

Family History Notes

Spring, 2010

Babler Families in the New Glarus Area

Babler is a family name which has been in New Glarus since 1845. This Glarner name is associated with the villages of Matt and Elm in the Sernftal – the little valley of Canton Glarus. The original Bablers arrived in the Sernftal from Gams in the Rhine Valley in the late 1500s. The name is spelled Bähler in Glarus and in America it generally became Babler with a minority adopting the Baebler spelling.

Among the original New Glarus settlers were brothers Oswald and Ursula (Stauffacher) Babler and Fridolin and Dorothea (Stauffacher) Babler of Matt. The Babler brothers drew 20-acre lots and the two families lived together in one cabin for a time. While some of the Babler children like son Oswald Jr. (see below) remained in the area, many went west. The families of Anna Babler (Mrs. Henry Hoesly) and her cousins Elsbeth Babler (Mrs. Jacob Blum) and Magdalena Babler (Mrs. Peter Utiger) settled in the State of Oregon.

A nephew of Oswald and Fridolin was Isaiah (originally Esajas) Babler, who immigrated with his first wife Anna Rhyner to the Monticello area in 1854. Also from Matt were Fridolin and Maria (Elmer) Babler. They farmed immediately south of New Glarus between the village and the New Glarus Woods. Heinrich and Maria (Marti) Babler arrived from Matt in 1864. They and their descendents lived in the New Glarus and Belleville areas. A family portrait was printed in the Family History Notes Fall 2005 and told of five Babler children who married five Schuler siblings. Other immigrant Bablers from Matt who settled elsewhere in Green County were Vincenz and Maria (Stauffacher) Babler, Johann Peter and Sibilla (Stauffacher) Babler, Paulus and Barbara (Brunner) Babler, Heinrich and Barbara (Baumgartner) Babler, and Heinrich and Salome (Luchsinger) Babler.

Other immigrant Bablers arrived from the village of Elm including Jacob and Anna (Kundert) Babler and Christof Babler and his second wife Verena Disch – both families arriving in 1853. The first cheese factory in Green County (1868) was located on the farm of Christof's son, Albrecht (Albert) Babler. Also from Elm were children of Meinrad and Elsbeth (Rhyner) Babler including Anna Barbara who married Joseph Schindler.

Babler immigrants also settled in the New Elm colony near Oshkosh as well as in Iowa, Oregon, Missouri, and Brazil. A Babler branch in Holland became known as Bebelaar. There are numerous Bablers and Baeblers living in Green County today. New Glarus Bablers include Victor Babler (descendent of original colonists Oswald and Ursula), brothers Terry and Jeff Babler (descendents of Paulus and Barbara Babler) and the family of the late Harland Babler (descendents of Christof Babler and his first wife Cleophea Elmer).

Oswald Babler – A New Glarus Original

One of the colorful characters who lived in the New Glarus area was Oswald Babler (1835-1927). Oswald was born in Matt, Canton Glarus in June of 1835 and lived there with his parents – father Oswald, a slate miner (*Plattenberger*), mother Ursula née Stauffacher, two brothers, Nicholas and Esajas, and two sisters, Anna and Barbara. At the age of nine, Oswald left Switzerland with his family, joining the other Glarner emigrants who were to become the first settlers of New Glarus. Oswald celebrated his 10th birthday while on the Atlantic Ocean. But he noted the voyage was difficult and that often “we were hungry” during the crossing. The immigrants arrived in Baltimore and passed through cities like Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, St. Louis and then Galena, IL. Oswald remembered how the immigrants had to walk the last 70 miles from Galena to New Glarus, wading through streams along the way.



Oswald's youth in the new settlement was filled with physical and emotional challenges as the family forged a new life. He recalled all 26 immigrant families crowded together in one hut. But before winter set in his family and the family of his uncle and aunt, Fridolin and Dorothea (Stauffacher) Babler, lived together in a wooden shanty – a dwelling without windows, doors, or floor, and only a hay and sod roof. A two-lidded iron stove provided a small amount of heat. Yet recalling this primitive lodging he remarked “but we were happy.” A more proper log cabin was constructed the following year. Oswald's father (Oswald Sr.) died in December of 1847 being buried on Christmas Day. Oswald was only 12 years old. At the age of 15, a young and independent Oswald took two teams of oxen and a load of wheat to sell in Janesville. In August, 1853, tragedy literally struck when Oswald's older brother, Nicholas, was killed by lightning while shocking wheat in a farm field. Nicholas Babler's tombstone, found in the museum cemetery, is the oldest in New Glarus.

The Babler family initially farmed their 20 acre plot drawn on August 21, 1845. This acreage was located west of New Glarus along the ridge which is now Highway 39. In 1852, a 40 acre farm was established a mile or two southeast of New Glarus and has remained in the family to this day. It is said the original one-room log cabin with loft was added on to over the generations resulting in the small 1 ½ story house that exists today.

Oswald's education was limited to three terms in the New Glarus School. In 1856 he went to Madison to learn the cabinet making trade with the O. C. Buck Company. A baby cradle in the collection of the New Glarus

Historical Society was made by Oswald for the Jacob Stuessy family who lived over the ridge from the Babler farm. He was also skilled with a foot-pedaled scroll saw on which he made intricate and delicate wooden objects such as picture frames, jewelry boxes and pieces of miniature furniture. (Oswald's grandson Lloyd Babler (1897-1976) was also a noted scroll saw wood crafter. Several of Lloyd's works are in the New Glarus Historical Society collection.)

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In 1860 the 25 year old Oswald married 16 year old Sarah Kundert, an 1853 immigrant from the Canton Glarus village of Rüti. They were to become the parents of at least 13 children over a span of about 25 years. Several of their children died as infants. In 1865, Oswald enlisted in the Wisconsin 46th Infantry serving from March to September of 1865. During his months of service he traveled to the South for duty along the Nashville and Decatur Railroad. Upon his release from the Union Army, Oswald returned to his wife and three small children on the family farm. Not returning from the war was Jacob Kundert, Sarah's brother, who was killed at Antietam. After the great Chicago fire of 1871, Oswald leased his farm and put his carpentry skills to work to help rebuild the city. The Bablers went to Chicago around 1873 where Oswald built window and door frames. They remained there for 3 years then returned to their New Glarus farm. Starting in the 1880s Oswald and Sarah became grandparents and some years later great grandparents. In 1910 they celebrated their golden wedding anniversary. As they became an aged couple they moved from the Babler farm to New Glarus and in their later years lived in Monticello. In June, 1920, a story appeared in the Wisconsin State Journal about how Oswald's grandson, banker H. O. Babler of Monticello, congratulated his grandfather on his 60th Wedding Anniversary. Oswald, who was tending his weedless garden, looked up and said "By gosh you're right." Oswald had "plumb forgot".

As the years progressed Oswald found himself one of the oldest surviving original colonists in New Glarus, one of the last surviving Civil War vets from the area, and one half of a married couple who was to spend over 67 years together. Oswald had lived a full life and assumed the role of an honored original settler of New Glarus and veteran. His stories and historical reminiscences were related in newspaper articles around the state whenever New Glarus celebrated an anniversary. Oswald was a moving force behind the 1915 erection of the Settlers' Monument on the Swiss Church lawn. As an old man, Oswald made the annual 12 mile roundtrip walk from Monticello to New Glarus to help decorate graves on May 29 and returning again on May 30, Decoration Day (*Gräberschmückungstag*), when he proudly read the names of his fellow Civil War veterans who had entered service from New Glarus. Only in his last two years did he bow to family pressure to accept a car ride to and from New Glarus. The 1914 photograph of Oswald on the previous page was likely taken on Decoration Day.

Occasionally Oswald's reminiscences, as is occasionally found with old time historians, did not completely square with historical fact. He told the story of Fridolin Streiff who was returning on horseback from Mineral Point. Streiff's saddlebags loaded with supplies. The spring rains had swollen the rivers, and when crossing one stream the saddlebag broke, dumping the sugar in to the water. And Oswald concluded that the river has been named the Little Sugar River ever since. The problem with the story is that the name Sugar River preceded the Swiss of 1845 and can be found on pre-1845 maps of the Wisconsin Territory.

Shortly before his death, Oswald bemoaned the fact that his family wouldn't let him go fishing alone. They suggested he tend to his garden. "I went out to pick potato bugs and all I found was six. Not much sport in that" Oswald commented. The many chapters of Oswald's life ended in 1927 when he died at the age of 92. Sarah, who unlike her husband received little press coverage, outlived Oswald by just over a year. She died in 1929. They are buried in the EUB Cemetery near the grave of Oswald's mother, Ursula (Stauffacher) Babler, as well as near the graves of Sarah's mother Elsbeth (Kundert) Kundert and grandmother Sarah (Voegeli) Kundert.

Oswald and Sarah Babler's children who survived to adulthood were Henry Lincoln Babler (married Ursula Marty), Emma (Mrs. Jost Hoesly), Ellen (Mrs. Henry Kundert), Edwin (a bachelor), Otto H. (married Rosa Waelti), Victor (married Barbara Zweifel), Ida (Mrs. John Holdrich), Lilly (Mrs. John Zweifel), Ada (Mrs. Matt Zentner), and Alma (Mrs. Dietrich Freitag). The children all lived in or around New Glarus including Monticello, Monroe and Brooklyn. Descendents of Oswald and Sarah Babler are numerous and include John (Chuckie) Zweifel, Vic Babler, Muriel (Babler) Olson, David Zweifel, Bill Breylinger, John Patterson and Linn Lederman.

The Schiibeflegübuäba of Matt

The village of Matt in Canton Glarus has a unique annual tradition carried out by the young village boys. In the dark of night on the Saturday before Ash Wednesday, the Matt boys age 11 to 14 climb to a rocky projection nearly a thousand feet above the village. From this spot glowing wooden disks (*Schiibe, Scheibe or Schybe*) are flung into the air. The glowing disks are even found on Matt's village flag (seen at right). The history of the custom may be preserved from a pre-Christian period, although it is said the first documentation in Matt is from 1846. The village boys view their participation in the *Schiibeflegü* as a rite of passage. They remain alone on the mountainside all night. These boys are called *Schiibeflegübuäba* – pronounced shee-ba-floy-ga-boo-ah-ba. And as they hurl the disk toward the village below they cry something akin to "*Schybe, Schybe überrybe, die söll em Tüüfel zueflüüge.*"



Matt is home to familiar family names such as Babler, Stauffacher, Marti, Weiss, Elmer and Speich. The church in Matt is reportedly the oldest in the Canton -- part of the church dating from 1261 and a Gothic wooden ceiling in the nave dating from 1497. Matt is said to receive the most sunshine of any Canton Glarus village. Above Matt is a sun terrace called *Weissenberg* which can be reached from the village by way of a small aerial cable car. Here you will find the welcoming mountain inn *Berggasthaus Edelwys* run by Heiri and Alice Marti-Tischhauser. Their 11 year old son Thomas Marti was recently featured on Swiss television explaining his participation as a *Schiibeflegübuäb*. High up on the other side of the valley from *Weissenberg* is the *Berglialp* where a wellness spa is operated by Heiri and Ursi Marti-Kamer. Here you can enjoy soaking up the mountain scenery while soaking in an outdoor hot tub of whey (*Molkenbad*) or alpine herbs (*Kräuterbad*). Both establishments serve typical Alpine food as well as Glarner specialties.

Another Babler Descendent

According to family history sources, a direct descendent of immigrants Fridolin and Maria (Elmer) Babler of New Glarus is Cheryl (Alley) Howard. In 1975 Cheryl married her high school sweetheart, actor and director Ron Howard (aka Opie Taylor and Richie Cunningham). They have four children. She has earned degrees in both Psychology and Screenwriting. Cheryl is also a descendent of early New Glarus settlers Mathias and Anna Katharina (Schmid) Schmid and Niklaus and Anna Maria (Streiff) Duerst.

Foods of Our Ancestors - Anggäzeltä

A sweet culinary tradition yet maintained in Canton Glarus is a buttery cake called *Anggäzeltä*. The origin of the cake's name is derived from an old Glarner dialect word *Anggä* for butter. *Zelte* refers to a flat cake. Numerous spellings of this Glarner specialty exist including Ankezelte, Anggäzältä, and Anken Zelte. Flour, butter, sugar, eggs, and yeast are blended to form a dough. Raisins and a hint of cinnamon add interest to the rich and dense cake. *Anggäzeltä* was a part of New Glarus' culinary past having been documented in local histories and cookbooks. But its preparation is probably a rarity today. In Canton Glarus today bakeries which continue to bake this Glarner treat include Netstal's *Bäckerei-Konditorei Villiger* and Ennenda's *Cornetto Bäckerei-Konditorei*.

Anyone interested in enjoying a slice of our culinary past may wish to try the following recipe adapted for American measures:

- Yeast: dissolve two envelopes (1/4 oz. each) of yeast and 2T sugar in 1/2 cup of 115F water. Let sit until foaming.
- Wet Ingredients: combine 13T of melted and cooled butter, 3 beaten eggs (less two tablespoons to use as an egg wash), 1 cup of raisins (plumped in 1T kirsch or brandy).
- Dry Ingredients: dry blend 4 cups of flour, 1 cup of sugar, 1t cinnamon and 1/2 t salt.
- Add dissolved yeast and wet ingredients into the blended dry ingredients. Mix until a moist dough is formed. Add dough to a buttered spring form pan. Set in a warm place and let rise (about 1/2 hour). Brush reserved egg wash over surface of dough. Bake in a 350F oven for 50-60 minutes until golden brown. Best when served warm along with a cup of coffee or tea.

For a less traditional Anggäzeltä, try substituting the cinnamon with the zest of a lemon, or substituting the raisins with craisins, currants or candied fruit. The recipe can be halved with a reduced baking time of 40-45 minutes.

Landvogt Schiesser House

A handsome and well-preserved home (pictured right) in the village of Linthal, Canton Glarus is the Landvogt Schiesser house. This chalet-style home was originally built by Bernhard Schiesser back in 1530. Schiesser served as the *Landvogt* in Thurgau in 1516 and again in 1530. He died in 1549. The house was restored in the 1970s as a multi-unit dwelling which also houses a small museum.



The Vidal Family

Around 1860, an Austrian-Swiss family by the name of Vidal lived in New Glarus. Eugen Vidal, a druggist (*Apotheker*) was born in Feldkirk, Austria. Feldkirk is located just kilometers from where the Switzerland, Liechtenstein, and Austria borders meet near Buchs, St. Gallen. Vidal was educated at the University of Lausanne. He married Emma Hartmann, the daughter of Ludwig and Christina (Traxler) von Hartmann of Lucerne. Eugen arrived in New York City in 1849 on the immigrant ship *Pescatore* accompanied by Emma and her mother. In 1850 Eugen and Emma were living in the Town of Franklin, Milwaukee County where Eugen was listed as a farmer. By 1855, the family had moved to Monroe, WI. The 1860 census indicates that Eugen, Emma and three daughters were living in New Glarus. A sketch of the village dating from about 1860 appears to say "*Fidal, Apotheker aus Österreich*" living in a small frame dwelling immediately north of the New Glarus Hotel. This is likely the same building shown to the left of the Tschudy store in the vintage photo. Around 1861 or 1862 a son Felix was born to the Vidals.



By 1870, the Vidal family was living in Bangor, WI where Eugen was still a druggist. Vidal family sources indicate Eugen left the family at some point, but returned years later. Emma, who could speak English, French, German and Italian was said to have supported the family by translating foreign stories for publication in various newspapers. By 1880 she was living in La Crosse supporting the family as a dressmaker.

The Vidal's son Felix, a railroad engineer, married Margaret Rewalt. Felix and Margaret raised their family in Madison, SD where their son Eugene Luther Vidal was born in 1895. Eugene was to become a star athlete of the University of South Dakota. He transferred to West Point where he also excelled in sports and captained the football team. Aviation became his passion and he was later the first aviation instructor at West Point. Eugene was a U.S. Olympian in the 1920 Olympics and even played professional football for a year with the Washington Senators in 1921. He became an aviation innovator, a friend of the Wright Brothers, and a colleague of Amelia Earhart – even rumored to be romantically involved with Earhart. Vidal served as President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Secretary of Air Commerce and actively promoted the concept of an inexpensive personal airplane (photo at left) for everyday use. Eugene's younger brother Felix Vidal was also a West Point graduate who rose to become a Brigadier General in the United States Air Force.



Eugene Luther Vidal married Nina Gore and while at West Point, a son Eugene Luther Gore Vidal was born in 1925. Eugene and Nina's only child was to become known simply as Gore Vidal the noted American novelist, screenwriter, playwright and political activist. It was recently written of Gore Vidal, "Vidal published his first novel when he was nineteen. So far, at 84, he has published twenty-five other novels or story collections (*Julian, Myra Breckinridge, Burr, Lincoln, Empire*), twenty-two works of nonfiction (his collected essays, *United States*, at 1,312 pages, won the National Book Award in 1992), five mysteries under pseudonyms, eight plays, more than ten screenplays (among them *Suddenly, Last Summer*, and revisions to *Ben Hur*), dozens of television productions, has acted in six movies (*Bob Roberts, Gattaca, Igby Goes Down*), and has appeared on camera dozens of times as himself (including on *The Simpsons*). Not bad for someone who never attended college."

Flags of the Gemeindefusionen Kanton Glarus

When voters of Canton Glarus considered the consolidation of their numerous community governments (*Gemeindefusionen*) the outcome was unexpected. The Glarner ultimately made the bold decision to pare down their 25 local community governments down to just 3. The Glarner villages of our ancestors are now part of 3 new jurisdictions known as Glarus Nord, Glarus Süd, and Glarus. Each partition chose a new flag to symbolize the new political entity. Pictured here are the new banners.



Glarus Nord (North) comprises the eight northernmost villages of Canton Glarus. The new blue and yellow flag depicts the Linth River with four communities on each side of the Linth. – Bilten, Niederurnen, Oberurnen, and Näfels to the left of the Linth, and Mollis, Filzbach, Obstalden and Mühlehorn on its right side.

Glarus Süd (South) was formed from the 13 small villages found in the southern end of the Canton. These villages are Elm, Matt and Engi in the Sernftal, Linthal, Rüti, Braunwald, Betschwanden, Luchsingen (including Diesbach and Hätzingen), Haslen (including Leuggelbach and Nidfurn) in the Linthal, and Sool, Schwändi, Mitlödi and Schwanden located near the confluence of the Sernf and Linth rivers. The new flag depicts the confluence of the two rivers. The sun with 17 rays in the upper center was inspired by the star found on the family crest of the Bälidi family. In 1548



Landammann Joachim Bälidi established the *Freiberg Kärpf*, now Europe's oldest nature preserve, which lies in the mountainous area between the Sernf and Linth (see Family History Notes Winter 2009).



The third partition called Glarus -- or sometimes referred to as Glarus Mitte (middle) -- lies between the Nord and Süd and is comprised of the capital and largest village, Glarus, along with the neighboring villages of Riedern, Ennenda and Netstal. The new flag incorporates elements from the existing village flags.

Fighting Hunger – Count Rumford, Dr. Fridolin Schuler and Julius Maggi, and Kids Against Hunger

The idea of a nutritional soup to feed the poor is not a new one. Two hundred years ago Count Rumford was committed to feeding the poor of Bavaria. He developed a nutritious soup -- Rumford's Soup or *Rumfordische Suppe* -- based on pea meal for protein, and barley, potatoes and sour beer to supply simple and complex carbohydrates. The soup was inexpensive but not particularly tasty. While it provided protein and carbohydrates, knowledge of vitamins and minerals was not yet understood. In 1816-1817 when northern Europe experienced severe food shortages as a result of the "the year without a summer", Rumford's soup was served in Elm, Canton Glarus to help feed those without proper nutrition (see Family History Notes, Spring, 2008).

Count Rumford was born Benjamin Thompson in Woburn, MA. He excelled in science and by the time of the American Revolution was a prosperous New Englander. However, he did not support the rebellion and actually provided the British with valuable information about the American forces. He left America, lived in London for a time, and then moved to Bavaria where he became known as Count Rumford. The Count is remembered for his scientific experimentation on heat conductivity and insulation, and for having created Munich's large central park, the *Englischer Garten*, in 1789.

In the late 1800s, Dr. Fridolin Schuler (pictured right), a Mollis, Canton Glarus pediatrician had risen to become Switzerland's first factory inspector. Schuler helped improve working and living conditions for the Swiss factory working class. His concern about the lack of nutritious food for the workers brought him together with a miller by the name of Julius Maggi. And like Count Rumford a century earlier, Schuler and Maggi tried to develop an inexpensive and nutritious soup for the poor. Their instant soup mix utilized legume flour made from peas, beans and lentils. It was cheap, easy to prepare, although lacking in flavor. Maggi continued to work on developing instant soups and simultaneously developed the famous "*Maggi Würze*" – the ubiquitous Swiss seasoning sauce initially developed as a substitute for meat extract. Out of his collaborative efforts with Dr. Schuler to feed the poor, Julius Maggi founded the industrial food processing giant Maggi GmbH now a part of the world's largest food processor, Nestlé.



Dr. Fridolin Schuler's effect on the working classes extended far beyond the development of a soup. He was concerned with the working conditions, living conditions, work hours, and medicine offered to factory workers. Schuler was intimately involved in the Canton Glarus and Swiss factory laws enacted in the mid to late 1800s.

Dr. Schuler (1832-1903) practiced medicine in Mollis but was descended from the Wolfgang Schuler line which originated in the village of Rüti. Mrs. Rudolf Kundert (born Elsbeth Schuler in Rüti) was an early New Glarus resident and also a descendent from Wolfgang Schuler. She was likely the New Glarus resident most closely related to Dr. Schuler. Mrs. Kundert (1819-1904) was the mother of Fridolin Kundert, the first president of the Bank of New Glarus.

In our own time the Minnesota-based organization Kids Against Hunger has partnered with food industry nutritionists to develop a soup which provides 75% of a child's daily nutrition requirements. The dehydrated soup mix is a combination of chicken broth, vegetables, and rice. It is further supplemented with soy protein and 21 vitamins and minerals. Tens of thousands of volunteers across the U. S. form assembly lines to package the soup mix for worldwide distribution. The soup has proven to be a great success – inexpensive yet good tasting with a measureable effect in providing the proper nutrition to children around the globe.

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