

Family History Notes

Summer 2015

Klassy Families

The family name Klassy is of Canton Glarus origin linked to the villages of Luchsingen and Schwanden. The name is spelled Kläsi or Klaesi in Glarus and is one of those Glarner names which has taken on many spellings in America. It is most often seen here as Klassy but variations include Klassey, Klassi, Klashy, Klasse, Klassie, Klaessy and even Klaehsy. The name is said to be a diminutive derivation of the Christian name Niklaus. The Kläsi von Luchsingen family crest is shown at left. These Klassy spelling variations make this a rather challenging name to research in the U. S. census records or in searchable internet databases. And then there is a challenge posed by the adjective “classy” -- sometimes spelled as “klassy” -- which can lead to such off-topic websites such as the “Kinky and Klassy” adult entertainment site!



The name Kläsi can be found in Glarner records going back many centuries. A Hans Kläsi is listed among the dead at Weesen when the Habsburgs attacked that village (*der Mordnacht zu Weesen*) in 1388. Another Hans Kläsi was killed in battle against the French at St. Jakob an der Birs in 1444. The Klassy families in the New Glarus area can trace their ancestry back to one of two men named Thomas Kläsi who lived at the same time in the early 1600s. While some online ancestries have concluded that these two men were one and the same, the Glarus genealogy records assign a different number to each Thomas and thus they are presumed to be two distinct individuals. Thomas Kläsi #2 was married to Rosina Laager and Thomas Kläsi #3 was married to Regula Knobel. The accompanying chart will assist readers navigate through the various Klassy branches discussed. The chart is shaded in three areas to help differentiate between these various Klassy lines.

There were several Klassy branches that came to the New Glarus area beginning with Johann Peter and Barbara (Schiesser) Klassy. They had emigrated as newlyweds from Luchsingen in 1847 and lived for a time in Greenfield, WI (near Barbara's brother-in-law and sister Johann Jacob and Maria (Schiesser) Freitag). After their arrival in this area around 1851 they farmed near the southwest corner of the Town of New Glarus and adjoining Town of Washington. Peter and Barbara had five sons – Samuel, Johann Jakob (John Jacob), Johann Peter (John Peter), Heinrich (Henry) and Fridolin (Fred).

Oldest son Samuel was born in Greenfield in 1848. He married Anna Wild and they farmed the Hilarius Wild homestead near the four corner point where the Towns of Adams, York, New Glarus and Washington abut. John Jacob married Charlotte (Lottie) Rolph and they farmed in the Town of Mt. Pleasant. John Peter married Elsbeth Legler and it appears they and their sons farmed Peter and Barbara's homestead farm. Brothers Henry and Fred Klassy married sisters Anna and Christina Schrepfer and both families farmed in the Town of Exeter.

These Klassy families typically named their sons Samuel and Peter, giving rise to the family saying “every Peter has a Sam, and every Sam has a Peter”! To differentiate between the various Sams and Peters, the Klassy men, as found with other locals, adapted the New Glarus convention of using a middle initial. At a time when men were not baptized with a middle name, the middle initial came most often from the maiden name of their wife. Therefore there was Peter O. Klassy (married Verena Louisa Ott), Peter Z. Klassy (married Henrietta Zwicky), Peter H. Klassy (married Barbara Hoesly), Peter L. Klassy (married Emma Legler), Peter Ch. Klassy (married a widow Rosa Duerst Christen), Sam B. Klassy (married Anna Becker) and Sam W. Klassy (married Emma Waeffler). Sam P. Klassy had the middle name Peter and was married to Wilma Pluss -- he would have been Sam P. either way.

Peter Klassy-Schiesser also had two brothers and a half-brother that came to America. Brother Samuel Klassy married Rosina Kundert and they farmed in Exeter. Brother Fridolin (whose family used the spellings Klassi and Klasse) married Barbara Freitag and they farmed in the Renwick/LaVerne, Iowa area. And lastly half-brother David Klassy married Anna Zweifel and was a shoemaker and restaurant operator in Monticello. These aforementioned Klassy family members can be found on the lightly shaded area of the accompanying Klassy chart.

The next set of Klassy members discussed can be found on the medium gray shaded area of the chart. Among these branches the names David and Joachim appear to prevail. Arriving in or around 1852 was David Klassy, his wife Katharina née Dürst accompanied by her father Mathias Dürst. David Klassy purchased and operated the saw mill begun by Joshua Wild and converted it to a grist mill. Later Klassy operated the saw mill and grist mill in the Town of Cadiz (Green County). There were no children from this marriage.

Joachim and Anna Katharina (Speich) Klassy and two sons Johannes (John in America) and Joshua were in-laws of Joshua Wild of New Glarus. When Wild traveled to his homeland in 1860 the Klassy family had planned to send 12 year old son John to America with Wild on his return. But the Klassy family became so distressed over this plan that the entire family decided to accompany Wild to America. The Klassys and Joshua Wild traveled on the steamship Illinois arriving in New York City on September 13, 1860. Below are excerpts from the Illinois ship manifest showing Klaesi Joachim 50, Klaesi Catherine 46, Klaesi John 12, and Klaesi Joshua 7, and following that Wild Joseph (sic) 47. Joachim Klassy was listed as a Swiss farmer; Wild as a mechanic whose citizenship was the U.S. A.

82	Klaesi Joachim	50		Farmer	Swiss
83	Klaesi Catherine	46	female	—	"
84	Klaesi John	12	male	—	"
85	Klaesi Joshua	7	male	—	"
88	Wild Joseph	47		Mechanic	U. S. A.

[As a historical footnote, also traveling on the ship Illinois was Swiss priest (and later bishop) Martin Marty. Marty, 26, was being sent to administer St. Meinrad, a Benedictine community in

southern Indiana founded by monks from the famed Einsiedeln Abbey in Canton Schwyz. Marty was later served the Dakota Territory where he was known as “The Apostle of the Sioux”.]

A black and white portrait of a young man with dark, curly hair. He is looking slightly to the left of the camera with a serious expression. He is wearing a dark suit jacket over a white shirt and a dark bow tie. The background is a mottled, dark grey.

Joachim's wife, Anna Katharina née Oertli was born in Ennenda, Canton Glarus. According to family lore she came to this country as a "mail order bride" with an arranged fiancé whom she strongly disliked. Anna Katharina worked to reimburse him for her immigration costs. She made coffee and cooked sausages at the New Glarus Hotel and then worked at the Hefty and Kundert store (across the street from the Hotel). The New Glarus post office was located in this store and that is where she met Joachim Klessy whom she married in 1884.

Yet another Joachim, this time spelled Klaessy, arrived here and married yet another woman named Anna Katharina. Anna Katharina Luchsinger had been born in Norway to Glarner parents, Samuel and Anastasia (Tschudi) Luchsinger. The Klaessys farmed in the Town of Jordan and then in 1891 moved to a farm near Renwick, IA.

Emigrating in 1853 was the Melchior and Margaretha (Wichser) Klassy family. Melchior and Margaretha traveled on the immigrant ship Manchester from LeHarve to New York City arriving on October 24 with sons Thomas, George, Melchior, Heinrich and Fridolin (baby Fridolin was not listed on the ship manifest). The Klassys farmed in the Town of Washington near the New Bilten settlement. Two generations later Melchior Klassy grandsons Herman F., Henry C., and William E. all farmed on adjoining farms in the same land and area of where their father Henry had farmed. These Klassy farms were along Fairview Road southwest of Monticello. Growing up on these adjoining farms were Edwin Klassy, New Glarus agriculture teacher, Roger Klassy of Klassy Milling, and Kenneth Klassy who married New Glarus native Grace Figy.

Melchior and Margaretha had two granddaughters, Mae and Caroline Klassy, who for 45 years ran a millinery and gift shop in the Eugene Hotel building on the southwest corner of Monroe's Square. It was appropriately called the Klassy Shop. Mae had attended millinery design school and had been employed designing millinery items in New York City before returning to Monroe.

The Melchior Klassy branch can be found in the darkest shaded area of the Klassy chart. This line is entirely distinct other Klassys who came to this area being descendants of Thomas Kläsi #3. In this branch the names Thomas and Heinrich are most common.

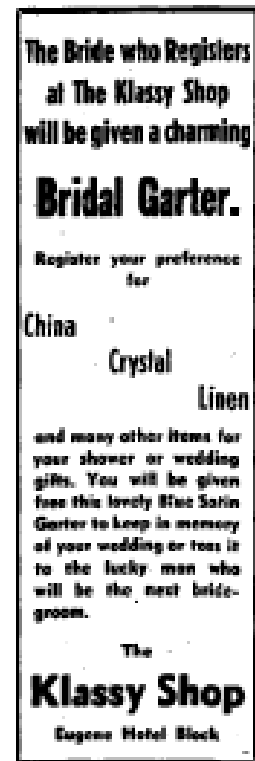
Some Klassy/Klassi/Klaesi Individuals Today

From Limoges porcelain to space travel to cow manure, the follow stories tell of some diverse Klassy family members today.

Debby DuBay

Debby DuBay is the third great-granddaughter of Melchior and Margaretha Klassy through their son George. (George Klassy, born in Canton Glarus, grew up in the Town of Washington, married locally to Susan Schlunegger, and then relocated to South Dakota where they farmed in Lake County.) Debby has become one of America's foremost authorities on Limoges porcelain and has amassed what is believed to be the largest collection of antique Limoges in the country.

Debby started collecting in 1974 at the beginning of her 20 year career in the U. S. Air Force – much of that service in Germany. She spent her free time combing European flea markets and Paris antique shops searching for pieces of Limoges.

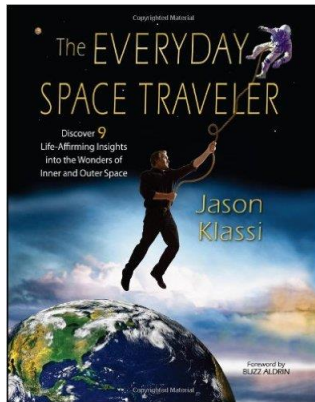


After retiring from the Air Force, Debby turned her passion for collecting into a new profession. She began selling Limoges at her retail store. She was an early adapter of internet technology (her website began in 1995) and now she sells to a worldwide audience from her website. Debby has a decidedly high-end clientele. The porcelain jardinières currently offered for sale command thousands of dollars for each piece.

Debby has authored several books on the subject of Limoges and is a sought after lecturer. Here is a link to her website -- take a look: <http://www.limogesantiques.com/>

Jason Klassi

Iowa native Jason Klassi has eclectic interests and a wide-ranging intellect. He is an author, documentary filmmaker, producer, composer and space travel enthusiast. And he is the great-grandson of Fridolin and Barbara (Freitag) Klasse who married in Wisconsin then farmed near Renwick, IA.



Jason's first interest in space began when he met astronaut Buzz Aldrin in 1979. He began designing space stations and lunar bases. His interest in outer space led to a career filming inner space (the oceans and seas) with Jacques Cousteau and scoring original music.

Jason's 2012 book "The Everyday Space Traveler: Discover 9 Life-Affirming Insights into the Wonders of Inner and Outer Space" has a foreword written by Buzz Aldrin. The Amazon listing for Klassi's book says, "*The Everyday Space Traveler* is the first book that brings space travel down to Earth and makes these profound insights available to us all. Like the astronauts, you too can discover timeless secrets of the universe that have taken earthbound humans millennia to understand. Whether you personally travel to space or not, embracing these powerful insights can move you beyond merely surviving to truly thriving."

Paul and Fritz Klaesi

Brothers Fritz and Paul Klaesi have a Canton Glarus pedigree. Although they are immigrants to North America it was Canada, and not America, which beckoned the brothers. The Klaesi Brothers and their families arrived in 1990 and purchased a dairy farm near Cobden, Ontario. The Klaesi Brothers have achieved notoriety across Canada for the anaerobic digester they have installed within a previously existing manure storage pit. The manure from their animals goes into the digester yielding biogas which the Klaesis use to provide both heat and electricity. The heat goes back into the digester to maintain the proper temperature or can be utilized to heat their homes and water. The electricity generated by burning the biogas is used within the farm operation to operate equipment. Surplus electricity is sold back to the electrical utility.



Pictured above at an agricultural roundtable meeting in Cobden, ON are Paul Klaesi and son Elias, and Fritz Klaesi and son Michael. They are flanked by Cheryl Gallant, Member of Parliament representing the Cobden region and Gerry Ritz, Canadian Agriculture Minister.

The Klaesi anaerobic digester yields \$20K of electricity each year with an investment payback of about 10 years. Additionally the Klaesis were awarded a \$50K prize for in recognition of the successful implementation of their anaerobic digester. There has been so much interest shown in the Klaesi operation that as many as one to two groups tour their farm facility weekly.

Paul and Fritz have divided the responsibilities of running their farming operation, and their sons have also become part of the setup. Paul is in charge of the digester and office work, Elias looks after the cows, Michael and Fritz focus on machinery and repair. However Elias was quick to point out in a recent interview, “But those are generalizations. We’ll all help out wherever needed.”

For a great article about the Klaesi family from the “Progressive Dairyman” (of Canada) website just click on the following link: [Klaesi Family Farm](#)

The Swiss National Anthem

One might presume that Switzerland, a country which traces its origin to the year 1291, would have a long-cherished national anthem. But until the 19th Century there was no Swiss anthem. The song "*Rufst du mein Vaterland*", which has the same simple melody as "God Save the

Queen" and "My Country, Tis of Thee", served as the first Swiss anthem from the 19th Century until 1961 when it was replaced, provisionally, by the *Schweizerpsalm*. In 1981 the *Schweizerpsalm* was made the official anthem.

Schweizerpsalm

Leonhard Widmer (1809–1867) Aldrich Zwysig (1808–1884)

Andante

1. Trittst im Morgen - rot da her,	seh' ich dich im Strah - len - meer,	dich, du Hoch - er -	
2. Kommst im A - bend - glühn da her,	find' ich dich im Stern - en - heer,	dich, du Men - schen -	
3. Ziehst im Ne - bel - flor da her,	such' ich dich im Wol - ken - meer,	dich, du Un - er -	
4. Fährst im wil - den Sturm da her,	bist du selbst uns Hort und Wehr,	du, all - mäch - tig	

The *Schweizerpsalm* dates from 1841 when it was composed by Alderich (Alderick) Zwysig with lyrics by Leonhard Widmer. The familiar lyric “*Trittst im Morgenrot daher*” begins the first of four stanzas in the German language version of the anthem. There are also French, Italian and Romansch lyrics representing the other national languages of Switzerland.

An argument has been put forth in recent years that the Swiss have long been ambivalent about their current anthem. Some feel the many verses are too long. Others feel it is too difficult to sing. One commenter decreed the lyrics have too many references to God and the weather.

Therefore the selection of a new national anthem is currently underway in Switzerland. The aim is to choose a melody and lyrics which will become more meaningful to the Swiss today. The new lyrics in each of the four national languages are to convey a more contemporary expression of Switzerland's values, spirit and pride. A contest was begun which yielded anthem submissions from over 200 songwriters. A diverse panel of 30 Swiss including musicians, politicians, clergy and a poet completed the task of narrowing the hundreds of submissions to six. A single mixed chorus produced twenty-four internet videos – performing the six songs with the new lyrics in each of the four national languages. Internet voting has narrowed the field to three finalists – two of which retain Zwyssig's melody. Another vote will choose the best of the three. The winner will be announced on September 12, 2015 during a televised broadcast of the Swiss Festival of Folk Music followed by the anticipated approval of the Swiss government.

1915 Road Trip

One hundred years ago this summer, the Edward and Anna (Schindler) Blum family left Monticello, WI on a three month, 7700 mile camping trip to California and back. In 1972, the late Fred G. Blum wrote about his family's adventure in an article for the Wisconsin State Journal. The Monticello Area Historical Society has this article posted at their website. Click here for link to 1915 Blum road trip ["So You Think You had a Camping Trip"](#)

Wilhelm Tell on YouTube

Interlaken's famed outdoor performance of Schiller's Wilhelm Tell has been filmed and the nearly two hour video can be viewed (at least at present) on YouTube. Whether or not one can understand the German language production, it is enjoyable to see their set and scenery, their costumes and the staging of the various scenes. In 2004, then director Monika Wild introduced a narrator for the drama in the person of Friedrich Schiller. Here is the link [Wilhelm Tell Video](#)

Chattanooga's Mayor Rudy Olgiati

The U. S. Highway 27 Bridge which spans the Tennessee River in downtown Chattanooga, TN is sometimes referred to (incorrectly) as the Ol' Johnny Bridge. Actually the bridge is the Olgiati Bridge named for three-term mayor (1951-1963) of Chattanooga Peter Rudolph (Rudy) Olgiati. Olgiati was a quintessential "boss"-style mayor, being referred to as an "absolute monarch" in Bob Martin's book "Both Sides of the Fence: Corruption and Redemption in Chattanooga, Tennessee from the 1940s through the 1980s".

Olgiati was born in the Swiss settlement of Gruetli (today Gruetli-Laager), TN the son of Spanish-born Roman Olgiati and his wife Anna nee Wichser. Anna was born in Schwanden, Canton Glarus to Fridolin and Barbara (Wild) Wichser. Fridolin Wichser had come to Tennessee about 1878 with oldest son Jacob. Barbara Wichser followed in 1879 with their little children Tobias, Fridolin and baby Anna (later Mrs. Roman Olgiati).



Mayor Olgiati's grandmother, Barbara (Wild) Wichser was the niece of early New Glarus residents Barbara (Wild) Luchsinger and David Wild-Figi, thus making Anna Wichser a first cousin of various early area residents such as Katharina (Luchsinger) Stuessy of New Glarus, John Luchsinger of Monroe, Fred Luchsinger of Belleville and Jacob Wild of Verona.

Yorty and Jordi

American city mayors with Swiss backgrounds included Rudy Olgiati of Chattanooga (see previous article), Harold H. Burton of Cleveland, Peter Staub of Knoxville and Samuel W. (Sam) Yorty of Los Angeles. Yorty was a Nebraska native who attended college in California and was admitted to the bar in 1939. He was elected to the California Assembly in 1936 and he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1950 and re-elected in 1952. He served as Mayor of Los Angeles from 1961 to 1973.



The Yorty family is descended from the Pennsylvania Dutch, many of whom had Swiss roots. It is likely that Sam Yorty's ancestry included a Peter Jordy who was born in Canton Bern, Switzerland in 1696 and later immigrated to Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. And it is also possible Mayor Yorty's father, grandparents and great-grandparents all lived (at least for a period of their respective lives) in Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin. It remains to be determined if the broken grave marker of S. P. Yorty in Brandon, WI is that of Mayor Yorty's grandfather.

There are a number of family names in America related to the name Yorty. Among these names are Jordi, Yorde, Jordy, Yotty, and Yerty. All of these names can trace their origin to the Swiss name Joder -- Joder being a shortened version of Theodorus, referring to a 4th Century monk in the Valais region of Switzerland.

One of the countless constituents whom Sam Yorty met while serving as Los Angeles Mayor was Elsie Beichel, a New Glarus native and long-time resident of Los Angeles. Elsie's maiden name was Jordi (pronounced YOR-dee) and she remarked to the Mayor the similarity between their surnames. It is unlikely that either realized that there was indeed a common source of their family names. Both Mayor Yorty and Elsie Beichel had one other trait in common -- they both are remembered for their pronunciation of Los Angeles as "Los AHNG-geh-leez."

Dear Grandma Jordi

The following thank you note was written on Christmas Day, December 25, 1930 by my father, Arthur Elmer, to his maternal grandmother, Catherine (Geiger) Jordi. Dad was 10 years old at the time. His grandmother lived with her daughter and son-in-law Elsie and Hugo Beichel near Pasadena, California, in Eagle Rock -- now part of Los Angeles. The envelope was simply addressed to Grandma Jordi, 4985 Vincent Ave., Eagle Rock, Calif. The bungalow at 4985 Vincent Avenue can be viewed courtesy of Google Maps Street View. Real estate data of today indicates that this 1000 square foot home, built in 1922, is worth about \$500,000!



Dear Grandma Jordi,

I am going to write and thank you for the stationary. Kathryn is well pleased with the doll. She is carrying it around all the time. She has a whole family of dolls. We have a lot of snow. We go sleigh riding and skiing. It is cold in the morning. But in the afternoon the sun is out and it's warm.

We have a Christmas tree. We put eight lights on it.

I got a new cap and necktie and a game. We had a program in school. We drew names. The name you drew you have to get a present for. I got a box of paints and three pencils with my name on it. Julian was Santa Claus. We have vacation for two weeks. We were at the Christmas Program at town Wednesday night. They had a large tree with many lights on it. Outside they have a large pine tree decorated with lights. There was a large crowd. Ma and Pa stayed at Joe's. Julian, Dean and I went. We got candy. Every child got some.

In town nearly every house has a tree in the window decorated with lights. Joes have one too.

Kathryn has a large doll nearly the size of herself. It has hair and it cries. On the radio we heard a Christmas program. There was a little girl five years old. She sure could speak. They sang Christmas carols too. Saturday the 20th there was a Santa Claus in Chaimson's store. He gave a pack of candy to each boy or girl. Herberts may sleep here tonight (Christmas night). Ma is not feeling so good. So we have to help a little. I guess I will close my letter. Wishing you a Happy New Year.

With love,

Arthur Elmer

Mentioned in the letter are Dad's siblings Kathryn, Julian and Herbert Elmer, their Uncle Joe and Aunt Louise (Jordi) Gmur and Gmur son Dean. Chaimson's was a New Glarus department store in the former Levitan-Steussy building.

Grandma Catherine Jordi died about a year after receiving this letter. She was predeceased by a son Arthur but survived by her other 10 children. Her body was returned from Eagle Rock to



New Glarus and was buried in the Swiss Church cemetery next to her husband, Swiss immigrant and Civil War veteran Jacob Jordi. Jordi family photo below: back row, Arthur, Bert, Cora Elmer (my grandmother), Otto, Josie Hoesly, Emma Freitag; middle row, Anna Gmur, Jacob Jordi (father), Elsie Beichel, Katharina (Geiger) Jordi (mother), Nettie Simms; front row Louise Gmur and Florence Schlatter.

[illegible]

Note: These Klassv families are recorded in both the Schwanden and Luchsingen family books in the Landesarchiv in Glarus. The designation "S" refers to the Schwanden book; "L" refers to the Luchsingen book.

Prepared by Robert A. Elmer, July 2015