

# Family History Notes

Fall, 2005

## Ellis Island Records

One source for immigrant records can be found for on-line (and for free) at <http://www.ellisland.org> the Ellis Island internet site. This site is relatively easy to use if you are looking for immigration data between 1892 and 1924, and the port of entry was New York City. You can search by surname, but as is often the case, the spelling may not necessarily be correct in the original records. Therefore, it is wise to check spelling variations.

This website was used to assist Wilfried Gutmann of Canton Zurich who requested assistance in finding immigration records of his uncles and aunts who settled in this area in the early 1900's. These people included families by the names of Gutmann, Richard, and Oberholzer.

An example of a specific immigrant record found at the Ellis Island site is that for cheese maker Ernst Ruegsegger who emigrated to New Glarus in 1912. According to a story related by Mary (Hanna) ZumBrunnen in her 1990 *History of the Township of Primrose*, Ruegsegger had purchased a ticket on the Titanic, but changed his mind and chose an earlier sailing. Indeed, the Ellis Island site shows Ruegsegger's arrival in New York on the ship "Chicago" on March 30, 1912 – just days before the sinking of the Titanic. Scanning the "Chicago's" manifest shows several other Swiss passengers heading to a new life in Green County, Wisconsin.

## Titanic Victims

*Unlike Ernst Ruegsegger who opted for a ship other than the Titanic, emigrants Josef and Josephine (Franchi) Arnold of Canton Uri booked passage on the Titanic. They perished with 1520 others following the ship's collision with an iceberg on the evening of April 14, 1912. The Arnolds were heading to New Glarus where his sister Anna (Mrs. Matt A. Marty) lived. The Arnolds did not have enough money to bring their infant son, so the child was left with the Arnold grandparents back in Uri. This son, Josef, died in Switzerland in 1973.*

## Heinrich and Maria (Marti) Baebler Family

The 1989 family history book "Treasured Memories" by Evelyn (Baebler) Hollis of Belleville is a wonderful example of preserving history. This book captures the history of the Heinrich and Maria (Marti) Baebler and their family (see photo from our collection). Evelyn's book is not merely names and dates, but more importantly it relates



stories about the immigrant parents and each of their 11 children. At the end of the book are the ancestry sheets for the Bähler line going back to the 1500's in Matt, Canton Glarus.

An interesting aspect of this family was their linkage through marriage to another local family, the Schulers. In fact, five of the Baebler children married five children of Jacob and Elsbeth (Blumer) Schuler. Baebler sisters Maria and Verena Baebler married Jacob and Henry Schuler on the same day in 1891. Another Baebler sister, Katharine, married Fridolin Schuler in

1892. In 1895, brother Jacob Baebler married Barbara Schuler and a year later John Schuler married Barbara Babler. (This last couple lived in New Glarus and were the parents of the late Mrs. Henry (Florence) Stauffer.) Pictured are standing: Katherine, Henry, Mary, Jacob, Mathias, and Verena. Seated: Ida, Dorothea, Amelia, Henry and Maria, Anna and Barbara.

Two other families closely linked by marriage are the John and Dorothea (Speich) Legler family and the Paulus and Sybilla (Knobel) Kundert family. Four Legler children (Peter, Barbara, Dorothea and Anna) married four Kundert children (Barbara, Paulus, Jacob and Baltz).

## **Another Niklaus Dürst**

Much has been written this past year about Judge Niklaus Dürst (1797-1874) who along with Fridolin Streiff located the site for the New Glarus settlement 160 years ago. Judge Dürst returned to his home of Diesbach, Canton Glarus in late 1845. But 1846 saw the arrival of one of the first families following the original 1845 group. The head of that family was another Niklaus Dürst also of Diesbach, Canton Glarus. This Niklaus and Anna Maria (Streiff) Dürst family was likely drawn here so early because three sisters of Niklaus Dürst were with the original group of settlers. These sisters were Mrs. Fridolin Hoesli (nee Margareth Dürst), Mrs. Balthasar Dürst (nee Magdalena Dürst), and Mrs. George Legler (nee Anna Dürst). Some years later another sibling, Melchior Dürst and some members of this family also emigrated. While many members of these early Duerst-related families stayed in New Glarus and the surrounding area, many also ventured west to Kansas, Iowa, Oregon and California.

Niklaus Dürst died in 1869 and was buried in the original cemetery on the lawn of the Swiss Church, and it is his tombstone which we have in our museum cemetery (lower left corner). His widow, Anna Maria, lived to be in her 90's and died in 1905 and was buried in the "new" cemetery. Miriam B. Theiler later wrote of Anna Maria that she "often walked over the hills and through the woods to Belleville, a distance of 7 or 8 miles, did a day's washing by hand, walked home again through the lonely woods to care for her own family, carrying the small bag of meal which was her earnings. This life didn't seem to harm her as she lived to be 94."

## **Baptismal Caps**

In 1870 relatives in Switzerland sent Nicholas and Euphemia (Elmer) Zentner two caps for their twin daughters. These twins – Barbara and Verena -- were born and baptized that year, but in 1871 Barbara Zentner died. Her twin sister Verena (Mrs. Henry Z. Duerst) lived her life in New Glarus where she died at age 78 in 1948. Mrs. Duerst had donated these bonnets in the early days of the Historical Society and they remain on display. The tombstone of twin Barbara is in our museum cemetery.

## ***Green's Prairie and a Mayflower Heritage***

*Some of the earliest settlers in the northern tier of Green County were the Yankees who settled in the Town of York in an area then know as Green's Prairie. One of these families was the Philander and Hannah (Hurlbut) Peebles family. Philander and Hannah Peebles' great-grandchildren were the Hilton children – Maude (Mrs. Fred Stuessy); Vera (Mrs. Arthur Gmur); Vola (Mrs. Jacob Bruni); Scott (married Barbara Zweifel). Philander and Hannah Peebles apparently moved on to the state of Iowa where they were buried, but their parents – Robert and Diathena Peebles and Augustus and Lydia Hurlbut -- are all interred in the Green's Prairie Cemetery.*

*Philander Peebles brought something else to Green's Prairie and that was a Mayflower pedigree. Several of his ancestors (Samuel Fuller; Stephen and Elizabeth Hopkins; the Billingtons) were among those 102 brave souls sailing on the Mayflower in 1620 from Plymouth, England. In fact Elizabeth Hopkins gave birth to a boy while on the Atlantic and this baby was appropriately named Oceanus Hopkins! Descendents of the Peebles family still reside in the New Glarus area.*

## **Anniversaries in the Year 2005**

500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Aegidius (Gill) Tschudi, Swiss Historian born 5 February 1505

200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Friedrich von Schiller, *Wilhelm Tell* author, died 9 May 1805.

150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of "Fighting" Bob La Follette, Wisconsin politician born north of New Glarus in the Town of Primrose on 14 June 1855.

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*There's gonna be two dates on your tombstone. All your friends will read 'em. But all that's gonna matter, is that little dash between 'em. - Kevin Welch - "Life Down on Earth"*