

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*)

by
Gottfried Heer

Printing and publishing by Rud. Tschudy, Glarus, 1920
Translated by Sue Wolf

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

XVI. THE ALTMANNNS
[pg. 129-131]

On the 28th of March in 1596, a little daughter named Elisabeth was baptized to Hans Altmann and Anna Speich in the Matt church. She remains, however, the only child of these parents of whom the Matt church book informs us. On the other hand, on the 21st of January in 1600, a Hans Altmann married Frena Jakober, and to this married couple, in the years 1600-09, 3 children were baptized (Anna in 1600, on the 27th of December, Barbara in 1602, on the 3rd of April, who died in 1620, on the 27th of October, and Johannes in 1609, on the 7th of May). And, in 1613, on the 31st of January, again a Hans Altmann married Barbara Hämmerli, and to these parents then, in 1613-35, in fact, 7 children were baptized (Elsbeth in 1613, Johannes in 1618, Fridli in 1622, who died in 1623, Fridli in 1626, who died in 1629 of the plague, Elsbeth in 1631, Maria in 1633, and Hans in 1635). The brevity of the church books' announcements of that time means that we do not know, with the entries that were passed on, whether it was a question of 2 or 3 Hans Altmanns, or whether it was one and the same Hans Altmann who, in 1613, married Barbara Hämmerli in a third marriage, and whether it was a son of this Hans Altmann's first marriage who, on the 15th of *Wintermonat* [November] in 1618, married Columbine Zopfi and, on the 14th of *Wintermonat* in 1619, had registered a son named Heinrich Altmann for baptism, as his first (and only) child. On the other hand, what we are told by the chronicler, J. Heinrich Tschudi, is that, of the Hans Altmann reported above, or of one of the Hans Altmanns reported above, his employment conditions beforehand were of significance for the history of the Sernf valley. In the introduction to his *Chronicle*, J. Heinrich Tschudi reported to us, namely (pg. 21): "What Canton Glarus also had, in particular, was the so-called Blattenberg^a (*Ardesia Glaronensis* [Glarner slate]) or the mine of black tiles, lying nearest to Matt in the little [Sernf] valley; at what time, strictly speaking, they first began to put this mountain to use, and to hew out and polish the tablets or slates, is not known to me; but 2 men living in Matt, Läry Beusser¹ and Hans Alpmann [sic], are said to have made the first start to this, about 100 years ago². Some time later, about the year 1617, a foreign cabinet-maker, born in Silesia [Poland], stayed there, who was the first one who enclosed these tablets in neat frames of wood, and later only people at E n n e n d a taught such handiwork, as well."

a Now called "Plattenberg" [SW]

1 The Matt baptism book had reported as fathers who brought children to baptism in the first third of the 17th century, Hans, Melchior and Rudolf Büsser. I have not come across a Läry Büsser. He could, however, go back before 1595.

2 The *Chronicle* of J. H. Tschudi appeared in 1714.

The last remark refers, indeed, to a relationship of the Altmanns from Engi with those from Ennenda. Moreover, Ennenda may well be considered to be the ancestral headquarters of the Altmanns. In the 1763 cantonal tax roll, 26 head-taxpaying Altmanns (property: 33,600 Fl.) were found in Ennenda, and 9 of them (600 Fl.) in Engi. In 1876, the cantonal tax roll in Ennenda had recorded 30 of them (property: 59,500 Fr.), and in Engi [*number of Altmanns omitted*] (3000 Fr.); moreover, 2 (60,000 Fr.) in Glarus³ and one each in Schwanden and at Sool.

We find the first mention of Altmanns in 1444: the Linth [*river*] valley anniversary book mentions, among those "who lost at Barspurg [*Birsburg*] near Basel in the Zürich war" (St. Jakob on the Birs [*battle, 26 Aug 1444*]), a Hans Altmann from the Glarus church commune, to which Ennenda belonged at the time.

Likewise, the following belonged to Ennenda: Joh. Heinrich Altmann, cantonal standard bearer, 1636-43, *Tagwen* official Heinrich Altmann, who, in 1713, was elected as *Neunerrichter*^b, for which he paid 33 Crowns, and held this position until 1733, Captain and Federal Councillor Jakob Altmann, who, in 1765, was elected *Landvogt*^c of Lauis [*Lugano, Canton Ticino*], "with the addition that he did not want to compete in the *Stillstand*^d, but for other offices"; however, he paid for this: 10 Fl. into the communal arsenal, 40 Fl. into the Evangelical arsenal, 300 Fl. into the Evangelical cantonal treasury, and 26 Fl. into the Evangelical treasury. David Altmann from Ennenda held the position of a cantonal captain in the beginning of the preceding century, of whom Melch. Schuler, in his *Glerner History* (p. 444) gave the testimonial that he was a man "who, in general, distinguished himself by a co-operative, charitable disposition". The chronicler, J. H. Tschudi, had already expressed the wish in 1714 that he would like to revise the cantonal book and hand it over to the press, since, by this means, many a dispute and lawsuit would be avoided, and the chronicler, Chr. Trümpy, expressed the same wish in 1774, but both times it occurred without success, and the judges had to continue to make do with their handwritten cantonal books. In 1806, the cantonal captain at the time, David Altmann, placed an amount of 30 doubloons at the disposal of the council in order to make possible the printing of the cantonal book, then, after that, "in 1807, the *Landsgemeinde*^e moved to adopt the revised cantonal book, it was approved by them, and it was handed over to the press."

3 In 1706, the following bought themselves into the Glarus *Tagwen** right for 400 fl: Captain, Church Official, Judge and Federal Councillor J. Heinrich Altmann, and *Tagwen* official Heinrichs [*Altmann*] (already, in 1560, two Altmanns were found in Glarus as guard- and mineral spring partners: Pfister Altmann and Fridli Altmann).

* *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]

b *Neunerrichter* - one of nine judges on a court [SW]

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

d *Stillstand* – the executive committee of the Evangelical church's public assistance program [SW]

e *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]

As regards the meaning of the name Altmann, I had assumed, at some earlier time, that it belonged to the group of family names like Alt [*old*] (Thurgau), Altheinz, Altherr and Altheer, Jung [*young*] (Basel), Junghans, etc. The spelling "Alpmann", as the chronicler Tschudi presented it in the above-cited quotation, but also as it is found in the Matt baptism book, on the other hand, suggests the presumption that it earlier belonged to that group, like the family names of Bauer, Baur, Baumann, Mühlbauer, Landmann, etc., which point back to the occupation of their ancestors. Also, today, if we listen closely, the customary pronunciation is not "Altmann", but "Alpmä".