

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]

XII. THE HÄMMERLIS

[pg. 116-119]

The same *Landsgemeinde*^a of the year 1566 which accepted Matthis Bräm into the Glarner cantonal right for 40 Fl. had, for the same price, also granted the Glarner cantonal right to Lienhard Hämmerli from the Uznachberg [*Canton St. Gallen*]. What caused Leonhard Hämmerli, or his father, to emigrate from the Uznachberg to Engi was not also reported to us; however, here we can guess the likely cause of the emigration, probably even more likely than with Matth. Bräm; we will hardly go wrong when we presume that it was the result of the Reformation. In the years 1529 and 30, as we learned from the *Chronicle* of Valentin Tschudi, the great majority of those in the Gaster [*Canton St. Gallen*] also switched over to the new faith. In 1531, they even allowed themselves to refuse provisions to those from [*Canton*] Schwyz [*who remained Catholic*], who, like the Glarner, were their overlords. However, the spirit of change had also made itself felt in the lord's domain of Uznach. After the [11 Oct 1531] second Battle of Kappel [*Canton Zürich*], which, as is well known, ended unfavorably for the followers of the Reformation [*Zwingli was killed*], the reaction then began with all its might, the rulers from Schwyz then certainly no longer tolerated that the Glarner, who had administered the lord's domain of Uznach alternately with them, let a Calvinist assume office there as *Landvogt*^b. Had Leonhard Hämmerli, or his father, 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 that very place, 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 Matt pastor's register, 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

a *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]

b *Landvogt* – an administrative and judicial official of a cantonal government in a vassal territory [SW]

heads of families who had registered children for baptism in this period, descendants of the previously mentioned Lienhard Hämmerli may 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. These three and their descendants, for this reason, probably had also found themselves in possession of the Glarner cantonal right. 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*^c right, but did not also possess the Glarner cantonal right; they belonged rather to the category of the non-cantonal citizens, of which we spoke earlier, on the occasion of the Bräms. The 40 Gulden which Leinhard Hämmerli paid for the Glarner cantonal right signified such a considerable sum at the time that it was not possible for all Hämmerlis who had emigrated from the 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 buying into the Glarner cantonal right until they had saved up a few things or until the Glarner would relinquish their cantonal right 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 right 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, just simply residents without the citizen right until 1834, 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 head-tax-payers of the Engi *Tagwen*; in the 1784 pension roll already cited above (page 114 [*in* “The Bräms” chapter (pg. 1 in the SW translation)]), 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 burdens (the cantonal taxes), nevertheless to see themselves excluded from the pleasures and privileges, we may think to ourselves. Among the former non-cantonal citizens who were accepted in 1834 into the cantonal right 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. Here the Hämmerlis were evidently already present much earlier than in Engi. Already, at the establishment of the Schwanden church commune in 1350, a Hämmerli appears, who took

c *Tagwen* - an ancient Glarner 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]

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

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

upon himself a donation of 6 Schillings and a penny from the old Alpine pasture. In Schwanden, then, the Hämmerlis were also citizens from time immemorial and, therefore, qualified for the government. One of these, Federal Councillor Jakob Hämmerli, was entrusted by the Evangelical *Landsgemeinde* of the year 1779, thereby, to collect "the French cantonal funds in [Canton] Solothurn"; and that was no small honor, a symbol of trust.³

As on 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 National Councillor Hämmerli.

As regards the probable origin of family names, I recall to mind, above all, how even today inn signboards serve to indicate the house's occupants. (I suppose all readers know, perhaps, an Adler-[*eagle*]-Fritz or -Balz, a Rabben-[*ravens*]-Hans or -Heiri, or a Sonne-[*sun*] -Grite or -Magdalena. In Hätzingen we have an Ochsen-[*oxen*]-Schag, although he has long since ceased to live in "The Oxen".) However, if today, especially in the country, we only still meet 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 sign-boards: Neuburg [*new castle*], Armbrust [*crossbow*], Giessfass [*rain barrel*], Steinbock [*stone ram*], yellow Gilgen [*lily*] (earlier Härre, a snare for birding), black Ambos [*anvil*], Seckel [*small sack*], Sichel [*sickle*], white Täublein [*little dove*], Pfau [*peacock*], smaller Pfau, Schwarzgarten [*black garden*], Hirschli [*little stag*], red Ochs [*ox*] and Wellenberg [*wavy mountain*]. The houses were then first named after 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 belongs, to be sure, the Hämmerlis [*little hammer*] and the Hammers (Solothurn), also, of course, the Bären [*bear*] (Zürich) and the Ochsen (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 it.

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

Member state pensions	3,975 Fr.
The so-called secret state pensions.	3,666 Fr.
Peace money	2,400 Fr.
Sum	10,041Fr.

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

4 Dierauer, *History of the Swiss Confederation*, II, 80.