

First Missions – Switzerland

First Missions – Pioneering Workers – Switzerland

Switzerland

Revised Sept. 5, 2025

WHEN DID THE WORKERS FIRST GO TO SWITZERLAND??

The following is a summary of information received about this subject. There were workers who labored in Switzerland for a brief period **BEFORE** World War I began in 1914; and other workers who went there to labor in 1927 **AFTER** World War I ended in 1918.

BEFORE WORLD WAR I

In 1913, **OTTO SCHMIDT, JAMES JARDINE, PENNY BARTON and MAGGIE JOHNSTON** were the VERY first workers to pioneer Switzerland.

After the Irish convention held in July 1913 at Crocknacrieve, Penny Barton and Maggie Johnston left for the Italian speaking part of Switzerland, and James Jardine and Otto Schmidt left for the German speaking part of Switzerland. However, the men soon left Switzerland and went to Germany where they started their first mission in February, 1914 at Lustnau, Württemberg. The sister workers returned to Ireland and attended Crocknacrieve in 1914. It appears that no converts professed during the short time either pair of workers were preaching in Switzerland.

They are shown on the 1913 Crocknacrieve picture; and also on a picture at the Grant home. On the 1921 Staffordshire photo, Maggie Johnston is shown as No. 183; Otto is No. 51; James Jardine is No. 12; Penny Barton left the work and married in 1918.

PENNY BARTON: The earliest mention in public media of workers in **Switzerland** is found in the July 9, 1914 issue of the Impartial Reporter newspaper of Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh, N. Ireland regarding the Crocknacrieve convention which had convened. It stated that *"Two preachers, one of whom is **Miss Barton, Pettigo, have lately returned from North Italy and Switzerland.**"*

July 30, 1908 *"After tea another service was held and it was a pleasant change to listen to the musical voice of **Miss P. Barton, as she told the story of her conversion to the true way and the opposition that she met with from her friends.**"* Sermons by Miss Barton at Crocknacrieve Convention were mentioned in the Impartial Reporter from July 1908 thru 1909. There is no mention of her again until she appears at the 1914 Crocknacrieve convention **having returned from Italy and Switzerland.** (Other references to Miss Barton are located in the Impartial Reporter newspapers issued for: August 5, 1909, p. 8; August 12, 1909, p. 8; August 19, 1909, p. 8; and July 9, 1914, p. 8;).

Since both Penny Barton and her sister Susie Barton were sister workers during this time period, it is not known to which "Miss Barton" the newspaper articles had reference, except for the 1908 article which specifically indicated Miss P. Barton. It is also known from other sources that Penny Barton preached in Switzerland, so it can be safely assumed that she is the Miss Barton in the 1914 issue. Either sister could be the Miss Barton in the July 29, 1909 Impartial Reporter : *"**Miss Barton, the Waterfoot, Pettigo, also spoke, telling of the great peace she has found with the Pilgrims. Each of the churches said their way was the best, but it was manifest that none of them had Christ's way—the way of self-sacrifice and suffering and poverty.**"*

The Barton family lived on the family estate Waterfoot, in Pettigo, Co. Fermanagh, N. Ireland, and has a long history in Ireland, England and France, where they owned large estates and were leading citizens. Penny was the 8th child and Susie was the 9th child of Captain Charles Robert Barton and Henrietta Martha Mervyn Richardson. These military rankings were mostly given to gentry. Their youngest son was a Captain, the oldest son was a Lt. Col. and another son was a clergyman. The two Miss Bartons mentioned in the Impartial Reporter were:

Mildred Penelope Matilda Barton born 25 April 1885 in Pettigo, Co. Fermanagh, **married Simon Christopher Loane** on August 27, 1918, and they had 4 sons. She died Aug. 6 1971, age 86.

Susan Cecil(e) Grace Barton born December 24, 1886 in Pettigo, Co. Fermanagh. She died March 2, 1968, unmarried, age 82. (source: thePeerage.com) Susie Barton spent her life in the work, both in the British Isles and in North America.

In 1904, the first Crocknacrieve Convention was held in County Fermanagh, Ireland (about 4 miles Northeast of Enniskillen) and lasted about a month. Crocknacrieve was purchased from Sir Edward Archdale in 1901 by **John and Sara West** in the year they were married. All twelve of the West children were born there. In 1921, John West sold the property to **Simon C. Loane who married Penelope (Penny) Barton** on August 27, 1918, the former sister worker who pioneered Switzerland. They had four sons and one of

them, the late Warren Loane married Anne Loane and this couple resided at Crocknacrieve in 2004 when the TTT Editor visited Crocknacrieve. They have two sons. (See: *The Go Preacher Movement- An Anthology* by Patricia Roberts, p. 14)

MAGGIE JOHNSTON: Was in the work at least from 1913-1921, based on appearing in pictures in those years. Nothing further known about her.

JAMES JARDINE: One of three brothers who were all workers: Walter, Nichol and James (Jim). They were from Scotland, of mixed blood, Scottish and French. Jim was quite the scholar, knew five languages well enough to preach in all of them. He traveled a lot preaching around the world. Reportedly, their French side came from hundreds of years ago when the Catholics chased the Protestants out of France and some went to Scotland. James is shown on the 1905 Workers List as entering the work in 1904.

OTTO SCHMIDT: Father of Mervyn Schmidt of Mildura, Australia, who was the only child of Otto and Sarah Jane (Heath) Schmidt. Sarah was from the Staffordshire, England convention grounds. Otto Schmidt is shown on the Workers List for South Australia for the years 1911-1912 and 1912-1913. Mervyn wrote:

"My Father, Otto Schmidt, was in the work in 1911 with Adam Hutchison in South Australia; and in 1912, he was with Sam Jones in S.A. William Irvine visited Australia at the end of 1912, and early 1913 for conventions. When he returned to Ireland, he took my Father, Otto Schmidt, with him. At the 1913 Crocknacrieve Convention, it was decided that Otto and Jim Jardine would go to Germany. In the Eddie Cooney book, there is a photo of all the workers there in 1913. Otto is in that photo."

Mervyn Schmidt was not aware of the reason the two men left Switzerland shortly after arriving for Germany. As far as he knew, there were no friends in either Germany or Switzerland prior to 1913, and no one professed while they were in Switzerland. There is more information about Otto Schmidt in the Pioneering Accounts for Germany and Bethel Mission, Australia.

AFTER WORLD WAR I

FIRST FRIENDS: Violet Blanck was born in South Africa in 1907. In 1920, when Violet was 13 years old, through a friend at school, she and her mother attended a meeting where **Alec Pearce** spoke. In a later mission, Violet and her mother professed. In 1922, the Blanck family moved back to **Switzerland**, their homeland. There were no friends or workers there. Violet and her mother often spoke about the truth to their cousin **Emma Bovy, who became the first person to make her choice in Switzerland**. Violet's father couldn't find work there so he moved the family to **Paris**. After the Blanck family moved away, Emma was the only professing person in all of Switzerland.

After WWI ended, in 1926, the first four workers who went to Switzerland and labored there for an extended period of time were **EDWIN SCHAER** (from U.S. whose parents came from Switzerland), **KATIE HAY** (Canada); and **GEORGE AND LOTTIE WIX (brother and sister)** from New Zealand.

GEORGE WIX started in the Work in 1911, went to New South Wales, Australia in 1916, to the USA in 1920, to Germany in 1925, and then to Switzerland in 1927, as one of the pioneers there, where he continued until his death in 1956. Both George and Lottie Wix are shown on the 1922 Workers List for North America for Washington state.

EDWIN (EDDIE) SCHAER: Eddie was born in Switzerland but emigrated to USA at an early age. Willie Jamieson and Jim Martin had a mission in Oregon, and *"in 1909 at Mountindale, **Eddie Schaer** professed in Willie's mission."* In 1909, **Eddie Sheer (Schaer) pioneered the work in Switzerland with George Wix.** (Sources: **California #1 Early Days in California, 1904-1910** by Mrs. Alex McPhail; and **When the Gospel Came to Oregon in Dec. 1907** compiled by Ada Park in 1985). Edwin Schaer is shown on the 1922 Workers List for North America for Washington state. He was the Overseer of Switzerland until he passed away in Switzerland on September 1966.

Edwin Schaer told this at the Randolph Conv. Oct. 10, 1960: *"I was not yet fourteen when I heard the true Gospel. Willie Jamieson came across our pathway and we began to see things we read of in scriptures. The thought came to me, you can go in for this sometime and go out to preach. Willie Jamieson came across the water to bring the message. You can do that and go to **Switzerland** where your parents came from. A little while after this Willie's sister came and confirmed what Willie had been telling us."*

GEORGE AND LOTTIE WIX: Four Wix siblings became workers: Mabel, George, Lottie and Alice. *"The FIRST convention we went to was held in Harper Street, Sydenham, Christchurch. 70 people were there. It was the only convention in N.Z....Jack Craig went out from that convention to preach... The next preacher who came along was, H. McNeary...And in 1908 he worked a mission out at Purakanui just out of Dunedin; he and Jim McLeod had about 40 to profess. Quite a number went out to preach, among **them being the Wix family; of that family 4 went out to preach the Gospel...**" (First Workers in New Zealand Account)*

KATIE HAY: Katie was born in Ontario, Canada and appears to have migrated to Western Canada with her parents at a young age. Katie Hay is shown on the 1922-23 North America Workers List for Manitoba. She died in Switzerland in 1955 at age 65.

CONVENTIONS: The first convention in Switzerland was held in a school in Bern. After that, conventions were held for many years in a tiny hamlet called Hämlismatt, near the village of Biglen. From there, the convention moved to **Wahlendorf**, where it is held presently.

Later, another convention was started at Stilli, which later moved to **Villigen**, where it is currently held. Both these conventions are

German-speaking. The **French-speaking convention** started at Nyon and later moved to **Donneloye**, where it currently convenes. In 2008, there are three conventions held in Switzerland. It is the practice for some Swiss workers to attend the convention in Italy, and for some Italian workers to attend the Switzerland conventions.

When did the workers first arrive in Switzerland?

Pre WWI: 1913

Post WWI: 1925-1926

Who were the first brother workers?

Pre WWI: James Jardine & Otto Schmidt

Post WWI: Eddie Schaer & George Wix

Who were the first sister workers?

Pre WWI: Penny Barton & Maggie Johnston

Post WWI: Lottie Wix and Katie Hay

Who was the first person to profess?

Pre WWI: None

Post WWI: Emma Bovy, after 1922

When & Where was the first meeting? (information needed)

When & Where was the first convention? In a school in Bern (date unknown)

Where are the conventions currently held? In 2008, there are (3) conventions: Wahlendorf and Villigen (German speaking); Donneloye (French Speaking)

Who have the Overseers been?

Eddie Schaer was the First Overseer of Switzerland. Died September 9, 1966. Buried in Bern, Switzerland.

Succeeded by Paul Schluep; succeeded by Willy Geiser; succeeded by Graham Snow (from New Zealand)

Succeeded by **Hansruedi Fehr** who is the present overseer (2009).

All these men are native-born Swiss except for Graham Snow

About Switzerland

Switzerland is divided in four parts, as far as languages are concerned. To have a good job, the Swiss need to learn two or more of the Italian, German and French languages, plus English. One-half of Switzerland (the Northern half) has **German** for their main language and their two conventions are spoken in German. One-fourth (the Southwestern section) uses **French** as their main language. One-eighth of the population, mainly in Ticino, the most southern section of the country, speak Italian as their main language. In Graubünden, the southeast part of the country, a few people (only about 1% of the population) still speak an ancient language called Romansch, which is spoken nowhere else in the world; and no one has ever responded to the gospel there.

A small part of Switzerland has Italian as its main language, and there is a Sunday A.M. meeting there. Some Swiss workers always attend the convention in Italy, and some Italian workers go to the Switzerland conventions. In 2003, there were three conventions held in Switzerland.

TTT Editor's Note: In the absence of a written account, the above information has been compiled by Cherie Kropp-Ehrig, the TTT Editor from various sources. Corrections or additions are most welcome; as well as other historical accounts for this country [Email TTT](#)