

Family History Notes

Winter, 2010

Hefty Families in New Glarus

Another of the family names originating in Canton Glarus and commonly found in New Glarus history is Hefty. The name is spelled Hefti in Glarus, occasionally observed in old references as Höfti, and generally spelled Hefty in America. The Hefti name is found in numerous Canton Glarus villages including Hätzingen, Haslen, Schwanden, Luchsingen, Elm, Ennenda and Diesbach. Among the original 1845 colonists were Fridolin Hefty and his second wife Christina Hoesly. They were accompanied by Fridolin's son Jacob who became the New Glarus brewer. Brewer Jacob Hefty is recorded in the Canton Glarus archives as "*ein bekannter Spassmacher in New Glarus*" – a well known joker! Mrs. Fridolin Legler (born Barbara Hefti) and Mrs. Hilarius Wild (born Anna Hefti) were also among the original settlers. Barbara's sister Margaretha Hefti (Mrs. Oswald Baumgartner) and family arrived in the following years.

Southwest of New Glarus were three immigrant Hefty families all from Hätzingen and all farming in the upper watershed of Hefty Creek. Caspar Hefty was one of the earliest Glarner to buy government land. Caspar married Elsbeth Hoesly and they started the Hefty family farm on Meadow Valley Road. Nearby on Hefty Road was the farm of Fridolin and Rosina (Schiesser) Hefty. Their farm today



is known as the Hefty-Blum Homestead. Pictured is the 1861 stone barn built by Fridolin Hefty and proudly restored by Hefty-Blum descendents. Also southwest of town was the homestead farm of Johann Jacob and Maria (Streiff) Hefty in Section 29 of the Town of New Glarus. Other Hefty immigrants from Hätzingen included Fabian Hefty, a Civil War veteran, and his wife Anna Barbara Hoesly, as well as brothers Heinrich and Fridolin Hefty who married Anna Barbara Hoesly (niece of the aforementioned Anna Barbara Hoesly) and Anna Disch, respectively. From Luchsingen were Heinrich and Regula (Legler) Hefty who farmed east of New Glarus in the Town of Exeter. Fridolin Hefty of Luchsingen married Rosina Duerst on September 4, 1864, the day before he

enlisted in the Wisconsin 3rd Infantry. From Elm came immigrant Samuel Hefty and his second wife Rosina Rhyner who lived in the Town of Jordan. Also from Elm were Nik and Anna Maria (Elmer) Hefty and Nik's nephew Gustave Hefty. Jacob F. Hefty (married Verena Ruegg Freitag) was from Elm. Two of his sisters, Elsbeth (Mrs. Alfred Urben) and Amalia (Mrs. Samuel Hefty) lived north of New Glarus. Anna Hefti (Mrs. Ernst Aebly) was from Ennenda. Sisters Katharina Hefti (Mrs. Paulus Figi) and Barbara Hefti (Mrs. Gabriel Schindler) were from above Haslen "*auf dem Schlattberg*". Barbara's 1868 *Reisepass* is in the Historical Society collection. Franz and Anna (Disch) Hefty were from the village of Schwanden where Franz was employed as a *Kaminfeger* (chimney sweep).

While there are numerous Hefty descendents in New Glarus today, the family name Hefty, like so many other Glarner surnames, is disappearing. Local Heftys today include Al Hefty who is a descendent of immigrant Samuel Hefty of Elm, Lawrence Hefty who is a descendent of immigrants Johann Jacob and Maria (Streiff) Hefty, and Lillian (Klassy) Hefty, whose late husband Werner was a descendent of immigrants Caspar and Elsbeth (Hoesly) Hefty.

An Illuminating Hefti Contribution

Throughout the years the New Glarus Historical Society has been the recipient of numerous family treasures donated by generous benefactors. Among the most beautiful of the donated artifacts is a pair of etched glass and leaded lanterns hanging in the museum's log church. These treasures were the gift of a Swiss woman by the name of Maria (Hefti) Mueller (1904-1996). It was said that these lamps originally hung in a Swiss castle. The lamps were purchased by the Muellers in an antique shop and used to decorate their home in Hemberg, Canton St. Gallen. Mrs. Mueller knew Edwin Barlow of New Glarus who, as we know from his collection of the Chalet of the Golden Fleece, had a refined collector's eye. Barlow acted as middleman, accepting the lamps from the Muellers and donating them to the New Glarus Historical Society. And it can be argued that the lamps more closely resemble the sophisticated European collection of the Chalet of the Golden Fleece than they do the pioneer atmosphere of the Swiss Historical Village.

Mrs. Mueller, who was born in Canton Glarus, had Hefti/Hefty aunts and uncles who lived in the Renwick, IA area and great aunts Katharina and Barbara Hefti (Mrs. Paulus Figi and Mrs. Gabriel Schindler, respectively) who resided in New Glarus. Mrs. Mueller visited New Glarus in 1973 and had the opportunity to see her donation (now wired for electricity) in the log church.

Heftys in Local Commerce

Green County history relates that there were two men by the name of Jacob Hefty who were brewers. Jacob Hefty of New Glarus ran the local brewery, later operated by his son-in-law Gabriel Zweifel. Jacob Hefty from the Town of Washington operated the brewery in Monroe. Hefty's brother-in-law, Adam Blumer, bought into the business and ran it as the Blumer Brewery after Hefty's death.

Founders of the Bank of New Glarus in 1893 included Thomas Hefty and Thomas C. Hefty. Thomas Hefty arrived at the age of one with his immigrant parents Fridolin and Rosina (Schiesser) Hefty, and was a younger brother of Monroe brewer Jacob Hefty. Thomas C. Hefty was the son of immigrants Caspar and Elsbeth (Hoesly) Hefty. He was a partner with his brother-in-law Bartholomeus Kundert in the firm of Hefty and Kundert -- a late 19th century general store. Their 1882 building is known today as the Glarnerladen.

History books have cited the New Glarus millinery shop of Mrs. Gabriel Schindler (born Barbara Hefty). Brothers and WWI vets Peter and Henry W. Hefty began the Hefty Brothers Feed Mill on Railroad Street in 1921. They operated this until 1948 when they sold to Klassy Milling. In 1926, Peter Hefty sounded the fire alarm when the nearby Streiff and Domholdt livery barn caught fire. He and his brother Henry tried to salvage what they could from the burning building, but the barn was a total loss.

A Mother to the Rescue

Twin brothers Johann Melchior and Mathias Hefty were bachelors in their early 20s when they immigrated to America. They arrived in the mid-1860s and farmed in the New Glarus vicinity for several years before moving to Hamilton County, NE. Ten years in America passed and the twins, now in their early thirties, still hadn't married. The tale is told by descendent Terri (Knoble) Pesek that the twins' mother, Barbara (Schindler) Hefty, returned to Switzerland to find wives for her unmarried twin sons. She found two 19 year old textile mill workers in their native Canton Glarus who were willing to become American wives. The two friends, Katharina Baumgartner of Engi and Elsbeth Zimmermann of Schwändi, came to America and married the Hefty twins. Katharina married Johann Melchior and Elsbeth married Mathias, and they all farmed near Stockham, NE. This area of Nebraska boasted several Glarner immigrants including family names such as Hefty, Sigrist, Figi, Knobel, Steinmann and Speich.

The Lion of Lucerne – The Most Mournful Stone

Mark Twain said of the Lion of Lucerne monument “it is the most mournful and moving piece of stone in the world”. The sculpture pays tribute to the Swiss Guard defending the Tuileries Palace of King Louis XVI in 1792. On August 10, 1792 French revolutionaries stormed the Paris palace killing hundreds Swiss soldiers. In command of the Swiss Guard was Glarner Karl Josef Bachmann of Näfels. Bachmann escorted King Louis from the Palace but all were captured days later. Bachmann was found guilty by the revolutionaries and guillotined on September 3, 1792. The King and his wife Marie Antoinette were also to become victims of the guillotine in 1793. The monument honoring the Swiss victims was carved in the stone wall of a former Lucerne quarry. Carved into the stone is the Latin phrase “*Helvetiorum Fidei ac Virtuti*” or “to the loyalty and bravery of the Swiss”. Bachmann's name is also carved on the monument.



Among those Swiss Guard slain at the Tuileries was Fridolin Hefti (1766-1792) of Glarus. Hefti had attained the rank of Sergeant, was unmarried, and thus had no direct descendents. But a direct descendent of Sergeant Hefti's older brother was Jacob Hefty of Mentor, Clark County, Wisconsin – a brother-in-law of Jacob and Rose Trumpy of Green County.

The Wildheuer – One Foot on the Border between Life and Death

The occupation of *Wildheuer* (wild-hay cutter) had to be among the most arduous occupations known to man. In Schiller's Wilhelm Tell drama the destitute mother, Armgart, pleads to the tyrant Gessler to release her husband from prison. “Who is this man?” Gessler asks. “A poor wild-hay cutter from the Rigiberg” Armgart replies. “He mows hay from the steep and craggy shelves to which the very cattle dare not climb.”



The life of a *Wildheuer* gets an almost romanticized makeover in the book “The Alps: Sketches of Life and Nature in the Mountains” which states, “High up on the rocky summits, which, as seen from below, appear to be inaccessible to human feet, where the little round and bright green cushions of turf refresh the eye by their contrast with the smooth vertical grey cliffs, and clothe with mildness the jagged weather-beaten line of dead rough rocks, where at the utmost one would look for the eyries of the eagle and lammergeyer (bearded vulture), there is the harvest-place for the *Wildheuer*.” But as the book's description continues the hardship of the *Wildheuer* becomes apparent. “Yes, indeed it is a wretched life, a toilsome day's work, full of deprivations, fighting against wind and weather, always with one foot on the border between life and death. For only those slopes of grass in the mountains which are almost inaccessible become places for wild hay, generally high above the forest region, that is, at a height of 6000 feet and upwards.” And confirming Armgart's assessment, “(the wild-hay) can be approached neither by goats nor sheep, much less by heavy cattle. . .”

The equipment used by the *Wildheuer* included his scythe and sharpening stone, an *alpenstock* (a long staff with an iron point), crampons (metal footwear to provide traction), and cloth in which to bundle the cut hay. Provisions were also carried, along with the possibility of a goat for milk and as a faithful companion. In addition to falling from those dizzying heights, the occupational hazards of the *Wildheuer* also include falling stones, swollen streams, and the possibility of sudden snow storms.

The mountain hay serves as winter fodder for the animals in the valley. Cows fed the aromatic mountain grasses and herbs are said to produce a richer and more flavorful milk for butter and cheese than milk derived from cows fed valley-grown hay. The wild-hay cutters generally had only August and September to mow the hay. The remainder of the year found these men working such jobs as laborers, chamois hunters, weavers, or as foresters.

There were a number of *Wildheuern* among the ancestors of New Glarus folk including Fridolin Oertli (1769-1850) and original colonist Jost Becker (1790-1871) both of Ennetbühls, Fridolin Stuessi-Hoesli (1760-1834) and Fridolin Stuessi-Heer (1769-1837) both of Riedern, and Thomas Zimmermann (1697-1749) of Schwändi. Zimmermann died in August of 1749 while cutting wild hay as a result of possible dizziness, blackout or stroke. Daniel Durst, older brother of Judge Niklaus Durst, fell while cutting wild hay in August of 1799. He died hours later as a result of his injuries. Heinrich Knobel also fell to his death from the Glärnisch on a rainy September day in 1842.

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Wer in die Fußstapfen anderer tritt, hinterlässt keine eigenen Spuren.

Those who walk in the footsteps of others leave behind no tracks of their own.

Foods of our Ancestors

Many area residents have Norwegian backgrounds and one traditional food of Norwegians was a porridge made of flour and cream. If the cream was soured, the dish was called *rømmegrøt* (*rømme* means sour). If the cream was sweet the dish was called *fløtegrøt*. Today, church suppers still serve this dish -- although purists often claim what is billed as *rommegrot* at these church dinners may actually be *fløtegrøt* because generally sweet cream is used in the recipe. The dish is prepared by adding the cream to the flour and stirring over heat. As the porridge thickens, the butterfat separates into a layer which is removed to the side. The device originally used by the *husmor* (housewife) to stir the *grøt* was a branched stick called a *tvare* (pronounced ta-VAR-a). This implement was carved from the top of a spruce tree which generally had five small branches. When the *tvare* could stand upright in the thickened porridge, the *husmor* knew the dish was ready to serve. The “stirring stick” found in our museum’s Hall of History exhibit can correctly be referred to as a *tvare*.



Primrose Firsts

The Town of Primrose lies immediately north of the Town of New Glarus – Primrose in Dane County and New Glarus in Green County. In 1844 Robert Spears, the first white settler of Primrose built the first log cabin near a spring in Section 19. The approximate site of this cabin is near the intersection of present day County A and County G. This location was also just downhill from the intersection of two routes of earlier days – the Wiota-Madison route and the Blue Mounds-Exeter route. This intersection was a mid-way point between Madison and Wiota, and Blue Mounds and Exeter, and served as a logical spot for over-nighting. Ore haulers and travelers on these early routes would ask Spears for lodging which he gladly offered. Seizing an opportunity, he began an inn and soon doubled the size of his cabin. In 1846, Spears built a barn which was Primrose’s first wood frame structure, and in 1847 his cabin also became the first Primrose Post Office. Lodgers at Spears Tavern included peddler Arabut Ludlow of Monroe and Jerome Increase Case who sold threshing equipment to area wheat farmers and who was the founder of the Case Corporation, now part of Fiat.

The story of Robert Spears and other Primrose pioneers can be found in Albert Barton’s interesting 1895 history of Primrose. Barton’s book can now be found on the internet as part of Google’s efforts to make digital copies of public domain books available online to the public. Albert Olaus Barton was a Primrose native born to Norwegian immigrants Ole and Mary Ann (Tvedten) Barton. William T. Evjue wrote of Barton that he was a man of “ever-abiding curiosity” especially in all things historical. Barton had served as a city editor with the Wisconsin State Journal, was elected seven times as Dane County Register of Deeds, and in 1909 went to Washington, D. C. as a clerk to his long time friend Senator Robert La Follette. And according to Barton family lore, Albert dated a daughter of Woodrow Wilson while he resided in D. C. clerking for Senator La Follette. Albert Barton was the great uncle of Randy Beckwith of New Glarus.

The Legler Sisters

Among the original 1845 colonists was the Johann Caspar and Agatha (Speich) Legler family of Diesbach, Canton Glarus. Their children at the time of the immigration were Katharina, Mathias, Agatha, Regula and Maria Magdalena. A newborn son, Johann Caspar, was baptized while the immigrant group was in St. Louis (see Family History Notes - Summer, 2007). After arriving in New Glarus, the Leglers had four more daughters – Anna (the first girl born in New Glarus), Sybilla, Margaretha, and Maria.



Johann Caspar Legler participated in the August 20, 1845 drawing for 20 acre lots and it can be argued that Johann Caspar drew one of the best lots of all. His lot was

the 20 acres today bordered by 6th Avenue on the north and 10th Avenue on the south, and by Railroad Street on the east and 2nd Street on the west. This land was immediately adjacent to the village center. The Legler home stood until the 1930s when the Knobel Garage was build (today’s Blumenladen).

The picture above shows five of the Legler sisters likely taken around 1900. They are (from left): Katharina (married to Dr. Samuel Blumer and after his death to blacksmith Marcus Luchsinger, the widower of Legler sister Regula); Agatha (married to Johann David Sztinick); Maria Magdalena (married to Johann Jacob Figi); Anna (married to Peter Rudolf Tschudy); and Sybilla (married to Pankrazius Elmer). Three other Legler sisters were already deceased by 1900 – Anna who died in infancy in Switzerland, Regula, wife of blacksmith Marcus Luchsinger, and Margaretha who married Dr. J. J. Blumer. In 1900 sisters Katharina Blumer and Agatha Sztinick lived in Plymouth County, IA, Maria Magdalena Figi lived in Dodge County, MN, Anna Tschudy lived in Lincoln County, SD and Sybilla Elmer lived in New Glarus.



Pictured at right is a four generation photograph showing an aged Anna (Legler) Tschudy of Beresford, SD with her daughter Agatha (Tschudy) Schiesser of New Glarus, granddaughter Amelia (Schiesser) Hoesly and her children Robert and Lorene (Sis) Hoesly, also of New Glarus. Anna Tschudy was the last surviving of the Legler sisters. She died in 1939 and was buried in Beresford’s countryside Zion Cemetery located across from the Tschudy homestead.

Albert Mueller

New Glarus native Albert Mueller had a distinctive musical talent. He was a zither player. In the 1930s, Mueller could be heard performing on Madison radio broadcasts. In 1942, Mueller moved to Milwaukee where he was a charter member of Milwaukee's Zither Club. He entertained at Milwaukee area restaurants and at Milwaukee's Swiss Club. He is perhaps best remembered for the 13 years he played his zither at the Golden Zither Restaurant on West Vliet Street. Today Mueller's zither recordings are found in the Library of Congress' American Folklife Center.

Albert's father, Marcus Mueller, was a native of Glarus, Canton Glarus and their Mueller ancestry can be traced back to Johannes Mueller (born about 1580). Marcus married Berta Agnes Benziger in Switzerland and they immigrated to New Glarus in 1912 where their son Albert was born the following year. Albert's 1929 confirmation class included Waldo Freitag, Tosca (Gmur) Ruck, Wilma (Stauffer) Babler, and Otto Puempel. He was a 1931 graduate of the New Glarus High School. Mueller died in 1996 at the age of 82.

The zither is a stringed instrument played with the fingers and found throughout the Alps. Similar stringed instruments are known to many cultures in many lands. The etymology of the word zither is the same as that for the word guitar – they both are derived from the Greek word *kithara*. The New Glarus Historical Society has several zithers in its collection, one of which was donated by the Marcus Mueller family. Zithers were popular in the home played primarily by school girls and the girls who worked in factories. Zither playing declined with the advent of the radio and then television. But it recently has had resurgence due to players like Barbara Disch-Rhyner of Canton Glarus who, it is said, learned to play the zither in only five minutes.

And Speaking of the Swiss Club . . .

Years ago, a ventriloquist was entertaining at the Milwaukee Swiss Club. During the act, an angry Swiss man stood up and yelled "you have been making too many jokes about us Swiss people . . . this must stop!" The ventriloquist replied to the Swiss man "take it easy . . . they're only jokes." The Swiss man replied, "I wasn't talking to you, I was talking to that rude little guy sitting on your knee."

The Codex Manesse and the Black Knight

The jewel of the University of Heidelberg (Germany) library is the centuries old Codex Manesse, known there as the *Grosse Heidelberger Liederhandschrift*. The medieval work contains images and poems of the leading *Minnesänger* of the era. The *Minnesänger* were poets and musicians who wrote of courtly love – a medieval concept of nobly and chivalrously expressing love, admiration and patriotism. The ranks of the *Minnesänger* included noblemen and commoners. This beautifully rendered medieval volume documents 137 such poets and these illuminations have become among the most widely reproduced images of the Middle Ages.

This priceless volume dates from the early 1300s when it was created for Zurich's wealthy Manesse family. In the late 1500s, the book came into the possession of Baron Johann Philipp of Hohensax (1550-1596), a Swiss noble, whose interest in the volume was likely roused by the fact that two Hohensax predecessors were among the *Minnesänger* illustrated in the book. After the death of Baron Hohensax, the highly sought-after Codex Manesse passed to the French royal library, the French National Library, then the Palatinate Library of Heidelberg (Germany's most important Renaissance library) and now resides in the University of Heidelberg Library.



Baron Johann Philipp of Hohensax, who possessed the Codex Manesse in the late 1500s, was a highly educated man, having studied history, philosophy, ancient languages, medicine, theology, and law at schools and academies in St. Gallen, Zurich, Lausanne, Geneva, Heidelberg, Paris and Oxford. While a student in Geneva, he met the son of Friedrich III, Elector Palatine of Heidelberg. Hohensax went to Heidelberg in 1568 and lived in the royal castle for four years. In 1572 while studying in Paris, Hohensax escaped the slaughter of the Huguenots in the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre by going to England. At Oxford University, Hohensax received the degree of Magister. He returned to Heidelberg where he served the Elector Palatine and also began a military career serving in The Netherlands. Hohensax married into the Dutch House of Brederode. Among the wedding gifts received was one from Queen Elizabeth I of England presented by Elizabeth's court favorite Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. After his father's death, Johann Philipp became head of the House of Hohensax and returned to Sax (in today's Canton St. Gallen).

But the accomplished Baron Johann Philipp was to die tragically in 1596. He was murdered in the *Löwen* (a Salez pub) by a drunken nephew over an inheritance dispute. The nephew fled the scene, but was captured four years later and executed for his deed.

The story of Johann Philipp did not end with his death. He was laid to rest in a vault in the church at Sennwald, St. Gallen. A fire in the church in 1730 prompted the building of a new church and in the process the mummified body of the Baron was discovered. Some Catholics, knowing of this unusually intact corpse, stole the body, thinking this proved Hohensax a holy man. But it was proven that Hohensax was a committed Protestant and the Catholics returned the body to the Sennwald church. In 1979, the body, now known as the "Black Knight" (*Schwarzer Ritter*) was taken to Basel for scientific evaluation, conservation and reconstruction. And the mummy of Baron Johann Philipp of Hohensax rests today in a glass-topped casket and can be viewed by appointment in the Sennwald church. Johann Philipp's residence, known as the *Landgasthof Schlössli Sax*, has been restored and is now a charming inn and restaurant.

The link to local family history is that Baron Hohensax had three nieces who married Glarner – Barbara married Tobias Tschudi and then Dietrich Streuli, Cleophea married Bartholomeus Paravicini, and Anna Maria married Hans Elmer. And these Glarner couples are ancestors of many old Glarus and New Glarus families.