

Family History Notes

Summer, 2009

The Tornado of 1929

History books tell of a devastating area tornado occurring on 23 May 1878 which killed more than a dozen people and destroyed many buildings on its path from Mineral Point on to Daleyville and finally Primrose. Many people will recall the Palm Sunday tornado of 11 April 1965 which swept through the northwest corner of Monroe. Seventy-eight tornadoes were spawned on that day – the second biggest outbreak on record in the United States. And many cannot forget the ferocious F5 tornado of 8 June 1984 which slammed nearby Barneveld at 1 a.m. killing nine and virtually wiping out the village. One of the Barneveld victims was Ralph Hammerly, Jr., whose ancestors, Fridolin and Barbara (Hefti) Legler, were among the first settlers of New Glarus.

Eighty years ago, a tornado struck close to New Glarus on the early Saturday evening of 6 April 1929. The funnel cloud was said to have formed near Cuba City in Grant County and then crossed Lafayette County in an east northeasterly direction. It passed near Lamont and entered Green County between Argyle and Blanchardville. The tornado continued by crossing the Town of York where the farms of Peter Disch and Jacob Stauffacher were hit and damaged. On the Stauffacher farm, occupied by daughter and son-in-law Lucinda and Lawrence Arnes, the home and barn were leveled. The twister continued on its path inflicting damage on the Ernest Pauli farm (Highway 39 and Zentner Road) then down into the area of Pioneer Valley where the farms of Henry Zweifel, Anton Jaeger and Anton Ott experienced damage. Henry Zweifel and two sons were in the barn milking when the tornado hit. The barn collapsed on the Zweifels and all were injured. In addition they lost more than a dozen head of cattle.

The tornado continued over the ridge west of Highway 69 and passed between the farms of Henry Ott and Julius Elmer. At the Elmer farm, 2 ½ year old Kathryn Elmer was sitting in a swing when her father Julius saw the tornado approaching. Farmhand Frank Ehinger grabbed Kathryn and the family sought shelter in the basement. The winds blew out the windows of the Elmer home and a shed was moved off its foundation. The village of Belleville was in the tornado's projected path but fortunately the storm weakened and Belleville was spared damage.

Miriam (Theiler) Abplanalp recalled visiting the Arnes/Stauffacher farm shortly after the tornado struck. She remembered that the Arnes family moved into a machine shed which was unharmed, and the children combed the area for household items scattered by the tornado. Miriam found the family's table cloth, pillow cases and a cooking pot.

A brief article in a Madison newspaper one year after the twister noted that damage occurred on 50 farms, 5 people were injured, 100 head of cattle were killed, and losses were estimated at \$200K (over \$2 million today)

Johann Heinrich and Katharina (Schuler) Zweifel Family

Johann Heinrich Zweifel (1812-1887) was a native of Linthal, Canton Glarus. In 1855, he married Katharina Schuler (1837-1914), in Galena, IL. Katharina was a native of Metten, Germany and was 25 years younger than Johann Heinrich. They had 10 children – nine of whom lived to adulthood. The Zweifels farmed in what is called today Pioneer Valley. Johann Heinrich died in 1887 and Katharina married the widower Jost Zweifel (1827-1911; no relation) the following year. The Zweifel farm was later operated by son Henry and Katharina (Hauser) Zweifel and grandson Henry and Margaret (Schneider) Zweifel.



Shown in the Zweifel family photograph are (back row) John M. (married Anna Marty), Jacob (married Regula Streiff), Amalia (married J. Henry Legler), Henry (married Katharina Hauser), and Sabina (married Matt S. Marty); (front row)

Sarah (married Martin Disch), Katharina (married Oswald Figy), Katharina (mother), and Nick. This photograph was taken sometime after the death of daughter Anna (Zweifel) Mani in 1901.

The photograph is courtesy of Barbara Kuehni, a Zweifel descendent. Other Zweifel descendents in the area include Erwin Zweifel, Donna Rupnow, Wayne Duerst, Russ Reuter, Kirk Webber, Karl Duerst and the late Dr. Philip Marty. Phyllis (Legler) Conrad who died in October of 2008 at the age of 99 may have been the last surviving grandchild of Johann Heinrich and Katharina.

Like branches on a tree, our lives may grow in different directions yet our roots remain as one.

Oertli Families

The Oertli name in Canton Glarus is commonly found in the adjoining villages of Ennenda and Glarus. The Oertli family name has been in Canton Glarus since the late 1500s. Heini Oertli, originally from Canton Bern, purchased citizenship in Glarus in 1595 for himself and his four sons – Rudolf, Heinrich, Hans, and Jacob. The surname has been found in New Glarus but has never taken root. However the Oertli name can be found in various places in the United States due to other Oertli immigrants who settled in Texas, Montana, Illinois, Missouri and Washington D. C.

According to a report from 1846, a Fridolin Oertli had purchased a lot in New Glarus. Apparently he did not remain here. He is most likely the widower Fridolin Oertli born in 1785 who left Ennenda in 1846. A decade later in 1856, another Fridolin Oertli of Ennenda arrived in New Glarus. He was a fabric printer (*Meisterdrucker*) in Canton Glarus and tried farming in America. Oertli, his wife and two daughters lived near the Pioneer School for several years (farm neighbors of the Heinrich Zweifels previously mentioned) before moving to Dubuque, IA. Farmer Georg Oertli, born in Ennenda in 1853, lived here in 1880.

Anna Margaretha Oertli (1842-1912) was born in Glarus and married New Glarus brewery owner Jacob Hefty in 1860. The Hefty brewery was later operated by Hefty son-in-law and daughter Gabriel and Rosina (Hefty) Zweifel.

Anna Katharina Oertli (1863-1945) was from Ennenda. According to descendents, Anna Katharina had come to America as a bride-to-be in an arranged marriage. But she did not like her future husband. So she worked to earn money enough money to pay him back (presumably for the immigration expenses). Anna Katharina then married Joachim Klassy in 1884 and they were the parents of 10 children including Henry Klassy, Barbara Louise Klassy and Bill Klassy.

Anna Maria Oertli (born 1873) was born in Ennenda and married Baltz Hoesly. They were farmers in the Town of Decatur and raised a family of three sons and three daughters. Many descendents live in the vicinity of Brodhead, Juda and Monroe.



An Oertli item from Canton Glarus can be found in New Glarus today. An outdoor lead and wood sculpture by Eva Oertli (born 1964) of Canton Glarus is located at the Swiss Historical Village. It is a tribute by the sculptress to immigrants and depicts a pair of shoes and a packed suitcase on top of a semi-spherical globe. Artistic works of Eva Oertli can be found around Glarus, Switzerland. One of her most interesting pieces – done in collaboration with Beat Huber – are the giant fingers surrounding a tree (see above) not far from the *Kunsthaus Glarus*. Eva Oertli is the great-grand niece of Anna Maria (Oertli) Hoesly mentioned above.

One Stauffacher Family Story

There were five Stauffacher families from Matt, Canton Glarus who arrived in New Glarus as original colonists in 1845. However none of these original families remained. Two of the families moved to different areas in Green County and the others to Illinois, Iowa and later Missouri. But several other Stauffacher families arrived in Green County in subsequent years and the family name Stauffacher became a common Glarner family name found throughout Green County.

One such immigrant was Johannes Stauffacher of Matt, son of Dietrich and Euphemia (Marti) Stauffacher. In 1864 Johannes married Anna Katharina Norder, daughter of immigrants Jacob and Anna Katharina (Altmann) Norder of Engi. Johannes and Anna Katharina moved to the Renwick, IA area where they farmed. They had five children – Anna Katharina, Jacob (who died as an infant), Jacob, Dietrich and John – all born in a five or six year span. But tragically this young mother, Anna Katharina, died in 1871 and only three years later the father Johannes died leaving four young orphans. Both parents were buried in the Swiss Cemetery of Humboldt County, IA. The 1880 census indicates that the children were sent back to Green County to live with friends and family. Son Dietrich Stauffacher was raised by Johann Jacob and Verena (Elmer) Ott who farmed the Ott homestead north of New Glarus. Son Jacob Stauffacher lived with Ott in-laws Caspar and Emma (Eichelkraut) Elmer who farmed in Spring Valley. And youngest son John was taken by his maternal grandparents, Jacob and Anna Katharina Norder in Monroe. The oldest child, daughter Anna Katharina, was not found listed in the 1880 census.

Each of the four orphaned Stauffacher children married and raised families. In 1887 Anna Katharina Stauffacher married Conrad Marty of Mt. Pleasant and they had three daughters – Anna (Mrs. Gilbert P. Hoesly), Edith (Mrs. E. J. Hoesly) and Elsie (Mrs. August Heller). Among the Marty grandchildren were Fern (Hoesly) Ferris, Harold Hoesly, and Janet (Hoesly) Austin. Son Jacob Stauffacher married Marion Becker in 1891. They farmed in the Town of York and had two children, Lucinda (Mrs. Lawrence Arnes) and Leroy (who was killed in WWI). Their grandchildren were Arthur, Leroy, Ruth and Lucille Arnes. Son Dietrich Stauffacher was a local livestock dealer in the firm of Stauffacher and Kundert. He married Barbara Elmer in 1892 and their three children were Kathryn (Mrs. Arthur Theiler), Werner (married Esther Streiff), and Lydia (Mrs. Ray Meythaler). Their grandchildren were the Theiler girls (Miriam, Lois, Rebecca, and Ruth) and the Meythaler girls (Barbara, Mary, and Margaret). And youngest son John Stauffacher married Lucy Staedtler of Monticello in 1894. They farmed near Dawson, ND and had a son Arthur and a daughter Margaret.

Despite being dealt the misfortune of losing their parents, the four Stauffacher orphans appear to have all thrived. They and their children and grandchildren went on to be contributors to society. Kathryn (Stauffacher) Theiler wrote local interest and local history stories for their family newspaper the *New Glarus Post*. Miriam (Theiler) Abplanalp wrote a centennial history of New Glarus. In 1963 Lucinda (Stauffacher) Arnes honored her parents by presenting funds in their memory for the construction of New Glarus' floral clock. And Leroy Stauffacher made the ultimate contribution – he gave his life in service to our country.

Germans in New Glarus

There have been Germans and German families living in New Glarus for over 150 years. Family names like Eichelkraut, Haegele and Bidlingmaier have been around so long many have assumed the names were Swiss. Once established in the New Glarus area, the children of these early Germans immigrants generally married within the Swiss community. These Germans, who emigrated from various regions throughout Germany, included the following:

Constantine Haegele (1835-1888) was born in Württemberg, Germany and was an early New Glarus blacksmith. He married Barbara Duerst in 1861. Barbara had been born in Canton Glarus and immigrated here with her parents in 1847. Among the children of Constantine and Barbara were triplet daughters – Amalia, Crescentia and Katharina -- born in 1874.

Henry Holdrich (1844-1932) was a Bavarian-born cheese maker who arrived in America in 1867. In 1879, he married Margaretha Zwickey, the widow of Jacob Disch. Jacob and Margaretha's son John Disch was legally adopted by Henry Holdrich in 1899. Now known as John Holdrich, he married Ida Babler, daughter of original settler Oswald Babler and his wife Sarah Kundert.

Reverend Wilhelm Streissguth (1827-1915), the first minister of the Swiss Reformed Church (1850-1857), and his brother Emil were natives of Lahr in the Duchy of Baden. Emil married Magdalena Norder, a native of Engi, Canton Glarus in 1852. Emil died two years later in the cholera epidemic.

Katharina Schuler (1837-1914) of Metten, Bavaria married Johann Heinrich Zweifel in 1855. Mrs. Zweifel was German, but her maiden name, Schuler, is found in various Canton Glarus villages including Matt, Rüti and Glarus, as well as elsewhere in Switzerland, Austria and Germany.

Johann Heinrich Julius (known simply as Julius) Eichelkraut (1830-1900) was born in Röblitz near Saalfeld in Thuringia. (Röblitz was located in East Germany from 1949 until 1990 when East and West Germany were reunified.) A miller by trade, he immigrated to America around 1849. According to family lore became acquainted with Dr. Samuel Blumer (New Glarus' first doctor) during the California Gold Rush. Julius Eichelkraut came to New Glarus in the mid-1850s and married Anna Katharina Wild, eldest daughter of Joshua and Barbara (Speich) Wild. Julius Eichelkraut's brother Louis (originally Ludwig) also lived in New Glarus until his death in 1888. Emma (Eichelkraut) Schouw, a niece of Julius, arrived here in 1925 and lived with her cousin Emma (Eichelkraut) Elmer

Karl Albert Iffert (1845-1915) was a local teacher who was born in the village of Ruhla in Saxony. He immigrated in 1866. In 1878 Iffert was commissioned by Louis Eichelkraut to commemorate the marriage of Eichelkraut's niece, Barbara Eichelkraut to Andrew Hoesly. Iffert created two hand printed multi-colored wedding documents which are in the collection of the New Glarus Historical Society. One document contained the following blessing/prayer for a home: *Wo glaube da Liebe, Wo Liebe da Friede, Wo Friede da Segen, Wo Segen da Gott, Wo Gott keine Noth* which can be translated as where there is faith there is love, where there is love there is peace, where there is peace there is blessing, where there is blessing there is God, where there is God there is no want. Another singular item in the collection is a hand carved meerschaum pipe. The ivory-colored bowl of the exquisitely hand carved pipe bears the face of an elderly, bearded gentleman. It belonged to Karl Albert Iffert. The late J. U. Freitag said the pipe perfectly captured Iffert's likeness.

The Michael North (originally Nord) family farmed in the vicinity of the New Glarus Woods. North, a native of Hurtigheim, Alsace started a vineyard in 1860 which yielded as much as 500 gallons of wine in a season. Johann Georg Bidlingmaier (1814-1903) and his wife Anna Wörner were from the village of Heiningen in Württemberg. They immigrated around 1852 farming in the Town of Washington. Their son Michael Bidlingmaier married Verena Iseli.

Buried in the pioneer cemetery in 1861 was Peter Anton Popp (or Papp) a native of Aschaffenburg. He and his wife Margaretha Allenbrand may have been the parents of the three Popp boys who enlisted in the Union Army. Buried in the "new" Swiss Reformed Cemetery in 1874 was Hermann Mohlstadt (or Mollstedt) a native of Bremen, Germany. Mollstadt was born in 1781. He immigrated and became a farmer near the New Elm settlement in Winnebago County, Wisconsin. Two of his daughters married into the Swiss community. Hermann's daughter Rebecca became Mrs. Nik Elmer of New Glarus and his granddaughter Rosina Rhyner married Paulus Schrepfer of nearby Dayton.

More recent German natives arrived in New Glarus during the last century, many of whom were personally involved in the German language production of New Glarus' Wilhelm Tell Play – the historical drama written in 1804 by Friedrich Schiller.

Bavarians Henry Schiffmann (1878-1958) and his wife Heinrich Schoierer (1884-1974) were farmers in Legler Valley. In 1938 Henry Schiffmann originated the role of the Baron von Attinghausen in the Wilhelm Tell Play. In the drama, the Baron of Attinghausen dies and as the scene ends he is carried offstage by monks. Upon hearing the audience applause at the end of the scene, the "dead" Mr. Schiffmann sat up and took a bow! Mrs. Schiffmann, a native of Augsburg, was a loyal volunteer guide at the Historical Village for many years. She was an elderly woman with a time-worn countenance and copper bracelets to ward off rheumatism. Her tours captivated visitors.

Kathryn (Kimpel) Strickler (1892-1981) was a native of the Westphalian village of Mörs and the wife of Swiss sausage maker Eugene Strickler. In the first productions of the Wilhelm Tell Play, Mrs. Strickler originated the role of Hedwig, wife of Wilhelm Tell. And daughter Ilse Strickler originated the role of Walter Tell. During WWII, Mrs. Strickler was a 3 Star mother having sons Gilbert, Robert and Palmer (Butch) all serving their country.

Germans in New Glarus (continued)

Shoemaker Moritz Krugjohann (1885-1959) was a native of Langenholzhausen in the Principality of Lippe-Detmold. In 1910 he wed Mary Tschudy of New Glarus and they raised a large family. During the war years, the Krugjohanns were the proud parents of four sons who served their country – Robert, Richard, Grover Gordon and Moritz. In the early days of WWII another son, Chester Krugjohann, collected 2225 pounds of scrap metal – nearly 25% of the local school’s salvage drive. Some of the Krugjohann boys had played soldier and peasant roles in the early Tell productions. In 1926 cobbler Krugjohann had a run-in with the law when four stills were found in his basement along with 15 barrels of mash and 10 gallons of illegal hooch.

On the whole the Swiss and the Germans maintain a civil camaraderie, although there has often existed a certain sibling rivalry between Switzerland and Germany. The Swiss are annoyed by the perceived arrogance of loud and authoritative Germans. And the Germans have perhaps viewed the Swiss as unenlightened and slow. An example of the latter is illustrated in the following quote by Charles Peterson -- “the provinciality of the Swiss is archetypal in Germany; famously intransigent, with an accent that sounds hickish, they are considered even more backward than the Bavarians.”

The Tale of Fabian Streiff

A popular fable has been told for nearly 100 years about Wisconsin’s own Rip Van Winkle. It is the story of Fabian Streiff of New Glarus who vanished from his home in 1881 and returned 34 years later. A popular version of his story was repeated in newspapers across the country. And once again the tale has been dusted off appearing in the March 17, 2009 *Wisconsin State Journal* as part of the Wisconsin Historical Society’s “Odd Wisconsin” series.

The *WSJ*’s lighthearted story (of which there are several versions) may have originally been spun with a humorous intent. Fabian Streiff, a hunter, had crawled into a fox’s den. This den led to a labyrinth of caves in which he wandered for three days before coming out of the bluffs near the confluence of the Wisconsin and Mississippi Rivers (some 80 miles from New Glarus!). He drifted south where an Illinois farmer befriended him. And 30-some years later the farmer returned Fabian home to New Glarus.

But the actual story is more heartrending. Canton Glarus-born Fabian Streiff (1851-1934) was the son of 1861 immigrants Fabian and Katharina (Baertschi) Streiff, natives of Diesbach, Canton Glarus. Fabian Streiff Senior had two brothers and sisters-in-law – Johann Balthasar and Sibilla (Knobel) Streiff and Johann Peter and Anna (Knobel) Streiff – who also immigrated to New Glarus -- the latter being the grandparents of Edwin Barlow, builder of New Glarus’ Chalet of the Golden Fleece as well as the originator of the Wilhelm Tell Drama.

It appears by inference that Fabian Streiff was mentally challenged. He was described as shy, timid, feeble, and mentally weak. It appears he could neither read nor write. He disappeared in 1881 (some reports say 1883) when he was 29 years old. One account says he wandered off after being frightened by harassment and juvenile threats. And another account says he lost his way while wolf hunting. What is true is that after a period of wandering on foot he came into the employ of an Illinois farmer by the name of Henry Reedy. Reedy took advantage of Streiff for 34 years, paying no wages, and providing only room and board, tobacco, and meager clothing “to cover his nakedness”.

On the Reedy farm Streiff was known as Casper Snyder or “Cappy” – an alias possibly recalled from a former farm neighbor Caspar Schneider of New Glarus. This identity is verified in the 1900 census (pictured below) and 1910 census enumerations for the Henry Reedy household of Whiteside County, IL where the farm laborer “Casper Snyder” is indeed recorded. The census indicates

Reedy Henry	Head	40	Sept	1848	52	11	20	Pennsylvania
Anna	Wife	37	Sept	1854	45	11	20	Pennsylvania
William H.	Son	10	May	1877	23	8		Illinois
Minnie C.	Daughter	10	Sept	1878	21	8		Illinois
Bert A.	Son	10	Aug	1882	18	8		Illinois
Edward F.	Son	8	May	1884	16	8		Illinois
Basie C.	Daughter	10	June	1890	19	8		Illinois
Snyder Casper	Servant	10	April	1860	40	8		Germany

that “Snyder” was born in Germany and his age was listed as 40 in 1900 and 55 in 1910. (Fabian Streiff was born in Switzerland and would have been 49 in 1900 and 59 in 1910.)

By 1915 Fabian Streiff was 64 years old. Apparently he was simply set free of his servitude at the Reedy farm because he could no longer do strenuous work. Streiff hoped to return

to New Glarus. He walked to the vicinity of Stockton, IL where he sought shelter in a snowstorm. Here a more kindly farmer let him rest for several days. This man also demonstrated his compassion for Fabian and wrote a message to the New Glarus Postmaster who in turn passed this message along to Streiff’s kin. Relatives Fred B. Streiff and Jacob Figi immediately left for Stockton and identified Streiff. Fabian was brought home to New Glarus in 1915 after a 34 year absence. A suit was brought against Henry Reedy in the amount of \$25,000 for back wages. Fabian Streiff was awarded \$5,000.

After Fabian Streiff’s return to New Glarus in 1915, he resided for many years with his cousin Fred B. Streiff and family. In 1934 Fabian died in the Green County Home at the age of 82. One obituary related in a particularly understated manner that he had lived over thirty years in Illinois. Pallbearers at his funeral were long-time farm neighbors Jacob Krieg, Sr., Fred Voegeli, John E. Schneider, Caspar Schneider, Henry Zweifel and Jacob A. Disch.

The actual events surrounding the story of Fabian Streiff may never be fully known. But what is known of the real story proves more gripping than the embroidered yarn as related by “Odd Wisconsin”.