



# Sheldon Historical Society Schoolhouse Museum Newsletter



An update on our progress as a Society and a Chartered Museum "A New Look at Old News From our Town"

We've been busy getting our Schoolhouse Museum ready to open for the year. Anyone interested is invited to come and help us out. There is something for everyone to do, even if it is just to encourage others. Meetings are held on the third Thursday of the month, February to October, at the Schoolhouse, 7:00 PM.

We will be open all day June 1-2, during our annual Town-Wide Yard Sale. Then our regular hours resume and we will be open on Tuesday afternoons, 1:00-4:00 and on the last Saturday of the month from 9:00-12:00, June to September.

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Varysburg Students in a "Costume Social" at the close of School, March 1890, from "Varysburg, NY History".

Thank you, Adam Vetter and Scott Almeter, for sharing these historic photos and memories of Varysburg on Facebook!



Glaser Brewery - Frank Glaser and sons; George, Henry, Andrew, Albert

## BRINGING FAMILY HISTORY TO LIFE

Recently this family history surfaced, that was written over 20 years ago and donated to our files when Sheila Glaser Bultmann learned that ancestors on both sides of her family had come from the small town of Sheldon. We were able to contact the author and get her permission to print excerpts of it. The complete version of her story is available to read at the Schoolhouse Museum. This inspired us to check out the Glaser file in our museum, where we found a wealth of information; Civil War records, family trees, short stories about this family and many photos. This issue became a group effort, with input from Scott Barvian, Betty Reisdorf and Mary Ann Metzger, who were all familiar with the family. So we hope you will bear with us, as this newsletter does focus a lot on the Glasers. We look forward to hearing from our readers. Please send us some stories from your family history and we will see what we have in your family file!

Compiled by Jeanne Mest

### THE GLASER FAMILY IN AMERICA

By Sheila Marie Glaser Bultmann

When I married my Oldenburg-born husband in 1970, I had no idea that I too was an Oldenburger, since my great, great grandfather, Franz Glaeser (originally Klaeser), had emigrated in 1837 from Eiweiler, in the former Grand Dukedom Oldenburg in Germany. My father had spoken about his family to me on only one occasion, his 80th birthday. For years, I only knew the story that my mother told; that my parents first met at a dance in Toronto, Canada, and discovered that both of their families had been neighbors somewhere "out in the country" southeast of Buffalo, New York. That was it. But this anecdote was the clue that led me to find the story of my ancestors in a little church in Sheldon, New York. There I discovered, to my great delight, the French ancestors and my mother and my father's German ancestors, together with a whole enclave of immigrants from Germany's Saarland, who emigrated from Eiweiler and the surrounding area, probably between 1830 and 1860.

After my father's death in 1991, I wanted to visit his cousins whom he had grown up with. I went to East Aurora (outside of Buffalo) to see Mildred, whom I'd remembered meeting once or twice at funerals when I was a child. Mildred welcomed me very warmly and introduced me to her three sons who all happened to be home that day. She showed me wonderful old family photographs. I loved hearing the stories and wanted to know more about the family. I drove to see her sister, Margaret, who still lived out "in the country".

"Who were they; where did they come from?", I asked her about our ancestors. Since she was quite deaf by then, I had to write out all my questions. With plenty of energy and good humor, she gathered up her photo albums, explained the pictures, and finally

directed me just up the hill to St. Cecilia's in Sheldon, "The church of our ancestors". Unfortunately I could not get into the church that day, but I did find the gravestone of Johann Glaeser, the brother of my great, great grandfather Franz. When I finally entered the church two years later, a framed chart near the old baptismal font immediately caught my eye: "The First Catholic People in Sheldon". It turned out to be a list of 38 immigrant families from Belgium, Luxemburg, France and Germany. To my great surprise the list contained the names of eight of my direct ancestors. The two "Glaeser" families listed came from Enweiler in Oldenburg.

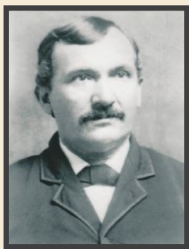
My Oldenburg husband declared flatly, "There aren't any 'Weilers' in Oldenburg." Neither of us knew then that Eiweiler, as part of the Furstentum (principality) Birkenfeld had been annexed to the Grand Dukedom Oldenburg in 1817, during the Napoleonic Wars. I finally found Eiweiler in Oldenburg on a 1830 map in the Old Map Library at the Wisconsin State Historical Society Library in Madison, Wisconsin, where I've lived since 1978.

In searching for my family history, I also used various census data, magazines and books, as well as the surprisingly comprehensive collection of church books made available by the Mormon Church on microfilm. But I much prefer going to places and talking to people directly. For example, in Sheldon I met a direct descendent of the Conrad family who connected me to Gladys Glaser Almeter (also in Sheldon). Gladys and I share the same Glaser ancestors. Gladys also pointed out that the Daniel farm, the home of my father's childhood friend, had originally been the home of my mother's French ancestors, the Nassois, a fact I believe neither of my parents knew. My conversations and letters left no

doubt that Sheldon's history is still alive among its current residents.

Gertrude Simon Glaser had been widowed for eight years when she came to America in 1837, with her two grown sons, John (Johann) and Franz and their families. They had just sold their farm and belongings in Eiweiler and came to settle in Sheldon. A third son, Peter, emigrated at a later time and also settled in Sheldon.

Franz Glaser and Anna Marie Becker had married 15 years earlier in the church in Mettnich; Eiweiler belonged at that time to the Catholic parish in Mettnich. They emigrated with seven Eiweiler-born children and later, six more children were born in America - 13 children! Franz farmed in Sheldon until his death in 1862. At that time the country was torn by the Civil War (1861-1865). The three youngest, American-born sons had followed Lincoln's call to volunteer. Frank, the oldest of the three at first seemed to have enjoyed



Frank Glaser

the adventure and he wrote to his older brother, Peter: ***".... Our reg't was very lucky so far it has not been to a Battle yet except the other Day we drove the rebiles out of Harper's ferry. We had fine times in Baltimore and could wish for no better times for soldering. We got acquainted with a great many peopals there but Now I think that we got to make up all our good times we had there...."*** Soon after, Frank got a bullet wound in the leg and was hospitalized for a long time. He got home just in time to reclaim his fiancé, who was about to get married to someone else.

Frank and Margaret Metzger married and lived in Sheldon for a while, but eventually moved down the hill to Strykersville, where in 1870, Frank had gone into the brewery business with his brother-in-law. They rebuilt a brewery which had burned down and Frank added a large hotel built in the Italianate style typical for that era. In the surrounding fields they raised their own hops. Frank and Margaret had seven children. The four boys worked in the brewery and helped deliver the Glaser beer to surrounding towns. The underground beer cellar with its stone walls and stone arched ceiling must have been dark and scary. My father remembered that "you had to take a candle down there; if the candle went out, the air was bad". A fire in 1909 completely destroyed the brewery and the hotel. Frank's insurance policy had just expired and he lost it all; he died two years later.

Frank's son Henry, my grandfather, had been the brewmaster until he married Elizabeth (Lillie) George, and took over the hotel and livery in the nearby town of Bliss. Bliss was a train stop, where sales agents from the big cities stayed at the hotel before they visited the surrounding towns, using the horse and wagon livery service. The Bliss Fire of 1919 destroyed the Glaser property, together with most of the business district - 65 buildings altogether. Henry finished building a new house, but died three years later. His oldest son was already in dental school at the University at Buffalo. Now, Lillie and the three younger boys also went to Buffalo, where she went into the business of buying and renting apartments. She had a knack for business and during her retirement was able to travel around the world. In one photo you can see her sitting on a camel with the Egyptian Pyramids in the background!



Henry Glaser

Lillie's son George, my father, was liked at his new high school. He was good at sports because he was big and husky from working on the farm. His teacher trusted him to cash her paychecks, because "She figured I was just a hayseed". George became a dentist, married Vera Kane, and moved to New York City, where my younger brother and I were born. My father later specialized in orthodontics and practiced in Buffalo. Like many of their contemporaries, the Glasers had moved from the country to the city. For six generations they have witnessed almost 3/4 of the history of the United States! And yet, in the little town of Sheldon, where they had started their life in America, the past doesn't seem far away and you can still get a sense of the life of the 19th century settlers.

The settlers, who established the first Catholic Church in Sheldon, primarily came from areas close or adjacent to the Rhine River (Germany, France, Belgium and Luxembourg). The Glasers were among the first from the Eiweiler area (Mettnich) to emigrate to Sheldon. Altogether, including the immigrants from "Theley" and "St. Wendel", the Sheldon parish eventually included an enclave of at least 15 families from today's northern Saarland in Germany. These settlers probably came to Sheldon, in western New York State, by way of the Erie Canal, which opened in 1825, linking New York City to Buffalo and Lake Erie. Thousands of immigrants took this route to the new western frontiers. When they arrived in the beautiful rolling hills of Wyoming County, much of

(Continued from page 3)

the forest had already been cleared by the earlier Yankee pioneers from the east coast and many of the Indians had been relocated. By 1880, most of the Yankees had left and some 75% of Sheldon's population was of German descent.

On our 25th wedding anniversary, my husband and I finally had the opportunity to visit "my homeland", Eiweiler. As we stopped on the way, in Mettnich, the bells were ringing in the old tower of the church in which the immigrants Franz Glaser and Anna Marie Becker had been married. Something like that can't be planned! As we drove up the valley to Eiweiler, I was struck by how much the landscape resembled that around Sheldon. We stayed three days, exploring Peterberg Mountain, Bostal Lake and the spring of the Nahe River. As we took photos of the exquisite St. Katherina Chapel in Selbach, next to the Oldenburger Hof and the one meter-wide Nahe River, we were approached by the owner of the grocery store from across the street. He and his wife shared my interest in family history and lent me two volumes of the genealogical family books by Rudi Jung, in which I discovered two additional generations of Glasers, going back to the beginning of the 18th century. Soon I met other like-minded people in Eiweiler. In the Didas family's guesthouse "Lindenhof" where we stayed, I met Frau Didas and her daughter, who turned out to be a distant relation on the Becker side of my family. Through them I was introduced to local historians Herbert Backes and Viktor and Walburga Heck, with whom we talked over an evening beer and during lunch, respectively. During the last hour of our visit, just before we got caught in a



Frank Glaser, with Albert, George, Louisa, Henry, Della, Gertrude, Andrew and Margaret Metzger Glaser

drenching thunderstorm, Mr. Heck took us to walk a few hundred yards through the woods along the "Kirchweg", the old "church path" which the ancestors walked from their homes in Eiweiler to their parish church. Then we left to visit the homeland of my mother's French ancestors, the Nassoii family in Metz, France. But that's a story for another time.

Sheila Marie Glaser Bultmann  
March 30, 1998  
Madison, Wisconsin

*"Thank you, Sheila, for sharing your story with us!"*

#### From "Strykersville Sketches", by Harry S. Douglass, 1958

after Mr. Clapp, and wound up also as a cider mill. By the Civil War period, Thomas Battendorf, a brewer from France, established a beer-making business at the north end of the village. On April 10, 1870, the brewery, and adjacent house burned at a loss of \$7,000. It was rebuilt soon after by John Metzger or Frank Glaser at a cost of more than \$9,000 for a hotel, barns and other buildings. There was a large hop yard on the property. Beer was peddled in eighths, quarters and halves as far east as Hermitage, north to Cowlesville, south to Arcade, and west to Sardinia. The product was aged in large hogsheads in deep cellars, some one-half mile in length; ice was always put up in the winter in ice houses, packed in sawdust, and when the season was mild with little ice forming, the brewery would cut snow banks into squares to store in the cellars to save the ice crop. Mr. Glaser continued operation of the brewery until August 13, 1909, when again fire swept the large hotel and brewery nothing remained but the hotel sign. The brewery was rebuilt and flourished but a brief time until Prohibition closed its doors forever. Lastly, the buildings were used as a GLF branch of the Java Village feed mill, then closed. Cider was made there seasonally also. Today, the edifice remains untenanted, a mute reminder of a colorful local industry.

#### From "The History of Wyoming County 1840-1880", by F.W. Beers:

**FRANK GLASER is the proprietor of Strykersville Brewery and Hotel, and engaged in farming. He married Margaret Metzger January 16th, 1866. He served in the war of the Rebellion and was honorably discharged.**

### Frank Glaser Celebrates his 70th Birthday

Frank celebrated his 70th birthday with his family, as they gave him a gala party. Many years later his great granddaughter, Shirley George Weatherbee, would recall seeing 70 flags in Grandma Glaser's dresser. Grandma told her they were from Grandpa's 70th birthday cake. He died less than a year later. It was a year and a half after the fire that took a piece of his heart forever.

An earlier heartbreak had been seeing his first wife Margaret suffer for some time with a brain tumor, with little help available. He was left with nine year old twins, Gertrude and Albert, and five year old Della.

Frank married again, to Cecilia Martin, who brought up the younger children. She also raised several of the grandchildren, when their parents died.



Frank Glaser and children, 1901. Standing: Bert, Gertrude, Louella, Del (Isabel), Andrew. Front Row: Henry, Frank, George Samuel

### The Red Onion

Some years after the flood at the turn of the century, John Reisdorf's cooper shop was moved to the Glaser property after being used briefly as a home for his mother in law, Elizabeth Petrie, who died in 1905. It was known as the Red Onion, and Frank Glaser's son Albert operated this small business as a sideline to the farm. It was large enough for a few tables, chairs and a small bar where the local cronies could buy beer and snacks while they played cards. There was a stove with a bar rail to put your feet on. They were trusted to help themselves and put payment in the box, as Bert was usually working on the farm.

Beer was 10 cents a glass. During Prohibition, the locals continued to congregate here and it was known to sell orange pop mixed with hard cider to satisfy their thirst and outwit the prohibition agents. The Red Onion building was sold to Clarence Smith and moved across the road to his Factory Rd. residence. No trace remains today.



Bert Glaser at the Red Onion

### The Pail (Owned by the growler)

Long before we had refrigerators in our homes, the only way to have fresh beer around the house was to tote it home from the brewery or tavern. A lot of beer they served was in kegs. One could not spend all of one's time in a bar, a way to transport beer home from the faucet became necessary. This dilemma led to the development of the growler. Early forms of this beer transport were just crudely made, galvanized metal pails.



The term "growler" originated as a result of children handling beer. The father or grandfather of the household would usually send the kid down to fetch a fresh pail of beer. If the child was not careful and splashed the beer out of the bucket, the old man was said to "growl". These young entrepreneurs would use a long pole in order to carry a quantity of pails to refill on one trip. This task was known as "rushing the growler." After Prohibition, refillable beer containers went away in most areas.

*It is not known for sure if there were any growlers in the Strykersville area. However, Florian Reisdorf told his children that as a child he was sent for a bucket of beer. That we know was common practice.*

### From "The History of Wyoming County 1840-1880", by F.W. Beers:

"The use of spiritual liquors as a beverage was almost universal. Early settlers took their daily drams. It was taken into the harvest field. Many placed it on the breakfast table as an appetizer. Distilleries sprang up early in the towns and liquor was easily procured at a cheap rate. It was used to keep out the cold and protect against the heat; by the physician to protect himself against contagion, the jurist to sharpen his perceptions and the clergyman who drank a portion for inspiration to enable him to present divine truth".

From "TOWN OF SHELDON - Historical Comments, Narratives and Summaries of Factual Events" (F. W. Kehl, 1946)

**ANECDOTE**

*On the bank at the roadside of the farm presently owned by Henry Logel stood a log house which was the boyhood home of Frank Glaser, the formerly widely known brewer of Strykersville. He, together with three brothers served in the Civil War and was seriously wounded. During the course of the war, in various engagements, all of his brothers fell in action.*

*After the close of the war he made several trips to Baltimore to purchase surplus war stock in the line of field equipment, blankets and mantels. He married into a prominent family and acquired by purchase the hotel and ballroom opposite the church property at Sheldon. Several years after, the long horses tall barn near by took fire and with it, the hotel was destroyed. Mr. Glaser now took over the Demonjot Brewery at Strykersville, owned by his Father-in-law.*

*Not many years intervened when a new brewery and hotel were erected, which in its location on a gracefully rising summit, with its unique architectural design and copula, was a landmark that would grace any town. There was but one small brewery in competition and apart from that, the whole countryside was served by the Glaser Brewery. Horsedrawn city delivery was not in evidence.*

*The fire hazard is a definite risk, and if the policy lapsed it is indefinitely compounded. This happened in the instance of the new brewery. From the Insurance Agent who had written the expired policy, we have this first hand written version: It was a Sunday afternoon, when I was sitting at my desk typing policies. I was facing a window which gave me a plain view of the brewery some 40 rds. Away. Suddenly I saw a cloud of smoke emerging from the roof of the brewery. I knew the proprietor had notice of expiration of the policy, but I had no bid to renew, which he agreed to do if he didn't go elsewhere. At my arrival at the scene of the fire, I soon learned that the renewal was yet pending.*

In December 1910  
this heading was  
on the Glaser's  
business calendar.

The Season's Greeting from

**FRANK GLASER,**  
**BREWER.**

Where can You Find any Better Beer than Frank Glaser's?  
STRYKERSVILLE, N.Y.



"STRYKERSVILLE HOTEL & BREWERY BURN TO THE GROUND, AUGUST 13, 1909; ONLY THE HOTEL SIGN REMAINS"

1902 Map shows location of Glaser brewery & Strykersville Hotel



Aug. 20, 1909 Wyoming Co. Herald

The most disastrous fire this village has ever known occurred on Friday afternoon, Aug. 13, 1909. The large brewery with Hotel attached, owned by Frank Glazer, also his horse barn, icehouse and sheds were all laid in ashes; also the home of Frank Brass, in which they were just cozily settled and recently purchased of C. Waltz and his barns were destroyed. The fire broke out in the ice house, but its origin is unknown.



Ruins of Glaser's Brewery, after the fire.

I know someone must be listening, when my seven year old granddaughter refers to family holidays as "Parties with my Ancestors".

*The Hotel in the Dell*

*It was a big white mansion  
Built of great fashion.  
It welcomed the traveler,  
And invited the neighbor.*

*A sight to behold,  
Stories to be told.  
The laughter was heard,  
Though some was absurd.*

*The children were known,  
To be walking through town.  
Carrying a pail of beer,  
That was full of cheer.*

*The men came to chat  
And that was a fact.  
The women were home,  
While the men did roam.*

*The cards they were dealt  
The warmth it was felt.  
A fun place to gather,  
But then where was Father?*

*But Ma I'm so sorry,  
I stayed for the story.  
The news they did bring,  
And oh they could sing!*

*On the North end of town,  
The place was renowned  
All were treated well,  
In the hotel in the dell.*

*When temperance came,  
The town wasn't the same.  
The women were happy,  
But the men became snappy.*

*By Mary Ann Metzger  
(About the Glaser Brewery in  
Strykersville from 1875-1909)*

**Sheldon Historical Society Schoolhouse Museum**  
**3859 Main Street, PO Box 122**  
**Strykersville, NY 14145**

**New from our County Historian, Cindy Amrhein:**

**Where in Wyoming is the History Gnome?**

- \$20 gets each participant their gameboard map, gnome guide and more. History, trivia, and prizes throughout the summer!
- Visit the designated museums, June 1– Oct. 31 get your map & guide book stamped, find the gnome get your collector token!
- Call 585-786-8818 or camrhein@wyomingco.net for info.

If your newsletter arrives in damaged condition, please call or email and we will send you a replacement.



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 Hilltop Printshop  
 3 East State Street  
 Mount Morris, NY

Previous newsletters can be seen at <http://www.townofsheldon.com>  
 Museum open June to September, but assistance is available upon request. Call (585)457-9509, 457-3444, 457-3061 or (716) 474-3156. Email: sheldonhistoricalsociety@hotmail.com or metzgermaryann@gmail.com  
 Newsletter compiled by Mary Ann Metzger and Jeanne Mest, with the help of many volunteers. Submissions welcome. Email or call (716) 474-3156 for information. Send articles & inquiries to: Jeanne Mest, 470 Route 20A, Strykersville, NY 14145

Sheldon Historical Society Officers:  
 President - Michael Szucs  
 Vice President - Carol Felski  
 Interim Secretary - Laury Lakas  
 Financial Secretary - Donna Kirsch  
 Board Members: P.J. Almeter, Chairman;  
 Janet Kirsch, Elizabeth Reisdorf,  
 Elaine Almeter, Judie Coffey, Gertrude Hyman.  
 Classroom Curator - Elizabeth Reisdorf  
 Archival Curator / Town of Sheldon  
 Historian - Jeanne Mest  
 Museum Curator - vacant

Become a member of the Sheldon Historical Society and be part of preserving history. Dues and donations support the maintenance of our museum and historical artifacts. As a member you have voting privileges, and published newsletters are sent to you at no cost. Meetings are held the 3rd Thursday of the month at 7 pm from March to October at the Sheldon Historical Schoolhouse Museum, 3859 Main St., Strykersville, NY.

If you are currently a member, thank you for your support. Please remember to renew yearly. The membership year runs from June through the following July.

The Schoolhouse Museum is open June through September on Tuesdays from 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm and the last Saturday of those months from 9:00-12:00.  
 Email: [Sheldonhistoricalsociety@hotmail.com](mailto:Sheldonhistoricalsociety@hotmail.com)

Phone: 585-457-9509 585-457-3444 585-457-3061 716-474-3156

**Membership Application**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ \$10.00 Single \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal

\_\_\_ \$75.00 Lifetime \_\_\_\_\_ Wish to make a gift to Society \_\_\_

Make Check Payable to: The Town of Sheldon Historical Society

Mail To: Donna Kirsch, Treasurer, 4458 Richardson Rd., Arcade, NY 14009