

Tschudy family fabrications

Compiled by Duane H. Freitag

While genealogists have been fascinated with the story of the Tschudy/ Tschudi family history going back to the year 870, the fact is that the old family tree is mostly a fabrication. In an academic study published in 1938, Frieda Gallati showed how Gilg Aegidius Tschudi, the “father of Swiss history,” created this illusion over many years.¹

Frieda held a doctorate in history from the University of Zurich and, besides her specialty of Swiss foreign policy during the Thirty Years War, was considered the foremost scholar of Aegidius Tschudi. She died in Glarus in 1955.²

Aegidius Tschudi lived from 1505 to 1572 and had assembled a huge collection of documents from early Switzerland, sometimes borrowing them from archives and never returning them. Later in life he used the documents as the basis for his *Chronicon Helveticum*, the first comprehensive history of Switzerland.³ Like other early historians, he often elaborated on facts and legends with his own inventions in order to create a more coherent chronology. While the accuracy of his works has been questioned, his achievements remain



Gilg Aegidius Tschudi

¹ Most details in this report were translated from Frieda Gallati’s article, “The Tschudi Family Legend,” that was published in the 1938 *Jahrbuch des Historischen Vereins des Kantons Glarus* [Yearbook of the Historical Society of Canton Glarus]. The extensive article also discussed Tschudi’s portrayal of the older Glarus history. (Gilg Aegidius Tschudi is recorded as Tschudi #93 in the Kubli-Müller Glarus genealogy records.)

² Euphrosina Frieda Gallati was the daughter of Rudolf and Martha Gallati. Rudolf was a politician and jurist (Kubli-Müller Glarus genealogy Gallati #8). Frieda was married and later divorced.

³ The original history, roughly covering the years 1006 to 1470, consists of excerpts from Medieval documents, citations, folk songs, and yearbooks, as well as Tschudi’s comments. It was mostly in Latin. A second version, called the “Fair Copy,” was in German and covered the years 1001 to 1570. It was worked on from 1569 until Tschudi’s death. It was not published until 1734. Frieda Gallati thought that the significant style of Tschudi’s history was more revealing in the original version. Tschudi’s supplementary work about the years before 1,000 was published in 1758 under the title *Gallia Comata* [*Gallia* was roughly the area west and south of the Rhine River; *Comata* referred to the long hair of the inhabitants].

much admired. Hundreds of early documents would have been lost had he not reproduced them.

Some historians still cling to the questionable family tree, partly with the knowledge that traditions are often based on truths that can no longer be verified. One of those persons was Marion Pomeroy Carlock of Los Angeles, California. In 1953 he published a wide-ranging history of the American branches of the Tschudi family.⁴ Carlock, who died in 1959, had done extensive research and claimed his descent through a branch of the Tschudi family in Canton Basel, Switzerland. While aware of the modern criticisms of Aegidius Tschudi, Carlock totally accepted the old family history and even applied an honorific title of “baron” to himself. Carlock wrote – in capital letters for emphasis – that he “does not believe or approve these claims against our greatest kinsman.”

While Frieda Gallati’s study recounted various pro and con arguments about Tschudi’s work, her conclusion about the family history was different. She was able to identify complete fakes as well as subtle changes that Tschudi had made in some documents and translations through which the old Tschudi family tree was supposedly proved. She felt that in the field of native history, Aegidius Tschudi had carried a new element into his work: inventions that have no justification, either for artistic reasons or patriotic feelings. However, Gallati believed that Tschudi didn’t create an image of family power and nobility for personal profit, but as a legacy for his heirs to make them feel on par with other powerful and noble families in Europe. To that end he succeeded for a long time.

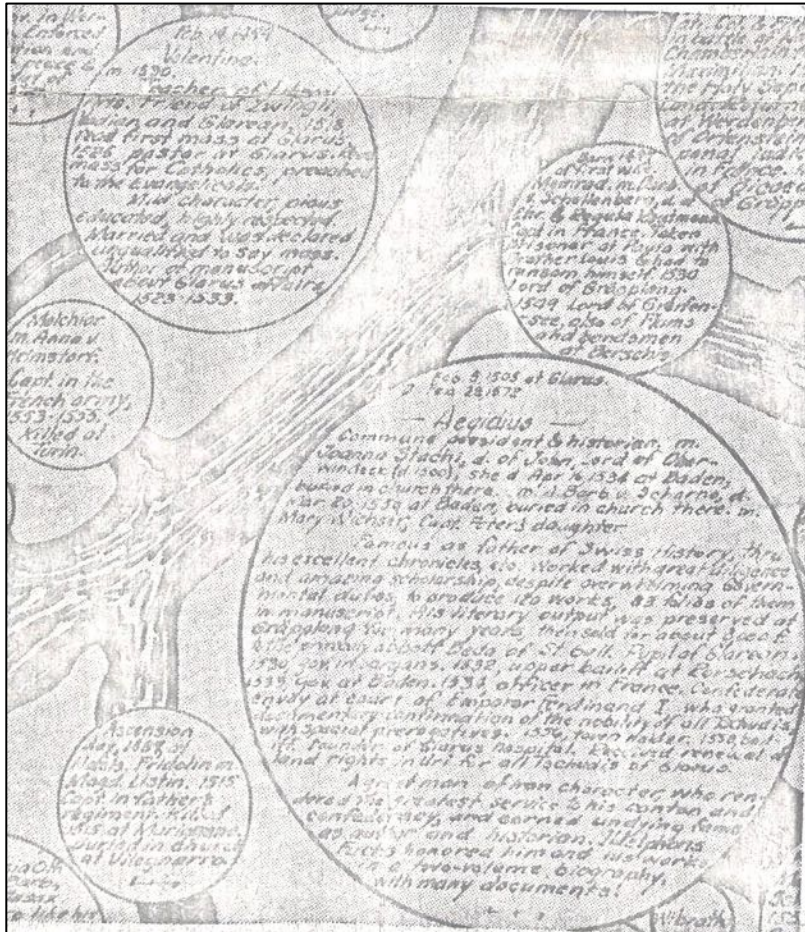
The Tschudi family is very widespread, primarily in Europe and the United States. Genealogy internet files show that many people have unknowingly repeated the family fable without qualifications and sometimes, through second-hand information, have created odd variations of the story. Research by Gallati and others has shown that following the family tree beyond Heinrich Tschudi (1356-1388)⁵ becomes increasingly questionable, although collective family memory at the time Aegidius created his story may mean some of the detail is accurate. Almost all of the Canton Glarus-related Tschudi families today descend from

⁴ The 567-page book, “The History of the Schudi-Tschudi-Tschudin-Tschudy-Judah-Judy Family of Switzerland, America and the World,” is available online through the HathiTrust Digital Library at the University of Wisconsin.

⁵ Kubli-Müller Glarus Tschudi genealogy #54. Heinrich was killed in the murder night at Weesen during the freedom struggles. He had two orphaned sons. Jost settled in Ennenda and his descendants are primarily the Catholic branch of the family. His brother Heinrich settled in Schwanden and his descendants are primarily the Protestant branch.

Heinrich and his wife Itta Aebli. The Basel branch descends from Johannes Tschudi (b. 1254), who is alleged to have moved to Canton Basel in 1285.⁶

Along with weaving his family history tale, Aegidius Tschudi wrote about early life in Canton Glarus. That included his own conception of the people and their lifestyles as well as the evolving fight for freedom from the Austrian empire.



A sample of the English version of the huge Tschudi family tree, focusing on background about Gilg Aegidius Tschudi.

created by Gilg Tschudi had to step back into the darkness that in the early days uniformly shrouded all Glarner.”

Among the many interesting items in Carlock’s Tschudi family history is his mention of how Heinrich Blumer⁷ of Schwanden, Canton Glarus, had assembled a Tschudi family genealogy in 1851 that included the traditional beginning. Blumer

Even that has since been found full of errors, as Gallati demonstrated. Only Tschudi’s account of the early church history of Glarus appears to be fairly accurate.

When negative comments about Tschudi were first published in the 1890s, that “hit the circles of educated Glarner like a thunderbolt,” according to Gallati. “They still worshiped Gilg Tschudi as a great countryman and incomparable historian, which made them proud to be a Glarner. . . . It had to be absolutely painful for the bearers of the family name, if their oldest ancestors on the pedestal

⁶ Kubli-Müller Glarus Tschudi genealogy #27, a brother of *Der Lange Reibing* who is mentioned later.

⁷ Probably Kubli-Müller Schwanden Blumer genealogy #222. As president of the village of Schwanden, he was involved with the Emigration Society that founded New Glarus.

then presented the family genealogy in a unique, huge 9 by 12-foot tree chart displaying 3,550 Tschudis along with brief biographies and dates. The contents were in German, with one side of the tree displaying the Catholic families and the other the Protestant lines. The tree was originally presented on thick vellum and sewed together from smaller pieces. Later the chart was cut into 15 pieces that were then folded and bound into a large book. The Swiss Center of North America in New Glarus has a copy.

In the 1940s, John Tschudy and his wife, Mathilda, then living in Milwaukee, prepared an English language version of the family tree and copies of their 6 by 7-foot display still exist. The couple found a copy of Blumer's original



Camerarius Tschudi

chart in Iowa and John spent more than 300 hours of spare time constructing his version. Mathilda did the translating, not only from German, but also from documents in Latin, French, and Swiss-German.⁸

While some of Aegidius Tschudi's huge document collection survives in libraries and archives, other parts have been lost or were sold. Copies of his writings are found in many places, including published collections of some of his works. Johann Jakob Tschudi (1722-1784),⁹ who rose to the position of *Camerarius* [chamberlain, or assistant to the deacon] in Glarus, was the most passionate of 18th Century collectors of Aegidius' works. It is especially through him that all

the sources of the family history come together, although he was unable to recognize the forgeries. While his collection was one of the largest and included valuable originals, it was destroyed in the 1861 fire that ruined much of the city of Glarus. Fortunately, a lot of the documents had been copied.

⁸ An article describing the effort of John and Mathilda Tschudy in preparing the tree was published in The Milwaukee Journal on April 12, 1941. The Tschudys later resided in Park Forest, Illinois. John, a civil engineer, was a great-grandson of John Jacob Tschudy, who managed the Swiss colony of New Glarus from 1846 to 1851, and brother of the Rev. Lynn F.B. Tschudy who was pastor of Swiss Church in New Glarus from 1951 to 1961. Although Carlock's book mentions that John Jacob Tschudy's mother, Rosina Blumer, was a daughter of the Heinrich Blumer who created the original large family tree, the Blumer family genealogy shows that her father was Samuel Blumer.

⁹ Johann Jakob Tschudi (Kubli-Müller Glarus Tschudi genealogy #87) had served as a pastor in Linthal and Schwanden before working in Glarus. He founded the state library, a secondary school, and an institute for the poor. He also was among the accusers in the famous witch trial of Anna Göldi.



The ruins of Gräpplang Castle are a Swiss heritage site. Hotel Restaurant Gräpplang is nearby.

Photos from Gräpplang Foundation web site

Aegidius Tschudi served in several important political positions, including *Landammann* [governor] of Canton Glarus in 1558, *Landvogt* [bailiff or sheriff] in neighboring Sarganserland from 1530 to 1532, representative of Glarus in the federal legislature, and ambassador to the imperial court. He claimed that while at the imperial court in 1559 he received the honorific title of baron from Emperor Ferdinand I of the Holy Roman Empire. Frieda Gallati also disputed that.

While Tschudi lived in a number of places, given his various duties, the family was in possession of Gräpplang Castle, near the city of Flums east of Canton Glarus. The castle, built around 1220 and originally known as the Castle of Flums, had been occupied by the Knights of Flums. The castle was on a hilltop site where there once had been a Bronze Age settlement. The site was important because it was along a major trade route and, in the Middle Ages when the bishop of Chur asserted his authority over the area, he placed a noble family in charge. The name Gräpplang comes from the rocky spur that protrudes on the southwest side, which in the Raetian language is called *Greppaglia* [near the striking rocks]. The castle had been significantly expanded over the centuries to include a five-story palace.

After the family of the Knights of Flums died out in 1312, a variety of families lived in the castle, which was still under the control of the bishop of Chur. Eventually the diocese, which had money problems, put the property up for sale. In March of 1528 it was purchased by Ludwig Tschudi,¹⁰ Aegidius' brother. He paid 1,200 guilders to the church at Chur and 1,200 guilders to the previous tenant,

¹⁰ Kubli-Müller Glarus Tschudi genealogy #10

Heinrich von Gutenberg. Aegidius had claimed that the Knights of Flums were part of the Tschudi family and therefore they were re-claiming the castle. Frieda Gallati also provided evidence that the Flums claim was not true.

The castle remained in the Tschudi family until 1767. The complex had been structurally altered around 1700 under the ownership of Josef Anton Tschudi. However, the construction work was poorly done and maintenance work became expensive. The last of 13 Tschudi family members to live there was Leodegar Tschudi. The baron was unable to afford the maintenance, even selling off some of Aegidius' papers and document collection to raise funds. Leodegar had spent a lot of effort toward proving that the old Tschudi family tree was valid. "He could not tolerate that the heraldic book [created by Aegidius and discussed later] included the blasphemous shield of the Knights of Glarus with the allegation that that family had died out," according to Gallati. Leodegar ended up selling the property to the Good family. Medical specialist Bonifaz Good set up a pharmacy there, but by 1795 the castle was abandoned.

There was no interest in preserving the castle, so it was sold for demolition in 1804. Recyclable materials such as bricks, iron mountings, fixtures, and woodwork were sold whenever possible. In 1923, the community of Flums took over ownership of the site and some restoration work was done on the ruins. A foundation now organizes cultural events there and it is sometimes the site of weddings. There is a small hotel next to the castle ruins.¹¹

The Meieramt

The core part of Aegidius' fabrications was his claim that the Tschudi family held a hereditary title of *Meier* [steward, or literally mayor] for three and a half centuries over property in Canton Glarus that was owned by a monastery at Säkingen.¹² While some Tschudi ancestors likely did hold the stewardship for a time, the only proven records show that members of the von Windegg [or von

¹¹ Many photos of the castle ruins are available at the Gräpplang Foundation's website: www.ruinegraepplang.ch

¹² The Tschudi family stewards as claimed by Aegidius, starting with their Kubli-Müller Glarus genealogy numbers, and the years they supposedly held the title, are: 1 – Johannes (906-936), 2 – Rudolf I von Glarus (936-967), 3 – Johannes II von Glarus, (967-998), 4 – Ulrich I von Glarus (998-1029), 5 – Rudolf II von Glarus (1029-1062), 6 – Johannes III von Glarus (1062-1095), 7 – Hermann I von Glarus (1095-1128), 8 – Heinrich Schudi I (1128-1149), 9 – Johannes Schudi IV (1149-1170). 10 – Rudolf Schudi III (1170-1196), 13 – Heinrich Schudi II (1196-1220), 14 – Rudolf Tschudi IV (1220-1242), and the childless Rudolf Tschudi V (1242-1253).

Windeck] family held the *Meieramt* in the last years of the land ownership. They probably were related to the Knights of Glarus, who likely held the position earlier. It is possible that the Tschudis were also an offshoot of the Knights of Glarus, of whom little is known. The key documents through which Aegidius supposedly proved the Tschudi family tree are discussed later.

It is not certain when or how the monastery gained control of land in Glarus. It probably happened in the middle of the 8th Century. That would be long after the time of Saint Fridolin, who is credited with founding the monastery around the year 600. Therefore, the legends about Fridolin getting the land for the monastery from donations by the brothers Urso and Landolf don't ring true. However, many Alemanni nobles did donate their possessions to monasteries to avoid having the land expropriated by secular rulers. In return, they received back their property as a fief. More recent research has shown that the monestary controlled about a quarter of the valley land in Glarus, far less than what Tschudi claimed. The rest of the land was freely held.

The monastery was on a Rhine River island at today's Bad Säckinggen, Germany. Placing the monastery on the island provided a good defensible position for the Franks, who were extending their territory into that of the Alemanni tribe and eventually achieved complete domination. While the religious site was under the diocese of Constance, it had strong relations with the royal court of the Franks. At first there were both men and women at the monestary, but by the 11th Century an abbess was in charge and monks were no longer mentioned in records. The only men there were chaplains.

Early records of the monestary are scarce, as are references to the situation in the region of Glarus. When the Magyars invaded the Rhine area in the years 917-925, they plundered the convent. On August 17, 1272, fire broke out in the house of a Säckinggen baker and spread throughout the city. Most of the archives of the monastery were destroyed, but not the bones of Fridolin. During reconstruction, the Habsburg's Rudolf IV had Fridolin's coffin moved to Laufenberg. In 1334, fire again ravaged Säckinggen and the replacement church was damaged. The Bishop of Constance then inaugurated the new *Fridolinsmünster* in 1356. At the time, Fridolin's coffin was opened and some relics taken to St. Stephen's in Vienna.

Among items that did survive is a copy of a 14th Century Säckinggen *Urbarium* [a Medieval register of fief ownership and rights]. One can see that

while Tschudi drew on it in developing his account of the history of Glarus as well as his family history, he made alterations.

Other documents do reveal how the abbess was required to visit Glarus every four years, collecting her tithes and other levies and settling various disputes. In other years, the steward and his cellarmaster took care of those matters. The items that were gathered – sheep, cows, fish, cheese, butter, wool, cloth, and small amounts of money – were then slowly taken all the way to Säckingen, with various officials and workers taking a share along the way. When the goods finally arrived at the convent, they comprised a much smaller amount.

The Säckinger Urbar

Tschudi had used some of the *Urbarium* material and records of the Habsburg empire in compiling a *Säckinger Urbar* [Säckingen Record]. That account laid out his view of the economic and social conditions of the Land of Glarus in the Middle Ages. It is possible to compare his writings with original documents since the Säckingen files that had been partly copied for his use were published in 1865 and the Habsburg files are archived. While Tschudi's account does include things from the genuine records, there are additions that are exclusively his own work and may have no basis in fact. Gallati wrote that “the Glarner history buffs of the 18th and 19th Centuries have been endeavoring in vain to align this creation of their countryman with what they knew about the Medieval estates.”

The original of Tschudi's *Säckinger Urbar* was lost in the 1861 fire at Glarus, but various copies of it exist. However, all of the copies – including ones that were the basis of later canton histories – are “a mixture of tradition, assumption, and pure invention, paired with excerpts from the Habsburg-Austrian record,” according to Gallati.

Since Tschudi held the erroneous view that all of Glarus was the property of Säckingen, he would therefore have considered all Glarners as being under Säckingen control. In that regard, Tschudi claimed that there were three levels of families in Glarus, in addition to the nobles who had died out or left the area: 12 free *Wappengenossen* [coat of arms families], 34 *Gotteshausleute* [free families of the house of God – the Säckingen abbey], and 59 families who were *Hörige*

[bondsmen or serfs].¹³ The original Säckingen *Urbarium* did mention “coat of arms” men but, according to Gallati, with no names and no description of their duties. Tschudi and others applied names that were found in other old documents. Glarus historian Gottfried Heer suspected that the highest level families were ones who had fiefs or were *Ministerialens* [a class of unfree nobles, often knights, holding positions of power]. Their taxable fiefs and the corresponding family names are listed in tax lists (*Abgaberodel*). While they were comrades in arms, they did not all have the same feudal birthrites. Some sources refer to the twelve as “judges” and state that if one of the family lines died out another would be appointed to the twelve.

In the 1890s, German scholar Aloys Schulte saw Tschudy’s description of the Glarus families as one of the most profound falsifications by the Swiss historian. In truth, the Glarner population was quite a uniform mass without deep contrasts. Historians today say it is also an oversimplification to describe the people as free or unfree, because numerous gradations existed. And, when the people began to hold *Landsgemeinden*, the free and the unfree worked together. Gallati wrote that Schulte’s comments “showed that by scientific reasoning not only was a previously believed legend ended, but at the same time the oldest Glarus story was put on a new and more solid basis.”

The *Säckinger Urbar* includes a section about Glarner castles. In regards to the one in the city of Glarus on the hill that still today is called *Bürgli* [little castle], Tschudi’s comments probably reflected many of the traditions that circulated at the time he wrote them. The castle was already gone by his time and the hill is now the location of St. Michael’s Chapel. While Tschudi regarded the *Bürgli* as the original seat of the Säckingen steward, it would also have been the original seat of the Knights of Glarus if they had once been the *Meier* – something Tschudi avoids mentioning. As for his comments about other castles in the canton, Gallati says

¹³ About 200 family names are original to Canton Glarus, according to Patrick Wild, a Swiss financial services manager who has compiled an extensive online file of the interrelated Glarus genealogies. Many other family names became common before and after the Reformation due to migration into the canton. Of the 12 claimed coat of arms families, six still exist today: Abli, Elmer, Stucki, Tschudi, Vogel, and Wichser. Of the 34 claimed free families of Säckingen, 21 exist today: Beglinger, Brunner, Bühler, Fischlin, Gallati, Grüniger, Hässi, König, Lager, Landolt, Leuzinger, Luchsinger, Maurer, Salmen, Schindler, Schuler, Speich, Stäger, Strub, Suter, and Walcher. Of the 59 claimed bondsmen, 19 families still exist: Böniger, Bürold, Dürst, Elsener (later Milt), Freuler, Giger, Grob, Hophan, Müller, Ott, Schiesser, Schlittler, Schneider, Steinmann, Störi, Stüssi, Trümpi, In der Wart, and Weber.

“unfortunately there is more here than reality.” No sources at Säckingen mention its ownership of any of the castles, most all of which are now only scant ruins.

It has long been proved that Tschudi was mistaken in describing the castle at Schwanden [Benzingen Castle] as a Säckingen fief of the “free noblemen of Schwanden,” since he confused them with a family from Canton Bern. Even more of an invention is his claim of there being a castle at Schwändi. Equally a fantasy is his comments about a family related to the Castle of Sol, which supposedly died out. Little is known about that castle, but it may have been home to the Knights of Glarus before they went on to Zurich. While the castle at Oberurnen is only mentioned in the annals of Mollis, that it once existed is testified by the ruins on a hill north of the village. In later years it may have been a refuge castle before being abandoned in the 15th Century. Tschudi wrote: “The castle of Urnen, or Oberurnen, was possessed by the noblemen of Urnen as a fief of the abbey until Hermann, the last of the family, left. Then Rudolf Stucki of God’s house possessed the fief.” Gallati says that only a complete misjudgement of the facts led to that view. Tschudi’s comments about the castle at Näfels – on the low hill where the Capuchin monastery now stands – reflect his carelessness in writing his *Säckinger Urbar*. He made errors in the timeline of events and in his accounts of nobles who may have lived there. The castle was eventually used intermittently by the Austrian authorities and bailiffs and was in no sense a fief of Säckingen. Today we know more about the lords of Näfels and it seems they arrived at about the same time that the Knights of Glarus left for Zurich. An existing seal indicates that they probably belonged to the same family as the Knights of Glarus.¹⁴

Tschudi’s reports of King Albrecht conquering the castles in Glarus are part of his effort to portray the Habsburgs as greedy intruders, according to Gallati. The alleged military campaign of King Albrecht is nowhere to be found in real sources.

Likewise, Tschudi’s report on how the region of Glarus came under Austrian rule is deficient. Recent historical research has sufficiently revealed that the real events are not in harmony with the description by Tschudi. The discrepancy centers on who actually held the two levels of legal power – the *Kastvogtei* [high bailiff in charge of the *bailiwick* with power over serious offenses and crimes] and

¹⁴ Two other important castles, Oberwindegg above Niederurnen and the more important Niederwindegg across the valley to the north between Schänis and Ziegelbrücke, are apparently not mentioned in the *Säckinger Urbar*. They were castles of the Windegg family and show up in Gallati’s discussion of Tschudi’s heraldry book. Tschudi mistakenly said the Windegg family took its name from the castle Niederwindegg. In 1230 the castle was already the property of the Count of Kyburg. In 1257 it was called the seat of a Kyburg bailiff and at the end of 1264, the Kyburg properties went to Rudolf von Habsburg.

the lesser civil jurisdiction which varied in different parts of Switzerland. For Tschudi, they were the same person in Glarus.

Gallati tried to sort out the origin and content of the Säckingen-Habsburg power in the Land of Glarus and other related issues and riddles, relying on knowledge of the imperial tax system and areas that were immune from those taxes. It is indisputable that in the 13th and 14th Centures the *Kastvogtei* of Säckingen and the imperial *Reichsvogtei* of Glarus do not coincide.

The *Kastvogtei* that was over Säckingen in the 13th Century had no rights of domination over the Glarnerland itself. Tschudi confused the *Kastvogtei* and *Reichsvogtei* and did not understand that the bailiwick of Glarus came under Friedrich Barbarossa as a special imperial fief after the extinction of the noble Lenzburg family line. There was no connection with the *Kastvogtei* Säckingen. Barbarossa's son, Count Palatine Otto von Burgundy, then handed over the power to the Kyburgs. Then, after the death of Hartmann Sr. von Kyburg in 1264, the authority fell to the nephew Rudolf von Habsburg. King Albrecht gave the Glarus high bailiwick to his sons. About two decades later, the Säckingen abbey granted the Austrian dukes a fief over their land as well.

The freedom fights

As some of the cantons in central Switzerland began to rebel against the Austrian authorities during the 14th Century, Glarus also eventually got involved. However, Tschudi had difficulty explaining the early tolerance of the Austrians by the people of Glarus. According to Gallati, Tschudi's imagination gave him room to maneuver on that issue. The first draft of this situation in the original *Chronicon Helveticum* shows numerous deletions and patches. Tschudi was eager to claim Glarner troops fighting in memorable Swiss wars of independence even if there were not any Glarners there. Tschudi also made Austrian rule responsible for the border disputes between Uri and Glarus, which went on through the centuries.

By the dawn of the 14th Century, Austrian authorities had merged the Glarus administration with that of the Gaster district and the city of Weesen to the north [both now part of Canton St. Gallen]. Even though they kept two parts, the merger began to cause resentment in Glarus. Gallati felt that Tschudi had a correct instinct when he wrote about the disappearance of native *Ammann* and the lifting of a sense

of autonomous control in Glarus.¹⁵ In their place were governors who were a disagreeable change. As the Austrian administrative organization became more and more determined to tighten control, they suppressed all desires for self-reliance, making the Glarus mountain dwellers more excited.

On the other hand, Gallati called Tschudi's claims about records being destroyed in the 1337 fire in the village and parish church in Glarus "a fantasy." He claimed that all of the letters of freedom were incinerated – those from the Roman Emperors and kings, as well as from the church at Säkingen, and all the pledges of King Albrecht and his sons.

The struggle for Swiss freedom from the Habsburgs involved a wide range of events and agreements stretching though most of the 14th Century. Gallati reviewed the activities as she delved into Tschudi's version of the events. He relied on several versions of contemporary accounts that were generally related to the history of Zurich. Some members of the Tschudi family were among the political and military leaders who took part in these major events. With the passage of time there is now a more clear understanding of events than what Tschudi could have determined.

A significant agreement was a truce in 1318 between the forest cantons and Austria. The agreement was extended several times and included a new friendship with Glarus. Zurich, which was once pro-Austria, signed an alliance with the forest cantons in 1351 and that caused the Habsburgs to engage in a number of military adventures against Zurich. By 1353, Bern and Lucerne also became more closely allied with the confederation. While there was a brief time of Glarus neutrality, there was also a peaceful conquest of Glarus by Zurich and the forest cantons.

In the final version of the Chronicle, Tschudi became more intense than in his earlier writings. He described the massacres and abuses of the Austrians and the resistance of the Glarners more extensively. However, his often-corrected and supplemented text shows exactly what he was up to. For example, contemporary sources explain expressly that the confederates had taken and destroyed the Näfels

¹⁵ Here *Ammann* refers to representatives of other authorities. It has been certified that during the 13th Century each new Säkingen abbess appointed 12 judges who were selected from the most respectable people in the Land of Glarus to make decisions in her name along with the steward and cellarmaster. None of these offices were hereditary. Eventually the Austrian dukes appointed a bailiff who initially was taken from the local people and probably mainly took care of the business of the former steward. There was no *Landammann*, as Tschudi wanted to believe, before the freedom fights.

castle in 1354. Tschudi moved the date to 1352 and described it in detail mainly as an act of the Glarners.

On July 9, 1386, the Swiss made an impressive victory at the battle of Sempbach in Canton Lucerne. Duke Leopold III, who was attempting to expand his position in Switzerland, was killed in the battle. The Austrians then turned against Glarus in hopes of separating it from the forest cantons. The Glarners rose up and destroyed the Oberwindegg castle in what was really their first major freedom fight. A *Landsgemeinde* was held and on March 11, 1387, the Glarners declared themselves free of Habsburg control.

Soon after, Glarus troops took over the adjacent village of Weesen, a key center for the Habsburgs. There are short reports about that and the eventual *Mordnacht* [murder night] in the Zurich Chronicles, possibly based on oral tradition and some records that are now lost. Tschudi gave longer versions of the Weesen events, which in the main were spun by him. Tschudi gave in to his feelings in overestimating the opposing forces who got back into the town when a sympathizer left the gate open. That resulted in 60 men being killed, about half from Canton Glarus. It was also characteristic of Tschudi's attitude that he, who otherwise preferred details and anecdotes, gave no word about the tragic fate met by the guardians of the Glarus battle flag. A Glarner version of the Zurich Chronicle says that on the night of the murders – February 21-22 – the flag had been taken from its container. The Glarners who defended it with their lives had been tricked into letting the Austrians into their chamber. The Glarners were killed and the seized ensign was taken to nearby Rapperswil.

As for the Glarnerland's request for help from Uri after the night of the murders, the meeting on Lake Zurich of messengers from Zurich and from the three forest regions is supported in the Klingenberger Chronicle [a revision of the Zurich Chronicle]. But Tschudi's description of negotiations aimed at an agreement with Austria were another example of where his imagination and patriotic feelings were unhindered.

Then came the decisive battle of Näfels in Canton Glarus on April 9, 1388. The duration of the battle was probably determined by Tschudi himself – about five hours from four in the morning to nine o'clock. He initially had 300 defenders at the *Letzimauer*¹⁶ and along the *Rauti* [a river], although the people from the back

¹⁶ The *Letzimauer* was a stone defensive barrier to protect the entrance to the Glarus valley. A trace of it still exists.

country could not have rushed there that fast. The Glarners were forced to withdraw to the mountainside. But then, while the Austrians were plundering the territory, the Glarners emerged from the fog and surprised the disorganized imperial troops. As those troops fled towards Weesen, the bridge over the Maag river collapsed and many drowned. Glarus had won its freedom.

Tschudi's view that at the end there were about 700 Glarners defending their land probably corresponds to reality. His comments about a messenger being sent over the mountains for help from Schwyz and about 30 men arriving during the battle may be from tradition. It does match details in the commemorative "Battle Song" that emerged after the victory. The number of slain enemies, not including those who drowned in the pursuit and collapse of the bridge, was strongly rounded up by him to an estimated 3,000. Other reports say 2,500 or 1,700. The Swiss had 54 men killed and they were buried at the Mollis parish church.

Galliti used a story about what happened after the Näfels battle as another example of Tschudi's approach to history. She wrote: "[Tschudi said that] after the battle, the Glarners moved back from the bridge at Weesen to the Walstatt near the Rauti and said five *Paternosters*, five *Ave Marias*, and kneeled there to pray before seizing the booty. Although [another source] also has the Glarners giving thanks to God and the saints after the battle, the pious act as Tschudi tells it does not quite fit with the constitution of people of that time, just after a desperate fight against a cocky and powerful enemy. The report in the Klingenberger Chronicle, which says that the Glarners on their return beat to death all who had not yet died and stripped them to their undergarments, is more likely."

The booty of 1,800 harnesses given by Tschudi is according to the "Battle Song," while the Zurich Chronicle mentions only about 1,200. Tschudi is consistent with the reports of eleven conquered banners, most of which ended up being hung in the church at Glarus.

Following the battle, Weesen was burned. Rebuilding the city did not occur until the beginning of the 15th Century.

The following year a peace agreement was signed in Vienna and the Swiss Confederation then had full control of its territory. The first *Näfelser Fahrt* [pilgrimage to the battle site] was held and continues to be held on the first Thursday in April.

After the successful freedom fight, the Glarners wanted to also gain independence from Säckingen. In 1390 they reached an agreement with the

convent. The agreement was expanded in 1395. Canton Glarus continued to pay a token tribute to the abbey for many more years. The abbey closed in 1806 at the time that German princes and Napoleon formed the Confederation of the Rhine. Today the remaining buildings are used by a Catholic charity as a community center.

The disputed family history documents

The old Tschudi family genealogy and its claim to the Medieval stewardship of the Land of Glarus was pieced together in the 18th Century by prominent family members from hints left by Aegidius Tschudi in his various manuscripts and published histories. Family members gloried in their status. It wasn't until the 1890s, when historians started to question many of Tschudi's writings, that the family story also faced serious doubts.

In discussing the family genealogy, Frieda Gallati was able to provide various examples of Aegidius Tschudi's mischief and also show how he behaved cautiously when his inventions about the family could possibly be challenged.

Here is a synopsis of her explanation of documents that were used to outline the early Tschudi family history:

- The family legend takes its origin from a real document from the beginning of the 10th Century: A **certificate dated May 31, 906**. It shows King Ludwig the Child (then only about 13 years old), at the request of a Count Burkhard, freeing one of his serfs named Johannes. The original, probably taken from the archives at the abbey of St. Gallen, was once owned by Aegidius Tschudi and, though lost, may still possibly exist somewhere.

In the course of his writings, Tschudi began to call the freed Johannes his ancestor and eventually gave him the title of *Meier*. One can see from various records how Tschudi embellished the certificate over time, including calling Johannes a nobleman, which would not have happened for a newly freed man at the beginning of the 10th Century.

It is unlikely that this certificate was a family heirloom as has been claimed. It is in essence nothing but the release of an unknown Johannes. Frieda Gallati commented: “Now imagine, of all things in the Glarnerland – a thoroughly peasant area where status differences have long been blurred – there had been in a family that by the 14th Century had not branched off for six hundred years and thereby kept such a document even though it had no meaning. Moreover, it wandered happily from Linthal to Ennenda and Glarus until it came into the possession of the writer. Believe it if you want, but is it not far-fetched? Is it not more probable that Tschudi found the document, which served excellently as the foundation stone of his whole airy building, as he was envious of kings and princes?”

- Tschudi then used two documents to expand his family story: **Bills of enfeoffment from 1029 and 1128**. The certificates have long been regarded as suspicious. In the first, Tschudi has an alleged ancestor, the *Meier* Rudolf von Glarus,¹⁷ outlining how he and his ancestors received the stewardship from Säkingen. Tschudi describes attached seals from middle and lower nobility – something that did not occur in the 11th and 12th Century. Likewise, Tschudi lists witnesses with family names – also questionable for that era. The document from 1128 also has a genealogy and claims the family was called “Schudi” by the abbe¹⁸. Both documents are suspicious because of the more modern nature of the language that Tschudi used, a historical error that he made in naming a duke of Alemannia, and especially the enumeration of five generations that, Gallati noted, was unheard of in what was a simple legal transaction.¹⁹ Only Tschudi could be the counterfeiter, Gallati said. These documents were apparently invented quite late as they are not included in his earlier compilations of Swiss history.

¹⁷ Kubli-Müller Glarus Tschudi genealogy #5

¹⁸ The name Schudi supposedly means perfect or good fellow, based on the Latin word *Judex* [judge]. More recent interpretations in Glarus say it referred to people with dense, tangled and unkempt hair and may have been a nickname at first.

¹⁹ Carlock, in accepting the old genealogy, noted in his book that it was common practice in Medieval times to list your lineage as far back as possible. It is true that issues of lineage, inheritance, and succession were crucial to feudal society, but Gallati would seem to be more knowledgeable about this situation.

- The so-called **Parceling Letter of June 1, 1220**, was used by Tschudi to try to explain what happened to the stewardship in later years. In it, Heinrich Tschudi²⁰ is called a free man of Glarus and the distribution of all his possessions among his three sons is reported. Son Rudolf is said to get the Glarner *Meieramt*, son Heinrich gets the Flums *Viztumamt*, and everything else fell to son Johannes. For the falseness of this document, the same suspicions can be applied as with the documents from 1029 and 1128: the surprisingly complete family tree and the unbelievable witness list with family names. Add to that the questionable Tschudi claim to the Flums *Viztumamt* and a betrayal of the situation in Latin language translations of the document.

- The **deed of sale of the Horalp from June 18, 1241**, becomes part of the legend despite it apparently being genuine. It contains a simple legal transaction: *Meier* R. von Glarus, who is in the process of attacking the Tartars to protect Christianity, sells the Horalp to the people of the church at Schännis and those in Bilten who belong to the Counts of Kyburg. The *Meier* R. of Glarus can be proven without difficulty to be the *Meier* Rudolf von Windegg. Gilg Tschudi alone made him the *Meier* Rudolf Tschudi.²¹ In one version of the story the alleged Crusader Rudolf Tschudi was not fighting the Tatars in Hungary in 1241 but rather was fighting in Syria in 1221.

- Real **certificates from June 17, 1240, and August 8, 1256**, show the falseness of Tschudi's account of the transition of the stewardship to the Windegg family. Both certificates are rulings deciding disputes between the Säckingen abbess and the Windeggs. In the 1240 document, after praising the abbess Willebirgis and the *Meier* Rudolf von Windegg and his son Diethelm, the four referees required the Windeggs to pay the abbess 10 marks silver, 14 sheep, tithing from Betschwanden that had been illegally kept, and accumulated interest. The verdict was given in the valley of Glarus under the oak and in the presence of numerous witnesses, including a deputy of the Counts of Kyburg and Rapperswill. The 1256 ruling decided a dispute

²⁰ Kubli-Müller Glarus Tschudi genealogy #13

²¹ Kubli-Müller Glarus Tschudi genealogy #14

between the Abbess Anna of Säckingen and the knight Diethelm von Windegg. Apparently the younger *Meier* also did not comply with tithing obligations to the abbess and was several years behind in his obligations. That tithing involved the *Sernftal* and the record is counter to Tschudi's descriptions of what occurred in that valley.

Tschudi did not initially know about these two real Säckingen documents, but when he realized that the Windeggs had once held the stewardship for a long time he needed to account for it or his fable would arouse suspicion. He invented a situation that when Rudolph V von Glarus (1205-1253, son of the above mentioned Crusader) died without a son to inherit the fief, the stewardship fell to Hartmann von Windegg Sr., whose wife Margaretha was said to be the Crusader's sister.²²

Among documents kept in Glarus is a copy of a deed dated June 5, 1308, in which the *Meier* Hartmann von Windegg renounces his Glarus stewardship and yields it to the duke of Austria. Tschudi mistakenly assumed that in 1308 Hartmann von Windegg sold the rights, while in truth he no longer had them as they were previously transferred by the abbess on April 5, 1288. Hartmann was merely affirming that he no longer had the stewardship. Tschudi also invented having the aging *Meier* Hartmann being a steward for the monastery at Schänis and then giving it up to be the Glarus steward for Säckingen. Gallati concluded that "it is not subject to any doubt that the story of this alleged *Meier* Hartmann Sr. giving up his Schänis fief . . . sprang from Tschudi's imagination."

- For the conclusion of the narrative about an undue withdrawal of the *Meieramt*, Tschudi provides the **certificate of July 31, 1274**. In it the abbess Anna von Säckingen gives property to Rudolf Tschudi²³ and his five sons and their descendants. The transaction was supposedly for having done wrong to the Tschudi family in settling the inheritance dispute of 1256. The property was an area at the foot the Glärnisch mountain called *Hof* [courtyard] and two farms described as *in dem Boele* – both area names that

²² According to Aegidius Tschudi's account, the Sackingen abbess gave the stewardship to the husband of Rudolf's sister. Rudolf's brother Johannes – and later his son Rudolf – contested the decision but were rejected. Most of the Tschudi family ancestry descends from Johannes and from that point onward the records seem accurate.

²³ Kubli-Müller Glarus Tschudi genealogy #19

still exist today. Other Tschudi property throughout the canton, including in the Alps, was also supposedly restored.

Some have argued that the document is genuine even though the parceling letter of 1220 and the deed of 1256 were not. But Gallati noted that German scholar Schulte preferred the opposite since the sound of the certificate resembled the false ones. Again the witness names expose the document as fake as they are from families who had no tie to Säkingen. While the certificate was in both Latin and German in the original *Chronicon Helveticum*, it was not even included in the Fair Copy. In her article, Gallati reprinted the Latin text of the original along with a version from the files of the *Camerarius* and noted changes that appeared to be directed at the Tschudi family. “Either you have a first draft that was later changed or a draft intended for readers other than of the Chronicle,” she wrote.

The land mentioned actually belonged to the Tschudis later, according to a judgment in 1499. At that time there was a dispute between the people of the village of Schwändi and Aegidius’ father and Rudolf Elmer. The people had claimed the right to drive their cattle through the rivers and farms to the market at Glarus and the rights of the landowners were upheld. Aegidius didn’t have to be very inventive in using information from that dispute settlement in creating his earlier claim.

- Unlike the other false documents, the **Certificate of June 28, 1370**, was written in German. It is easy to understand, almost too light for a 14th Century document. In it a legal transaction is confirmed where the Tschudi family’s supposed fief right to the lamb tithe in the valley of Glarus was sold to Glarus *Landammann* Dietrich Kilchmatt for 91 silver marks. There were several problems with the story and Gallati wrote that “the aspiration of Tschudi to not only lend honor and prestige to his ancestors, but also wealth, seduced him to give them the possession of the profitable lamb tithe attributed to the valley of Glarus.”

Had the original certificate not been destroyed in the 1861 fire, the document could have been easily disproved. However, several problems persist. Tschudi has the transaction being approved by Bilgeri Kilchmatt, who in 1370 was the Austrian *Untervogt* in Glarus. As such he would not have had anything to say about such an agreement. Second is the likelihood that

Tschudi invented Dietrich Kilchmatter as being a *Landammann*. Prior to the freedom battles there was no Glarus *Landammann* and this Dietrich supposedly fell at the battle of Näfels. Then there is the mention that Katharina Tschudi was the wife of the Knight Hermann von Landenberg Jr. when it can be shown that Aegidius Tschudi was in error on the various lines of the widespread Landenberg family. Most importantly, German scholar Schulte found a Säckingen record, unknown to Tschudi, that proved that in about 1325 the lamb tithe went to an Elmer (and someone in the Hönisen family).

- Gallati then described a **nobility certificate issued on April 23, 1559**, as “the most delicious fruit of the Tschudi falsifications as far as the family legend is concerned.” The certificate was supposedly issued when Aegidius Tschudi was ambassador to the Reichstag in Augsburg. There was a meeting that spring, along with Zurich town clerk Hans Escher, in which the Swiss Confederation was agreeing to several items including purchase of silver in the Reich. The story is that Tschudi was asked to provide information about his status and, as a result, Emperor Ferdinand I explains Tschudi’s heritage based on what Tschudi had submitted to him. He allegedly wrote that the Tschudis were an ancient and good family with an old coat of arms and of noble status. As a special grace, the emperor granted to the Tschudis that marriages with non-noble women would not be to their detriment and the advantages of nobility would continue through later generations.

Those with knowledge of nobility certificates know that getting them was not easy and one had to make all sorts of written submissions. According to Gallati, Habsburg files contain no trace of that happening and Aegidius Tschudi’s records contain no records of such a request. However, there is what seems to be a very accurate copy of an imperial certificate – so accurate that even the signatures of the emperor and the chancellor are carefully reproduced. But archivists who examined the certificate for Gallati said it did not contain the established formulas and customs of such a document, including missing the signature of the vice chancellor. Also, the certificate was in Latin when such a document at that time would have been in German.

The fir tree fable



A rendition of the first Tschudi coat of arms with the fir tree.



One of the later versions with a four-part shield.

Aegidius Tschudi was also the person behind the famous fir tree story, although he never explicitly wrote that account. His *Chronicon Helveticum* contains the story of an inheritance dispute between cousins Rudolf Tschudi²⁴ and Hans von Seedorf after the death of their uncle from their mother's side. The rift supposedly led to a small war along the border of Cantons Glarus and Uri, upsetting the Habsburgs. The Uri side called Tschudi the “*lange Riebing*” [the tall irritant], and the Glarners called Hans the “*Teufel von Uri*” [the devil of Uri].

The story was later embellished by historian Hermann Hermanni in his *Pinus Chudiana*²⁵ and that led to the family's fir tree coat of arms. Hermanni based his account on writings about the *Chronicon Helveticum* by historian Johannes Stumpf of Zurich, a contemporary of Aegidius Tschudi. Stumpf, like Tschudi, had a large coat of arms collection. Now the fable was that during the dispute there was a furious fight in which Rudolf Tschudi's weapons were broken. He then pulled out a young fir tree with the roots and used that to kill nine more enemies. To have an eternal memory of this heroic deed, Rudolf Tschudi, who is recorded as cellarmaster for Säckinggen, supposedly replaced his old noble coat of arms with a new one – the fir tree with nine blood-red cones, symbolizing the nine slain enemies.²⁶

²⁴ Kubli-Müller Glarus Tschudi genealogy #29

²⁵ Hermanni, a friend of Tschudi's nephew Wilhelm, was Licentiate of Rights and later worked at the Academy of Salzburg. In writing his *Pinus Chudiana seu Genealogia familiae Chudiorum a Glarus* [Tschudi Tree or the Genealogy of the Family Tschudi of Glarus], he was able to draw on materials that were part of Tschudi's estate but are now lost.

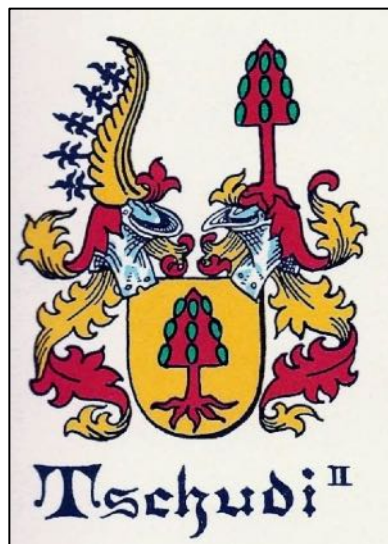
²⁶ The illustrated coat of arms, as well as others in this report, is taken from the *Wappenbuch Des Canton Glarus*, published in 1977 by *Buchhandlung Baeschlin of Glarus*. They may not exactly match what was in Aegidius' heraldry collection.

The original Tschudi coat of arms, which Aegidius had observed and recorded from a seal, displayed a standing black steinbock and was similar to that of the Knights of Glarus. Gallati noted that while the first mention of a fir tree design was in 1316, the first record of that Tschudi family coat of arms was not until 1421 for *Landammann* Jost Tschudi, who she described as “the first outstanding representative of the family.” She speculated that he might be the one who chose the fir tree for the coat of arms.

Part of the problem with the fir tree story is that Aegidius Tschudi moved the story to the year 1316 and it is known that the family of the Uri Knights of Seedorf had most likely become extinct by around 1260. The creation of the story may have been part of Tschudi’s effort to establish a noble family connection, since the combatants’ mothers were supposedly the daughters of the noble *Meier* Burckhart von Bürglen (who probably didn’t exist). Thus Gallati wrote: “That ends any credibility of this narrative, as far as the origin of the feud and the names of the persons involved. Here again is a piece of family legend before us, no question about it.”

Various later renditions of the Tschudi coat of arms combined the fir tree and steinbock elements in a four-part shield. The four-part shield is now universally used by the various Tschudi families.

Heraldry issues



Aegidius Tschudi had spent many years compiling a heraldic book of 4,000 known family crests of the Swiss Confederation – hand drawn and illuminated with colors.²⁷ In the case of his family, he made subtle comments and juxtapositions of the crests to further his aims of

²⁷ Replicas of the *Tschudischen Wappenbuch* were made in monasteries and even outside of Switzerland. Tschudi started the project in his 30s and probably worked on it until his death, since not all of the shields were filled with colors. The original is in the Abbey Library of St. Gallen.

nobility. Gallati asked: “What else was left for him to use other than the heraldic book in which to make discrete allusions that would not awaken suspicions and yet achieve his purpose?”

In his writings he not only applied the Glarus *Meieramt* to his ancestors but also affixed “von Glarus” to most of their names – an appellation that would have been used by the Knights of Glarus. Further back in his heraldry book, Tschudi places a second version of the fir tree coat of arms next to the “von Glarus” shield. Now the Tschudi shield had a helm with the fir tree on the right and a helm with a horn adorned with black *Gilgen* [cock’s tail feathers] on the left. The von Glarus shield had a variation of the horn and *Gilgen*.

Down on the same page are the coat of arms of the Kilchmutter and von Windegg families. Both had two helm ornaments. For Kilchmutter, a steinbock is on the left and on the right is the ibex horn with the *Gilgen*. For von Windegg, the



steinbock is on the left again and on the right a golden hip horn on a red pillow. So, different coats of arms on the same page have the same helm ornament – the ibex or the ibex horn – but only the Tschudi version has no relationship. Nothing was provided on where Aegidius got the fir tree coat of arms with the ibex helm

ornament. Gallati wrote: “Nothing could justify Tschudi in taking over the coat of arms of the Knights of Glarus – the standing black ibex in the golden field – other than to subtly identify his ancestors with the Knights of Glarus.”

Commentary on one of the pages reads: “The *Meier* of Glarus also sat for a long time in Zurich as well as Glarus.” Above that coat of arms is written “Tschudi” and below it “*Ex sigillo arma*” [from the seal of arms]. Next to the coat of arms of the Knights of Glarus is written *Keller* and *Kelleramt* [cellar and cellar master] instead of *Meier* and *Meieramt*. Although not written by Tschudi, but undoubtedly at his command, the Knights of Glarus were supposedly not stewards

but cellarmasters and they didn't always hold that office. It was inadvisable for Tschudi, even if he had historical testimonies, to stamp the Knights of Glarus directly as the stewards since he had equipped his ancestors with that office. But, according to Gallati, Tschudi left such clear evidence by the consistent addition of the particle "of Glarus" to the names of his alleged and real ancestors – as well as his own – that one must render him as the true and only author of this usurpation.

It has long been agreed that the seal of the *Meier* Diethelm von Windegg is linked with the shield of the Knights of Glarus. Pictures of documentary books of Zurich with the seals of Diethelm from the year 1265 show the standing steinbock. This also occurs in the coat of arms of the Knights of Glarus in Zurich since 1246; the two families are probably one greater family.²⁸

²⁸ There is a line of the Windegg family whose shields have a completely different picture: a wall anchor. Despite the different shields, the question remains whether they are part of the same family.