

Family History Notes

Spring 2024

Elm's Martinsloch Phenomenon and Cheese Market

Elm, Canton Glarus has a natural hole in the mountains high above the village. Twice a year – in spring and in fall – the sun is aligned so that its rays pass through the hole and stream down on the church spire. When I visited Elm in September of 1977 my trip was timed to allow me to witness this event. Clear skies prevailed and the morning sun rose behind the mountain. Suddenly its rays appeared and flowed through the hole. It was a magical show but over in just a few minutes. I was expecting crowds



of people on the street looking up at the Martinsloch. And yet there were only a handful of local women who stepped out of their front door or looked out of an opened in window to view the semi-annual event. There were no crowds. But in more recent years

the Martinsloch has become a better known natural phenomenon in Switzerland and crowds have increased. Publicity about the event has grown and in 2012 a three-part postage stamp (above) was issued to celebrate the sun shining through the Martinsloch.

The village celebrates its local alp cheeses on the first weekend of October with an open air market (*Alpchäs- und Schabzigermarkt*). Local cheese makers from the nearby alps assemble to sell their wares. When I visited this market about 15 years ago the event drew a large local crowd who enjoyed beer, sausages, cheese and folk music within the confines of the *Truppenlager* (military barracks). Even the herdsmen's dish, *Fänz*, was prepared – a rare occurrence. A highlight of the market day was when the cows were paraded down Elm's street representing the return of the cows from the mountain pastures (*Alpaufzug*). Today the cheese market has outgrown the *Truppenlager* and has moved to Elm's streets.

This past year, 2023, the Martinsloch phenomenon and the cheese market occurred on the same weekend. And under beautiful skies, hundreds of visitors filled Elm. One visitor was Mary Dibble of New Glarus whose Kubli and Elmer ancestors were Elm natives. And Mary graciously shared her beautiful photos of the day. And these photos attest to how much both the cheese market and witnessing of the Martinsloch have grown and developed in recent years. The following are six samples of Mary's photographs.





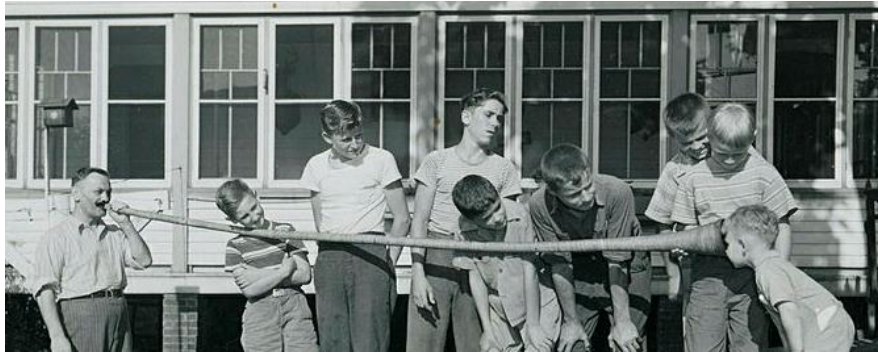
Photo descriptions (1 to 6): 1-- Crowds looking up to the Martinsloch near Elm's church; 2-- Crowds near Zentnerhaus and Hotel Elmer; 3 -- Cow parade going up Elm's main street; 4 -- *Zigerbrötli* (*Schabziger canapés*) sold by Elm's women (*Elmer Landfrauen*); 5 -- Cheese sold by cheese makers from the Alp Empächli; 6-- Mountain crystals sold by Chäp Bähler.

The Alphorn and Balthasar Streiff

It is a difficult task to try to pin down the history of one of Switzerland's icons, the alphorn. In fact it is difficult to pin down the history of many musical instruments. The ancient Jewish shofar and the Scandinavian *bukkehorn* were fashioned from goat/ram horns. Conch shells could be blown like a trumpet. Wood, ivory and bone could be hollowed out and used as rudimentary instruments; in fact a bone flute found in Germany is considered the world's earliest instrument dating back 40-60K years.

The following is a brief history of the alphorn adapted from an online source: "*The beautiful alphorns were built from spruce trees growing high in the Alps. They were used by Alpine shepherds for centuries to communicate with others and to call grazing animals. And they also made music. Builders would choose a high mountain tree that grew out of a steep mountainside. After growing out from the mountainside, the tree would turn and grow vertically toward the sun, and this curved shape of the tree was used by the early builders of alphorns to create the shape of the horn. The cut trees were split in half, carved out, and the halves re-attached. Alphorn playing declined in the late 1700's and early 1800's as they were needed less for communication. Efforts were made in Switzerland during the 1800's to promote the alphorn due to its cultural significance, and the alphorn has seen a resurgence in the last hundred and fifty years, and especially the last 40 years.*"

The 1940s photo below is of New Glarus tavern owner Ernst Thierstein (left) and group of boys examining an older form of the alphorn. Don Ott is seen third from the right (looking down) and his



cousin Randy Ott is possibly the little boy furthest to the left. The photo was taken behind Thierstein's tavern. The 1950s photo below also shows an unusual alphorn. Two women in Tell Usherette costumes are not absolutely identified but the woman on the left is thought to be Phyllis (Duerst) Foster or and

the woman on the left remains unidentified.

One of Switzerland's leading authorities on its iconic alphorn and other similar wind instruments is Balthasar Streiff. Not satisfied playing the tradition alphorn tunes, Streiff is charting new paths exploring the connections between Swiss cultural traditions and contemporary and futuristic musical forms. Streiff stated, "To see the alphorn as the only Swiss National Instrument I find unimaginative, because you can do so much more with it."



Streiff, a Basel resident, has Canton Glarus ancestry. Balthasar Streiff is a distant cousin of New Glarus Streiffs – their closest common ancestor is Johann Balthasar Streiff (1725-1788). Check out Balthasar Streiff's interesting website [here](#).

Fritz Streiff: Renaissance Man

For nearly 50 years, Fritz Streiff was the face of Alice Waters' iconic Chez Panisse restaurant in Berkeley, CA. Streiff, dressed in his trademark white-linen suit, bow tie and distinctive glasses, warmly welcomed hosts of diners. He was a key associate of Waters beginning in the kitchen and later moving to the front of the house.



Fritz was a native of Lewiston, ID and a graduate of Harvard University. He was known as a man with wide-ranging interests – a vast culinary knowledge, a passion for art, literature and classical music (he played the piano and harpsichord) and an ardent traveler, particularly Southeast Asia and Italy. Regarding his knowledge of food, Alice Waters commented, "Because he loved to cook and knew a tremendous amount about food, he would always fine-tune everything." She added, "And he was always right." His writing skills led him to write/edit the numerous Chez Panisse cookbooks. One obituary noted, "Fritz's expansive vocabulary was unsurpassed, and he was known for his inimitable writing style, sly wit, and meticulous eye for detail." Yes, Streiff was a Renaissance man, although it was a label he disliked.

Fritz Streiff died of stomach cancer in September, 2022 at the age of 72. He was the grandson of immigrant Abraham Streiff, a native of Diesbach, Canton Glarus, who settled in Jackson, MI. Looking at Fritz's ancestry he does not appear to be closely related to any of the Streiffs of New Glarus.

Daniel Strieff: Jimmy Carter Historian

California native Daniel P. Strieff (pictured) is a historian, an author, and a journalist. Dr. Strieff earned his PhD in International History from the London School of Economics and has taught at the University of California, Berkeley, is a visiting fellow at the London School of Economics and a visiting lecturer at City, University of London. Strieff's specialties are 20th century American foreign relations, U.S. Middle East policy, post-World War II American politics, the Cold War, and journalism history. He is the author of *Jimmy Carter and the Middle East: The Politics of Presidential Diplomacy* published in 2015.



A review of Strieff's book on President Carter commented, "*Despite the widespread perception of him [Carter] being a largely ineffectual head of state, both historians and the U.S. public still credit Carter with promoting human rights and securing a treaty between Egypt and Israel after decades of strife and conflict. In the provocative new monograph, Daniel Strieff not only questions Carter's efficacious role as a Middle East peacemaker, but ultimately casts the former president as an often opportunistic and rudderless leader who succumbed to the pressure of pro-Israeli lobbyists and elements of public opinion, and expediently betrayed the Palestinians for political purposes.*" And as we can witness yet today, a permanent peace settlement in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict remains elusive nearly 50 years since President Carter.

Daniel was the great-grandson of Nicholas Streiff (later Strieff) who was born in New Glarus in 1898. Nicholas was the youngest of six children born to Nicholas and Katharina (Speich) Streiff. Katharina died just weeks after baby Nicholas was born. In 1900 the widower Nicholas and his six young children ages 2 to 8 lived on a Town of Exeter farm. His mother Margaretha (Durst) Streiff and sister Elsbeth Streiff were also living with Nicholas, presumably to help raise the six Streiff children. But sometime before 1910 the Streiff children were separated and raised in other households. By 1920, youngest son Nicholas Streiff was living in Black Dog, SD and using the spelling Strieff.

♪ Cheer, Cheer for New Glarus High ♪

Pearle (Haldiman) Kittelson (1914-2004) and Merle (Hoesly) Weinberg (1914-2012), friends from the New Glarus High School Class of 1932, are credited with writing the lyrics to the school song sung by New Glarus sports fans to the tune of the Notre Dame Victory March.

Pearle and her husband Rodney Kittelson married in 1940 and lived in Monroe where Rod practiced law. Merle and her husband Joseph Weinberg met at the University of Wisconsin. Weinberg, a physicist, earned a Ph.D. at Berkeley where his doctoral advisor was J. Robert Oppenheimer, director of the secret Manhattan project. Joe and Merle lived in Syracuse, NY until their deaths.

Both Pearle and Merle were of 100% Swiss ancestry – Merle being 100% Glarner. And both Pearle and Merle had sisters who remained New Glarus residents – Delma (Haldiman) Phillipson and Fern (Hoesly) Ferris.

History Trivia Questions

In 1900 it was announced that the Solomon Levitan mercantile stores in New Glarus and Blanchardville would be closed on Wednesday, October 3, 1900. Does anyone know why Levitan closed his stores on that particular day?

The centenary of the late President George H. W. Bush's birth will occur on June 12, 2024. What consumer product which originated in Wisconsin will also achieve 100 years on the same date?

Elmer's Restaurants and JaCiva's Bakery

In January of 2024, the U.S. Congress held hearings to understand how crime is affecting small businesses. One businessman who testified was Jerry Scott, CEO of the Elmer's pancake restaurant chain located in the Pacific Northwest.

What Scott testified is all too common in America today. He explained, "In just the last six months, one of our locations experienced two armed robberies in the space of three weeks. Two other locations have had armed robberies within the same time. A young guest was unable to produce a valid ID to purchase a beer. When he became abusive to the server, the guest was of course asked to leave but returned with a firearm, pointed it at the server, and threatened to kill the server."

Scott continued, "At an Elmer's in Washington State, within the last six months, guests and employees have had over 15 vehicles broken into while dining or working, including the theft of the general manager's vehicle."



Scott's time ran out before he could relate how a car drove into one of the Elmer's restaurants to steal an ATM. The robbers succeeded in taking the machine's cash and their damage cost \$25K in repairs. Additionally, the restaurant manager was attacked by a person lurking outside of the business. That particular Portland restaurant closed in 2021 due to homelessness and crime. Patrons and staff alike were afraid to come to the restaurant. Ironically in 2018, this restaurant was one of the top Elmer's performers.

An Elmer's restaurant in Tacoma, WA now requires private security patrols costing \$80K per year – a significant amount equal to about 40% of the location's profit. Sadly these stories of stores closing across the country have become an everyday occurrence as we witness lawlessness, homelessness, drug abuse, untreated mental illness and violence across the country and the lack of political will to address these issues.

The Elmer's family restaurants were begun in 1960 in Portland by Walter S. Elmer and his wife Dorothy



which featured a breakfast focus and a proprietary pancake recipe. Elmer's pancakes caught on and the original single location expanded to 29 locations. However the family sold to outside investors when Walter was mid-70s. Walter was the son of Albrecht (Albert) Elmer, a native of Elm, Canton Glarus and Regina Schmid, a native of Frutigen, Canton Bern. Albert and Regina were married in the New Glarus Swiss Reformed Church in 1889 and then moved west to Washington State. Both had several siblings who remained in the Green County area. Ida (Zahler) Kubly and Marie (Marty) Haldiman of New Glarus were nieces of Regina Elmer.

Walter Elmer's nephew Jacob (Jack) Elmer was Swiss-trained master pastry chef (*Konditor*) who had learned to bake at his Swiss mother's side. Jack and his wife Iva began JaCiva's Bakery in Portland in 1986 which became a successful neighborhood institution. Jack's stepdaughter Laura Boscole took over managing JaCiva's shortly before Jack's 2014 death. JaCiva's once-thriving wedding cake business never fully returned in the years since the COVID pandemic. And giving way to the pressures of running a small business in Portland it was announced that a favorite neighborhood bakery would be closing in 2023.

“It’s a struggle in this economic environment.” Boscole told local news. “There are a lot of changes that Portland has gone through and it’s been very difficult for small businesses. Crime and vandalism play a part in that and this wasn’t a decision that came lightly and it’s heartbreaking.” They had seen neighboring businesses close – the empty buildings becoming targets of vandalism. And of course our recent inflation worked against their profitability.

Leglers of North Dakota

Jamestown, ND native Paul Legler (pictured below; now of Minneapolis) was a farm boy who went on to be educated at the University of North Dakota, the University of Minnesota and Harvard University. He became a lawyer specializing in poverty and civil rights issues. And he was a policy advisor within President Clinton’s administration.



In recent years Paul has authored two books – “Song of Destiny” (2013) and “Half the Terrible Things” (2020). The *Historical Novel Society Magazine* described the latter book as “a hybrid of documentary and fiction, depicting the true story of a young North Dakota farmer named Martin Talbert who left home to see the world and wound up in a convict labor camp in North Florida.” There, in 1922, Talbert died a violent death and was buried in an unknown location in the Florida swamps. Legler advances the storyline into more recent times by using a fictional character that seeks out Talbert’s burial site in Florida and uncovers the tragic truth of his circumstances.

Paul Legler is the son of the late Victor Legler who was an early *Family History Notes* reader until his death in 1910. Victor was the grandson of New Glarus natives Peter and Barbara (Kundert) Legler who relocated to North Dakota in 1913. And Peter Legler was the son/grandson of original New Glarus settlers Johannes (John) Legler and Fridolin Sr. and Barbara (Hefti) Legler.

Pictured are original New Glarus immigrant John Legler (seated center) and his four sons and seven sons-in-law. Peter Legler who took his family to North Dakota is seated lower right in the photo. The



other Legler sons were Fred, John and Herman Legler. The sons-in-law were Baltz, Jacob and Paulus Kundert, Gottlieb Wittwer, Werner Zentner, John Streiff and Peter L. Klassy. Mrs. Peter Legler (Barbara née Kundert) was the sister of Baltz, Jacob and Paulus Kundert. In fact, four Legler siblings married four Kundert siblings.

The late Douglas (Doug) Legler was also a North Dakota native with Canton Glarus and Wisconsin roots, but appears to have no close connection to the New Glarus area Leglers. Doug was a lighthearted prankster whose last laugh was his obituary. His long-standing request was that his obit would simply read “Doug Died” and nothing more. Doug’s unusual request earned him his 15 minutes of fame, albeit after he died.



Numerous publications like the New York Daily News, USA Today and even London’s Daily Mail, ran short items about Doug’s two word obit. Doug was remembered for his love of country music, cars and most of all his ability to laugh and to make other people laugh. According to his daughter, Doug lived a full and happy life and it could be said “Doug Lived.”

Doug (pictured left) was the great-grandson of immigrant Nicholas Legler. Nicholas Legler’s brother Ulrich constructed a dam on the West Branch of the Milwaukee River in Fond du Lac, County, WI. Here he built and operated a saw mill and grist mill in the little hamlet of Leglerville – now named Elmore.

While Ulrich Legler lived and died in Elmore, several of his great-grandchildren (all deceased) lived in the New Glarus area. These descendants included Wilma (Derendinger) Wenger and Calvin Derendinger of New Glarus, Laura (Derendinger) Ochsner of Albany, Martha (Grether) Tschudy of Monroe and one-time New Glarus art teacher Caroline (Grether) Steva of Stoughton.

Kueng Family Update

Shortly after the George Floyd’s death in 2020, I reported that J. Alexander Kueng, one of the four police officers involved had Green County connections. Alex Kueng has since pled guilty to aiding and abetting second-degree manslaughter and is now in prison serving a three year term.

Alex’s great-great grandfather, Gebhard Kueng, was a cheesemaker at the Clover Hill cheese factory northeast of Monticello. The Kueng family moved from Monticello to the Twin Cities area where family members continue to reside. Gebhard’s grandson Dennis Kueng was Alex’s grandfather. Both Dennis and his wife Bonnie (pictured) witnessed the 2020 events surrounding the Floyd tragedy and their grandson’s role.



But sadly Bonnie Kueng died in 2021 and Dennis in 2022. Bonnie and Dennis are remembered for their four decades of service to others through their lifelong nursing and teaching professions and their family medical missions to Rwanda and Haiti.

For a different perspective on the Floyd affair there is a new and provocative documentary, “The Fall of Minneapolis” (2023), which puts forward a view that politics trumped justice for the four police officers. Joni Kueng is interviewed in the documentary and Alex Kueng is featured via telephone. Here is a link to the [Fall of Minneapolis Documentary](#). Joni and Alex can be found at about 1:29:00.

Breads and Spreads

A bench with advertising for Swiss bread (see next page) was photographed a few years back at the Winterthur, Canton Zurich train station. The *Schweizerbrot.ch* (Swiss bread) website named the times of the day when their delicious breads could be enjoyed – *z’Morge* (breakfast), *z’Nüni* (morning snack around nine a.m.), *z’Mittag* (lunch), *z’Vieri* (afternoon snack around four p.m.) and *z’Nacht* (evening dinner). A variety of Swiss breads and rolls can be found at the ample breakfast buffets found in most Swiss hotels. And these Swiss breads are enhanced by Swiss butter and their local cheeses, meats and jams.

Bread was baked and butter was churned by early pioneer women as part of their chores. In the earliest days of the state, the women made butter by milking their family cow (or two), letting the cream rise, and then churning the cream into butter. It took no small amount of elbow grease to produce a few pounds of butter. But the quality of the butter was often so bad it could not be sold or bartered at the local general store. There were various causes for this bad quality butter. The wooden churns and kneaders could not be effectively sanitized like the stainless steel of today. Little attention was paid to what the cows grazed upon, so the milk often took on undesirable flavor notes. This inferior butter was dumped into barrels and sold in Chicago by the hundred-weight as an axle lubricant. It became known

as “Wisconsin wagon-wheel grease”. Elbow grease yielded axle grease!



A new spread was developed in the 19th century initially using animal fats such as tallow, then animal and vegetable fat blends and since the 1950 primarily vegetable fats. The spread was called oleomargarine and is commonly known as both oleo and margarine. From 1895 to 1967, Wisconsin had a ban on

the sale of colored form of oleomargarine. This ban was driven by Wisconsin’s strong dairy lobby to protect butter from the non-dairy alternative. Consumers could purchase a white, uncolored oleo (which looked like lard) but not a buttery-yellow product. Pouches of color could be used to turn the uncolored margarine an appetizing yellow color, but this required about 10 minutes of kneading. But colored margarine could be purchased in Illinois, only about 30 miles from New Glarus. And so families were known to make across the border “margarine runs” to stock up on the less expensive colored margarine.

One of the staunchest advocates of Wisconsin butter was our own Wisconsin State Senator Gordon Roseleip. Roseleip participated in a notorious blind taste test challenge pitting butter vs. margarine. And he failed the taste test identifying the margarine as the superior product! It later was revealed that Roseleip’s wife had been buying margarine for years and passing it off as butter in the family home.

Although our state is pro-butter, the sale of the prized Irish Kerrygold butter (America’s second best-selling butter after Land O’Lakes) was banned in Wisconsin from about 1970 until 2018. Sellers who broke the law were subject to fines and/or prison! Until 2018!

Tarzan’s Yodel

Johnny Weissmuller (right; né Johann Peter Weissmüller) is considered the most definitive of the several actors who played Tarzan in the movies. Weissmuller is credited with creating the iconic Tarzan yell. Apparently in Weissmuller’s youth he was exposed to yodeling in German beer halls and ethnic picnics in Chicago.



Click here for a short video on the history of [Tarzan’s Yell](#). Readers likely remember Carol Burnett’s spot-on rendition of the Tarzan yell on her weekly television show.