

The History of the Glarus Families, especially Those of the Sernf Valley.

A Medley of Pictures from Past Days.

(Zur Geschichte glarnerischer Geschlechter, derjenigen des Sernftales insbesondere. Allerlei Bilder aus vergangenen Tagen)

By Gottfried Heer, 1920

Printing and publishing by Rud. Tschudy, Glarus, 1920

Translated by Sue Wolf

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

XXII. The Freitags

[pg. 141-143]

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

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

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

In 1749, Lieutenant Waltert Freitag had been elected to [be one of] the nine judges, in place of the deceased Jakob Elmer.

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

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

Although these pronouncements show that the Freitags felt a vocation for participation in the governmental rule, and that often had cost something, so, to be sure, that was true most of all of Federal Councilor Joh. Heinrich Freitag, who, in 1790, had been elected by the

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

Heinrich Ries, who was happy because of the prize, had also not dreamed of grasping the reins of power as cantonal administrative governor of Werdenberg; he had doubtless also not known from where to appropriate so much money for paying the indicated burdens. However, Councilor J. Heinrich Freitag had enjoyed his former administration so much that he willingly interceded for Heinrich Ries, that is, he didn’t simply remove the designated burdens for him, but no doubt also still saddled Reis with an ordinary gratuity. The vassals in the count’s domain of Werdenberg did not feel quite as great joy in this business; indeed, they were not asked for their opinions.

An identical thing happened again in 1796. This time Heinrich Leuzinger, son of Tobias Leuzinger, from Glarus, received the grand prize, and again Cantonal Administrative Governor J. Heinrich Freitag announced him as purchaser. He had, however, known well to make “good profits” in both preceding periods of office, so this time his rule concluded with fear. From France hither the cock-crow of freedom was heard in the Swiss vassal lands, and, as the citizens of [Canton] Vaud greeted the entrance of the French with enthusiasm, so also the Glarner vassals in the Werdenberg domain cried out that the yoke which they had now carried long enough be thrown off. The rule of J. Heinr. Freitag, who was reputed to be a real bloodsucker, had made the Werdenbergers still all the more hungry for the “sweetness of freedom”. Freitag thought it advisable not to wait for an official recall from his Glarus masters, but to anticipate the people’s dislike that was directed against him personally by fleeing to escape. “Freitägli,” one of his vassals is said to have called out to him on the evening of his escape, “it is now time that you clear out; I have now turned to the time of “*Samstag*” [Saturday]; I have now had enough of *Fritäg* [Friday].”

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

^a An ancient Glarner term, from at least the 6th century A.D., which is still used today in Canton Glarus to denote the commune of the citizens, i.e. those who have inherited or purchased the *Tagwen* rights (this may only partially coincide with the political commune). It is derived from *Tage Wann*, meaning the work someone could

perform in one day in the commonly-held fields, pastures and forests. Over the years the number of *Tagwen* in the canton has varied considerably, with the present-day number being 29. Also its duties have changed – from jointly working on and enjoying the benefits of its common property, to administering all the commune’s public interests, to (today) administering and enjoying the benefits of its common property. [SW]

^b The Popular Assembly, which is the Glarus cantonal legislative body. It is made up of all the citizens of the communes who have full citizenship rights. [SW]