

Family History Notes

Spring, 2008

Civil War Veterans: Setting the Record Straight

The Bank of New Glarus Historical Calendar has become an annual tradition, always contains interesting images from times past. The 2008 calendar contained a 1914 photograph supplied by the New Glarus Historical Society of six surviving Civil War soldiers. Unfortunately the names ascribed to the veterans were incorrect. Here again is that photograph and here are the names from left to right: Henry Altmann, Fridolin Streiff, Oswald Babler, Thomas Schmid, John Ulrich Kubly and Peter Disch.

Henry Altmann served in the Illinois 46th Infantry and was later a farmer near the Pioneer country school. Altmann died in July, 1914, shortly after this photograph was taken. Fridolin Streiff was a member of the famed Iron Brigade serving in Wisconsin's 6th Infantry. Fridolin was wounded in battle yet served from 1861 to 1865. He died in 1917. Oswald Babler was an original settler



of New Glarus and the last of the veterans pictured here to pass on. He was a member of the Wisconsin 46th Infantry. Thomas Schmid was the first child born in New Glarus in December of 1845. Schmid served in the Wisconsin 9th Infantry – the German-speaking Salomon Guards. John Ulrich Kubly was wounded in the war in the 1861 Manassas campaign. According to grandnephew Herbert Kubly, John Ulrich lost his leg in the battle. Kubly was married but died childless in 1918. Peter Disch, like Thomas Schmid, served in the Salomon Guards which took part in campaigns west of the Mississippi. Disch never married and died only a few months before Oswald Babler in 1927. Except for Schmid, all these vets were born in Canton Glarus – Altmann in Ennenda, Streiff in Schwanden, Babler in Matt, and Kubly and Disch in Elm. Except for Disch, all married Glarner girls – Altmann married Rosina Figi, Streiff married Barbara Wild, Babler married Sarah Kundert, Schmid married Anna Hauser, and Kubly married Rosina Gallati (who was the widow of Civil War casualty Rudolf Kundert).

An earlier photo taken between 1900 and 1911 shows the same six veterans plus an additional two. The men in the second photograph



are from left to right: Henry Altmann, Peter Disch, Fridolin Streiff, Jacob Jordi, John Ulrich Kubly, Thomas Schmid, Henry Hoesly and Oswald Babler.

The additional two vets in this earlier photograph were Jacob Jordi and Henry Hoesly. Jordi was a local harness maker. He was born in Canton Bern, Switzerland and married Katharina Geiger of New Glarus. He enlisted in the Wisconsin 45th with his father, Johannes Jordi. The senior Jordi died of disease in Nashville, TN where he was buried. Henry Hoesly was born in

Haslen, Canton Glarus. He was part of the Wisconsin 2nd Infantry. After the war, Henry married Agatha Duerst of New Glarus and was one of the "New Glarus Eleven" – one of eleven local tavern owners. Hoesly died in 1911 and Jordi in 1913.

There remain scores of direct descendants as well as grandnieces and grandnephews of these honorable men in the area yet today. A few are descended from two of the Civil War veterans -- Dean Streiff is a direct descendent of Fridolin Streiff as well as Thomas Schmid. Gerald and Rolland Disch are direct descendants of both Fridolin Streiff and Henry Altmann. Jennifer Schneider, daughter of New Glarus natives Mike and Cindy (Streiff) Schneider is the great-great-granddaughter of four of the vets in the second picture – Henry Altmann, Fridolin Streiff, Jacob Jordi and Thomas Schmid.

At the time of these historic photographs, there were other surviving Civil War vets who had enlisted in the New Glarus area but subsequently moved away. These vets included Sebastian Durst of Albany who died in 1925, Caspar Schiesser of Monroe and Jacob Freitag of Monticello who both died in 1914, Abraham Kundert also of Monroe who died in 1927, Fridolin Klassi of Iowa who died in 1914, Mathias Durst of South Dakota who died in 1917, the three Blum/Bloom brothers – Jacob of Oregon who died in 1915, Fred of Minnesota who died in 1923, and Caspar also of Minnesota who died in 1924, and the Trogner brothers George of Neillsville who died in 1924 and John H. of Monticello who died in 1927. Possibly the last surviving Civil War vet who enlisted in New Glarus was Franz (Frank) Brunner, a native of Canton Lucerne, who died in Monroe in 1932 at the age of 94.

The monument in the top picture is a mystery. It does not appear to exist today. Was it a gravestone or a monument to the war vets?

1816: The Year without a Summer

The massive Mount Tambora eruption in 1815 on the remote Indonesian island of Sumbawa had catastrophic effects throughout the world -- particularly in Northern Europe, New England and the Canadian Maritimes. Ash fell two feet deep over nearly 1000 miles from Tambora and darkness shrouded a 300 mile area around the volcano for days. Only 26 of the 12,000 people living on Sumbawa survived. Mt. Tambora lost 4,100 feet in height and threw out an estimated 36.4 cubic miles of debris. Volcanic dust was hurled into the atmosphere where it circled the earth, darkened the sky and eventually helped make 1816 “the year without a summer”. Due to the vast amounts of volcanic dust ejected into the atmosphere, less sunlight was able to pass through this dust causing temperatures to fall. In 1816 killer frosts ruined crops. Snowfalls and lake ice occurred in summer months. Consequently, 1816 and 1817 were also known as the *Hungerjahre* (hunger years) when crops failed and food prices soared.

New Glarus resident Joshua Wild (1813-1878) originally of Schwanden, Canton Glarus recalled the hunger and poverty of that time. The Wild family’s Newfoundland dog was butchered for food by some of their indigent relatives. An account from a Swiss newspaper picked up by *The Times* of London (26 December 1816) gives this profoundly heartbreaking description of life in Schwändi, Canton Glarus – “Three and four families with many children, live crowded together in one room, in dirty rags; some half naked, other wholly naked. Tables, stools, bedsteads, bed-clothes, have long since disappeared. Roots, herbs, and even dug-up carcasses, are their food – the dying cannot even obtain a drop of skimmed milk. All of them sleep, summer and winter, on the hard ground in their rags; those who are privileged by age or sickness on the stove. Most have the appearance of skeletons dug out of their graves, and the suckling comes like a corpse from the mother’s bosom.” In Elm, Canton Glarus, people survived by eating spelt porridge, roasted beans and whey. *Rumfordische Suppe* (a soup developed around 1800 to feed criminals and the destitute.) was provided daily to the needy. Despite the assistance, 67-year old Johann Caspar Zentner died of hunger in 1817. Two of Zentner’s sisters – Ursula (Mrs. Caspar Schneider) and Rahel (Mrs. Johann Peter Zentner) – are ancestors of numerous New Glarus area families.

A positive outcome of that bleak period - in July 1816 the cold, wet and dreary weather forced Mary Shelley to stay indoors for much of her Swiss holiday, prompting Shelley to write her gothic novel “Frankenstein”.

Thomas Legler House

One of the small museums of Canton Glarus is the birthplace (*Geburtshaus*) of Thomas Legler in Diesbach. Senior Lieutenant (*Oberleutnant*) Thomas Legler (1782-1835) is a figure from Glarus history recognized for the role he played in the Napoleonic Wars. He served in the second corps of French Marshall Oudinot in Napoleon Bonaparte’s army which invaded Russia. Legler’s fame is linked to the 28 November 1812 Battle of Beresina and to the *Beresinalied* which he helped immortalize as a symbol of the sacrifices made by the Swiss mercenaries.



Napoleon’s army was retreating with the Russians in pursuit. Napoleon ordered the crossing of the presumeably frozen Beresina River. However the river had thawed and the bridges had been destroyed. Of the originally 8,000 men of the four Swiss regiments, about 1,300 were left by the time the retreating army reached the Beresina River. The Russians pressed back the Swiss vanguard, trying to force them back into the river. Only 300 Swiss survived the day.



Thomas Legler’s birthplace was built in 1736 by his grandparents David Legler (1695-1763) and Anna (Hefti) Legler (1697-1771). In addition to being Thomas Legler’s grandparents, these people were direct ancestors of early New Glarus residents Regula Legler (Mrs. Heinrich Hefty), Anna Legler (Mrs. Charles R. Marty) and Margaretha Wichser (Mrs. Melchior Klassy). And thus this well-preserved chalet with its original *Kachelofen* (tile stove) is an ancestral home of several New Glarus area people including Jim Kundert, Butch Alderman, and Roger Klassy.

The Hitz Family and some Notable American Connections

The Swiss family name Hitz, a name often associated with Canton Graubünden’s Prättigau Valley, does not have strong New Glarus or “old” Glarus connections. There was a Menga Hitz, born in Malans, Graubünden who married a Nicholas Wild of Schwanden, Canton Glarus and it appears they (or their children) lived in the New Glarus area many years ago. In Madison, Wisconsin there was an Elsbeth Hitz, born in Seewis, Graubünden (near Malans) who married German immigrant and blacksmith Johann Jacob Reiner. The Reiner home was the first in Madison to celebrate Christmas with a Christmas tree in 1848. (The Glarner name Heitz is still found in Green County. But Heitz, while similar in spelling to Hitz, is unrelated.)

But another Hitz family from Canton Graubünden has made an important impact upon American history. Johannes Hitz and his wife Anna née Kohler were natives of Klosters, Canton Graubünden. They immigrated to Washington, D. C. where Johannes Hitz later served as Swiss Consul General. Anna was known as “Mother Hitz” in recognition of her tireless devotion for the relief and comfort of Union troops during the Civil War. Their son, John Hitz, also served as Swiss Counsel General in the late 1800s. John Hitz’s daughter Gertrude Hitz married Alfred E. Burton. Their son, Harold Hitz Burton (1888-1964), graduated from Harvard Law School, served as a mayor of Cleveland, OH, and later served in the U.S. Senate. In 1945, Harold Hitz Burton (a Republican) was nominated to the U. S. Supreme Court by President Harry S. Truman (a Democrat). Burton served on the U.S.’s highest court until his retirement in 1958.

The name of one more Hitz descendent is intimately connected with another famed government institution – the FBI. This descendent was none other than J. Edgar Hoover. Hoover’s mother was born Anna Maria Scheitlin, the daughter of Jacob Scheitlin of St. Gallen and Margaretha Hitz of Klosters. Margaretha was the daughter of Johannes and Anna Hitz mentioned above. This made Hoover a second cousin to Supreme Court Associate Justice Burton – both great-grandsons of Johann and Anna (Kohler) Hitz.

Samuel Luchsinger

An 1854 immigrant to New Glarus was Samuel Luchsinger (1825-1914). He was a native of Schwanden, Canton Glarus. Samuel's journey from Switzerland to America did not take 8 weeks or 8 months but 8 years. He came by way of Christiania (Oslo), Norway.

Samuel was first married to Anastasia Tschudi. They immigrated to Norway around 1846. It was in Norway where their daughter Anna Katharina was born in 1851. In 1854 the family then left Norway and came to New Glarus. Shortly after they arrived here Anastasia died. In 1856 Samuel married Anna Dürst (daughter of Niklaus Dürst whose headstone is in the museum's cemetery) and they had three sons – Henry, Niklaus and Waldo. Wife Anna died in 1882 and Samuel married for a third time. His last wife was Regula Fluri, also a native of Schwanden, and they had son Samuel J. born in 1884. (Photo of Samuel Luchsinger courtesy of Lennys Luchsinger and Kaye Gmur.)



Samuel's occupation evolved from a stone mason in early years to hotel proprietor. He is credited with building the stone Swiss Reformed Church (1858). A story circulated years later that the minister of the church had pronounced the stone church unsafe and a new church should be constructed. Samuel witnessed the demolition of the historic stone church in 1899. But the "unsafe" stone walls built by Samuel required repeated blasts to bring them down. He is noted as a proprietor of the New Glarus Hotel and according to family sources built the old hotel (which burned in 1972) located east of the Little Sugar River.

Samuel's daughter, Anna Katharina, married Joachim Klassy and they farmed in the Glarner settlement near Renwick, IA. Son Henry was a New Glarus furniture dealer. Son Nik married Amalia Haegele – one of the Haegele triplets – and after her early death married Martha Pagel. Son Waldo lived in Janesville where he worked for the railroad. And youngest son Samuel J. became a lawyer and municipal judge in Oshkosh. Judge Luchsinger was reportedly "the toughest traffic judge in Wisconsin".

Samuel's grandsons and namesakes included Samuel H. Luchsinger who was a New Glarus cigar maker and photographer, Samuel N. Luchsinger who was the father of Willis Luchsinger of New Glarus, and Samuel J. Luchsinger a retired Watertown, Wisconsin jeweler.

The late Samuel N. and Elizabeth (Elmer) Luchsinger were generous benefactors to the New Glarus Historical Society having donated treasured articles of local interest from the Luchsinger, Elmer, and Eichelkraut families. Among their donations is the handsome portrait of Samuel Luchsinger which can still be viewed in the museum's store/collectables building.

The Luchsinger Coat of Arms

The Luchsinger Coat of Arms portrays the lynx -- in German *Luchs*. The depiction of this animal may imply the derivation of the Luchsinger name from an association with the lynx. But like the Marti coat of arms which depicts a marten and the Ott shield which depicts an otter, there is no such etymological link between these surnames and these animals. Rather the names Marti, Ott and Luchsinger are derivations of the names Martin, Otto and Lux. (In Latin, *lux* means light; the name Lucius was derived from the Latin word *lux*.)

Luchsingers in New Glarus

There were several branches of Luchsinger families who immigrated to New Glarus and the Green County area. They were primarily from the Canton Glarus villages of Schwanden and Engi. There were also local people with Luchsinger connections from the village of Bilten, Canton Glarus. Luchsinger families emigrated from Switzerland to many other areas of the United States including New York, Kentucky, California, Nevada, Iowa, Minnesota and Missouri (see story on back) as recorded by the 1880 census.

In addition to Samuel Luchsinger mentioned above, other Luchsinger immigrants in New Glarus included Johannes and Barbara (Wild) Luchsinger also from Schwanden. They arrived in New Glarus after living in Syracuse, NY and Philadelphia, PA for a number of years. There was also Thomas and Elisabeth (Stalder) Luchsinger and their son and daughter-in-law Christian and Margaretha (Wild) Luchsinger and family who came here in 1852-3. Christian was a watchmaker (*Uhrmacher*) by trade and also served as Town Clerk and Justice of the Peace. Christian fought in the Civil War as did his son Thomas. There was Fridolin Luchsinger who lived here around the time of the Civil War and enlisted to become part of the famed Iron Brigade. He married Rosina Hefti and they later homesteaded in Platte County, Nebraska. Other immigrant Luchsingers in the area included Jacob and Katharina (Marti) Luchsinger, Jacob and Elisabeth (Luchsinger) Luchsinger, Sebastian and Sybilla (Knobel) Luchsinger, Fred and Euphemia (Marti) Luchsinger, Balthasar and Sybilla (Schmid) Luchsinger, and Samuel and Verena (Hefti) Luchsinger.

Around 1860, three Luchsinger families lived on the same "downtown" block in New Glarus. Markus Luchsinger, credited as New Glarus' first blacksmith, lived in frame building at the northeast corner of First Street and 6th Avenue (where the Maple Leaf Cheese shop is today). Marcus married original colonist Regula Legler. They later moved to the Berne, MN settlement where they died and are buried. Thomas and Elisabeth Luchsinger lived in a small house which was located at approximately 19 5th Avenue (where the 5th Avenue Shops are located). And Samuel Luchsinger the stone mason lived in a house at approximately 513 Railroad Street (the current site of the cobbler shop).

Family and Local History Documents and Photographs

Family historians are fortunate to possess or have access to archival material such as documents, certificates and photographs which belonged to ancestors. The New Glarus Historical Society has a collection of historic photographs and documents which are sadly underutilized by those interested in history. A few years ago three volunteers – Louann Bodenmann, Carlton Zentner and Bob Elmer – took the initiative to index the unsorted documents in our archives. These documents are now indexed by year and by the names associated with the document. To properly store these historical documents, they were placed in acid-free archival storage boxes. Most of these documents are related to land ownership and often contain the actual signatures of our ancestors and others in the community.

Duane Freitag, while researching early land ownership, discovered one 1855 document which contained the signatures of four early community leaders -- Joshua Wild, J. J. Tschudy, Fridolin Egger and Fridolin Streiff. And by using the archive index, Robert Kohls, a family historian researching the Constantine and Barbara (Dürst) Haegele family of New Glarus, recently learned that there are five original documents in the New Glarus collection associated with the Haegeles – the earliest dating from 1861.

A Document Tells Many Stories: Luchsinger Travel Contract

The Johann Heinrich and Margreth (Legler) Luchsinger family left Luchsingen, Canton Glarus in 1859 bound for DeKalb County, Missouri where they became farmers. The voyage contract which they executed with the Andreas Zwilchenbart Company of Basel has survived. This single travel document tells many stories – names and ages of the family members, cost of the voyage, required provisions for the voyage, restrictions on who was permitted travel to America, and what was expected of the immigrants' behavior while at sea. Here are some interesting highlights from this contract:

The contract fee included transportation from Basel via Le Havre (France) to New York (or other U.S. seaports). The Basel to Le Havre segment was via rail and the Atlantic crossing (for this contract) was via a three-mast sailing ship. Each passenger over 10 years was allowed 200 pounds of baggage free of charge. Meals were provided at the seaport until the actual departure. Breakfast consisted of bread and coffee with milk and sugar. Lunch and dinner were a soup, meat and vegetables.

It was directed that “Voyages themselves shall undertake to purchase and supply the necessary . . . provisions according to the relevant embarkation port”. For those traveling to New York via Le Havre (often a six or seven week ocean journey), the requisite supplies were 30 pounds of Zwieback, 70 pounds of potatoes or legumes, 5 pounds of rice, 4 pounds of peas, 10 pounds of flour, 8 pounds of salted pork (without bones) or bacon, 7 pounds of salted beef (without bones), 3 pounds of butter, 1.5 pounds of coffee, 2.5 pounds of brown sugar, 2 pounds of salt, and 1 liter of vinegar. Travel to New Orleans required “relatively more” of the aforementioned supplies. Packing supplies, cookware, and bedclothes for the sea voyage were the responsibility of the traveler. Travelers were responsible for labeling all of their baggage with the owner's name and destination, and once the beds were assigned, the bed number. Zwilchenbart

and Company provided sweet water, wood, light, room in the kitchen for cooking, a bed, and a pharmacy if necessary. Travelers could remain on the ship 48 hours upon arrival in America. The agent would pay the traveler for any lost baggage, assuming the baggage had been properly delivered and labeled.



Transport was denied those emigrants not in possession of a legal passport to America. (This section of the contract was in boldface type.) These passes were issued by the police authority of the home canton. Furthermore, transport was not permitted for the following persons – idiots, sleepwalkers, lunatics or those in any way mentally weak, one-eyed, blind, deaf or dumb; infirm, lame, mutilated or in any way crippled person; persons who have exceed the sixtieth year of live,

as well as children under thirteen years who are not under the protection of relatives; completely penniless persons who do not possess the necessary means upon arrival in America to move to the inner regions of the country.

The Ship's Rules clearly spelled out the expected behavior while on the seas. Beds were to be assigned and not taken possession of on one's own authority. Large trunks went into the ship's cellar along with the potatoes, ship's bread and wine. When at sea, the cellar would be opened so that each passenger could access any necessary items. Valuables and weapons were to be handed over to the Captain. Required food rations needed to be on board 12 hours prior to embarkation. Strict cleanliness was to be observed and beds were to be kept tidy. Sweet water was to be used for cooking and drinking and not for washing or cleaning. Smoking was permitted while at sea, only on the top deck and only from covered pipes. Lights were lit between decks only with the Captain's permission and never without a lantern. Disputes and trade among the passengers were to be avoided. It was forbidden to give the crew members wine or other beverages. Drunkenness may cause one's liquor to be locked up during the voyage. These rules were issued for the “safety, comfort and health” of the passengers.

Embarkation from the German port of Bremen required no provisions since cooked food was served to emigrants. The menu consisted of meat with pudding and potatoes on Sunday, bacon and peas or beans with potatoes on Mondays, meat or bacon and peas or beans with potatoes on Tuesdays, bacon and sauerkraut with potatoes on Wednesdays, rice or barley with plums and meat on Thursdays, a repeat of the Tuesday menu on Fridays, and meat and rice soup or oat porridge with potatoes on Saturdays. Additionally, each traveler was given 3 pounds of black bread, 2 pounds of white bread and 3/8 pound butter each week.