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From Näfels to the United States: Emigrant Portraits From a Town in Switzerland's Canton Glarus*

by *Susanne Peter-Kubli*

Fridolin Josef Feldmann— A Conscientious Objector in Minnesota

Only a few, and mainly quite confusing, details are available about Feldmann's life in Näfels and also about the date of his emigration. It derives, in part, from the fact that two people by the same name were living in Näfels. Both were butchers by profession and both had married women by the last name Müller.¹ Checking the marriage and baptismal records of Näfels finally clarified the matter.

It is certain that Feldmann was married by 1845 to Maria Elisabeth Müller from the town of Walenstadt. They lived in Näfels until the birth of their first child in 1846. Two years later this was not the case anymore. The protocol of the Military Commission noted that Caspar Josef Gallati, Caspar Fridolin Leu, and Fridolin Josef Feldmann, all three in local compulsory military service, had “left the battalion in a wantonly and most highly punishable manner, and thus qualified as

* This is a translation of Chapter Four: “Die Jahrhundertmitte—die klassische Auswanderung nach Nordamerika” in Susanne Peter-Kubli's book *In Alle Herren Länder. Die Auswanderung aus Näfels, 1800-2000* (Herausgeber: Freunde der Geschichte von Näfels, 2019), 90-113.

¹ Fridolin Josef Feldmann, born 1817, is listed in the genealogy under No. 103. According to the baptismal register, only the 1846 born son, baptized in emergency, was of Feldmann's marriage to Maria Elisabeth Müller. Children later mentioned such as Kaspar, born 1852, and Maria Josefa, born 1854, were from a second marriage of the namesake Fridolin Josef Feldmann, (Gen 90).

formal runaways” during the last military tour of duty.² They were all mandated immediately to present themselves; however, this was in vain.

Therefore, the Military Commission identified the disappearance of the three men as a “more serious offense” that would fall under the jurisdiction of the Criminal Court in line with paragraph 117 of the Military Code of 1840. The case should have actually been adjudicated by the Federal War Tribunal, but Battalion Commander Trümpy had neglected to mention it in his report.³

One may only speculate about the reason that had led the three to desert. Desertion during the Sonderbund War of 1847 was a quite frequent offense. Deserters especially among the Catholics would mention that it was primarily fear or religious concerns which led them to desert.⁴ Since none of the three men from Näfels could be located, they became subject to an official search warrant.⁵

Three years later—meanwhile, the federal state had been established—a citizen proposed that those Glarnese who had committed political crimes should receive full amnesty. The proponent reasoned that, since “peace and quiet now reigned in the immediate and general fatherland, and that conditions thereby could be significantly strengthened, if trespasses that had been committed were being forgiven, and the reconciliation between previously hostile parties was envisaged.”⁶

Although Cantonal Councilor Hauser supported the proposal at the Cantonal Assembly, he requested that the “amnesty of the sovereign” be awarded only to those who deserved it and not to those who

² Protocol of the Military Commission of March 9, 1848, LAGL, AAA 6/99.

³ *Ibid.*, April 8, 1848. – Balthasar Trümpi from Ennenda was promoted to Commander of the Landwehr Battalion. LAGL, AAA, February 11 (435), protocol of the triple Landrat of June 28, 1847. The reference may imply that the three men had left the Battalion in November 1847 at the time of the Sonderbund War. According to the *Amtsblatt*, Feldmann was declared as “unknown absent from the canton.” Gallati was reported there likewise and *bevogted*, that is assigned a supervisor, on January 8, 1848.

⁴ Bruno Steiner, *Die eidgenössische Militärjustiz unter General Dufour im Sonderbundskrieg 1847/48. Ein Forschungsbericht zur Entstehungsgeschichte der modernen schweizerischen Militärstrafrechtspflege* (Zurich, 1983), 239 ss.

⁵ LAGL, AAA, March 13, Protokoll of the Criminal Court, April 18, 1848.

⁶ LAGL, AAA, March 11. *Landratsprotokoll* of January 22, 1851, as well as Memorial of the Landsgemeinde, p. 7.



The Feldmann farm about 1920. To the left the new large stable, to the right the residence which has been enlarged since first built. Source: private archive of Jeff Miller.

were too proud to request it. Cantonal Councilor Dr. Tschudi argued similarly and referred explicitly to the “deserters of Näfels.”⁷

A significant majority of the cantonal assembly accepted the proposal of the Cantonal Council. Gallati and Leu stayed in Canton Glarus, while Feldmann and his wife had meanwhile emigrated to the United States. In 1855, Feldmann was rehabilitated and awarded all his earlier civic honors and rights.⁸

Like the other emigrants from Näfels, the Feldmanns chose St. Louis as their first destination where their first son Michael was born. The family moved from there to Carver County, Minnesota, where they lived for several years. They managed a farm or at least owned land.⁹

⁷ *Glerner Zeitung* from May 14, 1851, (Gen. No. 40) Schmid Kaspar Fridolin Leu (1819-1887) married in 1852 Maria Magdalena Breuss from Altenstadt, Voralberg. Later the family resided in Canton Glarus (Gen. No. 183). Carpenter Kaspar Josef Gallati (1818-1888) was declared free from supervision (*entvogtet*) at the end of August 1851: *Amtsblatt*, August 30, 1851. In 1852, he married Maria Elisabeth Glaus from Rufi.

⁸ *Amtsblatt*, February 10, 1855.

⁹ According to the *Minnesota Territorial and State Census* of 1857, the family had then two children, six-year-old Michael and one-year-old Mary, later others. Feldmann’s first name is erroneously listed as Ferdinand. See www.ancestry.com.

About 1864, the Feldmanns settled in nearby Hennepin County not far from the Eden Prairie settlement. The farm near the Minnesota River was well situated, had sufficient pasture, a lake, and its own spring. Feldmann and his sons were raising cattle as well as cultivating wheat, corn, and alfalfa (clover), and were managing a large garden. By tradition, the elder Feldmann had been an expert, successful farmer who had especially mastered the art of heaping up sheaves and was assigned that task during the time of threshing.¹⁰

Fridolin Feldmann was apparently also an aggressive type. Because he could not stand one of his daughters-in-law, he was known to have made her life difficult and even spread an evil rumor so that her brother promptly sued him. The evil slander turned out to be costly. The district court supported the plaintiff and forced Feldmann to pay \$1,000.¹¹

When Fridolin died in 1889, the farm was taken over by his son Joseph (born 1867) who managed it with his siblings until 1942. At the end of the 1890s, it totaled about 251 acres and was the fourth largest farm in the area.¹²

Today, only a few barely visible foundations remain of the Feldmann farm in Hennepin County, Minnesota. A good part of it is now a nature and recreation reserve for people to enjoy.¹³ Another section has been built up. The farmhouse that Feldmann had built with its open (in the 1920s covered) veranda has been moved some miles away to a new location. At the present, the “Eden Prairie Historical Society” is considering placing a marker at the original location.¹⁴

¹⁰ “Fred Feldmann seemed to really know the art of properly stacking grain, so he was always given the honor of stacking the grain at threshing time.” Marie Wittenberg kindly provided the information from Hennepin Public Library, Minneapolis.

¹¹ When the first child of Michael and Katie Feldmann-Dorsch was born, Feldmann Sen. declared that not his son, but Katie’s brother John Dorsch, was the father: *St. Paul’s Daily Globe*, 29.4 and 4.5.1887: <http://www.mnhs.org/newspapers/hub>.

¹² Two of the seven children, Fred and Mary, remained single, while Michel got divorced, and the three resided on the farm. Reference kindly provided by Jeff Miller, Eden Prairie, a descendant of Fridolin and Elisabeth Feldmann-Müller.

¹³ The “Richard T. Anderson Conservation Area,” named after a local politician.

¹⁴ Reference kindly provided by Jeff Miller.

Kaspar Anton Landolt (Kentucky) and Josef Fidel Müller (Texas)—The War of Secession

The American War of Secession in the nineteenth century that threatened the dissolution of the United States, also involved Glarnese immigrants. At the beginning of 1862, some 40 volunteers were recruited from New Glarus and its environs.¹⁵ These may not only have volunteered for military service because of the pay, but also because they identified with the new homeland in which they had been living for some years already, and some of them had been born in the United States.

Assuming, that news from the war would also interest Glarnese, some of who might have followed them with apprehension, newspapers occasionally published reports that were submitted. Among them is a detailed description of the “American War Troubles (*Kriegsleiden*).” The author was an immigrant from Näfels, who had settled in Elizabethtown, Kentucky. Although not named, words in the text seem to refer to the cooper and brewer Kaspar Anton Landolt. He had been living in Tiefenwinkel near the town of Mühlehorn and emigrated to the United States in 1854. The native commune Näfels supported the emigration of Kaspar Landolt and his wife Elizabeth, born Feldmann, and their two children, the three-year-old Kaspar and the newborn Katharina, with 300 *francs*.¹⁶ They arrived in New Orleans on March 24, 1854. First the family moved up the Mississippi River to Louisville and finally to Elizabethtown.¹⁷ There, Landolt managed a small brewery, whether by himself or with others is not known.

Elizabethtown was founded in 1797 and, after it became connected in 1854 to the Louisville–Nashville railroad line, it expanded economically and prospered. In the Civil War, Elizabethtown became a focus of hostilities, and in December 1862 suffered from a clash between attacking Confederates and Union troops. In the middle of it, Kaspar Anton Landolt wrote on New Years Day 1863 to Glarus:

¹⁵ *Neue Glarner Zeitung*, January 3, 1863. Volunteers are listed with origin and residence.

¹⁶ LAGL, PG Näfels IV.B.01.07 *Gemeinderatsprotokoll* from March 26, 1854.

¹⁷ Birthplace of Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), some 70 miles from Louisville.

“Two years ago when South Carolina cut its ties with the Union, only a few anticipated the destructive storm that would break out like lightning. Although a dull storm cloud had depressed the whole political situation, and we saw on occasion a keen lightning and heard the rolling thunder of revolution, only a few suspected the strength and force, and to what extent, it would soon break out—at least those who were called to quiet the storm.

In March 1861, we had commonly and seriously assumed that in about 60 days it would have passed without a trace; but now in 1863 more than a million persons are in arms and needed to decide who was to rule: the highest law and legally expressed will of the majority, or the anarchistic capriciousness of some who are trying to build an anarchy on the ruins of the previously so powerful and proud republic. We do not know when the end of this world-historical struggle will be—as we did not know two years ago.

Yes, two years have passed in which nothing but calamity and misery have gone by. I never imagined what war meant, but woe to those who must experience war, especially a civil war in which father rises against son, the son against the father, and brothers against brothers, to kill like Cain and Abel. Is it not a true misery?

Yes, soon two years will have passed since the war began, and there is still no hope for peace. There is still one terrible battle after another and still no decision. It costs money and people causing one’s hair to stand up, and the levies are so large that they reach over the ears. We thought quite often of you, that you would go to sleep many a night worrying about us; you don’t do it for naught.

The war hits us very hard as we are living at a very bad place, right on the main thoroughfare where most military troops need to march past. In one week, they took from us 46 pigs, 8 quarts of welsh corn,¹⁸ 10 cords of hay, 26 sacks of malt belonging to the malt house¹⁹ in Louisville for each of which I had to pay one dollar, 21 cords of wood, 26 chick-

¹⁸ One quart equals 20.72 liter; *Welschkorn* translates to maize.

¹⁹ Louisville attracted numerous German immigrants including some Swiss families. Already in 1850, there were six breweries in Louisville, five were managed by German immigrants. The first malthouse was started in 1861. See Herman-Wiley Ronnenberg, *Material Culture of Breweries* (New York, 2011); C. Robert and Victoria A. Ullrich, *Germans in Louisville. A History* (Charleston, 2015), chapter 11. Both works are available on the internet, but without page numbers.



History Hour on Cemetery Hill in Elizabethtown, Kentucky—place of a battle between the Union and Confederate troops. Source: Available on the Internet.

ens, seven Welsh chickens,²⁰ four woolen bedcovers, kitchen utensils, etc. You cannot fathom what worries and fears we had to endure.

There is no week — sometimes no day — that we are certain that everything will be burned; many dwellings in town have been cut to pieces. Many people lead a miserable life; food is terribly expensive; and there is no income; 100 pounds of flour cost 20 to 25 dollars (not sure), one quart of potatoes costs 2 to 3 dollars, one pound of butter costs 2 dollars, and sugar and coffee are not at all available. Many people are brewing rye together with barley and make coffee with it. Pieces of clothing are also expensive. One pair of boots costs 20 to 25 dollars and a pair of shoes costs 10 to 15 dollars.

Thank God we are not in distress, we have three good milk cows and, if necessity demands, we still have calves or sheep to butcher, and between 80 to 90 pigs. We are still able to satisfy hunger and have two horses by which we can earn money. We manage the brewery by ourselves; when the railroad is in operation, we may make quite good deals; but

²⁰ Turkeys.

we never know when suddenly rebels may come and burn the bridges, and such is happening quite often. The Union constantly offers work to bridge builders.

How I wish we could celebrate this New Year's feast with serenity and joy, but at many a festive table numerous dear relatives or family members will be sorely missed; many a dear mother will shed tears about her deceased beloved son; and many a family will weep for the father who has died in the struggle for liberty and right. But, hopefully, their blood has not been spilled in vain. We wish and hope that the new year will fully crush the snake of rebellion and bring us back peace with all its blessings. We hope that the humiliation that this country must endure with this war will be the last humiliation for us, and that the great republic will emerge rejuvenated and strengthened from this fight."²¹

The December 27, 1862, encounter at Elizabethtown ended with the defeat of the much smaller group of Union troops. The people, with the exception of Kaspar Landolt, sided with the Confederates and celebrated the troops of General Morgan as liberators. They served the soldiers whisky and distributed Christmas cookies.²²

Landolt, according to data given above, was well situated, but only had a short time to enjoy the newly-strengthened "great republic." He died at 43 years of age in October 1865 only a few months after the end of the war. His widow married Jakob Kurz and later Joseph Recks²³ in a third marriage. They lived for a time in Newport near the border of Ohio. She died in 1905 in Houston, and was buried in Somerville, Texas.

Son Kaspar, who was born in Canton Glarus in 1851, had primarily taken evening courses to obtain his formal education, and worked during the day as a painter in Newport. He became independent and moved in 1878 to Cottelsville, Missouri, and, finally, to Somerville, Texas, together with his younger brother, William,

²¹ *Neue Glarner Zeitung*, February 24, 1863.

²² Tim Asher, "John Hunt Morgan's Christmas Raid," www.hardinkhistory.org/morgan.pdf.

²³ Francis W. Johnson, *A History of Texas and Texans* (1914), Vol. 3, pp. 1550-1552: <https://babel.hathitrust.org>.

born in 1862. Both were involved in business owning farms, a hotel, a feed store, and as builders certainly expanded the area. It is reported that Kaspar had built some 60 structures of all kinds in Somerville, and that around 1914 he owned the most real estate and paid the highest taxes. He was the first mayor of Somerville, served on the school board, and was president of the local bank.²⁴ Kaspar passed away in 1924, and William died three years later. Both had children.

In early September 1968, William's son, Casper "Cap" Landolt (1904-1987), visited his Glarinese commune of origin and asked Joseph Müller, an employee of the Cantonal Archive, and Albert Müller, conservator of the Freuler-Palace, about possible relatives. These officials immediately organized a "Landolt-Reunion" held on Kilbi-Sunday at the Freuler Palace. There "Cap" learned about the economic situation in the mid-nineteenth century that had motivated his grandparents to emigrate. In turn, "Cap" described in English—translated by a Glarinese exchange student—the life of the Landolts in Texas and promised to create a summary of the Landolt-clan.²⁵ Whether it was accomplished and sent to Näfels, is not known.

The War of Secession also touched the life of Josef Fidel Müller. He was the son of a carpenter with the same name and early experienced what it meant to grow up in strained circumstances. In the spring of 1847, his father had to declare bankruptcy and to have his belongings auctioned. Among these were "various items such as: bedlinens, bedframes, copper and earthen wares, two joiner benches, various carpenter utensils, various wood and planks besides various household items."²⁶ In the fall of the same year, the family announced its departure, but at first things didn't seem to be working out. In December, an unusual time of departure, the time had arrived. The family of carpenter Fidel and that of his brother-in-law, the weaver Franz Müller, departed from Näfels, taking a loan of 18 *doubloons* or about 250 *francs*. Their financial means had been used up already before their arrival

²⁴ Ibid., p.1551.

²⁵ *Glarner Volksblatt*, September 11, 1968.

²⁶ *Amtsblatt*, March 6, 1847.



Birdseye view of New Orleans—a lithography of a painting by John Bachmann, about 1851. Source: Library of Congress.

in Le Havre; therefore, they were not allowed to go on board until the municipality of Näfels paid the transport agency the missing sum.²⁷

Finally, they began their ocean journey to New Orleans on the boat *Espindola*. While Franz and his people settled there,²⁸ Josef Fidel and his family moved on to Nacogdoches, Texas. It had been a Spanish mission in the eighteenth century, but in the nineteenth century, it grew with the arrival of both Americans and Europeans to the largest settlement in the environs, and soon became an important place of entry into Texas. Texas had joined the United States three years before

²⁷ *Amtsblatt*, December 6, 1848; A. Müller, “Ein Auswandererschicksal aus dem alten Näfels”: *Glerner Volksblatt*, October 31, 1962. According to municipal accounts of 1859, Franz Müller owed Fr. 341.45 plus “5% interest”, i.e. Fr. 17.07, thus Fr. 358.52, but minus Fr. 25.00 for his *Tagwen* apportionment, thus Fr. 333.52. By the end of 1878, Müller’s debt had decreased including interest to Fr.74.27; see LAGL, IV B2.70.1.

²⁸ Census records of 1850 and 1860 indicate that Franz and Magdalena Müller-Müller and their children were living in New Orleans. There two more children were born, Martha Magdalena in 1850 and Julia in 1852. Franz Josef Müller died November 26, 1877, in New Orleans; see www.ancestry.com.



Confederate Veteran Josef Fidel Müller, about 1910. Source: www.ancestry.com.



Balthasar Josef Leu was a Union Corporal in the 40th Missouri Regiment. Source: www.findagrave.com.

the arrival of the Müllers.²⁹ The region was mainly agricultural, and slavery was common. In the 1850 census, father and son are registered as carpenters, and perhaps also managed a small farm. Shortly after their arrival, Fidel's wife Franziska passed away. In 1850, he married Magdalena Schwitter who had also come on the *Espindola*. In June 1851, Fidel Müller asked for citizenship that was granted in August 1855.³⁰

At the father's death in 1857, the oldest son Josef Fidel Jr. became the head of the family that had grown by three half-siblings from the father's second marriage.³¹ When the Civil War broke out in 1861, some 1500 volunteers from the Nacogdoches District entered the

²⁹ See http://www.sfasu.edu/heritagecenter/documents/Chapter_1_Nacogdoches_History.pdf

³⁰ Stephen F. Austin State University, East Texas Research Center, Nacogdoches: Courthouse records box-0034, Box 19, folder 2.

³¹ 1860 Census Records; named are Frederick, age 7; Albert, age 6; Carolina, age 3: www.ancestry.com.

military service. Carpenter Josef Müller was among these volunteers joining in the fall of 1861. It seems, however, that he did not serve in the army, but was engaged in the production of arms.³²

Josef Fidel Jr. married the American Sarah Anne Carroll about 1865. They had five children,³³ and some of their descendants are still living in Texas today. Once Fidel returned to civil life, he operated an arms-making and repair shop. He also tried his hand at building new machines; and in 1873, he patented at least two of his projects, a driving engine as well as a hay and cotton press.³⁴

On August 16, 1907, fire broke out in Nacogdoches and destroyed the Methodist Church. In addition to other buildings, the fire also destroyed Josef Müller's armory and cotton press.

By the end of the nineteenth century, veterans of the Confederacy received pensions. Perhaps that fire may have led Josef Fidel Müller, meanwhile 75 years of age and having lived in Texas for 60 years, to unsuccessfully apply for a soldier's pension in 1907, and again in 1909, when he was successful. Because he had served for three years in the war, he was paid an annual pension retrospectively to 1907.³⁵

Fred Schwitter in West View, Pennsylvania

In many respects, Balthasar Fridolin Schwitter's life corresponds to that of a "self-made man." Born in 1847 in Näfels where he grew up, the trained silk dyer decided at barely 19 years of age to emigrate to the United States. After arriving in New York, he moved to Pennsylvania

³² The request for a "Confederate Pension" dated August 16, 1909, reads: "The said Joseph Muller enlisted in the ordinance department of the Confederate government in the fall of 1861 and was detailed from Clark's County and made arms for the Confederate government until almost close of the war." Application for Confederate Pension Number 16149 Joseph Muller, Nacogdoches, Texas; entry in www.ancestry.com.

³³ Mary Magdalena (1865-1897), John (1866), Josef Frederick (1873-1955), Robert Franklin (1875-1936) and Julia Elizabeth/Lizzie (1879-1968); entries in www.ancestry.com.

³⁴ U.S. Patent Office: Official Gazette, February 4, 1873, and October 14, 1873: <http://www.leeannlavender.com/gen/jfmuller1.html>.

³⁵ The pension amounted to \$61. Texas State Library and Archives Commission; Confederate Pension Payments Amounts 1899-1928: www.tsl.texas.gov.



Fred Schwitter (1847-1909), likely taken when he got married. Source: Private Collection, Ron Yochum.

where he found work on a farm near Pittsburgh. A few years later, he was employed by James Andrew, a regionally well-known bridge builder. The \$6.00 per month pay did not quite suffice, however, so Fred/Frederick, or Fridolin as he now identified himself, looked for a more lucrative job. About 1871, he began transporting milk in a two-wheel hand wagon into neighborhoods. From his savings, he bought four milk cows and developed a small but lucrative business selling milk.³⁶

After 10 years, he bought property outside Allegheny City, owned 75 acres, and changed from a modest house to the “Schwitter’s Mansion” in West View, today a northern part of Pittsburgh. The farm “Sweet Home” and its owner have been identified as follows: “The farm covers 75 acres, that is some 30 hectares and, since owned by Schwitter, has evolved into one of the most impressive properties of the county. For 30 years, it provides people of Allegheny City³⁷ with milk and cream that are always of highest quality.”³⁸

³⁶ From the obituary of Fred Schwitter in *Pittsburgh Press*, March 18, 1909: www.ancestry.com.

³⁷ This was an independent city until 1907 when it was incorporated into Pittsburgh.

³⁸ “This farm contains 75 acres and since it came into his possession, it has become one of the finest in the county. During the 30 years that he has been a purveyor of milk and cream to the people of Allegheny city, he has never allowed his goods to depreciate, and its dairy is known all over the county for the purity of its products.” See *Memoirs of Allegheny County*, Vol. 2 (1904), 366s. <https://archive.org/details/memoirsofallegh-O2nort>.



Schwitter's dairy farm in West View, Pennsylvania. Source: Ron Yochum, private collection.

In 1875, Fred Schwitter married Maria Wehrle (1852–1923), daughter of immigrants from Baden.³⁹ It seems that they had two daughters: Marie or “Mamie” (1883-1960) and Anna Maria (born 1896), but the available data is different and confusing. About 1900, Marie married Eugene Otto Graf (1875-1940) who carried on his father-in-law’s milk distribution business. Anna Maria remained single.

As the new residence had to fit their social status, Fred Schwitter chose to join other business people in building an electrical railway for a street train to reach their house. It was quite a few miles away from Pittsburgh, but was certainly a convenience.⁴⁰

Schwitter’s economic success meant high social status. He was valued for his cultural engagement such as the “Helvetia Men’s Choir” with which he attended several singing festivals. He was a deeply religious Catholic and supported the area’s small Catholic group and even installed a small chapel in his home as well as generously sup-

³⁹ *A Genealogical and Biographical History of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, including Its Early Settlement and Progress to the Present Time* (Chicago, 1889), 722s: <https://archive.org/details/historyof/alleghe1889cush>.

⁴⁰ *Street Railway Journal* (May 1892), 320, and (September 1899), 847: <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008897005>.



Schwitzer's Dairy Wagon used to deliver town milk and milk Products.

Source: www.ancestry.com.

ported—\$10,000 dollars is mentioned—the building of St. Athanasius Church in Allegheny City.⁴¹

Schwitzer visited his old Glarnese home several times and encouraged his siblings to emigrate also. Among them was Franz Josef, who died in 1873 in Pittsburgh, as well as Balthasar Josef, born 1848. The latter left the Catholic persuasion and later settled with his family in Palestine, Texas.⁴² According to census records, Ferdinand, born 1856, was living in Pittsburgh. He worked as a farmhand in the house of his brother Fred. The sister Louisa Caroline, born 1850, also emigrated to the United States where she married Frank Dafferner and later resided in Ohio. Isidor, born 1858, went, based on communal records, in 1877

⁴¹ Kind communication from Ronald Yochum, Chief Information Officer of the Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Commission, September 20, 2018. He estimates that the amount would today be about \$300,000.

⁴² Balthasar Josef Schwitzer, born August 27, 1848, in Näfels, emigrated in 1867 to the United States, married Elisabeth Jane Portmann in 1878, and died on September 19, 1936, in Palestine, Anderson County, Texas.



Schwitter family (parents and siblings of Fred) in Näfels, ca1870.
Source: Ron Yochum, private collection.

to the United States but since then has been presumed lost.⁴³

Perhaps for health reasons, Fred considered an occasional stay in Canton Glarus. He leased his farm and in 1903 purchased a villa in Oberdorf in Glarus. It was purchased for 61,000 francs from the late Johann Heinrich Blumer-Tschudi (1812-1899), a spinning manufacturer, and included the greenhouse, gardens, stable, farm buildings, and a wash house, as well as a full-sized and three half-sized fountains.⁴⁴ Al-

⁴³ LAGL, PG Näfels IV B.01.11 *Gemeinderatsprotokoll*, 14.9.1877. Only three of the nine children of the Aeschen farmer Fridolin and of Louise Carolina Schwitter stayed in Näfels: Barbara (1852-1890), Katharina (1854-1932), and Johann Melchior (1866-1883).

⁴⁴ Laurenz Burlet, *Glarus—vom Flecken zur Stadt. Geschichtliche Notizen zu den Strassen und Gebäuden*. Typoskript 1989, Vol. 2, p. 821. In the *Inventar der neueren Schweizer Architektur (INSA)*, Vol. 4, p. 469, the house at the Oberdorfstrasse 19 is described as a “spätklassizistische Villenanlage,” with a large economy building and a glass greenhouse, and was built from 1865-70. In 1945, Hans Andrea Schuler-Iberg and his sister bought the property. According to the son Dr. Andrea Schuler, the buildings were demolished, except the “Orangerie” in 1963. The permission for demolition issued by the commune of Glarus officials mentions as address “Eichenstrasse 25.” As Schuler remembers, the villa might also have had a house chapel, perhaps built by Fred Schwitter who did the same in his Pennsylvania homes.



Fred Schwitter, his wife Maria Schwitter-Wehrle, and Mamie in front of their home in West View, ca1893. Source: Ron Yochum, private collection.

ready three years later, he sold the property for unknown reasons. Passenger lists indicate that Fred Schwitter was accompanied by his wife and daughter, Anna Maria, after personally managing the purchase as well as the sale on site.

In 1908, Fred Schwitter visited Switzerland for the last time. He wrote his last will during a hospital stay in Bern. It designates his wife as the sole inheritor of his movable and immovable property. As a proper practicing Catholic, he designated \$100 for the priest in Allegheny with the request to have a mass celebrated for him. Fifty dollars was destined for the same purpose for Pastor Schönbächler in Näfels, as well as \$50 for the Capuchin Monastery. He cancelled his sister Katharina Feldmann-Schwitter's loan of 4,000 *francs*, and enabled his brother Josef to buy the farm in Palestine. He designated \$500 for Mamie Graf-Schwitter. Finally, there are also three children mentioned



Schwitters' Villa at the Oberdorfstrasse in Glarus, ca1905. Source: www.ancestry.com.

in his will: Anna Maria living in Westview, “Gertrud, and her younger little sister whose name I have forgotten.” Those two seem to have been living under the care of Mary Wagner-Michalec, also in Palestine. Fred mentioned the three (!) as his own beloved children.⁴⁵ Until their coming of age, Mary Wagner was to receive \$10.00 monthly and the children \$15. If, however, his wife should adopt the two girls, the Schwitters’ inheritance would be evenly distributed among the three (!) daughters after her death.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ The obituary in the *Glerner Nachrichten* mentions Fred Schwitler as “our most beloved husband, foster father, brother, brother-in-law, and uncle.” Perhaps, it indicates that all four girls were foster children. As the oldest, Mamie might have received already a larger portion of her inheritance at her marriage, she is awarded only \$500 in the last will, while the possibly adopted Anna Maria and the two girls living in Palestine received significantly more.

⁴⁶ There exists a German original of the “Testament” signed by “Fridolin Schwitler” and an English copy in *Pennsylvania Wills and Probate Records 1683-1993*, Vol. 100-102, No. 136, reachable in www.ancestry.com. The two girls were perhaps Gertrud Wagner (1899-1994) and Marguerite Catherine Wagner (1903-1974).

Fred Schwitter died on March 14, 1909, in the house of his sister, Katharina Feldmann-Schwitter, at the Fahrtsplatz in Näfels.

Little is known about the ongoing life of Schwitter's wife and about the three minor children. As to the "Schwitter Mansion," it is known, however, that Maria Schwitter-Wehrli sold it to Frank Kuhn, and that finally the district bought it from his widow. In 1943, three prison cells were possibly established in the previous kitchen, and the chapel and two bedrooms were remodeled into meeting rooms. Once the most significant and imposing building in the town, the Schwitter mansion had become a dilapidated sight by the 1960s:

"Every window in the house had been smashed, the wooden rails and balustrades that flanked the main stairway have been sawed off and carted away, the water heater was stolen and holes had been battered through some of the interior walls. So the old structure that once hosted the aristocracy has fallen from glory before the professional wreckers set a hand to it."⁴⁷

Today, only the name Schwitter Avenue refers to the most successful immigrant from Näfels.

The Feldmanns in Nebraska and Kansas

The four Feldmann brothers from the Rösslistrasse in Näfels are among those who took advantage of the opportunity to establish themselves with an advance from the commune as farmers in the United States. Their father, Balthasar Josef (1812-1870), pursued various occupations. According to the genealogy, he was a woodsman, laborer, and farmer. This indicates that he most likely owned a small farm, but was also dependent on various small side jobs.⁴⁸

In 1850, he was already in debt, went bankrupt, but in two years he was rehabilitated and received all his previous civic rights

⁴⁷ *Pittsburgh Press*, December 21, 1969, p.105: <https://archives.postgazette.com/search/#query=schwitter+mansion>.

⁴⁸ Feldmann was farming at the *Gerbe* as well as at the *Burg*, and in 1845 probably was living near Rapperswil.

5.	Feldmann Fridolin	21
46.	Luchsinger Melchior	19
7.	Wild heimisch	20
8.	Dürst Johannes	21
9.	Jenni Joh. Jacob	21
20.	Marti Jacob	19
1.	H. D. Peter	19
9.	Jenni Jost Fridolin	18
3.	Beglinger Caspar	21
10.	Peter	19
5.	Zöpfi Samuel	22
6.	Zöpfi Rudolph	62
7.	Walburga	20
7.	Walburga	20

Excerpt from the April 16, 1861, William Tell Passenger List. Jakob Fridolin Feldmann traveled with several emigrants from the back of the Glarus Valley with names such as Luchsinger, Wild, Dürst, Jenni, Marti and Zöpfi. Source: www.ancestry.com.

and rights.⁴⁹ The couple, Balthasar Josef and Anna Maria Feldmann-Pfeiffer, had six children: Melchior, born 1840; Jakob Fridolin, 1841; Margaretha, 1844; Balthasar Josef, 1845; Albert, 1848; and Kaspar, 1851. Melchior and Margaretha stayed in the Canton,⁵⁰ but their four brothers chose to emigrate.

Jakob Fridolin was the first to join a larger group of emigrants from the Glarner hinterland, and embarked in March 1861 on the ship *William Tell* for New York where they arrived on April 16. He settled as a farmer at Nemaha, Richardson County, Nebraska, and later profited from the 1862 Homestead Act that enabled farmers to settle on public land, select a parcel of 160 acres (65 hectares), and register it with their name at the land office. It finally became his property likely in 1883 when he became a United States citizen.⁵¹

⁴⁹ *Amtsblatt* of June 15, and November 2, 1850, and of January 1, 1852.

⁵⁰ Melchior (Gen. 122) married Maria Winteler and lived as a butcher in the "Müsli" in Mollis. Margaretha married Johann Melchior Pfeiffer (Gen. 119, Mollis). The couple too was living in Mollis.

⁵¹ U.S. Homestead Records 1863-1908, Land Office Brownville, Nebraska. Entries for Fridolin Feldmann of May 31, 1876, and July 10, 1883: www.ancestry.com.

In 1886, Feldmann and his wife Magdalena, born Glarner, resided in Nemaha with their children Mary, age 18; Fred, 16; Henry, 13; Emma, 11; and Maggie, 9. Feldmann died in 1886 or 1888, and was survived for several years by his wife who had immigrated in 1868.⁵²

Three years after Jakob Fridolin left, his younger brother, Balthasar Josef, also made the transoceanic journey, arriving in the United States in May 1864 and settling near his brother in Sabetha, Kansas. “Bos”, as he was later called in the local press, seems to have been the most successful of the four brothers. In 1875, he married Barbara Moser (1840-1912), and supposedly owned, at one time, three farms in Berwick Township. As his descendants have since said, he managed these farms by himself until 1900 when they were leased.⁵³

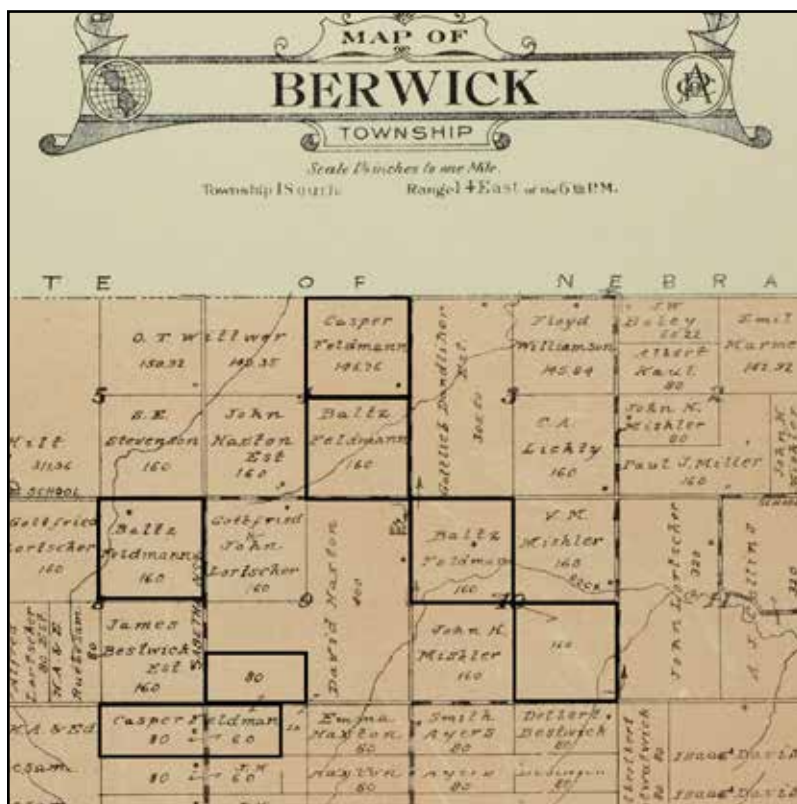
In 1877, he made his first return trip to Näfels, and brought his younger brother back to the United States. Seven years earlier in 1870, another brother, Kaspar, arrived in Kansas, and he and Bos became next-door neighbors. In 1884, Kaspar married Elsbeth Fry (1865-1948) who had also emigrated from Switzerland.

Bos Feldmann built a townhouse in Sabetha, and in 1900 became an American citizen. As the *Sabetha Herald*⁵⁴ reported, Bos undertook a three-month journey to Europe in the Spring of 1914. In June 1920, Bos made another pleasure trip on the *Lapland*, as was recorded on his request for a passport. This time he was accompanied by his nephew, Carl Ralph, who was born in 1908. Their destinations included: “Switzerland, Italy, Luxembourg, France, and Belgium.” In

⁵² Nebraska State Census of 1885. The U.S. Census Records of 1910 has mother Feldmann living at the home of son Fred, born 1869, and his wife Lizzie in Nemaha, Nebraska. According to Richardson County Marriage Records, entry of February 24, 1897, on the occasion of the marriage of daughter Maggie, Magdalena Feldmann’s family name was Glarner: www.ancestry.com.

⁵³ Kind reference from Hans Felber, Weesen.

⁵⁴ *Sabetha Herald*, April 23, 1914. The niece, Reeve Allan-Lash, reports that Bos Feldmann and his family had undertaken an extended European tour in 1900 already and included visiting the world exhibition in Paris. Thanks to Hans Felber, Weesen for providing this detail. The newspaper is preserved in the Mary Cotton Public Library in Sabetha, Kansas, available as: <http://marycotton.advantage-preservation.com>.



Bos and Kaspar Feldmann's properties in Berwick, Nemaha County, Kansas, excerpted from the 1922 Plat Book of Nemaha County. p. 5.

Source: Kansas State Historical Society.

October, they returned from Antwerp to New York on the ship *Finland*.⁵⁵ Bos Feldmann passed away in 1927, leaving behind a considerable inheritance, but the heirs were reportedly in disagreement as to the interpretation of his will.⁵⁶

Balthasar Josef and Kaspar Feldmann are both buried in the Sabetha Cemetery as are their spouses and several of their

⁵⁵ Passport application of May 19, 1920, and BAR, E2175#1000133#17: Auswanderinnen und Auswanderer GL-GR, according to Cantons 1920: www.ancestry.com. Feldmann mentions Mollis as his place of residence where he might have visited the children of his two siblings.

⁵⁶ *Sabetha Herald*, May 4, 1927. Bos Feldmann had four children: Albert (1876-1899), Caspar (born 1879), Susie (born 1879), and Louis (born 1880).



Millie, Nettie and Nellie Feldmann, daughters of Albert and Sophie Feldmann-German, ca1904. Source: Hans Felber, private collection.

children.⁵⁷ Albert, who had arrived in the United States in 1877 along with Bos Feldmann, managed a farm south of Humboldt, Nebraska.⁵⁸ In 1882, he married Sophie L. German (1862-1949) who had already become widely known. In 1874, she had been abducted by Cheyenne Indians along with three of her sisters while their parents and other siblings were killed. The historical conditions, the attack on the Family German (or *Germaine*), as well as the abduction and recovery of the four girls have been variously described. The event was widely reported, and the United States Congress allocated \$10,000 for the upbringing of the orphans.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ See www.findagrave.com.

⁵⁸ Census Records for 1900 indicate that the Feldmann family was living in Speiser, Richardson County, Nebraska, and included the three daughters: Millie (15), Nettie (13), and Nellie (10). The age of Albert is not correct.

⁵⁹ Among others, by the niece Grace E. Meredith, *Girl Captives of the Cheyenne* (Los Angeles, 1927). Also by the Feldmann's grandniece Arlene Feldmann-Jauken, *The Moccasin Speaks: Living as Captives of the Dog Soldier Warriors, Red River War, 1874-1875* (1998). Also: <https://www.pampamuseum.org/german-family-reunion.html>.

Albert died in 1905. He, his wife, and their children are buried in Pleasant-Hill Cemetery south of Humboldt.

The Family Oswald in Missouri

In the second to last decade of the nineteenth century, Kaspar Jost Niklaus Oswald and his wife, Anna Maria, born Züger, decided to emigrate to the United States. Although Oswald was already 58 years



Kaspar Josef and Emily Electa Oswald-Fowlston with daughters, Sophia and Barbara Ann, and son Casper David, ca1893. Source: www.ancestry.com.

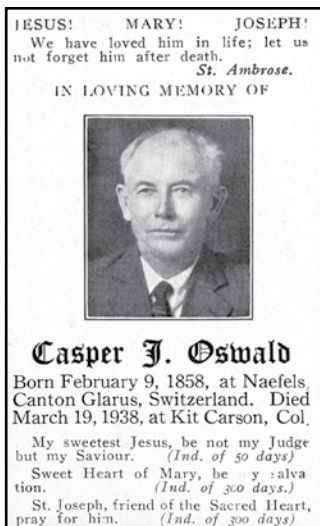


Kaspar Josef and Emily Oswald ca1935.

Source: Donald Oswald.

old, the grown son Fridolin, born 1862, would make the new start of the family of five more easy. They boarded the ship *France* in Le Havre in early March 1881 and reached New York in good health already on March 23. After staying for some weeks in Illinois, they settled in Henry County, Missouri in April.⁶⁰

The father purchased a farm, but two years later conveyed it to Fridolin, while the older couple moved to Montrose. According to a 1919 *History of Henry County*, Fridolin raised mainly cattle and managed his 200-acre farm southeast of Urich. Its value had remarkably increased with an impressive farm house and two stables. Oswald raised livestock and pigs on a large scale, and was counted as one of the region's successful farmers, and as an influential and "substantial



Obituary Picture of Kaspar Josef Oswald (1858-1938). Source: Donald Oswald.

⁶⁰ Uel W. Lamkin, *History of Henry County* (1919), p.691s: <http://files.usgwarchives.net/mo/henry/bios/obio/oswald.txt>.

citizen of the community.”⁶¹ In 1884, Fridolin Oswald married Elisabeth Stapf, U.S.-born daughter of an immigrant family from Bavaria. The family numbered ten children, among them Charles and John who served in World War I in the U.S. Army.

Fridolin’s older brother, Kaspar, born 1858, had arrived a year earlier in the United States and first worked in carpentry with his cousin Fridolin Oswald in Alhambra, Madison County, Illinois.⁶² Later, he too raised cattle, living the first decades in Missouri, but after 1910 he was living in Kiowa, Colorado. Like his younger brother, Kaspar Josef also had a large family. Like his parents, Fridolin Oswald is buried in Saint Mary’s Cemetery in Montrose, Missouri, while the graves of Kaspar Josef and his wife, born Fowlston, are in Kit Carson, Colorado.

Fridolin Landolt—a Veterinarian in Trouble

For Fridolin Landolt, emigration was the last possibility to escape the shame of bankruptcy. His professional career had started with promise. After three years at the veterinary schools of Zurich and Munich, his final grade was “very satisfactory,” and he was “examined” in Canton Glarus. In early September 1861 after licensed, he announced himself to prospective customers.⁶³

Four years later, a newspaper report from Glarus may have severely damaged Landolt’s reputation as a veterinarian:

“Last week in Glarus the owner of a wagon from the Unterland—a veterinarian at that—left his horse in bad weather from the day through the whole night until mid-morning hitched to the wagon without food or care, while he himself stayed in a

⁶¹ “He remained with his parents until he was 21 years of age. Since then he has been engaged in farming and stock raising on his own accord and now owns a valuable and productive farm of 200 acres situated three miles southeast of Urich. The place is well improved with a very good farm residence and two barns. He raises cattle and hogs on an extensive scale and is one of the successful stockmen of Henry County. [. . .] The Oswald family are prominent in the community and Mr. Oswald is one of the substantial citizens of Henry County.” *Ibid.*, p. 691s.

⁶² Census record of 1880. Fridolin Oswald was a master carpenter and later an architect.

⁶³ *Neue Glarner Zeitung*, September 3, 1861 and *Amtsblatt*, 1861, No. 35.

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neighboring wine tavern for fun and drink. The next morning, three persons brought the horse that had collapsed to a neighboring stable where it had to lie the whole day.”⁶⁴

Landolt contested the accusations and declared that he had been in Glarus on business and not for fun and drink, and that he had covered the horse with a good blanket, but someone had abducted his horse and he had to look for it in vain for a full two hours.⁶⁵ Despite his assertion, he was still accused of tormenting an animal. The police court absolved him because of insufficient evidence, but it fined him for one crown “because of illegally parking his wagon on the main road.”⁶⁶

After a few years, Landolt moved his business from Näfels to Glarus, but apparently he did not have enough customers there, and began “to speculate with cotton,” but went into debt to such an extent that he needed to mortgage and finally sell his property. With bankruptcy, he also lost his license and probably fled abroad in the spring of 1872, while his wife and three minor daughters⁶⁷ (placed under guardianship) remained in Canton Glarus.⁶⁸ Whether he stayed in contact with his family and possibly supported them is not known.

The Orphan Office in Näfels received notice of Landolt’s death in the fall of 1890. Meanwhile, his wife and one daughter had also passed away, while the other two daughters were living in straight circumstances. The deceased father—in the United States “a

*Obituary of Fridolin Landolt in the September 11, 1890, Columbus Weekly Telegram.*⁶⁹ Source: Columbus Public Library, Nebraska.

Gone Over the Divide.

Dr. F. Landolt, the veterinary surgeon, died at the hospital yesterday morning. He had only been in the hospital twelve or fourteen hours, though he had been ailing for some time.

The deceased was 47 years of age. He was born in Switzerland, where he has two daughters.

His funeral will be held at 10 o'clock today. Rev. Fleischer will deliver the sermon at the grave.

⁶⁴ Ibid., November 30, 1865.

⁶⁵ Ibid., December 2, 1865.

⁶⁶ Ibid., January 20, 1866

⁶⁷ Maria Anna “Nanette,” born 1864; Maria Emma, born 1866; and Julia, born 1870.

⁶⁸ *Amtsblatt*, June 24 and August 19, 1871, as well as February 24, April 20, and May 11, 1872.

⁶⁹ See <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/13664845>. Born in 1839, Landolt was 51 years of age when he died.

very respected man” as Kubli-Müller noted in his genealogy—had left some capital and 40 acres of land. The value of the property was estimated at \$400, yet in later correspondence, it listed at only \$72.

Finally, the trustee residing in the United States sold the property for \$250. The two sisters should have received the stately sum of SFr. 1,250, but their father had that land entered in the registry under the name of Fritz Landolt. Consequently, the American officials doubted whether Fritz was the same person as Fridolin Landolt. It took two years until the matter was finally resolved and the inheritance was paid.

~ *Translated by Leo Schelbert*

⁷⁰ LAGL, AAA, 12/4, 12/5, and 12/6: *Regierugsratsbeschluss*, October 2, November 20, 1890; March 5, March 26, April 30, May 14, September 1, December 24, December 31, 1891; and January 14, July 13, August 11, and August 18, 1892. LAGL = Landesarchiv Glarus.