

# Family History Notes

Winter, 2012

## Zweifel Families

The family name Zweifel is one of the most common names of Canton Glarus. And it has been a common name found in the New Glarus area. The *Familiennamenbuch der Schweiz* (see accompanying article in this issue) lists the Zweifel family as citizens of 6 Canton Glarus villages and 5 villages in Canton St. Gallen. Those Glarus villages are Linthal, Glarus, Bilten, Haslen, Netstal and Braunwald. Zweifels in the New Glarus are known to have come from the first four of those villages. The Zweifel family crest – one of four Canton Glarus variants – is pictured below.

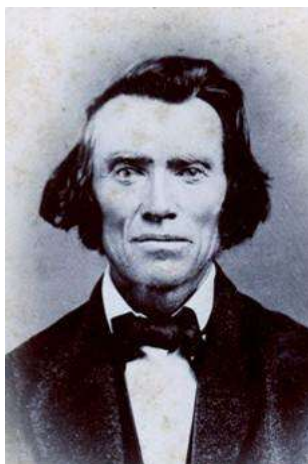
In 1972 Alice Zweifel published a book in which she documented the ancestry and descendants of the six Zweifel brothers – Adam, Fridolin, Peter, Albrecht, Jost and Bernhard – who emigrated from the Canton Glarus village of Linthal, settling in New Glarus. It appears Adam and his family arrived first in 1853 followed by the other brothers the following year. All brothers married Canton Glarus women except Albrecht who died a bachelor in 1857. Adam married Verena Dürst, Fridolin married Regula Oswald, Peter married Barbara Zweifel, Jost married Verena Zopfi and Bernhard married Barbara Kundert.



Alice Zweifel's work provides interesting details of the lives of each of the Zweifel brothers. They are described as hard working, stern and quick to temper, but mellowing in their old age. Jost was said to be a spot-on weather predictor. Their descendants numbered in the hundreds (perhaps in the thousands today) and many have lived or are still living in the area. Names of Zweifel brother descendants include Chuckie Zweifel, Art Zweifel, Robert Reuter, Hazel Kundert, Jeanette Brand, Wilfred Sandridge, Palmer Knobel, Viola Truttmann, Marlea Duerst, Bill Breylinger and Vic Babler.

A great-grandson of Jost Zweifel who died in 2010 was Air Force Colonel Harold "Dutch" Zweifel, a native of New Glarus. Col. Zweifel had an exemplary military career in which he was awarded six distinguished flying crosses and the bronze star. He logged 1375 combat flying hours and in 1960 set a speed record flying between The Philippines and Travis AFB, CA. Zweifel's 18,000 hours of accident free flying is achieved by only 1% of military pilots. He served in WWII, the Korean War and in Vietnam.

Another military hero and also a great-grandson of Jost Zweifel was Leroy Scoville of Evansville. Lt. Scoville was one of the "Janesville 99" who suffered at the hands of the Japanese in WWII. Scoville died after being held on a Japanese "hell ship". More of this story can be found in "Family History Notes" Spring, 2009.



Other early Zweifel immigrants from Linthal were Johann Heinrich Zweifel and his sister Sabina (Mrs. Peter Hoesly). Johann Heinrich (1812-1887; picture at left courtesy of Barbara Kuehne) married a German immigrant, Katharina Schuler, in Galena, IL in 1855. Their farm northwest of New Glarus (today's Dan Klassy farm) was in the Zweifel family for three generations. Peter and Sabina (Zweifel) Hoesly were members of the Evangelical Association Church. Their farm, on the southeast edge of New Glarus, was also in their family for several generations until purchased by the William Kummer family in the 1960s.

Other Zweifels who lived in the area with family roots from the village of Linthal included brewer Gabriel Zweifel, grocer Jacob Zweifel (known as Kroger or Clover Jack), and Adam Zweifel (the grandfather of Merton Colney). Settling near Brooklyn were Fridolin and Elisabeth (Wützenberg) Zweifel. Zweifel Road in the Town of Brooklyn is named for this family. Fridolin Zweifel, an immigrant from Linthal, married a Blanchardville girl, Mary Blake. They resided in Blanchardville. Near Brodhead was the farm of Verena (Voegeli) Zweifel, a widow with several sons. The Zweifel Brothers of local polka band fame are descendants of this Brodhead branch. Between Monticello and New Glarus lived Melchior and Elsbeth (Zweifel) Schlittler. Rosina Zweifel immigrated in the late 1870s and married widower Abraham Kundert of the town of Jordan. Sister and brother immigrants from Linthal were Sara Zweifel (Mrs. Dan Wichser) of Monticello and Fridolin Zweifel (known locally as Fred G. Zweifel) who was married to Josephine Gisler.

A Zweifel immigrant from the village of Haslen was Johann Peter Zweifel who ran the Monroe House in Monroe, WI. He was married to Elisabeth Luchsinger, daughter of the Christian Luchsingers of New Glarus. Among their descendants was Homer Zweifel, a New Glarus funeral director and Jim Zweifel, Monticello's basketball phenomenon, now in Wisconsin's Coaches Association Hall of Fame.

A Zweifel immigrant from the village of Bilten was Jacob Zweifel. He married Verena Blum whose family were members of the New Bilten settlement. Jacob Zweifel (pictured) served in the 46<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin Infantry Co. A and died in 1865 while still in service. He is buried in the Camp Butler National Cemetery in Springfield, IL.



Zweifel immigrants from the village of Glarus included Anna Barbara Zweifel (Mrs. Hilarius Wild, Jr.), Elsbeth Zweifel (Mrs. Jacob Schlittler), Katharina Zweifel (Mrs. Heinrich Hottinger and later Mrs. Fridolin Egger), and Anna Maria Zweifel (Mrs. Balthasar Schindler)

There was a Zweifel branch who accepted the Mormon faith while in Switzerland. Several of these Zweifel siblings emigrated from Linthal to Utah and Idaho. One of the siblings was Barbara (Zweifel) Billeter who was the mother of prominent Mormon/Swiss genealogist Julius Billeter.

### **Zweifels Through and Through**

Exploring the many branches of various Zweifel family trees might lead one to believe that Zweifels usually married other Zweifels. This is a generalization, but there are many examples of local Zweifels who had numerous Zweifels in their immediate family tree.



For local brewer Gabriel Zweifel, both parents (Fridolin and Regula Zweifel-Zweifel) were Zweifels as were two of his grandparents and three of his great grandparents.

For the six immigrant brothers Bernhard, Adam, Albrecht, Fridolin, Jost and Peter Zweifel, both parents (Johann Heinrich and Ursula Zweifel-Zweifel) were Zweifels as were three grandparents and three great-grandparents.

For grocer Jacob ("Clover Jake") Zweifel, both of his parents (Melchior and Rosina Zweifel-Zweifel) were Zweifels as were three grandparents and four great grandparents. In addition, his mother-in-law was born a Zweifel.

For Johann Heinrich Zweifel and his sister Sabina (Zweifel) Hoesly, both parents (Jacob and Sabina Zweifel-Zweifel) and all four grandparents were Zweifels as were four great-grandparents.

And for Fridolin K. Zweifel and his siblings, both parents (Peter and Barbara Zweifel-Zweifel), all four grandparents and six great-grandparents were Zweifels.

### **Jakob Zweifel: Architekt**

Switzerland lost one of its leading modernist architects in 2010. That architect was Jakob Zweifel (1921-2010). Zweifel was born in Wil, Canton St. Gallen, but his Zweifel roots were from Glarus and Linthal. Zweifel and the team of architects designed dozens of Swiss buildings, including several projects in Canton Glarus.

Zweifel left a legacy in New Glarus. The Hall of History at the Swiss Historical Village was designed by Zweifel and his associates. The building was a gift to the people of New Glarus from people of Canton Glarus. The Swiss donors were very proud of their gift and felt it lifted New Glarus Swiss architecture out of the traditional *Chaletstil*, expressed here in varying degrees of authenticity. Kaspar Marti and Claudia Kock-Marti remarked in 1995 that Zweifel's Hall of History was "*das einzige echte Schweizer Gebäude in New Glarus*" – the only true Swiss building in New Glarus.

In its museum setting surrounded by 19<sup>th</sup> century American buildings (both genuine and replicas), the Hall of History stands out in contrast as a singular piece of Swiss modernist architecture. A band of clerestory windows encircling the building just below the flat roofline gives the structure a light and airy quality. The windows also allow indirect natural light into the exhibit area. Unfortunately, a clumsily executed enclosure to one corner of the building has interrupted the continuous band of windows, detracting from Zweifel's original modernist statement.

Besides his modernist projects, Zweifel helped historical preservation efforts in Canton Glarus. He was involved in the preservation of historic Canton Glarus homes such as Glarus' *Iselihaus* and *Trümpihaus*, the *Leglerhaus* in Diesbach, the *Stählihaus* in Netstal and the *Schiffmeisterhaus* in Mitlödi. Zweifel was also a well-known patron of the arts. In 1964 he founded Zurich's "*Theatre an der Winkelwiese*".

### **The Zweifel Miniature White House**

In 1962 John Zweifel and his wife Jan began a new project. Their result is now recognized as a national treasure. The Zweifels' creation is an exact replica, in miniature, of the White House. Constructed on a scale of one inch to one foot, the replica duplicates each room of the White House down to the furniture, rugs, pictures and even the picture frames. The miniature White House has been viewed by tens of millions of viewers, having been exhibited in Presidential Libraries, museums, retail malls and locally at the Cheese Days celebration in Monroe.

John Zweifel began his interest in miniatures through his interest in circuses. As a boy, Zweifel crafted a miniature of the Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey circus complete with tents, circus wagons, human and animal figures – eventually 42,000 pieces in all scale of one-half-inch-to-the-foot. The miniature circus experience was enriched by lights, calliope music, and moving figures. A close inspection showed a small boy trying to sneak into the big top under the canvas.

Zweifel's love of miniatures coupled with an interest in Americana drove him to an even greater vision – an exact replica of the White House in miniature. The Zweifels had hoped to be granted access to the White House to study, in detail, the home and its furnishings. Despite early indications of support from Kennedy Administration officials, the White House staff was unable or unwilling to grant the Zweifels access until the Ford Administration. Until then, the Zweifels had to use publically available books and blueprints for research. John



took countless tours to study and sketch the furnishings. The Ford White House became more accommodating when they observed Zweifel's passion for and commitment to the project, his love of the White House, and the quality of the miniature furniture already crafted. The White House was opened for the Zweifels to measure, sketch, photograph and document all items down to the smallest detail. Pictured above is a photograph showing John Zweifel setting up the Blue Room for a scheduled display.

Consider some examples of what needed to be replicated in miniature: a vast assortment of period furniture, woven rugs with intricate patterns, wallpaper and murals, paintings and portraits in exquisite frames, parquet floors, china and stemware found in the dining room and in the China Room, chandeliers (which are illuminated), woodwork and trim, curtains and upholstery. Each item was a project in itself requiring countless hours of painstaking craftsmanship.



For further reading about Zweifel and his miniature White House, there is well-illustrated book by Gail Buckland entitled “The White House in Miniature”. A YouTube video can be viewed by clicking on the following link: [Zweifel's Miniature White House Video Tour](#)

John Zweifel’s pedigree includes some of the earliest Glarner immigrants to New Glarus – Bernhard and Barbara (Kundert) Zweifel, Joshua and Barbara (Speich) Wild, Fridolin and Rosina (Schiesser) Hefti, Niklaus and Euphemia (Elmer) Zentner and Rudolf and Elsbeth (Schuler) Kundert. John’s grandfather, Nik K. Zweifel, was a long-time Buick dealer and his grandmother Kathryn née Kundert was the daughter of Fridolin Kundert, the founding president of the Bank of New Glarus. John’s father, Earl T. Zweifel, became a successful Illinois businessman and is remembered for his chauffeured limousine which could be seen in New Glarus when the

Zweifels visited local relatives.

Pictured above are John Zweifel’s great-grandparents Thomas and Anna Maria (Zentner) Zweifel and their twins Barbara (Mrs. Scott Hilton) and Nik K. (John’s grandfather).

### **Familiennamenbuch Der Schweiz**

A useful online genealogical tool of importance to those researching Swiss family roots is the *Familiennamenbuch der Schweiz*, also referred to as the Swiss Surname Registry. Here researchers can enter any Swiss family name and find out the village or villages where that family name was found in Switzerland. The efficacy of the *Familiennamenbuch* as a research tool is largely dependent upon the uniqueness of the family name. The more unique the name, the more precise the village of origin can be determined. A common Swiss family name will be found in dozens of villages, and thus researchers using this book may not be able to narrow down the origin to one specific village.

For instance, if you are a Zimmerman or Zimmermann from Green County and would like to determine your ancestral village of your ancestors, you would enter the family name and search for all Swiss villages which had the name Zimmermann in prior to the year 1800. If you knew the home canton was Bern (as was the case with some of the area Zimmermans) you would get a listing of about two dozen villages in Canton Bern where the Zimmerman or Zimmermann name was established. This would not be of great help. However, if you knew your Zimmermann line came from Canton Glarus, the list is now narrowed to only one village – Schwändi – where your family originated.

Another example is Schmid, the Swiss-German version of Smith. And like Smith in America, the name Schmid is very common in Switzerland. Entering Schmid into the *Familiennamenbuch* search form, the result lists dozens of villages in numerous cantons where Schmid families lived prior to 1800. Schmidts from Canton Bern alone were found in several dozen villages. Schmidts in Canton Glarus were found in four – Mollis, Glarus, Schwanden and Nidfurn.

Some examples of more uncommon Swiss surnames: Disch was found in only three villages prior to 1800 – two in Canton Graubünden and one Disch line from Elm, Canton Glarus. The New Glarus area Disch families are from the Elm lines. The surname Legler was found only in two villages in Switzerland prior to 1800 – Diesbach and Linthal both in Canton Glarus. And the name Zopfi was only found in one Swiss village prior to 1800 and that was Schwanden in Canton Glarus.

The three volume hardback version of the Swiss Surname Registry is available for purchase. At Amazon.com you can buy the 3 volumes – over 2100 pages – for about \$330.

Here is a better idea -- use the following link and get the information for free: [Swiss Surname Registry](#)

### **History Detective Multiple Choice**

A traveler visiting Switzerland begins her trip in Brienz, Canton Bern staying at the Hotel Weisses Kreuz. After a few days she continues on to Cressier, Canton Neuchatel where she lodges at the Croix Blanche. Her third stop is the Hotel Crusch Alba in the village of Lavin, Canton Graubunden. Based upon her travel history, can you determine which of the following will be her next stop?

Will it be: the Hotel Edelweiss in Engelberg, Canton Obwalden?  
the Eden Palace du Lac in Montreux, Canton Vaud?  
the Croce Bianca in Poschiavo, Canton Graubunden?  
or the Dell Angelo Hotel in Locarno, Canton Ticino?

### **The Village of Glarus: A Pre-Fire Virtual Tour**

A new website offers a unique experience. It provides a virtual tour of what the village of Glarus looked like before their great fire of 1861. That fire destroyed much of the centuries-old village. What was rebuilt post 1861 was considered modern and laid out on a grid pattern bearing little resemblance to the Glarus of old.

For the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fire in 1961, an architect by the name of Hans Leuzinger (1887-1971) built a scale model of the old village of Glarus. This model has since been displayed at various Glarus venues including the lobby of the Glarus train station and more recently at the exhibit commemorating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fire. The Leuzinger model included the buildings found in old Glarus and the meandering street layout common to old villages. A photo of the Leuzinger model (below) shows the Christof Tschudi property (circled) which is believed to have been the origin of the fire.

For the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fire in 2011, this new virtual model was developed. The new visual tour



used the Leuzinger model as a resource along with maps and etchings of Glarus from the pre-fire days. Using today's technology, the virtual tour improves upon the model in several ways. The layout of old Glarus comes to life on this website allowing one to explore the streets and buildings. You may zoom in and zoom out. By sliding a bar found on the map, the old Glarus image fades away as an aerial photo of contemporary Glarus come into view showing exactly the same location and at the identical scale.

By choosing other options, one can watch the spread of the fire from its origin at the Zaunplatz at approximately 9:30 p.m. to the boundaries of the fire at 10 p.m., 11 p.m. and maximum extent of the fire at midnight. Icons appear on the map which, when clicked upon, show period photos of the fire ruins. The icons are positioned exactly where the photographer would have stood. Other historic images from Glarus' past are also viewable when the icon is clicked.

Here is a link to the virtual tour: [Old Glarus Video Tour](#)

### **Four Town of Washington Grandsons**

Four men – John Closner, Edward Weissmiller, Herman Wittwer and Thomas R. Hefty – share a common trait in that their respective grandparents were among the earliest Swiss immigrant farm families in the Town of Washington. These four Swiss immigrant families were Adam and Anna Margaretha (Blum) Blumer, Jacob and Elizabeth (Dick) Weissmiller (originally Weissmüller), Johannes and Verena (Iseli) Dick, and Fridolin and Rosina (Schiesser) Hefty. The Blumer, Weissmiller, Dick and Hefty families lived on neighboring farms all located within about a mile or two of each other near today's County Highways N and C south of New Glarus.

The Weissmillers and Dicks were natives of Canton Bern and the Blumers and Heftys were natives of Canton Glarus. It was here in the Town of Washington (one of the highest concentration of Swiss-Americans in the United States yet today) that the Berners of the *Bernertali* settled near the Glarners of the New Glarus and New Bilten settlements.

The four Town of Washington grandsons were born in years from 1853 to 1915. These four men all made contributions to American life and culture in various ways and in various corners of the United States. Here are their respective stories:

### **John Closner: A Texas Original (but Born in Wisconsin)**

A wedding was held on April 9, 1852 at the Town of Washington home of Adam and Anna Margareth (Blum) Blumer. Their daughter Elsbeth Blumer wed Johannes Klossner (later Closner). Adam and Anna Margareth and their several children were 1849 immigrants from Canton Glarus – the Blumers being natives of Nidfurn and the Blums from Bilten. Johannes Klossner and his parents, Christian and Susanna Katharina (Knutti) Klossner, were immigrants from Diemtigen, Canton Bern. Here in Green County, the immigrants from Canton Glarus began interacting with Berner immigrant neighbors with one result being marriages of their children.

In 1853 Johannes Klossner and new wife Elsbeth Blumer had a son, John Closner, born in Green County (some records say New Glarus, some say Monroe). They left the area with other Klossner/Closner kin to live in Dodge County, MN a farming area which attracted both Berner and Glarner immigrants. Later the Closner family moved to Iowa and finally ended up settling in Texas around 1870.

John Closner (Jr.) held a variety of jobs in Texas including a railroad construction worker, a stage coach driver and a mail carrier. He learned to speak Spanish in order to work with Mexicans and have Mexicans work for him. In 1884 he was appointed Assistant Sheriff in Hidalgo County, TX – a location directly on the Mexican border and an area known for rampant crime – murders, robberies and cattle rustling. Closner brought law and order to the border country and was appointed Sheriff. A 1911 San Antonio newspaper account of Closner, by then a larger-than-life south Texas figure, boldly proclaimed him to be the “Nemesis of Evil”.

Equal to or greater than his efforts against the lawlessness of the area was his leadership in the transformation of the arid landscape of cactus and mesquite into productive agricultural land. Closner saw agricultural possibilities and began buying what was considered worthless land at 25 cents an acre. He started irrigating using water from the Rio Grande and experimented with a vast array of crops. He successfully grew cotton, tobacco, alfalfa, sugar cane, fruits and vegetables. Eventually his San Juan Plantation (named for Closner by his wife) covered 45,000 acres – nearly 1/8 the size of Green County!

The neighboring municipalities of Edinburg, McAllen and San Juan, TX were founded by Closner and his fellow south Texas civic leaders. He was instrumental in the development of the area by bringing railroad lines, establishing a telephone company, and donating a school for the Edinburg community.

Closner retired to nearby Brownsville, TX where he died in 1932.

## **Edward Weismiller: A Poet of Renown**

In 1834 Emanuel and Magdalena (Wittwer) Weissmiller immigrated from Canton Bern to Ohio along with their four children Emanuel Jr., John, Jacob and Susanna (later Mrs. John Dick). They traveled on the immigrant ship “Florence” along with members of the Germann and Schlunegger families. A number of these Berner families lived for several years in Tuscarawas County, OH, a center of German and Swiss immigration, prior to moving to Green County, WI. The Weissmillers were one of the earliest of the Berner families to settle in Green County. They farmed in the Town of Washington with other Berners such as the Wittwer, Schlunegger, Germann, Iseli, Dick, Zimmerman and Kaderli families.

In 1850 the Weissmiller sons – Emanuel, John and Jacob – all farmed in the Town of Washington. Jacob and his wife Elizabeth née Dick farmed the land on what was to become the Weissmiller homestead. Jacob and Elizabeth’s oldest son, Albert Weissmiller, remained on the family farm with his wife Anna Bieri. Albert and Anna had three children – Alma (Mrs. W. C. Baumgartner), Albert Jr. and Dr. Lester L. Albert Jr. married Clara Zimmerman and they farmed the home farm raising two daughters – Lucille (Mrs. Alvin Moritz) and Leona (Mrs. John Frehner).

Jacob and Elizabeth Weissmiller also had a son Jacob Jr. who married Iowa-born Georgia Wilson. Jacob Jr. and Georgia had four children born in the Monticello area, one of whom was son Edward Ronald Weismiller (note different spelling). According to published sources, Edward Weismiller lived an impressive life. Rather than rewrite what has already been written about Edward Weismiller, the following are edited excerpts from his Wikipedia entry:



*Edward Ronald Weismiller, born August 3, 1915 near Monticello, Wisconsin, was an American poet, scholar and professor of English at George Washington University. In 1936, the twenty-year-old Edward Weismiller became the youngest poet to win the prestigious Yale Series of Younger Poets prize. He graduated from Cornell College in 1938, from Harvard University with a master’s in 1942, and from Oxford University, with a Ph.D. in 1950, where he was a Rhodes Scholar.*

*Weismiller was proud of what he called a nice American success story. His father, Jacob Weismiller, came of Swiss stock; his mother, Georgia Wilson, was of Scottish descent. Young Edward grew up inventing word games and creating crossword puzzles for his sister Jean. The family lived on a tiny farm in rural Wisconsin (Town of Mt. Pleasant) and the children went to a small country school where Edward won good grades from his teachers and attacks from a bully. His mother died when he was 11, shattering the family. Two years later, taken in by his older sister Luverne, he began doing better in high school and writing songs and poetry. He won scholarships to Swarthmore and then to Cornell College in Iowa, where he fell in love with Milton’s poetry and began to publish his own. At age 20 he became the youngest Yale Younger Poet when his first book of poems, “The Deer Come Down”, was selected for publication by series editor Stephen Vincent Benet.*

*In 1936 he was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford, soon interrupted when England declared war on Germany. Repatriated with the other U.S. students, he earned his Master’s degree and taught at Harvard, where he founded lifelong friendships with some of the best poets and writers of his generation. He translated a prize-winning French novel, “The Young Concubine”, and began his second book of poems, “The Faultless Shore”, published after the war, in 1946.*

*Edward Weismiller was lecturer at Harvard’s prestigious Morris Grey Lecture Series featuring the most celebrated poets and writers of the day. The Morris Grey signature book (pictured next page) shows Weismiller’s 1942 lecture just weeks after that of poet Robert Frost. Other notable signatures in the book include Tennessee Williams, T. S. Eliot, E. E. Cummings, Dylan Thomas and Carl Sandburg.*

*When the U.S. joined the European war, Weismiller's life took an astonishing twist. In a midnight phone call from the new Office of Strategic Services (OSS), he was recruited for counterespionage. (He never knew who had recommended him.) He chose to earn his required commission and startle his friends—and the Commandant—by joining the Marine Corps. On detached service in Europe, he was trained by the British secret services MI5 and MI6 and watched the terrible beauty of firebombs*



*falling on the roofs of London. Deployed to Cherbourg, France, after D-Day, he became the first American officer to run a captured enemy agent back against the Germans. Eventually he was put in charge of counterespionage in the American Zone in occupied Germany. He was awarded a Bronze Star and the Medaille de la Reconnaissance Francaise. When he turned in his final report, he was told that it was so highly classified that he would never see it again. (He later heard that the British, apparently less secretive, were using their copy in counterespionage training.)*

*After the war Weismiller declined an invitation to join the newly formed CIA, which succeeded the OSS; instead he went home to his family in Southern California and commenced work on his novel, "The Serpent Sleeping". In 1948 the Rhodes Trust invited back the scholars whose time had been cut short by the war, allowing them to bring their new families, so he earned his doctorate from Oxford. He went on to teach poetry, creative writing, and Milton at Pomona College.*

*Professor Weismiller, an eminent scholar of John Milton's poetry, went to Washington, DC in 1968 to study original source materials in the Folger Library, and stayed on to teach in the English department of George Washington University. His third book of poems, "The Branch of Fire", was published in 1970, and he was invited to give a reading of his poems at the Library of Congress in 1979. In 2002, at age 87, he became the oldest Yale Younger Poet when the press published "Walking Toward the Sun".*

*He was in love with words and stories and had a gift for making and keeping friends. An inspiring teacher, he worked to instill the love of beautiful and precise language in his students, and many of them went on to success as writers, artists, actors, and teachers. He passed away on August 25, 2010, at 95.*

### **Herman Wittwer: Insurance Entrepreneur**

Herman L. Wittwer was born in Monticello the son of Albert and Mary (Dick) Wittwer. Albert and Mary operated Monticello's Wittwer Hotel (also known as the Grand Central Hotel) along with Albert's brother Gottfried and Gottfried's wife Helena Dick, who happened to Mary's sister. Both Albert and Gottfried died in 1908 and the Hotel continued to be operated by their widows. (Another Wittwer brother, Samuel, married another Dick sister, Rosina.) The Wittwer brothers were the born in Spiez, Canton Bern and immigrated to Green County with their parents Christian and Maria (Schneider) Wittwer in 1879. The Dick sisters were born in Green County, the daughters of immigrants Johannes Dick and his wife Verena Iseli. The Dick and Iseli families were also Berners – the Dicks from Etzelkofen and the Iselis from Wynigen.



Herman Wittwer attended the University of Wisconsin and following graduation worked in the insurance field. He decided business was not for him and enrolled at Marquette University Dental School. Wittwer played the clarinet and he used his musical talent to play in bands to earn money for his education. But he will not be remembered for his musical abilities or filling cavities, but for the founding of Madison, WI's only Fortune 500 firm, American Family Insurance. (Pictured is Herman Wittwer with his daughter Jane in 1919.)

An idea formulated in Wittwer's mind that insuring farmers who owned automobiles might just be an insurance niche to develop. He founded the Farmers Mutual Insurance Company in 1927 which



ultimately became American Family Mutual Insurance Company and American Family Life Insurance Company, of which he served as Chairman of the Board.

Herman Wittwer's idea flourished. Today American Family Insurance boasts \$16.8 billion in assets, \$5.4 billion in equity, \$6.3 billion in revenue and life insurance in forces is greater than \$86 billion. AmFam is a major area employer, contracting or employing 11,300 people.

Wittwer died in 1968 and is buried in Madison's Roselawn Memorial Park.

### **Thomas R. Hefty: Madison Banker**

Thomas R. Hefty's lakeside home at 98 Cambridge Road in upscale Maple Bluff, WI was just down the street from Herman Wittwer's lakeside home at 23 Cambridge Court. The Wittwer home was handsome, but the Hefty home, originally built around 1920 by Madison industrialist Carl A. Johnson, was a mansion. In fact today the former Hefty home serves as Wisconsin's Governor's Mansion.

Hefty's immigrant grandparents, Fridolin and Rosina (Schiesser) Hefty were natives of Hätzingen, Canton Glarus. They immigrated in 1847 with their children including baby Thomas. Thomas married Barbara Kundert and they raised their family of two sons and two daughters on the Hefty homestead.

Thomas Rudolph Hefty, their youngest child, was born in 1885. On October 25, 1894 Thomas R. then just 9 years old became an "only child" when his older brother and two older sisters all married in a celebrated triple wedding.



Thomas R. Hefty attended the University of Wisconsin and following graduation set his sights on banking. His father Thomas Hefty and Uncle Fridolin Kundert had been among the founders of the Bank of New Glarus in 1898. In 1926 at the age of 41, Thomas R. was named President of Madison's First National Bank making him the youngest bank president in Wisconsin. In 1958 he became Chairman of the Board.

In the early 1930s, Hefty purchased Carl Johnson's mansion on Lake Mendota. The Hefty family lived there until 1949 when Hefty offered the 4 acre property (then valued from \$125,000 to 200,000) to the State of Wisconsin for the bargain price of \$47,500. Wisconsin Democrats were against the deal thinking the Hefty home overpriced and a white elephant. One of the more outspoken opponents was Ruth Doyle, whose son Jim (Governor James R. Doyle) would one day occupy the residence.

Thomas R. Hefty died in 1967 and is buried in Madison's Forest Hill Cemetery.

### **Marriages: All in the Family Part 1**

The *Family History Notes* of Fall, 2005 told of the Babler and Schuler families. Five sons and daughters of Heinrich and Maria (Marti) Babler married five daughters and sons of the Jacob and Elsbeth (Blumer) Schuler. Specifically, Jacob, Maria, Verena, Katharina and Barbara Babler married Barbara, Jacob, Heinrich, Fridolin and Johannes Schuler.

Also mentioned in past issues were the four members of the Johannes and Dorothea (Speich) Legler family who married four sons and daughters of Paulus and Sibilla (Knobel) Kundert. They were Peter, Barbara, Dorothea and Anna Legler who married Barbara, Paulus, Jacob and Baltz Kundert.

The practice of multiple children from one family marrying children from another family was not uncommon. This has been attributed to local clannishness, but perhaps more fundamental limitations of the day prevented the youth from meeting others and socializing in a wider circle of acquaintances.

Courting opportunities in times past were profoundly different than today. Transportation was limited. There was less free time to devote to personal pleasures. Discretionary spending money was likely non-existent with the family purse strings probably closely controlled by the parents. Even if someone in those days had the time and money to “hang out” where would young men and young women go? School attendance was often limited to the eighth grade at the nearby county school and perhaps the boys did not even get through the eighth grade due to work commitments. A trip to town by the farm kids may have been limited to church services and the occasionally shopping trip. Social activity was family and church oriented. So when an older brother or sister married, the family and social circle now included the family members of the in-laws. And so other romances were spawned from within these family circles.

Think of the youth of the past generation. Nearly everyone has a car or easy access to transportation. Free time and spending money are much more abundant. Places to socialize – bars, malls, theatres, coffee shops – are everywhere. Every night of the week, a young person could drive to a different destination and have the opportunity to meet new people. And today, most young people leave high school and go to college, into the military, or into the workforce, all of which afford the opportunity to meet and mix with countless numbers of other young people.

In the first hundred years, the New Glarus area was populated by people often related by blood or marriage. And these inter-relationships wove a closely-knit fabric among the local community. Reflecting on communities today, there is still a strong camaraderie among the residents of small towns, but that cohesiveness formed by family connections, is far less prevalent today versus times past.

The following lists document the interesting relationships formed by area family marriages. The first list documents area marriages where brothers married sisters and the second list documents when brothers married an aunt and niece. Other marriage lists will be found in future issues.

**Brothers who married sisters:**

Fred and Robert Strahm married Rosa and Anna Rhyner  
Ernest and Adolph Strahm married Mary and Ella Schiesser  
Harold and Robert Maurer married twins Dora and Doris Granberg  
Caspar and Edward Zwicky married Barbara and Verena Voegeli  
William A. and Herman Legler married Anna M. and Theresa Schmid  
Wilbert and Arnold Elmer married Lucille and Lorraine Freitag  
George and William Stauffacher married Ursula and Katharina Geiger  
Mathias and Jacob Geigel married Euphemia and Anna Stauffacher  
Johannes and Dietrich Stauffacher married Anna Katharina and Anna Norder  
Ulrich and Jacob P. Elmer married Emma and Lydia Jenny  
Samuel and John Iseli married Clara and Cora Lemereaux  
Henry and John Elmer married Katharina and Lisetta Wenger  
Fred and Emil Ritschard married Anna Barbara and Magdalena Iseli  
Isaiah and Daniel Stauffacher married Anna and Lena Faeser  
Orville and Clarence Funseth married Hilda and Elsie Duerst  
Gilbert and Robert Wittwer married Ella and Clara Funseth  
Balthasar and Henry Hefty married Maria and Barbara Hauser  
Fred A. and William K. Underhill married Elizabeth and Mary Schofield (the latter being the first marriage in Primrose)  
Andreas and Henrick Brekke Anderson married Maren and Gunhild Andersdatter Bjolgerud (early Norwegian immigrants in Primrose)  
Heinrich and Caspar Hefty married Sara and Verena Ott  
Sam and Waldo Luchsinger married Elizabeth and Mathilda Elmer  
Jacob and Rudolf Regez married Louisa and Lisetta Wittwer  
Sam and Herman Klassy married Wilma and Frances Pluss

Oswald and Mathias Schmid married Sylvia and Margaretha Zimmerman (half sisters)  
 Fridolin and Heinrich Klassy married Christina and Anna Schrepfer  
 Alvin and Gilbert Zweifel married Hilda and Emma Fahrney  
 Ernest and Adolf Gempeler married Emma and Anna Stauffer  
 Fred and Gilbert Disch married Lillian and Rose Bigler  
 Jacob and August Halder married Catherine and Elizabeth Brunner  
 Conrad and John H. Babler married Elizabeth and Anna Verena Rhyner  
 Gottlieb and Peter Steiner married Anna and Barbara Klassy  
 Ira and Robert Holcomb married Hulda and Bertha Marty  
 Ezra and William Blumer married Emma and Katharina Blumer (Blumer married Blumer)  
 Fred M. and Edward Blum married Barbara and Anna Blumer  
 Fridolin and Johann Heinrich Zentner married Barbara and Anna Legler  
 Paulus and Thomas Altmann married Ursula and Regula Baumgartner  
 Jacob N. and Fred N. Marty married Anna Karolina and Katharine North  
 Herman and William Marty (sons of Fred N. and Katharine above) married Bertha and Louisa Hefty  
 Edward and Arnold Zumkehr married Rosa and Maria Bertha Marty  
 Orville and William Colney married Hilda and Anna Barbara Zweifel  
 Joseph and Arthur Lamboley married Emma and Anna Disch  
 Anton and Christian Bontly married Ursula and Susanna Babler  
 David and Andreas Legler married Bertha and Emilie Schlittler  
 Gilbert P. and Ernst J. Hoesly married Anna and Edith Marty  
 Walter and Matt Wittenwyler married Lydia and Anna Kubly  
 Anton and Jacob Baumgartner married Mary E. and Libbie Clayton  
 Alois and Pius Buesser married Louisa and Meta Marty  
 Walter and Albert Elmer married Beatrice and Arvilla Golz  
 Caspar and Henry Elmer married Myrtle and Irene Krause  
 Franz and Nathan Brand married Carol and Dora Schindler  
 Paulus and Thomas Altmann married Ursula and Regula Baumgartner  
 Samuel and Julius Eichelkraut married Alma and Alice Hefty  
 William and Edward Wild married Dora and Ida Hageman  
 Samuel and Melchior Klassy married Rosina and Sarah Hoesly

**Brothers who married Aunt and Niece**

Brothers Dietrich and Jacob Freitag married Verena Elmer (aunt) and Verena Ruegg (niece)  
 Brothers Alexander and William Wallace married Nancy Lynn (aunt) and Elizabeth Moore (niece)  
 (early Irish immigrants who lived in Exeter)  
 Brothers John and Jacob Legler married Mary Blumer (aunt) and Ursula Freitag (niece)  
 Brothers G. F. and Peter Klassy married Louisa Kundert (aunt) and Henrietta Zwicky (niece)  
 Brothers John Peter and Fridolin Klassy/Klasse married Barbara Schiesser (aunt) and Barbara Freitag (niece)



Pictured left is the Andreas and Barbara (Duerst) Hoesly family. Brothers David (seated right) and Andrew (standing left) married Elsbeth Wild (aunt – seated left) and Barbara Eichelkraut (niece – standing left). The niece Barbara was nearly 3 years older than her *Basi Baeti*.

**New Glarus Digital Collection**

Between 200 and 300 historic photographs and documents (including early New Glarus Swiss Reformed Church records) have been digitalized and posted online. This is a wonderful new source of local history and family history information. Unfortunately, many of the people and locations in the photographs have been misidentified. Here is the link: [New Glarus Digital Collection](#)

**Photographs Received in Response to the Previous Issue**

Two photographs were submitted in response to articles in the last issue of “Family History Notes” The first photograph below was received from Sherry Anderegg of the Johannes and Euphemia (Babler)



Hauser family. Johannes Hauser was born in Elm, Canton Glarus and his wife Euphemia Babler (originally Bähler) was a native of nearby Matt. Johannes’ father, Adam Hauser (1818-1881), was killed in Elm’s mountain slide.

The parents (seated middle) are surrounded by their children (from left to right) Henry, Euphemia (Mrs. Arthur Kubly), Adam, Susan

(Mrs. Rudolf Benkert Jr.; Harveda Knobel’s grandmother), and John (known as Jack; Sherry Anderegg’s grandfather).

The second photograph was received from Mike Bovre. Mike’s family lived on a farm down the road from the Montrose Store. The 1980 photo taken by Charlene (Eichelkraut) Schmid shows Denton Robert Smith (aka Bobby Dent) and his Model A Ford in front of the store.



Jim Town Store - 1980  
Bobby Dent & car  
Photo by Charlene Schmid