

Family History Notes

Winter, 2011

Roman Coin -- A Curious Discovery

Tom Danner, a newsletter reader from St. Louis, MO and a descendent of the Stuessy and Ruegg families of early New Glarus, emailed an article which he had discovered in a 1900 issue of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. The article told of an ancient coin being unearthed by a New Glarus workman digging the foundation of an icehouse. The dirty coin was sold for 10 cents to local teacher Karl A. Iffert (see Family History Notes Summer, 2009 about Germans in New Glarus) and was later identified as a Roman denarius dating from 100 B. C. The bronze piece had a silver wash and was about the size of a nickel. On the obverse was a head and on the reverse were two human figures apparently walking. The article claimed only one other matching coin existed in the United States and that other coin was in the collection of a Washington, D. C. museum.



The newspaper article also speculated the coin's arrival in North America was via French fur traders who may have traded the coin with Native Americans. At some point the coin was lost in the ground, only to be discovered by the unsuspecting workman in New Glarus around 1900. John Broihahn, Wisconsin State Archaeologist, was matter-of-fact about the article and the coin, saying this coin was more likely brought by a settler who lost the coin only to have it found some years later. And of course there is also the possibility that story was a hoax.

Other sources have documented Roman coins having been found in various places in the United States – some said to be at the bottom of ancient Indian mounds and thus suggesting their arrival in the Americas predated the arrival of Christopher Columbus. But in 1980, Jeremiah F. Epstein documented 40 such discoveries and concluded that there is no evidence suggesting any of the coins were pre-Columbian. He suggested these coins were lost at some point after 1492 and re-discovered later. Epstein's data (which didn't include the New Glarus coin), still suggests the New Glarus discovery was unique in that it pre-dated the other documented Wisconsin coin finds -- Elkhart Lake (1905), Oconomowoc (1928), Shawano (1933), and Wausaukee (1943). (Current Anthropology Vol. 21 No. 1 Feb 1980 "Pre-Columbian Old World Coins in America: An Examination of the Evidence" by Jeremiah F. Epstein.)

But what became of the Roman coin of New Glarus? Karl Iffert died in 1915 and didn't have a family. Is the coin in the collection of the New Glarus Historical Society, the Chalet of the Golden Fleece, or perhaps the Wisconsin Historical Society? The minuscule odds that an early settler possessed and carried a Roman coin, of that settler loosing that coin of such a special historic nature, and then another individual finding that coin make this story worth repeating. And its untraceable provenance invites intriguing speculation.

The Salmen Families

The Salmen family is associated with the village of Bilten, Canton Glarus. Their history goes back for centuries and includes a Heini Salmen, a victim of the *Mordnacht zu Wesen* of 1388 – the midnight ambush of the garrison at Weesen near Glarus by the Habsburgs. The name died out in Bilten when Maria Elisa Salmen, the last Salmen, passed away in 1947.

When the Bilten emigrants left Switzerland in 1847 bound for the New Bilten settlement (between New Glarus and Monticello) the group included one Salmen family – Caspar and Barbara (Knobel) Salmen. This family stayed in the area for a time, but eventually moved to the Dodge County, MN area which was home to many Glarner and Berner families. In Minnesota, this Salmen family became known as Solman, which ironically was one of the original spellings of the name centuries ago. In 1820, this Caspar Salmen experienced a tragic event when he was not quite two years old. His father, Rudolf Salmen, was executed for thievery. The means of the execution was decapitation by the sword (*hingerichtet mit dem Schwert*).

Another Salmen family to find their way to Green County was Johann Caspar and Columbina (Lienhard) Salmen and their three children – Anna Maria, Anna, and Johann Caspar. The father Johann Caspar died here in 1869 and was buried in the pioneer cemetery. The mother Columbina died in 1878 in Hornell, New York where she had moved to live with daughter Anna and son-in-law Rudolf Tschachtli.



The oldest child, Anna Maria married Melchior Marty and they farmed in the Town of Washington. Their five children were Maria Louisa (Mrs. Henry Klassy), Charles Rudolf (married to Anna Legler), Johann Caspar (married to Rosina Hefty), Anna (Mrs. Gottfried Karlen) and Jacob Fridolin (married to Maria Bertha Steiner and Barbara Legler). Among the many descendents of Melchior and Anna Maria (Salmen) Marty are Bill Hustad, Barbara Thacker, Butch Alderman, Roger Klassy, Josh Kammerud, Jance Marty and David Eichelkraut. Anna Maria and Melchior Marty are buried in the Washington Reformation cemetery.

Johann Caspar Salmen (Junior) was perhaps the member of the Salmen family who has had the most lasting impact upon Salmen family history in the past 200 years. The circa 1863 photograph (shown left) is of Johann Caspar and first wife, Mary, and sons Henry and John. Johann Caspar, who was married twice, had 16 children over a period of nearly 40 years. In the mid-1870s, the Salmen family left Green County for Clay County, NE. The older half of the Salmen children were born in Wisconsin and the younger half in Nebraska.

And today, the descendents of Johann Caspar and wives Mary Krepts and Margaret Foltz, number in the hundreds and they regularly hold family reunions to maintain the Salmen familial bonds. Salmen descendents have maintained the family genealogy in printed binders, they record the events of the year to present at their reunions, and have printed their own family cookbook. So while the Salmen name in Bilten has died out, the Salmens of Nebraska have flourished. Johann Caspar is buried in the historic Farmers' Valley Cemetery in Hamilton County, NE.

Homes of Our Ancestors: Bilten's Elsenerhaus and Ritterhaus

The village of Bilten is located in the northwest corner of Canton Glarus. The village lies at the foot of the mountains and near the Linth Canal which flows onward toward the *Zürichsee*. Nearby are the cantonal borders with Schwyz and St. Gallen. The village's two most important homes date from the early seventeenth century and were built by a father and a son. These two significant houses are located in *Oberbilten* (upper Bilten) on the *Elsenerstrasse* (Elsener Street). The family name is confusing since these people were known by two completely different family names. One name is Milt and the other is Elsener. So in old Swiss records, you may see the name Hans Heinrich Milt or you might see the name Hans Heinrich Elsener. Sometimes the records would include both, citing Hans Heinrich Milt *genannt* (known as) Elsener, or Hans Heinrich Elsener *genannt* Milt.

The Milt (or Elsener) family accumulated its wealth as salt and wine merchants. The wares came over the mountain passes from Northern Italy. It is claimed that Milt was the richest man of his day in Canton Glarus. In 1608 Hans Heinrich Milt and his wife Regula Elmer, built the home known as either the *Elsenerhaus* or the *Herrenhaus Milt*. The house is occupied yet today and is best known for its third floor *Ehrenstube* or Room of Honor (1618) – an imposing banquet room. The room is decorated in the Renaissance style with artistic parquetry featuring many types of wood. Stone columns near the windows have carved family crests. The room, a treasure of Glarner architecture, is considered of national importance having protection under Swiss federal regulation.



Nearby is the *Ritterhaus* or *Miltsche Ritterhaus* the home built in 1638 by Hans Heinrich Milt *genannt* Elsener, the son of Hans Heinrich and Regula. The term *Ritter* (Knight) applied to Hans Heinrich Milt (Jr.) because of his military career in the service of the French. The house, with its tall and imposing gable, is perfectly situated

with its back to the mountain. The home underwent extensive interior and exterior renovations within the recent past, its colorful window shutters are contrasted against the clean, white stucco. According to an online history of the historic *Ritterhaus*, the house remained in hands of Milt descendents until 1888 and was subsequently divided into two apartments around 1900. (A link to further information about the *Ritterhaus* (in German) can be found by following this link: http://www.gctag.ch/pdf/ritterhaus_bilten.pdf)

eNewsletter readers who are descendents of both Hans Heinrich Milt (father) and Hans Heinrich Milt (son) include Barbara Nelson, Joseph Bloom, John Snider, Bill Hoesly, Gloria Etter, Larry Klassy, Laurie Medina, Fred Salmen, Steve Kleinschmidt, Nedra Klassy-Disch, and Tom Danner.

Foods of Our Ancestors: Schabziger

Perhaps the most iconic food product of Canton Glarus is its unique green cheese named *Schabziger*. It was well known to our Canton Glarus ancestors. The origin of this curious cheese dates from the Middle Ages when nuns of the Säkingen Convent are said to have added the herb blue fenugreek (*Trigonella caerulea* or *Melilotus caerulea*) to a somewhat bland and low fat Glarner cheese. Legend states that this clover-like trefoil was introduced to Europe by Crusaders returning from the Middle East. In 1463, the Canton Glarus *Landsgemeinde* established standards for this cheese, making *Schabziger* the oldest branded product in Switzerland today. *Schabziger* is also known in Switzerland as *Kräuterkäse* (herb cheese) and is marketed in the United States as Sap Sago – Sap Sago believed to be a U. S. corruption of the Swiss word *Schabziger*.

The traditional form of the hard sage-green cheese is a cone shape called a *Stöckli*. In recent years, the Geska Company of Glarus (the world's sole manufacturer of *Schabziger*) has re-energized the brand by increasing its number of products, creating new packaging and graphics for the cheese cones, developing new advertising, and offering kitchen-size mills to grate the hard cheese. The new products include processed cheese wedges flavored with *Schabziger*, selling the green cheese in a grated form, and a butter/*Schabziger* blend for spreading on breads or for melting on potatoes and vegetables. This butter blend is known in old Glarner dialect as *Anggäziger* – *Anggä* being an old Glarner word for butter.



(Photographs show the Schabziger packaging graphics -- similar but different graphics used in Switzerland and in the United States.)

There are easy ways to incorporate Schabziger into your meals and snacks. And each of these recipes is commonly found in Canton Glarus today. The butter/*Schabziger* blend called *Anggäziger* can be spread on bread and crackers. For a festive appearance the blend can be piped onto bread to create fancy *Zigerbrötli apéritifs*. A less rich spread variation replaces part of the butter with Neufchatel or cream cheese.

Another way to use the butter/*Schabziger* blend is to add it to hot potatoes cooked in their skins. As the butter and cheese mixture melts, it coats and seasons the potatoes. This is known in Glarus as *Gschwellti mit Anggäziger*. This recipe brings to mind the comments of Mathias Dürst in his 1845 immigration diary when he noted “something we are longingly wishing for: green cheese which could improve the watery potatoes”. Instead of using potatoes, this spread can also be melted on vegetables such as green beans, cauliflower or Brussels sprouts.



A common and simple dish found in Glarus is *Zigerhörnli* (variation *Zigerhöreli*) which is simply macaroni and cheese flavored with Schabziger. The macaroni is prepared and a mixture of a melting cheese and grated *Schabziger* is added to the hot macaroni. Perhaps a bit of cream or milk is added to make a creamier sauce consistency. This dish is traditionally topped with a small amount of very thinly sliced onions browned and crisped in butter. It is served along with a side of applesauce (*Öpfelmüs*). Americans like the convenience of boxed macaroni and cheese dinners, and a tablespoon to two of grated Schabziger can be added to any of the boxed versions to create a quick “speed-scratch” *Zigerhörnli*.

Another idea for using *Schabziger* is in our ubiquitous green bean casserole. After baking the casserole, remove it from the oven and stir in 2 to 3 tablespoons of the grated cheese. Instead of topping with canned French fried onions, top the casserole with crispy fried onions. An American classic with a Glarner twist!

The following are two YouTube links – the first is a television commercial aired in Switzerland for *Schabziger*, and the second is a news report about the Guinness Book world record *Zigerbrötli*.

Web link to Schabziger TV Commercial (in Swiss-German): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bTZmuIbvbX8>

Web link to World Record Zigerbrötli (in Swiss-German): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDUXuK8oJEI>

Swiss Brands: Geska, Ricola and Hero



As previously mentioned, the Geska Company of Glarus, Switzerland is the sole manufacturer of *Schabziger*. The name Geska was derived its name from *Gesellschaft Schweizer Kräuterkäse-Fabrikanten*. Similarly, the name Ricola, which makes the famed herbal throat lozenges, was derived from the name of the company *Confiseriefabrik Richterich & Co. Laufen*. In 1910 the Swiss brand name Hero was formed from the first two letters of the owners’ last names -- Henckell and Roth. It is said that if you look closely at the Hero label on a jar of their jam, you will notice 4 cans or jars hidden within the word Hero.

A Swiss Compliment

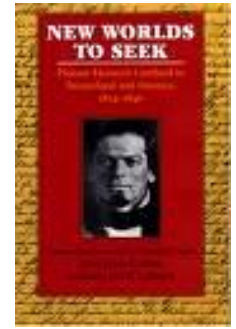
Uncle Fridolin was a man of few words and even fewer compliments. So when Aunt Verena reported that Fridli had paid her a compliment, there were more than a few skeptics.

“He told me that I looked like a breath of spring,” Verena boasted.

But after a moment Verena added, “However, that wasn’t exactly how he phrased it. What he actually said was that I looked like the end of a hard winter.” (Adapted with thanks to Cousin Minnie)

Winter Reads: Mid-Nineteenth Century American History from a Glarner Perspective

Those with an interest in mid-nineteenth century U.S. history may be interested in reading the works of Heinrich Lienhard whose published diaries tell of his 1846 overland trek to California before the Gold Rush. Born Johann Heinrich Lienhard in Bilten, Canton Glarus, his works provide a look at the life of an immigrant and an early settler of the west. Lienhard was working for Swiss-American Johann Augustus Sutter at Sutter's New Helvetia settlement in California (then part of Mexico) when gold was discovered. Lienhard's translated works are "New Worlds to Seek" which covers his life from 1824 to 1846, and "From St. Louis to Sutter's Fort" which begins in 1846. After the gold rush, Lienhard returned to Switzerland to marry. His wife, Elsbeth Blumer, was a first cousin of Adam Blumer who settled in the Town of Washington. The Lienhards returned to the U. S., lived for a short period in Madison, WI, then settled in Nauvoo, IL. In "New Worlds to Seek", Lienhard wrote about a chance encounter with the original group of the New Glarus settlers, then passing through Galena, IL, just days away from their new Wisconsin home.



Another reading suggestion is Peter DeCarlo's senior thesis (University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire) entitled "Freely Bleed and Even Die: A Story of a Civil War Soldier". DeCarlo's thesis is based on the correspondence written by a Minnesota soldier fighting in the Civil War. The soldier was Glarner immigrant Adam Marty (1836-1923). His dozens of letters, as well as those letters of his cousin, fellow immigrant, and correspondent, Samuel Bloomer (originally Blumer), have been transcribed and are held in the archives of the Minnesota Historical Society. DeCarlo's paper is found online by following the following word or pdf links:

[thesis word](#) (Microsoft Word)

[thesis pdf](#) (PDF)

Peter J. Babler: Monticello Cigar Maker

The Monticello Area Historical Society has recently acquired a piece of Monticello history for their collection – a cigar box from the Monticello cigar maker Peter J. Babler. The brand name Babler's "112" found on several places of the wooden cigar box. The name "112" apparently refers to the fact that the Babler factory was registered as factory No. 112 in Wisconsin. (The Wisconsin Historical Society was unable to determine any regulatory agency which oversaw the manufacture of cigars.) An advertisement promoting Babler's "112" nickel cigars was found in the October 16, 1912 *Monticello Messenger*. Another Babler cigar box is already in the MAHS collection is a brand he called "La Morenda".

Peter J. Babler (1881-1949) was born in Matt, Canton Glarus, Switzerland, the son of Johann Peter and Anna (Babler) Babler. He came as a child with his family to Green County in late 1880s. Babler married Anna Alma Voegeli, the granddaughter of Jost and Barbara (Opprecht) Voegeli who started the Voegeli farm in 1854. She was also the granddaughter of Markus Hoesly an original 1845 colonist of New Glarus and one-time proprietor of the Wilhelm Tell Hotel.

Other area cigar makers included Charles A. Jordan of Monticello who produced the "Court House" brand. Jordan's "Court House" cigar was described as being "As Fragrant as a Rose" and "As Mild as a Summer's Night". Ed Lipchow of Monroe (married to Barbara Hefty of the Town of Washington) made the "Shoe Peg" brand. The "Shoe Peg" and "Pony" brands were later made by retailer Reuben T. Holcomb of Monroe (brother of Ernest Holcomb of Monticello). Also making cigars in Monroe was Swiss immigrant Jacob Trumpy. In New Glarus, cigar maker Samuel H. Luchsinger made a brand called the "31" or "Highway 31" which referred to the numerical designation at that time of the north-south State highway running through Green County (today known as Highway 69).

NGHS Yearbooks Online

The New Glarus School District has about 3 dozen of the "Glarian" yearbooks posted on their website. The yearbooks begin with the Class of 1946. By clicking on the year, the entire yearbook can be viewed page by page, including all of those now embarrassing pictures of by-gone hairdos and haircuts. Here is the link: <http://www.ngsd.k12.wi.us/page.cfm?p=3480> Hint: right click on the photos to access the zoom feature.

The Geiger Families

The family name Geiger, like the surnames Becker, Schmid and Schneider, was derived from an occupation -- in the case of Geiger that of fiddle (*Gyge*) player or fiddle maker. And like Becker, Schmid and Schneider, the name is commonly found throughout the German speaking areas of Europe. A German, Hans Geiger, was the inventor of the Geiger Counter. In Austria, the iconic Geiger clothing line was developed by Barbara Geiger over 100 years ago. Today their Tyrolean-style fashions are still run by the Geiger family.

In Canton Glarus the Geiger family name (also spelled Giger and Gyger) was generally associated with the villages of Engi and Elm. The Elm line died out nearly 80 years ago largely due to immigration to the U.S. There are perhaps a couple dozen households in Canton Glarus today with the surname Geiger or Giger.

In New Glarus history, there were a few Geigers who immigrated. The first was Heinrich Geiger who came from Elm around 1849. Heinrich had married Sabina Baumgartner and they were the parents of two sons, Jacob and Heinrich. Heinrich immigrated in advance of his family. According to New Glarus and Swiss records, when wife Sabina and their two boys arrived in America in 1851, all three contracted cholera and died while on the Mississippi River below Galena, IL. In 1852 Heinrich married a second time to New Bilten immigrant Anna Maria Oswald. Heinrich was a shoemaker in New Glarus and later farmed the land which is

now being developed by the New Glarus Home for their new Glarner Lodge project. Geiger also donated one half acre of land for the EUB cemetery located west of New Glarus.



Heinrich and Anna Maria (Oswald) Geiger had eleven children, eight who lived to adulthood. Pictured left is their youngest child, Maria Geiger, and her husband New Glarus businessman Henry Steussy. Steussy was a partner of Solomon Levitan in the Levitan-Steussy mercantile store. Maria and Henry had three sons – Henry, Edwin and Leroy. Maria died at the age of 23 only a few months after the birth of youngest son Leroy.

Heinrich Geiger was not the only one of his family to immigrate. His sisters Ursula (Mrs. Thomas Duerst) and Rahel (Mrs. Pankratius Elmer) also were early New Glarus immigrants. A sister Barbara (Mrs. Jacob Rhyner), was part of the New Elm settlement near Oshkosh. Another sister, Anna Maria (Mrs. Engelbert Gredig) also immigrated to America. Only one Geiger sibling, Susanna (Mrs. Wernet Kubli), remained in Elm where some of her descendents still live.

The parents of these people were Jacob and Rahel (Schneider) Geiger. Jacob was part of the Glarner Battalion which took part in the Swiss efforts to defeat the remaining Napoleon loyalists at the Huenigen (France) fortress near Basel in 1815. This military action was the last occasion Swiss forces were outside of their national borders. Jacob died at sea en route to New Glarus in 1856. Wife Rahel Geiger died in New Glarus in 1868. Her tombstone is in the museum cemetery.

While there are many Geiger descendents in New Glarus today, it appears there are none bearing the Geiger name. Among the local Jacob Geiger descendents are Jane Phillipson, Fred and Gloria Bodenmann, Dwight and Marilyn Elmer, Pat and Laura Nevil, Eddie Klitzke, Ken Ruegsegger, Jeff Babler, Mary Shanahan, Rick Engen, and Jeanette Rupnow. Perhaps Tim Geiger, a Mt. Horeb pharmacist, is the nearest male Geiger.

Another Geiger from Elm to arrive in New Glarus was Anna Geiger who married Johann Ulrich Rhyner. Anna had two brothers, Jacob and Johann Ulrich Geiger, who were killed in Elm's 1881 landslide. Anna's nephew, Johann Ulrich Geiger, died in 1934 and was the last Geiger male of Elm. Descendents of Anna Geiger and Johann Ulrich Rhyner include Nick Hauser, Doris Streiff and MaryAnn Schuett.

Immigrants to the New Elm settlement near Oshkosh included Oswald and Margreth (Rhyner) Geiger of Elm and several sons. Monroe blacksmith Leonhard Geiger (or Giger) was an immigrant from the village of Engi. Leonhard's sister Elsbeth Geiger married Fridolin Norder and their sons Jacob and Leonhard Norder were also early Green County residents (see Family History Notes, Fall, 2008). Other Geiger families left Canton Glarus for Brazil.

St. Louis, MO immigrants included brothers Leonhard, Peter, Fridolin and Bernhard Giger. They were from the Engi branch and related to Leonhard Geiger of Monroe. In St. Louis, some of Bernhard's descendents spelled their name Geger. A descendent, Fr. Bart Geger, a Jesuit educator, has helped translate and post information about Canton Glarus families (especially those of the Sernftal) on the Internet.

Family Connections among Area Reformed Clergy

A small item in the May 20, 1924 edition of the Capital Times newspaper reported that Rev. and Mrs. Albert Muehlmeier of Monticello attended the New Glarus funeral of Miriam Elliker. Their attendance would not be surprising since Albert was the minister of Monticello's Zwingli Reformed Church and Miriam was the daughter of Reverend Gottfried Elliker of the New Glarus Swiss Reformed Church. The newspaper account also noted that Miriam was the niece of the Muehlmeiers. But was this relationship true since Rev. Elliker was of Swiss background as compared to the German Muehlmeiers.

Bob Elliker, a newsletter reader and also the grandson of Rev. Elliker, confirmed that indeed the Elliker and Muehlmeier families were related. Bob's grandmother, Emilie (Muehlmeier) Elliker, was the sister of Albert Muehlmeier. Bob further shared that his great-grandfather, Herman Augustus Muehlmeier, was one of the founders of the Mission House near Sheboygan -- today known as Lakeland College. The Mission House was formed in the 1850s by German Reformed immigrants as an educational institution and seminary.

Rev. and Mrs. Elliker and family arrived in New Glarus in 1913 and served the Swiss Reformed community until 1926. Rev. and Mrs. Muehlmeier served the Monticello community from around 1898 to 1901. In 1909, Monticello asked Rev. Muehlmeier to return. He did return, perhaps enticed by the promise of a new parsonage (built in 1910), and he served until 1938. The Muehlmeiers were the grandparents of the late Rosemary (Rolph) Klassy, a longtime New Glarus music teacher, and of Courtney Muehlmeier who was killed in WWII at Iwo Jima.

Today, Lakeland College landmarks include a Muehlmeier residence hall as well as a Grosshuesch residence hall. The name Grosshuesch may be recognized by local and family historians. Rev. Walter Grosshuesch served as pastor of Belleville's Reformed Church and at the Mt. Vernon Zwingli Church. In 1917, Walter married New Glarus area native, Rosina Kundert. Walter's brother, Rev. Dr. Paul Grosshuesch was President of the Mission House from 1931 until 1949

In another curious family connection, the mother of Revs. Walter and Paul Grosshuesch was Silla Muehlmeier, the sister of Emilie Elliker and Albert Muehlmeier. Silla Muehlmeier was married to Wilhelm Grosshuesch, a professor at the Mission House.

The Grether family was also closely associated with the Mission House. The Grether Woods, located adjacent to the campus, was named for Rev. Frank Grether a well-respected teacher at the institution. The name Grether was found in the New Glarus area. Rev. Alvin Grether, Frank's son, was the minister of the Postville Reformed Church in the early 1900's. And like his father, Alvin Grether also became a professor at the Mission House. People may remember Rev. Grether's daughters -- Martha (Grether) Tschudy, the Green County Nurse, who regularly came to the New Glarus schools in the days of goiter pills and oral polio vaccines. Martha's sister Caroline (Grether) Steva an art teacher at the local schools.

And in yet another curious family connection, Rev. Alvin Grether had a cousin, Edna Grether, the daughter of Rev. George Grether. Edna married Mission House graduate and minister, Richard Rettig. Rev. Rettig was the successor to Rev. Gottfried Elliker of the New Glarus Swiss Church. Cousins Alvin Grether and Edna (Grether) Rettig were the grandchildren of German immigrant Rev. John Michael Grether.

Calaboose Envy (from the “Monroe Sentinel” of June 23, 1886 in the Monticello local news column):



“We understand that New Glarus is building a Town Hall, the basement of which is being fitted up as a calaboose. With five saloons, it is no wonder that they need the latter. With only two [saloons] here [in Monticello], an institution of the above character is much needed. It would be a fitting place for a man that has become legally drunk on legal whiskey, to become legally sober.” The New Glarus Town Hall survives and the metal bars seen on the basement windows still bear testament to the late 19th century calaboose. (Photos on this page courtesy of Fred Underhill.)

History Detective Follow-up

The question posed in the last issue tested your knowledge of local historical trivia. The question – “What New Glarus area landmark was named for a Polish Muslim?” The answer is the Bem School which was named for Josef Zachariasz Bem, a Polish-born military man who became a war hero in 1848. Bem is said to have converted to Islam in order to serve as Governor of Aleppo (in today’s Syria). Bem died in Aleppo in 1850. The name Bem was applied to a Town of York post office, probably around the late 1840s, and later the name was appropriated by the nearby country school about 4 miles west of New Glarus.

Doris (Strahm) Streiff did some research and arrived at the correct answer. She told of growing up in the farmhouse at Strahm’s Corners which had previously served as the Bem Post Office. In fact, her own bedroom door (since painted over) read Bem, Wis. Doris also attended the nearby Bem country school. Duane Freitag was stumped by the question at first, but arrived at the correct answer when he remembered that his mother had attended the Bem School and that it had been named for a European General.

History Detective Questions

This issue’s history detective questions may be difficult for those eNewsletter readers who were not born and raised in New Glarus. The questions may prove challenging for New Glarus natives, too. Since many readers are not from New Glarus, a third trivia question is offered. Answers will be found in the next issue. Good luck!

1) “What did these three New Glarus men – Arnold Marty, Oswald Geiger and Elmer Figi – have in common?”

2) Can anyone explain any historical significance of this storage shed found in the backyard of a New Glarus home?

3) Samuel Warmbrodt (1838-1921) was an immigrant from the village of Siselen, Canton Bern. Warmbrodt farmed in Bond County, Illinois, a region of many Swiss immigrants in the mid-1800s. Warmbrodt enlisted with the Illinois 49th Infantry and was promoted to Corporal. He was married twice and had several children. Samuel’s granddaughter, Sara Viola Warmbrodt, became a stage actress who went by the name Sara Southern. Sara became the mother of a well-known American. Does anyone know who that famous American is?



From a Previous Issue . . . The Story of Harriet Fisher and an Update

The following story ran in the Winter, 2008 issue telling of Harriet Fisher of Missouri who was thought to have been born Afra Stauffacher in Matt, Canton Glarus. Afra and her parents, Heinrich and Barbara (Blumer) Stauffacher were among the first settlers of New Glarus in 1845. But this family was one of the first to leave and their whereabouts thereafter were unknown to New Glarus historians.

Who was Harriet Fisher?

Amy Fisher of Colorado hit a brick wall researching her great-great grandmother Harriet Fisher. Little was known about Harriet before her 1851 marriage to George Fisher in Hancock County, IL. Marriage records spelled Harriet's maiden name as Stanfacker or Staufacker while other family records listed her maiden name as Stofer or Stauffer. An entry in the RootsWeb genealogical database says Harriet was born in Onton Blarivus, Switzerland in 1835. Her entry in the LDS database says Harriet Ann Stouffer (or Stauffer or Staufacker) was born in Llanton Staris, Switzerland. Amy knew that Harriet was born in Switzerland and made the connection with Canton Glarus. She believed that Harriet had immigrated to the U.S. in 1844 via New Orleans and had spent some years in Galena. Fisher family lore reported that two of Harriet's brothers died en route to America. Another family story told of a little girl was buried at sea. But these bits and pieces of Harriet's life wouldn't reveal her ancestry.



People from the Green County region may immediately recognize that the name Staufacker is quite likely the Glarner name Stauffacher. Local historians may recall reading that original New Glarus settlers Heinrich and Barbara (Blumer) Stauffacher buried one daughter at sea (recorded by diarist Mathias Dürst) and that two of their sons died presumably en route to America (see p. 208 of "New Glarus 1845-1970" by Dr. Leo Schelbert). Heinrich and Barbara did not have a daughter named Harriet, but they did have a daughter named Afra born in 1836. Was Afra Stauffacher the same person as Harriet Fisher?

Heinrich and Barbara Stauffacher, like the other Stauffacher families who arrived in 1845 left New Glarus within a year or two. Fridolin Streiff wrote that this family was in Galena in 1846 and census records indicate they were somewhere in Illinois around 1850. In the 1860 federal census, "H. Stofaker" and wife Barbara are found in Scotland County, Missouri. And only miles away living in adjoining Knox County, Missouri are Harriet and George Fisher! Based on circumstantial information it appears quite likely that Harriet Fisher was born Afra Stauffacher, an original New Glarus colonist. Harriet died in Missouri in 1929. She is pictured above with two grandchildren around 1920.

An Update to the Harriet Fisher Story

Additional research has taken place since this story was first reported three years ago. Several other children of Heinrich and Barbara (Blumer) Stauffacher were identified based on Illinois marriage and census records. They were daughters Euphemia (Mrs. John P. Thomas), Barbara Stauffacher (Mrs. Antoine Laurene), Anna (Mrs. Israel Watts), and son John C. Stauffacher. (The daughters Euphemia and Barbara were present at the founding of New Glarus. Anna and John were born after the family left for Illinois.) But until recently there was no definitive connection linking Harriet Fisher with these other Stauffacher children.



But recently, a Scotland County, MO document from 1877 was discovered which listed the names of the Heinrich Stauffacher heirs on a quit claim deed. All the above children were listed as well as Harriet and George Fisher. Thus a definitive link was discovered establishing Harriet as a member of the Stauffacher family. Amy Fisher and her relatives can now claim a Glarner heritage through Afra Stauffacher who became Harriet Fisher. (Pictured Stauffacher coat of arms.)

* * * * *

"A dream is just a dream. A goal is a dream with a plan and a deadline. And that goal will remain a dream unless you create and execute a plan of action to accomplish it." Harvey Mackay