

# Family History Notes

Fall, 2008

## Outsiders

Clannishness may be a part of our hard-wiring. We are comfortable with the familiar and wary of outsiders. Yet as we mature as individuals and communities, these parochial sensibilities are (hopefully) replaced with broader perspectives.

The 1845 settlement of New Glarus was comprised wholly of people all from the same canton in Switzerland. And yet a degree of disharmony which existed between two geographic factions – between those colonists from the big valley (Linthal) and those from the small valley (Sernftal) – caused many of the small valley minority (perhaps feeling like the outsiders) to move to other locales. Within a matter of years these early rivalries were forgotten. When non-Glarner Swiss like Jacob Ernst from Canton Zurich and the Ott Brothers from Canton Schaffhausen began to take an interest in New Glarus area there was the perhaps inevitable sentiment expressed that the New Glarus colony land was for Glarner only. In his report on the colony land disposition, Duane Freitag cited an admonishment made by the Glarner Emigration Society “*Es is verpflichtet, Fremde von der Colonie fernzuhalten* (it is obligatory that strangers are to be kept out of the colony).” But soon immigrants arrived from various cantons -- particularly the Canton Bern farmers found between New Glarus and Monroe -- forming a continuum of Swiss immigrants throughout the region.

And the local marriages which ensued united the Canton Glarus natives with spouses from other cantons. For example Johann Jacob Tschudy's 1848 bride was Barbara Hottinger from Canton Zurich. New Bilten settler Mengadina Becker married Canton Thurgau native Balthasar Oprecht in 1850. In 1851, widower David Legler married Elizabeth Schürch who was born in Canton Schaffhausen. Anna Barbara Becker married Berner Jacob Kaderli in 1853. Magdalena Streiff, from Canton Glarus, married Gustav Alder an Appenzeller in 1854. Adam Hefty married *Bernerin* Magdalena Stalder in 1858. Katharina Disch's bridegroom in 1862 was Samuel Wernkli, a native of Canton Aargau. And Canton Graubünden immigrants Albrecht Engler and Johann Tasher both married Canton Glarus natives Anna Durst and Anna Maria Elmer (respectively) in the 1860s.

It has been said that Wisconsin can lay claim to having more diverse European immigrant groups than any other state. As Wisconsin developed from a collection of ethnic pockets it was inevitable that marriages between various groups would begin to occur. It is a safe bet that there was controversy among the various parents and relatives as well as the village and church elders about the appropriateness of a these inter-ethnic marriages. In the vicinity of New Glarus there were the Norwegians to the north and west, the French to the east, with English, Yankees, and Germans scattered about. For the most part Swiss married Swiss, but there were certainly exceptions to this rule. Barbara Blum from the New Bilten settlement married an English native Emanuel George in 1848. The English-speaking Marti brothers in Monticello married Yankee girls – Jacob married Electa Hills in 1849 and Mathias married Amanda Pierce in 1858. Heinrich Duerst married New York-born Louise Jackson in 1861. Anna Katharina Wild, daughter of Joshua Wild, married a German immigrant Johann Heinrich Julius Eichelkraut in 1856 and Niklaus Elmer married Rebekka Mollstedt, a German, in 1863. In the 1860s, Swiss-Norwegian marriages occurred such as those of Thomas Klassy and Cari Swenson in 1868 and Jost Becker and Sarah Arneson (or Arnes) in 1869. Jacob Hoesly married Barbara Domholdt, of Norwegian parentage, in 1880. In succeeding generations and with improving transportation and communication, such marriages became even more common.

Outsiders who were Jewish were found in Green County and a 1900 survey of Russian-born residents of Monroe showed many Jewish surnames. The tale of Solomon Levitan is well known in New Glarus lore. A Jewish peddler, Levitan married and settled down, establishing retail stores in New Glarus, Blanchardville, and later in Madison. When Sol Levitan moved to Madison to expand his



horizons, his share of the local Levitan-Steussy store was sold to H. Marcus & Sons (also Jewish) of Muscoda, WI. A Marcus daughter and son-in-law, Sara and Joseph Schrader, moved to New Glarus to help manage the store. Also living in New Glarus in the early 1900s was the Samuel Katz family. Katz was a Russian-born Jew and was a self-employed junkman. Photographs from the turn of the last century show the Levitan and Katz boys in the local Juvenile Bands so popular at this time. (Pictured left are Solomon and Dora (Moses) Levitan on their 1887 wedding day.)

Roman Catholics were a rare exception in New Glarus. The original Swiss residents were exclusively of Swiss Reformed stock and although ethnic barriers were soon breached, religious barriers effectively precluded most inter-marriages. One early exception to this was the marriage of Ursula Legler, daughter of David Legler, who married Daniel Keleher, an Irishman and Catholic. But the Kelehers did not reside in New Glarus, but rather in Galena, IL. Early immigrant and blacksmith Constantine Haegele was originally from Württemberg, Germany and was born Catholic. In 1861, he married Barbara Duerst in the local Swiss Reformed Church. And Pius Truttmann from Küsnacht, Canton Schwyz, whose parents were married in the Einsiedeln Abbey, married Margaretha Hefty in the Swiss Reformed Church.

Swiss-French unions were seen in the 1870s such as those of Niklaus Elmer and Mary Jane Tourdot in 1877 and Mathias Schmid and Octavia Pernot in 1879. These appear to have been Swiss Reformed rather than Catholic services. However the 1896 marriage of Francis Tisserand and Fanny Legler was a Catholic service in nearby Dayton. (Continued on back)

One German Catholic family did find their way to New Glarus in the early 1900s. Frank Leipzig and family lived here around 1910 when he was an employee of the Zweifel Brewery. When and where they practiced their Catholic faith is not known, but it is known that Frank's son Frank Jr. was ordained a priest and eventually became Bishop Francis P. Leipzig of the Diocese of Baker, Oregon. Little Frank Leipzig Jr. was a New Glarus school mate of such people as Philipp Marty, Sr. and Joshua Hoesly and he perhaps chummed around with other village boys of that time period such as Abe Levitan and Meyer Katz – an unusual amount of religious diversity in turn-of-the-last century New Glarus.

The Amish certainly tested the inclusiveness of the community in the 1960's. First looked on as curiosities by local residents, the Amish eventually became known and respected. But to a large degree they always seemed to be outsiders, living separately from the New Glarus mainstream. And as demographics evolve in coming years, perhaps the shrinking number of New Glarus residents with Swiss blood will eventually find themselves feeling like the outsiders.

### **Levitan Anecdotes**

Solomon Levitan (1862-1940) was an outsider who grew to become a significant part of the local community. Some Solomon Levitan anecdotes were related by Manuel C. Elmer in his book "Rudy's Hill". Elmer grew up on a Dutch Hollow farm at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. A periodic and welcomed visitor to the Elmer farm was Solomon Levitan during his pack peddler days. Since the Jewish Shabbat begins at sundown on Friday, Levitan would be invited to stay with the Elmer family the entire weekend. The Elmers would not accept money for lodging or food, so Levitan would secretly leave an article of merchandise on a window sill as a token of his appreciation. Elmer remembered that Levitan "spoke a few words of English and a lot of German Yiddish; we spoke Swiss throughout the valley (i.e. Dutch Hollow), which was no worse for him to understand than his Yiddish was for us."

Another story involves the practice of banks issuing their own paper money signed by the bank president. In Monroe, Bank President Ludlow made a ceremony of this practice by signing the notes in the bank window. One day Solomon Levitan witnessed this signing ceremony and wondered aloud how long it would take for him to sign his first bank note. Ludlow laughed and replied condescendingly, "I will tell you – two lifetimes!" Just twenty years later Levitan had advanced to become the president of the Commercial National Bank in Madison. Levitan signed his first \$10 bill and sent that bill to Ludlow with a note saying "it took me just one half of one lifetime!"

Yet another tale was of a young school teacher touring the Wisconsin State Capitol with her students. An elderly man approached the school group and inquired if he may be of any service. The teacher replied that her class was visiting the Capitol. The elderly man proceeded to provide an impromptu tour escorting the students around the building and relating many interesting facts. The old man asked the young teacher to repeat the name she had given him. He shook his head and said "It doesn't sound right – you look Swiss but your name isn't Swiss." The teacher replied that it was her mother who was Swiss – an Elmer from Dutch Hollow. The old man said that he knew this family and they were kind to him when he was a young peddler. He then unexpectedly ordered dinner for the school group at a Madison hotel. The old man finally introduced himself as Solomon Levitan the Wisconsin State Treasurer.

The last story is one Levitan frequently told himself about his longtime friend Robert M. La Follette. Levitan claims to have sold Wisconsin's greatest politician a pair of suspenders back in the 1880s. Levitan joked "and I have been supporting him ever since!" Even in death he supported La Follette – Levitan served as an honorary pallbearer at La Follette's funeral.

### **Anna Katharina (Wild) Zopfi**

A charming image in the archival collection of the New Glarus Historical Society is the unusual nineteenth century sketch (at right) of Anna Katharina Wild (1767-1853). Anna Katharina was the wife of merchant Hans Peter Zopfi of Schwanden, Canton Glarus, and they were the parents of six children – Niklaus, Johannes, Agatha (who died at 3 days), Hans Peter, Gabriel, and a second Agatha. Their two eldest sons were part of the Glarner Battalion which captured the Hüningen fortress from the forces loyal to Napoleon in 1815. And like many families of the mid-1800s, Anna Katharina was to see grandchildren leave Switzerland bound for various parts of the United States. Among her grandchildren in America were Hans Peter Zopfi who died of typhus in New Orleans, Gabriel Zopfi and his sister Wilhelmina (Zopfi) Blesi both of Philadelphia, Johann Balthasar Streiff of Modoc County, California, Johan Peter Streiff of Missouri and Fridolin Streiff (1838-1917) of New Glarus. Anna Katharina had two great-grandsons, Heinrich and Johann Balthasar (known as John B.) Streiff, who settled in the Monroe vicinity. Anna Katharina died in 1853 at the age of 85.



### **Frau Landammä**

As printed in the June newsletter, Marianne Dürst-Kundert has become the first female *Landammann* in Canton Glarus' long history. She was sworn into the Canton's highest office on 4 May 2008 at the annual *Landsgemeinde*. Born Marianne Kundert in Niederurnen, Canton Glarus in 1961, she is the daughter of Georg Kundert, a policeman and his wife Elsbeth née Hefti. She is married to René Dürst whose ancestry comes from Mühlehorn, Canton Glarus. Many of Marianne's family origins stem from the Canton Glarus villages of Schwanden and Hätzingen. Her great-great grandfather, Heinrich Hefti, had two sisters who were New Glarus residents -- Mrs. Paulus Figi (born Katharina Hefti) and Mrs. Gabriel Schindler (born Barbara Hefti). Additionally, Heinrich Hefti had several children living in the Glarner settlement around Renwick, IA.

### **Kissing Cousins**

The subject of first cousins who marry might bring to mind images of Appalachian inbreeding and the banjo-playing albino in "Deliverance". Comedian Jeff Foxworthy joked that you might be a redneck if you go to your family reunion to meet women. And then there is the Al Bundy quote "nothing says lovin' like marryin' your cousin".

But in fact, marrying your first cousin is legal in 26 U.S. States as well as in Canada, Mexico and all of Europe. Well known historical figures who married first cousins included Queen Victoria, Charles Darwin, Edgar Allan Poe, King Haakon of Norway, Albert Einstein, Edvard Grieg, and H.G. Wells. Many female descendents of Queen Victoria and her consort (and first cousin) Prince Albert carried the gene for hemophilia. As a result of this high profile hereditary disorder found throughout the royal houses of Europe, there was reinforcement in the belief that the marriage of first cousins was to be avoided.

Yet genetic science today suggests that the marriage of first cousins may increase the risk of genetic abnormalities only 2 to 3 percent more than the norm. While this is not insignificant, it is far from the popular notion that such marriages produce imbeciles. It can also be argued that first cousins with strong genetic pools can produce exceptional children. Consider the following -- in New Glarus, the 1894 marriage of first cousins Sebastian A. Schindler and Anna Wohlwend resulted in two of New Glarus' most honored sons -- Rear-Admiral Walter G. Schindler and his brother Dr. John A. Schindler, founder of the Monroe Clinic and author.

### **Wild Families**

Over the years New Glarus histories have frequently cited Joshua and Barbara (Speich) Wild and family. This is due to Joshua's role in the early development of New Glarus, the fact that he penned an autobiography which provides first-person insights into immigration and early New Glarus history, and because of the abundance of Joshua Wild descendents yet in New Glarus.

But other Wilds also settled here. Among them was Joshua Wild's first cousin Margaretha Wild. Margaretha was married to Christian Luchsinger and they arrived in New Glarus in the early 1850s. Among the original colonists were Hilarius and Anna (Hefti) Wild whose portrait is in the museum collection. The descendents of Hilarius and Anna are nearly as numerous as those of the Joshua Wilds. Direct descendents of both the Joshua Wild family and the Hilarius Wild family include Viola (Zweifel) Truttman as well as the late Klassy sisters Amelia Mueller and Anna Ott Vamstad. Barbara Wild, sister of Hilarius, married an Aargauer, Rudolf Fricker, and their descendents include area people with the names Schneider, Schober and Schraepfer. Mathias and Verena (Scherer) Wild's daughters Elsbeth and Barbara lived in the area. Elsbeth married Matt Zentner and Barbara married Albrecht (Albert) Duerst. And there was Andreas (Andrew) Wild who arrived here with his father Caspar around 1881. Andrew married Margaret Hefty -- a member of the Hefty family who began the local brewery.

Barbara Wild and her husband Johannes Luchsinger arrived in New Glarus around 1850. The Luchsingers' flat, ground level markers are the only two stones on the site of the original pioneer cemetery in downtown New Glarus. Barbara's brother and sister-in-law, David and Elsbeth (Figi) Wild, were early immigrants whose local descendents have spelled the family name Wild (e.g. Irving Wild; David Wild) and Wilde (Duane Wilde; Bernie Wilde). The tombstone of Samuel Wild (1845-1867), the son of David and Elsbeth, is in the museum's cemetery. John Wild, a grandson of David and Elsbeth, married Jennie Koster in 1914. They set up their new home on the farm of his parents Jacob and Regula (Stuessy) Wild near Verona, WI. Just two week following their wedding tragedy struck when Jennie slipped and fell as she was drawing water from the well. She struck her head and drowned in the water.

Other Wild families who immigrated to various corners of the United States included Samuel and Verena (Tschudi) Wild who came to Philadelphia in 1833. Ludwig Wild was a Glarner who settled in the German community of Hermann, Missouri. And Katharina Wild married Edward Koelliker and they farmed on the foothills of the Wasatch Mountains near Salt Lake City, Utah.

All of the Wild families descend from Klaus Wilhelm (later Wild) and his wife Anna née Zwingli (niece or sister of Reformer Ulrich Zwingli). The common ancestors of the New Glarus branches of the Wild family are Caspar and Rosina (Wichser) Wild who were born in the 1590s. And all of these immigrant families mentioned above are from the village of Schwanden, Canton Glarus and many other Wild branches are found in the neighboring village of Mitlödi, Canton Glarus. Charles Abrams, a descendant of David and Elsbeth (Figi) Wild, has posted information on the Genealogy.com website that provides ancestry and descendant information for many of the Wild families mentioned above. Abrams' information can be found at: <http://genforum.genealogy.com/wilhelm/messages/860.html>

### **Grob Family**

Among the original colonists in New Glarus were two brothers from Obstalden, Canton Glarus -- Paulus and Johann Jacob Grob. Johann Jacob Grob, along with George Legler, was considered a leader of the colonist group. And in the story of New Glarus' founding, it was Paulus Grob, along with Mathias Dürst, who was selected to leave St. Louis, MO in order to locate the scouts Judge Niklaus Dürst and Fridolin Streiff and obtain precise directions to the New Glarus settlement. But the Grob brothers left New Glarus shortly after it's founding (for reasons unknown), abandoning their 20 acre lots. By 1850 the Paulus and Regula (Schräpfer) Grob family lived in and around Bond and Madison Counties of Illinois. According to family sources, they later lived in Prairie City, MO where they died.

Recently Justin Mayo of Janesville, WI wondered about the ancestry of his great grandfather, Clinton Grob (1895-1976). Clinton, a native of Highland, Illinois had married Clara Held of New Glarus in 1920. The Clinton Grobs had farmed near Janesville and part of their farm is now Thresherman's Park, the site of the Rock River Threshere. Piecing information together, it seems highly probable, although not yet entirely confirmed, that Clinton Grob's father George Grob, was the son of original colonists Paulus and Regula Grob.

## The Guliweg

Borders in mountainous areas are generally defined by the mountain peaks and ridges. The watersheds formed within these natural mountain borders then become a political entity. In Canton Glarus, this rule is generally true – the watershed of the Linth River essentially forms the Canton. But there is a notable exception to this and that is the hanging valley above the village of Linthal. This valley is the Urnerboden. Its waters flow into the Linth, yet the majority of this long, high valley belongs to the neighboring canton of Uri across the Klausen Pass. The valley of the Urnerboden is actually an alp and is the largest alp in Switzerland. In summer, cattle are brought to graze the Urnerboden with no fences to encumber their movement. Cars, buses, motorcycles and bicycles need to take caution when driving the unusually straight road along the valley base. (Photo of Urnerboden from the road to the Klausen Pass.)



How this area became the property of Uri and not the property of Glarus is the subject of a long-told tale about a race to determine the border. It was agreed by cantonal officials of both sides that two runners – one from the Glarus side and one from the Uri side – would wake when the cock crowed and race until the runners met. This spot where the runner met would determine the canton border. The evening before the race, the Glarners fed their rooster (known in Swiss as *Guli* or *Gulli*) while the Urners did not feed theirs. As a result the Glarner rooster slept late and did not crow as early as the Urner rooster. The Urner runner got a head start while the Glarner runner slept in. The Urner runner went over the Klausen Pass and down into the Urnerboden before he met the Glarner runner. As agreed, this spot would determine the border. But the Glarner had a proposition. He would carry the Urner runner back up the Urnerboden. He could push the border back if he could carry the Urner runner. It was agreed.

The Glarner carried the Urner back a certain distance, but then fell dead of exhaustion. And it was here the boundary was marked. At the spot today is a stone marker (*Grenzstein*) which has the Uri “bull” on one side and Glarus’ St. Fridolin on the other. The Urnerboden is still known as the Guliweg in remembrance of the race which, according to custom, took place nearly seven centuries ago.

## Peter Norder of Engi

What did Peter Norder (1579-1659) of Engi, Canton Glarus have in common with England’s King Henry VIII, actor Rex Harrison and author Norman Mailer? Each married six times. Peter first wed Barbara Speich. She died in 1614 and only one month after her death Peter married Anna Hämmerli. Peter and Anna had several children, but Anna died in 1622 having fallen from an ash tree. The following spring of 1623, Peter married Regula Laager. Peter and Regula had two daughters. Regula died in 1629 of the plague six days after the birth of their second daughter. In 1631 Peter married Katharina Joos and this marriage soon ended in divorce. In 1633, Peter married Magdalena Ott, the widow of Rudolf Elmer of Elm. Apparently this marriage also ended in divorce for in 1642, and at the age of 63, Peter Norder married for the sixth time to Regina Dinner, another local widow. Peter died at the age of 80 in 1659. Peter and his second and third wives -- Anna Hämmerli and Regula Laager -- are direct ancestors of numerous New Glarus people whose ancestry can be traced to the Canton Glarus villages of Engi, Matt and Elm. Early Glarner settlers in Green County included Peter’s direct descendents the brothers Leonhard and Magdalena (Stauffacher) Norder and Jacob and Anna Katharina (Altmann) Norder.

## 90 Years Hence -- WWI Casualties

November 11, 2008 marks the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War I. New Glarus had four men who died during their term of service – William Guy Bartlett, August Gottlieb Martin, Martin Schneider and Walter Wilhelm Stuessy. William Bartlett was the son of local druggist Robert and Edith (Silver) Bartlett. William was a 1916 pharmacy graduate of the University of Wisconsin and shortly before his enlistment he had married Norma A. Zwicky. He volunteered for medical duty in the overcrowded hospital at Jefferson Barracks near St. Louis. He contracted spinal meningitis and died in January, 1918. Bartlett’s funeral was held in Monroe. There was a significant snow storm prior to the funeral and the New Glarus mourners, being unable to drive to Monroe, took sleighs instead. August Martin was the son of German immigrants who lived in Boscobel, WI. August died from wounds received in France in October 1918. Martin Schneider, the son of Paulus and Margaret (Zentner) Schneider, served in France but returned ill and died in a Denver, CO hospital in 1919. Martin was the uncle of Ron Schneider, Erwin Zweifel and Charlotte Brauer.

Walter Stuessy was the son of local harness maker Salomon and Anna Magdalena (Becker) Stuessy and was killed in action only days before the armistice was signed. Walter Stuessy gave his life for his country and as the first New Glarus native killed in the war, his name was given to the local legion post – today’s Stuessy-Kuenzi American Legion Post. In 1921, Walter’s remains were returned to New Glarus and interred next to his father Salomon Stuessy who had died in 1914. But two years later word was received by the Stuessy family that a mistake had occurred and the body returned to New Glarus was not that of Walter but of an Irish-American by the name of Patrick Waldron. In 1923 the situation was rectified when Walter Stuessy’s body was finally brought home to New Glarus and Waldron was re-buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

Other area men who died in WWI included Emil Wichser of Monticello, the brother of Sarah (Wichser) Ziltner Stuessy of New Glarus (Roy Ziltner’s mother). Emil died from wounds received in France in April of 1918. Leonard W. Rhyner of Monticello died in France from pneumonia (often a result of the 1918 influenza pandemic). And Leroy Arthur Stauffacher, the son of Jacob and Marion (Becker) Stauffacher of the Town of York, died from wounds received in France in October, 1918. Additionally, both Leonard Rhyner and Leroy Stauffacher were great-grandsons of Jacob and Anna Katharina (Altmann) Norder mentioned in the preceding article.