

Family History Notes

Summer 2023

Figi/Fijge/Fygi of Amsterdam

I recently visited the French seaside city of Cherbourg. While there I opened my Spotify account to listen to the Michel Legrand songs from the 1964 musical romance movie “The Umbrellas of Cherbourg”. As I was listening to a lovely vocal rendition of “Watch What Happens”, I glanced at the artist and her name was Laura Fygi. I learned that Ms. Fygi is a popular Dutch jazz singer who had an extensive discography -- 16 albums since the early nineties listed on Spotify. I was intrigued by her surname Fygi which is just one letter away from the Glarner family Figi (crest shown right). I seemed to recall someone in Canton Glarus mentioning to me that a Figi family did indeed go to the Netherlands. Was there any possibility that Laura Fygi of Holland was descended from Glarner stock?



What I learned was that a Melchior Figi, who was born in Haslen, Canton Glarus in 1835, moved from Haslen to Amsterdam where he was a pastry chef (*banketbakker* in Dutch). Melchior Figi’s surname became spelled Fijgi in Holland. (However, the family tombstone in Amsterdam spelled their surname Fygi. In New Glarus the name is spelled Figi and sometimes Fygi.) Melchior was married twice; both marriages to Dutch wives who gave birth to several children including sons Georg H. Fijgi by his first wife and Hendrik Fijgi by his second wife.

In 1902, George H. Fijgi, a pastry chef like his father, began a successful bakery and café in the Dutch village of Zeist. 1917 the Ruijs family took over Fijgi operation but retained the Figi (not Fijgi) name which evolved over the years to the Hotel Theater Figi. Today the hotel continues to operate as the modern 97 room Hotel Theater Figi and still run by members of the Ruijs family. After he left the Figi café and bakery operations, George H. Fijgi built a new home in Zeist which he named “Villa Haslen” after the Figi home village in Canton Glarus. George H. Fijgi was active in local politics and served on several municipal boards and councils. He died childless in 1947.



And Melchior’s son Hendrik Fijgi was also a pastry chef by occupation. And Hendrik, like his father, was married twice to Dutch women. Hendrik’s son Johannes had a son Eric Jan Fygi who became an American citizen and has just recently retired from a long government career in the Department of Energy. In fact, Fygi has served as Assistant General Counsel in the Energy Department from the time the DOE began in 1977. Prior to his role in the DOE Fygi was part of the DOE precursor, the Federal Energy Administration. He retired in 2022 after 45 years in government service under all Presidents from Carter to Biden. Pictured are DOE Secretary Jennifer Granholm and Fygi at his retirement.

But Eric Fygi’s lengthy government career had a stain not generally mentioned. In the mid-70s Fygi admitted to destroying documents sought by House Energy subcommittee chair John Dingell. Newspaper investigative columnist Jack Anderson reported in 1976, “Two officials of the “Natural Gas Task Force” executive director James Rubin and deputy general counsel Eric Fygi, huddled after hours to sift through documents that were supposed to be turned over to the Dingell investigators.”

Columnist Jack Anderson continued, *“But instead of handing everything over, they stuffed some embarrassing evidence in the trash to keep it out of Dingell’s hands. Rubin and Fygi candidly admitted that they “pitched” the documents, and told us they now regret their actions.”* It seems Eric Fygi’s long federal government career was not hampered by his admitted mishandling of documents!

Hendrick Fijgi had another son Melchior born in 1909. And this brings us back to the Dutch chanteuse Laura Fygi (pictured) who it seems was the daughter of a Melchior Fijgi. Her online biographies do not mention her father’s name. But an obscure reference was found where Laura mentions that her father was named Melchior. It seems probable that Laura was the great-granddaughter of Melchior Fijgi born



in Haslen and who moved to Amsterdam and quite likely the daughter of Melchior born in 1909.

Laura Fygi (née Fijgi; pronounced FEE-jee; pictured left) was born in 1955 and according to her online biography her parents were a Dutch business man employed by the Philips Corporation and an Egyptian belly dancer. The family spent several years in Uruguay where her father died in the 1960s. Mother and daughter returned to The Netherlands.

Laura’s biography is eccentric – an exotic mother, childhood in Uruguay, a French governess, becoming a limbo dancer and touring with a steel drum band. Laura was a member of Terra, a band which included girls from Surinam, China and Saudi Arabia. She then became one of a trio of the girl singers called Centerfold, a group which became popular with hit singles in Europe and Japan. When one member of the trio died Laura teamed up with her Centerfold partner formed the two-person group Backlot. While performing in Switzerland, Laura visited a hotel bar which had a jazz trio performing in the lobby. Laura asked to sing “All of Me” with the group and her solo career was born. Mike Hennessey wrote in “Jazz Now” that Laura was *“an abundantly gifted singer worthy of much wider recognition.”* He went on, *“When you listen to Laura Fygi singer, you are struck by her fine intonation, her excellent phrasing, her relaxed sense of swing, her clear diction, mellow voice and her sophisticated choice of repertoire. But what impresses most of all is the abundant joy she clearly derives from performing.”* Her repertoire is based in the Great American Songbook interspersed with French and Latin standards, all sung in impeccable English, French or Spanish. Laura clearly has a love and passion for these timeless songs.



On November 27, 2022, Laura was awarded the Knight of the Order of Orange-Nassau for her *“meritorious service to the community and outstanding achievements of international importance as renowned singer preserving cultural heritage in music and entertainment.”* She was presented with the decoration, appropriately, at the Hotel Theatre Fijgi in Zeist. The honor came at the pleasure of His Majesty King Willem-Alexander of The Netherlands. And fittingly for Holland, Laura has a vibrant red and yellow-tipped tulip named for her (pictured).

Melchior Fijgi/Fijgi, who is presumably Laura’s great-grandfather and who left Canton Glarus for Amsterdam, was a first cousin of Margaretha (Fijgi) Hoesly of New Glarus. Margaretha immigrated to New Glarus with her parents Johannes and Louisa Christina (Hoesli) Fijgi at age 3 in 1868 at a time when her cousin pastry chef Melchior Fijgi was just getting established in Amsterdam. Margaretha Fijgi married Peter Hoesly of New Glarus in 1882. They had two sons – Ernst J. and Gilbert P.

Both Melchior Figi and Margaretha (Figi) Hoesly were the grandchildren of Melchior and Barbara (Vögeli) Figi of Haslen – Melchior being the oldest Figi grandchild born in 1835 and Margaretha being the youngest grandchild born in 1865. Melchior and Margaretha both died in 1922 – Melchior at age 87 in Amsterdam and Margaretha at 57 in New Glarus.

Another Figi Link in Amsterdam

Amsterdam is a city best known for its canals. And today it is a recognized destination for many marijuana enthusiasts. In May I was passing one of many Amsterdam pot shops and decided to go in and ask if they carried a strain of marijuana called “Charlotte’s Web”. Readers may recall that “Charlotte’s Web” was named for Charlotte Figi, a Colorado child with severe epilepsy. Her experimental use of a particular strain of non-hallucinatory marijuana resulted in a near complete and miraculous reversal of her symptoms.

The shop clerk checked their inventory and informed me that yes, they carried that particular product. The price was about \$45 for 5 seeds. I thanked him for the information and began moving toward the exit. As I was walking out the price continued to drop and by the time I reached the front door the price had dropped to \$40, then \$35 and finally \$30 when I left the shop.

Other Glarners in Holland

Many Swiss men, including those from Canton Glarus, went to Holland to serve in the Dutch military as mercenary soldiers. One was Jakob Bähler who was born 1762 in Matt, Canton Glarus and who was stationed in the Netherlands in 1782. He married Jacoba van Antwerpen in Veere in the Dutch province of Zeeland. Jakob remained in Veere and died there in 1811. In Holland, the family name Bähler varied in spelling from Bebler, Bebbeler and Bebbelar but appears to have settled on Bebelaar. A Bebelaar family tree can be found online including recent descendants Tess Bebelaar and Sam Bebelaar born in 2006 and 2009, respectively. In addition to the Netherlands, descendants of Jacob and Jacoba can be found in Canada, the U. S. and Germany. Canadian-born Gary Bebelaar is the Head Golf Pro at the Big Springs Country Club in Louisville, KY. Gary’s daughter Molly is a competitive college golfer who recently led her Middle Tennessee Blue Raiders team with a score of two below par in a national golf invitational.

Local author Herbert Kubly wrote about distant Kubli cousins from Elm, Canton Glarus who had gone to Holland. Herb’s 4th great uncle Jakob Kubli served as a corporal in Dutch service for 4 years around 1815. Jakob’s son Rudolf was one of many *Schwabengänger* – poor youths who went to Swabia to work. Rudolf Kubli continued on to Holland where he served as a corporal in Dutch service for 4 years around 1818 and rose to become an orderly for Crown Prince Wilhelm, later King Wilhelm III. In 1847



Rudolf married Jantien Siebers in Apeldoorn, NL and they had 4 sons. Rudolf died in Apeldoorn in 1871. The four Kubli sons all married Dutch girls. Second son Willem Frederick Kubli became associated with the royal household and served as Concierge in the Soestdijk

Palace (pictured left). Youngest son Hendrik Kubli served as Royal Housekeeper to Queen Wilhelmina and her consort Prince Heinrich of Mecklenburg-Schwerin.

On March 5, 1925 Queen Wilhelmina and her entourage visited Elm, a visit likely prompted by her association with the Kublis. Her signature can be found in the Hotel Elmer guestbook. She had commissioned the local game warden by the name of Zentner (perhaps Mathias Zentner #193 of Elm) to capture some marmots from their mountain burrows and send them to The Hague. It is recorded in Elm's chronicle that the Queen was particularly interested in the stairs found behind the oven in Game Warden Zentner's home – probably referring to the steps found behind the *Kachelofen* where children would sit and warm themselves. And somewhat humorously, the Royal Chauffeur ran over a chicken near Elm for which the Queen paid five Swiss Francs to compensate for the loss.

Thinking about Switzerland and Holland, I am reminded of the passage found in Friedrich Schiller's play, "Wilhelm Tell". In the famous apple shooting scene (Act 3 Scene III), Wilhelm Tell is explaining to his son Walter about the Netherlands . . . and freedom.

WALTER

And are there countries with no mountains, father?

TELL.

Yes, if we travel downwards from our heights, and keep descending in the rivers' courses [the Schächen torrent, the Reuss, the Aare, and the Rhine], we reach a wide and level country, where our mountain torrents brawl and foam no more, and fair, large rivers glide serenely on. All quarters of the heaven may there be scanned without impediment. The corn grows there in broad and lovely fields, and all the land is fair as any garden to the view.

WALTER.

But, father, tell me, wherefore haste we not away to this delightful land, instead of toiling here, and struggling as we do?

TELL.

The land is fair and bountiful as Heaven; but they who till it never may enjoy the fruits of what they sow.

WALTER.

Live they not free, as you do, on the land their fathers left them?

TELL.

The fields are all the bishop's or the king's.

WALTER.

I should want breathing room in such a land; I'd rather dwell beneath the avalanches.

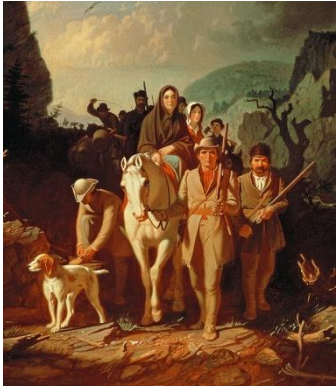
TELL.

'Tis better, child, to have these glacier peaks behind one's back than evil-minded men!

One spring about 15 years ago I thought of this Tell passage on the top of the Urnerboden-Fisetengrat near the border of Cantons Uri and Glarus. Barbara Bässler-Rhyner of the Hotel Elmer had suggested an excursion to this remote spot. A tiny cable car took us to the top where deep snow covered much of the rough terrain. Yet here and there a few *Pelzanemonen* were flowering in open patches. The *Pelzanemon*, a close relative of the pascal flower, is among the earliest of perennial wildflowers. And, surprisingly, here on this remote spot were a group of three or four Dutch visitors. The Dutch, from that "wide and level country" as described by Tell, were exploring a terrain vastly different from their homeland. And Barbara, who grew up surrounded by Elm's ring of mountains, explained to the Dutch "flatlanders" what it was like growing up in the mountains. A surreal chance meeting at the top of a mountain.

Early American Settlement Routes to the Midwest

The Appalachian Mountains stood as a barrier to east-west travel in colonial America. Only a handful of routes afforded a reasonably “easy” means of westward expansion into the lands east of the Mississippi. Considered the earliest route was a colonial road known as the Wilderness Road which led through the Cumberland Gap to connect Virginia with Tennessee and Kentucky. Buffalo and Native

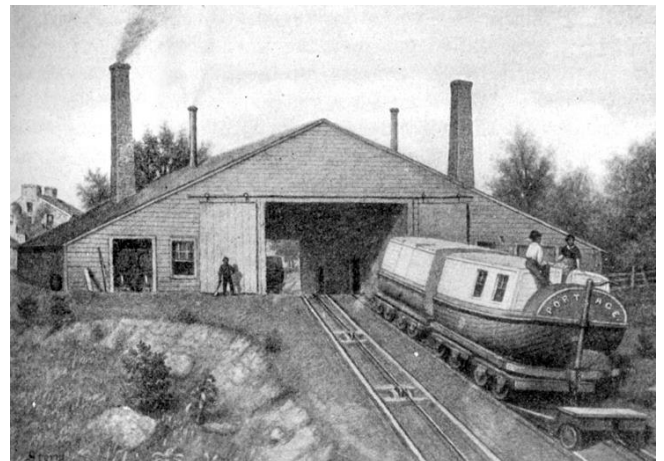


Americans used this narrow, natural pathway over the Appalachians. This route was made famous by frontiersman Daniel Boone who blazed a trail in 1775. The Wilderness Road was traversed by foot or by horse as made familiar by George Caleb Bingham’s 1851/52 painting of Daniel Boone escorting settlers through the Cumberland Gap. It is estimated that 300K settlers used the Wilderness Road to settle on the west side of the mountains.

The National Road dates from 1811 and ran from Cumberland, MD to Vandalia, IL – just over 600 miles. It was America’s first highway. It was built by the federal government and by 1830 was surfaced with compacted crushed stone and stone dust (the Macadam process). Wagons and stage coaches were able to use the National Road

In New York State, nature provided a natural break in the Appalachians. The Mohawk River flowed west to east. And the Erie Canal was constructed along this route from Albany, NY on the Hudson River to Lake Erie, being completed in 1825. The canal project was derisively called “Clinton’s Folly” or Clinton’s Ditch”. However New York Governor Dewitt Clinton had the last laugh – the Erie Canal was immensely successful. The cost to transport a ton of goods from Buffalo to New York City was reduced from \$100 to \$10. Midwest farm products found their way to the eastern seaboard markets and consumer goods, American settlers and foreign immigrants flowed the other way. Even lead ore from Wisconsin’s lead mining region was shipped east rather than the previous southern route via the Mississippi River. The 1847 New Bilten settlers traveled to New Glarus by way of the Erie Canal. Presumably countless other Canton Glarus immigrants used the Erie Canal to get to the Midwest before canals were replaced by railroads. And many of them remained in and around Rochester and Syracuse where descendants still live. Barbara (Wild) Streiff and Katharina (Luchsinger) Stuessy, both New Glarus residents, were both born in Syracuse during the time their respective families resided in New York State. Both Barbara and Katharina were the great-grandmothers of Rolland Disch mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter.

While New York State was enjoyed great success with its Erie Canal, the State of Pennsylvania recognized a need to develop its own route over the mountains. The Allegheny Portage Railroad was a 36 mile route which took advantage of a natural gap in the Allegheny Mountain ridge between Hollidaysburg, PA and Johnstown, PA. The Pennsylvania’s Main Line canal system brought canal boats to both Hollidaysburg on the east side of the Allegheny ridge and Johnstown on the west side. But getting the boats over the mountains required some spectacular engineering. Rail tracks were laid up both sides of the mountain in five incline planes on each side. The goods and passengers from the canal boats were transferred to rail cars which were brought up the mountain by steam engines. And the goods and passengers likewise descended on the other side where they were transferred back to canal boats.



By the 1830s the canal boats were designed so they could be directly loaded onto the rail cars and transported up and over the ridge (see illustration 1839 on previous page). This advancement offered the benefit of continuous travel without the need to transfer the goods and passengers.

Famed author Charles Dickens traveled on the Allegheny Portage Railroad during his 1842 tour of America and he recorded his thoughts of his journeys in his *American Notes*. Three year later the original settlers of New Glarus also used this route as they traveled to their new home in the Midwest. Like Dickens, they too marveled at the engineering feat. Diarist Mathias Dürst wrote from Hollidaysburg, “. . . *the canal ends here and our boats with all that was in them [were to be] loaded on rail cars. This however was quite easy, the rails continue deep under water, the cars were brought down, the boats moved onto them and then pulled by 4 horses which circle around a winch, thereby winding up a rope of iron wire. Soon we went up a very steep mountain, and there the wagon train was pulled up . . . sometimes by locomotive, sometimes by horses and in one stretch we went without either one and fast at that! In some places the train went through tunnels underneath the mountains, amazing, costly and bold projects.*” The following day Dürst commented on Pennsylvania’s canal and rail system, “*All these works of which one has no comprehension in Europe.*” Of course not many years later the Swiss would excel in railroad engineering including some 1300 tunnels and galleries today. The tunnel noted by diarist Dürst was the Staple Bend Tunnel near Johnstown, PA which is recognized as America’s first railway tunnel -- built in 1831-1833 for the Allegheny Portage Railroad.

The Allegheny Portage Railroad was used until 1854 when the Pennsylvania Railroad went up and over the same Allegheny Mountain ridge. The Penn railway engineers lessened the Allegheny grade by the use of the famous Horseshoe Curve near Altoona, only a few miles from the Allegheny Portage Railroad incline planes which it replaced. And Amtrak still uses this historic route over the Alleghenies.

Two other routes to America’s Midwest were by way of the St. Lawrence River to Montreal and then continuing onto the Great Lakes. This route was favored by nearly all of those coming from Scandinavia. And the other route was to sail to New Orleans and use the Mississippi River as a highway to points north and west. Sailing to New Orleans extended the transatlantic journey but provided an all water route to Wisconsin.

New Orleans experienced several cholera epidemics the longest one lasting from 1848 to 1855. In 1849 the Johann Ulrich and Verena (Marti) Elmer family arrived in New Orleans where members of their family contracted cholera. They all lived with mother Verena crediting the *Matrosen* (U.S. sailors) with their survival. In 1851, Sabina (Baumgartner) Geiger and her two young sons Jacob and Heinrich were traveling up the Mississippi River en route to New Glarus to join husband/father Heinrich Geiger who had immigrated earlier. Sabina and her two sons contracted cholera and all died.

To Wisconsin by Way of Hudson Bay and Manitoba

Perhaps one of the most unusual immigration routes from Switzerland to Wisconsin was taken by the Swiss Rindisbacher family who arrived in Wisconsin’s Lead Region in 1826. The Rindisbachers and about 150-200 other Swiss were part of the ill-fated Lord Selkirk’s Red River Colony. The family left Switzerland in 1821 and sailed from Dordrecht in the Netherlands bound for York Factory on Canada’s Hudson Bay in what is now Manitoba. This water route took 4 months and passed the Orkney Islands, Greenland and through the Hudson Strait to Hudson Bay. The immigrants were eager to believe the glowing reports from sketchy pitchmen about this new colony. But their destination, the Red River Colony, was not the promised land but rather proved to be a desolate outpost with a lack of provisions, little housing and harsh winters. After a particularly severe river flood in 1826, most of all of the Swiss including the Rindisbachers had departed for various points south – Fort Snelling, MN, Vevey, IN, St. Louis, MO, and Wisconsin’s Lead Region.

The route south from the Red River Colony to Wisconsin was by way of the Red and the Bois de Sioux Rivers to Lake Traverse on the Minnesota/South Dakota border. Lake Traverse is the southernmost point of the Hudson Bay watershed. And less than a mile away is Big Stone Lake in Minnesota the source of the south-flowing Minnesota River. Between the two lakes is a flat continental divide known as the Laurentian Divide. The confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers was the site of the historic Fort Snelling and today's Minneapolis and St. Paul. And the Mississippi River led to Galena, IL



and the Lead Region where the immigrant family of Peter and Anna Barbara (Wyss) Rindisbacher settled and ended their immigration story.

Father Peter Rindisbacher was from the village of Lauperswil, Canton Bern and the family had lived in nearby Eggwil. The Rindisbacher children included Magdalena, Peter, Anna Barbara and

Elisabeth. Daughter Magdalena has been mentioned in this newsletter before. She married Ireland-born Robert Oliver in 1835 in Iowa County and they farmed in the Town of Exeter just a few miles east of what would become the settlement of New Glarus in 1845. Magdalena is considered the first Swiss-born resident of Green County. New Glarus native Terry Argue is a descendant of Robert and Magdalena (Rindisbacher) Oliver.

Son Peter Rindisbacher was a prolific painter whose water color painting of Fort Gibraltar (later Fort Garry) at present day Winnipeg is found above. His promising young life ended at age 28 in St. Louis as a result of cholera. Daughter Anna Barbara married Red River Colony doctor Louis Ostertag/Osterday, a native of Württemberg, Germany. Their daughter Caroline was said to be the first white child born in what is Lafayette County and who married Hollis Crocker. The Crockers later resided in the Town of Montrose. Dr. Ostertag died in 1832 in St. Louis and Anna Barbara was remarried to Adam Collins

One of the Swiss settlers in the Red River Colony was little Anna Scheidegger (later Adams) who immigrated with her parents. Anna wrote her memoirs decades later and remembered how the settlement was primarily single ex-soldiers who had been given land to farm. When the Swiss arrived, Anna commented that it was only 24 hours before men “began to flock in, eager to get a wife.” Indeed the single Swiss girls were a sought-after commodity. Elisabeth Rindisbacher was one of the young girls to marry a soldier, Antoine Brückler (Anthony Brickler in America) just weeks after their arrival.

Author Therese Bichsel has written the novel, “*Überleben am Red River*” (Survival on the Red River) in which she creates a novel from the women’s point of view. Bichsel’s work is based upon historical documentation including Anna Adam’s memoirs. Bichsel has made Elisabeth Rindisbacher the protagonist in her novel. It is suggested in the book that Elisabeth’s marriage was for the benefit of the Rindisbacher family since Brickler could provide a roof over their heads, food and general security.

The Rindisbacher family members died and were buried in Illinois and Wisconsin. Parents Peter and Anna Barbara are buried in the Ladies’ Union Cemetery, Stockton, IL. Elisabeth and Anthony Brickler are buried in the Townsend Cemetery, Stockton, IL. Anna Barbara Rindisbacher and her second husband Adam Collins are buried in the Miller Cemetery, Wiota, WI. And Magdalena (Madalen) Rindisbacher and her husband Robert Oliver are buried in the Montrose Pioneer Cemetery located between New Glarus and Belleville, WI. Also buried in the Montrose Cemetery are Rindisbacher grandchildren Caroline (Ostertag) Crocker, Robert A. Oliver and Jane (Collins) Oliver.

1969 New Glarus Shopping News

My New Glarus classmate Lou Ann (Wild) Colby sent me a copy of the New Glarus Shopping News from August 12, 1969. It was a special issue dedicated to the recent 10 month stay of Herbert Kubly in Switzerland. Kubly captured many of the high points of his journey supplemented with many of his photographs. All of Herb Kubly's great-grandparents were born in Canton Glarus and his ability to converse in *Glarnertüütsch* (Glarner dialect) help him connect with the various Swiss people he encountered on his travels. And this was especially important in establishing rapport with the people of Canton Glarus.

The Shopping News also contained advertising for local businesses. Those businesses who advertised in this issue were: Walt's Toggery, Disch Hardware, Disch Furniture, Disch Outlet, Uffelmann's, Bank of New Glarus, Hofmann's Wilhelm Tell, Downtown Tell Bar, Swiss Miss, and Don and Dee's North Star Bar. Of these businesses, only the Bank of New Glarus is still operating.



The trend for color television sets is evident in the 1969 flyer. Several models of color TV consoles were advertised. The top-of-the-line model was the 23 inch giant-screen Zenith "Mondrian" with a price tag of \$630. Calculating for inflation over the ensuing 50+ years, what cost \$630 in 1969 would cost \$5178 today! Yet prices of televisions have plunged from 50 years ago. Today a 43 inch Samsung flat-screen television from a box store may cost only \$500.



Along Highway 69

The drive from Monticello to New Glarus on Highway 69 is a short one -- only about 5 miles. But in that 5 mile stretch one passes through the New Glarus Woods State Park and across what was once a historic lead transportation road from Wisconsin's lead region to the Lake Michigan ports. Most memorable to me in years past were three of the dairy farms along the way -- the Freitag farm, the Voegeli farm and the Stauffacher farm. The farms are/were among the most picturesque in Green County.



Coming from Monticello, the Freitag farm was passed first. It was originally the farm of New Glarus founder Fridolin and Anna Katharina (Blumer) Streiff. The Streiffs lived in a log cabin which was replaced by an 1862 Gothic Revival style farm house which is still standing. In 1869, the Streiffs sold the farm to Dietrich and Verena (Elmer) Freitag and the farm has remained in the Freitag family (albeit non-residents) to the present time. The Freitag barn is a local example of the Pennsylvania bank barn which itself evolved from barns in Switzerland. The original architectural characteristics of this barn (pictured above) include the hillside location, a one-time forebay (overhang) and louvered ventilators. The imposing red brick Queen Anne style home (pictured above) built in 1906 by second generation Nicholas and Elsbeth (Hefty) Freitag. The log cabin which was originally home to the Streiffs became the first commercial Swiss cheese factory in Green County in 1869. The small cabin was later replaced by a larger cheese factory but sadly that building was razed many years ago.



Just up the road from the Freitag farm is the Voegeli farm, one of the best known farms family farms in the state. Immigrants Jost and Barbara (Oprecht) Voegeli began the farm in 1854. That same year Barbara gave birth to their first of 15 children in a span of 20 years. The farm passed to Jacob Voegeli, Sr. and his wife Verena Freitag (no relation to aforementioned Freitags). It was Jacob Sr. who introduced the Brown Swiss cattle to the farm in 1895. The next generation to operate the farm were



sons and daughters-in-law Walter and Lydia (Blum) Voegeli and Jacob Jr and Lillian (Weiss) Voegeli. Walter died at the age of 43 and Jacob and his son Howard continued to operate the farm. Today the farm is operated by 5th generation brothers Bryan and Jimmy Voegeli who are the sons of Howard and Alice (Lien) Voegeli. Bryan's children Brienna and Christopher represent the 6th generation. The farm has grown to 1500 acres supporting 250 registered Brown Swiss cows. The Voegeli's herd is considered one of the pre-eminent Brown Swiss herds in the

world. And they have become known for their business of exporting Brown Swiss genetics to more than 35 countries. The famed Voegeli Brown Swiss is pictured with their impressive dairy barn in the background.

The Stauffacher farm came next. The farm was purchased by immigrants Dietrich and Verena (Elmer) Stauffacher (pictured below) when they immigrated from Canton Glarus in 1871. Dietrich Stauffacher, who was referred to as "Long Dietrich" referring to his height, and his wife Verena were welcomed to Green County by several siblings who had previously immigrated.

Dietrich Stauffacher's sister Maria Katharina was married to John Marty of Mt. Pleasant. Verena's brother John Ulrich Elmer also farmed in Mt. Pleasant. Verena's sister Maria and brother-in-law Fridolin Babler farmed a mile or two north of the Stauffacher farm and just south of New Glarus.

Additionally Dietrich Stauffacher's nephew, Dietrich Freitag (previously mentioned in this article), farmed just down the road. The two Dietrichs were only two years apart in age yet were in fact uncle



and nephew. A second nephew, Jacob Freitag, arrived in Green County prior to his 1877 marriage to Verena Ruegg. And they farmed the Ruegg homestead just west of the Stauffacher farm.



The Stauffacher farm became a three generation farm. Following immigrants Dietrich and Verena Stauffacher, their son and daughter-in-law Conrad and Maria (Elmer) Stauffacher took over the

farm followed by their sons and daughters-in-law Conrad Jr. and Emma (Roethlisberger) Stauffacher and Fred H. and Anna (Amstutz) Stauffacher. Under the management of Conrad and Fred, the Stauffacher farm reached its peak at 667 acres, multiple barns, a larger more modern farm house and an award winning Holstein herd.

They Stauffacher brothers were innovators, said to be the first Green County farmers employing strip-cropping and contour plowing on their rolling hills. They were also assisted by youngest brother Dietrich (Dick) Stauffacher who was a soil scientist in Baraboo, WI and who provided technical advice to his brothers. But the farm did not pass into the fourth generation – Conrad Jr. and Emma Stauffacher had only one child, daughter Dorothy (later Mrs. Kenneth Halvorson). And Fred H. and Anna Stauffacher did not have any children.

The 1902 Green County plat book indicates there were four small cheese factories operating along a two mile stretch -- at the Dietrich Freitag, Jacob Voegeli, Dietrich Stauffacher and Jacob Freitag farms.



The Stauffacher photographs on this page are from the Monticello Area Historical Society collection and those volunteers who have scanned many photos from family collections and posted them online. 1900 These photos and many more of this Stauffacher family can be viewed at the MAHS website. It appears that these Stauffacher (and Roethlisberger) family collection was donated by the family of Dorothy (Stauffacher) Halvorson.



The upper farm photo above is probably from about 1895 to 1900 and the lower from the 1940s or early 1950s. The road on the lower photo is Highway 69 which came down the hill from New Glarus Woods. The two dark barns seen in the upper photo were painted white and are seen in the center of the lower photo. In the late 1950s, a revamped Highway 69 bypassed the Stauffacher and Freitag farms

The Disappearing Silo

The farm silo may seem timeless but they have only been around just over 120 years. In 1882, there were only 91 silos in the United States. By 1895 there were over 50,000 across the country. By the early 1900's there were more than 500,000 silos dotting the agricultural landscape of America. But silos are rarely erected today. Farmers have moved towards bunker silos or flat storage rather than tower storage. The long, white bags you see near cow barns are filled with a nutritious mix of feed. And thus the eye-catching tower silos are disappearing from our farm landscape. But this should be seen as a sigh of progress. (Adapted from Morning AgClips)

Kittleson's Hill

When local physician Dr. Sylvain J. Francois died in 1956, his will stipulated a fund be established for yearly scholarships to local students and for equipping a new children's playground. This playground was established on a piece of land at the corner of Fifth Street and Tenth Avenue on the southwest side of New Glarus. The playground equipment was painted to resemble the red and white stripes on a candy cane. Thus the park was named Candy Cane Park.

The park was built on a small hillside which provided winter sledding for small children. I recall sledding as a young child on the park's small hill. The older neighborhood kids had staked out a steeper hill for sledding. We called that hill Kittleson's Hill. It was located on Kittleson farm operated



by Stanley and Luella (Valstad) Kittleson and their two sons Duane and Richard. This larger hillside was used for grazing cows and was fenced-in by barbed wire. There were no homes in this corner of the village except for four new homes along 5th Street. These four homes

belonged to Wayne and Hazel (Engen) Duerst, Henry and Phyllis (Freitag) Pauli, Stanley and Donna (Reuter) Rupnow and David and Barbara (Frey) Hodgson. Pictured is Candy Cane Park today with Kittleson's Hill at center in the background with the Shepherd of the Hills church center left. The playground equipment is no longer painted with the signature red and white candy cane stripes.

As I outgrew sledding on the small hill at Candy Cane Park, I joined the older group of neighbors on Kittleson's hill. It was probably a neighborhood dad who would gather the lower strand of barbed wire, pull it up and secure it to an upper strand. This would allow us to go under the wire both when climbing the hill and when sledding under the wire. We knew there was a certain amount of risk going under barbed wire. We could lie as low as possible on our sleds to clear the fence. Occasionally a bulky winter jacket snagged a barb and ripped a bit.

In 1962 the Kittleson's sold 4.5 acres of farm land for the construction of a Lutheran church. The church opened within a year or two as the Shepherd of the Hills congregation. The church land included the sledding hill and the barbed wire was taken down. The entire southwest corner of the village filled in with new homes and sledding continues to the present.

There was a small rock ledge adjacent to the sledding portion of the hill. One summer two young neighborhood boys -- my brother David and his friend Scott Hodgson -- decided to dig under the rock. Scott's mother Barb could see the boys from the Hodgson home. But later, when she looked out the window to check on the boys, she had noticed the rock had collapsed and the boys were nowhere to be seen. She called the Fire Department who arrived shortly with no boys in sight. I remember hearing the fire siren and asking someone "Where is the fire?" And the reply I received was that two boys were crushed under a boulder. Fortunately David and Scott had crossed the street to play with another classmate, Kurt Duerst, just before the boulder collapsed.

The New Glarus Community Cares group is currently fund-raising to purchase the sledding hill and adjoining greenspace which would become part of the adjacent Candy Cane Park.

What we knew as Kittleson's Hill might have been called Zwicky's Hill. Four generations of the Zwicky family had farmed on this land on the southwest edge of the village. The immigrant Kaspar Zwicky (also known in America as Caspar Zwicky/Zwickey) had come from Mollis, Canton Glarus in 1845 with his sons Jacob and Caspar. The Zwickys were among the original 1845 settlers but had spent the first winter in Baltimore. They arrived in New Glarus in 1846. Over the years the Zwickys purchased various tracts to form a large farm on the edge of the village. From Duane Freitag's "Disposition of Swiss Colony Land" (the 1845 disposition of the sixty original 20-acre tracts) -- Jacob Grob was assigned Lot #40. The Grobs abandoned their lot and it was re-assigned to Kaspar Zwicky in 1846. The Zwickys went on to purchase lots 39, 40 and 49 in 1855 from the Emigration Society. They eventually owned lots 33, 34, 41 and 42 creating a more sizeable farm. It appears lot 42 is the site of the sledding hill.

By 1860 immigrant Caspar Zwicky had grown the size of his farm to 160 acres. After Caspar's death in 1866, the farm passed to sons Jacob and Caspar. The Zwicky farm grew even more and by 1891 there were 257 acres. Jacob Zwicky and his wife Magdalena née Baumgartner had 6 sons who grew to manhood. Two sons and daughters-in-laws then owned the farm – Edward and Verena (Voegeli) Zwicky and Jacob and Barbara (Kundert) Zwicky. And by 1930, Willis Zwicky, the son of Jacob Jr. and wife Barbara farmed the land. This is the farm which became the Stanley Kittleson's. In 1962, my parents bought a residential lot in New Glarus from Willis Zwicky on which they built a new home. The lot was formerly part of the Zwicky farm and a kid-friendly location being just one block from Candy Cane Park and Kittleson's Hill.

Rolland Paul "Rollie" Disch – 1931-2023

Rolland Disch of New Glarus recently passed away. He was the father of my classmate, the late Steve Disch and the son of Jacob S. and Bertha (Streiff) Disch. Rollie was of 100% Glarner ancestry. He was the descendant of many early New Glarus residents including early teacher Mathias Stuessy, mill owner Joshua Wild, and Iron Brigade veteran and farmer Fridolin Streiff. And Rollie was a direct descendant of Swiss Reformer Ulrich Zwingli.

About the time that Don Ott (the father of another classmate Ann Marie Ott) passed away in 2003, I began an informal list of those New Glarus residents who, like Don, possessed 100% Canton Glarus ancestry. And Rollie Disch was on that list. My list was close to being comprehensive and had about two dozen individuals who I believed had all 8 great-grandparents and all 16 great-great grandparents of Glarner stock. And when I read that Rollie Disch had died, I located that list from twenty years ago and discovered that in the subsequent years, all the others on the list have passed – except one. So at present, I know of just one living New Glarus resident with 100% Glarner ancestry.

David Philip Hefti

Did anyone happen to see Jeopardy on Monday, June 26? If so, did anyone notice the mention of David Philip Hefti in one of the daily clues? The clue was, "Modern composer David Philip Hefti's *Fünf Concertini* honors this Italian known for creating about 500 concertos." The Jeopardy answer (actually the Jeopardy question) was "Who was Vivaldi?".

Hefti (born in St. Gallen in 1975) is a contemporary Swiss composer and director who has built a noteworthy career writing and conducting *avant-garde* music. In recent years he has won several distinguished prizes. One review of Hefti's compositions commented, "*David Philip Hefti . . . spans the full spectra between sound and noise, sensation and stillness, tension and release, with compositional virtuosity.*" Hefti's music, like that of Laura Fygi, can be listened to on sites like Spotify.

And as expected, David Philip Hefti has family roots in Glarus Süd.