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## THE WISCONSIN STATE JOURNAL

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# Monticello Resident Last New Glarus Swiss Settler

BY ALICE E. BENKERT

The settlement of the town and village of New Glarus, is of a different character from that of any other town in the county. Its history is the story of an experiment in emigration and colonization, unique in the history of the country, and up to the time it was made, probably unique in the entire history of the United States unless we go back to the very first colonies planted in America.

About the year 1844, from a variety of causes, there was great economic distress in Switzerland, especially in the cantons least adapted to agricultural pursuits. It was a case of population beyond the limits of support. For several centuries the young men of Switzerland had been accustomed to seek occupation in the larger countries of Europe, especially as mercenary soldiers.

So dire did the distress become in the canton of Glarus in 1844 that even with the most rigid economy on the part of every family, enforced by the strict state regulations under which the land tenant did his farming, that it was impossible to support the population in most of the parishes and it therefore became evident that something must be done to relieve the situation and as much as the Switzer loved his native mountains no alternative seemed to prevent itself, other than that of emigration in considerable numbers.

### Plan to Emigrate

After holding many public meetings to devise means of relieving the economic distress, the canton of Glarus hit upon the plan of purchasing the vested rights of a considerable number of its citizens at one time in and to their land equities and thus enabling them to migrate in a body to try their fortune in America.



OSWALD BARBER

Finally, at a public meeting called at Schwanden it was decided to ask the co-operation of the cantonal government to carry out the idea. The government appropriated \$600 to aid the project and steps were taken to put it into effect. By subscriptions from various parishes and individuals the fund was increased to \$2,000.

Nicholas Duerst and Fridolin Strieff, both of them men well qualified by native ability and education to carry on the important work were chosen to go to America to select a site. How well these men succeeded in their efforts is shown by the present prosperous condition, not alone of the Swiss Colony, at New Glarus, Wis., but of the whole region of southeastern Wisconsin to which they have so largely contributed.

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Point or worked on farms for the Americans in other parts of the county. The women hired out as domestics or washerwomen, often walking to Monroe for that purpose. This however went a long way toward making them familiar with the ways of the Americans and put them in a much better position to do their own work at home, in the American fashion.

The farmers of this colony soon found that they had an ideal locality for the pursuit of the old work with which they had been familiar in Switzerland, namely, that of cheesemaking, and they entered upon a period of prosperity which has continued in ever increasing measure to the present day and has enriched and made productive a section of Wisconsin, which, otherwise might be far less so. Green county produces more cheese than any other equal area in the world.

From  
Milwaukee Herald  
Aug. 1, 1926.

## Der Letzte der Schweizer Pioniere.

### Oswald Babler grün- dete vor 81 Jahren New Glarus.

Kam mit ~~Indianten~~ aus dem Schweizer Kanton Glarus und traf nach beschwerlicher Reise über St. Louis in Wisconsin ein. Primitive Wohnverhältnisse in den ersten Jahren. Keine Streitigkeiten mit den Indianern. Babler war Freiwilliger im Bürgerkrieg. Jetzt mit 91 Jahren der Letzte Ueberlebende. Noch äußerst rüstig und am liebsten im Garten tätig.

DeSoto, Wis., 31. Juli.

In einem alten, verwitterten Holzhaus, das, umgeben von einem wohlgepflegten Garten, unweit der geschäftigen Hauptstraße von Monticello liegt, lebt der 91 Jahre alte Oswald Babler, der Letzte der unerschrockenen Bergbewohner, die vor 81 Jahren ihre Heimat in der Schweiz aufgaben, um in der neuen Welt ein besseres Auskommen zu suchen. „Es war in meinem zehnten Lebensjahr,“ so erzählte der Greis, „als wir Kanton Glarus verließen. Wir hatten eine ungemütliche Fahrt, trafen schließlich aber sicher in St. Louis ein. Von dort zogen wir nördlich und marschierten neben dem Wagen her, der unsere Habe trug. Bei unserer Ankunft in New Glarus mußten erst 26 Familien in einem Haus wohnen, in einem Raum, der ungefähr 14 mal 20 Fuß groß war. Bevor der Winter begann, hatten wir jedoch mit der Familie eines Landels zusammen ein eigenes Blockhaus, in dem wir dreizehn Personen uns wohlfühlten, trotzdem Fenster, Fußboden und Tür zuerst fehlten.“ Herr Babler erinnert sich noch des Tags, da die erste Fuhre Weizen nach Milwaukee gesandt wurde. Da die Ladung jedoch nur einen Nettopreis von 10 Cents pro Bushel einbrachte, wurde das Experiment vorerst nicht wiederholt. Henry F. Janes, nach dem die Stadt Janesville benannt wurde, eröffnete bald nach der Gründung der Schweizer Kolonie einen Laden in Exeter. Es dauerte auch nicht lange, so brachte zweimal in der Woche ein Reiter Post, sodas man diese nicht mehr zu Fuß von Mineral Point zu holen brauchte. Mit den Indianern hatte man keine Differenzen. Als der Bürgerkrieg ausbrach, trat Oswald Babler der 1. Kompagnie des 46. Wisconsiner Freiwilligenregiments bei. Als Korporal diente er entlang der Straße der Nashville & Decatur Bahn. Am 27. September 1865 wurde er entlassen und erreichte 5 Tage später Madison. Oswald Babler ist, soviel er

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**60TH ANNIVERSARY OF  
MARRIAGE FAILS TO  
KEEP HIM FROM WORK**

**Oswald Babler, 85, Green County Pioneer, "Plumb  
Forgot" Date; Four Generations of Family  
Live Near Monticello**

WHEN H. O. BABLER, cashier of the bank at Monticello, in Green county, greeted his grandfather, Oswald Babler, one of the first settlers to establish the Swiss colony at New Glarus, with congratulations upon the sixtieth anniversary of his wedding the other day, that venerable gentleman looked up from his work in his little garden with a surprised look and answered:

"By gosh, you're right. This is our sixtieth wedding anniversary."

Then he applied himself all the more diligently to his hoe, stopping only to acknowledge other congratulations from the residents of the village.

This incident happened last Tuesday at Mr. and Mrs. Babler's home in Monticello. The day passed uneventfully, wedding anniversaries being so common with them now that even rhubarb pie is not a feature of the occasion.

Mr. Babler was 10 years old when he walked from Galena, Illinois, to New Glarus, in 1845, one of the little band of Swiss immigrants who came over in that year and who have since made Green

county one of the most prosperous districts in the entire United States. Mr. Babler took up farming, and in 1860 he married Miss Sarah Kundert, who came from Switzerland a few years after the founding of the New Glarus settlement.

For 60 years they have lived happily together, watching Green county develop from a rough pioneer country into a land of elegant farm homes and automobiles. Several years ago they removed to Monticello.

Mr. Babler observed his 85th birthday on June 1, when he worked the entire day in his garden. Mrs. Kundert is 77, and except for an injured limb, sustained several weeks ago in a fall, is in excellent health.

Four generations of the Babler family are living in Green county. There are nine children of the aged couple: Henry L. Otto, and Mrs. Dick Freitag of Monticello; Ed, Victor, and Mrs. John Zweifel of New Glarus; Mrs. Henry Kundert and Mrs. Matt Zentner of Monroe; and Mrs. John Holdrich of Brooklyn. One daughter, Mrs. John Hoosly of New Glarus, died three years ago.

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