

Family History Notes

Fall, 2007

Two Historic Anniversaries and Two Historic Homes in Mollis

Two historic anniversaries are taking place in Canton Glarus in 2007. Both anniversaries have links with the Schindler and Zwicky families of Mollis, Canton Glarus. And both anniversaries are connected to two of Mollis' most historic homes.

The first anniversary commemorates the notorious tale of the housemaid Anna Göldi who was sentenced for witchcraft and beheaded in Canton Glarus 225 years ago (13 June 1782). She was the last witch executed in Europe. A new book about Anna has just been published by lawyer and author Walter Hauser. Hauser hopes to re-examine and perhaps to rehabilitate Anna's historical record. It appears Anna may have been framed with trumped up charges orchestrated by her former employer, the wealthy and influential Johann Jacob Tschudi. A new Anna Göldi museum opens in Mollis near the Zwickihaus on 22 September 2007



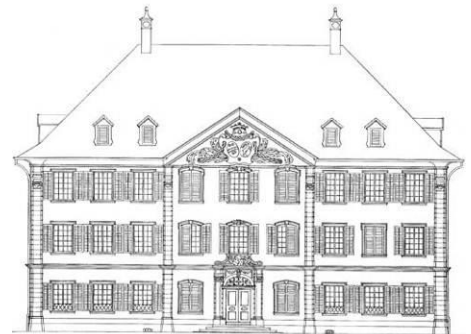
The Zwickihaus is one of the historic homes in Mollis and was for a time the home of Anna Göldi while she was in the employ of Dr. Johann Melchior Zwicky. This house, built large enough for two families, was actually built in 1621 by Conrad Schindler (born 1583) and his wife Maria Katharina Zwicky. Above the door of this house (see photo at left) is the date 1621 and the owners' initials "CS"



and "MZ". This couple died childless and the house passed into the Zwicky family for over two hundred years and thus became known as the Zwickihaus.

A second anniversary in Glarus is the 200th anniversary of the start of the Linth Canal project. This massive engineering project began in 1807 and redirected the flow of the Linth River. The river originally ran from Canton Glarus to the Zürichsee. In the north of Canton Glarus, the river was surrounded by swamps and these low-lying areas were often flooded.

Mosquitoes bred and malaria ensued. The river was rerouted to flow via the Escher Canal into the Walensee which would serve as a catch basin. Then the Linth Canal was constructed to channel the water from the Walensee to the Zürichsee. The swamps below Bilten and along the former Linth route became productive farmland. The project was (and is) a celebrated achievement in Switzerland. The chief project manager, Hans Conrad Escher, was posthumously honored by the Swiss Diet allowing his male descendants to bear the name Escher von der Linth.



One of Escher's assistants on the Linth correction was architect Conrad Schindler (1757-1841) of Mollis. Schindler was married to Dorothea Zwicky whose family lived in the Zwickihaus. (Dorothea Zwicky was a sister to Dr. J. M. Zwicky mentioned above.) In 1782, architect Schindler designed and built the palatial French baroque-style mansion called "das Haltli" (sketch right).

Today the mansion is a home for children with mental disabilities. Conrad and Dorothea (Zwicky) Schindler's grandson, Joachim Heer, was a member of the Swiss Federal Council and served as President of the Swiss Confederation in 1877.

The Conrad Schindler who built the Zwickihaus was an ancestral uncle of the architect Conrad Schindler who built "das Haltli".

Zwicky Family in the New Glarus Area

People by the name of Zwicky (also spelled Zwicky and Zwickiey in America) lived in New Glarus over the years, although this surname has virtually disappeared from the area. Widower Caspar Zwicky and two sons of Mollis came with the original 1845 colonists. According to records these people remained in the east for the first winter, but came to New Glarus the following year. Caspar's elder son, also named Caspar, remained a bachelor. The younger son, Johann Jacob, married Magdalena Baumgartner, daughter of the Anton and Magdalena (Marti) Baumgartner. Johann Jacob and Magdalena had seven sons who lived to adulthood. Mardell Elmer and Barb Thacker are local descendants of the Johann Jacob and Magdalena Zwicky line. The Fridolin and Rosina (Winteler) Zwicky family (also from Mollis) came to the Town of Washington in 1847. Many of their descendants lived in the Monticello and Evansville areas. Local descendants of the Fridolin Zwicky line include Lorene Beers, Richard Voegeli and Richard Blum. In the mid-to late 1800s, Michael and Anna Katharina Zwicky and sons Michael, George and Caspar were soap and candle makers in Mazomanie and later Madison, Wisconsin.

The Most Renowned Zwicky

The distinguished U.S.-based astrophysicist Fritz Zwicky (1898-1974) grew up in Mollis. A brilliant and visionary scientist, Zwicky was ahead of his time in conceiving of supernovas, neutron stars, dark matter, and gravitational lenses. His passion for supernovae theory led him to the discovery of 122 of these stellar explosions -- a record for a single astronomer. Zwicky was associated with the Mt. Wilson Observatory near Pasadena, CA. He died in California but was interred in Mollis.

Swiss in Green County -- A Bernese Woman Precedes Glarners of 1845

In 1977, Dwayne L. Marty wrote an interesting history of the Town of Exeter. In his piece, Marty made an intriguing observation writing that Madaline Oliver was “the first Swiss to settle in Green County”. Madaline Oliver was born Magdalena Rindisbacher in 1812-13 in Lauperswil, Canton Bern, the daughter of Peter and Barbara (Wyss) Rindisbacher. This family came to North America in 1821 and settled in Selkirk’s Red River Colony in today’s Manitoba. Around 1826, various hardships caused the Rindisbachers and others to leave the Red River Colony and move to Gratiot’s Grove in southwestern Wisconsin.



In 1835, Madaline married Robert Oliver, a native of Ireland and in 1841 they had moved to begin farming in the Town of Exeter in Green County. Madaline gave birth to about 12 children and died in 1859 shortly after the birth of son Charles. Three other sons (William J., Robert A., and James F.) served in the Civil War. Madaline is buried in the Montrose Pioneer Cemetery.

Madaline’s son Robert A. Oliver was born in 1841 in Exeter. He married Jane Collins in 1866. Jane was the daughter of Adam and Anna Barbara (Rindisbacher) Collins. It appears Robert A. and Jane were first cousins – their mothers being Rindisbacher sisters. The Olivers farmed in the Town of Montrose where Robert A. died in 1902 and Jane in 1927. They are also buried in the Montrose cemetery.

Madaline Oliver’s brother, Peter Rindisbacher (1806-1834) was an artist of considerable talent and has been recognized as the earliest artist to capture the American and Canadian west. The portrait above is of Madaline by her brother Peter circa 1830. Peter died in St. Louis at the age of 28.

Norwegian Neighbors: Eidsmoe and Tronrud

The nearby towns of Primrose, Perry, York and Adams were areas settled by large numbers of Norwegian immigrants starting in the late 1840s. The northern tier of the Town of New Glarus also had many Norwegian settlers. The Norwegian immigrant experience was in many ways similar to that of other immigrant groups of that time. Lack of opportunity in the old world and the promise of America led to mass immigration to the Midwest.

The immigrant story of Amund O. Eidsmoe, (<http://eidsmoe.com/>) written in 1901 when Eidsmoe was 88 years old, tells of the struggles and hardships encountered by one Norwegian family in 1852. Eidsmoe wrote “*It was fortunate for us that we had no knowledge of the danger and adversity that were to meet us on our way, otherwise we should hardly have started on the trip.*” Difficulties started for the Eidsmoe’s – Amund, wife Gjertrude and two small children – from the beginning. They missed their ship in Norway and had to wait an additional 9 weeks before they sailed. Their trip from Norway to Quebec took more than 8 stormy weeks. A train was taken from Montreal to Buffalo where they boarded the steamer Atlantic. Disaster struck when the Atlantic was hit by a rival ship in the middle of the night on Lake Erie. The Eidsmoe’s were swept into the water as the ship sunk. They lost everything but their lives. In total 300 lives were lost in the Atlantic tragedy.



The immigrants continued on through Detroit, Chicago, and Milwaukee. In Milwaukee, caring residents had taken up a collection for these destitute survivors and provided each family with money and clothing. The Eidsmoe’s continued by ox cart to Springdale, Dane County. Amund staked a claim, built a crude cabin and stable, and toiled for two years when a land speculator informed him that the land was not his. The Eidsmoe’s again had little or nothing and in 1854 came to the Town of York, Green County where his brothers Christopher and Martin had settled.

Over time Eidsmoe wrote that they had acquired five “forties” (acres) in York and that “after a while I became fairly prosperous.” He served as Town Clerk, Treasurer and was Justice of the Peace for 28 years. He was also the “*Norsk-Klokke*” – the Norwegian sexton.

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A Norwegian, Aslak Tronrud of Oslo, has created a Tronrud family history website including names, dates and stories of Norwegians and Norwegian-Americans. The name Tronrud may not be particularly well known today. But another early Norwegian settler in the Town of York was Gudbrand O. Tronrud. Other Tronrud families who came to this area became known simply as Rood. Area families with links to this Tronrud database include Rear, Slotten, Austin and Nybroten. Aslak Tronrud visited his cousin Ron Nybroten in New Glarus several years ago.

This Tronrud database is found at: <http://home.broadpark.no/~aslaktro/index.htm>

Civil War Roots Discovered

Larry the Cable Guy recently revealed a piece of his family history. He discovered a great-great-great grandfather from Civil War times named Lawrence the Telegraph Gentleman.