

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

### XIII. THE ZENTNERS

[pg. 119-121]

“Bläsy and Hans Centner, when they had been condemned by some individuals that they were not cantonal citizens, had been recognized and registered as cantonal citizens by an entire council in the 1574<sup>th</sup> year.” Thus reports a summary of cantonal right acquisition and restoration that is lying in front of me. When spitefulness was repeated to both Zentners that they were not cantonal citizens at all, and, therefore, also had no right to vote, then the council had declared that to be slander and had officially recognized their Glarner cantonal right. However, that such gossip might occur, nevertheless, seems to indicate that they had been regarded as newcomers, only that they had legitimately acquired the cantonal and *Tagwen*<sup>a</sup> right. However, all reports are missing about from where, and when,<sup>1</sup> they immigrated into the Sernf valley.

The first entry of a Zentner in the Elm baptism register (1595): “Bläsi Zäntner, of Hans Zäntner and Ursula Bähler”, is also reminiscent of the above-mentioned Bläsy and Hans Centner of 1574. However, the same names of Hans and Bläsi also recur repeatedly with the subsequent children of the Zentners.

In the years 1595 – 1624, 12 heads of families from the Zentner family in Elm registered 26 children for baptism; within the same time period, however, more of them emigrated to Matt-Engi, probably as a result of their marriages (thus: Heinrich, who was married to Ursula Blumerin, and who, in 1620, brought a son, Bläsi, and, in 1622, a daughter, Elsbeth, to baptism in Elm, on the other hand, in 1619, brought a son, Jakob, and, in 1623, a daughter, Margreth, to baptism in Matt; likewise, Hans Zentner, who had been married to Elisabeth Buchmüller since 1617, and who, in 1619, had registered a daughter, Magdalena for baptism in Elm, on the other hand, in 1621, had registered a daughter, Margreth, and, in 1624, Anna, for baptism in Matt). On

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a *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]

1 In any case, the Zentners were found in Canton Glarus a long time ago; in 1499, a Hans Zentner was captured alongside other Glarner in the Schwabian war during the invasion of Gams [Canton St. Gallen].

the other hand, this emigration of the Zentners into Matt-Engi<sup>2</sup> was only a temporary one; according to the 1763 cantonal tax roll, no more Zentners were found in Matt in the year mentioned. The only 2 Zentners that had resided outside the Elm commune in 1763 lived in Bilten; however, also in Bilten there was no staying for the Zentners. Also, in 1876, of the 26 head-taxpaying Zentners, only 3 were found outside their citizen commune of Elm, 1 each in Glarus, Schwanden and Luchsingen. In Elm, in 1876, they were the 4<sup>th</sup> most numerous family, with 23 head-taxpayers, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> richest, with 137,000 Fr. of property (the Freitags had 320,500 Fr. and the Elmers had 244,000 Fr.).

The Zentners clearly distinguished themselves by their sedentariness, so they had probably given up all claim to cantonal offices (*Landvogt*<sup>b</sup> positions, etc.) due to this strong preference for their home commune. They were only able to decide on the representation of their commune on the council. Among the 18 councilors from Elm, which Trümpi's *Chronicle* had listed between 1700-74, 4 Zentners are found, compared with 9 Elmers, 3 Freitags and 1 each of the Heftis and Martis: in 1700, Hans Zentner, and, in 1713, his son, J. Heinrich, and, in 1733, a second J. Heinrich Zentner, and, in 1742, his son Nikolaus.<sup>3</sup>

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, during 21 years (1842-48 and 1851-66), a Zentner occupied the presidency of his commune: Kaspar Zentner (born on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October in 1811, died on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May in 1887). In the records left behind by him, he had collected the most valuable material<sup>4</sup> for a detailed history of his commune: excerpts from *Tagwen* rights, bills of sale concerning Alpine and common land and timber sales, bequests to the church, a detailed history of the Plattenberg [*mountain*], of road construction and the Sernf [*river*] correction, and lists of *Tagwen* officials, the clergy, etc.; he also gave an exhaustive report about the natural phenomena, in connection with which the reports of a Bläsi Zentner and Johannes Marti were also at his disposal. He also made his entries about political events (for example, the Werdenberg rebellion, etc.), and, by them, he displayed his keen interest in all public questions that affected his time and his fatherland.

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2 In the years 1616-25 four Zentner heads of families (Peter, Heinrich, Hans and Matthis) are found who had their children baptized in Matt, and a fifth, Läri, was married there to Maria Bähler in 1614.

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

3 In a baptism register record about the 13<sup>th</sup> of November in 1631 elections (it seems the custom at that time in Elm had been to hold the elections in the late autumn) it was reported: Hans Zentner had again been asked to be church steward.

4 These records of President K. Zentner also reported, among other things, that the Zentners, who are believed to stem from the Sernf valley, to some extent also found themselves in high places in Germany (George Friedrich, Baron von Zentner, royal Bavarian minister, born in 1752, died in 1835, and 1<sup>st</sup> lieutenant Friedrich, Knight von Zentner, died in 1871).