

Family History Notes

Summer, 2008

Ancestors in the Swiss Reformation and the Anabaptist Movement

Several historical figures who played prominent roles in either the Swiss Reformation and/or the Anabaptist movement appear to be direct ancestors of numerous New Glarus families. These men were Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575), Hans Rudolf Lavater (1491-1557) and his son Ludwig Lavater (1527-1586), and Jacob Grebel (~1460-1526) and his son Conrad Grebel (~1498-1526). According to genealogical information provided by Raphael Ackermann of Zurich, all have direct descendants among New Glarus residents past and present through brothers Johann Heinrich Elmer (1737-1780) and Johann Balthasar Elmer (1743-1815) of Elm, Canton Glarus. These Elmer brothers came by their historic Zurich roots via their grandfather Johann Balthasar Zwingli (1689-1757). Zwingli, a native of Canton Zurich, was the minister of Elm's Reformed church from 1710 to 1737. Reverend Zwingli was the descendent of Bullinger, Lavater and Grebel. Additionally, he was the direct descendent of Niklaus Zwingli, the brother of reformer Ulrich Zwingli.

Area families with direct links to these historic figures include the descendants of Wernet and Anna Maria (Elmer) Elmer, Niklaus and Verena (Elmer) Elmer, Albrecht and Barbara (Hauser) Elmer, Johann Ulrich and Anna (Geiger) Rhyner, Paulus and Margaret (Zentner) Schneider, and Niklaus and Anna Maria (Elmer) Hefty.

Heinrich Bullinger (pictured below left) was Ulrich Zwingli's successor (*der Nachfolger*) at the Zurich *Grossmünster*. Bullinger was born in Bremgarten, the fifth son of parish priest Heinrich Bullinger and Anna Wiederkehr his common-law wife. Church celibacy laws were loosely enforced and such clerical "marriages" were tolerated. The Bullinger home still stands at 22 Marktgasse in Bremgarten. Heinrich Bullinger (the son) was educated in Emmerich (then in the Duchy of Cleves; now in the Netherlands) and the University of Cologne. While a student, he became acquainted with the teachings of Luther, Melancthon, and then Zwingli. Soon he renounced his intention of becoming a Carthusian monk and in 1528 became a parish minister.



After Zwingli's death at Kappel (1531), Bullinger, was elevated to succeed Zwingli in Zurich and served in that capacity until his own death in 1575. In 1529 there were two Bullinger marriages. Heinrich Bullinger (the son) married a former nun, Anna Adlischwiler, and they were to become the parents of 11 children (including Margaretha: see below). Heinrich Bullinger (the father) accepted the Reformed faith and married his common-law wife of 40 years.

There exist about 12,000 letters from and to Bullinger, the most extensive correspondence preserved from Reformation times. Bullinger was a personal friend and advisor of many leading personalities of the reformation era. He corresponded with Reformed, Anglican, and Lutheran, theologians, as well as with King Henry VIII, King Edward VI, and Queen Elizabeth I of England, Lady Jane Grey, King Christian II of Denmark and Philipp I Landgrave of Hesse.

Hans Rudolf Lavater was said to have been the most powerful man in Zurich. His mother's family, the Kamblis, led the Tanner's Guild (*Zunft zur Gerwe*), one of the 14 medieval guilds of Zurich. In 1525 Lavater was named *Landvogt* at the Kyburg Castle near Winterthur.¹ While

serving as the *Kyburger Landvogt*, Lavater had 15th century religious murals plastered over in keeping with Reformation zeal to minimize church decoration. Today the castle has been completely restored (including the murals) and is a popular museum. Lavater was commander at the second battle of Kappel in 1531. He led a contingent of Zurich forces to Kappel on 11 October 1531. Ulrich Zwingli accompanied the forces as chaplain and was killed that same day. These Zurich troops arrived mid-afternoon and were quickly defeated by the forces of the Catholic cantons. Despite Lavater's leadership failures associated with Kappel, he later went on to become the mayor of Zurich in 1544 and served until his death. Hans Rudolf Lavater's son **Ludwig Lavater** (pictured right) was born at Kyburg and married Margarethe Bullinger the daughter of Heinrich Bullinger. Ludwig, a clergyman, was the pre-eminent authority on ghosts, spirits and angels of his day. His work, *Das Gespensterbuch* (1569) was translated into English in 1572 with the title *Of Ghostes and Spirites walking by Nyght, and of strange noyses, crackes and sundry forewarnings* -- the first book in English to discuss the subject of poltergeists.



Felix Lavater, the son of Ludwig and Margarete (Bullinger) Lavater, married Regula Grebel. Regula was the granddaughter of Conrad Grebel. **Conrad Grebel** was another learned man of his time having studied at universities in Basel, Vienna and Paris. He has come to be known as "the Father of the Anabaptists". Grebel lived a carefree life as a student but that

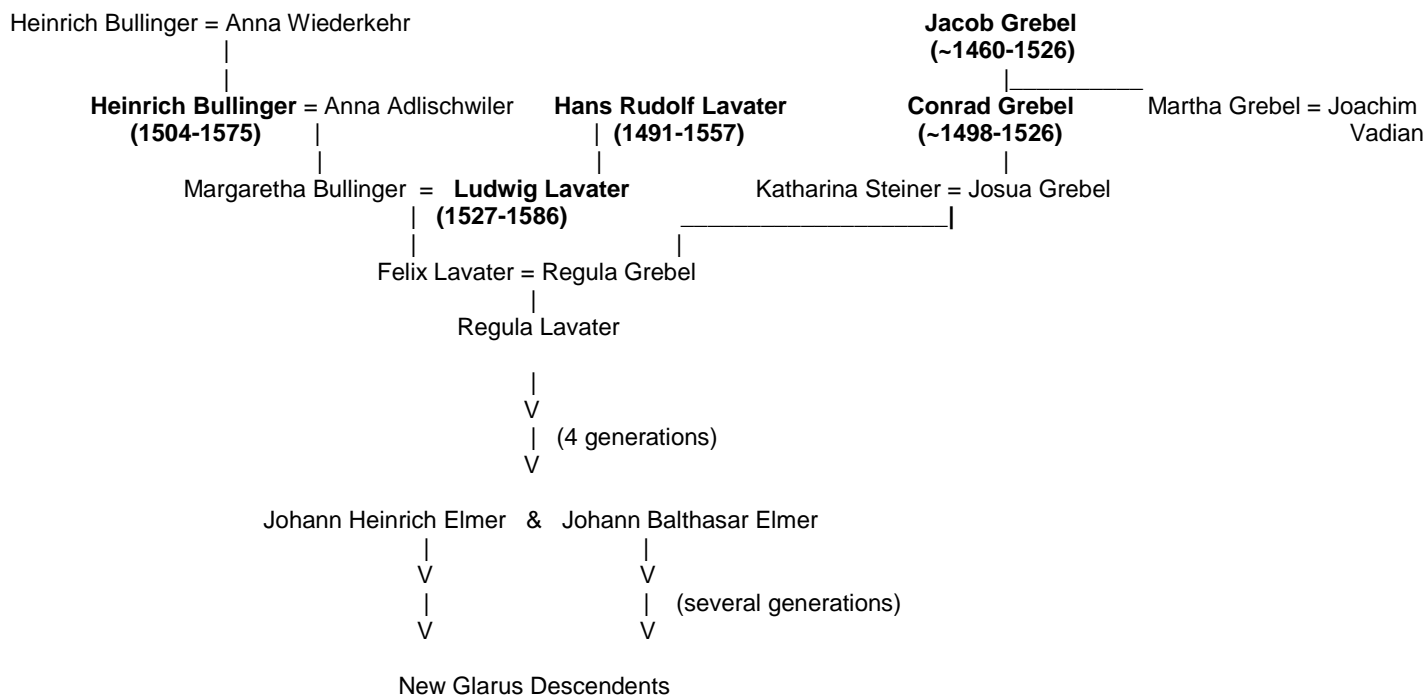
¹ In the 12th and 13th centuries, the historic Kyburg Castle was the home to the influential Counts of Kyburg. When Kyburg dynasty died out in 1264 the castle was inherited by the Habsburg dynasty. In 1424 Kyburg Castle was acquired by Canton Zurich.

changed when he returned to Switzerland in 1520 and became an enthusiastic student and ardent supporter of Ulrich Zwingli. But within a few years Grebel was challenging Zwingli's views particularly those (continued on back)

supportive of church/government alliances and the establishment of state religions. Grebel felt matters of religions should be outside the realms of government control such as those of Zurich's city council. Another core disagreement between Grebel and Zwingli involved baptism. Grebel and others believed infant baptism invalid since a newborn could not understand the implications of Christ's teachings. The Reformed movement supported infant baptism as did the Roman Catholic Church.

On 21 January 1525 Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz, and Georg Blaurock baptized each other (the first adult baptisms in Reformation times) and began a new church set apart from the state. They called themselves the Swiss Brethren but were quickly nicknamed the *Wiedertäufer* or Anabaptists -- meaning rebaptized since they all had been baptized as infants and again as adults. The Mennonites, Amish, and Hutterites can trace their origins to the Anabaptist movement and the historic 1525 baptisms by Conrad Grebel and his fellow Swiss Brethren. A fervent missionary zeal had overtaken the Anabaptists, much to the displeasure of Reformers and their allied city and cantonal officials. Soon Zurich's city council forbade the Anabaptists from meeting, teaching or socializing. The persecution of the Anabaptists commenced. Special police forces known as the *Täuferjäger* (Anabaptist Hunters) were formed. The punishment in Zurich for adult baptism was drowning in the Limmat River – an ironic death by a “third baptism”. Felix Manz was drowned in 1527 -- the first casualty of the Zurich edict. Two years later Georg Blaurock was burned at the stake in Klausen in the Tyrol. Conrad Grebel had been imprisoned but escaped. He removed himself to less hostile environs of Maienfeld, Canton Graubunden. But Grebel died shortly thereafter of the plague in 1526, likely cheating the Zwingli forces of another victim. Grebel's friend and brother-in-law was Joachim Vadian (1484-1551) of St. Gallen, another esteemed Swiss intellectual from that period. (Grebel and Vadian had climbed the Pilatus together in 1518.) Despite his family connection to Grebel, Vadian rejected the Anabaptists but embraced the Reformation and was a correspondent and ally of Zwingli.

Jacob Grebel, Conrad's father and Vadian's father-in-law, was a powerful political figure in Zurich and a Zwingli supporter. While Jacob did not espouse his son's Anabaptist beliefs, he led a minority in the Zurich Council arguing for religious tolerance. Zwingli strongly opposed the accommodation of any competing religious practices, and soon saw Jacob Grebel as a potential enemy. The Zwingli forces had Jacob Grebel sentenced on spurious charges. Jacob Grebel was beheaded at Zurich's fish market on 30 October 1526, a victim of the complexities of religious, political and personal relationships of those transformational Reformation times.



Saint Felix and Saint Regula

Felix and Regula are the patron saints of Zurich. Over the centuries the names Felix and Regula were commonly used in Glarus and other Swiss Cantons as evidenced by husband and wife Felix Lavater and Regula Grebel (see above). Saints Felix and Regula were siblings who were born in the 3rd Century. According to legend they lived in the Valais and had converted to Christianity. Under threat of execution, Felix, Regula along with their servant Exuperantius attempted an escape traveling via Glarus to Zurich where they were all caught and decapitated. Reminiscent of the legend of Saint Denis in Paris, the headless bodies picked up their heads and walked to their intended burial site. At the gravesite, they dug their own graves and interred themselves. Zurich's *Wasserkirche* was built at the site of their execution and the nearby *Grossmünster* was built at the location of their graves. An account of Felix and Regula from the year 820 mentions *Glarona* – the first mention of what is now known as Glarus.

A Harsh Assessment

"The American Glarnese have apparently little or no appreciation for genealogy and precious little sense of family. Their goal is the DOLLAR!" - Martin Baumgartner, a teacher and family history lecturer from Engi, Canton Glarus (circa 1923)

A Link to Napoleonic History

The cemetery at the Swiss Historical Village contain two links to the time of Napoleon Bonaparte's defeat, Switzerland's breach of its policy of neutrality, and the last engagement of Swiss troops outside of Switzerland's borders. Two simple tombstones -- those of Rachel (Schneider) Geiger (1794-1868) and Joshua Wild (1813-1878) -- provide these links. In 1813 Rachel was married in Elm, Canton Glarus to Jacob Geiger (1791-1856) and Jacob was a member of 4th Company of the Glarner Battalion which took part in the 1815 siege of Hüningen. Also in the Glarner Battalion was Hilarius Wild (1789-1823) the father of Joshua.

Hüningen (Huningue in French) is on French soil immediately north of Basel -- a strategic location on the Rhine River near the point where the borders of France, Switzerland and Germany meet. Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo in June of 1815, yet the French fortress of Hüningen and its 135 soldiers remained loyal to the empire and swore not to capitulate. The Swiss and Austrians, some 25,000 strong, laid siege to the fortress and the French surrendered on 26 August 1815. Other men who were in the Glarner Battalion and who have local descendents include Othmar Knobel, David Kundert and Heinrich Aebli.

Zimmermann/Zimmerman Families from various Villages and Cantons

If you are Swiss and have a name like Zimmerman, you may have difficulty determining your *heimatort* or *bürgerort* — your family's village of origin. The Zimmermann name is found throughout the various cantons of German-speaking Switzerland. Doing a search using the *Familiennamenbuch der Schweiz* (Swiss Book of Family Names) and you will learn there are 100 different Swiss villages where the name Zimmermann or Zimmerman occurs.

The earliest Zimmermanns in New Glarus were from Schwändi, Canton Glarus where all the Zimmermanns descend from *Stammvater* Heinrich Zimmermann (1592-1672) and his third wife Margreth Knobel. This family typically spelled their name with a double "n"



(see family crest to the left). Gabriel Zimmermann of Schwändi was one of the earliest to settle here. Gabriel was married twice – first to Katharina Dürst and after her early death he married Anna Maria Streiff (the widow of George Streiff). David and Verena (Schiesser) Zimmermann were also early settlers. They had three sons – David, Henry and Fridolin (or Frederick) – and each son fought in the Civil War. Later immigrants from Schwändi included Jacob and Rosina (Zimmermann) Zimmermann who were 1868 immigrants to the Town of Jordan, and the Zimmerman sisters Elsbeth (Mrs. Fridolin Jenny) and Anna (Mrs. Jacob Schiesser). Elsbeth was the mother of the late Sally Ott and Anna was the grandmother of Elda Schiesser.

Another area Zimmerman family originated in Wattenwil, Canton Bern. Jacob and Elisabetha (Krebs) Zimmerman (one "n") were born and married in Canton Bern then immigrated to Ohio. Their daughter Louisa Zimmerman (Mrs. Alexander Tschabold) was said to have been born in a covered wagon en route from Ohio to Wisconsin in 1856. Jacob and Elisabetha had at least seven children when Elisabetha died. Jacob Zimmerman then married Anna Barbara Kaderli and they had several more children. The Zimmerman children (from both marriages) included Emma (Mrs. John Theiler), Margareth (Mrs. Christian Itten), Katharina (Mrs. Rudolf Benkert) Albert Zimmerman

(married Anna Blumer) and Jacob (married to Therese Hefti and after her death to Anna Disch).

Yet another Zimmerman family line came from the Canton Schaffhausen. Johann Conrad Zimmerman was an early New Glarus teacher, having taught school in the log church from 1855 to 1859. He married Maria Jenny, daughter of Peter Jenny-Elmer. Johann Conrad's brother Johannes Zimmerman was the second minister of the New Glarus Swiss Reformed Church.

A 1911 immigrant from Canton Glarus was Jacob Zimmermann (father of Walter). A 1914 immigrant from Ennenda, Canton Glarus was 19 year old Anna Zimmerman. The year following her arrival Anna married David Kundert. And a 1929 Swiss immigrant to the area was Benedict (Ben) Zimmerman who was born in the Canton St. Gallen village of Vilters near Sargans. Ben Zimmerman was a cheese maker and also worked for the Pet Milk Company.

J. J. Kubly-Müller

Dana Durst Lawrence wrote to a family researcher "You are lucky to be able to trace your roots to the Canton of Glarus. Fortunately for every researcher with roots in (Canton) Glarus, J. Kubly-Müller produced a huge compendium of all the Glarner families. It is an exhaustive work, and goes back to the beginning of written records for each name. If you can connect with an ancestor who lived in (Canton) Glarus, you will be able to look up your family in Kubly-Müller." Indeed the books which are housed in the *Landesarchiv des Kantons Glarus* are the works of Johann Jacob Kubly-Müller (1850-1933) and these seminal works have been used by countless family historians. Kubly-Müller's work is based upon the village and church records found throughout the canton which typically date to the mid-1500s. His books are handwritten in German *Schrift* but are easy to use provided you know the Canton Glarus village where your ancestors lived. Permission to view these books is now required due to increased privacy concerns in Switzerland.

Kubly-Müller was the son of Kaspar and Susanna (Heer) Kubli. This Kubli family branch has been connected with the village of Netstal for centuries and is not linked to the Kubli families who originated from the villages of Elm and Matt. (The Sernftal Kublis were originally named Zopfi – *Kubli gennant Zopfi*.) But as is usually the case with Canton Glarus genealogy there are familial links between Kubly-Müller and New Glarus. His grandfather's first cousins, Fridolin Hefti and Barbara (Hefti) Becker, were original settlers of New Glarus in 1845.

A Family Movie

For Anita Blumer of Engi, Canton Glarus, her quest for family history resulted in a documentary movie. Her movie is about Fridolin Blumer (1893-1969) of Engi, a great uncle of Anita's. Fridolin (Fritz) Blumer immigrated to America in 1913. He settled near Monticello, WI where he was a farm worker for the Zumkehr and ZumBrunnen families. A couple of years later Fritz left Wisconsin bound for the St. Louis area. Fritz occasionally wrote postcards to his family back in Switzerland, but after receiving a card from St. Louis, the family never heard from Fritz again. They hoped he was alive, yet feared he was possibly dead.

What actually became of Fritz Blumer is the subject of Anita's movie. Fritz had a strong sense of independence and adventure. He left for the gold mines of Alaska where Fritz Blumer reinvented himself as Jack V. Koby, a Swiss native from Bürglen, Canton Uri (Wilhelm Tell's hometown!). In Alaska, Koby became well known as a skilled guide, mountain climber and explorer, particularly known for his exploration of the massive Taku Glacier. Koby married and raised a family of three children in various remote places in Alaska. All the time Koby never communicated with his Blumer kin, nor did he speak to his wife and children of his family back in Switzerland. While Koby was alive, his wife and children never knew his true identity.

The documentary movie, which debuted in Switzerland, is simply entitled "Jack V. Koby", and contains interviews with Koby's children and grandchildren, and people who knew him in Alaska. Blumer relatives still living in Engi were interviewed speaking their particular Glarner dialect. And Dennis Streiff of New Glarus is featured early in the film discussing how Swiss immigrants like Blumer frequently came to the New Glarus area to find work on farms and cheese factories.

After Koby's death in 1969, the Koby children found the name Fridolin Blumer on a document and eventually learned the true identity of their father and his birth in Engi. They traveled there and visited the relatives they never knew existed and the Engi relatives learned of the mysterious life of a mysterious uncle.

Two Cousins: Contrasting Lives in 1850

Anna Maria (Zweifel) Schindler (1804-1876) and her first cousin Elisabeth (Marti) Mann (1811-1891) were both granddaughters of Peter and Elisabeth (Elmer) Marti of Glarus, Switzerland. In 1850, these two cousins lived very different lives.



Anna Maria was a pioneer. She was married to Balthasar Schindler and had given birth to nine children. The Schindlers immigrated to America in the late 1840s. In 1850 they were living in New Glarus, a small frontier settlement only five years old. And based on what we know of the construction of that time, the Schindlers were presumably living in a primitive log cabin or hut of some sort. (The first frame house was said to have been built here in 1851.) The Schindler family moved west since family members are found in California and Oregon as early as 1860 and Anna Maria is recorded as being buried near Sacramento.

Across the Atlantic in Lübeck, Germany lived Anna Maria's cousin Elisabeth. Elisabeth was the daughter of a wealthy Lübeck grain merchant, Glarus-born Heinrich Marti. She married patrician Johann Siegmund Mann. In 1841 they purchased one of the finest homes in Lübeck located at 4 Mengstrasse. Elisabeth and Johann Siegmund were the grandparents of 1929 Nobel Laureate Thomas Mann. Thomas Mann immortalized the house of his grandparents in his novel *Buddenbrooks*. Today the Mann Family's rococo-gabled townhouse (pictured) is known as the *Buddenbrookhaus* and is a Lübeck landmark.



Names of our Ancestors: The Three Kings

Saints were a common source of names for Glarner children, but other Biblical names were used such as those of the Three Kings – also known as the Magi or Wise Men – Melchior, Balthasar and Kaspar. It was the Magi who brought the gifts to present to the baby Jesus. Melchior, King of Arabia brought gold; Balthasar, King of Ethiopia brought frankincense; and Kaspar, King of Tarsus brought myrrh. These three male names were very commonly used in Glarner families and were widely found in early New Glarus.

Numerous New Glarus area residents bore the names of the Three Kings. Those with the name Melchior included men with various surnames such as Schmid, Klassy, Marty, Aebli, Figi, Hoesly, Schlittler, Baumgartner, Schiesser, Jenny, and Duerst. Those having the name Balthasar (commonly known as Baltz) included surnames such as Streiff, Schindler, Hoesly, Disch, Hefty, Luchsinger and Kundert. And those having the name Kaspar (Caspar) included surnames such as Zentner, Rhyner, Zwicky, Altmann, Hefty, Elmer, Blum, Kundert, Becker, Disch, Knobel, and Luchsinger. To find the names Melchior, Balthasar and Kaspar in New Glarus today, a visit to the cemeteries may be required! Using time-honored names such as these is one tradition New Glarus has not maintained.

According to Catholic tradition, the bones of the Magi are found in the Cologne (Germany) Cathedral's Shrine of the Three Kings (*Dreikönigsschrein*) in an ornate gold reliquary. These relics were brought to Cologne by the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa in 1164. Even today, the coat of arms of Cologne bears three gold crowns symbolizing Melchior, Balthasar and Kaspar.

Will Rogers . . .

. . . reflecting on his Native American heritage -- "My ancestors didn't come over on the *Mayflower*, but they met the boat."

