

# Family History Notes

## Spring 2021

### Blumer Families

Blumer is one of the early immigrant family names from Canton Glarus to settle in the New Glarus area. In Canton Glarus the Blumer families resided primarily around the village of Schwanden, a nearby locale named Thon and also in neighboring villages such as Nidfurn, Luchsingen, Engi and Glarus. The



recorded Blumers family lines began with Othmar Blumer (born about 1500) and his sons Esajas (progenitor of the Schwanden Blumers) and Wolfgang (progenitor of the Matt/Engi Blumers). Wolfgang Blumer served as the Glarner *Landvogt* (governor), the highest official at the Werdenberg Castle in 1577. At left is the Blumer von Engi family coat of arms. There are several variants of the Blumer coat of arms but all appear to have a red flower(s) (*rote Blume(n)*) with green leaves on three green mountains (*grünen Dreieberg*).

Among the Blumers who found their way to New Glarus:

**Original Colonists:** Two members of the original party of New Glarus settlers were named Blumer. Barbara née Blumer was the wife of Heinrich Stauffacher. This Stauffacher family left New Glarus in the early years and headed to Illinois and later resettled in Scotland County, MO. Regula née Blumer accompanied her husband Balthasar Jenny, but Mr. Jenny left the group (and his wife) in Rotterdam and returned to Canton Glarus. Wife Regula ventured on and married John Fritz of Galena, IL where they resided.

**Johannes (John) and Maria (Stuessi) Blumer:** Johannes was a widower traveling to America in 1853 with his children. He was a native of “*Schwanden im Thon*” – Thon being the hamlet near Schwanden known for many Blumer families. Blumer met fellow immigrant Maria Stuessi of Linthal, Canton Glarus on the ship and they married in America. John Blumer’s sons from his first marriage to Anna Dorothea née Blumer included son Esajas (Ezra in America) and son John who both served in the Civil War. Blumer son-in-law Jacob Freitag served in the Wisconsin 46<sup>th</sup> Infantry and another son-in-law Ulrich Stoller died of disease while serving in Columbia, TN. Additionally Maria (Stuessy) Blumer had four brothers – Joseph, Peter, Fred and Alex – who were Civil War veterans.

**Blumer sisters – Anna Katharina (Mrs. Fridolin Streiff), Barbara (Mrs. John Jacob Hefty and Mrs. Hans Jacob Ruegg) and Amalia (Mrs. Fritz Tschudy):** These three sisters were daughters of Schwanden village official Josua Blumer and his wife Anna Katharina née Luchsinger. As a newly married man and father, Josua Blumer served with the Glarner troops in the Swiss siege of the Hüningen fortress in 1815. Oldest Blumer daughter, Anna Katharina, became the wife of the 1845 scout Fridolin Streiff. She and her children soon followed their husband/father to New Glarus. The Streiff family lived on a farm between New Glarus and Monticello (present day Freitag homestead farm) and later lived in Monroe where Anna Katharina and Fridolin were buried. Daughter Barbara Blumer lost her husband John Jacob Hefty when he was 32 years old and she was just 28. She had given birth to six children. Barbara remarried to Hans Jacob Ruegg and gave birth to a daughter Margaretha. Barbara Ruegg died in the 1854 cholera epidemic before daughter Margaretha’s second birthday. The youngest of the Blumer daughters was Amalia who became the wife of New Glarus merchant Fritz Tschudy. After Fritz’s death in 1888, Amalia operated the Tschudy store.

**Adam and Anna Margaretha (Blum) Blumer:** Adam was a member of a Blumer family from Nidfurn, Canton. He married Anna Margareth Blum of Bilten and they immigrated in 1849, establishing the family farm in the Town of Washington near the New Bilten settlement. Anna Margaretha gave birth to 14 children, many of whom died in their infancy or as children. Blumer son-in-law Jacob Hefty and son Adam Blumer were Monroe brewers (see more on page 4).

**Dr. Samuel and Dr. John Jacob Blumer:** Dr. Samuel Blumer was New Glarus' first doctor. His father, Samuel Blumer Sr. was a doctor and surgeon from one of the Blumer family lines of Schwanden, Canton Glarus. Blumer Sr. practiced medicine in the village of Mühlehorn, Canton Glarus, where Samuel Blumer Jr. was born. Dr. Samuel Blumer Jr. arrived here in 1848 as a recent widower. Shortly after his arrival, Samuel married 15 year-old Katharina Legler. Dr. Blumer left for California from 1852 to 1855 and then returned to practice locally until 1868 when the family relocated to Iowa. In 1860 the *Albany Times* reported that Dr. Blumer, while in the New Glarus Hotel on a Saturday night, was struck over the head with a chair by hotel owner Rudolf Baumgartner. Blumer was critically wounded and the cause of the altercation was reportedly jealousy. The exact nature of the jealousy was not cited. According to John Luchsinger's history, Dr. Blumer opened a brewery in New Glarus in 1867. Blumer died in Iowa in 1871.

Johann Jacob Blumer, son of Dr. Samuel Blumer, arrived in New Glarus to join his father in 1861. Shortly thereafter he joined the Wisconsin 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Company E in the Civil War. After the war he received his medical training at the University of Pennsylvania. He started his medical practice in New Glarus in 1869, about the time his father left. Dr. J. J. Blumer practiced here until sometime after 1900 when he moved to Milwaukee. He married three times. His first marriage was to Margaretha Legler, younger sister of his step-mother. After Margaretha's death in 1885, Blumer married his first cousin Anna Maria Streiff. And after her death in 1892, Blumer married Anna Maria Weibel, a Swiss

Josanna Weibel	4	3	16
Henry Siger	5	4	20
same	5	4	330
Madam Hartman Eugene Vidal	2	1	100
Rudolf Baumgartner	1 & 3	1	600
Samuel Blumer	Engl 8	1	175
Fridolin Kundert	W. of 8	1	20
Fridolin Egger	7	1	20
John Kundert	6	1	450
Jacob Blumber	4	1	25

immigrant 40 years his junior. Dr. Blumer had eleven children with his three wives. His youngest two daughters, Martha and Bertha, were both doctors (and 4<sup>th</sup> generation doctors).

A portion of the 1859 New Glarus tax assessments is shown at left. Dr. Blumer's 1850s Greek Revival home is now on the National Register of Historical Places. The stone home is located on Block 4 – the same village block as the 1853 New Glarus Hotel (listed as Rudolf Baumgartner on the tax

assessment). The Blumer house shared half of lot 8 with the Fridolin Kundert home – a log home still occupied. Three of New Glarus' oldest structures (log, stone, and frame) form an adjoining trio along this one 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue block.

Other Blumer families immigrated later including the following families. Many of the Green County residents in the Monroe, Monticello and Albany areas by the name of Blumer are descendents of these families.

**Jacob and Verena (Fanny Baumgartner) Blumer:** Jacob and Verena married in their native Engi, Canton Glarus in 1871 and immigrated shortly thereafter to Green County. They farmed southwest of New Glarus where they raised a family of 12 children. The late Dennis Blumer was a descendant of this Blumer branch and was one of the few New Glarus residents of recent years having the name Blumer.

**Othmar and Anna Barbara (Ambühl) Blumer:** Othmar and Anna Barbara immigrated to America in 1868 and were Monroe residents. Othmar was a native of Schwanden and Anna Barbara was from Wattwil, Canton St. Gallen.

**Josef and Anna (Schneider) Blumer:** Josef and Anna were natives of Engi and Elm, respectively, and who settled in Monroe where he is recorded as a farmer and cheese dealer.

**Brothers Hilarius and Jacob Blumer and sister Maria (Blumer) Disch:** These siblings were the children of Johann Jacob and Katharina (Luchsinger) Blumer of Engi. Hilarius married Rosina Marti, Jacob married Anna Katharina Weiss and after her death married Elsbeth Blumer, and sister Maria Blumer was the wife of Balthasar Disch. Each of these wives was born in Engi and Balthasar Disch was a native of nearby Elm. These people lived in the Monroe-Albany-Monticello area.

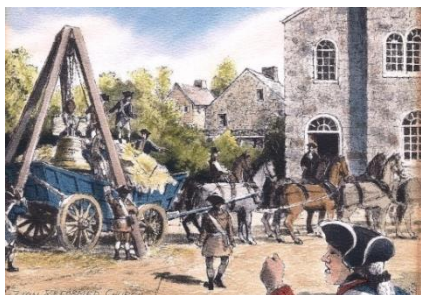
**Mathias Blumer:** Mathias was a native of Engi who married a Hungarian-American woman, Mary Konash. They are buried in Monroe's Greenwood Cemetery. My classmate Mike Krauss né Blumer was a great-grandson of Mathias and Mary Blumer.

**Fridolin/Fred (Fritz) Blumer:** Fritz was a native of Engi and a more recent immigrant to America – arriving in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. He served in the U.S. Army before marrying Clara Oppliger in New Glarus in 1963. Fritz and Clara made cheese in the Richland Cheese Factory. He was the nephew of Fridolin Blumer written about on page 4.

### **Blumers in America**

Many Blumers settled across America and left their individual marks which were summarized and retold in my book “Glarners in America”. The following sketches tell of the interesting and diverse lives of nine American Blumers throughout the years. In addition to Wisconsin, these assorted Blumers lived in many corners of the United States including Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Mississippi, Illinois, Alaska and Arizona

**Abraham Blumer** . . . was one of the earliest Glarner immigrants in America, arriving in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. He lived in Northampton Towne (today's Allentown), PA at the time of the Revolutionary War where he served as the minister of the Zion Church. When British troops threatened Philadelphia in 1777 it was feared the British would capture and melt the bells for weaponry. Therefore many bells including the State House bell – the bell we know today as our famed Liberty Bell – were secreted away British forces. The Liberty Bell was transported to Allentown in a hay wagon (see illustration) and successfully hidden under the floorboards of Rev. Abraham Blumer's church.



**William H. Blumer** . . . was the grandson of Reverend Abraham Blumer. And thus when born in Allentown in 1812, he was a third generation American of Glarner descent. As an established American with Glarner roots, Blumer was sought out by Canton Glarus authorities to provide American guidance for the 1845 settlement of New Glarus. Blumer owned an Allentown, PA private banking house (see photo of a Blumer bank note) and was President of the First National Bank of that city. But Blumer's financial world collapsed in 1877 with the bank's failure. Depositors lost everything and Blumer moved in disgrace to Beemer, NB where he died and was buried in 1884.

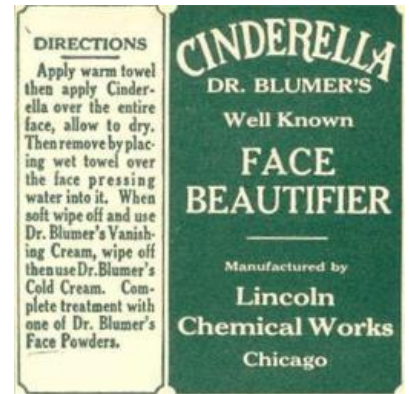




**Samuel Bloomer (né Blumer)** . . . was a native of Matt, Canton Glarus whose family settled in Stillwater, MN. In 1861 he mustered into the First Minnesota Volunteer Infantry in and participated in major battles including the first and second Bull Run. At Antietam, Bloomer was wounded in the leg and lay on the battlefield for three days – two days of which were behind enemy lines. He was taken to a field hospital where his leg was amputated below the knee. Bloomer is remembered for the numerous letters he wrote home while serving in the Civil War, providing first-hand accounts of the events he experienced. These letters are found in the Minnesota Historical Society archives.

**Adam Blumer** . . . was an immigrant born in Bilten, Canton Glarus and who had settled in the Biloxi, MS area. Adam served in the Civil War and unlike Union soldier Samuel Bloomer above, Adam served in the Confederate Army. According to family lore, Adam had been captured and imprisoned in Chicago but managed to escape. He and a companion walked nearly 1000 miles from Chicago to the Gulf Coast whereupon he resumed his military duties. In 1872, Adam Blumer began a small business which became one of largest foundries and machine shops in Southern Mississippi. Over the years Blumer also operated a tannery, shoemaking shop and had a Western Union office in his octagonal store.

**Dr. Robert Blumer** . . . was a Chicago chemist who developed and sold cosmetics and patent medicines (e.g. Cinderella Face Beautifier and Blumer's Brain Duster) as well as food flavorings and baking ingredients beginning in the 1880s. Robert Blumer's background is sketchy, but it is theorized that he was born Jacob Blumer of Glarus, Canton Glarus, where his family sold cosmetics and perfumes. Their business was damaged in the Glarus fire of 1861 after which they suffered financial challenges and later went bankrupt. The family secretly fled to America where it is speculated Jacob reinvented himself as Dr. Robert Blumer of the Lincoln Chemical Works of Chicago. Note the number of Dr. Blumer products required when using his Cinderella Face Beautifier!



**Fridolin Blumer** . . . was born in Engi, Canton Glarus and immigrated to America in 1913 as a single man. He settled in the Monticello, WI area, working as a farmhand and stayed only a short time before disappearing. No one in his family in Switzerland or Monticello acquaintances ever heard from him again. He was a known adventurer and it was assumed he had met a tragic end. But Fridolin reinvented himself as an Alaskan gold miner named “Jack Koby”. He married, had three children and was by all accounts a good husband and father although frequently absent on his many Alaskan treks as a glacier and mountain guide. When he died, his children found a document indicating his birth name was Fridolin Blumer of Engi. They traveled to Engi where they met an elderly uncle and many cousins. Here is a link to the fascinating video of the [Jack Koby Story](#) (note: scroll back to beginning of video).



**Adam Blumer and Sons:** Adam Blumer, born in 1844 in Bilten, Canton Glarus immigrated to America with his family in 1849. The Blumers farmed and made cheese west of Monticello, WI near the New Bilten settlement of 1847. Adam Blumer's brother-in-law Fridolin Hefty had purchased the Monroe Brewery in 1868 and later entered into a partnership with Adam Blumer in 1885. (Note: Adam Blumer's wife, Margareth was the sister of Fridolin Hefty and Fridolin Hefty's wife Katharina was the sister of Adam Blumer.) Following Hefty's death in 1892, Adam owned and operated the brewery until his own death in 1918. Prohibition immediately posed an obstacle to Adam's sons and they were forced to produce non-alcoholic “near beer”. Fred Blumer, Adam's son, had run afoul of Chicago gangsters and was kidnapped with a \$6 million ransom (in today's dollars). The ransom was not paid and Fred Blumer was released unharmed. Blumer's current successor, the Minhas Brewery of Monroe, continues to brew beer and also produces a line of specialty soft drinks under the brand name Blumer's Old Fashioned Soda name (pictured).

**Jacob Corwin Blumer** . . . was born in Engi, Canton Glarus and immigrated at a young age to America with his parents. From 1906 to 1917 Blumer was considered an up-and-coming and promising botanist of the American Southwest, particularly Arizona's Pima and Cochise Counties. He collected and identified thousands of plant specimens and had several named for him (e.g. *Lupinus blumerii*). Regrettably for the botanic world, Blumer abandoned his scientific work became a reclusive bachelor farmer in Minnesota.

### **William V. Kaeser, Mid-Century Modern Architect**

A recent article in the "Wisconsin State Journal" announced that "New Glarus buildings [and a] Madison home [were] placed on State Register of Historic Places". The New Glarus buildings referred to are located on a stretch of Second Street in the downtown area. But it was the Madison home which caught my eye since the home, known as the Philip and Margaret Gray Home (upper photo), was designed by Madison architect William V. Kaeser.

Kaeser has been receiving increased recognition as a prominent Mid-Century Modern architect. He received his training at the prestigious Cranbrook Academy of Arts, said to an incubator of mid-century modernism. At Cranbrook Kaeser was taught by world renowned Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen and was a schoolmate of Eliel's son Eero Saarinen. Kaeser settled in Madison where the influence of architectural legend Frank Lloyd Wright can also be seen in Kaeser's works.



William V. Kaeser was the grandson of Fridolin "Fritz" Kaeser, a native of Glarus, Canton Glarus and one of the founders of the Helvetia Milk Condensing Company of Highland, IL (later the Pet Milk Company.) Kaeser's father William G. Kaeser was the plant manager of the Pet Milk plant at Greenville, IL and was later transferred to Madison, WI where he became Pet's district supervisor. William G.'s brother Emil F. Kaeser was the plant manager of the New Glarus Pet Milk plant from 1910 to 1947.



Kaeser-designed properties are sought after and command premium prices. Lower photo is that of the Marshall Erdman home in Madison, also designed by William V. Kaeser.

### **Town of Adams, Green County, Wisconsin**

Do you recognize these area place names – Shook's Prairie, Dougherty Creek, Puddledock Creek, Biggs Road, St. Francis Catholic Church and Cemetery, Willet (or Willett), and Walnut Springs,? They are (or were) found in the Town of Adams which lies immediately southwest of the Town of New Glarus. Shook's Prairie, named for early Green County settler Jonas Shook, was a natural prairie landmark near today's junction of County C and J. Dougherty Creek was named for John Dougherty, an early settler and trader at the Exeter Diggings. Puddledock Creek flows into Dougherty Creek at an area known as Puddledock which boasted a saw mill, grist mill, Town Hall, country school, cheese factory and St. Francis Catholic Church and Cemetery.

It has been theorized that Puddledock was derived from “puddle” (referring to the mill pond) and “duck” from the waterfowl that gathered there. The late Walt Wenger’s parents, Carl and Barbara (Tschudy) Wenger, were cheese makers at the Puddledock Factory. Willett and Walnut Springs were one-time post offices operated by pioneer settlers Jonas Shook and James Biggs, respectively. Biggs Road was named for James Biggs.

Adams’ written history likely began with James Biggs, a veteran of the 1832 Black Hawk War and a lead miner. After the war, Biggs found lead by looking for the lead plant, a prairie plant thought to grow in crevices which signaled lead below. Biggs’ diggings were located on or near the Wiota-Madison trail (today’s County A), an early pre-Wisconsin statehood ridge road running through today’s Town of Adams.

Another early ridge route found in the Town of Adams was the Wiota-Exeter road which corresponds to parts of today’s County C between Argyle and Monticello. This route can be found on an 1832 map and is surmised that this was the route used by troops in the Blackhawk War of that same year. The Wisconsin Historical Society archives also holds a survey map of the same period which shows the locations of Biggs’ Diggings, Fretwell Diggings (near present-day Blanchardville), Hamilton’s Diggings (Wiota), Skinner’s Diggings, the John Dougherty home and lead furnace and the Little Sugar Creek.

The 1873 map of Green County lists just two Swiss immigrant families who lived in the extreme northeast part (Section 1) of the Town of Adams. These were the brothers Esajas (Ezra) and John Blumer and the Hilarius Wild family. These farms were located along present-day County J. Swiss farmers did not progress far into Adams.

The St. Francis Roman Catholic parish served a pocket of Irish settlers in the Puddledock vicinity. While the church is gone, the St. Francis cemetery remains with the tombstones of early Irish immigrants such as Patrick Quinn, Patrick Purcell, Bridget Ryan, Maurice and Bridget Crotty, Michael Flannery and three Patrick O’Sullivans. And a handful of descendants of these people have resided in New Glarus including Mike Flannery, Greg Purcell, and sisters Helen (Crotty) Schindler and Alice (Crotty) Opferman.

### **Cigars, Politics, Blackface Minstrel Shows , , ,**

Alexander Stussy, the Civil War veteran briefly mentioned in the Blumer article as the brother of Maria (Stuessi) Blumer, established himself after the war as a cigar maker in Monroe. By 1880 Alex and his family had moved to Eau Claire, WI where he continued in the cigar making trade. Stussy’s son Fred continued his father’s business and became a well-known Eau Claire cigar wholesaler and businessman. Fred also served his city in many capacities including serving on the local school board, as city councilman and as Eau Claire Mayor from 1928-1934.

Fred was also a locally celebrated comedian and actor in local theatrics – notably the Elks club amateur minstrel (blackface) shows in which he participated for over three decades. His comedic skills were heralded. In 1899 the Eau Claire Leader pronounced, “Fred is a born comedian and is possessed of rare histrionic ability. He is in his natural element on the stage.” And more than two decades later in 1922, The Leader said, “Fred Stussy stepped into the realm of song and graceful stepping with an original song “Sweet Mamma” that was encored so often that the director had to call a halt to save Fred from falling dead in front of the audience from physical exhaustion.”

It is acknowledged today that these minstrel shows perpetuated racist stereotypes, are highly offensive and demeaning. And yet it was not that long ago that contemporary comedians performed in blackface, such as Billy Crystal in 2012 and Sarah Silverman in 2007.



### ... And Blackface in Europe?

It has been recently claimed that the Dutch holiday character *Zwarte Piet* (Black Peter), the side-kick of *Sinterklaas* (St. Nick), is a dated and racist image that needs to be confronted. And this Dutch controversy is not lost of the Swiss, whose *Schmutzli* (the Swiss side-kick of the Swiss *Samichlaus*) is also being evaluated for racist connotations. It is said that the Swiss have toned down the scary and demonic elements creating a more benign *Schmutzli*, and making him (literally and figuratively) less dark.

### Hot Lunch from the Old School

(From the “Monroe Evening Times” of Saturday August 27, 1960)

*New Glarus to Start School Lunch Program: The [New Glarus] school lunch program will go into effect on Monday. Students are asked to bring their money for the first week's tickets to school on Monday, after that the tickets will be sold on Thursdays. Mrs. Herman J. [Bertha K.] Marty will be head cook. Her assistants will be Mrs. Fred [Freida] Maurer and Mrs. Edna Hefty. Students in the upper grades will assist with serving and dish washing. Pictured left to right are Edna Hefty, Freida Maurer and Bertha K. Marty. And despite the serious demeanor in this photograph, these were friendly and*



lovely ladies. A note of interest to many newsletter readers, Edna (Hoesly) Hefty, born April 28, 1901, was the youngest the 40-some grandchildren of Joshua and Barbara (Speich) Wild.

It occurred to me that my first grade class may have been the first hot lunch diners in 1960. And if I'm not mistaken the cost of the lunch was \$0.35 cents per day, however if a weekly ticket was purchased, the total price was \$1.25. According to national school lunch data, the cost of a weekly grade school lunch today is \$12.48, which reverse-adjusted to 1960 dollars, equals \$1.41 per week – so only slightly more than it cost 60 years ago. And according to data from the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), of the 30 million students a day who received school lunch, 8 million pay the full price, 2 million pay a reduced price of 40 cents and as many as 20 million students receive their lunch for free.

### Red Barns and Colorful Quilts

Researchers have found that early farmers painted their barns with tawny-colored linseed oil often containing additions of milk and lime. The combination produced a long-lasting paint that dried and hardened quickly. But where did the red color come from? There are two leading theories – addition of blood and/or the addition of rust (ferrous oxide).



When farmers added blood from a recent slaughter to the oil mixture, the bright red blood turned to a darker, burnt red. When farmers added ferrous oxide, a reddish tone was also produced. Rust was plentiful on farms and possessed the added benefit that it naturally inhibited the growth of molds and mosses which trap moisture in the wood and thus increasing decay.

Red barns became a fashionable contrast to the traditional white farmhouse. And by the mid to late 1800s paints began to be produced with chemical pigments. Traditional barn red was the color of choice until whitewash became less expensive, at which time white barns also became popular. There is the widely told story about how countless farmers painted their barns red because it was the cheapest paint available. And when paint manufacturers were asked why red paint was so cheap, they replied that it was because the farmers bought so much red!

Handsome dairy barns proudly dotted the New Glarus area landscape but sadly many have been taken down or fallen into disrepair. And it is true that this unfortunate trend is occurring across many areas across the country which had barns. In an effort to inject some color on barns which would hopefully increase barn pride and barn preservation, the barn quilt movement started in Ohio in 2001. The vision was to create a colorful “clothes line” of different quilt patterns stretching from barn to barn across the countryside.

Jim Leuenberger of Shawano, WI saw the barn quilts while traveling. He liked the idea so much that he brought it to Shawano County. Around 2010 Jim enlisted the help of his wife Irene, and together they have since painted a total of over 300 unique barn quilts for barns in Shawano County. Their efforts have earned Shawano County the title of Barn Quilt Capital of America. Barn owners quickly jumped on the quilt bandwagon and were enthusiastic supporters. Each quilt is designed by the barn owner and may reflect a personal meaning or may just be a pattern with colors which they find appealing. Pictured on page 7 is a Shawano County barn with a quilt entitled “Autumn Leaves”. The maple leaves are significant since in addition to a dairy herd, the farm family has made maple syrup for over 50 years.

Jim and Irene (Huber) Leuenberger are both natives of Winneshiek County in northeastern Iowa. And both have Swiss ancestry. And Irene was a co-worker of mine at Kraft Foods/Oscar Mayer R&D. Jim Leuenberger is the great-great grandson of 1853 immigrant Johann Ulrich Leuenberger of Rohrbach, Canton Bern. And Irene née Huber is the great-great granddaughter of Franz Joseph Huber, a native of Canton Aargau and his wife Marie Anna née Gaertner. The Hubers emigrated in 1836, first settling in Indiana. They continued on to Fort Atkinson, IA where they established their residence in the former Winnebago (Ho-Chunk) Indian Agency house -- actually a small log cabin dating to 1840s. The cabin survives and is among the oldest structures in Iowa. This historic log cabin was restored by the Huber family in 1965 and relocated to a new location adjacent to the Chapel of St. Anthony of Padua near Festina, IA, a tiny stone church built by the Huber and Gaertner families.



### **Edith May Leuenberger – America’s Prettiest Salesgirl**

Just a bit over one hundred years ago in September of 1920, Edith May Leuenberger, 17, an employee in Monroe’s Waffle Shop, was named America’s Prettiest Salesgirl. Among the judges of this national



contest was famed New York theatrical revue producer Florenz Ziegfeld, perhaps the top arbiter of female beauty of his day. Pictured is Edith May meeting Ziegfeld in his office. As seen in these photographs of the time, Edith May wore her hair curled in the fashion popularized by Mary Pickford. These photographs appeared in newspapers across the country.





Edith May was born in Monroe in 1903. Her father Albert Leuenberger was a local blacksmith born to Swiss immigrant parents Gottlieb and Marie Anna (Zaugg) Leuenberger. Albert Leuenberger's brother Henry G. (Heinrich Gottlieb) Leuenberger was the owner of Monroe's Waffle Shop. Edith May's mother was born Eva Streiff whose father Johann Balthasar Streiff was a Glarner immigrant. (Johann Balthasar was the nephew of Fridolin Streiff (Civil War vet) of New Glarus.) .

As the winner of the Prettiest Salesgirl contest, Edith May and her mother were given an all-expenses-paid trip to New York City and a rare opportunity to become a star of stage and/or screen. She won a six week period with movie director Raoul Walsh (a founding member of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences) and a six week engagement as a Ziegfeld Follies chorus girl in the New Amsterdam Theatre on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street. She received \$100 a week for those 12 weeks (\$1200 is nearly \$16,000 in 2020 dollars). Ultimately, Edith May did not pursue a New York theatrical career. Rather she married Harry Scheberle, the operator of Brodhead's Goldenrod Creamery. Edith May died in 1987.

### **Baby Jack**

His name is Jack Legler. Jack is about 12 years old and already the "CEO" of a company. The company, named Baby Jack, was started by his creative mother Kelley Legler when Jack was just a baby. Kelley's return to work after her maternity leave coincided with the 2008 recession and she was let go. And so she decided to look for a creative outlet for her entrepreneurial energies.

Kelley had noticed how baby Jack would play, touch and cling to his blanket. And he was fascinated by the tags found on blankets and clothing. And she saw an opportunity to create security and comfort items for babies and infants. She attached numerous tags and tabs to the fabric perimeter. And for safety Kelley sewed the tags shut to prevent any entanglements.

The various fabrics used in the Baby Jack products are bold and colorful, typically incorporating animals, shapes, letters and numbers. The products not only provide the desired comfort and security but also provide learning opportunities. And Kelley reports that Baby Jack products are sold in New Glarus at the Kinderladen shop.



Jack Legler is the 5<sup>th</sup>-great-grandson of 1845 settlers Fridolin and Barbara (Hefti) Legler. Additionally Jack is a direct descendant of another 1845 pioneer couple, Mathias and Anna Katharina (Schmid) Schmid. Pictured at the Pioneer Monument is Jack Legler, his sister Bailey, father Brian and grandfather Randy Legler. They are proudly pointing to the names of the family ancestors who were among original settlers of New Glarus in 1845. Here is a link to [Baby Jack and Company](#).

### **Unidentified Photograph**



The photo here of an unknown gentleman was recently received from Merikay (Krieg) Payne. She was hoping for identification, but this is an image I have never seen. Perhaps one of the newsletter readers can help identify the individual. Merikay believed the photograph came to her from her Krieg cousins -- either Viola (Werndli) Ubert or Earl and Florence (Klassy) Voegeli. Because each of these three people has multiple ancestors who were early settlers in the New Glarus area there are multiple options. Could this be John Peter Blum (1829-1891), Fridolin Voegeli (1806-?), Niklaus Dürst (1809-1869), Peter Disch (1819-1887), John Peter Klassy (1822-1876), John Jacob Ott (1799-1868), or Peter Streiff (1794-1868)? Can anyone help identify this person?

### Madam Hartman

On page 2 of this newsletter issue is a portion of New Glarus Assessor Henry Aebli's 1859 tax assessment records. Listed two lines above Dr. Samuel Blumer was the house owned by an individual recorded as "Madam Hartman". Madam Hartman [sic] was Carolina (Troxler) von Hartmann. She had been born in 1800 in Cartagena, Spain to Swiss parents. She married Ludwig von Hartmann and they became the parents of at least two daughters born in Lucerne – Maria Katrina and Emma. Maria Katrina was the wife of John Conrad Ott, an early New Glarus merchant. She died in 1858. According to the 1860 census, Ott had remarried and lived in Monroe next door to his former mother-in-law Carolina von Hartmann. Carolina's New Glarus property was occupied by her son-in-law and local druggist Eugen Vidal and his wife Emma von Hartmann. The Vidals were the great-grandparents of the late novelist Gore Vidal. Carolina von Hartmann is buried in Tunnel City, WI where she had lived with a granddaughter, Fannie (Vidal) Moll.

In Jay Parini's biography "Empire of Self: A Life of Gore Vidal" Eugen Vidal is described as a con-artist who faked a medical degree and worked as a pharmacist. Eugen Vidal abandoned his family around 1870 just a few years after they had left New Glarus. Emma von Hartmann Vidal was said to be an heiress, although disinherited due to her marriage to Vidal. Emma was a seamstress with a talent for languages which she used to support herself by translating articles. Gore Vidal's grandfather, Felix Vidal, was born in September of 1861 and it is possible he was born in their home adjacent to the New Glarus Hotel.

### Talerschwingen

One of the Swiss customs brought to Swissconsin from Switzerland was the Appenzeller custom of *Talerschwingen*. This unique percussion instrument is said to have been introduced locally by Rudy Burkhalter in 1955 – perhaps at Monroe's Cheese Day festival of that year. Legend has it that herdsman took broad ceramic bowls (used for separating cream from the milk before mechanical separators) and spun a Swiss 5 Franc silver coin (known as a "*Taler*") inside the bowls. The coin rotates nearly horizontally due to friction and centrifugal force supplied by a gentle circular motion. Different sized bowls can be used to produce different sounding tones often compared to the tones of cow bells. Pictured holding *Talerschwingen* bowls are Rudy Burkhalter and his most successful protégé, the late Betty (Kneubuehl) Vetterli.



Burkhalter's fascination with *Talerschwingen* began as a boy when he saw a musical group perform *Talerschwingen* in Urnäsch, Canton Appenzell Ausserrhoden. And yet while living in Switzerland before he emigrated, Rudy never saw this unique folk art performed again. After he immigrated and on trips back home to Switzerland he would enquire about this unusual musical practice, but people would mostly respond, "I've heard of *Talerschwingen*, but have never seen it performed." In the summer of 1955 on a Swiss trip, he asked again – this time to the head of the Swiss Broadcasting Company in Bern. And this time the answer was "Yes, I've heard about *Talerschwingen* . . . and follow me."

Burkhalter was taken to an older part of Bern where many small shops were located. They entered a china shop and asked the elderly proprietor if she had any *Talerschwingen* bowls. She was taken aback at their odd request but beckoned the men into her basement, where in a dark corner, she had a stash of dusty *Talerschwingen* bowls. Burkhalter picked out three different caramel-colored bowls which yielded a harmonious chord when struck. And presumably it was these three bowls which were the original three *Talerschwingen* bowls in Green County. (It may be that Swiss performers who traveled through Green County on early concert tours, had performed *Talerschwingen* in their acts.)

Our word “dollar” is an Anglicized form of the German word “*Thaler*”, which had its origin in “*Joachimsthaler*”, a silver coin from Bohemia’s “*Joachimsthal*” or Joachim’s valley. It might be interesting for a local Swiss folk group to create an American version of “*Talerschwingen*” using a U.S. silver dollar spun inside an American pottery bowl and “coin” it “*Dollarschwingen*”.



Talerschwingen made an impression on movie director Alfred Hitchcock. In his 1936 movie *Secret Agent* an Appenzeller folk group perform *Talerschwingen* along with singing, yodeling and dancing. Here is a [link to the movie](#) – go to about 42:30 to see Hitchcock’s spinning coins, spinning dancers and spinning heads.

**Trivia Question and Answers:** Can anyone identify the image on the Swiss 5 Franc coin which is pictured above?

And congratulations to those readers who identified Goldfish (*Goldfischli*) as the snack crackers created by the Kambly Company of Switzerland. And yes, the phrase “*Uli der Pächter wohnt hier*” found on a downtown New Glarus building is a reference to the novel by Swiss author Jeremias Gotthelf, however any possible hidden meaning or inside joke remains a mystery.



### **Ending this Newsletter On a Sweet Note: Läderach**

Godiva, the high end Belgian chocolate purveyor, is closing or selling 128 U.S. brick and mortar retail operations and will focus on online sales. Swiss chocolatier Läderach has announced that it intends to lease 34 of the former Godiva Chocolate shops. Läderach was founded in Glarus, Canton Glarus in 1962 by Berner Rudolf Läderach as a bakery and pastry shop (*Bäckerei* and *Konditorei*). Over the years their specialty has become fine chocolates. Their two manufacturing plants are located in the Canton

Glarus villages of Ennenda and Bilten. The company leadership passed to Rudolf’s son Jürg in 1970 and is now in the third generation with Jürg’s sons Johannes, Elias and David running the firm’s top management positions. With 700-800 employees, Läderach is Switzerland’s largest artisanal chocolatier.



Läderach (sometimes spelled Laderach in North America) currently has four U.S. retail locations – Fifth Avenue NYC, Lexington Avenue NYC, American Dream Mall in New Jersey, and Union Station in DC – and two Toronto outlets.

One of Läderach’s favorite items is their *Frischschoggi* (*Frisch* means fresh and *Schoggi* is dialect for chocolate). Large slabs (we might refer to it as bark) of various types of unwrapped chocolate with various nut and fruit inclusions are prominently displayed in their retail store windows. Customers ask the staff to snap off pieces their choice. Pictured is a Läderach retail store with dozens of slabs of their luscious *Frischschoggi* in the foreground.