

Family History Notes

Winter 2017

Historic Highland

The discovery of an online 1833 cargo manifest for the immigrant ship Marengo (web link to this document follows on page 4) opened the door for the opportunity to learn about the history of Highland, Illinois. Highland has been somewhat a sister community to New Glarus -- both communities being founded as Swiss immigrant colonies in the first half of the nineteenth century. Both served as immigration points for many thousands of Swiss settlers. Highland was the home of Helvetia Milk Condensing Company later the Pet Milk Company. And from 1910 to 1962 New Glarus was the location of one of Pet's condensed milk production plants.

Highland was founded in 1831 by Dr. Kaspar Koepfli (originally Köpfli), his nephew Joseph Suppiger and various members of the Koepfli and Suppiger families of Sursee, Canton Lucerne. Their intent was to find land in America which would support a settlement of Swiss immigrants. Dr. Koepfli had read Gottfried Duden's 1829 "Report on a Journey to the Western States of North America" praising Missouri as a destination for German immigrants. Missouri was explored by the Koepfli/Suppiger party however they felt there were too many trees and they were also troubled by Missouri being a slave state. Thirty miles east of St. Louis in Illinois lay Looking Glass Prairie, an area of mixed prairie and wooded lands situated on gently rolling hills. They purchased land here settling between Silver Creek on the west and Sugar Creek to the east. Rather than recite the history of Highland, it may be interesting to compare and contrast various aspects of its founding and development versus that of New Glarus. There are interesting similarities and distinct differences.



Reason for Emigration and Settlement: Dr. Kaspar Koepfli was a professional man who had experienced political disharmony in Switzerland – at one point even being jailed for his convictions. He envisioned a new Swiss colony having more political tolerance for opposing positions than he had experienced in Switzerland. The Highland settlement was a private endeavor funded with Koepfli and Suppiger funds. New Glarus was founded by people who sought better economic opportunities for themselves and their descendants. They were sponsored by the Canton of Glarus Emigration Society.

Timing and Route: Both groups left Switzerland in April and arrived at their destination in August. The Highland group, not having advance scouts, then took an additional two months to locate the final settlement site. Both groups utilized water routes from Europe to St. Louis. The Highland founders left Le Havre bound for New York, while the New Glarus settlers left Holland and entered the U. S. in Baltimore. The Highland group used the Hudson River, Erie Canal, Lake Erie, the Ohio and Erie Canal and the Muskingum River to Marietta, Ohio. Both groups had the same route from Marietta, OH on the Ohio River to St. Louis on the Mississippi.

Location of Settlement: Both groups considered Missouri as their settlement site but chose land in Illinois and Wisconsin which satisfied their desire for agricultural land, water and timber. The Highland settlement happened to be situated on a line from Vandalia, IL to St. Louis, MO. Vandalia was the western end point of America's first road, the National Road, from Cumberland, MD in the east to its western terminus at Vandalia. As St. Louis grew, it was logical to extend the road from Vandalia west. Highland citizens, following the urging of founder Joseph Suppiger, ensured that the road would pass through their town by committing to the road construction of the Highland segment. And Highland was just 30 miles from St. Louis and the great north-south superhighway of the day, the Mississippi River. New Glarus was not located with reference to any particular strategic point, although it was situated near a few "lead roads" which ran east from the lead mining region toward the Lake Michigan ports. But as the area became settled roads and railroads soon followed. Both Highland and New Glarus have a stream named the Sugar to their east.

Additional Settlers: The first Highland settlers, numbering only a handful of families, felt lonely and isolated in the early 1830s. Many more immigrants arrived in subsequent years, coming from a wide range of German-speaking Swiss cantons including Zurich, Aargau, St. Gallen, Basel, Glarus, Bern, Zug, Graubunden, Schaffhausen and Schwyz. French-speaking Swiss from Cantons Fribourg, Bern, Vaud and Neuchatel also joined the Highland community. While the New Glarus settlement was primarily Glarner, there were other Swiss settlers arriving who came from other cantons as well. But the village of New Glarus and Town of New Glarus were decidedly Glarner for decades.

Naming of Settlement: The Koepfli/Suppiger party first named their settlement New Switzerland (seen as *Neu Schweizerland* on an early map). It was renamed Highland to satisfy an early non-Swiss resident. But because there was another Illinois village named Highland, the Swiss settlement became known, for a short time, as Helvetia. When Highland, IL near Chicago became Highland Park, Helvetia was dropped and the name Highland was re-established. Local hills and ridges were nicknamed Rigi, Jura, Sonnenberg, and Rütli after Swiss landmarks. Streets had some Swiss names -- few remaining today. Highland east-to-west streets are numbered and many of the north-to-south streets are named for trees (e.g. Oak, Pine, Locust, Cypress). New Glarus was named for the home canton of its settlers. Early village streets were named for the home villages of early settlers (e.g. Diesbach, Rütli, Schwanden) but were later renamed as numerical north-to-south streets and east-to-west avenues.

Religion, Schools and Occupations: The Canton Lucerne families Koepfli and Suppiger were Roman Catholic. The New Glarus founding families were Swiss Reformed. The German Methodists (Evangelical Association) began congregations in both Highland and New Glarus in the early years of each settlement. The earliest settlers recognized the need to educate their youth. Both communities built a primitive school which doubled as a church. In the case of the Highland building, it was shared by Roman Catholic and Protestant denominations for several years. The Koepflis and Suppigers were educated, many of whom were physicians. The New Glarner were textile workers and laborers who earned a living off of the land. Both groups learned to farm (in the American sense of that period) through hard physical work. Both purchased livestock and planted wheat.

Meeting Swiss along the Way: The Koepfli and Suppiger founders met the Hitz family of Klosters, Canton Graubunden in Le Havre. They forged a friendship but went their own ways in America. The Hitzs ended up in Washington, DC. Hitz great-grandsons (and second cousins) were J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the FBI, and Supreme Court Justice Harold H. Burton. In Ohio, the immigrants sampled the wine (at 25 cents a bottle) produced by the Vevay, IN settlers from Canton Vaud. In St. Louis the Koepfli/Suppiger party met the Rindisbacher family who told of their experiences in Selkirk's Red River Colony in today's Alberta. The Rindisbachers later lived in southwest Wisconsin. And Rindisbacher daughter Madeline (Magdalena) and her husband Robert Oliver were early 1840s settlers in the Town of Exeter just east of New Glarus. The Glarner group also met fellow Glarners along their route, including people named Ruch, Wild, Freuler and Lienhard. And the Swiss immigrant Rodolf family of Wiota and Mineral Point, WI greatly assisted the founding Glarner families in 1845.

Community Activities: Music and sport developed in Highland with organizations including the *Sängerbund*, *Männerchor*, *Turnverein* and *Schützenverein* being formed in the 1850s and 1860s. The same or similar groups also formed in New Glarus, Monticello and Monroe. Friendships were formed between the sharp shooters of Highland and New Glarus.

Community Industry: As mentioned, the founding of the Helvetia Milk Condensing Company occurred in Highland. New Glarus was to become the site of one of its many production facilities of condensed milk. The New Glarus plant also produced tin cans for the other Pet condenseries. The first two managers of the New Glarus facility were Robert L. Latzer followed by Emil F. Kaeser in 1913. (One source says Kaeser was the manager beginning in 1910.) These two men were the sons of Pet founders Louis Latzer and Canton Glarus-born Fritz Kaeser.

Two Highland natives, Julius and Timothy Mojonnier, were dairy chemists and both had worked for Pet Milk. They were grandsons of Canton Vaud immigrants to the Highland area. The brothers went on to form the Mojonnier Brothers Company in Chicago. The dairy and food processing equipment company was privately held until 1980 and has since had a succession of corporate owners. The Mojonnier Brothers also developed a successful quality control test for milk fat which uses ether to extract the fat. It is a recognized alternative to the Babcock milk fat test developed at the University of Wisconsin and used by area farmers and cheese makers.

Both Highland and New Glarus were home to an embroidery factory.

1833 Immigrant Cargo Manifest

Like the immigrant travel contract published in the last "Family History Notes" newsletter issue, the cargo manifest of the ship Marengo referenced here can tell many stories. It is a ship manifest showing the names of the immigrants and their possessions held in storage. Listed on this manifest are members of the Suppiger family of Sursee, Canton Lucerne including Joseph Suppiger, Sr. and his 12-year-old son Melchior (Gottfried Melchior). Joseph Sr.'s brother Johannes and several members of his family were also on this ship. It was Joseph Suppiger, Jr., the son of Joseph, Sr., who was a founder of Highland in 1831. The ship sailed from Le Havre to New Orleans arriving in the spring. Joseph Suppiger Sr. died in August of 1833 just months after his arrival – Highland's first death and burial.

The cargo manifest document also shows the ship provisions. These included 2 barrels each of beef and pork, 40 bushels of potatoes, 500 pounds of bread and tinned preserves. Champagne, claret, cordial and port made up the supply of alcohol. In all there were 12 dozen bottles of spirits. The document also itemizes the commercial cargo being shipped to New Orleans.

Of the 40 or so passengers, a number were of Glarner background including Jacob Kamm Sr. and his son Jacob Jr. Jean W. Hossli is listed as a passenger. He is believed to be Johann Ulrich Hösli of Glarus who was known to have immigrated during this time. Both Jacob Kamm Jr. and Johann Ulrich Hösli are featured in my book “Glarners in America” Kamm became a very wealthy shipping and transportation entrepreneur in the state of Oregon. Hösli became known as John Hessly, a store owner in Galveston in the Republic of Texas.

Other details included an inventory of items brought with the immigrants. Many brought immigrant trunks packed with necessities such as food, clothing, utensils and perhaps treasured family heirlooms. In addition to trunks, there were personal items such as bedding packed in cases. And some travelers (perhaps the young unmarried men) simply traveled with sacks. This document also indicates a number of assorted guns (e.g. muskets, pistols, carbines) and weapons (e.g. sabers and knives) brought for hunting and protection in the American frontier.

To see the immigrant document click here: [1833 Cargo Manifest](#)

New Glarus People with Highland Links

With the construction of the Helvetia Milk “Condensing Company (aka Pet Milk) plant in New Glarus in 1910, many Highland and Highland area people moved to New Glarus. Mentioned in a previous newsletter (see Family History Notes Spring 2012) was Bill Yann, a barber who cut hair in New Glarus around 1915 to 1920. Bill and Iola (Feutz) Yann had twin daughters Iola and Iona born in New Glarus. Iona married Samuel Lenoir had they were the parents of a son who



became NASA astronaut William Lenoir. Others associated with Pet Milk with Highland roots and Swiss roots include John and Jenny Liedel, Cecil and Estella Thacker, Bill Scheu, Harlan Wernle and Fred Meyer.

Jenny (Lorenz) Liedel was the daughter of

Swiss immigrant Emily Scharer of Canton Bern and granddaughter of Louisa Hausli of Canton Thurgau. Estella (Ellis) Thacker was the granddaughter of Swiss immigrants Jacob and Albertina (Sigrist) Bircher. Milk hauler Bill Scheu was a native of the Highland area. His maternal grandparents were Swiss immigrants John and Elizabeth (Tischhauser) Hilti likely from the Grabs, Canton St. Gallen area.

Harlan Wernle, the last Pet Milk manager in New Glarus, had immigrant grandfathers, Johann Jacob Hug and Samuel Wernli, both from Canton Aargau. Another man named Samuel Wernli immigrated to New Glarus where the family name became spelled Werndli. New Glarus immigrant Samuel Wernli/Werndli was a native of the village of Thalheim, Canton Aargau. And the Highland Wernli/Wernle family is believed to have come from this same village.

Frederick E. Meyer, a district manager of the Wisconsin Pet Milk plants and receiving stations, had Highland roots. One of Fred's immigrant ancestors was Hugo George Meyer, a Highland carpenter and native of Rühland, Canton Zurich. Fred Meyer's mother was Florence Suppiger, a member of the same Suppiger family that founded Highland in 1831 and who were among the early settlers of 1833. The names of Florence's grandfather Gottfried Melchior Suppiger and great-grandfather Joseph Suppiger, Sr. are found on the 1833 cargo manifest. Besides the aforementioned Meyer and Suppiger families, Fred Meyer had Highland ancestors by the name of Dr. Abraham Felder, a native of Ebnat, in the Toggenburg region of Canton St. Gallen, his wife Katharina Mettler, also a native of the Toggenburg, and David Pagan, a native of Nidau, Canton Bern.

Fred Meyer's maternal grandfather was lumber dealer Fred B. Suppiger. He served as Highland Village President and became Mayor when Highland changed from village to a city form of government. Fred B. Suppiger had a brother Dr. Louis G. Suppiger who was one of several Highland people (along with brewer Joseph Schlitz of Milwaukee) who were among the over 300 victims of the wreck of the S. S. Schiller off the coast of England in 1875. A memorial chapel was built in 1884 at the Highland Cemetery to honor the Schiller victims.

G. S. Suppiger and the World's Largest Catsup Bottle

Highland native Gerhart S. Suppiger (1891-1965) had the distinction of being both a Suppiger and Koepfli descendant. He is believed to be the first-born dual descendant of both founding families of Highland. And Suppiger has a uniquely American legacy towering over Collinsville, IL in the form of a water tower disguised as the world's largest catsup bottle. The G. S. Suppiger Company's production plant produced Brooks Catsup and Suppiger himself is credited with the idea to make the water tower look like one of their catsup bottles. The roadside novelty architecture remains an idiosyncratic piece of 20th Century Americana which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Schlaflys from Highland and St. Louis

Buried in Highland is Johann Joseph Schlafly (1813-1854; originally Schläfli) a native of Canton Solothurn (some sources say Canton Bern). He arrived in Highland in 1854 and died on August 20 in the same year from cholera. (Cholera also swept through New Glarus in August of 1854 killing many. Josef Schneider, a native of Elm, was a cholera victim in New Glarus dying on the same day as Schlafly in Highland.)

Johann Joseph Schlafly did not live long enough in Highland to leave a personal legacy, but his descendants included prominent bankers, business people, lawyers, inventors, educators, and brewers. Johann Joseph's sons John, Fridolin and August sold groceries, hardware and agricultural implements in Carlyle, IL. Fridolin and August founded the First National Bank in Carlyle, IL. Fridolin Schlafly's grandson, Hubert Schlafly, was the inventor of the teleprompter – invented to assist soap opera actors who needed to learn large amounts of dialogue each day. Hubert was also a pioneer in the emerging fields of satellite, cable and pay-per-view TV. August Schlafly's grandson, J. Fred Schlafly, Jr. was a lawyer and husband of conservative Phyllis Schlafly. August's great-grandson Tom Schlafly, also a lawyer, became a brewer. His St. Louis-brewed Schlafly Beer is now Missouri's largest locally-owned independent brewery. Their brew pub was the first such establishment built in Missouri since Prohibition.

Ben Zobrist and the Zobrist and Hediger Families of Illinois

The Zobrist name was heralded in October when the Chicago Cubs won the 2016 World Series, and Cubs second baseman Ben Zobrist was named the series' most valuable player (see photo).

Ben played high school baseball in his hometown of Eureka, IL but assumed his baseball playing days were over when no professional scouts or college recruiters sought him out. His coach suggested a summer baseball camp which led to an offer to play at Olivet Nazarene University. Ben's baseball career included a stint with the Wausau Woodchucks in the Northwoods League in 2003 followed by professional ball in Tampa Bay and Oakland. In 2015 he played for Kansas City (2015 World Series winners) and in 2016 for the Cubs.



Ben's Swiss immigrant ancestors were Rudolf and Verena (Hediger) Zobrist of Canton Aargau who settled near Morton, in Tazewell County, IL. Several immigrant families with the names Zobrist and Hediger also settled in Highland. These included Jacob, Heinrich and Rudolf Zobrist and Heinrich, John and Fred Hediger. And yet today you will find Zobrist Electric, Zobrist ball field and Hediger Back Hoe and Trenching in Highland. Ben's ancestors Rudolf and Verena (Hediger) Zobrist were likely related to the Highland Zobrist and Hediger families.

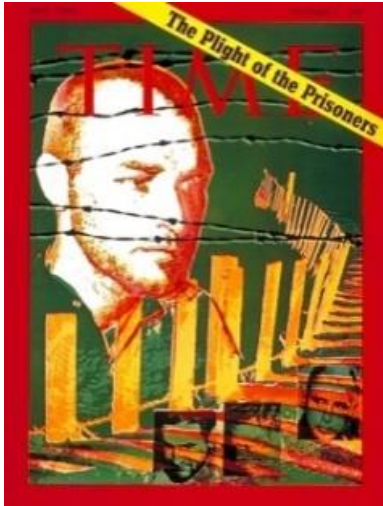
Enduring the Unspeakable

Highland, IL native William M. (Bill) Tschudy is an American hero. He served in Viet Nam and after 12 missions his aircraft was shot down forcing Bill and his commanding officer Jeremiah Denton (later U. S. Senator from Alabama) to parachute into enemy territory. The date was July



18, 1965 and unbeknownst to Tschudy and Denton their captivity would last nearly seven years and seven months before their release in 1973. Four of those years were in solitary confinement. Their aircraft was the lead plane of 28 on a mission to bomb the Thanh Hoa Bridge. This bridge was a target which would stubbornly withstand hundreds of attacks until 1972. Upon landing on the ground, Tschudy was surrounded by North Vietnamese holding machetes. An enemy officer held a gun and shouted at Tschudy, "Hands up, Yank."

Bill's lifelong friend Jeremiah Denton may be best remembered for the interview he gave while a POW in which he blinked T-O-R-T-U-R-E in Morse code. That code signaled to the world, that despite the enemy propaganda which the prisoners were forced to deliver, that torture was indeed part of their lives.



Bill Tschudy's confinement included the camps known as the "Hanoi Hilton" and "Briarpatch". Camp life was brutal and torture was commonplace. Drawings of the twisted positions the bound prisoners had to endure were sketched by artists after the war. Food consisted of a scoop of rice and cabbage soup twice a day. It was estimated later that this fare amounted to only about 700 calories a day. A metal bucket served as their toilet.

Tschudy, Denton and others were also subjected to the humiliation and torture connected with what was coined the "Hanoi March". Prisoners were paraded through the streets of Hanoi surrounded by an angry public who hurled insults, bottles, lit cigarettes and who spat at the POWs. The "Hanoi March" resulted in bruises and loss of teeth. But POWs like Tschudy kept physically and mentally active. Tschudy prayed aloud (to the annoyance of his captors) and credits his strong faith for getting him through the sustained strain of being a POW.

Bill Tschudy's ancestry comes from Canton Glarus and his Tschudy forefathers were people of high social stature in the 16th and 17th centuries. Bill's ancestor Tobias Tschudi (1554-1604) was married to the Barbara von Hohensax, daughter of Baron Johann Christof von Hohensax. Through this marriage the Tschudi family owned the castle at Uster, Canton Zurich until 1710. Following this period at Uster, the Tschudi men became ministers and served various churches in northeast Switzerland. In 1860 Johann Mathias Arnold Tschudi (Arnold Tschudy in America) immigrated from Rheineck, Canton St. Gallen to America. Arnold met Elise Merz on the immigrant ship and they married later that year in Highland.



Arnold Tschudy's grandson Roland Tschudy was a WWII veteran and local Highland dentist. Roland and his wife were visitors to New Glarus in years past. They had two sons Thomas, who served in Korea (and who happens to be my neighbor in Florida) and Bill. Bill Tschudy earned an MBA from Wharton, served in the Pentagon and later worked in the aerospace industry.

The cover of Time magazine from December 7, 1970 (pictured above) features a headshot of Bill Tschudy and an article inside entitled "The Plight of the Prisoners". And the AP wire photo appeared on front pages across the country in February of 1973 showing Bill Tschudy receiving a welcome home kiss from a woman at Alameda Naval Air Station in California.

Another Highland POW

Emil Frey (1838-1922) was a Swiss native and Highland-area farm worker. In 1861 he enlisted to fight for the Union in the Civil War, citing at the time his need for more money than his agricultural pursuits were providing. Frey became a Private in the Illinois 24th Infantry and later achieved the rank of Captain. He was captured At the Battle of Gettysburg and spent 18 months in Richmond’s Libby Prison. There prisoners dined on cornbread, rancid bacon and occasional roasted rat.

After the war, Frey returned to Switzerland where he married and raised a family. He became involved in politics – first at the Basel cantonal level and then at the national level. He apparently was a skilled politician for in 1882 through 1888 Frey held the position of the first Swiss Minister (Ambassador) to the United States. He achieved this position despite a declaration in Highland twenty years earlier, “I do not like America and I shall never like it.”

In 1894 Emil Frey attained the highest political position in Switzerland – the one-year position of *Bundespräsident*. Also in 1894 Frey documented (in a suspicious case of revisionist history) his more altruistic motivations for enlisting in the Civil War. He said he came from a family with a strong military heritage, that he wanted to see the Union preserved, and that he desired the abolishment of slavery. There was no mention of his need for more income!

Swiss-American Fashion Design

A very prominent and recognized name in international fashion is that of Tommy Hilfiger. Up until just a few years ago Hilfiger’s Wikipedia biography said he was of Scottish descent and further stated that he claimed to be a direct descendant of poet Robert Burns. Wikipedia now states Tommy’s father is of Dutch-German ancestry. But the surname Hilfiger was originally Hilfiker from Canton Aargau, Switzerland. Tommy Hilfiger’s immigrant ancestors were Jakob and Maria Hilfiker from Safenwil, Canton Aargau who immigrated in 1817 with a 2 year old son, Rudolph. Rudolph was Tommy’s great-great-grandfather and apparently the one responsible for the change in spelling from Hilfiker to Hilfiger.

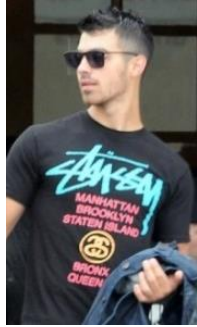


Tommy founded his clothing company in 1985 and his style has evolved from preppy menswear in the beginning to more edgy clothing which reflected the hip hop culture. He expanded his lines to include womenswear and luxury items such as perfume. Tommy continues to design and oversee the entire design process in his company. His 1400 stores can be found in 90 countries around the world and annualized global sales exceed \$6 billion. His philanthropy is extensive providing grants, scholarships and outreach in health, education and cultural programs.

While Tommy Hilfiger was a major contributor to American design culture, another Swiss-American is considered a founder of an American design subculture. This man, Shawn Stussy and his Stüssy brand of clothing, is an icon of the California surfer, skater, and hip-hop culture. Stussy’ career began with making surf boards. He signed each board with his distinctive umlaut-containing signature. And this humble beginning around 1980 led to his designing tee shirts, hats and jackets. In 1984 he formed an apparel line using his Stüssy signature logo. A store in Manhattan’s SoHo neighborhood followed in 1991.



The company has grown to \$50 million in annual sales. It has become a global brand



particularly strong in Europe and Japan. Stüssy pieces remain highly regarded and are worn by celebrities including Justin Bieber, Joe Jonas and Chris Brown (pictured wearing the Stüssy logo).

Shawn Stussy unexpectedly left as president of his company in 1995. His personal goals had become more family-oriented and his rapidly growing company was increasingly demanding more of his time and energy. He and his wife and son moved to Hawaii where Shawn lived a low-key life focusing on what he considered the essentials of life. In recent years, the creative bug has bitten Shawn again and he has launched new youth-oriented fashion items using his new “S-Double” logo.

Shawn’s immigrant ancestors were his great-great grandparents Johann Heinrich and Regula (Schlittler) Stüssi of Niederurnen, Canton Glarus who immigrated to Lincoln County, Kansas.

Jesse Kamm (pictured) is an up-and-coming fashion designer whose clothing is making a new statement. Kamm, like Shawn Stussy, is a Glarner-American. Her immigrant ancestors were Fridolin and Katharina (Kamm) Kamm from the village of Filzbach, Canton Glarus and who immigrated to Highland, IL. And Highland is Jesse’s home town.



Jesse founded her apparel line in 2005 after stumbling into the world of fashion design. She has stated that she makes “strong clothes for strong women”, and describes her fashion sense as minimal, clean, handsome, and crafted from fine textiles. She lives in California and works nine months of the year on her collection. The remaining three months are spent with her family at their off-the-grid retreat in Panama. She is living her dream.

Hilfiker and Roelli in Wisconsin

The Swiss surname Hilfiker was found in the Town of New Glarus in the 1940 census. The family of Leo and Johanna Hilfiker farmed here. Leo was one of several siblings who came from Switzerland to Wisconsin. Leo’s brother Ernst Hilfiker, a native of Boswil, Canton Aargau, was a cheese maker near Darlington. He married Hulda Roelli, the daughter of another Darlington cheese maker, Adolph Roelli. In 1942, Ernst and Hulda purchased their own cheese factory near Tuscobia, Wisconsin. To take advantage of the tourist traffic in northern Wisconsin, the Hilfikers also opened a popular retail cheese store. These enterprises were family affairs with the five Hilfiker children working in the production and retail sales of their cheese. Hilfiker daughter Mary said of her parents, "My dad came here with \$14. He and my mom . . . fulfilled every dream they ever had. That little cheese factory gave them everything. They put five kids through college."

Ernst and Hulda and their family have helped preserve Wisconsin history. They donated a copper cheese kettle along with other cheese making memorabilia to the Wisconsin Historical



Society along. Pictured is the Hilfiker Swiss cheese copper kettle donated to the WHS (Object #2004-64-1). Hulda Hilfiker has left another legacy in the woods of northern Wisconsin. The 74 mile-long Tussockia Trail was established on an abandoned railroad bed due to the leadership and vision of Hulda. A marker at mile one of the four-season recreational trail pays tribute to Hulda. This scenic spot, a short walking distance from the Hilfiker factory, was a favorite of Hulda's.

Darlington cheese maker Adolph Roelli (originally Rölli) immigrated from Altshofen, Canton Lucerne in 1903. His stated destination recorded by immigrant officials was the Hotel Grütli in New York City. Several of Roelli's fellow passengers were heading to Green County – men by the names of Zentner and Rhyner from Elm and Blumer, Hämmerli and Altmann from Engi. Perhaps they persuaded him to come to Wisconsin. Roelli made cheese at his factory at Hick's Corner (intersection of Highways 23 and 11) south of Darlington. And this is still the Roelli Factory today. Adolph married Emma Hirsbrunner and they had three sons and daughter Hulda. When Emma died in 1923 Adolph married her sister Hulda Hirsbrunner and together they had another son. The factory was passed on to Roelli son Walter, then grandson David and now great-grandson Chris. Chris Roelli has re-imagined the cheese factory turning it from a manufacturer of commodity cheeses for national markets to an artisanal focus. His signature cheese is Dunbarton Blue, which is a marriage of English-style Cheddar with the kick of Blue.

Adolph and Emma Roelli's son Edwin did not follow in his father's cheese maker footsteps, but rather became a feed and fertilizer dealer in Darlington followed by a career in real estate. Edwin was a WWII veteran and had the distinction of being a personal assistant to Dr. Robert Oppenheimer of the Manhattan Project at Los Alamos. Edwin's grandson Jakob Roelli (1987-2011) also served in the Army. He was stationed in Afghanistan where he was killed by enemy fire. As is the custom of the American Legion, Darlington's Legion Post #214 was renamed in 2012 to honor the service and ultimate sacrifice of Jakob. The Darlington Post is named the Bates, O'Brien, Howe, Wiegel and Roelli Post named after the first local casualties of WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam and Afghanistan.

Hilfiker in Switzerland

Hans Hilfiker was an electrical engineer born in Safenwil, Canton Aargau. A decade of his professional career was spent in Schwanden, Canton Glarus where he worked for Therma AG, a manufacturer of household appliances. But Hilfiker's claim to fame is found in every railroad station in Switzerland. In 1944 he designed the iconic Swiss Federal Railways station clock (pictured). His sweeping second hand was in red and modeled after the signal disc held by a railway guard. Wikipedia states, "The station clocks in Switzerland are synchronized by receiving an electrical impulse from a central master clock at each full minute, advancing the minute hand by one minute. The second hand is driven by an electrical motor independent of the master clock. It requires only about 58.5 seconds to circle the face, and then the hand pauses briefly at the top of the clock. It starts a new rotation as soon as it receives the next minute impulse from the master clock."



Swiss-American Senators

“Family History Notes” newsletter issues in the recent past have documented the Swiss ancestry of United States Senators Elizabeth Warren (MA) and Amy Klobuchar (MN). In the case of Amy, her grandparents and great-grandparents were at one time cheese makers in Green County. Another Senator, Orrin G. Hatch of Utah, has been identified as a Swiss-American and is in fact a Glarner-American.

Orrin Hatch’s connection to Canton Glarus is through his mother, Helen née Kamm. Helen’s grandfather, Gottlieb Kamm, was born in Obstdalden, Canton Glarus in 1838, the son of Johannes and Susanna Barbara (Brändli) Kamm. And a great-great grandmother of Senator Hatch was Katharina née Ackermann, said to be born in Mühlehorn, Canton Glarus. As seen in Highland, many Kamms left Canton Glarus and settled in Illinois. Senator Hatch’s Kamm ancestors lived in Jacksonville, IL.



Hatch is Mormon, Republican and conservative. He was first elected to the U. S. Senate in 1976 making him the longest-serving Senator in Utah history. And since 2015 Senator Hatch has held the position of President pro tempore of the Senate. He earned this by being the longest-serving member of the majority party. And this position makes Senator Hatch the third in line of succession to the presidency, following after the Vice President and the Speaker of the House.

And a Glarner-American in the Electoral College

This past year’s presidential election brought heightened attention to the Electoral College and the role it plays in determining our president. Patrick Wild of Switzerland happened to see an interview with a Wisconsin member of the Electoral College by the name of Kim Babler. And Patrick recognized this uniquely Glarner surname. The Bähler families originated in the villages of Matt and Elm in Canton Glarus.

Kim was one of 10 Wisconsin electors and one of 538 United States electors who voted on December 19, 2016 to formally choose the 45th President of the United States. In an interview with a local Madison television station (which can be found on YouTube) Kim stated it was a “rare honor” to be chosen to vote as an elector. Babler also mentioned that he had received over 75,000 messages in an attempt to sway his vote away from Donald Trump. But his convictions were firm and he voted (as did 303 other U. S electors) for Trump.

Kim is a Monroe native who lives in Madison. His immigrant great-grandparents were Heinrich Babler of Matt and Regula (Wichser) Babler a native of Betschwanden. The family farmed in the Town of Jordan, Green County and later resided in Monroe.



History Detective

The photograph at left shows President Kennedy in 1962 meeting with a 97-year-old Boston widow by the name of Josie Fitzgerald. Does anyone know or can anyone guess the significance of this special moment in presidential history?