

JOHANN GEORGE STAHELI

By: Abbey Nelson — 4th grade (Mrs. Millett)

My great, great, great grandfather Johann George Staheli was born on February 5, 1825, in Amersville, Switzerland. He was a music teacher and owned a small factory where he made cotton yarn. Grandpa George lived in a beautiful home and had a great job, but left it all for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. In 1861, he and his wife and children boarded a ship and crossed the Atlantic Ocean to come to America. It was a really long and hard trip. My grandpa lost his wife and a baby girl who died at one year old, both were buried at sea.

Grandpa George and his remaining family arrived in New York and then took a train to Nebraska; from there they had to travel by covered wagon to Salt Lake City. At October's General Conference, President Brigham Young called over three hundred families to go Southern Utah to raise cotton. This was going to be a very hard mission, so the prophet selected some of the best to go. My grandpa George was in that group. President Young had wanted him to stay and teach music, but my grandpa was very sad because he couldn't speak English and wanted to be with his relatives and friends.

On his way to Dixie, grandpa's cornet had been tied to the wagon and got loose from the bumpy roads and was smashed under the heavy wagon wheel. This was the only musical instrument at the time and it could not be fixed and would be years before he got a new one.

In November, 1861 the Swiss Company arrived in Santa Clara. The ground was hard and they couldn't get anything to grow. They had very little food and lived off of pig weed greens. They also suffered from typhoid fever, but the Swiss were hard workers and never gave up. My grandpa worked for Jacob Hamblin clearing land to farm, he was given land for pay. He had been in Santa Clara for a little while when a man named John Eaton received a set of band instruments from an estate. John gave these instruments to the town and my grandpa organized the first band. Because there was no sheet music, he spent many hours writing music for each instrument and then would teach the people how to read the notes. My grandpa also helped build the St. George Temple. After the dedication of the temple, he and his band were at the top of the Temple playing.

I think that my great great great grandpa Staheli is very special! He did a lot of things to help his family. He loved music and was very talented. His gift was shared with many other people. I feel that his love of music and talent has been passed down through each generation of his posterity and that I am blessed to have it as well. I have been playing the piano for four years, I enjoy it very much.

