

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

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Translated by Sue Wolf

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

XXII. THE FREITAGS

[pg. 141-143]

On the occasion of the baptism of the twins, Barbara and Katharina Bähler (above, pg. 126 [*in* “The Bählers” *chapter* (pg. 3 *in the SW translation*)], Waltert Freitag appears in the Elm baptism book as godfather of Katharina. The same Waltert Freitag is then, on the 2nd of February in 1623, again godfather at the baptism of a son of Joss-Joss, called “Over-Joss” (above, pg. 5 [*in the Introduction* (pg. 3 *in the SW translation*)]). On the 8th of April in 1632, the same Waltert Freitag, originally from Walenstadt [*Canton St. Gallen*], and Barbara Giger had then baptized a son named Rudolf. This Rudolf Freitag, who later became church steward and purchased the Glarner cantonal right in 1651 for 400 Gulden, was the ancestor of all of today’s Freitagss from Elm.

In the year 1876, the number of head-taxpaying Freitagss amounted to 38, with a taxable property of 320,500 Fr. Of them, 29 lived in Elm itself; from their citizen commune, 2 had taken up residence in Netstal and 1 each in Engi, Rüti, Luchsingen (or rather Adlenbach), Riedern, Näfels, Mollis and Bilten.

In the 18th century, members of the Freitag family repeatedly held offices in their home commune of Elm and the like for Canton Glarus. Thus, in 1737, Rudolf Freitag, and, in 1770, Joh. Heinrich Freitag, was elected to the Council as representative of the Elm *Tagwen*^a. The first-named became a *Chorrichter*^b, and, in 1742, *Landvogt*^c of Werdenberg [*Canton St. Gallen*]; and “shall pay, in addition to the usual levies, a tax to each cantonal citizen of 1 Fl.”

a *Tagwen* - an ancient Glarner term, from at least *Neunerrichter* - one of nine judges on a court [SW] 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 *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]

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

In 1749, Lieutenant Waltert Freitag had been elected to be a *Neunerrichter*^d, in place of the deceased Jakob Elmer.

In 1769, J. Rudolf Freitag was elected for the second time as *Landvogt* of Werdenberg and again, in addition to the usual levies, paid each cantonal citizen (about 4000 men) 1 Gulden.

In 1771, *Tagwen* Official Kaspar Freitag was elected to be a *Neunerrichter* and “shall pay according to custom”. Eleven years later the same person was appointed envoy to [Canton] Solothurn and “had burdens: 24 Fl. into the Evangelical cantonal treasury, 10 Fl. 40 Schillings into the Evangelical treasury, and 10 Fl. into the Evangelical arsenal”.

Although these notes show that the Freitags felt called to participate in the government, and that often had cost something, then that was, undoubtedly, still the most true of Federal Councillor Joh. Heinrich Freitag, who, in 1790, had been elected by the *Landsgemeinde*^e to be *Landvogt* of Werdenberg and, for it, like his predecessors, in addition to other burdens, had paid 1 Fl. to each cantonal citizen who was eligible to be taxed (although that amount began to grow significantly). Three years later – in 1793 – the same *Landvogt* position was again to be filled, and the *Landsgemeinde* decided to fill this position according to the procedure which had been decided in 1791, that is, to confer it by means of the so-called “bucket lottery”, among all the adult citizens who wanted to cast lots for it. As a result of this decree, which was inspired by the envy which looked upon the public office as a “breadbasket” or “milch cow”, the position of Werdenberg *Landvogt* came to the lottery on the days of the 23rd, 24th, 25th, and 26th of May 1793, and, by it, Heinrich Ries on the Laueli [Alp]^f in Linthal received the grand prize. According to the stipulations of the prize, he had to pay: 100 Fl. into the general arsenal, 32 Fl. into the general cantonal treasury, the office’s “bucket”, 200 Fl. into the Evangelical cantonal treasury, 26 Fl. into the Evangelical treasury, 40 Fl. into the Evangelical arsenal, and 1 Fl. to each cantonal citizen eligible to be taxed.

Heinrich Ries, who was happy because of the prize, had also not dreamed of grasping the reins of power as *Landvogt* of Werdenberg; he had probably also not known from where to appropriate so much money for paying the indicated burdens. On the other hand, Federal Councillor J. Heinrich Freitag had enjoyed his former administration so much that he readily interceded for Heinrich Ries, that is, he not only didn’t remove the designated burdens for him, but probably also saddled Reis with an ordinary gratuity, in addition. The vassals in the count’s domain of Werdenberg didn’t feel quite as great satisfaction in this transaction; however, they were not asked for their opinion.

An identical thing happened again in 1796. This time Heinrich Leuzinger, son of Tobias Leuzinger, from Glarus, received the grand prize, and again *Landvogt* J. Heinrich Freitag announced him as purchaser. He had, however, known well to make “good profits” in both preceding periods of office, so this time his rule concluded with fear. From France the cock-crow of freedom was heard in the Swiss vassal lands, and, as the citizens of [Canton] Vaud greeted

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

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

the entrance of the French with enthusiasm, so also the Glarner vassals in the lord's domain of Werdenberg cried out that the yoke which they had now carried long enough be thrown off. The rule of *Landvogt* J. Heinr. Freitag, who was reputed to be a real bloodsucker, had made the Werdenbergers still all the more hungry for the "sweetness of freedom". Freitag considered it advisable not to wait for an official recall from his Glarus masters, but to anticipate the outburst of the people's dislike that was directed against him personally by escape. "Freitägli," one of his vassals is said to have called out to him on the evening of his escape, "it is now time that you clear out; I have now turned to the time of *Samstag* [Saturday]; *Fritäg* [Friday] I have now had enough of."

A somewhat praiseworthy role fell to another member of the Freitag family in the same year of 1798. In the battle of Wollerau [*Canton Schwyz*], Lieutenant Freitag, with a detachment of 30 men, had received the assignment to block the path of one of the French companies retreating from Wollerau towards Richterswil [*Canton Zürich*], and, in fact, by this means, he was also able to capture 50 men. A lasting success of the Glarner warriors was not, of course, also achieved by this, since the French, who obtained reinforcements in Richterswil, pressed forward on them anew and repelled the Glarners again, despite valiant resistance, and won the final victory.