

## **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]*

### **XIII. The Zentners**

[pgs. 119-121]

"Bläsy and Hans Centner, when they had been decried by some parties that they were not cantonal citizens, had been recognized and registered to be cantonal citizens by an entire council in the 1574<sup>th</sup> year." Thus reports a summary of cantonal rights acquisition and restoration that is lying in front of me. When evil gossip had been repeated to both Zentners that they were not cantonal citizens at all, and therefore also had no right to vote, then the council had declared that to be slander and had officially recognized their Glarner cantonal rights. However, that such gossip as that can come into being nevertheless seems to indicate that they had been considered to be newcomers, but that they had acquired cantonal and *Tagwen*<sup>a</sup> rights in a lawful manner. But all accounts are missing about where and when<sup>1</sup> they immigrated into the Sernf valley.

The above-mentioned Bläsy and Hans Centner of 1574 also call to mind the first entry of a Zentner in the Elm baptismal register (1595): "Bläsi Zäntner, of Hans Zäntner and Ursula Bähler." However, the same names of Hans and Bläsi also recur repeatedly with the subsequent children of the Zentners.

In the years 1595 – 1624 twelve heads of families from the Zentner family in Elm registered 26 children for baptism; within the same time period, however, more of them emigrated to Matt-Engi, probably as a result of their marriages (thus: Heinrich, who was married to Ursula Blumer, and who in 1620 brought a son Bläsi, and in 1622 a daughter Elsbeth, to baptism in Elm, on the other hand, in 1619 brought a son Jakob, and in 1623 a daughter Margreth, to baptism in Matt; likewise, Hans Zentner, who had been married to Elisabeth Buchmüller since 1617, and who in 1619 had registered a daughter Magdalena for baptism in Elm, on the other hand, in 1621 had registered a daughter Margreth, and in 1624 Anna, for baptism in Matt). Nevertheless, this emigration of the Zentners into Matt-Engi<sup>2</sup> was only temporary; according to the 1763 cantonal tax roll, no more Zentners were found in Matt in the year mentioned. The only two Zentners that had settled outside the Elm commune in 1763 lived in Bilten; however, in Bilten was also not a place for the Zentners. Also in 1876, of the 26 head-taxpaying Zentners, only three were found outside the citizen commune of Elm, one each in Glarus, Schwanden and Luchsingen. In Elm, in 1876, they were the fourth most numerous family, with 23 head-taxpayers, and the third richest, with 137,000 Fr. of property (the Freitags had 320,500 Fr. and the Elmers had 244,000 Fr.).

The Zentners clearly distinguished themselves by their sedentariness, so they had probably given up all claim to cantonal offices (cantonal official positions, etc.) due to this strong preference for their home commune. They were only in a position to determine the

representation of their commune on the council. Among the 18 councilors from Elm, which Trümpi's Chronicle had listed between 1700-74, 4 Zentners are found, compared with 9 Elmers, 3 Freitags and one each of the Heftis and Martis: in 1700 Hans Zentner, and in 1713 his son, J. Heinrich, and in 1733 a second J. Heinrich Zentner, and in 1742 his son Nikolaus.<sup>3</sup>

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, during 21 years (1842-48 and 1851-66), a Zentner occupied the presidency of his commune: Kaspar Zentner (born on 20 October 1811, died on 9 May 1887). In the records that he left behind he had collected extremely valuable information<sup>4</sup> for a detailed history of his commune: excerpts from *Tagwen* rights, bills of sale concerning Alpine and common land and timber sales, bequests to the church, a detailed history of the Plattenberg [mountain], of road construction and the Sernf [river] correction, lists of *Tagwen* officials, the clergy, etc.; he also gave an exhaustive report about the natural phenomena, in connection with which the reports of a Bläsi Zentner and Johannes Marti were also at his disposal. Also he made his entries about political events (for example, the Werdenberg rebellion, etc.), and by them he displayed his lively interest in all public questions that affected his time and his fatherland.

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<sup>a</sup> An ancient Glarner term, from at least the 6<sup>th</sup> 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]

<sup>1</sup> In any case, the Zentners were found in Canton Glarus a long time ago; in 1499 a Hans Zentner was captured alongside other Glarnese in the Schwabian war during the invasion of Gams [Canton St. Gallen].

<sup>2</sup> In the years 1616-25 four Zentner heads of families (Peter, Heinrich, Hans and Matthis) are found who had their children baptized in Matt, and a fifth, Läri, was married there to Maria Bähler in 1614.

<sup>3</sup> In a baptismal register record about the 13 November 1631 elections (it seems the custom at that time in Elm had been to hold the elections in the late autumn) it was reported: Hans Zentner had again been asked to be church steward.

<sup>4</sup> These records of President K. Zentner reported, among other things, that Zentners who are thought to stem from the Sernf valley were also found in high places in Germany to some extent (George Friedrich, baron of Zentner, royal Bavarian minister, born in 1752, died in 1835, and 1<sup>st</sup> lieutenant Friedrich, knight of Zentner, died in 1871).