain, grapes, peaches, and garden products. The industrious Swiss, including the Rebers, immediately went to work and began to construct dams and irrigation ditches. They also cleared the land of rabbit brush, sagebrush, creosote, and sunflowers by hand using borrowed tools. Some found that their land was impregnated with alkali which was a great deterrent in raising crops.

Food was scarce and their mettle was tested when they were forced to eat pigweed greens, the bulb of the sego lily and any other edible greens which they could find. On Christmas day 1861 the rains began to fall – gently at first and then in torrents. After 25 days the little Santa Clara Creek which at low levels could be easily stepped over had now turned into a massive, roaring, river which began sweeping everything in its path. The Rebers and other Saints watched with horror from their vantage points on the low hills as Walter E. Dodge's nursery, the schoolhouse/meeting house, seven homes, and the grist mill and the fort were all swept away as the flooding river undermined them.⁹

Due to the heroic efforts of Jacob Hamblin and many others, no fatalities occurred. The flood was much more devastating to the original Fort Clara settlers than to the Swiss as their settlement was in the flood plain whereas the Swiss had settled northeast of the original site and were on higher ground. Discouraged but undaunted, the settlers had no choice but to duplicate their

labors of the past two months. They again constructed dams, irrigation ditches, and cleared the land of flood debris. Some even retrieved fruit trees which had been uprooted and carried some distance away and replanted them with varying degrees of success. With back breaking labor and primitive tools they planted gardens, grains, fruit trees, vineyards, and cotton. Cotton culture was a new venture for the Rebers.

When his second wife, Barbara Stucki Reber, delivered their daughter Lena, on 9 November 1864 the Rebers built a two story adobe home with two large rooms on the lower level and two large rooms upstairs to accommodate the two families. Like many polygamous homes it had two front doors. This home, still standing today, is known as the Frederick Reber home.¹⁰

Nine years after settling in Santa Clara (1870), John, 42, entered into polygamy marrying Anna Catherina Graff, 15, daughter of Johannes Graff. Two years later, 1872, a daughter, Lydia Ann was born, and later in 1874, a son, Alfred blessed their marriage. Lydia Ann married Morgan William Adams in 1890. Together they had 11 children—eight daughters and three sons all living to maturity save one daughter and one son. Lydia died in 1936 and Morgan 10 years later. John's daughter, Rosina), now an attractive 20-year-old, was courted by George Staheli and he married her as a polygamous wife on 5 June 1871. With her youthful vigor she would help greatly in the rearing of Staheli's three unmarried children from his first marriage.. Rosina and Staheli would have four children: Karl Henry, born 13 January 1872; Franklin, born 3 May 1874; Rosina, born 26 March 1876; and Georgina, born February 1878. Of these four children, only Franklin and Rosina would live to adulthood.

Upon Staheli's death in 1881 Rosina married Jacob Tobler, just a little over five months later on 8 October 1881. Six children were born to this union: John Alfred, Edward, Josephine, Vernon, Lillian and lastly Rhoda. Fifteen months after Rhoda was born on 24 April 1900, Rosina died from acute appendicitis. In 1872 John and Barbara were happy to welcome a daughter, Anna L. into their

home. Nothing is known regarding this infant. Did she die in infancy? The records are silent.

Embracing polygamy a second time in 1873, John journeyed to Salt Lake City where he was sealed in the Endowment House to Mary Ann Stucki, daughter of Samuel and Magdalena Stettler Stucki on 4 August.¹¹ He was 45 and she 19. This was Mary Ann's first marriage. She had received proposals from other men much younger than John but was attracted to him because of his jolly nature.

Here also he was to meet his brother, Frederick and his family who had embraced the gospel in Switzerland the previous year. Frederick had been baptized by John Huber on 18 May 1872 and confirmed by Edward Schonfield the same day.¹² The Rebers came to America on the steamship Nevada which arrived in Castle Garden, New York on 23 July 1873.¹³ Frederick then traveled by rail to Salt Lake City arriving on 1 August.

After a joyous reunion the two brothers and family members journeyed together to Santa Clara after the wedding. The day after their return to Santa Clara (16 August), Mary Ann, his wife, relates that John took "me and Aunt Barbara and her four children for a ride down to the field to see how the crops looked. We started back feeling very happy that the corn was so thrifty. On the way one of the horses caught its bridle under the wagon tongue, pulled off the bridle and started running. I jumped off; so did Aunt Barbara and the children. The frightened horses turned down a lane, ran over a woodpile, threw my husband under the wagon, where two wheels ran over him. He was injured internally and in spite of all we could do for him he died the next day."¹⁴

Upon his death, his wife, Barbara, and her children acquired John's property. Barbara never remarried and died twenty-two years later in Santa Clara on 9 March 1895.

John, only fortyfive, had a large posterity to mourn his passing. He never regretted the choice he made to come to America where he could live in harmony with the Saints and be true to his testimony of the restored gospel. His son, Johannes or Honnas, would marry a Swiss lady, Elizabeth, who had previously been married to Samuel Barnhurst. She had come to Utah on the ship Enoch Train¹⁵ with her parents, Alowis and Barbara Elliker Bauer in 1856, and had journeyed west in the Dan Jones/John A Hunt Wagon Train in 1856.¹⁶ No children resulted from Honnas and Elizabeth's marriage. Honnas died on 18 February 1933 and Elizabeth on 16 December 1939.

Daughter, Lena, was courted by Jacob Frei and this courtship ended in marriage on 12 February 1885. To this couple were born 13 children: Robert 1886, Effie 1888, Della Lena 1890, Boy Frei 1891 who died the same year, Victor Edward 1893, John Claudius 1895, Elsie Barbara 1897, Addie Margaret 1899-1904, Rex Rudolph 1901, Newell Reber 1904, Clark 1906, and Cecil Mathias 1910.

Jacob would precede Lena in death dying on 29 November 1950 with Lena following on 4 December 1951. Both are buried in the Santa Clara cemetery.

SAMUEL REBER

Samuel Reber, brother to John, was born on 10 September 1839 to Christian Reber and Maria Gerber in Schangnau, Bern, Switzerland. His baptism, journey to America and then across the plains and finally coming to Santa Clara in 1861 has been discussed in the previous pages.



Samuel Reber

In 1863, Samuel was one of three Santa Clara men called to serve a "down and back" mission to the Missouri River, the other three being John Ence, Conrad Naegeli, and Samuel Wittwer. This mission was under the captaincy of Daniel D. McArthur, a bishop of St. George. Before leaving McArthur and the teamsters and guards who accompanied him, were all blessed by President Brigham Young. This company

arrived from St. George in Great Salt Lake City on 21-22 March and left for Florence, Nebraska, on 1 April arriving there on 20 June. They left there on 6 August and arrived in GSLC on 3 October. Teamsters would take ox teams and wagons laden with supplies to meet emigrating Saints and then would return home with emigrants and their belongings. According to family records Samuel met Anna Magdalena Wintsch in Great Salt Lake City, courted her and they were married on 11 June 1863.

Anna Magdalena, was the only one of her family to join the church. Her parents were Heinrich and Elisabeth Mueller Wintsch. Her mother and three siblings had all died in Switzerland before she came to America. We do not know when she came to America or on which vessel she came nor is she found in any wagon trains coming west. We know nothing of Samuel and Magdalena's courtship or marriage. The marriage date of 11 June 1863 cannot be correct as Samuel and the Daniel D. McArthur Wagon Train began their journey east to Florence, Nebraska on 1 April 1863 and did not arrive in Florence until 20 June, nine days after the supposed marriage date. This Wagon Train left Florence on 6 August and arrived in Great Salt Lake City on 3 October. We know that Samuel completed his down and back journey with the rest of McArthur's Company as he was paid the same amount as the other teamsters.

By stretching the imagination one could say that Samuel arrived in Florence before the other teamsters, met and courted Anna Magdalena and they were married on 11 June. The family history records that on arriving in Great Salt Lake City Samuel, after getting better acquainted with Magdalena was certain that he wanted to marry her. He would have married her in the city but at this time she was not quite ready for marriage but she did agree to travel south with him. By the time they reached Payson, she was ready to be married. Due to the late hour they had to search to find a bishop who could marry them. On finding him they were married.

Again, the family history for the date of this marriage is given as 11 June 1863. As mentioned earlier this date cannot be correct as the McArthur Wagon Train left Florence on 6 August and did not arrive in Great Salt Lake City until 3 October. A more likely date would be 11 October as this would give them time to make the journey to Payson.¹⁸ Which version of the story is correct? If the marriage date is correct then, by an uncomfortable stretch, they were married in Florence, Nebraska, on 11 June 1863. If the date is in error then a marriage date of 11 October would appear to be the most logical and proper date. Anyone who has historical information giving the correct marriage date is invited to contact the author as at this time the marriage date is extremely problematic.

On the journey to Santa Clara, Reber had told her of his home and of his land and she had visions of a very comfortable home. On arriving after dark, Reber tried to slip out the next morning to go to his home but Magdalena followed him to his dugout home which he had left snug and cozy but which in his absence a summer flood had utterly ruined. In Santa Clara, together they continued the arduous task of digging irrigation ditches, planting crops and vineyards and all the multitudinous tasks which colonization required. Over time seven children were born to them: Harmenia Ann, 13 July 1864; Henrietta, 28 January 1867; Matilda, 5 March 1869; Samuel Jr., 4 April 1871; Joseph Henry or Hyrum, 12 August 1873; Otilia Lucy, 16 June 1876; and Mary Elizabeth, 29 July 1879. Nine months after the birth of her last child, Anna Magdalena, passed away on 18 April 1880

Seeking another wife to help him raise his children, Samuel was attracted to his deceased brother John's wife, Anna Catherina Graff Reber, who had been a widow for seven years. They were married later that year (1880). It must have been a very difficult task for Anna Catherina to take over the nurturing and raising of Samuel and Magdalena's seven children but she never murmured and was up to the task. In addition she and Samuel would have six children: Minnie Magdalena, born 20 April 1881, died 24 July 1903; Dora

Lavinia, born 22 April 1883, died 10 October 1903; and Franklin Theodore, Alvin Samuel, Lyman Emil and Leo Melvin with no dates given. Minnie, the first child was born on 20 April 1881 and Leo Melvin, the last, was born on 20 March 1895 and died on 7 July 1903.

Reber, 44, entered into plural marriage with Emma Hesina Hoffer (pictured left), 21, a young convert from Rothrist, Aargau, Switzerland who had come to America with her family. She was working for John Stettler Stucki, son of original Santa Clara settler Samuel Stucki. Emma gave birth to a son, Frederick Jacob Hofer on 14 February 1885 who died a little over two years later on 22 February 1887. The male parentage of this child is not known. Samuel and Emma were married on 11 June 1885. This marriage was blessed with 13 children. Five of these children died before the age of 17. The children were: Edwin, born 13 June 1886, died 26 July 1902; Martha Emily, born 29 June 1888, died 29 May 1969; Hulda May, born 1 March 1890, died seven weeks later on 10 May 1890; William Walter, born 23 May 1891, died 30 April 1954; Robert Emil, born 9 October 1892; Christina, born 30 August 1894; Evelyn, born 25 February 1896; Ella, born 6 December 1898; Louis Rumell, born 27 September 1899; James Sheldon, born 7 October 1901, died 26 February 1902; and twins Verda, born 6 December 1903, died 19 December 1903; and Verna, born 6 December 1903, died 7 December 1903; and Elsie.

After the manifesto in 1890 Reber moved Emma and children to Littlefield, Arizona, where he purchased a home and farm. His wife, Anna Catherina died in Santa Clara on 3 May 1898. She who had been the stepmother to Magdalena's seven children and her own six was mourned greatly by Reber at her passing.

During a typhoid fever epidemic in Santa Clara in 1903, Samuel and Anna Catherina Graff Reber would lose their two oldest daughters, Minnie Magdalena and Dora Lavinia, and also a son, Leo Melvin. In a move to solidify his family, Reber sold his property in Santa Clara to a son-in-law and moved the rest of his family to Littlefield where all were consolidated into one large

family. From his three wives he was able to father 27 children. Samuel Reber had a keen sense of humor and one could not be around him long before one was aware of this blessed gift. He also was one who loved the Lord and felt that everything he had came from the Lord. He would die in Littlefield on 4 March 1926 and was taken to Santa Clara to be buried. His wife Emma would join him in death twelve-years later in 1938 and would be buried in Littlefield

Taken from "Oh, These Red Hills, This Roily Water" Life Sketches of the Original Swiss Settlers of Santa Clara, Utah Third Edition by Waldo C. Perkins, MD

1 John S. Stucki, *Family History Journal of John S. Stucki*, Pyramid Press, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1932, hereafter cited as *Journal of John S. Stucki*, 30.

2 John S. Stucki in his book incorrectly gives the date of the baptism as "a very cold, clear December night." *Ibid*, 32.

3 Records of Members Collection, Reel 6817. LDS Church Archives, Family and Church History Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives.

5 *Journal of John S. Stucki*, 33.

6 Mormon Immigration Index, Underwriter, 1859. Family Resource File, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, hereafter cited as Mormon Immigration Index.

7 Ross was returning from England where he had served as first counselor in the European Mission Presidency.

8 *Journal History*, 3 September 1860, James D. Ross Wagon Train, LDS Church Archives, 1860.

9 Daniel Bonelli, Santa Clara, Utah, to Brigham Young, 19 January 1862. Brigham Young Collection, LDS Church Archives. Bonelli in this letter to Brigham Young gives us the exact date that these structures were destroyed by the flood.

10 Cory Jensen, "Angel Doors and Polygamy Pits," *Utah Preservation*, 63.

11 Mary Ann Hafen, *Recollections of a Handcart Pioneer*, Denver, Colorado, 1938, hereafter cited as Hafen, *Recollections*, 51.

1 Record of Members Collection, Reel 6817, LDS Church Archives.

13 Mormon Immigration Index. Nevada, 1873.

14 Hafen, *Recollections*, 51

15 Mormon Immigration Index, Enoch Train, 1856.

16 *Journal History*, 10-15 December 1856, Dan Jones/John A. Hunt Wagon Train, LDS Church Archives.

17 Mormon Immigration Index, Monarch of the Sea, 1861.

18 In searching the Perpetual Emigrating Fund financial records the author found that at the end of the journey Reber was paid the same amount as the other teamsters indicating that he completed his duties and did not arrive until 3 October. The Payson Ward records were searched but they contained little information about marriages and Samuel and Magdalena's marriage record was not found.

