

Chapter 6. Freihofer, Siegrist, and Gebendinger Families of Canton Zurich, Switzerland: Ancestors of My Great-Grandmother Anna Barbara Freihofer Egger

In June 2000, on a trip West, I spent two days in Boise, Idaho visiting my Egger cousins and their mother LaVerne Tauscher Egger. Aunt LaVerne told me a great deal of family history. Among those stories was one that my great-grandmother Barbara Freihofer came over from Switzerland with her family, landing in New Orleans and steaming up the Mississippi River to Wisconsin. On the way, in Iowa, Barbara's mother died.

The 1861 marriage record of Barbara and Melchior Egger, among records compiled from the La Crosse County Register of Deeds, is online from the La Crosse Area Genealogical Society. It shows that the parents of Melchior were Melchior Egger and Elisabeth Abegglen and that the parents of Barbara were Jacob Freihofer and Katharine Siegrist. The rather obscure LDS film 8547394 (records of the Evangelical Lutheran Friedens-Gemeinde of La Crosse) yielded the important additional fact that Barbara's parents were from Feldheim [Veltheim] in Canton Zurich, Switzerland. That fact was crucial in tracing their ancestors in Switzerland.



LaVerne, Jim, Maralyn, David Egger
2000



Wart Castle in Neftenbach

These ancestors lived in Veltheim and Neftenbach, two towns in and near Winterthur, which is a city in far northern Switzerland, 12 miles northeast of Zurich. Veltheim was formerly a municipality but in 1922 was annexed to Winterthur. Winterthur became an industrial town in the 19th century and today has a population of over 100,000. Neftenbach is a municipality in the District of Winterthur 3 miles northwest of central

Winterthur. In 1850 its population was 1,490.

Church records of Veltheim Parish are on LDS Film 923990 and include births, marriages, and deaths from 1526 to 1875, as well as church censuses, for entire families, for a number of the

earlier years. Equivalent church records for Neftenbach Parish are on films 996475-996477. Church censuses are on films 1185139-11185174. Another great resource is marriage compilations for Canton Zurich: Staatsarchiv Zurich Ehedaten (online).

Freihofer Ancestors

Jakob Freihofer¹ (Magdalena Bosshart, married 1718) → Hans Jakob Freihofer (1726- , Elisabeth Kuenzli) → Hans Jakob (1765- , Magdalena Bodmer) → Johannes Jacob Freihofer (1797-1846, Katharine Siegrist) → Anna Barbara Freihofer (1841-1928, Melchior Egger) → Albert Egger → Willis Egger → David Egger

That sequence is from my 5th great-grandfather Jakob. Church records indicate that Johannes Jacob Freihofer (1797) was a drechsler (thresher). He died in 1846 in Veltheim, before his wife and four children went to America. I will cover two of those children, Anna Barbara and her sister Susanna, as well as his wife Katharine, below as part of the Siegrist line. Here are the two others:

Johan Jacob Freihofer (1827-1894), the son of Johannes Jacob Freihofer and Katharine Siegrist, left for America in 1849. Five years later, in Cincinnati, Ohio, he married **Mary Meyer**, who had come from Bavaria. Their first child Solomon (1855-1931) was born in Cincinnati, but by the time the next two were born – Henry (1858-1917) and Jacob J (1861-1892) – the family had relocated to Piqua in Miami County, Ohio. Piqua is in west-central Ohio, west of Columbus.

The children of Solomon Freihofer (1855-1931) and Matilda Robbins, all born in Piqua, were Henry (1883-1939, Mary Erma Baumgardner), Susan Rose (1885-1932, Charles George Grosvenor), Mary M (1885-1984, John Fred Comolli and Lee Walter Babb), Albert August (1886-1949, Maud Mauk), George (1888-1918, who died in France during WWI), Jacob John (1892-1971, Bessie Young Rittenhouse), Solomon (1895-1990, Clara Williams), William Hamilton (1898-1918, Bonnie Mabel Cashner), Matilda Margaret (1899-1976, Lawrence Wolaver), John Aloysius (1902-1954, Frances Konz), Agnes Rodilla (1903-1935, Raymond Wesley Lawrence), and Anna Louise (1905-1995, Howard Miller). A grandson of Agnes Rodilla is my DNA 4th cousin and my actual 3rd cousin 1X removed.

Henry Freihofer (1858-1917) married Elmira Eichelberger. They had a daughter Viola Lucile (1888-1966, Carl Edward Thomas).

Solomon Freihofer (1828), the son of Johannes Jacob Freihofer and Katharine Siegrist, left for America, like his brother Johan Jacob, in 1849. But I have been unable to find what happened to him. Surprising how common was the name Solomon Freihofer in the United States.

Siegrist Ancestors

Hans Sigrist (~1665-1646, Judith Grunauer) → Christoffel Sigrist (1611- , Elisabeth Leimbacher) → Hans Heinrich Sigrist (1641-1714, Margaretha Jucker) → Jacob Sigrist (1667-1712, Verena Schaerer) → Ulrich Sigrist (1704-1751, Margaretha Steiner) → Hans Heinrich Sigrist (1741- , Anna Magdalena Berger) → Johannes 'Hans' Jakob Sigrist (1773-1807, Anna Katharina Gebendinger) → Katharine Siegrist (1801-1855, Johannes Jacob

Freihofer) → Anna Barbara Freihofer (1841-1928, Melchior Egger) →Albert Egger→Willis Egger→David Egger

This sequence starts with my 9th great-grandfather Hans Sigrist. The Sigrist men were all born and were married in Neftenbach, which is a few miles northwest of Winterthur. Some of the wives, however, were from other nearby towns.

In the section above I talked about the two sons of Katharine Siegrist and Johannes Jacob Freihofer. I will now discuss the daughters.

Anna Susanna Freihofer (1834-1992). In 1855, her husband having died in 1846, Katharine Siegrist Freihofer set sail for America with her daughters Anna Barbara and Anna Susanna, Susanna's husband **Jacob Schweizer**, and Jacob and Susanna's daughter Emma. *The records of the ship Hortensia, landing April 3, 1855 in New Orleans from Le Havre, France, list a party of Jacob Schweizer, 34, wife Surem [Susanna], 21, and daughter Emma, nine months, with Catherine Freihofer, 53, and Babette [Barbara] Freihofer, 14, all from Switzerland.* It would appear that they steamed up the Mississippi River with the La Crosse area as their goal, specifically Mormon Coulee, south of La Crosse. Katharine died in Iowa on that journey.

whereof I am Master, from *Havre - grand ch*
 Sworn to the *3 April* 18 *55*
List or Manifest of all the PASSENGERS taken on board the
 is Master, from *Susanna Freihofer* burthen

	NAMES.	AGE.	SEX.	CI to wh ral
115	<i>Schweizer Jacob</i>	<i>34</i>		
116	<i>Surem</i>	<i>21</i>		
117	<i>Emma</i>	<i>3/4</i>	<i>f</i>	
118	<i>Freihofer Catharine</i>	<i>53</i>		
119	<i>Babette</i>	<i>14</i>		

Record of the ship Hortensia, showing the Schweizer and Freihofer families landing in New Orleans

Although he had been a schoolteacher in Switzerland, upon arrival in Mormon Coulee Jacob bought land. We find him in the 1860 census in the Town of Greenfield age 42, farmer, with Susan 40, Barbara (Barbara Freihofer), Emma 5, Henriette 3, and Sophia 2, later known as Magdalene (1857-1931). Tragically, Jacob died a year later. Probate was filed on 9 Feb 1863 by Susannah Schweizer in La Crosse County Court stating that Jacob Schweizer died 10 Feb 1861 in the Town of Greenfield, leaving children Emma 9, Henriette 6, and Sophia 4. She asked that John Ulrich be appointed guardian for the children. Ulrich subsequently sold the farm house and land, for their benefit, to Casper Loeble in May 1863.

Casper Loeble was born in Wangen am Untersee, Öhningen, Baden in 1831. He emigrated to the La Crosse area to be a farmer. He was married to the widowed Susanna Freihofer Schweizer on 8 April 1863.

After their marriage, Casper and Susanna disappear from any records in La Crosse County. I searched off-and-on for many years to find them. Then, fairly recently, I came across cemetery records for St. Nazianz in Manitowoc County, Wisconsin, across the state from La Crosse and

north of Milwaukee. There they were!



St. Nazianz. Father Ambrose Oswald was fleeing religious persecution when he came to Wisconsin in 1854. The Roman Catholic Church had suspended him from his duties in the parish of a small town in the Black Forest of Germany due to “mystical, prophetic, and heretical works.” When Oswald left, the congregation uprooted and followed him to America. They made their way to Wisconsin. Oswald bought land, sight unseen, in what would become St. Nazianz. After clearing land, and after early travails, his community thrived for many years. They called themselves “The Association,” agreeing to share everything in common and work without pay at a variety of trades. That arrangement continued until

1896. By 1898 The Association had disbanded and the property was taken over by The Society of the Divine Savior.

In 1867 Casper disposed of his farm and moved his new family to St. Nazianz. By then a son, Eugenius (1864-1893), had been born to Casper and Susanna. Once in St. Nazianz, more children came: Helena (1867-1928), Maria (1869-1887), John K (1876-1917), and Rosa (1872-1886). Casper joined The Association and later was a lay brother to a seminary that was built in 1909. Unmarried girls lived in separate quarters of The Association, and some later became nuns.

In the 1880 census Casper, a farmer, lived with wife Anna, son Ilgan (Eugenius), a farm laborer, and Magdalene, Helen, Rose, and John, all at home.

Susanna died in 1892 at St. Nazianz. Casper continued to live there until his death in 1926, at age 94. He was cared for in his declining years by Magdalene (Sophia) and Helena. None of his children or stepchildren married except John (Margaret Schnurr, 1878-1953) and possibly Emma and Henriette, whom I have not been able to trace.

Deaths of Casper, Susanna, Eugenius, Helena, and Maria were recorded in books of St. Gregory Church in St. Nazianz². Although none has an existing stone, they probably rest in the St. Gregory cemetery that adjoins the church. John K Loeble and wife Margaret Schnurr do have tombstones. Cemetery notes say that Magdalene is buried there. She had lived in the family home until 1929 and spent her last two years in Sisters of the Divine Saviour St. Mary's Convent. Her sister Helena lived in the home with Magdalene until her death late in 1928.



Barbara Freihofer Egger

Anna Barbara Freihofer (1841-1928). My great-grandmother lived with her sister Susanna and Susanna's husband Jacob Schweitzer until she was married to **Melchior Egger** in 1861. Her subsequent life and her children with Melchior are discussed in Chapter 6 on the Egger families.

Gebendinger Ancestors

One of the goals of my research has been to trace surnames in my tree as far back as possible. At present my oldest recorded ancestors are 14 generations removed from me, corresponding to an 11th great-grandparent. Surnames in this essay that go back 12 generations are Sigrist and Gebendinger. Like the Sigrist families, the Gebendingers all lived in Neftenbach.

Niklaus Gebendinger (Katharina Hug 1559-) → Jacob Gebendinger (1585-1656, Elisabetha Ruff) → Max Gebendinger (~1616-1684, Anna Fischer) → Jakob Gebendinger (1660-1720, Barbara Epprecht) → Hans Jakob Gebendinger (1693- , Anna Sabina Breiter) → Johannes Gebendinger (1735- , Anna Catharina Hofmann) → Anna Katharina Gebendinger (1768-1799, Johannes 'Hans' Jakob Sigrist) → Katharine Siegrist (1801-1855, Johannes Jacob Freihofer) → Anna Barbara Freihofer (1841-1928, Melchior Egger) → Albert Egger → Willis Egger → David Egger

FOOTNOTES

¹ The Veltheim church records offer the potential of tracing the Freihofers much farther into the past than shown here. The birthdate and parentage of Hans Jakob Freihofer (1765) are unambiguous, because both are given in his birth record. His parents Hans Jakob Freihofer and Elisabeth Kuenzli were definitely married in 1752. But that marriage record, unlike later records, says nothing about the parents or birthdate of Hans Jakob. Hans Jakob and Elisabeth were probably born 20-25 years before 1752. Only one Elisabeth Kuenzli can be found in that date range, born in 1729 to Hans Jacob Kuenzli and Anna Huber. Unfortunately, the name Hans Jakob Freihofer was common in Veltheim, associated with more than one family. The Familien-Registers are spaced too far apart in time to be any help. There are two possibilities, however, for Hans Jakob Freihofer, the one I chose born in 1726 to Jakob Freihofer and Magdalena Bosshart, who were married in 1718, and Hans Jacob born in 1722 to Rudolf Freihofer and Maria Getzman, who were married in 1715. I think those parents are less likely because there is no Rudolf anywhere down the descendant line and because his birth falls outside my 20-25 year range. Because Jakob Freihofer (Magdalena Bosshart) is not my proven ancestor, I did not take the line any farther back in time.

²Saint Gregory Catholic Church – Death Records: 2manitowic.com/22.html