

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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[All lettered footnotes and information in brackets were added by the translator]

XII. The Hämmerlis.

[p. 116-119]

The same 1566 *Landsgemeinde*^a which accepted Matthis Bräm into the Glarner cantonal rights for 40 florins had, for the same price, also granted the Glarner cantonal rights to Lienhard Hämmerli from the Uznachberg [*Canton St. Gallen*]. What caused Leonhard Hämmerli or his father to emigrate from Uznachberg to Engi was not also reported to us; we can, however, guess here the likely cause of the emigration, probably even more likely than with Matthis Bräm; we will hardly go wrong when we presume that it was the result of the Reformation. In the years 1529-30, as we learned from the Chronicle of Valentin Tschudi, the great majority of those in the Gaster [*Canton St. Gallen district*] also switched over to the new faith. In 1531 they took the liberty even to refuse provisions to those from [*Canton*] Schwyz [*who remained Catholic*], who, like the Glarners, were their overlords. However, the spirit of change had also made itself felt in the Uznach domain. After the second Battle of Kappel [*Canton Zürich*][11 Oct 1531], which, as is well known, ended unfavorably for the followers of the Reformation [*Zwingli was killed*] but after that established the reaction [*Reformation*] with all its might, the rulers from Schwyz then certainly didn't tolerate any longer that the Glarners, who, alternating with them, administered the Uznach domain, let ride a Reformer there as cantonal official. Had Leonhard Hämmerli or his father himself now declared decisively for the new faith, then probably the atmosphere for him and his family became so oppressive that he thought it proper to leave that area; and since the Sernf valley residents had acquired for themselves the reputation as particularly zealous followers of the Reformation, this also might have moved our Lienhard Hämmerli so much the more to emigrate into the Sernf valley, to Engi.

In Engi, certainly at the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th centuries, the Hämmerlis were already one of the most numerous families. The parish register from Matt, which begins in 1595, has, for the period from 1595 to 1617, no fewer than 16 baptisms from the Hämmerli family to report; they are more numerous than the Elmers, Martis, Stauffachers, and, moreover, the Blumers, who had just recently made their appearance in the Sernf valley. Of the heads of the families who had registered children for baptism in this period, descendants of the previously mentioned Lienhard Hämmerli could have included: Fridli Hämmerli, married in 1599 to Anna Wyss, whose first son (born in 1602) was called Lienhard; Hans Hämmerli, married to Dorothea Dietrich, whose first son likewise received the name Leonhard; and Leonhard Hämmerli, married to Magdalena Böniger. Therefore, these three and their descendants, to be sure, will also have been in possession of the Glarner cantonal rights.

On the other hand, that was not the case with all Hämmerlis who lived in Engi at the end of the 16th and beginning of the 17th centuries, that is, some of them in Engi, no doubt, wanted to

have acquired the *Tagwen*^b rights, but did not also possess the Glarner cantonal rights; they belonged rather to the category of the non-cantonal citizens, about which, a short time ago, the discourse was on the occasion of the Bräms. The 40 Gulden which Leinhard Hämmerli paid for the Glarner cantonal rights signified such a considerable sum at the time that it was not possible for all Hämmerlis who had emigrated from Uznachberg to Engi to pay so much money in cash; the acquisition of houses and landed property may have already cost enough for them. However, when they wanted to wait with their purchase into the Glarner cantonal rights until they had saved up a few things or until the Glarner would relinquish their cantonal rights more cheaply, things went for them as they went in 1919 for that one or this, who, after the conclusion of peace, waited for the reduction in price of certain articles. Instead of going down, the Glarner cantonal rights rose more and more in price, so that only just the rich, and eventually only just the extremely wealthy, were able to pay it.¹ So they remained, like the Bräms, until 1834 just simply small farmers, and, for this reason, we are also not surprised that no Hämmerlis are found among the 13 federal councillors which the Chronicler Trümpfi enumerates as representatives of the Matt-Engi commune for the period from 1700-1774.

In the 1763 cantonal tax roll 14 Hämmerlis (therefore 8.4%) are found among the 166 headtax payers of the Engi *Tagwen*; in the 1784 pension roll already cited above (page 114) only 5 Hämmerlis² (therefore only 2.6%) are found, out of 178 people who were entitled. How depressing it must be for them to have to contribute to the taxes (the cantonal taxes), on the other hand, to see themselves excluded from the pleasures and privileges, we may be thinking to ourselves. Among the former non-cantonal citizens who were accepted in 1834 into the cantonal rights were found, as already noted above, a large number of Hämmerlis and, indeed, 104 persons in total (among them 34 males over one year of age and 20 males under one year of age).

Besides in Engi, the Hämmerlis were also found in 1763 in Schwanden, and, indeed, there were 8 of them, according to the cantonal tax roll of that year. The Hämmerlis were obviously also found here, certainly far earlier than in Engi. Already at the establishment of the Schwanden church commune in 1350 a Hämmerli appears who took upon himself a donation of 6 Schillings and a penny from the old Alpine pasture. In Schwanden the Hämmerlis were also citizens and, therefore, qualified for the government from time immemorial. One of these, Federal Councillor Jakob Hämmerli, was entrusted by the 1779 Evangelical *Landsgemeinde*, thereupon, to collect "the French cantonal deposits in [Canton] Solothurn"; and that was a great honor, a symbol of trust.³

As at the Uznachberg and in Engi and Schwanden, so the Hämmerli family name was also found, and is found, in other cantons. I remember, by way of example, only the Züricher Canon Felix Hämmerli⁴ and the Bernese Representative Hämmerli.

As regards the probable origin of family names, I recall to mind, above all, how even today inn signboards serve to represent the house's occupant. (I suppose all readers know, perhaps, an Adler [*eagle*] -Fritz or -Balz [*first names*], a Rabben [*ravens*] -Hans or -Heiri, or a Sonne [*sun*] -Grite or -Magdalena. In Hätzigen we have an Ochsen [*oxen*] -Schag, although he has not lived in Ochsen for a long time.) However, when we now today, especially in the country, only still find these inscriptions, which are also understandable for illiterate people, at inns (in Glarus, to be sure, the same sign language also serves shoe shops - at the golden boot - watchmakers, and others), so it was in olden times, for centuries, even more the case that houses were marked by means of pictures or lopped-off figures, since the art of reading was

still rarer than today. Thus, according to information from Tobler-Meyer, the houses at the *Kindermarkt* [*children's market*] in Zürich displayed, one after another, the following signboards: Neuburg [*new castle*], Armbrust [*crossbow*], Giessfass [*rain barrel*], Steinbock [*stone ram*], yellow Gilgen (earlier Härre, a hair-snare for bird-capturing), black Ambos [*anvil*], Seckel [*small sack*], Sichel [*sickle*], white Täublein [*little dove*], Pfau [*peacock*], small Pfau, Schwarzgarten [*black garden*], Hirschli [*little stag*], red Ochs [*ox*] and Wellenberg [*wavy mountain*]. Now, to begin with, the houses were known by such pictures, so at the time the family names originated, the houses' names were transmitted also to the owners or residents. To this group of family names belonged, to be sure, the Hämmerlis and Hammers (Solothurn), also, of course, the Bärs [*bear*] (Zürich) and the Ochses (Basel), the Pfaues and the Adlers, the Fisches [*fish*] and the Fischlis [*little fish*]. I presume that the Glarner family names of Vogel [*bird*] and Vögli [*little bird*], Blum [*flower*] and Blumer [*flowers*] also belong to them.

^a 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]

^b A now-obsolete Glarner term meaning "full citizenship" in the commune. Citizens with *Tagwen* rights had the right to vote on all issues concerning the commune, they could use the common lands, and they were supported if in poverty. [SW]

¹ Already in 1595 the 31 candidates each paid 100 florins for the cantonal rights, and in 1644 Franz Anton Cleric paid 1000 florins. But in 1760 Colonel Steinmüller paid 120 florins into the Evangelical arsenal and 1 florin to each Evangelical cantonal citizen, altogether probably 4000 florins.

² *Tagwen* official Fridolin, Hans, Caspar, Lienhard, Sergeant Lienhard (both Lienhards remind us further of the Lienhard Hämmerli of 1566).

³ According to a tabulation of the *Landsgemeinde* minutes, there were to be fetched in 1777 in Solothurn:

Cantonal pensions	3,975 Francs
The privy state's pensions which were so directed	3,666 Francs
Peace money	2,400 Francs
Sum	10,041 Francs

That was a great sum for those times, of course.

⁴ Dierauer, "Story of the Swiss Confederation", vol. II, pg. 80.