

Sketch of the life of
MARGARETTE NAGELI FREI

written by

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Margarette Nageli Frei was born February 1830 in Landsclocht, 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 Romanshorn, 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 named Woodard. She emigrated 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 1861. There was just a wagon track through Santa Clara bottoms which was covered with Mesquite and grease woods. Israel Ivins and his son, Antone Ivins, were surveying the lots and blocks. After the survey they drew lots and each family moved onto their own lot.

Their first home was a dug-out with a dirt roof over it. Here their first child was born November 27th 1862, and he was my father, Jacob Frei. Right after father was born it started to rain and didn't stop 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 from getting wet.

Their next home was a log house and here she gave birth to twins, a boy and a girl, The boy died and the girl, Aunt Mary F. Reber, 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 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 man won't help, you help". When he got back the baby was born and they found that it had been just after he finished praying out on the hill. All together they had seven children, three lived and four died.

Often 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 cane and corn.

In 1874, thirteen years after they came to Santa Clara, they built their first adobe home. In this home they were quite comfortable with four rooms.

She had poor health all the time but always helped with the farm work 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 Jacob 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. Jacob said he would never forget when they all helped put her in 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 was how she 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 chunks and she would have to stop every little ways and scrape it off. The memory of this stayed with her always.

She 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.

When Jacob was small 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 was on the way to Church, Jacob was straggling along behind when Bill Lay, a boy older than he, came up 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. Jacob ran home got a comb and scissors and took the key to the cellar 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 almost dark and his mother was waiting at the gate for him. She screamed and her husband came running out and when he saw his son he said " Well, he has a right to have his hair cut", and then they started to quarrel. Jacob slipped through the gate and got the milk bucket and ran down to milk the cows, and that was the last he heard of it.

In 1903 her husband died and she was left alone to raise her children. She wouldn't go live with any of them, they were all married, so she lived alone for 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 to live.

She died March 8th 1911 at Santa Clara, Utah