

The History of the Glarus Families, especially Those of the Sernf Valley.

A Medley of Pictures from Past Days.

(Zur Geschichte glarnerischer Geschlechter, derjenigen des Sernftales insbesondere. Allerlei Bilder aus vergangenen Tagen)

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XI. The Bräms

[pg. 113-116]

"Mathys Bräm, whose father had been from Splügen [*Canton Graubünden*], became a cantonal citizen in the year 1566, and paid 40 Gulden for it." Thus reported a summary of the man who had purchased himself the Glarner cantonal citizenship rights. The remark that his father "had been" from Splügen explains, no doubt then, that this man [*the father*] had come to Engi by this time, and so his son, Matthias, grew up in Engi. What caused the father Bräm to emigrate to Engi is not known to us.

Fifty years after Matthias Bräm had bought into the Glarner cantonal citizenship rights, the first Book of the Dead from Matt had reported the death of his son or grandson: "Gorius Bräm, husband of Regula Zopfi, died on 18 February 1607." Thirteen days before, another boy, whose name was Hans, was baptized to him.

No doubt, Matthias Bräm, who was married to Maria Tschudi on 21 September 1617, was a son of this Gorius Bräm, and grandson or great-grandson of the before-named Mathys Bräm. Among the 8 children of this Matthias Bräm, which the oldest Book of Baptisms from Matt had reported in 1618-1637, three sons were found: Hans in 1625, Gregori (Gorius) in 1633 and Samuel in 1637. Of these, however, the oldest, Hans, died at 18 years old. The Matt Book of the Dead reported in 1643: "Around this time news came from France that Hanss Bräm, Matthias' son from Engi, lost his life altogether valiantly in a battle of Rocroy. He had not been with the company longer than 2 days." On the other hand, Samuel Bräm, who was born in 1637, and who married Katharina Ackermann, was the father of a large family. From 1665 to 1681 eleven children were baptized to him, among them 6 boys: Matthias in 1665, Hans in 1667, Jakob in 1669, Gregorius in 1671, Samuel in 1683, and Heinrich in 1684^a.

Nevertheless, the 1763 cantonal tax rolls showed only 4 Bräms subject to taxation. In a 1784 pension roll, however, no Bräms appeared among the 178 men from Engi who paid with regard to taxes. That appears very remarkable; but it tallies with the fact that the Bräms were also counted among the new cantonal citizens who acquired the Glarner cantonal rights in 1834.

Since the price for the Glarner cantonal rights was forced up higher and higher until 1798, the number grew of those in a Glarner commune who, of course, acquired the *Tagwen*^b rights, but dispensed with the cantonal civic rights (cantonal citizenship rights), and to whom the right to vote in church, school and *Tagwen* matters was granted according to older stricter law, and also whenever, certainly, their ancestors had bought into the *Tagwen* rights. They were just merely "patient ones".

Already in 1816 these residents demanded equalization in civil rights, since, after all, they had borne the country's burden for a long time in company with the cantonal citizens. The authorities proposed also to meet this request; but at the *Landsgemeinde*^c such an uproar was raised on that point, with narrow-minded shouts, that, as the report expresses it: "over this point no peaceful deliberation, and also no formal resolution, could have been proposed". In 1820, to be sure, the small farmers were acknowledged as equally entitled associates in communal and corporate situations; but in 1828, contrary to the proposal of the authorities, the *Landsgemeinde* again completely excluded them from the right to vote in *Tagwen*, church and school commune meetings.

For the first time, the progressive spirit of the 1830's brought them the fulfillment of their wishes. Towards the reaching of this goal, at the 1833 *Landsgemeinde* "some respected members of the non-cantonal citizens, in the middle of two petitions, had expressed the wish to the authorities that all of the non-cantonal citizens become equalized, in exchange for payment of a conciliation sum to the cantonal citizens." While the authorities supported the acceptance of this offer, the *Landsgemeinde* actually gave the order that, within the course of the year, the authorities negotiate with the non-cantonal citizens over the size of the purchase sum, and then, in 1834, bring back a report and proposal on that point.

During the following negotiation the so-called non-cantonal citizens offered to pay 15,000 Florins in cash, in 3 installments, by the end of 1835. The authorities, however, put forth a motion to increase this sum to 20,000 Florins, after which payment the so-called non-cantonal citizens should enter into the enjoyment of the cantonal rights¹. About the utilization of the purchase sum, the authorities should, in the course of a year, prepare a proposal, and the 1835 *Landsgemeinde* should submit it to deliberation. This proposition was then meant to be established, that a portion, which was to be more precisely estimated, be separated out for the *Tagwens* and communes, according to the number of lands held in common.² The remainder, however, should fall to the canton and should be used for a purpose beneficial to the commune, to be designated later.

"In the discussion" (of the *Landsgemeinde*) "it turned out then that, on the question of the admittance of the non-cantonal citizens, whose number amounted to about 700 males over and under a year old, only one vote prevailed, but that they did not want to go into the utilization of the money for some time and until the sum had been deposited. The so-called non-cantonal citizens were taken in and accepted as cantonal citizens by a rejoicing majority, unanimous with the exception of one, according to the authorities' proposal. However, concerning the utilization of the money, they decided not to set up a more reasonable way."^b

Of the 718 male persons which were granted the cantonal rights thru this decision, a full tenth belonged to Engi, among them 12 Bräms and 54 Hämmerlis.

According to the cantonal tax rolls for 1876, in total 10 headtax-paying Bräms⁴ were found in Canton Glarus, with a taxable property of 8000 Francs, namely 6 in Engi (5000 Francs) and one each in Schwanden (3000 Francs), Ennenda, Glarus and at Schwändi.

About the meaning of the name Bräm I am not able to express any conjecture. Related, of course, are the German family names of Brehme and Brem, and perhaps also Brahms, for which three family names Vilmar, in his brochure "About the Origin and Meaning of German Family Names", apparently also had prepared no explanation.

^a No doubt, these last two sons were born in 1673 and 1674. [SW]

^b Tagwen – an ancient term, from at least the 6th century A.D., which is still used today in Canton Glarus to denote the commune of the citizens, i.e. those who have inherited or purchased the Tagwen rights (this may only partially coincide with the political commune). It is derived from Tage Wann, meaning the work someone could perform in one day in the commonly-held fields, pastures and forests. Over the years the number of Tagwen in the canton has varied considerably, with the present-day number being 29. Also its duties have changed – from jointly working on and enjoying the benefits of its common property, to administering all the commune's public interests, to (today) administering and enjoying the benefits of its common property. [SW]

^c The Popular Assembly, which is the Glarus cantonal legislative body. It is made up of all the citizens of the communes who have full citizenship rights. [SW]

¹ Consequently, not only the right to vote in communal affairs, but the active and passive right to vote also on behalf of the canton.

² The distribution of a part of the purchase sum to the communes was eliminated by the 1836 *Landsgemeinde*.

³ The 1880 *Landsgemeinde* allotted the "New Cantonal Citizens Fund", which meanwhile had grown to 105,000 Francs, to the credit of the cantonal hospital.

⁴ That in 1786 and 1834 all the Bräms were a part of the non-cantonal citizens, while, however, their ancestor, Matthys Bräm, in 1566 had acquired the cantonal rights for 40 Florins, I myself account for it thusly: that the named Matthys Bräm acquired the cantonal rights, to be sure, for himself, but not also for his son. On the occasion of his later, still to be mentioned, buying into the cantonal rights through the *Landsgemeinde* of 1594, it commanded specifically: "of whom 100 Gulden each for his person, and if he had sons, he must pay so much for each of those also." Perhaps Matthys Bräm had believed that, when he had bought the cantonal rights for himself, that his son also became, in that way and of his own accord, a cantonal citizen, and not until too late did he discover that that was not the case (compare what was paid later on regarding the Hämmerlis and Hans Baumgartner).