Four Brides – Sisters – for Four Brothers:
Historical Observations in Commemoration of the 300th Wedding Anniversary of Christina Schweingruber and Lieutenant Peter Klossner

by
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Three centuries ago, on December 17, 1704, the Reverend David Maerki united Christina Schweingruber and Peter Klossner in marriage in a ceremony in the Swiss Reformed parish church in the village of Diemtigen (Canton Bern, Switzerland). Nowadays, these ancestors of ours remain virtually unknown to their innumerable posterity scattered throughout the world.

Admittedly, no letters or other personal records written by them or any of their eleven children are extant. At first glance, it would seem that hardly anything is known about them. Nonetheless, when attempting to piece together a few of the basic fragments of historical facts concerning their immediate family circle, it becomes possible to at least catch a brief glimpse of their lives and times and some of the things that concerned them.

On that wedding day, a week before Christmas in 1704, the village church must have been packed with the many close relatives and friends of the bride and groom, not only from the Diemtig Valley, but from the neighboring communities of Erlenbach, Daerstetten and Oberwil in the nearby Simmental Valley. It was not unusual for prosperous and politically influential families to invite up to 200 guests for wedding festivities which sometimes were celebrated for more than just a day. On such occasions, a vast crowd of paupers gathered, many having walked for as long as four hours in order to join in on the celebration. Hundreds of poor people lined up to beg and were generally rewarded with a coin of small value and a good-sized piece of bread and cheese.

In order to become better acquainted with at least some of the many people who attended the wedding three hundred years ago, it is necessary to take a closer look at the Schweingruber and Klossner families.

The Bride and her Family

Christina Schweingruber, the youngest of the 14 children of Christina Mani Schweingruber and her husband, Christian Schweingruber, was not the first child in the family to be named after her mother. Two elder sisters had also been given the name of Christina, but both died at an early age: Christina's eldest sister of the same name was born some 17 years earlier but did not reach the age of three; the second Christina in the family was 14 years older than the third sister to receive the same name, however she apparently died between the ages of 10 and 14.

Even as late as the 19th century, it was not really unusual for two or three children in an alpine Swiss family to be given the same names, particularly when they were those of a parent or grandparent. Christina Schweingruber's two brothers named David – after their maternal grandfather, David Mani of Daerstetten – were born in a bit less than 14 months of each other.

Christina Schweingruber's mother – Christina Mani – had just turned 17 years old when she married Christian Schweingruber only a few days before his 25th birthday in the church at Daerstetten. Anna, the first of their 14 children, was born three and one-half years later and named after her maternal grandmother, Anna Anneler Mani. Twelve children – including twin boys – followed on an average of every 21 months between

1661 and 1680, although the times between birthing varied from 14 to 32 months.

In such a large family, it is not unusual for some of the older children to be married and have growing families of their own at the same time that their youngest siblings are born. Such was the case in Christian and Christina Schweingruber's family. At the age of 21, their eldest son, Johannes Schweingruber, married Susanna Frey, a daughter of the local sheriff. They became the parents of nine children, including twins; their daughter Christina was born in the spring of 1685, but she was not the one who married Peter Klossner.

At the end of the summer in 1685, some five years after the 13th child in the family had been born, and a good three months short of her 46th
birthday, Christina Mani Schweingruber gave birth to her eighth daughter, the third one to be named after her. Christian and Christina Mani Schweingruber lived in the family home "*Vorderes Bergli*," which Christian's parents had built on the little mountain peak above Diemtigen village. Within a few days after the birth, Christina Schweingruber was christened by Reverend Abraham Walther in the Diemtigen parish church on September 4, 1685.

Christenings were generally important family gatherings and often sumptuously celebrated. Godparenthood was a significant part of the Swiss Reformed Church and godparents often played a meaningful role in the life of a child, particularly if it became orphaned through the death of its parents. In keeping with Bernese tradition, Christian and Christina Mani Schweingruber selected two godmothers and a godfather who stood as witnesses of their youngest daughter's baptism: Barbara Eschler and Anna Ueltschi, as well as Rudolf Schweingruber, Christina's first cousin and a well respected citizen in the Castellany – or bailiwick – of Lower Simmental.

Father and Brother arraigned in Church Court

Some three months after Christina's birth, her father – only a fortnight short of his 54th birthday – was cited before the parish church court, officially known as the Diemtigen Consistory Court. Although the pastor automatically served as merely the scribe of the ecclesiastical court, Reverend Walther nonetheless unquestionably acted as the extended arm of the state and the church it controlled, even though he had no official voice in leavening sentences.
In his minutes of the proceedings on December 13, 1685, the pastor identified Christina Schweingruber's father as holding two positions of considerable esteem: Christian Schweingruber Sr. served as one of the 14 jurors on the bench of the Diemtigen District Civil Court as well as the parish welfare commissioner.

As the longstanding mayor of the rural borough of Diemtigen, the de jure representative of the Bernese city-state magistrates, Lower Simmental Bailiwick Ensign – i.e., adjutant lord bailiff – Johannes Knutti (the great-great-grandfather of David Knutti, Rosina Knutti Kunz's father) presided over the court of the church parish. The panel of eight consistory court judges served as "church elders," who through their election by the parish members were also called to pass judgement over their fellow parishioners. The men on the church bench virtually always belonged to what one contemporary historian has called the "circle of [economically] fat peasants," and in 1685 one of them was none other than Lieutenant Benedikt Schweingruber Jr., an older brother of the incriminated Christian Schweingruber.

Earlier in that same Sunday session of the court, Johannes Schweingruber, Christian's eldest son and Christina's 24-year old brother, had been charged with disorderly management of the inn which he and his wife operated in the upper part of Diemtigen village. It was not the first time that the young innkeeper had appeared before the church court due to "*…providing his guests with place and stead, serving them wine, etc. on Sundays, especially during the church services, Sunday school and prayer meetings; and* […] *inasmuch as*

other good warnings had been to no avail, was this time fined 2 £ as a caution."

After sentence had been pronounced upon the innkeeper, twelve men were arraigned on charges "*…of having been drinking in the upper village inn, some of them during Sunday school, others during prayer services*." For them, however, it was a first offense and after "*…duly promising in the future never again to allow themselves to be found*" drinking in the inn during church services, they were "*…released unpunished with a good warning and censuring*."

Although Christian Schweingruber was summoned and charged "*…concerning the same cause,*" he "*… even showed derisiveness towards the court and especially the parson, maintaining that it was unnecessary for him to be cited before the court on such grounds, thereby attempting to defy the court and determine what it should consider;* […] *he showed himself to be particularly imprudent and impudent in his disdainful excuses and insulting comments.*" According to the lengthy minutes recorded by Reverend Walther, Christian Schweingruber "*…pleaded the excuse that he must have been collecting the interest money on funds restricted for the use of the needy*."

The pastor bluntly retorted that neither was it necessary for the collector nor those from whom money was being collected to be making and keeping such appointments at the inn during church services. Reverend Walther pointed out that it was not only completely inappropriate to the holiness of Sunday, but that such matters could be taken care of at other times. Christian Schweingruber immediately countered that although he might try to collect such interest funds at a better opportunity, no other time was suitable for him.

Although the sheriff had orders to check the inns during church services, when he confronted Christian Schweingruber with the fact that "*…he should now be in a* [certain] *place*," *i.e.*, in church services, civil court juror and welfare commissioner Schweingruber reacted with vengeance and, along with other things, purposely made a visit to the sheriff's home.

Reverend Walther noted in the church court minutes that Christian Schweingruber himself went to Wimmis Castle and personally reported the incident to the reigning lord bailiff, His Highly Honored Lordship, Castellan Hieronimus Hauser. As a juror on the bench of the Diemtigen Civil Court, Christian Schweingruber was already personally and presumably very well acquainted with the castellan of the Lower Simmental Bailiwick. He confessed being guilty of a gross quarrel with Reverend Walther, but complained that in rebuking him, the pastor had labelled him as a perjurer, a fact which caused him grief.

Both parties – the pastor, officially restricted to serving the church bench as court clerk, and the welfare commissioner, the official guardian of the needy in the parish – hurled insults, which resulted five days later in a visit from the bailiff of Lower Simmental Castellany, who personally presided over the extraordinary last meeting of the church court that year in Diemtigen. Compared to the bitterness which permeated the earlier session, the minutes recorded by Reverend Walther during that final session of the Diemtigen Consistory Court on Friday, December 18, 1685, almost seem dry:

> *Christian Schweingruber, the alms' steward and civil court juror, on the previously noted dispute, the charges of which were preferred upon him in detail by His Highly Honored Lordship, the Castellan, immediately pleaded guilty and begged God to forgive him for his crime, and His servant* [*i.e.*, the bailiff,] *as well as the pastor for the insubordination he had shown towards them, noting that in this case he will be less than offended to also submit to all of the appropriate penalties, which in addition to manifold exhortation and reproach to his obligations, he was therefore fined the accrued costs of the case as well as the costs of fare for His Highly Honored Lordship, the Castellan, and the Consistory Court; additionally,* [admonished] *to take great pains to put aside the infraction with His Highly Honored Lordship, the Castellan; also to pay the consistory court the sum of 2 £, all of which he gratefully accepted, and on top of*

that, shook hands with the pastor.

The apparent intensity of the friction between Christian Schweingruber and Abraham Walther – who was installed as pastor at Diemtigen in 1683 – is surprising, but would appear to be the managed effort of the pastor to keep as close a control as possible over the local civil servants within his jurisdiction. The relations between the Schweingruber family and the local pastor had not always been accented with tension. Reverend Walther's predecessor, Reverend Johann Konrad Kuhn, had not only officiated at the christening of Christina's twin brothers in December of 1677 but had accepted the invitation of the parents to be the godfather of Konrad, the elder of the boys.

Christina's Paternal Grandparents

Christina's paternal grandfather, Benedikt Schweingruber Sr., is first mentioned in the old parish registers of Diemtigen in 1611, over a half-century after the earliest church ordinances were recorded therein. Benedikt Sr. as well as his wife, Katharina Mani Schweingruber, stood at christenings as witnessing godparents along with Reverend David Dick (1614) and Reverend Daniel Schmid (1620), both parsons of the Diemtigen parish. In 1620, Reverend Schmid was also one of the godparents who witnessed the christening of the elder Benedikt Schweingruber Jr. In 1626, Reverend Niklaus Erzinger's wife was one of the godmothers at the christening of Magdalena Schweingruber, Katharina and Benedikt Sr.'s fourth daughter. In 1630, when the younger Benedikt Jr. – Lieutenant Benedikt Schweingruber, a longstanding member of the ecclesiastical bench of the Diemtigen Consistory Court mentioned earlier – was christened, Reverend Anton Hartmann was one his godfathers.

Of particular note is the godparenthood which "*Trina Mani, Bendicht Schweingruber's housewife*," accepted in witnessing the christening of Elsbeth Ammann in mid-summer of 1610 in the neighboring parish of Erlenbach in Simmental. The baby girl was the daughter of master tailor Ulrich Ammann and his wife, Katharina Blatter, who were destined to become the paternal grandparents of Jakob Ammann, the "arch-Anabaptist," after whom the "Amish" (conservative, old-order Mennonites) in Pennsylvania and other areas of the United States were called.

Christina Schweingruber's paternal grandparents commissioned Johannes Julmi to build them a new home – *Vorderes Bergli* – on Little Diemtig Mountain ("*Diemtigbergli*") above Diemtigen village and it was finished in 1627. Sixteen years later, Johannes Schweingruber – Benedikt Sr.'s eldest son, Christian's eldest brother – and his wife, Christina Werren, built their new home below that of Johannes' parents. (Today, nearly four centuries later, both of the picturesque chalets are still occupied.)

It is unknown whether Benedikt Schweingruber Sr. brought somewhat wealth with him into his marriage to Katharina Mani, or whether she was from a well-off branch of one of the largest families in the area. However, only a certain amount of prosperity enabled alpine dairymen to build such stately homes. Benedikt and his sons must have been intensely involved with dairy farming (and perhaps even the export of cheese), as well as the breeding of Simmental cattle and possibly even horses. Despite all of the unknown factors, it is certain that Benedikt and Katharina and their children were respected by the local citizens in the parish, as well as many of the pastors. That respect, combined with their individual capabilities, enabled them to assume positions of leadership in the military, the parish and the community.

A Growing Family

Christina Schweingruber was only four and one-half years of age when her 50-year old mother died in the spring of 1690. Christina Mani Schweingruber was survived by (at least) five daughters, five sons (the twins

were 12 ½ years old), and two granddaughters (ages 6 and 5 ½) and a grandson (age 1 ½), the latter being the children of her eldest son, Johannes – the innkeeper – and his wife, Susanna, who was five months pregnant with their fourth child.

Inasmuch as the 58-year-old widower Christian Schweingruber never remarried, it would seem logical that Anna Schweingruber – the first born of the 14 children in the family – especially looked after her youngest sister. Anna was nearly 30, still single and, presumably, living at home when her mother died. Twenty-four year old Margaretha Schweingruber, the second daughter and fifth child in the family, died in February of 1691. However, at least nine of Christina's elder siblings reached maturity, and at least eight of them married.

It was mid-October of 1691 when Elsbeth Schweingruber – Christina's 21-year old sister – came to be the first bride of one of the Klossner brothers from the hamlet of Oeyen in Zwischenflueh near the back of Diemtig Valley. She wed 26-year old Niklaus Klossner in a ceremony in the parish church in Diemtigen village performed by Reverend Abraham Walther. How the young couple became acquainted would be of great interest, but no known record tells such a story.

Exactly six weeks later, David Schweingruber – Christina's second oldest brother, some six weeks short of his 27th
birthday – became the husband of Margaretha Klossner, the nearly 22-year old sister of brother-in-law Niklaus Klossner. And two weeks after their marriage, David Schweingruber – along with his older brother Johannes, the innkeeper – were among eight men (including two other bridegrooms) cited before the consistory court because of the dancing which took place during the wedding celebrations in the upper village inn. Because most of the men who appeared before the church bench either denied or only reluctantly admitted to minor infringements, the court postponed the session for a week.

When the Diemtigen church elders assembled on December 18, 1691, to continue the wedding dance case, Reverend Walther noted that only three of the judges were present, "…*the others having withdrawn* [from this case] *because of the issue being considered*." Innkeeper Johannes Schweingruber was fined 4£ for having allowed dancing to take place in the inn and not keeping his oath to request the special permission required on such an occasion. The elder violinist was fined 2£ because of previous warnings and not appearing before the present session; his two sons, who had completed the musical trio, were each fined 1£. The cook was fined 2£ for having secretly allowed dancing to take place in the kitchen. The other two bridegrooms denied having danced themselves, but admitted to engaging the three violinists and were therefore also fined 2£ each. The last person to be listed by Reverend Walther was "*David Schweingruber, also a bridegroom, himself having danced with his bride, fined 3£*."

By the end of April 1695, Christina's sister Elsbeth Schweingruber Klossner had given birth to three daughters, including twins, and sister-in-law Margaretha Klossner Schweingruber had given birth to a son and a daughter and was six months pregnant with her youngest child. And, on the 26th day of that month, 19-year old Katharina Schweingruber – another of Christina's sisters – was united in marriage with Christian Klossner, the 28-year old brother of the other Klossner siblings previously mentioned. Katharina was the second Schweingruber bride of a Klossner brother.

A Further Church Court Summons for Family Members

According to the Diemtigen Consistory Court records, David Schweingruber and two of his Klossner brothers-in-law were cited before the parish church bench following the Sunday services on January 10, 1696. The hearing of the three men took place with five of the ecclesiastical judges and the parson. Reverend David Maerki, who had been installed as pastor of the parish the previous year, recorded the following in the court

minutes:

> *Niklaus and Jakob Klossner, brothers, and David Schweingruber, their brother-in-law, caused a disturbance of the peace on New Years Day at the inn in the upper village, cursing and swearing on the occasion, to which, however, they will not confess. Summoned to appear at the next session.*

Niklaus Klossner was nearly 31 and his brother, Jakob, was 23. David Schweingruber had just turned 31.

Some three weeks later, "*on Friday, the last day of January, 1696*," Reverend Maerki noted the appearance of the Klossner brothers and one of their brothers-in-law during the proceedings of the Diemtigen Consistory Court – with all eight parish justices occupying the bench on this occasion – as follows:

> *Niklaus and Jakob Klossner and, likewise, Christian* [*sic*] *Schweingruber, who now admit that they denied it in the session past.* [They] *Are punished under reservation of* [a change of opinion by] *the* [Lord] *Squire Castellan, with fines:*
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> | | |
> |---|---|
> | *Niklaus* | *30 Schillings* |
> | *Jakob* | *30 Schillings* |
> | *Christian* | *30 Schillings* |
>
> [Furthermore, they] *Shall beg pardon of God and the Honorable Court.*
>
> *Jakob Klossner is interrogated* [about] *whether he had not taken Anna, the daughter of Christian Schweingruber, the alms' steward, as his wife.* [He] *Replied Yes. Upon being questioned about the wedding day,* [he stated that] *he wants to take the aforenamed* [Anna Schweingruber in marriage] *to the church before May Day.*
>
> *David Schweingruber failed to appear.*

Although his name was not mentioned in the first hearing in early January, 22-year old Christian Schweingruber Jr. appeared with his Klossner brothers-in-law at the end of the month. David Schweingruber did not heed his church court summons until March 6, 1696. In observing that David had been "*the principal ringleader*" of the disturbances on New Years Day at the upper inn, Reverend Maerki noted in the court minutes that "*he is thus sentenced to pay an additional 10 Schillings*, [and] *should therefore make a payment of 40 Schillings to the Honorable Court*."

Being charged with cursing and swearing could have serious consequences. Cursing was often considered to be either a deliberate breaking of the commandment to worship only God and not to take His name in vain, or a verbal form of harmful magic. Swearing was generally interpreted as perjury.

Dealing with such things as breach of betrothal was very common for consistory court judges in the 17th and 18th
centuries. The binding promise of marriage, as well as the physical consummation of the relationship (which very often took place before the actual wedding in the church), sufficed in meeting the legal qualifications of a marriage. For government authorities in the old Republic of Bern, a church wedding merely confirmed an existing marriage for the sake of public morals.

Such brief excerpts from the minutes of the Diemtigen Consistory Court reflect the moral discipline which the Reformed city-state of Bern attempted to apply to its citizens. Such demands of evangelical morality, and requiring them as a kind of religious duty made considerable impact on the men, women and children who lived under those laws.

The 30 Schillings which each of the three men were fined amounted to the cost – depending on the price fluctuation in the 1690s – of between 9 and 11 lbs of beef, or between 11 and 15 lbs of mutton. In addition to the fine, the Klossner brothers and their brother-in-law were sentenced to "beg pardon of God and the Honorable Court," according to the verbatim wording of the court minutes. This presumably refers to what one historian has called the "particularly sensitive punishment" of publicly apologizing in a regular church service (not just before the parish court) and asking forgiveness of those present, in the spirit of the proverb "A sin confessed is half redressed."

Mention of this ancestral disorderly conduct on New Years Day 1696, stands, as such, for itself. Neither is the fact that two of the Klossner brothers' brothers-in-law were involved in the public disturbance, nor is the relationship of the Schweingruber brothers to two of the consistory judges – Lieutenant Benedikt Schweingruber Jr. (uncle) and Rudolf Schweingruber (first cousin) – of relevance here.

Nonetheless, one point of interest is particularly noteworthy. Following the details of the court's decision concerning the tumult, Reverend Maerki continued with what would seem to be an addendum to the minutes: Jakob Klossner – the younger of the two Klossner brothers summoned before the parish court – went on record declaring his intention to confirm his marriage to Anna Schweingruber, eldest daughter of the guardian of the poor in the Diemtigen parish.

Reverend Maerki recorded nothing in the court minutes as to why the betrothal of Jakob Klossner and Anna Schweingruber was brought up in the first place. Nor did the parson make any comments about possible detailed (or further) questioning concerning the promise of marriage. It is unknown as to whether "family politics" in the Schweingruber clan played a role of any kind in dealing with the matter on the parish bench. However, there is no doubt but what the ecclesiastical court – and its clerk, in acting as the extended arm of the state-controlled church – questioned Jakob Klossner in order to make certain that official notice had been taken of the betrothal of a fourth Klossner sibling to a fourth child of a local official.

A Third Klossner Brother takes a Schweingruber Sister as His Bride

Indeed, Anna Schweingruber and Jakob Klossner were united in marriage in the church in Diemtigen village in a ceremony performed by Reverend Maerki on March 27, 1696, five weeks before the deadline the 23-year old bridegroom had promised to keep. From a present-day perspective, it would appear feasible that the fact that Anna Schweingruber was 12½ years older than her husband may have been the real reason behind the church court's inquiry concerning the betrothal. However, upon realizing that Susanna Frey Schweingruber was some eight years the senior of her husband, innkeeper Johannes (who was only 16 months younger than his elder sister Anna), it becomes apparent that a woman with a younger husband was not entirely uncommon at the end of the 17th century in the Bernese Alps.

Christina Schweingruber was only 10 ½ years old when her oldest sister Anna, age 35, became the third of her sisters to marry a third brother in the Klossner family. Family Patriarch Christian Schweingruber was 64 years old at that point. Christina no doubt spent most of her time in the old family home with her father. Perhaps her 18-year old twin brothers were still living at home and working with their father on the family farm. It nonetheless seems likely that Christina spent a fair amount of time in the homes of her married sisters, all of whom were married to Klossner brothers.

The Family of the Groom

Through becoming acquainted with Christina Schweingruber's immediate family, it is virtually automatic to become familiar with one of the major lines of the Zwischenflueh branch of the Klossner clan. Hardly

anything is known about Margaretha Waeffler Klossner and Christian Klossner, the parents of the bridegroom. They were married in the parish church at Diemtigen in January of 1659, and in the course of the following seventeen years became the parents of five sons and a daughter.

Based on a detailed evaluation of the Diemtigen parish registers, it seems most likely that Christian Klossner had an elder brother Peter, who married Barbara Waeffler. Because of a lack of other 17th-century records with such family-oriented particulars, and because of the common given names of the children in both the Klossner and Waeffler families, definite proof of the relationships is lacking. Nonetheless, it is most likely that in this earlier generation, two Klossner brothers had married two Waeffler sisters (or at least cousins).

Of the six children born to Christian and Margaretha Waeffler Klossner, Johannes Klossner, the eldest son is the only one about whom nothing other than his christening is known. As already noted, Niklaus Klossner, the second son in the family, became the first to marry into the Schweingruber clan in the fall of 1691, and just a few weeks after his marriage to Elsbeth Schweingruber, his only sister, Margaretha Klossner, married David Schweingruber, one of Elsbeth's brothers. Christian Klossner Jr. married Katharina Schweingruber in the spring of 1695, and a year later Jakob Klossner married Anna Schweingruber.

On a number of occasions a note in the parish registers repeatedly indicates that Jakob and Anna lived at *Blatten*, which today is considered as being part of Meniggrund above Zwischenflueh. Although three old chalet-style buildings – *Upper Blatten*, *Lower Blatten* and *Schwand* (still called "*Blattenschwand*" in the second half of the 19th century) – presently form the group of "*Blatten*" homes, there was only one house "*auf der Blatten*" at the beginning of the 18th century, presumably the one which today is called the "*Upper Blatten*." It is well likely that the *Upper Blatten*
farm house was the home of Christian Klossner Sr. and Margaretha Waeffler Klossner.

A New Klossner Home in Meniggrund

Although built in 1693, and perhaps intended as merely a dairy farm building to be used when the cows were in the nearby pastures, the old house called "*Boden*" (also known as "*Grund*") at Meniggrund above Zwischenflueh, it proved to be too small. By the spring of 1699 – as the severely weathered inscription on one of the outside beams still testifies – Niklaus Klossner and Elsbeth Schweingruber built on the little wing on the rainy, southwest side, probably because they were living there year round with their growing family. Because the only references in the parish registers list "Meniggrund" (and never *Blatten*) as the place of abode for Niklaus and Elsbeth as well as for Christian Jr. and Katharina, it seems likely that perhaps first one family and then the second one made their home in *Boden* in Meniggrund. Their gradually growing families must have been the reason which caused Niklaus and Katharina to extend the living quarters in the house in 1699.

Peter Klossner was 20 when Jakob – his next oldest brother, only three years his senior – married 35-year old Anna Schweingruber. Christina Schweingruber was still only 10½ years old. But it was in those following eight years that Peter witnessed first-hand how his future wife matured from a child to a young woman. With four of Peter's siblings married to four siblings in the Schweingruber family, he not only had continuous opportunity to observe Christina's developing maturity, but also to – gradually – fall in love. However, before the wedding, another citation before the parish church court shook the family.

Absence at Church Services is Cause for an Appearance in Church Court

On September 12, 1704, three months before Christina and Peter's wedding, Elsbeth Schweingruber

Klossner, Niklaus' wife, was summoned to appear before the parish church court on an extraordinary cause. In the minutes of the Diemtigen Consistory Court, Reverend David Maerki noted that Elsbeth Schweingruber, of Meniggrund, appeared before the church bench "*…because of* [her] *complete neglect in attending the sermons and the Blessed Sacrament." Upon being questioned as to why she did that, the reply was, 'It is known to the Lord, He knows all.' Upon being asked if she did not also know, she gave the same answer. The question was* [then] *posed whether or not she would attend the sermon and Holy Sacrament services in the future*." And to this last question, Elsbeth Schweingruber Klossner responded that "*she did not know the will of the Lord; it is known to Him.* [The court] *Graciously demanded and admonished that she recognize her obligations and acquiesce in matters of our church rules, otherwise she would necessarily come to know something different which would be unpleasant. Report to be given to the* [Lower Simmental Bailiwick] *bailiff* [*i.e*., the reigning Lord Castellan at Wimmis Castle].

Attendance at the four annual sacrament services in the parish church was mandatory by law, and serious offenses were reported to political authorities. The local consistory court generally punished inexcusable absence from the sermons with monetary fines. Repeated absences were also reported to political authorities because of suspected affiliation with groups of varying religious, pietistic and/or mystical persuasion.

In the case of Elsbeth Schweingruber Klossner, the revivalist teachings of Bernese Pietism appear to be the basis of her change in thinking concerning the traditional doctrines of the state Reformed Church. Towards the end of March in 1695, the vicar in the Emmental parish of Luetzelflueh, Samuel Schumacher, reported to August Hermann Francke – the renowned German pietist at Halle in the Kingdom of Saxony – about the activities of Bernese pietists, observing that the preaching of the recently installed pastor at Spiez "*…soon caused an awakening of great love* [of Christ's teachings] *in the parish, and* [it] *then spread as a* [kind of] *delightful fragrance in the neighboring parishes*." How was it possible that more than three centuries ago the "delightful fragrance" of gospel teachings in the old church near Spiez Castle on the south shore of Lake Thun could have influenced our ancestral families in Diemtig Valley? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to briefly digress from the family history.

The Beginnings of Bernese Pietism in a Nutshell

In the late spring of 1689, four young theology students from the city of Bern – Samuel Gueldin, Christoph Lutz, Samuel Dick and Samuel Schumacher – were studying in Jean Calvin's city of Geneva, debating and learning French. Towards the end of July or in early August, Christoph Lutz became severely ill and his miserable condition converted his colleagues to spontaneously change their worldly lifestyles and turn over a new leaf. They remained "*…together continually in supplication and prayer*," reading "*…the Word of God diligently, and other profound books, which showed us the path of a holy life and fervent Christianity; also began according to our means to dispense comfort to the poor*."

In retrospect, Samuel Gueldin referred to what he called the "*beginning…of our Pietism*." The center point of the new pietistic movement was Bern, where Christoph Lutz preached to people of all social levels, including even those from the old patrician families of the capital city. Lutz and fellow preacher Jakob Dachs had been giving sermons since 1694 in the Hospital parish church of the capital city. Pietism first gained a foothold in the city of Bern in the church which was especially intended for the "poor." In the surrounding region, in such places as Stettlen – where Samuel Gueldin became pastor – and Belp, as well as the rural parish of Melchnau – where Samuel Schumacher served as vicar until his death – and the Bernese Oberland alpine parish of Spiez on the south shore of Lake Thun, where Samuel Dick accepted an appointment as the preacher, devotional and spiritual experiences came to be quite common for those who heard the sermons there.

Wherever they labored, movements of change took place in the ecclesiastical parishes of the state; a new spirit was felt in the churches where they preached. People came from far away just to listen to their

messages. Many of those who heard the sermons found joy once again – or for the first time ever – in their faith in God. Questions concerning their beliefs, repressed hopes and desires came to the fore. As a result, people intensively sought after a purer form of communion, after a more credible manner in forming their daily lives and the services in which they worshipped.

A thirst for religious experience, for a personal conversion to faith in God became apparent, and its intensity and propagation were something new. Furthermore, this reorientation against the "decay of Christianity" took place at a time which qualified as the so-called "last days." According to expectations throughout much of Europe, the Millenium was very near and represented – to those who looked forward to it – *the* challenge for Christians, churches and communities.

As a result, those who sought to quench this thirst and follow the signs of the times no longer necessarily visited church services where they lived, but where they felt inspired to go in order to hear an "anointed" sermon, regardless of the distance involved. During the week they met in so-called "cottage meetings," generally without a pastor, where someone would read from a devotional book of writings by, for instance, Reverend Georg Thormann in Luetzelflueh, who had actively engaged himself together with his French-born wife on behalf of the Huguenot refugees. The people who had gathered to strengthen themselves in spirit joined in song and prayer and uplifting conversation. Such private religious gatherings – whether in the farm house of a rural peasant or in the apartment of a fellow believer in the city – occasionally came to be competitive with the public church services. Pietists, theologians and lay people gradually began to criticize the church, questioning such things as the Holy Communion or the lacking transparency in the state appointments of pastors.

To the great surprise of many, Samuel Koenig, the Bernese theologian, orientalist and mathematician, took up the cause of the pietists and worked on their behalf, especially amongst the theology students. The city of Bern soon became divided into pietists and anti-pietists. As the controling organ of the state church, the Bernese Great Council – the parliament of the Republic – attempted to pass 19 theses against Pietism in 1696. However, in December, the pietist sympathizers in the city were strong enough to have Samuel Gueldin appointed as a vicar in the cathedral parish of the capital. By the spring of 1698, a state commission was named to investigate concerning "…*quackery, unauthorized meetings and teachings on separation*." Among the Bernese government officials, suspicion was gradually aroused that Pietism was not only theologically and ecclesiastically but also politically precarious.

In August of 1698, a newly appointed governmental Commission on Religion began to sound out the workings of the pietistic movement. The Reverend Samuel Koenig refused to stop referring to the Millenium in his sermons and was therefore suspended from preaching. Based on the commission's report, the Great Council pronounced their judgment in June of 1699. Samuel Koenig's theological competence was revoked and he was banned from the Republic. Samuel Gueldin and Christoph Lutz were released from office unless countermanded; Samuel Schumacher and others were officially reprimanded. Following the process of the pietists, a church synod was called and it ratified 20 theses against Pietism, a new version of those which had been turned down in 1696. Pietism in the Republic of Bern had become theologically impossible.

Reverend Dick's Pietistic Preaching at Spiez

As noted earlier, it was Samuel Schumacher – one of the four young theology students in Geneva in the summer of 1689 – who in his lengthy letter to August Hermann Francke in the old German town of Halle included a very brief overview of the first 18 months of Samuel Dick's pietistic activity as the pastor in Spiez. Reverend Dick took the oath of office as parson of the lakeside parish on April 7, 1693. On the day after his official installation, he took the deliberate step of inviting a number of the parish poor to the parsonage, needy persons who were being supported from local alms, and "… *gave them a meal for the body and also for the*

soul." As sensitive to the interrelationships of spiritual and temporal needs as Reverend Lutz in Bern and Vicar Schumacher in Luetzelflueh, Pastor Dick apparently also sought contact with those in his parish who were at the bottom of the social ladder. While seated at the table, Reverend Dick talked with his guests not only about gospel principles but also about the everyday worries which caused them concern. As a result, "*…God so melted his heart with such love, that he had to withdraw from them and pour out his tearful eyes and heart to God in his* [private] *chamber*."

In his early sermons at Spiez, Reverend Dick preached "*…so powerfully on the necessity and nature of true spiritual rebirth*" because of the "*…great corruption amongst the vast multitude…*" that a great many of those who were personally moved by his message thought it was necessary for them to join the Anabaptists (Mennonites) in order to gain salvation. Time and again during the 17th century, the affinity between Pietism and Anabaptism had been confusing to observers on the outside. In teaching them the reason for such a misunderstanding, Reverend Dick gained "*…a goodly number of devout souls*" in his parish.

The vicar from Luetzelflueh closed his short account of Reverend Dick's activity with the observation that "*…it is also a good testimony that his preaching is powerful, because one and another of the world's wicked children indicated to him that if he did not stop preaching so sharply, they would leave his fold and go to one of the neighboring parishes to hear the sermons. He has started private visits and finds them to be of great benefit*." It was during the first 18 months – the time period about which Vicar Schumacher wrote to Professor Francke – of labor at Spiez that Reverend Dick "*…had soon caused an awakening of great love* [of Christ's teachings] *in the parish, and* [it] *then spread as a* [kind of] *delightful fragrance in the neighboring parishes*."

Solidarity with Pietism in Diemtigen

After all of this digression from the family history, it finally becomes possible to attempt to answer the question as to how the "fragrance" of Reverend Dick's message of "*True Christianity*" – from the title of the four books completed in 1610 by Johann Arndt and recommended, along with the Bible, by Reverend Christoph Lutz in Bern, as edifying works – could have spread from Spiez to Diemtig Valley.

In the early winter of 1698, Katharina Allet Maerki, wife of the pastor at Diemtigen, gave birth to a daughter, Anna Katharina Maerki, in the parsonage. On December 4, 1698, the Reverend Jakob Lutstorff, pastor of the Swiss Reformed parish at Erlenbach in Simmental, presided at the christening ceremony in the Diemtigen parish church. Reverend Maerki permanently recorded the names of his daughter's godparents in the parish registers, two godmothers and a godfather, the latter being none other than the Reverend "*…Samuel Dick, at present the ardently faithful servant of Jesus Christ at Spiez*," who, albeit, was not present on the occasion, causing Pastor Maerki to request Giligan Frey – treasurer of the Diemtigen parish, as well as both consistory court judge and civil court juror in Diemtigen – to stand as proxy for the pietistic parson from Spiez.

In December of 1698 – some 5½ years after Samuel Dick had been appointed as pastor at Spiez, about 3 ½ years after David Maerki had assumed his pastoral duties at Diemtigen, and only a few months after the government of the city-state of Bern had newly named a Commission on Religion to investigate the pietistic movement in the republic – Reverend Maerki and his wife were without doubt avid supporters of the pietistic teachings of Reverend Samuel Dick. What Vicar Schumacher had termed the "fragrance" of Pastor Dick's teachings must have been noticeable – perhaps even for a period of some time – in the sermons preached by Reverend Maerki in the Diemtigen parish church.

It is recalled that in the fall of 1691, at the age of 21, Elsbeth had married Niklaus Klossner. Some seven months later, their first daughter – Margaretha Klossner – was born. In the summer of 1693, Elsbeth gave birth to twin daughters, Anna Klossner and Christina Klossner, both of whom were christened by Reverend

Abraham Walther. From these facts, it therefore appears that sometime between the summer of 1695 – when Reverend Maerki assumed the leadership of the Diemtigen pastorate – and the close of 1698, Elsbeth Schweingruber Klossner experienced the current "religious awakening" of the time, something which – must have – changed her life.

However, among the godparents who stood as witnesses at the christening of Elsbeth and Niklaus' eldest twin daughter in 1693 – Abraham Thoenen of Zwieselberg; Anna Eschler, the wife of Michael Regez; and Christina Stucki, the wife of Christian Wiedmer (one of Elsbeth Schweingruber Klossner's first cousins) in the hamlet of Oeyen at Zwischenflueh – the name of Anna Eschler Regez is remarkable. She is the same woman who some five years later was destined to also become the godmother of Anna Katharina Maerki, who was the goddaughter of Reverend Samuel Dick at Spiez!

As mentioned above, Pastor Dick was installed at Spiez just a few months before the birth of Elsbeth's twin daughters. By the time the twins were born, at least most of those who had been invited to Reverend Dick's day-after-installation-dinner had also realized that they indeed did not need to join the Anabaptists in order to gain salvation. It was still some two years in the future before Reverend Maerki would become parson at Diemtigen, nonetheless that "delightful fragrance" which the parson at Spiez had begun to disseminate through his teachings had started to spread itself in the area. It is therefore very well possible that through her close friend Anna Eschler Regez, Elsbeth Schweingruber Klossner became acquainted with the pietistic interpretations of the gospel long before Reverend Maerki even arrived in Diemtigen.

The Anabaptist "Connection"

At this point it is recalled that "*Trina Mani, Bendicht Schweingruber's housewife*" – the paternal grandmother of the five Schweingruber siblings who married Klossner siblings – went to Erlenbach i.S. and stood as the godmother of Elsbeth Ammann in 1610. The Schweingruber's and Ammann's were well acquainted with each other long before Jakob Ammann, the "arch-Anabaptist," was even born.

In the summer of 1696, the twins of innkeeper Johannes Schweingruber – the eldest brother of Christina Schweingruber Klossner – and his wife, Jakob and Barbara Schweingruber, were christened by Reverend Maerki at Diemtigen. One of Jakob Schweingruber's godfathers was Abraham Loertscher of Latterbach, a consistory court judge and parish welfare commissioner of the Erlenbach parish. As supervisor of the Erlenbach parish charities, he held the same office as Christian Schweingruber Sr. – the grandfather of the infant twin – in Diemtigen.

Abraham Loertscher never took the vows of the Anabaptist faith, nor did his father, Johannes Loertscher. However, in 1662 Johannes Loertscher Sr. published a 41-verse piece of poetry at Bern entitled *Ein schön new Geistlich Lied* ["*A Beautiful New Spiritual Song, written as a warning and preservative of such sundry pieces, which, unfortunately are now vanishing*"]. The poem reflects Johannes Loertscher's intensive study of the Bible, something which Anabaptists saw as the only foundation of their faith and conscience. That publication must have been well known – if indeed not owned – by Christian Schweingruber and Christina Mani Schweingruber, who were the parents of the first two of their 14 children when it was published.

The events which left indelible marks on the Loertscher family were – without doubt – closely followed by the Schweingruber family at Diemtigen. By 1666, "*three persons devoted to Anabaptist teachings, named Johannes, Melchior and Anna Loertscher, of Latterbach, siblings,*" – Johannes Sr.'s three eldest children – had been imprisoned in the orphanage at Bern. Although the authorities tried to convince the prisoners of their "*silly ideas,*" the Loertscher children continued "*to persist in clinging to their whims and monotonous thinking.*"

In the summer of 1667, the Loertscher brothers and another Anabaptist escaped from prison. However, in September, the two brothers were recaptured and again incarcerated in the orphanage. Life for the prisoners became increasingly difficult because the Bernese authorities regarded Anabaptists as "*corrupters*" of religious morality. Punishments – including banishment in foreign service, "*but not on the galleys*"– were intensified as of November 1670.

The situation changed in February of 1671: "*And in order to fill these people with alarm, some of the most spiteful Anabaptists are to be punished with galley service*." Although the galleys were feared as much as the death sentence, six of the prisoners remained adamant. On Thursday, March 16, 1671, Johannes Loertscher Jr. and Melchior Loertscher and four fellow brethren were deported from Bern chained in shackles. Upon their embarkation in Italy, the prisoners – by means of an extraordinary ruling – were "*allowed the*[ir] *beards*."

In the summer of 1673, magistrates at Bern authorized Councilman Johann Ludwig Engel, "*...to travel to Venice...,*
and seek to learn about the Anabaptists who had been sent to the galleys and inquire about their status." By the end of the year, Johannes Jr. and Melchior Loertscher were back in the Republic of Bern. They petitioned government authorities in an attempt to assume the inheritance of their father, who apparently had died while they were serving out the sentence. However, in accordance with the prevailing laws, the authorities refused to grant either the former prisoners or their younger siblings any of the inheritance.

It was in the fall of 1673 that Christina Mani Schweingruber gave birth to her son Christian Schweingruber Jr., the ninth of her 14 children. It is virtually certain that Christina and Christian Sr. closely followed the sparse news of the Loertscher brothers escape from prison, their recapture, their being sentenced to the galleys and their return home. It would still be another 12 years before Christina Schweingruber Klossner was born.

From a present-day perspective it seems clear that the Schweingrubers – or, perhaps more precisely, some of the women in the Schweingruber clan – apparently had always taken sincere interest in religious matters. Because no known records of any kind indicate how they literally felt about such issues, it would remain speculative to suggest what they might have thought. Nonetheless, a noticeable thread of the affinity between Anabaptism and Pietism mentioned above definitely passes through the history of the Schweingruber family during the 16th and 17th centuries.

With the above digression from the family history, we now return to the case of Elsbeth Schweingruber Klossner. It simply remains unknown as to how the Schweingruber and Klossner families reacted to Elsbeth's religious "awakening" and devotion. Because the parish court case was only three months before Christina and Peter's mid-December marriage, there can hardly be any doubt but what her church court appearance was in the minds – and probably even conversations – of most of the relatives and friends who gathered for the wedding festivities.

Although the Diemtigen Consistory Court had officially notified the reigning castellan at Wimmis Castle of Elsbeth's obstinacy, no record is known to indicate any reaction on his part. It is possible that local and even family politics played a role in aiding the lord bailiff to at least officially ignore the charges brought against Elsbeth Schweingruber Klossner.

The Wedding

On December 17, 1704, Reverend David Maerki united Peter Klossner – who at that time held the office of Sergeant Major in the bailiwick militia – and Christina Schweingruber in marriage. The bridegroom was only seven weeks short of turning 29; three months before her marriage, the bride had turned 19. Peter's father,

presumably also his mother and Christina's mother had passed away, but Christina's father – Christian Schweingruber Sr., the former civil court juror and parish welfare commissioner – was only a few weeks short of his 73rd birthday.

As noted earlier, Peter's eldest brother Niklaus and Christina's elder sister Elsbeth were already the parents of three daughters (including twins), and at the time of the wedding Elsbeth was some six months pregnant with her youngest child and only son. Christian Klossner Jr. and Katharina Schweingruber Klossner were the parents of a son and a daughter and Katharina was also some six months pregnant with her third child and second son. Margaretha Klossner – the only sister of the five Klossner brothers – and David Schweingruber were the parents of two sons and a daughter. And last, but certainly not least, Jakob and Anna Schweingruber Klossner were the parents of Jakob Jr. – their son of nearly 8 years who was destined to become the father of Anna Klossner Klossner (the paternal grandmother of Rosina Katharina Klossner Kunz) and Margaretha Klossner Kunz (the paternal grandmother of John Kunz I) – and a four-month old daughter, who was also named Christina.

Christina's oldest brother, innkeeper Johannes Schweingruber at Diemtigen village, and his wife Susanna were the parents of six daughters – the second of the girls, also named Christina Schweingruber, was five months older than her cousin, the bride – and three sons. Christian Schweingruber Jr. – Christina's second oldest brother – and his wife were the parents of a 17-month old son, but inasmuch as Christian Jr. was working (presumably as a dairy farmer) near the shores of Lake Geneva in French-speaking Switzerland, it is well possible that they were not present at the wedding. Christina's 27-year old twin brothers, Konrad and Benedikt, were still single and perhaps working with their father (and brothers) on the family estate in Diemtig Valley.

Besides the numerous relatives in the Klossner and Schweingruber families, Mani relatives from Daerstetten (where Christina's mother had been born and raised) as well as from Erlenbach i.S. (where it appears most likely that Christina's paternal grandmother – Katharina Mani Schweingruber – originated) were also in attendance. If there was music and dancing, then Johannes (the brides's oldest brother) had presumably obtained the necessary permit for the occasion. Pietistic as the tendencies in the family appear to have been, it seems plausible to believe that the poor who made the pilgrimage to Diemtigen village were not ignored.

At Home with a Little Family

The notes in the parish registers repeatedly indicate that Peter and Christina made their home at *Blatten* in Meniggrund above Zwischenflueh. It is also clear from the Diemtigen parish records that Jakob and Anna Schweingruber Klossner and their two children lived on the farm at *Blatten*, too. However, it was not at all unusual for two families two live under the same roof and it was only rare that they had separate fireplaces. The old *Blatten*
farmhouse had only one hearth. Inasmuch as Anna Schweingruber – Christina's eldest sister – must have been the main person to look after her 4½-year old sister following the death of their mother, it does not really seem unusual that upon their marriage Christina and her husband would have moved into the house where Anna and Jakob were living.

A year after their marriage, Christina and Peter's first child, Peter Klossner Jr., was christened by Reverend Maerki in the village church at Diemtigen on Christmas day of 1705. Some sixteen months later, Christina and Peter's first daughter – Christina Klossner – was born.

Sisters before the Diemtigen Consistory Court

According to the minutes of the Diemtigen parish bench recorded by Reverend Maerki on July 22, 1707, the eight church elders met in session, before whom

> *appeared: Elsbeth and Katharina Schweingruber, both sisters, and the womenfolk* [respectively] *married to Niklaus and Christian Klossner, two brothers, because they have completely divested themselves of external* [attendance at] *church services and no longer want either to attend the sermons or the Holy Sacrament.*
>
> *1. When asked why they did not partake of the Lord's Supper during the recent Pentecost time* [June 12, 1707], *the answer was: It had not then been the Lord's will; the Lord had not revealed anything to them.*
>
> *2. Upon then being questioned: Have you made up your minds for the future if from now on* [both of] *you will attend the public church services and by next opportunity go to the Holy Sacrament service? But the reply* [was that] *they could make no promise for the future, etc.; the Lord would lead and guide them.*
>
> *The entire affair amounts to their rejection of all outward appearances and* [their] *reliance upon God's direct leadership and guidance. To be sure,* [they both] *consider the Word of God as the only rule for their happiness and lives;* [they] *also read in the* [New] *Testament and in the* [Book of] *Psalms; and* [too, they] *pray. But they do not want the preaching of the Word* [of God].
>
> *Despite all the obliging encouragement as well as the remonstrance in the solemn orders of My Highly Esteemed and Gracious Lords* [of the Republic's magistracy], *nothing* [*i.e.*, no promises] *could be obtained from them.*
>
> *Result – Therefore, the Honorable Consistory Court demands that the matter be forwarded by the Presiding Judge to the Well and Highly Esteemed Lord Castellan.*

At the time they were summoned before the Diemtigen Consistory Court, Elsbeth – now the mother of three daughters and a son – was 37, and Katharina was six weeks short of turning 33 and seven months pregnant with her second daughter and fourth child, Christina. Another three years would pass before Katharina gave birth to her youngest child, Magdalena, who was destined to become the paternal grandmother of David Knutti, Rosina Knutti Kunz's father. Noteworthy is that within three weeks in the early spring of 1705, both of the Schweingruber sisters had given birth to sons, both of whom were named Niklaus Klossner. Michael Regez – whose wife (Anna Eschler Regez) was the godmother of Elsbeth's twin daughter, Anna, as well as Reverend Maerki's daughter Anna Katharina – was one of Niklaus Klossner Jr.'s godfathers. His first cousin, the elder Niklaus Klossner, was destined to become the maternal grandfather of Katharina Mani Knutti, Rosina Knutti Kunz's mother.

The appearance of the Schweingruber sisters before the parish church court is extraordinary not only because of the early time period, but particularly because the two women candidly stated their rejection of certain state church principles before the ecclesiastical bench. Furthermore, between September 1704 and July 1707, Elsbeth Schweingruber, Niklaus Klossner's wife, had obviously, as it were, "converted" her sister, Katharina Schweingruber, Christian Klossner's wife, to the devoutly religious awakening in which she had come to believe. The Schweingruber sisters unequivocally and publicly declared their faith that "*the Lord would lead and guide them*" in their personal quest for religious truth.

As in the case of Elsbeth Schweingruber Klossner some three years earlier, the religious insubordination of the two women was reported to Lord Castellan Emanuel Pretelli at Wimmis Castle and, once again, no other record indicates any kind of further action. It simply remains unknown as to why the women were not officially censured for their actions. The reason for the reigning lord bailiff of Lower Simmental Castellany to have literally shut both eyes in reference to the matter is difficult to interpret. Perhaps that very fact indeed

reflects something of the religious commotion of the period.

More Children and the Death of the Family Patriarch

At the end of May in 1708, Christina and Peter's second son, Christian Klossner, was christened at Diemtigen. Earlier that spring work started on the nearby *Blattenschwand* house, which only comprised what is presently the middle section. By the fall the simple dairy farm building – similar to many in the Kander Valley – was completed and no doubt used exclusively for such purposes for many decades. Presumably, the Klossner brothers jointly built it, particularly Jakob and Peter Klossner who are known to have lived in the old *Upper Blatten*
home. At least theoretically, the new building may have been constructed in conjunction with the purchase of a piece of additional property next to the *Blatten* estate. The *Schwand* property has its own spring of water up above the house.

At the end of June in 1709, Christina and Peter's second daughter – Margaretha Klossner – was christened. Two years later, in August of 1711, Anna Klossner – Christina and Peter's fifth child and third daughter – was christened in the parish church.

At some point between July of 1710 and December of 1712, Christian Klossner Jr. – the husband of Katharina Schweingruber Klossner – passed away. Of their five children, at least a little son (who was destined to become the maternal grandfather of Katharina Mani Knutti, the mother of Rosina Knutti Kunz) and two infant daughters (the youngest of which was destined to become the paternal grandmother of David Knutti, the father of Rosina Knutti Kunz) were left behind.

Christina Schweingruber Klossner was five months pregnant with her sixth child when her father, Christian Schweingruber Sr., died in his home on Little Diemtig Peak above Diemtigen village. If not by walking, someone – perhaps one of Christian's sons-in-law or one of his elder grandsons – must have ridden a horse up to Meniggrund to report that the family patriarch had passed away. He was 81 years and 2 months old.

Reverend Maerki recorded the burial of Christian Schweingruber Sr. in the parish register on March 6, 1713, noting – apparently amazed – that "*…the children, children's children, and children's children's children which he has left behind numbers 50.*" The very fact that in the early 18th century this rural alpine farming family kept track of the number (of living, and, therefore, presumably also deceased) in the clan indeed reflects at least a kind of family unity. Eight of Christian's fourteen children survived him and must have been present at his funeral, assuming that the sixth of Christina's eleven pregnancies within 13 years was proceeding without complications. No doubt most of the grandchildren – five of them were destined to become our ancestors (although one was not yet born) – and great-grandchildren were also in attendance.

A Growing Family

Christina and Peter's third son – Johannes Klossner – was born in the summer of 1713. At the end of September in 1714, a fourth son of Christina and Peter's was given the name Jakob Klossner at his christening. Jakob Klossner's christening record is the first one known in which Peter Klossner is identified as a lieutenant in the militia of the Lower Simmental Castellany.

Four and one-half years later, in the spring of 1719, Christina gave birth to her fourth and youngest son who was named Niklaus Klossner. The godmother who witnessed his christening was Anna Agenstein, daughter of Lower Simmental Bailiwick treasurer (and future adjutant lord bailiff) Peter Agenstein, the mayor of the borough of Diemtigen. Niklaus Klossner was destined to become the paternal grandfather of Rosina

Katharina Klossner Kunz, who was born a year after his death.

In the spring of 1722, Magdalena Klossner became the ninth child and fourth daughter in Christina and Peter's family. Fourteen months later, in mid-July of 1723, Christina Schweingruber Klossner gave birth to Barbara Klossner, her fifth daughter. Three weeks after Barbara was christened, 59-year old David Schweingruber passed away. David's widow, Margaretha Klossner Schweingruber, was the only sister of the four Klossner brothers who had married Schweingruber sisters. David Schweingruber was survived by his married son and daughter, and a 28-year old single son.

Diemtigen District Civil Court juror Niklaus Klossner Sr. – the first of the Klossner siblings to marry into the Schweingruber family – passed away at the age of 61 in mid-summer of 1726. He was survived by his widow (Elsbeth Schweingruber Klossner), their son and three daughters, and at least three granddaughters and four grandsons. Only some five weeks later, 31-year old Christian Schweingruber, the youngest son of David and Margaretha Klossner Schweingruber, "*…suddenly died on the Vorderen Mennigen Alp* [above Meniggrund] *while haying alongside his cousin Niklaus Klossner, after suffering a stroke and taking only three breaths thereafter*."

Peter and Christina's youngest child – their eleventh – and sixth daughter, Susanna Klossner, was born in mid-January of 1729, nearly four months after Christina's 44th birthday. In Susanna's christening record Reverend Maerki noted that Lieutenant Peter Klossner was also the schoolmaster in Zwischenflueh. As an officer, Peter Klossner was not only widely respected but he could also read and write, as opposed to a vast number of alpine farmers.

Towards the end of February in 1732, Christina Klossner – Peter and Christina's eldest daughter – married 28-year old Niklaus Gempeler Jr. from the hamlet of Schwenden at the back of Diemtig Valley. Some six week following the wedding, Reverend Maerki recorded the burial of "*Hans Klossner, the Lieutenant's son, a young man of 19 years*" in the Register of Deaths. The cause of his untimely death is unknown.

Late in November of 1732, Niklaus Gempeler (III) was christened in the village church at Diemtigen, and as had been the case in the previous generation, his godparents also included close relatives: Niklaus' godmother was 23-year old Margaretha Klossner, his mother's sister; godfathers were David Schweingruber, the 26-year old, eldest son of Benedikt Schweingruber, one of Christina Schweingruber Klossner's twin brothers; and Niklaus Mani Jr., age 17, who was destined to become the husband of Magdalena Schweingruber, one of David and Margaretha Klossner Schweingruber's granddaughters.

Death of the Lieutenant

On April 6, 1733, Reverend Maerki buried "*little Susanna Klossner, the Lieutenant's daughter, age 4 years and 3 months*," the youngest of Peter and Christina's eleven children.

At the beginning of December of that same year, Lieutenant Peter Klossner passed away at his *Upper Blatten* home at Meniggrund in the hamlet of Oeyen in Zwischenflueh. The local school teacher was 57 years and 10 months old. Peter Klossner and Christina Schweingruber had been married for 29 years. He was survived by her, nine of their eleven children (five daughters and four sons) and 1-year old grandson Niklaus Gempeler III. Lieutenant Peter Klossner was buried at Diemtigen on December 5, 1733. The reunion of the family at a funeral was traditional. In commenting upon the traditions in the parish in 1805, Reverend Johann Jakob Engemann observed that although the sumptuous festivities at christenings and marriages were no longer celebrated (perhaps as a result of the so-called "French Revolution"), the meal served to invited guests following a funeral often amounted to considerable expense.

Further Births, Marriages and Deaths

Less than three months following Peter Klossner's death, his eldest daughter (Christina Klossner Gempeler) gave birth to her first daughter, Christina Gempeler, in February 1734. A second daughter was born to Niklaus and Christina Klossner Gempeler early in the spring of 1736 and she was named Magdalena Gempeler. In mid-September of that same year, 76-year old Anna Schweingruber Klossner – Christina's eldest sister living (presumably with her under the same roof) on the *Upper Blatten* farm – died. She was survived by her husband, consistory court judge Jakob Klossner Sr., their son and daughter, and four granddaughters and a grandson.

On October 7, 1737, 26-year old Anna Klossner, Peter and Christina's third daughter, married Andreas Wiedmer from the *Anger* farm on the valley floor in Zwischenflueh. Their first home was at *Blatten*, presumably the *Upper Blatten* farm home rather than than the nearby dairy farm building at *Blattenschwand*.

Christina Klossner Gempeler gave birth to her second son – Christian Gempeler – in the summer of 1738. He was christened by Reverend Johann Rudolf Wolf, the successor of Reverend David Maerki, who had passed away the previous year. Among Christian Gempeler's godparents were two of his mother's siblings, the aforementioned Anna Klossner Wiedmer and Niklaus Klossner.

Anna Klossner Wiedmer gave birth to her first child, a daughter named Margaretha Wiedmer, in mid-January of 1739. Margaretha was the fifth grandchild of widow Christina Schweingruber Klossner.

The winter of 1739/40 was severe and because the spring of 1740 was one of the coldest in several centuries, the snow in the upper Diemtig Valley did not melt until June. Stephan Agenstein and Anna Sulzener Agenstein operated the *Wampflen*
mill at Zwischenflueh and the inscription on their new home there was completed "…*in the year 1740 when the extremely late and severe winter did not end until June*."

In May of 1742, 34-year old Christian Klossner, Peter and Christina's son, passed away. Other than the fact that he was single, nothing else is known about him.

It was mid-January in 1743 when Margaretha Klossner Schweingruber, David Schweingruber's widow, passed away. She was survived by her son and daughter and five of her seven grandchildren.

Early in the spring of 1743, Christina Klossner Gempeler gave birth to her last child – David Gemepeler – at her home in Schwenden at the back of Diemtig Valley. Six days after David Gempeler's christening on March 17th
in the church at Diemtigen, the family gathered once again in the parish church for the funeral of consistory court judge Jakob Klossner, Sr., who at the age of 70 had died "at Meniggrund," presumably in the old *Upper Blatten*
home which he shared with his sister-in-law, Christina Schweingruber Klossner. He was survived by his son, daughter, four granddaughters and five grandsons.

Christina's twin grandchildren, Johannes and Anna Wiedmer, were born during the summer of 1743 to Anna Klossner Wiedmer. Christina's twin brothers – schoolmaster Konrad Schweingruber, had passed away some three years earlier – were nearly eight years old than herself.

Peter Klossner Jr. – Christina's first-born son – married Margaretha Werren, a widowed second cousin, at the beginning of January in 1744, and became the step-father of Margaretha's three sons – ages 6, 12 and 15 – through her first marriage to Peter Wiedmer.

And in mid-December, Christina gained a new son-in-law when her 35-year old daughter Margaretha married David Arznet. Both of the wedding ceremonies were performed by Reverend Johann Rudolf Kyburz, who became the new pastor at Diemtigen upon the death of Reverend Wolf.

Peter Arznet, Margaretha Klossner Arznet's first-born child, was named after her father (Lieutenant Peter Klossner) when he was christened in the summer of 1745. Three months later Margaretha Werren Klossner, Peter Jr.'s wife, gave birth to their only child, Jakob Klossner (who was destined to become the maternal grandfather of John Kunz I).

Christina's twin granddaughter, Anna Wiedmer, died in the summer of 1747, shortly before her fourth birthday. In the spring of 1749, Anna Klossner Wiedmer gave birth to her youngest daughter, who was also named Anna, after her deceased twin sister.

Wedding of Three Siblings

Three of the four weddings which Reverend Kyburz recorded in the Diemtigen parish registers on January 23, 1750, concerned Christina's children: 35-year old Jakob Klossner – Christina's fourth son – married Anna Werren, his first cousin once removed (she being the granddaughter of Niklaus and Elsbeth Schweingruber Klossner); Niklaus Klossner, age 30 – the fifth son of Peter and Christina – was wed to Anna Klossner, the 20-year old daughter of his first cousin; and Barbara Klossner – Christina's 26-year old, youngest (surviving) daughter – married Peter Werren, a brother of the aforenmentioned Anna Werren Klossner. The other couple who married that day were Barbara Klossner – the 31-year old eldest sister of Christina's new daughter-in-law Anna Klossner Klossner (who was destined to become the paternal grandmother of Rosina Katharina Klossner Kunz) – and Christian Kunz, age 33 (whose younger brother was destined to marry Margaretha Klossner – Barbara's and Anna's sister – in 1762, he and Barbara thereby destined to becoming the paternal grandparents of John Kunz I).

Assuming that her health was still comparatively good, Christina Schweingruber Klossner – now 64 years old – must have had a front-row seat in the parish church at Diemtigen when three of her nine children were married.

Fourteeen months later, Christina Schweingruber Klossner died of asthma in her *Upper Blatten* home in Meniggrund above Zwischenflueh. Besides her sister, Katharina Schweingruber Klossner, age 75, and 73-year old Benedikt Schweingruber, one of her twin brothers, Christina was survived by four married daughters, a 28-year old single daughter (Magdalena, who married Jakob Werren two years later), three married sons, and perhaps as many as ten grandchildren. Six granddaughters and ten grandsons would still be born (one of them being Christian Klossner, in 1755, who was destined to become the father of Rosina Katharina Klossner Kunz).

The majority of Christina's immediate family must have been present at the funeral in the parish church at Diemtigen on March 20, 1751, assuming that the pregnancies of her daughters Margaretha (in her seventh month) and Barbara (in her sixth month) were proceeding without complications.

Conclusion

Three hundred years after their marriage, it is only possible to catch small glimpses in the lives of Christina Schweingruber Klossner and Peter Klossner, to see them in settings as children, spouses, parents and grandparents. Although the facts are sparse and virtually nothing is known about their personal thoughts and dealings, it is hoped that these pieces of the mosaic of our family history will better reiterate the fact that

despite our not really “knowing” too much about most of our ancestors, we carry – for better or for worse – their DNA with us and they are all an important part of our heritage.

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