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C O N T E N T S

Arthur Davis Hasler, A Swiss American Limnologist

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Articles in this Newsletter are abstracted in
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2. Autobiography of Johannes Hasler

I was born on the 17th of April, 1839, at Männedorf, Ct. Zurich, situated on the Zurich Lake, one of the most beautiful places in Switzerland, to godly parents. My father's name was John Hasler and my mother, Susana Lehman.

I was brought up in the Protestant Church which was then the dominant church of the State. My parents were particular that I should attend religious class work until I was 17 years old before I was permitted to partake of the sacrament and be confirmed a full member of that church.

Being the oldest child of our family, I worked at our little farm which was mostly planted with grapevines. It needed skillful work from early spring until fall to cultivate and care for them. In the winter months, besides attending school, I spent much time in learning music, for which I had a great liking, especially band music. While I had to study a great deal without a teacher, I learned to play different instruments. In those days printed music was quite expensive. I borrowed copies from men that were efficient in the art and copied most of my pieces and arranged them for different instruments. I often spent whole nights in writing and arranging popular music, and when morning dawned I would steal up to my room and disarrange my bed to make mother believe I slept in it.

When I was 15 years old I had to recruit in Military Service. My talent in playing an instrument well was soon recognized. I was advanced and before I was 21 years old I became the leader of the Military Band, was invited to the Cavalry and a Lieutenant grade. When I was about 25 years old there was a great revival in our town of the Methodist sect as we called it. I attended their meetings and soon joined it, but was never so much interested although I was quite favored by the Minister because I was a help to them with the singing.

Later, I got acquainted with a young man of my age, who had recently joined the Mormons. He was getting ready with his young family to go to

Utah. Having had some business transactions with him, and knowing him well and favorably, he was well situated and had good prospects for the future, I was forcefully impressed. I wanted to know what could induce him to leave his comfortable and beautiful home, parents and relatives, and go to an unknown place. He then took me to his private room and tried to explain the gospel message to me. I was impressed by the strength of his faith, and before we parted that night, I asked a favor of him-- that when he came to Utah and after investigating the strange religion and found that he was not misled, would he write to me and tell me all about it and how he was getting along.

This young man was Ulrich Winkler from Zell, Ct. Zurich, who later became my brother-in-law. I did not hear from him for two years. I had met his wife's sister that evening before his departure when he explained the gospel to me. I came in the autumn of 1866 on business to the place where she lived and called on her, to inquire about her folks in Utah. She gave me a favorable report of them. I then asked for Mr. Winkler's address. I wrote a letter to him and reminded him of his promise to me. He wrote me a long letter back and told me he was not disappointed. His religion was dearer to him than ever, and he again bore a strong testimony to me of the truthfulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, but in his blunt and outspoken way he told me that only those that would humble themselves, ask the Lord in sincerity for a testimony, would find happiness and satisfaction here. I read this letter over and over again.

I wanted to know more about it. I obtained an address of a man who was a member of the Mormon Church, who lived in the City of Zurich. I found him with some difficulty. I had been told that he was a teacher and expected to find a man of that profession. I was disappointed to find him working in a mechanic's shop, a factory employee. I asked him if he was a teacher. He looked at me amused, but hesitated and then said he held that office in his church where he belonged and was proud of it.

Seeing that I wanted to find out more about his beliefs, he invited me to his home. There I found that he was a teacher after the order of our Lord Jesus Christ. He bore his testimony to me and invited me to come

to their meetings which I attended and received a testimony. I applied for baptism and received that ordinance on the 6th of December 1868 by Ferdinand Bruppacher, and was confirmed on the 13th of December by Karl G. Maeser. I was ordained a priest the same month. I started to do missionary work with my former associates, the Methodists, but found a cold shoulder. The minister warned his flock to beware of me. I had fallen from grace.

After I received that letter from Brother Winkler I visited his wife's sister several times. We became better acquainted, so I invited her to my home to spend a few days at grape harvesting time which was always great sport with young people. Our acquaintance ripened into friendship. This was, however, before I joined the church, and Miss Thalman had not yet taken that step. I offered my hand and heart to her, but she told me she could not accept my offer as she intended to become a Mormon and go to Utah. This answer usually settled any of her suitors, but this time it did not work with me. This was the time I had received the letter of inquiry from her brother-in-law.

I followed his instructions and was baptized in the Church before she was; however, she was afraid my conversion might not be sincere. So she put me on probation for a time until she was sure I had received a testimony.

I was sent out a lot to attend meetings with Elders to different branches where I took part in speaking and singing. On the 25th of December the same year Miss Thalman came to Zurich to be baptized. There was no other branch near her home. We went out on the Zurich Lake at midnight as we were watched by a mob which wanted to make trouble. We wandered out away from the city and she and another sister were baptized by the Branch President, Benjamin Bruppacher, undisturbed. When we came back, Brother Karl G. Maeser confirmed and blessed her, and we continued our Christmas festivities.

A testimony was given Miss Thalman at the same time. She had been suffering with neuralgia in her head for about two months previously, so that she had scarcely slept at night during that length of time. She

had not told anybody of her ailment because she was a stranger there. But when Brother Maeser confirmed her, he told her that she would be blessed with health and her ailments should leave her. She wondered how he could know that she was afflicted, because she had told no one. After she went home with a young couple who invited her, she told the lady as she was shown to her room that she could not retire because she expected to sit up as usual with her pains. The Sister told her not to mind that. "We are all tired." She lay down as she was told, and in a few minutes she was asleep and her ailment never bothered her after that night.

Some time later we were engaged to be married on the 14th of May, 1869. As we intended to emigrate the same year, we did not go into housekeeping. My wife and [her] mother came to my parents to live until we were ready to start. Before this time we had tried to dispose of our little farm, but could not find a buyer. As soon as we took the initial step into the Church this obstacle was overcome, although we had to sell at a great sacrifice.

On the 13th of August we received from Brother Maeser the notice to be ready to start on our journey on the 15th of August. Our trunks were packed ready to be taken to Zurich when we received another telegram from Brother Maeser, asking if we could take a little boy of a poor sister, 3½ years old, and care for him until his mother could come in another year. Another family took his little sister a year older. We telegraphed the money, and the mother brought her children the next morning to the depot. I felt bad for the mother who had given up her children in our hands, but she was thankful for the way open and the prospect for her to follow. We took an affectionate farewell from my parents, brothers, and sister, who had opposed our leaving our home so much, because they could not see. I told them I had to go to pave the way for them to follow, as soon as they could understand the truth which saying proved to be prophetic. When I came back ten years after on a mission I was able to baptize my father, a brother and a sister. My mother, one brother and one sister had died before I came back.

Our journey was a pleasant one. We sailed from Liverpool to New York in thirteen days. We were in the first emigration train that took us right through to Ogden, Utah.

We were met in Salt Lake City by our brother-in-law, Ulrich Winkler. We bought a yoke of oxen, a wagon and some farming tools and finished our journey to Mt. Pleasant. We were received with great joy because my wife's family was united again, mother and her two daughters.

Brother Winkler had been driven from Richfield the year before on account of Indian trouble, and he had only been able to put up one room and part of another when we came. We went to work and put a dirt roof on the other which we occupied that winter. In the spring of 1870 I took up some city lots, made a willow fence around two lots more in basket fashion. Then I started to build a cellar, not being able to have any more done, I put a roof on the cellar, which had two rooms. In one room we were able to obtain some lumber to put in a floor. It was made so far habitable that we were able to move into it on Christmas Eve. No Prince or Princess was happier to move in a palace than we were that Christmas Eve. We fell into each other's arms and on our knees we thanked our father in heaven that we had so far succeeded in having a home of our own, but with gratitude and thankfulness, be it said right here, that we were made more than welcome with Brother Winkler and family. By this time both families had an increase and we got pressed for room. I was only a week in Mt. Pleasant when Sanpete County received a notice from the Governor that a military drill would be held in the fields between Ephraim and Manti, and they wanted it to be led by a military band. I was asked to lead that band.

I got busy. I had brought with me a trunk full of musical instruments, a big drum with sticks was a town property that everybody knew when it was beaten to bring all men together to guard against Indians. I divided out my instruments and drilled almost day and night our young men. In three weeks, at the appointed time, they were able to play a number of national hymns. My skill in writing notes came in handy. I had to write out every part of the band. It is needless to say we won

the prize because there was no other band to compete with us, although the ever-faithful drum and fife were there.

In 1870, on the 14th of June, our first son was born. We named him Henry Hasler. He brought great joy into our home. At this time I got ten acres of land in the field which I cleared, plowed, and planted in wheat which brought us a fair crop, even in the first year.

In 1872 another son had come to bless our home, but we did not have him very long. He only lived three months. The same year we went to Salt Lake City with an ox team to get our endowments and were sealed to each other for time and eternity by Joseph F. Smith.

In the fall of 1872 a severe trial overtook us. I was suddenly taken down with typhoid fever, which later developed into rheumatic fever. I was laid low all winter. My life hung on a thread for months. My body was reduced to a skeleton. The cords of my limbs were drawn together. In those days, there was no medical help obtainable. We had to depend entirely on the Lord, much faith being exercised by my family and the brethren of the Holy Priesthood. I was for months delirious. In the first days of my illness I told my wife of a dream I had. I dreamed I was working in the field when a personage dressed in a military suit came to me and wanted me to follow him. He promised me work that would be to my liking in music and I could be a good leader. This was very tempting to me, but I thought then of my wife and family who so much depended on me. I pleaded with him to let me then go to town to consider it. I was thinking of gaining time and that I could get the help of the Priesthood. I told my wife if I would get delirious again to get my brethren to help me, for fear this man would come back and overpower me. I did not want to go with him.

My wife told the dream to those who came to administer to me mostly every day. Some of them got weak in the faith and felt that it was almost a greater blessing to pray to our Father in heaven to take me and release me from the misery, for I suffered much. Many of them were faithful and fasted and prayed for my recovery. I was not able to help myself in the least for months. My wife carried me from one room to another so she

could be near me and help me while doing her household duties. My little son, Henry, also took the typhoid fever and hovered between life and death, but his grandma was able to care for him a great deal.

I was not able to help myself in the least. I had to be fed like a child. On the 25th of March, mother was confined to her bed and in this sorrowful and trying condition she was delivered and we were made happy to receive a little daughter that had been sent to come to bless and comfort us in this trying time. It nearly cost the life of our mother, who had become so worn out in strength through this long siege of sickness. After the excitement was over, she became unconscious. Her mother and sister tried every means to bring her out of her stupor, but to no avail. Then her sister ran for blocks to get some elders to administer to her. While she was gone, in the agony of the situation I managed to get out of my bed and over to hers. As I said before, I had not been able to lift up my body in a sitting position without being helped. I laid my hands upon her, and in the anguish of my soul, I cried to the Lord to spare her life. I think it was more than an hour before she gained consciousness. Her sister brought another elder and again we pleaded with the Lord for her recovery, when she was able to recognize us. Her recovery was speedy and in a short time she was able to care for us again. We named our little daughter Lydia Hasler.

On the first of May I was carried in a chair out of the cellar in the fresh air, for a little while. My recovery was slow; after the the warm weather came, however, I was able to help myself around with crutches. While I was in this weak condition I started to write music for brass band, which was a great help and blessing to us. I received wheat and provisions for my work.

In 1875, on the 31st of January, another son came to bless our home. We gave him the name of Walter Hasler. That fall we started to build our house over the cellar. We hired the adobes mostly made, but I was not able to do much. I had finally thrown away my crutches.

In that year the United Order was organized. We joined. My oxen and wagon were not of any use to us, so all was given up to the Order.

I was to teach music and those that could do masonry and carpenter work had to do the building. The mason did not get to the top when he drew out of the Order. The carpenters did the same. On account of inefficient leadership the Order lasted about two years when it was dissolved again. I then started to do the carpenter work myself. I had a few tools to work with. I got it so far along that we could move into two rooms before the hard winter set in. We had lived in the cellar for five years.

In the year 1877, on the 15th of July, another sweet little girl was born to us. She too was not permitted to stay long. She took scarlet fever. Those were hard trials, but we had to submit to the will of the Lord. She had only lived about seven months.

On the 22nd of December, 1878, Emil Hasler was born. At that time our grandma Thalman took sick, and on the 5th of April, 1879, died at the age of 76 years. She had never been able to learn the English language, but she had always rejoiced in the gospel.

In 1880 another son was born. We named him Edward Hasler. He only lived a short time.

At the April conference my name was called to go on a mission to Switzerland. On the 14th of April I left my home and family and arrived in my field of labor, Bern, then the Mission Headquarters.

I was called to work in the office for about six months to arrange the music to the songs of the German Hymnbook. One thousand copies were edited in the German language.

After this work was finished, I was sent to the North-Eastern part of Switzerland which was at that time a far-scattered field. Besides my missionary work I organized a choir in every branch and held singing practice almost every evening. Many young people that loved music and ones that were not even members came to our practices, and became interested. Some would become investigators in the gospel.

In the Autumn, 1882, I was released and had charge of an emigration of 72 saints, thus fulfilling a prophecy pronounced upon my head by a

patriarch, that I should go on a mission to my native land, and bring some sheafs home with me. I had a chance to preach the gospel to my schoolmates, although with little result. When I was at home I did Sunday School class work and conducted the singing. I was choir leader for over twenty years free of charge in the first years, and wrote the music to our hymns up to the time the Psalmody was printed. My wife wrote the words to the music in the copies. In 1883 we welcomed another baby girl, who was given the name of Mina Ottilia Hasler, August 13.

In about 1890 I started to travel through the county and Sevier County selling musical instruments, teaching music in the homes and organizing choirs, helping the people to have advanced students play in their meetings and Sunday schools.

On the 12th of August, 1894, I was ordained a High Priest by the hand of John B. Maiben. I then served in that quorum as secretary and led the singing.

I was successful in starting and leading a number of my students who are now taking prominent parts in their art in our church. Among them are Professors McLellan, Anton Lund, and Clair Reid.

I have been successful in obtaining a genealogy of my ancestors comprising over 3,000 names, for most all the baptisms had been attended to and some endowment work done. The rest I have to leave to my children. I was able to give my children a liberal education. The main reason I started to travel and be away from home was that our little farm did not support the family. The children had grown older. The boys in connection with their schoolwork were able to take care of the farmwork. Other boys had to leave home and seek work somewhere herding sheep and hiring out in mines, at the tender age when they needed home influence the most. They might get into an environment where bad habits are easily formed. I felt that I could better stand hardship than they could temptation, so they could have the advantage of schools and learning.

I tried to keep my children under church influence. I was strict with them to attend Sunday schools and meetings, and went with them to attend these functions until the habit was formed. I had the pleasure

of seeing two of my sons take missions, and my daughters teaching schools were also useful in church organizations for which I give my father in heaven my thanks and the gratitude of my heart that he has blessed me, and not withstanding many failings, has kept me in the faith of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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Center for Limnology
University of Wisconsin

August 19, 1987

Dr. Leo Schelbert
2523 Asbury Avenue
Evanston, IL 60201

Dear Dr. Schelbert:

Attached are a few essays from which you may choose for the proposed geneological record of my Swiss grandparents.

If you need other data, please let me know. As a representative of the family, I thank you.

Sincerely,

AD Hasler

Arthur D. Hasler
Professor

ADH:lmh

Enclosures

