

# Family History Notes

Summer, 2006

## First New Glarus Births

Thomas Schmid, son of original colonists Mathias and Anna Katharina (Schmid) Schmid, was born 15 December 1845. Thomas is recorded as having been the first birth in the new settlement. The Schmidts were originally from Nidfurn near Schwanden, Canton Glarus. Thomas served in the Civil War (the 9<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin Infantry Co's. H and D) and was often found in later years posing with the other aged vets. In 1868, Thomas married Anna Hauser, the daughter of early settlers Oswald and Anna (Kubli) Hauser. Thomas and Anna Schmid had 7 children: Katharine (Mrs. John S. Disch); Oswald; Mathias; Thomas; Caspar; Louisa (Mrs. Sam Schneider); and Emilie (Mrs. Fred Wurgler). Thomas died in 1922 and Anna in 1927. Ray Wurgler, a former New Glarus resident, is the last of the Thomas Schmid grandchildren, but there are many Schmid descendents yet in this area today – just ask our own Steve Gmur!

Does anyone know the first female born in New Glarus?



## Schmids from Bern

*The couple pictured to the left is Christian and Susanna (Trachsel) Schmid of Frutigen, Canton Bern. Christian died in Switzerland in 1897 and Susanna died in this area in 1903. Their children immigrated to the United States ending up in Wisconsin and the Pacific Northwest. Those children in Wisconsin settled around Mt. Vernon and included Susan (Schmid) Marty, Rosina (Schmid) Zahler, John Schmid and Adolph Schmid. Siblings Peter Schmid and Regina (Schmid) Elmer migrated west and lived in the shadow of Mt. Adams in Trout Lake, WA. Regina's son, Walter Sherman Elmer, was a restaurateur, and the Elmer's chain of restaurants found in the Pacific Northwest were begun by him in the late 1950s.*

*A tragic story occurred to the Anton and Elizabeth (Schmid) Schmid family. (Elizabeth was a sister of the aforementioned Schmid siblings.) On the unusual date of 11 November 1911 (11-11-11) a killer tornado hit the vicinity of Hanover in Rock County. Anton Schmid and three of his children were killed by that freak November storm. A graphic tale was reported in the Janesville Daily Gazette <http://www.wx-fx.com/janes.htm> which described the horrible fate of these people. The Schmids were brought to Monticello and were interred in Highland Cemetery.*

*According to "Wikipedia", this 11 November 1911 Rock County tornado is now estimated to have been an F4 on the Fujita Scale. The storm front was followed by what was the most dramatic cold snap in U.S. history. It is the only day in history for some cities to experience both a record high temperature and a record low. The storm front produced many tornadoes, one of which is said to have occurred in Owosso, MI at 11:11 p.m. on 11-11-11.*

## Halder Family

A book was recently donated to the New Glarus Historical Society by member Mike Bovre which tells of the history of the Swiss-American community of Helvetia, WV. One of the men credited with the founding the settlement of Helvetia in 1869 was Jacob Halder. Jacob and Barbara (Preisig) Halder were natives of Lenzburg, Canton Aargau and first settled in New York State. When farm land was being sold in West Virginia aimed at Swiss immigrants, Jacob was among the group of men that traveled to inspect that mountainous region. The Halders moved to West Virginia (Jacob was a cheese maker), but like many of the original New Glarus colonists, they stayed only a short time before moving further west. In fact, they lived here in Green County in the late 1800's. (A daughter, Sophia Halder, is buried in the historic Green's Prairie Cemetery – perhaps that cemetery's only Swiss-born.) Sons John and Jacob Halder later farmed in this vicinity. Son August moved on to Highland, IL and many of the family finally settled in Winnebago County, WI where the elder Halders (Jacob and Barbara) died shortly after the turn of the last century.

### Lehrer Mathias Stuessy

Visitors to the Swiss Historical Village occasionally ask about the couple in the large photograph in the museum's country school. The couple is Mathias and Katharina (Luchsinger) Stuessy. Mathias (1835-1909) was an early school teacher (Lehrer) in the New Glarus area hence the portrait in the schoolhouse. He taught country school in the Pioneer School north of town in the 1860's and also taught for a number of years in the village school. In the 1880 census, he is listed as a farmer. The Pioneer School record book contains the 1865-66 and 1866-67 Teacher's Contracts hiring Mathias Stuessy for the 5-month school term of November through March. Stuessy's pay was \$25 per month the first year and was raised to \$30 per month the second!

Katharina (Luchsinger) Stuessy was born in 1845 in Syracuse, New York. Her parents, mason Johannes and Barbara (Wild) Luchsinger, had emigrated from Schwanden, Canton Glarus in 1845 and settled in Syracuse, NY and Philadelphia, PA before finally moving to New Glarus. John Luchsinger, the historian, lawyer and legislator, was a brother of Katharina Stuessy.

Mathias and Katharina Stuessy were the grandparents of local people including Mathilda (Marty) Kubly, Tillie (Stuessy) Urben, Bertha (Streiff) Disch, and Melvin and Walter Streiff,

Mathias Stuessy's brother, Esaias Stuessy (1837-1925), also immigrated to New Glarus. He was a farmer south of New Glarus (County H) where his Stuessy descendents farmed until recent years.

### Marti Longevity

A Marti Family branch which emigrated from Engi, Canton Glarus to Green County is noted for its longevity. Magdalena Marti-Marti was born in 1782 and died in Green County in 1875 at the age of 93. Her son Johannes Marti was born in 1818 and died in 1911 at the age of 92. His son, also John Marty, lived from 1843 until 1938, dying at the age of 95. And John Marty's daughter, the late Anna (Marty) Balsiger of Monroe, died in 2001 at the age of 112. When Mrs. Balsiger died, it was claimed she was Wisconsin's oldest resident, the third oldest U.S. resident, and the eighth oldest in the world!

Following the death of his first wife, Johannes Marti (the one born in 1818) remarried in 1890 at the age of 72. He and his new wife went on to have two more children. Johannes Marti was 77 when his last child was born! This son, Fred Marty, died in 1988 in Sheboygan Falls at the age of 92.

The Marti brothers, Mathias and Jacob, who were businessmen and land speculators in the early years of Monticello, were also members of this same Marti branch.

### Billeter Records



Julius Billeter (1869-1957) is a well-known name among Swiss genealogists. He was responsible for copying church records throughout much of Switzerland and creating ancestry records for more than 1200 families. The LDS Church has these Billeter records on microfilm and these films can be ordered for viewing at the area LDS Genealogy Centers. Many genealogists are quick to point out that Billeter did make mistakes – generally in how he put together family groups. So caution is advised if using the Billeter records. Billeter was the son of Julius and Barbara (Zweifel) Billeter. Billeter's mother Barbara (photo to the left) was born in Linthal, Canton Glarus, the daughter of Johannes and Barbara (Marti) Zweifel. Further information on the Billeter collection can be found at: <http://www.eye.ch/swissgen/sursoue.htm#Billeter>

### Genealogical Research: Translating Occupational Terms from German

A question was recently raised about deciphering occupations (e.g. Knecht; Tagelöhner) when given in German. A couple of sources come to mind. One short list of occupations is provided by John Kester on page 57 in his book "In Three Millenia". This book is a great source of general information about Canton Glarus and its history. A more extensive listing of occupations is found at the following internet address <http://www.tr62.de/occupations/groups.htm> This internet site also has a wonderful reference on German Script and provides examples of all the uppercase and lowercase letters found in early handwritten documents.

