

Family History Notes

Fall, 2009

In Three Generations

When touring the Swiss Historical Village Museum, visitors are shown the earliest remaining gravestones from the pioneer cemetery. Among the forty-some original markers is that of Niklaus Dürst (1806-1869) of Diesbach, Canton Glarus. The Niklaus and Anna Maria (Streiff) Dürst family arrived in New Glarus in 1846 – one of the first families to settle here after the arrival of the original group the previous year. Niklaus and family followed his three sisters and brothers-in-law who were in the original 1845 group (Anna and George Legler; Magdalena and Balthasar Dürst; and Margareth and Fridolin Hoesli). The Dürst family (spelled both Durst and Duerst in America) was large and in order to get ahead various members of the family went to work in the area. The oldest daughter, Magdalena Durst, was sent out for employment as a housemaid in Mineral Point. She became homesick and asked to return to New Glarus. Magdalena and her father agreed that she could come home after she had worked long enough (at 50 cents per week) to purchase a team of oxen. But in 1847, Magdalena died in Mineral Point at age 16, never seeing her family again. The mother, Anna Maria (1809-1905), also worked outside the family home. She walked to Belleville (about 7 miles each way) to do housework, returning home in the evening with her pay -- a bag of meal.

The second oldest Durst son, Heinrich or Henry (1835-1903), was also sent out to work. At age of 11 Henry was hired out for a year at \$16 – enough to buy a yoke of steers for the family. For the next several years, Henry went to Madison where he worked in a livery. At age 16, Henry's entrepreneurial cleverness started to kick in. He and two others purchased a threshing machine on credit. At the end of the season, and just three days before the money was due, the thresher was paid off. Henry married New York-born Louisa Jackson, in 1861. They moved to Monroe in 1866 where Henry operated a store selling groceries and/or liquor. In 1878 he established a partnership (Durst & Hodges, and later Durst, Hodges & Knight) and by the 1890s Henry Durst's firm had become Monroe's largest clothier. Ironically, Henry himself did not have a pair of boots nor anything but homemade clothing until he was 23 years old.

Henry and Louisa Durst had several children, one of whom was William Arthur Durst born in 1870. In 1887, William Durst went to Minneapolis where he was engaged by Minnesota Loan and Trust. William started out as a bookkeeper and advanced through the ranks of the important banking house until he was elected President. William and his wife Clara became part of Minneapolis society. They lived on exclusive Lake of the Isles Boulevard in a neighborhood known for its stately homes. And in addition to his work and civic duties, William served on the Board of Governors of two prestigious private clubs -- Minneapolis Club and the Minikahda Club, serving as Vice President and then President of the latter. William A. Durst died in 1940 having achieved a status in life unlikely even imagined by his immigrant grandparents.

Old Swiss Months of the Year

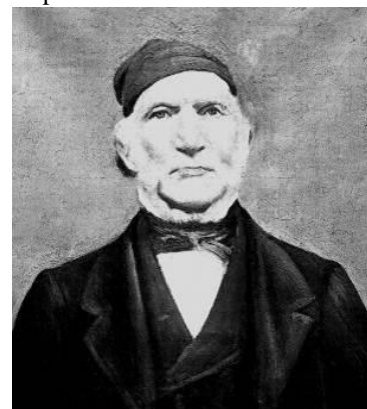
Occasionally old Swiss documents of a certain age will use some archaic terms for the months of the year. Here is a listing of these colorful terms (English – German – Old Swiss-German):

January	Januar	Estermonat; Jenner; Jänner	July	Juli	Heumonat
February	Februar	Hornung	August	August	Erntemonat; Augstmonat
March	März	Frühlingsmonat; Merz	September	September	Herbstmonat
April	April	Ostermonat	October	Oktober	Weinmonat
May	Mai	Wonnemonat	November	November	Wintermonat
June	Juni	Brachmonat	December	Dezember	Christmonat; Wolfmonat

Judge Niklaus Dürst Portrait Located in Madison

In 2003 the long-forgotten notebook of Judge Niklaus Dürst (1797-1874), held by the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS), was taken out of its archival hibernation. This handwritten notebook was carried by Judge Dürst on his 1845 trip to America to locate land for the New Glarus settlement. Once rediscovered, the notebook was transcribed and translated by Dr. Leo Schelbert of the University of Chicago and published in the Swiss American Historical Society's historical journal *Review* (June, 2005).

A descendent of Judge Dürst living in Pirmasens, Germany heard of the notebook publication and inquired about an oil portrait of the Judge donated to the WHS by her family in 1929 – the same family who had donated the Judge's notebook. The painting was located in archival storage. Once again an artifact linked with the founding of New Glarus has been sitting in Madison awaiting the eyes of those interested in history. (Dürst portrait at right; WHS #1942-281.)



Dürst is pictured wearing a *Züttelichappe* – a tasseled knit cap. This was a style often worn by the men of Glarus. On their way to New Glarus in August, 1845, the immigrant Glarner men “had their black knitted stocking caps pulled down over their uncombed heads” (observed by Heinrich Lienhard in Galena, IL). The knit cap can be seen today occasionally worn by Glarner farmers.

The Kubli Boys

For many, learning about our Canton Glarus heritage came in part from reading Herbert Kubly's books, most notably "At Large", "Native's Return", and "Switzerland" (in 1964 for Life World Library). In his Life World Library book on Switzerland, Chapter 8 is entitled "Enduring Ties with the Land" and Kubly took his readers to the summer alp high above the village of Elm occupied by Jakob Kubli and his two young sons Jakob and Heinrich. Here Kubly gave his readers a glimpse at the arduous life of alpine farmers. The young Kubli boys Jakob, 15, and Heinrich, 13, were photographed doing household duties, farm chores like hand-milking cows, and eating their simple breakfast of bread and cheese. It is hard to imagine that these "little" boys (assuming they are yet living) are now about 60 years old!

The Kubli boys had Elm blood through and through. Going back five generations the only family names found in their ancestry are Kubli, Elmer, Freitag, Zentner, Rhyner and Geiger – all typical Elm surnames. The boys' grandfather had three brothers and two sisters who immigrated to the New Glarus area in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. They were Werner and Anna Maria (Rhyner) Kubly, Balthasar and Maria (Rhyner) Kubli, Jost and Rahel (Kubli) Rhyner, Jacob and Barbara (Kubli) Rhyner and Heinrich Kubly. Heinrich Kubly, a bachelor, took his life in a barn near New Glarus. He died on the same day (2 March 1922) as Thomas Schmid who was the first child born in New Glarus. The Kubli boys also have one direct New Glarus connection -- their great-great-great grandmother was Rahel (Schneider) Geiger who immigrated to New Glarus as an old woman. Rahel died here in 1868 and was buried in the pioneer cemetery. Her tombstone is now in the museum cemetery.

Min Vater isch an Appenzeller: Appenzellers in New Glarus

Canton Appenzell (made up of the Catholic half-canton Appenzell Innerrhoden and the Protestant half-canton of Appenzell Ausserrhoden) is noted for its bucolic scenery, exquisite textiles, embroidery and lace, Appenzeller cheese, and a people steadfast to their traditions. The jovial Appenzellers are often the butt of Swiss jokes which make light of their rural nature and short stature.

A few years ago, the Swiss Consul Hermann Buff from Chicago visited the Swiss Historical Village. Buff, a native of Gais, Ausserrhoden, inquired whether Appenzellers had immigrated to New Glarus. As early as the 1850s, there have been Appenzellers living among the Glarners. The brothers Gustav and Arnold Alder of Herisau were among the earliest. Gustav built a store which later became the Wisconsin House, and which today houses the Lienhardt-Jeglum Realty. Gustav married Katharina Streiff and they later lived in Monroe. Arnold Alder married Maria Magdalena Germann and they later lived in Dodge County, MN.

The Rev. John Theodore Etter was an Appenzeller from Bühler who served the Swiss Reformed congregation from 1860 to 1897. Jacob Heim who married Rosa Barbara Blum was from Teufen. Jacob Bodenmann who married Sylvia Wurgler was from Speicher. The Frehner brothers, Conrad who married Katharina Schindler and Carl who married Nettie Jordi, were from the village of Urnäsch. Jake and John Wettach's parents were immigrants from Trogen and the parents of John's wife, Helen née Rechsteiner, were immigrants from the nearby villages of Reute and Oberegg. From Heiden came immigrant Rosina (Kaiser) Biegert, the great grandmother of Hedwig (Studer) Anderegg and the late Marilyn (Brunner) Berg. Numerous people were from the village of Herisau including Albert Schlöpfer who married Eva Tasher, Theodore Schiess who married Marianna Hefty, Emma (Zeller) Beutler who married the widower John W. Duerst, and Karl Mueller who married Belva Itten. Cheese maker Arnold Widmer of Herisau arrived here in 1915. He sent for an Appenzeller bride, Bertha Koller of Speicher, who arrived in 1919. The Widmer daughters, Margaret (Widmer) Wild and Dorothea (Widmer) Ingwell, were original members of the Edelweiss Stars singing group.

Perhaps the best known Appenzeller to arrive in New Glarus was Arnold W. Wieser, a native of Wolfhalden. Wieser arrived here by chance, hungry and nearly penniless one day in 1935. But shortly after his arrival in New Glarus, Wieser had been contracted to operate the floundering *Stickererei* (embroidery factory) which had been built the previous decade. Through hard work and business savvy, Wieser eventually bought the business and made it a success. The laces and embroideries made on Wieser's massive Schiffli looms were sought after especially by brides-to-be. And Wieser, a cigar-smoking and sometimes gruff character, became renowned as one of the most unlikely bridal consultants in the Midwest.

Foods of our Ancestors

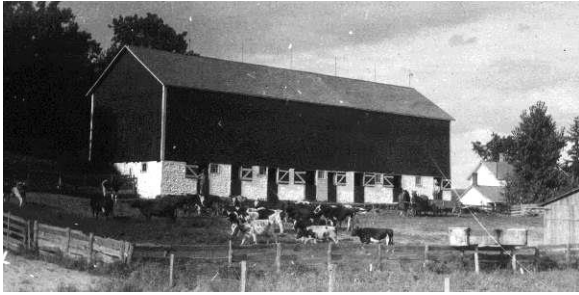
Call it corn meal mush, polenta, *Duerkemuäs*, or grits, these dishes are all basically corn meal boiled in water and/or milk and eaten as a porridge. When let to solidify, it can be cut into pieces and browned in butter. But whatever method of preparation is used or whatever it is called, all these culinary variations were all originally peasant food. Perhaps polenta has crossed over to high-end restaurants, but its roots remain humble corn meal, a staple of our pioneer ancestors.

But unless we have Native American blood, corn was not a staple prior to Christopher Columbus. Columbus brought the first corn back to the "old world" and its cultivation spread slowly. Corn was raised in Andalusia (Spain) by 1524 and records show corn was grown in Carinthia (Austria) in the mid-1500s. Corn cultivation spread to the Middle East and it was thought that the origin of corn in the alpine regions had come from the Balkans and Turkey. This novel grain even took on the name *Türkenkorn* (Turkish grain) in Germanic regions. And in Swiss dialect maize is still known as *Türgg* or *Türgge* (i.e. *Türken* or Turkish).

The ubiquity of corn in pioneer diets brings to mind corn bread, Johnny cakes, hoe cakes, and hushpuppies. In New England, corn meal was cooked with cream and molasses to make a dessert – Indian pudding. In the south, grits are a breakfast favorite. And in Mexico, corn was treated with alkali to create hominy. In New Glarus, corn meal mush was known as *Duerk* or *Duerkemuäs* – *Duerk* being an alternate spelling of the phonetically similar word *Türgg*. *Muäs* refers to mush, puree or sauce as found in the word *Öpfelmuäs* (applesauce). *Duerkemuäs* can be prepared by slowly simmering the corn meal in milk, butter and a touch of salt. It can be served with natural sweeteners like honey or maple syrup.

New Glarus Tornado of 1929

New Glarus native Don F. Schneider, now of Ankeny, IA, emailed the following two photographs taken before and after the 1929 tornado (written about in the Summer 2009 issue). This was the farm of Don's grandparents Jost (Joseph) and Amelia (Kundert) Becker and later the farm of Don's parents John B. and Amelia Leona (Becker) Schneider. The farm is located on County O about 3 miles north of New Glarus (just before the County U turnoff). The handsome barn was flattened by the tornado and the damage drew a crowd of about 2 dozen curious onlookers.



The Hiltons of Hilton Lane

Hilton Lane lies southwest of New Glarus in Section 5 of the Town of Washington. The John and Lucinda (Williams) Hilton family came from Maine and settled here in the 1850s. The father, John Hilton, was a veteran of the War of 1812. The Hiltons purchased land in the extreme northwest corner of the Town of Washington (Sections 5, 6, 7 and 8) just west of the New Bilten settlement. They had English roots and lived in Maine for several generations prior to coming to Wisconsin. John and Lucinda had several children including Amy (married John B. Smith), Daniel, Gustavus, James T., Joseph, Parker, and Polly (married Elam Stevens). It appears all these children farmed in Green County (including the Towns of Washington, York, New Glarus and Exeter) except for daughter Polly who remained in Maine.

In Maine, the Hilton family history included a horrific chapter when Ebenezer Hilton (1703-1747), his son Joshua Hilton and son-in-law John Boynton were all killed by Indians near Wiscasset, Maine on July 31, 1747. Ebenezer and his sons were doing field work when the Indians took them by surprise. A fierce fight took place. The story is told that father Ebenezer's legs were cut off. Undaunted, Ebenezer was said to have continued fighting on the stumps of his legs. Another Hilton son, William (1731-1790) was spared, but he was taken prisoner by the Indians and given to the French in Quebec. William escaped in the autumn by way of the Gulf of St. Lawrence and returned to Maine. Years later in 1782 William Hilton founded the village of Solon, Maine on the upper Kennebec River – land which William had first seen as an Indian captive being taken to Quebec. (Ebenezer Hilton and William Hilton were the great-grandfather and grandfather, respectively, of John Hilton who came to Green County.)

Census records show that over the years the husband and wife John and Lucinda Hilton lived separately. In 1860 John was living with son Gustavus and Lucinda was living with son James. By 1870, John had returned to Maine and was living with daughter Polly Stevens. He died in Maine in 1874. Lucinda was living with son James and family in 1870 and 1880. She died in the Town of York in 1886 at the age of 97 and was buried in the Green's Prairie Cemetery.

Well known in New Glarus history was Elam S. Hilton who owned a jewelry store at 108 Fifth Avenue. Elam was the son of James T. Hilton, a Civil War soldier who served in the 46th Wisconsin Company I, and Ellen Peebles of the Town of York. (The Peebles family and their Mayflower roots were written about in the Fall 2005 Family History Notes.) Elam married Stella Mosher and their children were Maude (Mrs. Fred A. Stuessy, Vola (Mrs. Jacob Bruni), Vera (Mrs. Arthur J. Gmur), Scott (married Barbara Zweifel), Dewey and Glenn. Area Hilton descendants include Marlea Duerst, Jane Phillipson, and Larry Stuessy.

The Urso Legend

There were two wealthy brothers, Urso and Landolf, who lived in the time of St. Fridolin in the sixth century. The brothers were the landowners of what today is Canton Glarus. They promised that upon their deaths their land would be given to Fridolin for the Säckinggen Monastery. But when Urso died, Landolf stepped in and took possession of his deceased brother's land thus denying the Church of their promised real estate. St. Fridolin decided to challenge Landolf at the noble court at Rankweil (Austria) saying, "Appoint your court and I will bring a witness." And so St. Fridolin summoned Urso from the grave to testify. Together Fridolin and Urso walked to Rankweil. The sight of Urso, now decomposing and skeletal, so terrified Landolf that he quickly relinquished Urso's land and gave his own land to the Church.



The subject of the wandering Irish monk (St. Fridolin) and the skeleton (Urso) can be seen in religious art and sculpture. In 1519 Germany's famed Renaissance artist Albrecht Dürer made a print of Fridolin and Urso. There is a statue of Fridolin and Urso in a niche on the facade of the Bad Säckinggen church (known as the *Fridolinsmünster*). The Freuler Palace in Canton Glarus has the statue pictured at left. And secure in the *Schatzkammer* of the St. Fridolin Church in Glarus is a baroque silver statue of Fridolin and a fully skeletal Urso. In 1892, Mark Twain wrote of the Urso legend in his essay, "Switzerland, Cradle of Liberty", and helped spread this curious tale far beyond the boundaries of Canton Glarus.

Circus Families Named Ringling and Juliar

Wisconsin family history would not be complete without mention of the Ringling and Juliar families of Baraboo. The German family name Rüngeling was changed to Ringling in America and has become synonymous with the circus. There were five Ringling Brothers (Al, Otto, Alf, Charles and John) who began their traveling circus in 1884. They had been showmen all their young lives starting with the backyard circuses held at their McGregor, IA home in the 1870s. Lesser known in circus lore is the Juliar family. The mother of the Ringling brothers was born Marie Salome Juliar. Her sister Mary Magdalene Juliar married G. G. Gollmar and the Gollmar brothers, like their Ringling cousins, started a circus in Baraboo. Another Juliar sister, Katherine, married Henry Moeller. Their two sons (cousins of the Ringling Brothers and the Gollmar Brothers) were Baraboo wagon makers who manufactured ornate circus wagons.

Several local history accounts tell of Al Ringling, the oldest of the Ringling Brothers, working in nearby Dayton, Brodhead and Orfordville. Newspaper accounts say Ringling worked for wagon maker Charles Wackman in Dayton, the firm of Durner and Laube in Brodhead where Ringling trimmed wagons, and for blacksmith Iver. H. Sater in Orfordville. In each locale, stories were told of Ringling performing for local crowds. People particularly remembered Ringling walking on tightropes.

In 1884, the Ringling Brothers circus was founded when the brothers partnered with an elderly and established circus man, F. L. "Yankee" Robinson. Their 1884 season started out from Baraboo on May 19 with a tent, 3 horses and a troupe of 21. On Saturday, May 24, the circus had a show in New Glarus (sandwiched between stops in Mt. Vernon on the 23rd and Albany on the 26th). The circus route meandered through southwest Wisconsin into Minnesota, Iowa, northwestern Illinois, ending the season on September 27 in Benton, WI before returning to their winter quarters in Baraboo. Yankee Robinson died in Iowa while on the 1884 tour.

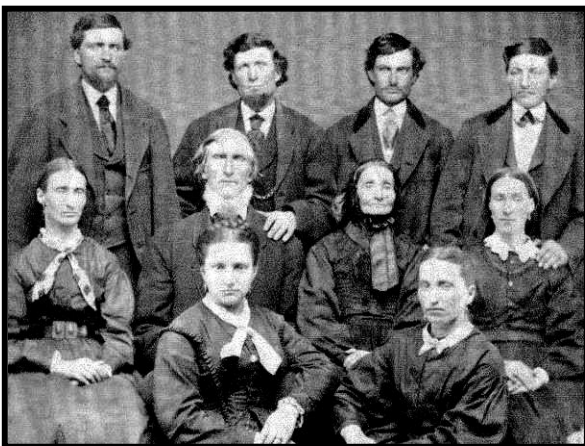
There may have been several circuses which played in New Glarus over the years. On Thursday, August 22, 1957, the George W. Cole Circus used elephants to set up their tents on the level area around 3rd Avenue west of 5th Street – an area sometimes referred to as Held's Flat. There were two shows – at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. This circus was known for its menagerie – elephants, lions, leopards, bears, apes, camels and a giant chimpanzee. Local Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Cub Scouts and Brownies sold advance tickets with 25% of the proceeds going to the swimming pool fund. Roy McFadden sold the most advance tickets and was given the honor of riding an elephant.

The Earliest Cheese Makers: Like Mother, Like Daughter

It comes as a surprise to many that Wisconsin -- America's Dairyland -- was a wheat-growing state during its first two decades. Wheat was king until the after the Civil War when the soil became depleted of nutrients, erosion became increasingly problematic and chinch bugs laid waste to the crops. The cheese making which had occurred in these early years was made in the home by the women for the family. Few, if any, commercial cheese operations existed. This scenario changed with the move from wheat to dairy cows, the introduction of the cheese factory system and the arrival of trains to transport the cheese to city markets.

An 1863 letter survives which Verena (Elmer) Ott of New Glarus wrote to relatives in Elm, Canton Glarus. Verena mentions how her mother, Anna Maria (Elmer) Elmer, then nearly 50 years old, had made a sizeable cheese every day the previous summer ("*hat letzten Sommer noch alle Tage einen ziemlich grossen Käse gemacht*"). Verena's letters back to Elm were full of news relating a mix of family events as well as those of other Elm immigrants. In this same 1863 letter, she wrote of Johann Ulrich Kubli being wounded while fighting in the Civil War and the subsequent amputation of his leg. And she related the death of Elm native Samuel Freitag and the posthumous birth of a sickly daughter Verena Freitag (later Mrs. Jacob Voegeli of the Voegeli Farm).

Verena Ott also had a sister, Anna Maria, who married Johann Tasher in 1866. The Tashers lived in the Town of Primrose. And like her mother Anna Maria Elmer, Anna Maria Tasher is remembered as a cheese maker. The Mt. Horeb Area Museum has a photograph of Anna Maria Tasher in their display about Swiss immigrants who lived in the Mt. Horeb vicinity. The picturesque Tasher (now Rhiner) farm is located on Highway G south of Mt. Vernon. The attractive 1888 Italianate home dwarfs the original little 1867 frame house where Anna Maria Tasher made her cheese. The Tasher farm passed to the Rhiner family (originally Rhyner) who are Tasher descendents.



Pictured is a photograph of the Wernet and Anna Maria (Elmer) Elmer family. The Elmers of Elm, Canton Glarus and their five oldest children immigrated to America in 1847 traveling with the New Bilten settlers. On 27 September 1847, just weeks after arriving in New Glarus, Wernet Elmer became possibly the first Glarner to buy government land rather than a 20 acre lot from the Emigration Society. Wernet bought prime prairie land in Spring Valley and in less than 10 years he had 400 acres. The Elmer parents are surrounded at the top by sons Werner (married Anna Barbara Duerst), Jacob (married Anna Streiff and after her death, Emma Weissmiller), Caspar (married Emma Eichelkraut) and Nik, (married

Elsbeth Hefty) and on the bottom by daughters Anna Maria (Mrs. Johann Tasher), Anna (a polio victim, she never married), Euphemia (Mrs. Nik Zentner) and Verena (Mrs. Johann Jacob Ott).

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"The difficulty lies not so much in developing new ideas as in escaping from old ones" John Maynard Keynes