

On the History of the Glarner Families, Particularly 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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With a Coat of Arms

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

## XXI. THE BLUMERS

[pg. 136-140]

As we already remarked on an earlier occasion, among all the children who were listed in the first Matt baptism book for the years 1595-1617, there are only 2 children from the Blumer family, which today is so numerous in Engi. They were Fridli and Paulus Blumer, both of whom also died young – and, therefore, without descendants (Fridli, born in January 1613, died in August 1613 and Paulus, born in 1616, died in 1628). In comparison, on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of *Wintermonat* [November] in 1620, two brothers of Paulus Blumer got married: Wolfgang, united with Margreth Hämmerli, and Meinrad, united with Elsbeth Knobel from Betschwanden. These two were the ancestors of the Sernf [river] valley Blumers. In the time from 1622-49, Wolfgang had registered 10 children for baptism, among them 6 boys: Joseph in 1622, Fridli in 1628, Paulus in 1631 (he was killed in 1660 in the foreign military service), Leonhard in 1641, Wolfgang in 1647, and Jakob in 1649. Six children were baptized to Meinrad Blumer from 1621-33, among them 3 sons: Paulus in 1623, Jakob in 1625, and Fridli in 1627. In that case, we should not be surprised that, with regard to the number of their members, the Blumer family, even in the Matt commune, advanced from the 24<sup>th</sup> place, which it reached at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, to the most numerous family in rank. In 1763, the Blumers numbered 36 head-taxpayers, so that in Engi only the Martis (40 head-taxpayers) and the Baumgartners (39 head-taxpayers) still were ahead of them by a little. For a time, they were also represented in Matt. The village book there reports it this way: "On the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of March in 1740, Joseph Blumer, the son of Mathias Blumer of Engi, had presented a proposal before an honorable Matt *Tagwen*<sup>a</sup> to the effect that his grandfather, Joseph Blumer, in the year 1677, has bought the *Tagwen* right at Matt for himself and his descendants, and he presumed that they should deliver the *Tagwen* right to him also, as one *Tagwen* citizen to another, since his father and grandfather lived in the *Tagwen*. The sovereign *Tagwen* citizens have replied concerning this that they will not refuse the

<sup>a</sup> *Tagwen* - 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]

*Tagwen* right to him, namely, the benefits of the common land of that time, which they had had then; but he would have to avoid what they had bought afterwards, namely, the *Bohlige [Boligen]* and ...ground [*sic*] and the great Hostet<sup>1</sup>, or make settlement with the *Tagwen*. About that matter he came with asking and begging, and wished that they would also look at him in mercy and consider that he was also a poor man. About that matter they had dealt with him and settled, namely, for 44 Fl. for the fire-tax and what they had paid for the common land; however, if he had a want in addition to the *Tagwen* in the autumn to come, then he should pay what is due for the clearings and common land."

The petitioner, master rifleman Joseph Blumer (born in 1713, died in 1764) was the only Blumer whom the canton tax roll for Matt had registered, and later the Blumers again became extinct in Matt. When Joseph Blumer described himself as "a poor man", that held very true also for his family members in Engi; whereas he is reported on the tax rolls with 100 Florins, in 1763 all 36 Blumers in Engi paid taxes on only 1600 Florins (the 40 Martis paid on 5600 Florins and the 21 Elmers in Matt paid on 7200 Florins). In that case, it is also not so very astonishing that, of the 13 federal councillors which, according to Christ. Trümpi, represented the Matt-Engi *Tagwen* in 1700-1774, no Blumers are to be found (on the other hand there were 4 Elmers, 4 Martis, 2 Wohlwends, and one each of the Wysses, Winteler and Baumgartners). On the other hand, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Blumers worked in the foreground at an increased rate, so that their name is connected most intimately with the history of the transport situation and the industrial development of the Sernf valley. Until in the 1850's no mail-coach ran into the Sernf valley. After the transfer of the postal system to the Confederation, the communal authorities of the Sernf valley used their influence with the Swiss post office to also introduce daily mail routes for the Sernf valley; against them, the council had stated in its official report of 1851-54 that its efforts, respectively, those of the member state commission, till now had been unsuccessful, that the District Postal Directorate of St. Gallen had determined "that, during a full month, also not one resident of the Sernf valley has made use of any one of the already existing postal facilities of Canton Glarus", and, on the basis of this determination there, it would be necessary to dispense with the establishment of a post office for the Sernf valley. On the other hand, the communal authorities of the Sernf valley told themselves: "He who does not give up wins," and, as the member state commission supported their efforts, the following official report of the council (1854-57) stated that now the mail wagon also goes into the Sernf valley. The management of these mail routes was taken over by C h u r c h O f f i c i a l F r i d o l i n B l u m e r, who transferred the command of the mail wagon to his son, Andreas, who, for his part, held this job until 1905, that is, the mail wagon at first ran as a little one-horse carriage and only to Engi, later up to Elm and as a two-horse carriage.

The introduction of a mail route for the Sernf valley, which was approved after a rather long struggle, meant a significant improvement, then it admittedly became largely obsolete through the construction of an electric tramway to Elm. But how much here, also, the Blumers, Chief Justice Fridolin Blumer, and, above all, C o u n c i l l o r o f S t a t e s L e o n h a r d

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<sup>1</sup> The above reason shows that also in Matt, as in other communes, the *Tagwen* had the tendency to add on to its possessions in the common lands. As a rule the *Tagwen* citizens would be obligated to use a part of their accruing "taxes" and peace money for it. The more common lands the *Tagwen* purchased, all the greater became the demand for such, which would be purchased in the *Tagwen* right. Likewise, citizens who lived away from home for a long time had to pay, if they again wished to return to the full possession of the *Tagwen* right, what the *Tagwen* people had given in the meanwhile for the expansion of the common land possessions.

Blumer, were the driving forces, is certainly in the grateful memory of every citizen of the Sernf valley. If, at the dedication of the railroad on the 12<sup>th</sup> of September in 1905, the train stopped in front of the house of the already seriously ill man, and, through Cantonal President Blumer, everyone participating expressed their gratitude and appreciation to him in a simple act of homage, we are, to be sure, all convinced, even today, that without the energetic and relentless work of the President of the Initiative Committee, Councillor of States Leonhard Blumer, the undertaking of a Sernf valley railroad would not have become a reality perhaps even today [1920], or, at any rate, not as early as 1905. A people's assembly of the three Sernf valley communes [Matt, Engi and Elm] had already, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December in 1889, appointed an initiative committee with Cantonal Councillor Leonhard Blumer as president, so we know how many difficulties of a technical and, above all, financial nature had to be overcome to reach the goal. As in the circles of his valley associates, so Councillor of States L. Blumer also had to stand up for the undertaking again and again in the cantonal council and at the *Landsgemeinde*<sup>b</sup>, and to revive his courage anew, which was sinking from time to time, until the *Landsgemeinde* of the year 1903 put another 250,000 Francs at the disposal of the undertaking, in addition to the already formerly-decided 500,000 Francs (as stocks of 2 levels), and thereupon — but also now with twice as much energy — the actual construction of the railroad was carried out<sup>2</sup> by means of the administrative council, which was constituted on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August in 1903, and its untiring president, Councillor of States Blumer. To be sure, everyone felt sad that he, the energetic promoter of the undertaking, was only allowed to wave his greetings to the festively decorated train and its passengers from his sickroom at the inauguration of the railroad; and a mere few weeks later, on the 21<sup>st</sup> of October in 1905, an extraordinarily numerous funeral procession accompanied the deceased magistrate, after a rather long suffering, to the Matt cemetery.

Born on the 28<sup>th</sup> of May in 1844 as the third oldest son of the previously-mentioned Church Official and Federal Councillor Fridolin Blumer of Engi, Leonhard Blumer at first attended the Glarus secondary school and then got his further business training at the *Industrieschule von Lausanne*<sup>c</sup>. Afterwards, while employed for some time as travelling salesman of a Glarner cotton company, he associated himself with some friendly businessmen in order to found a cotton weaving mill in his until-then industry-poor home commune of Engi, which was already open for business in the autumn of 1865. Besides his industrial job, however, he also served his home commune, such as in more public employment to the canton, thus, since 1867, as member of the cantonal council, which he presided over in 1892 and 1900, and, since 1870, as a member of, and, since 1883, as president of, the Engi school council. However, the *Landsgemeinde* elected him on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May in 1893 to be the successor of the resigning old Cantonal President E. Zweifel, to his membership on the Council of States, in which he reached a significant status, especially on commercial policy and industrial questions. Proof for the latter was, to be sure, his nomination to the presidency of the Council of States' tariff commission.

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<sup>b</sup> *Landsgemeinde* - 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]

<sup>2</sup> Since I would also like to report more thoroughly about the Sernf valley railroad in a special chapter in my *History of Glarner Transportation*, I shall content myself with the above brief remarks.

<sup>c</sup> *Industrieschule von Lausanne* - *Ecole moyenne et industrielle de Lausanne*, which Leonhard Blumer attended in 1858-59. [SW]

In Engi, the number of tax-paying Blumers in 1876 amounted to 39, with taxable property of 141,000 Fr. In the main [*Linth river*] valley, they were represented at that time, above all, in Schwanden by 41 taxpayers (2,219,000 Fr. property), in Nidfurn, by 30 taxpayers (112,500 Fr. assets), in Glarus, by 21 taxpayers (2,427,000 Fr.), and, in Niederurnen, by 14 taxpayers (53,000 Fr.). In Mitlödi and up in the Kerenzen [*Mühlehorn, Obstalden & Filzbach*], they numbered 5 each, and, in the remaining communes, 17 further taxpayers; in the entire canton, the number of taxpaying Blumers amounted to 175, who had taxable property among them of 5,162,000 Fr. In regard to the number of taxpayers, they stood, therefore, in 9<sup>th</sup> place, but, in regard to their taxable property, they stood in 3<sup>rd</sup> place.

Since I have already reported in detail about the Blumers in the *Historical Yearbook*, No. 26, pg. 70-99, I limit myself here to some short notes.

The first documented mention of the Blumers dates from 1423, in which year the familiar duel between Wälti Blumer and his brother-in-law, Heintz, took place.<sup>3</sup>

Captain and Federal Councillor Peter Blumer founded an actual dynasty of officials in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. He himself was *Landvogt*<sup>d</sup> in the Freie Ämter [*Canton Aargau*] in 1645. Of his sons, J. Jakob Blumer, in Nidfurn, was *Landvogt* in Baden [*Canton Aargau*] in 1661-62, and, in 1672-76, the Evangelical cantonal treasurer, a second son, Fridolin (born in 1619, died in 1696), who, after his marriage with the federal councillor's daughter, Barbara Trümpi, settled in the Thon [*in Schwanden*], later moved to Glarus [*capital*], and, in 1672, bought the *Tagwen* right of the capital, and was *Landvogt* to Lauis [*Canton Ticino*] in 1670-72. No fewer than 6 times he was also chosen as cantonal vice-president for the lottery, but all 6 times the "impartial lottery" decided against him, that is, for one of the other two candidates.

Of the 5 sons of *Landvogt* and Treasurer J. Jakob Blumer, the first was Fridolin (died in 1746, at 86 years old), *Landvogt* of Baden [*Canton Aargau*] in 1693-94 and the most frequent representative of member state Glarus to the confederate sessions, a second, Samuel, was, in 1696-1726, cantonal military administrator, and, in 1698-1701, *Landvogt* of Werdenberg [*Canton St. Gallen*], the third, Othmar, served, in 1717-23, as cantonal treasurer, a fourth, Peter, was, in 1675, pastor of Mollis, in 1700, *Chorrichter*<sup>e</sup>, and, in 1708-20 (until his death), dean, and a fifth, Joh. Heinrich, was, for 1689, pastor at Grabs [*Canton St. Gallen*].

Of the grandsons of *Landvogt* J. Jakob Blumer, and the sons of Federal Councillor and *Landvogt* Fridolin, J. Jakob became cantonal secretary, Fridolin, *Landvogt* to Werdenberg in 1715 and Peter, in 1726-1741, became cantonal military administrator, and, in 1741, *Landvogt* to Baden [*Canton Aargau*]. A further grandson of the same *Landvogt* J. Jakob Blumer, and son of Cantonal Military Administrator Samuel Blumer, Joh. Jakob, was, in 1737-40, *Landvogt* of Werdenberg; the son of Othmar, Paravacini Blumer, became, in 1743, *Landvogt* in the Freie Ämter [*Canton Aargau*], and his son, great-grandson of *Landvogt* Joh. Jakob, in 1773-76, was *Landvogt* to Werdenberg (representative of the Eschen [*Luchsingen, Nidfurn & Leuggelbach*] *Tagwen* on the council).

<sup>3</sup> *Historical Yearbook*, No. 25, pgs. 56-58.

<sup>d</sup> *Landvogt* – an administrative and judicial official of a cantonal government in a vassal territory [SW]

<sup>e</sup> *Chorrichter* – member of a special court for cases concerning family and vice. This court was held in the choir section of the Evangelical church, hence the name, "choir judge". [SW]

Of the sons of Captain Fridolin Blumer, who, in 1670-72, was *Landvogt* of Lauis, and whose name can still be read on an old bridge on Mt. Cenere [*Canton Ticino*], was one Peter Blumer, who was a federal councillor, *Neuner*<sup>f</sup>- and *Chorrichter*, and Evangelical treasurer in 1724-30, and whose one son, Joh. Jakob, was federal councillor, while his grandson, Konrad, served as captain in the Sardinian foreign service and, in 1782-85, governed as *Landvogt* over Werdenberg.

Of the great-grandsons of Captain and *Landvogt* Fridolin Blumer, and grandsons of Othmar Blumer, was, first, Fridolin, as of 1741, pastor of Rheineck [*capital of Rheintal, Canton St. Gallen*] and, as of 1761, treasurer of the Rheintal capital, a second, Othmar, *Chorrichter*, chosen to be elected by the *Landsgemeinde* as cantonal vice-president, that is, selected as cantonal president, but was turned down through the disfavor of the lottery, and a third, Peter, *Fünferrichter*<sup>g</sup>, in 1746, *Landvogt* in the Meyen valley [*Valle Maggia, Canton Ticino*] and, for 1752, cantonal military administrator.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century 3 sons of *Chorrichter* J. Jakob Blumer took part prominently in a similar way in the political life of our canton: A d a m (born in 1789, died in 1859), last cantonal military administrator and, in 1837-48, president of the court of appeals, whose son, Dr. J. Jakob Blumer, in 1848-72 and 1873-74, belonged to the Council of States, and, in 1874, was chosen as the first president of the federal court, which had been reorganized by the 1874 federal constitution. O t h m a r, Dr. med., *Chorrichter* and later president of the marriage court, and K o s m u s (born in 1792, died in 1861), cantonal vice-president in 1836-40 and cantonal president in 1840-48.

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<sup>f</sup> *Neunerrichter* – one of 9 judges on a court [SW]

<sup>g</sup> *Fünferrichter* – one of 5 judges on a court [SW]