

BIOGRAPHY OF RUDOLPH FREI.

Written by Miss Frie, grand-daughter, 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 Miss J. Seegmiller, County Historian of the D.U.P. in January 1945.)

Rudolph Frei was born in Leutsburg Canton, St. Gallen, Switzerland. His father and mother were both Swiss. They belonged to the Protestant Church and were staunch followers of Zwengli.

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. They 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.

When they landed in 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.