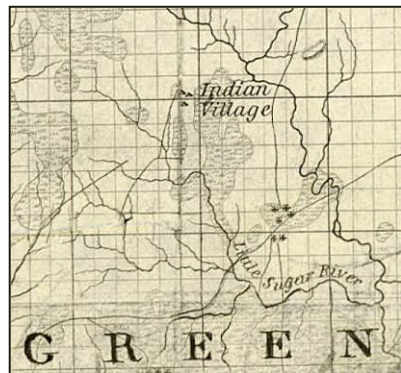


Family History Notes

Summer, 2012

The Indian Village of Camanche

Some of the oldest area maps (1830s and 1840s) show that an Indian village was located on the border of Section 1 of Town of New Glarus (Green County) and the adjoining Section 36 in the Town of Primrose (Dane County). This area today is near the point where Highway 69 begins climbing Spring Valley hill. According to the maps as early as 1838, the village was called Camanche (also found referenced as Comanche or Chemanchville). Frederic G. Cassidy mentions this village in his reference book “Dane County Place-Names”.



He noted that the Comanche Indians were a tribe known in history since the early the 1800s. They lived in the environs of present day Oklahoma, northwest Texas, southern Kansas and into New Mexico and Arizona. He believed the name Camanche was misapplied to this village. He theorizes that perhaps this name may have been related to an 1836 Iowa real estate scheme. An eastern real estate developer, Dr. George K. Peck, selected the name Camanche for the village he was developing in Clinton County, IA. Cassidy points out that the name Camanche “was no more native [in Clinton County, Iowa] than here.”

Pictured left is a small portion of an 1839 map of Wisconsin. Shown on the map is the above-reference Indian village. The horizontal line shown between the words “Indian” and “Village” is the Green County-Dane County border. The dark vertical line just to the left of the words “Indian” and “Village” is the border between the Towns of Primrose and Montrose (in Dane) and New Glarus and Exeter (in Green). The map also shows the sites of the lead diggings in nearby Exeter. The name “Little Sugar River” appears on the 1839 map debunking the tale that the Sugar River was named when Fridolin Streiff crossed the swollen river and lost the sugar stored in his saddlebags. Fridolin Streiff (the scout) did not arrive on the local scene until 1845.

Becker Family Five Generation Photo

Kendall Schneider shared this circa 1911 five generation photograph. The lives of the five people in the photo spanned nearly the entire length of time that Glarner immigrants



and their descendents have lived in this area. The old woman in the photo is Anna (Elmer) Becker (1825-1915). Anna and her husband Johann Caspar Becker were among the Bilten, Canton Glarus immigrants of 1847 who formed the New Bilten settlement between New Glarus and Monticello. The baby in the photograph was Marie (Kubly) Steiner (1911-2009). Marie was a life-long area resident married to Wilburt Steiner.



Also pictured are Marie’s great-grandfather Jacob Becker (1847-1934), likely the first child born in the New Bilten settlement and who married Rosina Hefty; grandmother Anna Becker (1873-1955) married to Henry B. Hefty; and mother Anna Barbara Hefty (1892-1920) married to Ernest Kubly. The smaller picture is Anna (Elmer) Becker taken decades earlier.

Besides Marie Steiner, other great-great grandchildren (living and deceased) of Anna and Johann Caspar Becker include Ralph Zimmerman, Dorothy (Gempeler) Schneider, Willis Elmer, Keith Freitag, Larry Klassy, Clarence Kernan, Darrel Hustad, Lorna (Hustad) Righter, Peggy (Feller) Roth, and Mary Ann (Frick) Schuett.

A Look at New Glarus Elections and Politics Through the Years

A new book takes an inside look at local politics. New Glarus native and local historian Duane Freitag has thoroughly researched elections during New Glarus' first century. His book, available for purchase on Amazon.com, is entitled "Sauerkraut, Suspenders and the Swiss: A Political History of Green County's Swiss Colony 1845-1945". From the book's description, "Freitag discusses what caused shifts in Wisconsin's political winds throughout this period by placing Green County elections against the larger context of political landscape of the United States as a whole. In doing so, he examines the history of America and demonstrates how Swiss immigrants and other Wisconsin cultural groups responded to the events that shaped the nation."

A Norwegian Political Dynasty

The George and Julia (Syse) Fjelstad family lived just north of the Green County border in Section 36 of the Town of Perry in Dane County – just a couple of miles north of Strahm's Corners. George was born Gunner (or Gunder) Johnson Fjelstad in Telemark, Norway, and immigrated as a baby with his parents in 1853. Julia



Fjelstad, born Gurine Syse, was born in 1855 to Norwegian immigrant parents whose farm straddled the Green-Dane border. The Fjelstads (pictured) had 7 children – Joseph, Gustafine (died as an infant), Melvin, Ben, Selma, George Jr. and Olin.

George Fjelstad Sr. was active in local politics and served as the Chairman of the Perry Town Board. Later he was elected as Dane County Clerk, a position held for 18 years until he was narrowly defeated in 1924 by Austin Johnson. Selma Fjelstad, George's daughter, held the deputy clerk position under her father and continued in that position under Johnson. However Johnson abruptly fired her – an action with an unintended consequence. A determined Selma decided to make a run for the County Clerk position herself. She challenged Johnson and won the 1926 election, defeating the man who had beaten her father and who had fired her!

George Fjelstad was descended through his mother from the Kittleson-Tvedten family. Members of this family immigrated from Nissedal, Telemark in Norway in the 1850s. In America some of the family retained their patronymic name of Kittleson (originally Kjetilson), while others retained the place name Tvedten.

The Fjelstad-Kittleson-Tvedten relationships constituted a veritable political dynasty. As mentioned George Fjelstad and his daughter Selma both held the position of Dane County Clerk. George had a nephew, John T. (Ted) Syvrud, the son of Knud T. and Carrie (Fjelstad) Syvrud, who served as Green County Sheriff. George Fjelstad's first cousin was Albert O. Barton. After serving on the Dane County Board for 12 years, Albert Barton was elected seven times to the position of Dane County Register of Deed, serving until his death in 1947. Barton was said to have been the second University of Wisconsin graduate from Primrose, the first being Robert M. La Follette. It was even claimed that Barton was born in the same Primrose log cabin in which La Follette was born. (One half of the double La Follette cabin had been moved to the nearby Barton farm.) From 1910-1912 Barton served as La Follette's Senate Clerk in Washington D. C.

George Fjelstad's mother's first cousin was Isaac E. Kittleson who served as Dane County Sheriff. Isaac's sister Anna was married to Herman B. Dahle. Dahle, a Mt. Vernon merchant, was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives for two terms ending in 1903. (Isak Dahle, the son of Herman and Anna was the founder of Little Norway which he began in 1927 in secluded glen near Mt. Horeb. Dahle referred to the site as Nissedal named after the Kittleson-Tvedten family's Norwegian home.) Anna (Kittleson) Dahle and Isaac E. Kittleson had a brother Jacob Kittleson who farmed in York, Green County. Jacob served as Town Clerk and Chairman of the Town of York before being elected Green County Register of Deeds from 1884 to 1892. The Jacob Kittleson farm was located in Section 10 of the Town of York. The farm's subsequent owners included a Swedish immigrant, Abel Swenson, and in more recent years, the Kittleson farmland was owned by Edward Willi and Ernest Hofer.

Jacob's son Isaac Milo Kittleson (usually referred to as Milo) was born on the family farm in York. Milo attended school in Monroe, taught country school in Green County, and moved to Madison where he was involved in banking. But the political bug hit Milo Kittleson and he was elected a one-term city alder in 1912 and then in 1920 was elected mayor of Madison and served in that capacity for three terms. In April, 1925 Mayor Kittleson addressed the City Council proposing a combination auditorium and boathouse for a site on Lake Monona at the end of Monona Avenue. Turning this concept into reality took decades of wrangling. The project, today known as Monona Terrace, was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright and completed in 1997.

Over the years several Fjelstad family members have married into Swiss stock. Ben Fjelstad's sons Clifford, Russell and Ervin married Idellis Disch, Pauline Bandi and Palma Yaeger, respectively. Their cousin Hazel Fjelstad married Wilbert Frick. Cousin Amanda Helland married Albert Schmid.

One Dairy Farm in Minnesota

Green County, Wisconsin has had numerous family farms owned and operated by various Marty families. Most of these Martys came from the adjoining Canton Glarus villages of Engi and Matt where the name was spelled Marti. And several of the area men named Marty also bore the name Jacob. One Jacob Marty (married to Electa Hills) helped found the village of Monticello. Another Jacob Marty (married to Barbara Stauffacher) was the progenitor of a large Dutch Hollow family. Another Jacob Marty (married to Rosina Wichser) was the progenitor of another large family in Primrose. Nearly every Marty family had a "Jake".

Yet another Jacob Marty immigrated from Engi around 1880 and married Swiss immigrant Susanna Trümpler. While Jacob and Susanna had Glarner kin in Green County and the Renwick, IA area settlement, they chose to carve out a farm of their own near a Marty uncle in the forests of Minnesota near the St. Croix River. This Marty farm remained in family hands through the third generation. But with the changes in family dairy farm economics, their farm did not make it to the fourth generation.

Gayla Marty, the great-granddaughter of Jacob and Susanna Marty, has written a heartfelt book entitled "Memories of Trees – A Daughter's Story of a Family Farm" in which she writes of the love of family, farm, heritage and the land. Gayla's book tells of how the land helped sustain a family for over 100 years. Hard work was required of all family members to survive -- a labor of love built on a firm foundation of faith. She also explains how the family arrived at the heartbreaking decision to quit farming. Gayla's book is available from Amazon.com.

The Dairy Farm in America's Dairyland

While Gayla Marty's book takes a look at the history of one family farm, Ed Janus's book "Creating Dairyland" explores dairy farming as a whole. He humorously suggests that Wisconsin's family dairy farms are a "get rich slowly scheme". Janus tells the story of how Wisconsin turned from wheat to cows, and how cows "saved our soil, created our landscape, brought prosperity to our state". He also explains the importance of the silo development which led to nutritious, year-round feed for cows thus allowing year-round milking, year-round manufacture of cheese, and year-round paychecks.

From Elbow Grease to Axle Grease

Sometimes we get nostalgic about the past and forget that not everything was picture perfect. In the earliest days of the state, the women made butter by milking their family cow (or two), letting the cream rise, and then churning the cream into butter. It took no small amount of elbow grease to produce a few pounds of butter. But the quality of the butter was often so bad it could not be sold or bartered at the local general store. There were various causes for this bad quality butter. The wooden churns and kneaders could not be effectively sanitized like the stainless steel of today. Little attention was paid to what the cows grazed upon, so the milk often took on undesirable flavor notes. This inferior butter was dumped into barrels and sold in Chicago by the hundred-weight as an axle lubricant. It became well-known as "Wisconsin wagon-wheel grease".

New Glarus Area Country Schools

The following is a listing of the area country schools which existed over the years educating the local youth. The schools were scattered about the countryside serving the neighboring farm families. Much has been written by various authors about the country school experience – this article merely serves to document a few basic facts about each school. With the exception of the Amish School, the last of the country schools operated in the school year 1961-62. In the fall of 1962, former country school students were incorporated into the New Glarus district schools. Unless otherwise noted, these country school houses have been renovated into private residences.

Bem: located west of New Glarus on Highway 39 in Section 12 in the Town of York. The name Bem was in honor of the Polish Born General Jozef Zachariasz Bem (1794-1850). The Bem merry-go-round (pictured) still exists on the property.



The nearby Bem Post Office was in the farm home currently owned by Ronald Strahm. Doris (Strahm) Streiff remembered that her bedroom in that home had formerly been the post office and the door to her room actually said Bem P.O. In 1874, the Bem Post Office was the final stop for two mail delivery routes. Route #25137 left Madison at 7 a.m. two times a week, stopping at Verona, Springdale, Mt. Vernon, Primrose and finally arriving at Bem at 5 p.m. Route #25166 left Monroe at 7 a.m. once a week, stopping at Willett (in Adams), Farmers Grove, Stewart (Postville) and finally arriving at Bem at 5 p.m. Each route was 27 miles in length.

Bowers: located in Section 23 in the Town of Primrose, Dane. The original school was built of logs in 1849 on a one acre parcel of the Knudt Bowerson farm. The Bowerson family name was anglicized as Bowers. In those early years the school was also used for religious services by the Methodists and Hauge Society of the Norwegian Lutherans. In 1865 a stone school house was built which served until the 1922 when a handsome brick school was built. In 1870 the enrollment of the Bowers School was made up of 20 families – 19 Norwegian and 1 Swiss. The latter was the Heinrich and Euphemia (Baumgartner) Hoesly family who farmed nearby.

Farmer's Grove: located in Section 25 in the Town of York, Green County. Farmer's Grove was name of an early post office named by Lemuel Chase around 1846 or 1847. The Farmer's Grove school house was located on County J and Farmer's Grove Road. In 1963 the building was purchased by the New Glarus Historical Society and moved to its outdoor museum to serve as a country store. The ridge on which the school stood is a natural division between the watersheds of the Sugar and Pecatonica Rivers. In fact the first country school south of Farmer's Grove was called the Dividing Ridge School.

Legler Valley: as the name indicates, the Legler Valley School was located in Legler Valley west of New Glarus. Legler Valley was settled by the Fridolin Legler (Sr. and Jr.) and the George Legler families all original 1845 settlers. The school house was on the hillside on the south side of Legler Valley creek near the former Sam Mani and Henry Schiffmann farms in Section 21 of the Town of New Glarus. In the late 1940s, the school building (no longer used as a school house) was moved to New Glarus by Harold and Katie Ingwell. Harold and his father-in-law Nic Zentner remodeled the school house into a home. It is still a residence, located at 31 Second Street on the north side of New Glarus.

Meadow Valley: located on Meadow Valley Road in Section 33 of the Town of New Glarus. The school house had an after-life as the clubhouse of the Apparitions motor cycle club. Today the School House has been renovated preserving its historic character and has been used as a guest house. The school was situated near the former Albrecht Babler farm and site of Green County's the first cheese factory (1868).



Nessa: located in Section 34 of the Town of Primrose, Dane. The school was named for the Ole Knudson Nessa (b. 1824 in Stavanger, Norway) family who owned land here from before 1861 until the 1960s. The original Nessa School was built of logs in the 1840s. The log school was replaced by one constructed of stone in 1870. And in 1908 a new frame school house replaced the stone structure. In 1951, under the leadership of school officers Milo Anderson, James Thompson and Orville Funseth, the decision was made to install a telephone in the school. Milo Anderson's grandfather, Johann Anderson, had been on the Nessa School Board 90 years previous (1861).

Pioneer: located in Section 9 of the Town of New Glarus near the intersection of Pioneer Road and Klassy Lane, in a small valley known locally as Pioneer Valley.



According to one legend, this is the valley which the original settlers took to reach New Glarus on the final few miles of their journey from Switzerland. The photograph left shows the Pioneer School in 1913 when Huldreich Roth (son of Pastor Anton Roth) was the teacher. Among the students was Amelia (Mani) Kuehni. This photograph is courtesy of Barbara Kuehni, the granddaughter of Amelia (known as Molly).

Plainview: located in Section 32 of the Town of Primrose. The original location of the school house was in Section 32 north of the present location and positioned higher on a ridge. In 1872 a new frame building was built and relocated a bit south on land purchased from Bjørn Olson Skuldt. The school was known as Skuldt School in earlier years and became known as Plainview or Plain View.

Postville: located in Postville in Section 26 of the Town of York. The post office here was originally called Stewart, after John Stewart the first settler, but the village of Postville, named after storekeeper Gilbert Post, was the name which stuck.

Primrose Center: located in Section 16 in the Town of Primrose. The origins of this school go back to around 1850 when a log school house was built on land owned by John T. Chandler. A frame school house was built around 1857 on land owned by Moses Chandler. The school was known as the Chandler School in these early years. In 1865 a stone school house was built using stone quarried on the Jacob Hanna farm. The name then became the Hanna School and later was known as Primrose Center – due to the fact that the school was located a point which is nearly the center of the township. The name Primrose was first used in 1846 for the post office set up by Robert Spears. The name was suggested by his wife. The entire township was then named Primrose. One history mentions “much talk was occasioned because the town was named by a woman.” In 1962 when the Primrose Center school district was incorporated into the New Glarus school district, the old stone school house, then 93 years old, was used as the Town Hall for another 27 years.

Ross: located in Section 17 in the Town of Exeter. The school was named for the Ross family who lived in the immediate area, but actually the land for the Ross School was donated by nearby farmer and early New Glarus community leader J. J. Tschudy.

Spring Valley: name of a valley running north of New Glarus, the stone school house was constructed near the Green/Dane County line in Section 1 of the Town of New Glarus. The Spring Valley school drew children from the Towns of New Glarus and Exeter in Green County as well as Primrose and Montrose in Dane County. The school house was demolished. The site today is occupied by Jim's Auto Service.

Tyvand: located on Tyvand Road in Section 35 in the Town of Perry. The original Tyvand School was a stone structure, replaced in 1923-4 by a larger frame building. Tyvand is named for the Norwegian immigrant Jens Peterson Tyvand whose family farm was adjacent to the school.

Voegeli: was located in Section 1 of the Town of Washington, on Hefty Road near the junction with Highway 69 and just a stone's throw from the Voegeli farm. The Voegeli school district was primarily farm families who eventually went to the Monticello schools; however a few farms were incorporated into the New Glarus district. This school house no longer exists.

Wallace: located in Section 29 of the Town of Exeter. The school was built in an area of immigrant families hailing from County Antrim, Ireland such as Wallace, Lynn, Moore, and Cain. One of the immigrants, Elizabeth Moore Wallace, wrote of the early history of this area. She wrote the Irish were keenly interested in education and that schools existed before 1854 when the State first created a school district. A temporary ten by ten foot frame structure was built while a permanent frame school house was built. Some years later a brick school house was built across the road from the original school site. The Wallace family farmed adjacent to the school houses. Today the Wallace School sits empty perhaps awaiting renovation.



A Country School Story

Of all the stories told over the years by country school students and teachers, the following one may be best:

Young Baltz attended the Voegeli Country School located between Monticello and New Glarus. He boasted to his father, "Pa, I've got the biggest feet in the third grade. Is that because I'm Swiss?"

"No, Baltz" his father replied, "It's because you're nineteen."

Holes in the Mountains

Many are acquainted with the *Martinsloch* (Martin's Hole) above the village of Elm in Canton Glarus. This natural tunnel in the Tschingelhorn Mountain is found thousands of feet above Elm. Twice a year (in the spring and fall) the morning rays of the rising sun stream through the hole and shine down upon Elm's church.

But many are not aware of a second mountain hole in Canton Glarus. This natural hole is known as the *Mürtschenfenster* (*Fenster* = window). The Mürtschenstock is a mountain rising above the villages of Obstalden and Mühlehorn. Twice a year (February and November) the afternoon sun's rays pierce this "window" and creating a sunny ribbon starting from Obstalden eventually reaching the church tower in Mühlehorn. One of the best viewing spots for this natural phenomenon is said to be a locality just east of Obstalden known as "Steinacker in Walenguflen".

Steinacker in Walenguflen has a link to New Glarus by way of the Grob family. This location was home to the Paulus and Regula (Schräpfer) Grob family prior to their immigration. Paulus Grob and his brother Johann Jacob and their respective families were among the original settlers who arrived in New Glarus in August of 1845. Paulus was with Mathias Durst on August 8, 1845 when contact was finally made with scouts Fridolin Streiff and Judge Niklaus Dürst. But the two Grob families stayed only months in New Glarus before abandoning their 40 acres of colony land and moving to Illinois. The 1850 census indicates that the Paulus Grob family was farming near Highland, IL.

The Grobs would have witnessed the sun shining through the *Mürtschenfenster* onto their home beneath the Mürtschenstock. And they would have heard tales of Elm's *Martinsloch* from their mother, Katharina née Zentner, who was a native of Elm.

The origins of these two Glarner *Felsenfenstern* (rock windows) are quite different. Elm's *Martinsloch* was formed when St. Martin was fighting a mountain giant and the saint's staff pierced the Tschingelhorn. The *Mürtschenfenster* was an entirely different story. A dragon that lived on the St. Gallen side of the Walensee flew out of his lair such at a tremendous speed that he (she?) knocked a hole through the Mürtschenstock.

Were you aware our Glarner ancestors lived among saints, giants and dragons?

Harvesting Ice on the Klöntalersee

Harvesting ice in Canton Glarus was a major industry in the days before refrigeration. In the winter of 1862 a Netstaler named Gabriel Leuzinger (1827-1891) cut the first blocks of ice from the Klöntalersee (Lake Klöntal) near Glarus. And he was laughed at for doing so. Despite the early skepticism, Klöntal ice soon was considered Switzerland's best ice due to the crystal-clear water. In 1873, the Glarus newspaper was so bullish on the potential of ice harvesting that it proclaimed the Klöntal a new California affording the opportunity for great riches.



The Klöntalersee lies deep below the Glärnisch massif which effectively blocks the low winter sun from hitting the cold, dark lake. The ice was cut into blocks using large saws. The blocks were loaded onto wagons and sleds then transported from the Klöntal down to warehouses in Netstal and Glarus. From there it was shipped by rail to such destinations as Zurich and Basel in Switzerland, Frankfurt and Cologne in Germany, and Paris and Marseilles in France. The ice even found its way onto ocean steamships. A hundred weight of ice was called a *Zentner* and cost from 30 *Rappen* to over 1 *Schwiizerfranke* depending on the quality. The image shows ice harvesting on the Klöntalersee.

A decline in the Klöntal ice industry began in the 1930s with the advent of ice-making machines and refrigeration. The last ice harvest of 3000 kilos occurred on January 7-10, 1953 and was sent to a Wädenswil brewery. This final ice harvest was filmed and a 12 minute documentary of that historic event can be viewed on the following YouTube link: [Eisgewinnung im Klöntal 1953](#) Thank you to Felix Stüssi, Sr. for this link.

Ice Tragedies One Hundred Years Ago

One hundred years ago in the spring of 1912, two unrelated tragedies occurred which both involved ice. The first story, a local Canton Glarus event, is little remembered today. The other event continues to capture the imagination of a worldwide audience.

The Canton Glarus story was that of Johannes Trümpy of Ennetbüchli, Canton Glarus. He was an ice worker on the Klöntalersee. One hundred years ago (March 29, 1912) Trümpy drowned in the ice-cold water while harvesting ice. Trümpy was survived by his wife, Regula née Becker, and three daughters. His two younger daughters, Magdalena and Katharina, lived their entire lives near Glarus and remained unmarried. Trümpy's oldest daughter, Anna Barbara, immigrated to New Glarus where she married Fred H. Disch.

The other story continues to cast a worldwide spell 100 year later. It is the story of the Titanic's fatal collision with an iceberg on April 14, 1912. The Fall, 2005 issue of "Family History Notes" told of Swiss immigrants Josef and Josefine (Franchi) Arnold of Canton Uri who were bound for the New Glarus home of Josef's sister Anna (Mrs. Matt A. Marty). The Arnolds perished when the Titanic sunk; their bodies if recovered were never identified. This same newsletter article told of Ernst Ruegsegger, an immigrant from Canton Bern bound for New Glarus, who apparently changed his plans. Instead of sailing on the Titanic, Ruegsegger took the S. S. Chicago two weeks earlier.

Swiss immigrant Albert Wirz of Uster, Canton Zurich was headed for employment in Beloit, WI. He was a cabin mate of Josef Arnold and four other men. Albert perished in the sinking. But unlike the Arnolds, his body was found and identified days after the sinking and sent to Beloit for burial.

A Titanic passenger who survived the tragedy was Alfons Simonius, a respected Swiss banker who served as the president of the *Schweizer Bankverein*. Simonius, who was traveling in first class, had played cards with some other Swiss businessmen until retiring around 11:30 p.m. Only minutes later the gentlemen came back out on deck after the iceberg had been struck. They were taken off the ship in a lifeboat and later rescued by the passenger steamship *Carpathia*. Simonius had a Canton Glarus connection through his wife, Alice née Blumer. Alice was born in Lyon, France, the daughter of Johannes Blumer, a silk merchant of the company Nägeli, Wild and Blumer. Her paternal grandparents were Othmar and Peterella Katharina (Streiff) Blumer of Glarus, Canton Glarus.

Canton Glarus has a contemporary connection to the Titanic story. Günther Bähler, who has Bähler family roots from Elm, is a Swiss historian and author with an insatiable appetite for all things Titanic. He has become a recognized authority on the subject and has amassed one of the world's largest collections of Titanic memorabilia. In 1996 Günther generously provided Albert Wirz's unmarked grave in Beloit with a proper tombstone. Bähler developed and maintained a friendship with Millvina Dean who was the last survivor of the Titanic. Millvina was a 2 month old babe in arms in April of 1912 and she died in 2009 at the age of 97. It was Bähler who announced her death to the Associated Press. Bähler was one of the guest lecturers onboard the Titanic Memorial Cruise which left England on April 10, 2012 and arrived at the exact disaster coordinates on April 14, 2012.

And Günther Bähler has distant New Glarus connections. One of his ancestors, Elsbeth Tinner (Mrs. Fridolin Bähler), was the niece of early New Glarus residents Joshua Wild, Anton Ott and Johann Jacob Ott.

Rösti and Switzerland's First Potato

Potatoes are the world's most important crop grown underground. And indeed both the Swiss dialect word *Härdöpfel* and the French *pomme de terre* translate as earth apple or apple of the ground. There is a bit of Swiss history which says the first potatoes were brought to Switzerland and cultivated by the Glarner Hans Jacob Straub of Schwanden. Hans Jacob Straub (1675-1747) was said to be either a Swiss mercenary serving in Ireland or a merchant who had traveled to Ireland. In either case Straub returned home with the tuber in 1697.

The potato originated in the Andes and was brought to Europe by the Spaniards. Like the tomato (another new world discovery), the potato did not immediately catch on. At first the potato was thought to induce a variety of ills, but slowly human consumption grew until it was widely cultivated. The potato filled Europe's empty bellies resulting in a sustained population increase.

Switzerland's famed potato dish, Rösti (pictured), a substantial golden-brown potato pancake, was said to have originated in Canton Bern. Other sources peg its origin in the Zurich region where it was a breakfast staple that then traveled to German and French speaking Canton Bern. In French it was known as "*pommes de terre rôties*" the latter word becoming Rösti in German.



In Switzerland, Rösti is eaten solely as a lunch item, or at dinner it might be found on a plate alongside *g'Schnetzelt* or a grilled *Bratwurst* with onion sauce. In New Glarus restaurants today it is found at breakfast, lunch and/or dinner. Rösti is typically thought of as a Berner dish (*Bernergericht*) served in a wide variety of ways. The basic fried potatoes can be enhanced with onions, various cheeses, herbs, and/or bacon. Glarner Rösti is a recipe which incorporates the Canton Glarus specialty green cheese *Schabziger*. Rösti in New Glarus area restaurants is generally made with Swiss cheese and onions, and is considered as good as, if not superior, to the Rösti found in Switzerland. There are many "how-to" videos on YouTube showing Rösti preparation. One tip given by an old-timer -- the loosely piled grated potatoes should be slowly browned in a well-seasoned cast iron pan resulting in a pancake two fingers high.

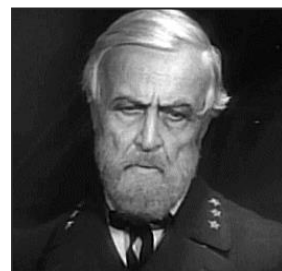
The term *Röstigraben* (Rösti trench or Rösti ditch) has been coined to denote the mythical boundary separating the Berners who eat Rösti and those that don't. The French-speaking Swiss on the other side of the Rösti border speak of it as the *Rideau de Rösti* (Rösti Curtain). This border has become a mostly friendly, although sometimes political symbol of the differences between German-Swiss and the Swiss-Romande cultures. If New Glarus were in Switzerland it would most definitely lay behind the Rösti trenches. Here in the middle of America perhaps we could be considered a culinary *Rösti Insel* – a Rösti island.

Hans Jacob Straub, the original spud purveyor, married Barbara Blumer also of Schwanden. She was the daughter of Werdenberg *Landvogt* Jacob Blumer and his wife Anastasia Feldmann. Descendants of Hans Jacob and Barbara Straub extend to New Glarus. Included among them are Bill Hoesly, Ken Zimmerman, and Viola Truttmann.

Edwin Barlow's Bosworth "Uncles"

Edwin Barlow (1885-1957) was the originator of the Wilhelm Tell Drama in New Glarus and the builder of New Glarus' Chalet of the Golden Fleece. The Chalet was built in 1937 as a home for Barlow's aunt Fannie (Streiff) Figi and became a memorial to Clara (Bosworth) Mather. Barlow was 39 years old in 1924 when he was taken under the wing of the 52-year old Mrs. Mather, said to be a wealthy society woman of New York City. This relationship not only brought Barlow a "foster mother" is brought him two "foster uncles". They were Clara's two brothers Hobart V. and William W. Bosworth. Both Bosworth men lived fascinating and artistic lives of quite different sorts on opposite coasts.

Hobart Van Zandt Bosworth was born (like his brother and sister) in Marietta, OH, the child of Daniel Perkins Bosworth and Clara Mumford Van Zandt. The Bosworth and Van Zandt families could trace their lineage to very early English and Dutch settlers of America including Mayflower families. Hobart Bosworth's life began in unhappy family circumstances. Citing parental abuse, he ran away from home at an early age and took to the sea as a cabin boy on ship, later traveling to the Arctic as part of a whaling team. After years at sea, he settled in San Francisco where he took on a great variety of jobs. He became interested in theatre, started painting sets and soon advanced to small speaking parts.



Roles in silent films followed. Hobart not only acted in these films but also served as writer, producer and director. In 1913 he opened his own production company. When the talkies took over Hollywood, he continued to act. His first talking role was in an historical costume drama starring John Barrymore. Over his movie career he was a prolific actor in scores of movies. In the early years he played leading roles but toward the end of his life he was often found in uncredited parts. His last film was "Sin Town" (1942) in which he received billing with Constance Bennett, Broderick Crawford, Ward Bond and Andy Devine. Hobart Bosworth died the following year. Pictured is Hobart Bosworth as General Robert E. Lee in D. W. Griffith's 1930 film "Abraham Lincoln" which starred Walter Huston as Lincoln.

William Welles Bosworth, also known as William W. or Welles, was Clara's other brother. He became a noted architect in the eastern United States and in post-WWI France. Notable works by Welles Bosworth include MIT's neoclassical "Great Dome" building in Cambridge, MA and the original AT&T headquarters in



Lower Manhattan. In 1906 John D. Rockefeller hired Bosworth to landscape the grounds of the vast Rockefeller estate, Kykuit, near Tarrytown, NY. Bosworth utilized terraces, gardens, fountains and pavilions to grace the grounds. After WWI, Rockefeller again called upon Bosworth to oversee the rebuilding of France's Chateaux de Versailles and Fontainebleau which the Rockefellers funded. He remained in France for years and received accolades from the French

government for his work on these French treasures. Pictured is Welles Bosworth (standing left) with his friend Theodore Vail (on right with telephone). The occasion is the first transcontinental telephone call (1915) made in the United States. Vail, President of AT&T, is on the line with Alexander Graham Bell in New York, Thomas Watson, Bell's Assistant in San Francisco, and President Woodrow Wilson in Washington, D. C. Others in the photo include William Rockefeller and J. Pierpont Morgan, Jr.

New Glarus Streets, Country Roads and State Highways

Most New Glarus streets use numerical designations – First Street, Second Street, Fifth Avenue, etc. For a period before and after the turn of the last century, streets bore the names of Canton Glarus home villages of the early settlers. An 1873 map and one from 1891 label the streets with these short-lived names. There was Rütli Street (now First Street), Ennenda Street (now Second Street), Mollis Street (now Third Street), Matt Street (now Fourth Street), and Engi Street (now Fourth Avenue). The two maps differ on Diesbach Street. On the 1873 map Diesbach is today's Sixth Avenue. On the 1891 map Diesbach is today's Fifth Avenue. The earlier map labels today's Railroad Street as the north/south Schwanden Street, but on the 1891 map Schwanden runs east/west corresponding to today's Sixth Avenue. There is also Mill Street (now Second Avenue) on both maps and a Pierce Street (Third Avenue) which is seen in early 20th century maps.

Pictured right is the corner of Ennenda Street and Mollis Street (2nd Street and 3rd Avenue) shortly after 1910. The view is looking toward the *Hinterstädtli* (Backtown) and includes the Pet Milk smokestack, the Wilhelm Tell Hotel, the Town Hall and the Fred Ott store.



In recent years the building of new housing caused the construction of new streets which were non-numerical – Valley Lane, Windlach Street, Heidi Court, Hillside Haven Circle, and Edelweiss Circle. When new streets were constructed to serve the residences in the New Glarus Home complex, Canton Glarus village names were again used – Elm, Engi, Schwanden, and Haslen. Duane Freitag made an interesting observation, noting that Elm Drive in New Glarus may be the only thoroughfare in the United States not named for the elm tree, but named for the Canton Glarus village. In fact, Elm Street is the seventh most popular American street name, with over five thousand U. S. streets bearing the name Elm.

The north/south and east/west grid pattern of New Glarus streets was based upon the section lines already established by surveyors in the 1830s. Sixth Avenue is an east/west section line and Eighth Street is a north/south section line. The corner of Sixth Avenue and Eighth Street is the 4-corner location of Sections 14, 15, 22, and 23. The village of New Glarus lies within these four sections.

The country roads which meander around the hills and valleys of the New Glarus area bear many familiar family names. Driving about the countryside you will see such names as Kubly Road, Hefty Road, Disch Road, Klassy Lane, Durst Road, Marty Road, Kuenzi Lane, Tyvand Road, Freitag Lane, Elmer Road, Freitag Lane, Hilton Lane, Argue Road, Zentner Road, Ness Road, Nessa Road, Hustad Valley Road, Legler Valley Road, and Truttmann Lane. The County Trunk Highway (CTH) system is an alphabet soup of one, two or three letter designations. The New Glarus area has County H to Blanchardville, County N to Monroe, County W toward Dayton, County U, County O and County G to Mt. Vernon, as well as NN, J, A, C and CC serving other nearby destination.

In 1917 Wisconsin became the first state in the nation to develop a statewide route numbering system for its highways. Our Highway 69 has not always had that numerical designation. In 1918 just after the Wisconsin highway numbering system began, the north-south route between Verona and the Illinois state line south of Monroe (and including Belleville, New Glarus, and Monticello) was called Highway 42. Also in 1918, there was a Highway 31 which linked Madison with Fond du Lac (present day U.S. 151). Sometime in the mid-1920s, Highway 31 was extended on the eastern end from Fond du Lac to Manitowoc, and on the southern end from Madison to Verona and down what was then called Highway 42 to the Illinois border. This entire stretch from Manitowoc to the Illinois border became called Highway 31. In 1926, the U.S. Highway system was begun and the portion of Wisconsin 31 from Madison to Fond du Lac became U. S. Highway 151 (as it remains today). The portion from Madison to the Illinois border was renamed Highway 69 and ran in tandem with U.S. Highway 18 from Madison to Verona. In 1932, the Highway 69 designation was dropped between Madison and Verona, and Highway 69 became only the portion between Highway 18 in Verona and the Illinois state line. The last time that Highway 69 changed was in 1995 when the northern terminus of the highway became the new U.S. 18/151 bypass at Verona.

The history of Highway 39 in Wisconsin goes back to 1918. At that time Highway 39 was a lonely stretch of highway in northern Wisconsin. In 1924 that northern Wisconsin road was re-numbered and Highway 39 was reassigned to a new Wisconsin trunk line route extending from Edmund in Iowa County southeasterly through New Glarus and ending at Highway 59 near Albany. In 1999, the Highway 39 designation for the eastern 15 miles from New Glarus to near Albany was removed and New Glarus became the eastern terminus of the route.

Highway 39 has the distinction of having the same number as one of Wisconsin's Interstate routes – Interstate 39. Typically Interstate route numbers are not used for local highways – i.e. there are no state highways 43, 90 or 94. But in this case, since Highway 39 had been in place for years, and since it was a minor road geographically removed from Interstate 39 it was deemed unlikely to cause any motorist confusion.

The history of all the Wisconsin highways has been meticulously detailed by Christopher J. Bessert, a highway historian. His website is located at: <http://www.wisconsinhighways.org/index.html>

History Detective Challenge

Windlach Street (mentioned in the preceding article) is one of New Glarus' newer streets. Who knows who or what this street was named for? Email me with the answer or your best guess.

Kinzie not Kuenzi

The Kuenzi family of New Glarus was mentioned in the previous newsletter. Their Kuenzi family roots originated in Canton Bern, Switzerland. Another family named Kinzie (originally McKenzie of Scottish roots) was involved in the earliest days of Chicago. John Kinzie and family moved to Chicago back in 1804 and can be counted among that city's earliest residents. By most accounts Kinzie was an all-around scoundrel – an alleged traitor, spy, murderer, and husband to multiple wives. But he has a Chicago street named for him.

John Kinzie's son, John H. Kinzie, grew to be a respected Chicago citizen. John H. was raised among the Great Lakes fur traders and in the course of time learned a variety of Indian languages. His knowledge of these languages earned him the government position of Indian Subagent stationed at Fort Winnebago in Portage, WI. Fort Winnebago was located at the then strategic position on the two mile portage between the Wisconsin River and the Fox River – a link which connected Montreal with New Orleans.

In 1830 Kinzie married the well-bred Juliette Magill and took her to their new home at Fort Winnebago. Although refined, Juliette eagerly embraced her life in the wilderness. She chronicled their trip to the remote Fort Winnebago and their life there in her book "Wau-Bun: The Early Days in the North West". (The book can be downloaded for free to your computer or eBook reader.) In 1832 the U. S. Government built the Kinzies a comfortable home, a site known today as the Historic Indian Agency House (pictured).



The Historic Indian Agency House is currently undergoing a costly restoration to stabilize the 180 year old structure. While the home is not open for visitors during the renovation, those who visit get an unexpected lesson in the extraordinary construction efforts and the deep pockets required for the proper restoration of a historic home. Every aspect of the building, from the foundation to the roof, needs attention to ensure the building will last for generations to come. The costs to renovate the property were so great that many interior projects had to be postponed to focus on basic structural issues.

John H. and Juliette Kinzie's eldest daughter was Eleanor Kinzie known as "Nellie". Nellie married a wealthy resident of Savannah, GA, William W. Gordon. The Gordon's eldest daughter was named Juliette Magill Kinzie Gordon after her maternal grandmother. This granddaughter Juliette was to become Juliette Gordon Low, the woman who founded the Girl Scouts in Savannah 100 year ago this year (March 12, 1912).