

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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VIII. THE WYSSES
[pg. 54-60]

From what place the Wysses of Engi originated will always remain a mystery, since, at the time when the church books were begun, several representatives of this family already lived in Engi as citizens. As early as 1533, the existence of a Hans Wyss in Engi can be documented. Then, in 1575, on the 22nd of July, a Jakob Wyss from Engi had to appear before the *Kaufgericht*¹, because he broke Hans Schnyder's rib in two with a hoe. Members of the Wysses were frequently before the council in 1547-1594, only the home commune is not noted, and one doesn't know whether one is dealing with Wysses from Engi or Glarus. — That which was stated by J. J. Kubli-Müller with all certainty is reliable, that the Wysses from Engi are not related to those from Glarus and Matt. Also, the late Teacher J. Wyss-Zentner in Elm had made a careful investigation of that, otherwise he would have willingly renewed the *Tagwen*^a right with his related Engi lines in Glarus. — In the beginning of the church books, this family was written “Wiss”. In the 18th century, a movement asserted itself in which as many names as possible were “transcribed into German”. So the Kublis in Matt became “Kaublis”, the Ruches in Mitlödi, “Rauches”, the Gigers, “Geigers” and the Wysses, “Weisses”. Only about the year 1912, at the request of the late Teacher J. Wyss and his brothers, were the bearers of the family name “Weiss” permitted by the government council to once again legally write “Wyss”.

About the year 1595, with the beginning of the church books, we encounter in them four different Wysses from Engi. However, we are unable to place these in relationship to one another as relatives, since their birth date and the designation of the father is missing. Of these four occurring Wyss-representatives, only two are regarded as ancestors of families. One had no male descendants, and the fourth bought the *Tagwen* right in Glarus and his sons had become “Glarner”. Also, of the two ancestors, only the one line survived (from him stemmed, then, all

1 *Kaufgericht* means “purchased court”. The ordinary court days occurred in May and October; those who required court at another time had to purchase it.

a *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]

the Wysses from Engi that are still living today); the other became extinct as early as about the year 1700.

The first Wyss we encounter is *Landsgemeinde*^b Sergeant-at-Arms and *Landvogt*^c Dietrich Wyss (Nr. 1), the son of Federal Councillor Fridolin, born ?, died in 1629, on the 6th of September, of the plague. He must have lived alternately in Engi and Glarus, as is shown from the births of his children and, in any case, also from official channels. He was *Landvogt* at Werdenberg [*Canton St. Gallen*] in 1593-95, after he held the office of a *Landsgemeinde* sergeant-at-arms in 1592. From his marriage (celebrated on the 6th of June 1600) with Magdalena Heitz came six children, three sons and three daughters. The fate of the oldest son, Hans Rudolf, born in 1602 in Glarus, is unknown; the second, Fridolin, born in 1604, died as a child of one or two years, and the third, Fridolin, born in 1606, became the only head of family (Nr. 5) of this family. Of the daughters, Margaretha, born in 1610, married Rud. Büsser (Nr. 9) from Engi, of Konrad and Barb. Hämmerli. One died young, and of the youngest again nothing is known. The head of family Fridolin Wyss (Nr. 5), 1606-1679, a sexton by profession, married, in 1631, an Anna Speich from Matt, 1604-1676, widow of Wolfgang Stüssi from Schwanden. From this marriage were baptized five children, two daughters and three sons, of which two sons continued the line. Dietrich (Nr. 7), 1632-1673, had six children, however, no head of family, and Fridolin (Nr. 9), 1644-1702, also a sexton, left behind no male descendants at all, so that, with him, the line of *Landvogt* Dietrich Wyss (Nr. 1) died.

The second Wyss occurring in the Matt pastor's book is a Hans Wyss (Nr. 2), born ?, died in 1605. In his marriage with Anna Bäbler from Matt, who died in 1632, he produced only two daughters, Margaretha, 1597-1666, who was married to Melchior Büsser (Nr. 7) from Engi, 1595-1669, and Anna, 1599-1669, who married Jost Hämmerli (Nr. 11) from Engi.

The third, therefore, Nr. 3 of the Wyss family tree, Jakob Wyss, born ?, died 1607, had then, in his marriage with Anna Stüssi, besides two daughters², a head of family, Hans, 1598-1667, Nr. 6, and this Jakob Wyss (Nr. 3) is regarded as the ancestor of all of today's Wysses from Engi.

Hans Wyss, Nr. 6, was married twice: in 1631, to Anna Feurer from Engi, who died in 1634, and, in 1640, to Anna Schneider from Elm, 1616-1648, widow of Standard-bearer Rudolf Buchmüller, Nr. 8, from Engi. From all seven children of these two marriages, only one head of

b *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]

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

2 It is interesting to note that the one daughter: “Madalena”, 1600-1641, already got married at the age of 15, thus in 1615, to Heini Salmen from Bilten, who died of the plague in 1629. In 1633, she married, for the second time, Tailor Mathäus Marti from Engi, in Bilten. The so-called child-marriages were the custom at the time. Young girls were married at the age of 12 and 13 years. Thus, the famous Cantonal President Joh. Heinrich Elmer, married a child of 13 years in 1624, on the 21st of November: Maria Elisabeth Streuli, daughter of *Landvogt* at Werdenberg [*Canton St. Gallen*] and Captain Dietrich Streuli and Maria Cleopha from Hohensax [*Canton St. Gallen*]. This Cantonal President Elmer and Maria Elisabeth Streuli we will come to know in what follows as parents of Cleopha Elmer, wife of Pastor and Dean Joh. Rudolf Wyss in Matt (or ancestors on the mother's side of all Matt Wysses; see Heer, [*On the*] *History of the [Glarner] Families[, Particularly Those] of the Sernf Valley*, pg. 83 [pg. 3 in the SW translation].)

family resulted, however. It is, therefore, not surprising that the Wyss family tree developed sparsely.

The last of the four first Wyss-representatives was *Landvogt* Adrian Wyss, Nr. 4, 1590-1657. He is referred to as Ship Master Felix's son from Engi, but lived in Glarus and, in 1638, on the 24th of August, even bought the *Tagwen* right in Glarus. He was, by trade, a gunsmith, became, in 1611, a shipmaster, and, in 1624, *Landvogt* in Uznach [*Canton St. Gallen*] (see Heer: [*On the History of the Glarner*] *Families*[, *Particularly Those*] *of the Sernf Valley*, pg. 87 [pg. 6 in the SW translation]). *Landvogt* Adrian Wyss married four times (two wives died in childbed) and had 14 children, of whom seven died quite young. Three sons, Fridolin, 1644-1695, Rudolf, 1651-1693, and Ludwig, 1653-1712, became heads of family and remained citizens in Glarus. However, in 1683 (according to the *Tagwen* minutes of Engi), they had prudently renewed their *Tagwen* right in Engi. Thus, indeed, notwithstanding this, they have no significance for the Wyss family tree of Engi.

As already noted before, the Wysses from Engi are, likewise, not related to the *M a t t e r W y s s e s*. The family of the latter begins only with the activity of Pastor and Dean Hans Rudolf Wyss from Glarus in Matt, who served here from 1671-1707, therefore, fully 36 years. (He was Dean for 20 years, from 1687 until 1707.) As thanks for his most assuredly excellent service, he received the *Tagwen* right in Matt as a gift. (Memorandum of J. J. Kubli-Müller.) In the Matt baptism book is written at the beginning of his term of office: “On Sunday, on the 14th day of Christmonth [*December*] in 1671, I, Joh. Rudolf Wyss, cantonal citizen and *Tagwen* citizen in Glarus and Engi (!) have been called through God's providence, etc. etc.” Dr. Gottfried Heer believed then (pg. 83, [*On the History of the Glarner*] *Families*[, *Particularly Those*] *of the Sernf Valley*, footnote [pg. 3 in the SW translation]) that the father or grandfather of this Pastor Joh. Rudolf Wyss originated from Engi, but established himself in Glarus and bought into the *Tagwen* right there. — That can never be true! The ancestors of Pastor-Dean Wyss, as I am able to satisfy myself in the family tree of the Glarner Wysses by J. J. Kubli-Müller, had always been Glarner-citizens. Presumably Pastor Wyss had mistakenly believed that all the Glarner Wysses originated from Engi, since actually, as we have seen, certain Wysses from Engi bought or emigrated into Glarus around the year 1600 (*Landvogt* Dietrich Wyss, Ship Master Felix Wyss and his son Adrian, *Landvogt*, etc.). If he had actually been an Engeler Wyss, his son, Federal Councillor Joh. Peter, whom we become acquainted with in what follows, would not have acquired the Matt *Tagwen* right.

From Pastor-Dean Hans Rudolf Wyss, born in 1635 (his death date is not known to me), from his marriage with Cleopha Elmer, 1635-1693, daughter of Cantonal President J. H. Elmer, came eleven children, six sons and five daughters. With two sons, Theodorus, born in 1666, and Joh. Christof, born in 1673, the youngest, the further fate is unknown. Three sons married in Glarus, and they and their descendants remained Glarner Wysses, namely: 1. Hans Heinrich, 1655-1699, cantonal secretary and minister, 2. Rudolf, coppersmith, 1661-1738, and 3. Dietrich, teacher, 1668-1736. And then one son, Hans Peter Wyss, 1663-1734, bought, in 1683, the *T a g w e n* r i g h t i n M a t t for 160 [*sic*] fl. and his descendants were entitled to the *Tagwen* right in Matt and Glarus, among them the Wysses zur “Post”^d in Glarus, who came to Glarus again from Matt.

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

This Hans Peter Wyss held, in Matt, the respected offices of captain, federal councillor and inspection judge (surveyor). Dr. Gottfried Heer, in his brochure: *[On the History of the Glarner] Families[, Particularly Those] of the Sernf Valley*, pg. 88 [pg. 7 in the SW translation], had commented incorrectly regarding Federal Councillor Hans Peter Wyss. Federal Councillor Wyss had already bought the *Tagwen* right in 1683 (not 1713)³. He was, therefore, already in possession of this for 17 years when he became federal councillor in 1700. He did not obtain this office of honor because he was looked upon as a citizen from Engi, as G. Heer believed. Matt and Engi had probably formed a common *Tagwen* at that time, but each *Tagwen* chose a representative of its own in the council, and Federal Councillor Hans Peter Wyss was council representative as a purchased citizen from Matt. He married twice, in 1686, to Juliana von Cadonau, who died in 1704, on the 30th of April, daughter of Overseer and Administrator Ulrich von Cadonau from Waltensburg [*Canton Graubünden*], and, in 1712, to Margreth Hämmerli, 1666-1732, daughter of Leonhard and Barbara Bähler from Engi (Nr. 16), and the widow of Andreas Marti from Engi (Nr. 20). Only two children came from the first marriage: in 1687, Hans Rudolf, who died in 1756, and who got married in 1712 to Eufemia Bähler, daughter of *Tagwen* Official Oswald, Nr. 20, in Matt (with seven children and two heads of family), and, in 1689, Cleopha, who died in 1756, and who got married in 1712 to Heinrich Wild from Engi.

The Matter Wysses also grew very sparsely. Only in the 19th century do we encounter two large children-rich Matter Wyss families, namely, the brothers Inspector of Weights and Measures Dietrich Wyss, 1808-1864 (father of Proprietor of the Post Joh. Heinrich Wyss in Glarus, who, in the year 1880, established from the church books that he was a descendant of Pastor Joh. Rudolf Wyss from Glarus. He paid the large entrance [*fee*] into Glarus, and, with it, again became a citizen of Glarus), and farmer Johannes Wyss, 1821-1897. All five sons of the latter, however, migrated, in part to America, and thus, nevertheless, it must be stated that the Matter Wysses are extinct.

The same fate could also befall the Wysses from Engi. We will hope, however, that the members of this family itself, for that reason, have seen to it that the Wysses, one of the oldest and most respected of all the citizen families of Engi, not, in time, become a thing of the past.

In the *Tagwen* accounts, the Wysses are reported on only with three enjoying *Tagwen* rights.

Around 1850, a whole series of Wyss families with multiple heads of family still lived in Engi, but whose sons, 14 in all, partly single, partly married, emigrated to America. For example, from the family of Slate Table Maker Mathias Wyss im Unterhaus, three married sons emigrated. Then Jakob Wyss (Nr. 27), born in 1817, died in 1885 (in America), a brother of Communal Councillor Johannes Wyss, moved to North America around 1870 with eight sons. In total, from the Wysses of Engi and Matt, 90 people = 32.15% had emigrated, of which 44 = 49% had emigrated to North America, 0 to Brazil, 1 = 1% to European countries, 12 = 13.4% to other cantons, 24 = 26.6% to other Glarner communes, and 9 = 10% to whereabouts unknown.

3 Contents of the *Tagwen* minutes in Matt from Mayday, 1683: “Therefore, while he gave the *Tagwen* citizens wine as a gift of honor, likewise had he presented and given 60 [*sic*] fl. to the obligation. He had paid with cash and made the payment so that he and his descendants are *Tagwen* citizens.”

Of the 56 wives of Wysses, only 20 = 35.7% stem from Engi (just as many from Matt and Elm!), and these are distributed to our citizen families of today as follows: Martis 7, Hämmerlis 5, Baumgartners 4, Altmanns 2, Luchsingers 1.

With the inheritance of *f i r s t n a m e s* of the Wyss heads of family, Hans or Johannes (15) stands in the first row, Jakob (7) in second and Dietrich (6) in third place.

That the Wysses were one of the most respected families of Engi and Matt is demonstrated by the fact that they were represented in almost all offices. They produced: two *Landvögte* (Dietrich, Nr. 1, and Adrian Wyss, Nr. 4); one *Landsgemeinde* sergeant-at-arms (also Nr. 1); two ship masters (Felix and Adrian (Nr. 4); one federal councillor (Joh. Peter Wyss, Matt, Nr. 11); one captain (ditto); one surveyor (ditto); one *Tagwen* official (Dietrich Wyss, Matt, Nr. 22, 1789-1832); one charity official (Communal Councillor Johannes Wyss, Nr. 31, 1823-1904); one rifleman, two sergeants, and one inspector of weights and measures, one communal councillor; two school councillors; one registrar and departmental head [both Wysses, in Elm], three teachers and one engineer.

F i v e W y s s e s from Engi were killed in *f o r e i g n m i l i t a r y s e r v i c e*:

In 1692, on the 24th of July, Hans Melchior Wyss, born in 1660, a great-grandson of *Landvogt* Dietrich Wyss, Nr. 1, died in the French service.

In 1694, in February, Hans Wyss, born in 1669, also in the service of France, and

In 1695, a brother of the latter, David Wyss, born in 1673; both were sons of Hans Wyss, Nr. 8, 1642-1694, ancestor of today's Wysses in Engi.

In 1735, Hans Wyss, born in 1714, died at Mantua in the Italian emperor's service under Company Captain Albertin (*[Canton]* Graubünden).

In 1807, on the 26th of May, Johannes Wyss, born in 1777, a brother of Joh. Heinrich, the father of Unterhaus Mathias Wyss, departed as an enlisted soldier and remains missing (perhaps killed in Russia).

In addition, the *a c c i d e n t s* that concern the Wyss family tree follow:

In 1714, on the 10th of October, Ursula Wyss, born on the 12th of November in 1677, single daughter of Fridolin Wyss (Nr. 9), was killed in an accident on the Kleintal [*small (Sernf) valley*] road, towards Schwanden (in what manner was not mentioned).

In 1844, on the 1st of June, Jakob Wyss (Nr. 24), born in 1788, husband of Barbara Marti from Engi, a brother of Unterhaus Mathias Wyss, and father-in-law of Packer Burkhard Bräm, Höftigen (first marriage), was struck dead by a rock in the forest.

In 1846, on the 9th of May, Kaspar Wyss (Nr. 20), born in 1819, husband of Barbara Marti from Engi, a brother of Charity Official and Communal Councillor Johannes Wyss, was crushed to death while felling timber. His widow emigrated with her three daughters to North America, to her parents.