

On the History of the Citizen Families of Engi and Their Development  
*[Zur Geschichte der bürgerlichen Geschlechter von Engi und ihre Entwicklung]*  
Public lectures

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

## IX. THE GIGERS

[pg. 60-62]

On the origin, as well as on the arbitrary changes of the family name "Giger" Dr. G. Heer has spoken at length in his brochure "*[On the History of the Glarner] Families[, Particularly Those]* of the Sernf Valley", pg. 54 and 55 [pg. 1 in the SW translation].

The origin of the Giger family line, however, is still not determined. In Engi, the Gigers were already found as citizens in the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, for, according to the tax list of the church in Matt of 1525, which has already been mentioned several times, an Albrecht Giger in der Auw (Au)<sup>a</sup> and a Heini Giger im Wald had to pay one pound, respectively, a quarter of grain. It seems as if the forest homesteads have already been inhabited, from time immemorial, by members of the Giger family.

In the council minutes of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Gigers are found in quantity. They are, however, named with their home place in the fewest cases, and were found, besides in Engi, especially at Kerenzen<sup>b</sup>. Elm, too, already had Gigers, now Geigers, for its own at that time. Thus, in 1551, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of July, a Hans Giger is named as an Elmer citizen, and then again in 1553 and 1559 several times; in 1563, his wife, "Anna Steinwieser", was also named in the lawsuit against Joss Dischen's wife. In 1566, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October, a Jakob Giger of Engi appeared before the council. In 1555, in July, a Lärer Giger of Engi, he [*sic*] asked for the remission of his guardianship; In 1563, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of December, a son of his was named Jakob. In 1559, on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May, a Mathäus Giger. In 1568, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December, Jakob and Fridli Giger, etc. (J.J. Kubli-Müller)

We can, therefore, establish that the Gigers of Engi can be traced back to 1500, and so belong to the oldest of our citizen families, even if the development of this family line always fallen very much behind, compared with the Martis, Blumers, and Baumgartners.

In the beginning of the Matt church books, we first meet a Hans Giger (Nr. 1), who died in 1602, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April. To him, from his marriage to Magdalena Heiz, were baptized two sons, Hans Melchior, in 1597, on the 21<sup>st</sup> of Aug., and Elias, in 1599, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Oct. From neither will

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a *Flurname - field name. People with identical names were differentiated by adding their occupation or a descriptive term for the area where they lived [SW]*

b *Kerenzen - Canton Glarus district which includes Mühlehorn, Obstalden & Filzbach [SW]*

anything further be reported to us afterwards; perhaps that they were presumed dead in foreign military service.

In 1613, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August, the death book reports to us that "Anna Giger, daughter of tall Hans, a widow, died." Whether this Anna was the daughter of the aforementioned Hans Giger, Nr. 1, or even perhaps came from Elm, can not be determined. — In 1613, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of Aug., a Dorothea Giger died, whom, unfortunately, we could also not put in her proper place. We had to provide each of these females in the Giger family tree with her own number (Nr. 2 and 3).

Only Levin Giger, Nr. 4, born ?, who died in the plague year of 1629, in December, can be considered the ancestor of all later Gigers from Engi. Married to Anna Willig, who was born in 1598, and died in 1668, on the 26<sup>th</sup> of January, "of dropsy", ancestor Levin Giger produced four sons. The first, Jakob, died in 1621, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of January, two days after his baptism. The second, Jakob, who was born in 1622, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February, and died in 1671, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September, became a head of family. Of the third, Bartli, born in 1625, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of February, his further fate is unknown, and the fourth, Mathäus, who was born in 1627, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September, died in 1699, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October, single, as "a big 70-year-old boy" (death book).

The head of family, Jakob Giger, Nr. 5, (he was a *Tagwen*<sup>c</sup> official), in 1651, married Elsbeth Elmer, 1626-1688, daughter of Standard-bearer Balthasar and Ursula Zentner of Elm. From this came nine children, five sons and four daughters, but only one son (Jakob, Nr. 6) became a head of family. Of the oldest, Balthasar, 1652-1686, it says in the death book: "He was a mute but hard-working and crafty boy." — A son, Levin, 1658-1721, died single; one died as a child, and of Fridolin, born in 1661, one knows nothing further.

The head of family, Jakob, Nr. 6, 1654-1718, on the other hand, left behind three heads of family. 1. Fridolin, Nr. 8, 1700-1742, original ancestor of the present-day Giger family im Wald. 2. Jakob, Nr. 7, 1706-1763, from whom came a large number of descendants in America. 3. Wernet, Nr. 9, 1709-1766, who left behind no male descendants.

The G i g e r family tree increased very slowly. There were  
by 1750 7 families (Bram 10, Wyss 16, Norder 6 families);  
by 1800 13 " " 15, " 20, " 9 "  
by 1850 25 " " 24, " 31, " 12 "  
by 1880 32 " " 36, " 40, " 15 "  
by 1900 34 " " 38, " 44, " 19 "  
by 1920 40 " " 48, " 46, " 20 "

Only in the period 1800-1850 is the increase, by 12 families, a considerable one. Although, from the Gigers the fewest of all emigrated, 54 persons equal to 25% (the Blumers had 41%), they

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c *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]

have raised it, from 1595 to the present, to only 41 families. Eight whole families migrated after 1850 to North America and Brazil.

Fourteen persons = 26.3% migrated to North America, 21 = 40% to Brazil, 1 = 2% to European nations, 4 = 7.5% into other cantons, 11 = 21% into other Glarner communes, and 3 = 5.5% whereabouts unknown.

A further reason why the Gigers developed so little is that 53% of their children were daughters and only 47% were sons (with the Baumgartners, 46% were daughters and 54% were sons!). Then, of all 180 Giger children, 20 = 11% died single, in proportion, more than with the other citizen families.

The marriages of the Gigers into the families of Engi is an important one to mention. Of 44 wives, 22 = 50% came from Engi. They were distributed among the particular families as follows: Baumgartners 7 = 17.08%, Blumers and Hämmerlis 4 each = 9.76%, Martis, Gigers, and Wintelers 2 each = 4.88%, and Altmanns 1 = 2.44%.

The inheritance of names of Giger heads of family shows the following picture: 1. Jakob 12 = 29.28%, 2. Leonhard 7 = 17.08% (like the Hämmerlis), 3. Meinrad 6 = 14.64% (like the Blumers), 4. Fridolin 4 = 9.76% (like the Martis), 5. Kaspar 3 = 7.32% (from the Wintelers).

The Gigers, although citizens of Engi since time immemorial, produced few *Tagwen* officials and no church officials at all. The only *Tagwen* official of former prominence who came from the Giger family was Jakob Giger, 1622-1671, Nr. 5 of the family tree, the only head of family of ancestor Levin Giger.

In the military of times past, they produced one sergeant, Jakob Giger, 1749-1804, Nr. 15, a grandson of the above. He left behind no descendants.

Overseer Peter Giger, Nr. 29, born in 1838, filled the position of *Tagwen* secretary. He migrated to America as a widower with two sons and one daughter.

In the Matt death book, no members of the Gigers are reported to us who perished in foreign military service.

Under the heading "Accidents and Events" there is also not much to report from the Gigers.

In 1887, on the 26<sup>th</sup> of July, roofer Meinrad Giger im Boden, born in 1862, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September, Nr. 38 of the family tree, fell to his death from a roof in Glarus.