

Gibel, Gerber und Hans Bürki

Peter Gerber, Author

edited for English translation by Tim Gerber with minor revisions



Figure 1: Portrait of Vorder Gibel, painted in oil on wood around 1930 and signed "O. Siegenthaler". A residential building (Stöckli) shown on the right was not built until the beginning of the 19th century. In the foreground is the Spycher built in 1735 by Michael Gerber and his wife Anna Röthlisberger.

It was 1691,¹ and life was quite good for Hans Bürki. He was 40 years old (probably born on January 29, 1651)² and lived with his wife, Barbara Langenegger, on Vorder Gibel³ in Langnau in the Emmental. He bought Vorder Gibel in 1682. Perhaps her family originated from the Langenegg farm just north of Gibel. They already had 10 children, and Barbara was pregnant again. Life as a farmer was not bad at that time: the population was growing and wanted to eat. The last plague epidemic in Aargau and the Bernese Oberland had begun to subside 20 years earlier, the Thirty Years War had ended more than 40 years earlier, and Europe was slowly recovering from its damage. The climate had become warmer which made it more profitable and easier to farm. The "little ice age", as the previous 200 years had been termed, was over and temperatures had finally risen.⁴ Isaac Newton then living in England (who likely interested Hans very little) had published his main work (Mathematic Principals of Natural Philosophy) five years earlier and in another

¹ Dates before 1700 are given according to the old Julian calendar in the canton of Bern. There was a difference of ten days between the old and the new calendar system.

² And baptized on 29 June 1651.

³ <http://map.geo.admin.ch/?Y=628233.5&X=198895.5&zoom=8&bgLayer=ch.swisstopo.pixelkartefarbe>

or

<https://www.google.com/maps/@46.9399451,7.8080156,3a,75y,306.4h,90.6t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1su80JTG1thgib90aOrxiuHA!2e0!7i13312!8i6656?hl=de>

⁴ The second half of the 1680's and the first half of the 1690's, however, did not have favorable weather. Furner, p 110

five years would be in the process of reforming English coinage.⁵ Pope Innocent XII, who later had the idea of starting the calendar year on January 1st, resided in the Vatican.⁶ Everything was going well if it weren't for the Bernese government authority. Hans Bürki (also spelled Hans Bürky) was "public enemy number 1" of his time, at least for the Bernese officials. Why? Hans Bürki was an Anabaptist.⁷

The Anabaptist movement started around 1525, and ten years later a former charismatic Catholic priest, Menno Simons⁸ (hence the name "Mennonites"), joined the movement. In Switzerland, the centers of the Anabaptist movement were in Zurich, in the Emmental, and in eastern Switzerland (Schleitheim). The Anabaptists were not welcomed as they disturbed the system in the OstSchweiz (an area at the northeastern border of Switzerland) that utilized the churches to maintain societal order. Anabaptists were known to be very industrious and peaceful, but they did not have their children baptized. This created gaps in the baptismal lists and thus in their system of "resident control". Countermeasures were taken in the areas infiltrated by Anabaptists, ranging from dispossession from their lands to the death penalty. All was of little use; even the corpses of Anabaptists hanging in baskets⁹ on the bell tower of the Lamberti Church in Münster did not stop the movement. The Canton (similar to a US "State") of Bern was also against the Anabaptists. Bern had just accepted the Swiss Reformed faith led by Zwingli as their sanctioned faith denomination,¹⁰ and that caused problems with fellow cantons who remained Catholic such as Lucerne. They didn't want to have problems with the Anabaptists as well. After the end of the Peasants' War (Niklaus Leuenberger, the leader of the peasants, was executed in 1653), Bern's repression against the Anabaptists began. They began to recruit "Anabaptist hunters", bounties were offered on Anabaptists, and finally in 1671, those communities that did not hand over their Anabaptists had to send respected citizens to Bern as hostages. In 1691, Hans Bürki, former leader in the Peasants' War, "elder" of the Anabaptist community in Langnau, and farm owner

⁵ Newton not only introduced the knurling of the coin edge to prevent precious metal extraction, but he also hunted down some coin counterfeiters who were subsequently hanged.

⁶ Julius Caesar, who introduced the so-called Julian calendar before our era (and thus the leap year that takes place regularly every 4 years) was wiser in several respects. The year began on March 1st, as is still the case today for the farming year (e.g., in Canton Bern, the State paid grants specifically to the farmers who planted the land on March 1st). You can still see that system today in the names of the months from September to December, which refer to the Latin numerals for 7 to 10 (not 9 to 12). Then came the leap day reasonably at the end of the year (the reason why the leap year in French is "année bissextile" is a different story, but it is related). It seems unwise to allow the Pope to set measurements that should be determined by the laws of physics.

⁷ At that time the "Anabaptists" were a unified faith community. The Amish-Reist division took place in 1693. Later, there was another division from the Anabaptists (called Fröhlichians or Neutäufers) in the 1830s. These people followed the teachings of Samuel Fröhlich. Today in Switzerland, they are known as the Evangelischen Täufergemeinde, or ETG. In the United States, their followers call themselves the Apostolic Christian Church.

⁸ Reiswitz and Wadzeck: "Beiträge zur Kenntniss der Mennoniten-Gemeinden in Europa und America, 1821". The book can be downloaded as a pdf from books.google.com.

⁹ The author of the corresponding Wikipedia article translated without good justification a word into "baskets", not "cages" as it is normally translated. After some consideration, it is evident that it should be called "baskets". Cages are containers for moving creatures like tigers or canaries, which the Anabaptists were not.

¹⁰ The State officials decided that in order to keep peace during the Reformation period, each canton would be required to choose between the Swiss Reformed church or the long-established Catholic church as its canton-sanctioned church. The citizens probably felt like Henry Ford's customers when he stated, "Any customer can have a car painted any color that he wants so long as it is black." In Switzerland, the canton was given a legitimate choice between only two, but the citizen had no choice. -Comment by Tim Gerber

of Gibel, was a recipient of this oppression. First there was a conversation with a failed attempt to dissuade Hans from Anabaptism. Finally in 1691, stronger efforts were used: Bern decided to expropriate Hans Bürki.

Hans Bürki was not a poor man: his farm, Gibel, was worth around 12,000 pounds. He had some debts but also other assets: 14,020 pounds and some loose change are listed.¹¹ After deducting the debt, there remained 1,079 pounds of which the State demanded almost 90 pounds. This was essentially Hans' portion of the estate after the estate would have been divided between all members of his family. Hans' wife's dowry (5,000 pounds) was deducted from the computation of the assets because a dowry was considered a debt of the husband to the wife. Barbara was also allowed to buy the Gibel farm for 12,000 pounds.¹² His neighbor Daniel Grimm¹³ was not faring much better: his farm, Gibelport¹⁴ or what is now called Widerberg, was also confiscated and 230 pounds (1/9 of his fortune) confiscated. The high lords were consistent in their computations of the fine.¹⁵

The confiscation of property was one thing, but there was also the threat of imprisonment and death. Hans had to flee and went to the canton of Lucerne. Lucerne was the typical escape destination for the Bernese Anabaptists of that time. Lucerne was Catholic and not on good terms with Bern.¹⁶ Therefore, it was happy to offer protection to the Anabaptists. Hans went to Luthern (probably via the Lüderalp) and lived for the next time on the Badegg¹⁷ farm above Luthern, at 1000 meters above sea level. We don't know much about Hans' during this period of his life. He must have been rather quiet. A year later the pastor Moschard of Langnau visited him probably to dissuade him from his beliefs on baptism. Yet, Hans held fast to his beliefs. Another year later in 1693, Hans is mentioned in a letter from Bern to the canton of Lucerne. Lucerne was asked to extradite Hans Bürki, but apparently the canton was either unwilling or unable to extradite him. At

¹¹ Geltstagsrödel of Langnau, Signature B III 194a, 4. December 1691 of the Staatsarchives Bern

¹² The rules were simple: the expelled Anabaptists were considered "dead", and then the inheritance (i.e., the wealth of the family) is distributed. The dead don't inherit, but the distribution was made as if the expelled were still alive and were to receive a portion. However, the state of Bern collected the expelled individual's portion as a fine. The fact that Bürki's wife, Barbara, was allowed to take over the farm shows that she was not viewed as an Anabaptist, or at least not as a threat. The assets were therefore divided by 12 (husband, wife + 10 children) and Hans Bürki's share (1/12) was retracted.

¹³ Daniel Grimm's conversion to the Anabaptist faith must have particularly affected Pastor Moschard. Grimm was not only known as an excellent Bible expert but was also the godfather of Moschard's daughter, Margret.

¹⁴ In any case, this assignment of the court is probable. In 1742, the next Gibel owner, Michael Gerber, exchanged a piece of land with Daniel Grimm, who appears most likely to have lived on Gibelport, according to the description of the borders. Maybe "Nachlass" by Margrith Rageth-Fritz, who meticulously recorded the owners of the Langnau farms, will bring clarity. Her research included the history of probably thousands of farms going back four centuries. Daniel Grimm's name can be found as the first name listed in Figure 2 right next to Hans Bürki. He was a known neighbor of Hans and an Anabaptist leader who was banished from his property. – Additions by Tim Gerber

¹⁵ I owe the figures and the source to Dr. Mark Furner, who wrote a dissertation on the Bernese Baptist (1997, University of Cambridge, UK, p. 58, p. 240). The dissertation can be viewed at the Swiss National Library and in the University Library of Cambridge. Furner Mark: Anabaptism in the Emmental, Switzerland 1659-1743,

¹⁶ The borders between both cantons were still a source of strife even in the 20th century, and strife continued in the northern part (Eriswil/Ufhusen or Eriswil/Luthern) in 1953. In 1993, after long discussions, two borders were adjusted. The adjustment had to be made because the two cantons did not agree on the maintenance of a road (which crossed the canton border several times). The border is now completely on the Lucerne side. Therefore, the street is entirely on Bernese territory.

¹⁷ <http://map.geo.admin.ch/?Y=637163.5&X=208276.5&zoom=8&bgLayer=ch.swisstopo.pixelkartefarbe>

some point, Hans returned to Langnau probably during a time when Bern was distracted by problems other than the Anabaptists.

More than 10 years later in 1708, the time had come again. Bern was actively persecuting the Anabaptists once again, and Hans had to leave home and farm, his wife, and now 12 children. This time he did not cross the canton border, but went instead into the Gohl (Gohlgraben), the valley that runs north from Langnau towards the Napf, to the Alp called Blutenried. We don't know exactly where that was because Switzerland is in the process of getting rid of the old field names and the alp can no longer be found on today's maps. In any case, the alp was known in 1830 as it is listed in an alp directory of the Canton of Bern. It was probably in the area of the Blutenried farms,¹⁸ which are still named on the map today. This time things did not end well. Hans was betrayed to the authorities, captured, imprisoned and finally expelled on March 18, 1710. He was put on a ship for deportation to America (to the Carolina's) and driven to Basel, and later to Klee and Amsterdam.¹⁹ Of course, the canton of Berne kept accurate records of the Anabaptists who were expelled. The list shown below comes from the chronicles of Christian Schenk.²⁰

¹⁸ <http://map.geo.admin.ch/?Y=630753.5&X=204500.5&zoom=8&bgLayer=ch.swisstopo.pixelkarteFarbe>

(The farm "Rächenhüttli" visible north of the Blutenried. It was probably not yet built in 1710 but in 1830 appears in the directory. It was purchased by my uncle and my father in the 1960's, Hans and Heinrich Gerber, respectively. They are thus continuing the tradition of farm purchasing by Gerbers.

¹⁹ <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/B8525.html>

²⁰ Gemeindearchiv Röthenbach, Schenk VI 76. The photograph came out of Jecker: "Von der Ausschaffung kriminalisierter Einheimische zur Endlösung in der Täuferfrage".

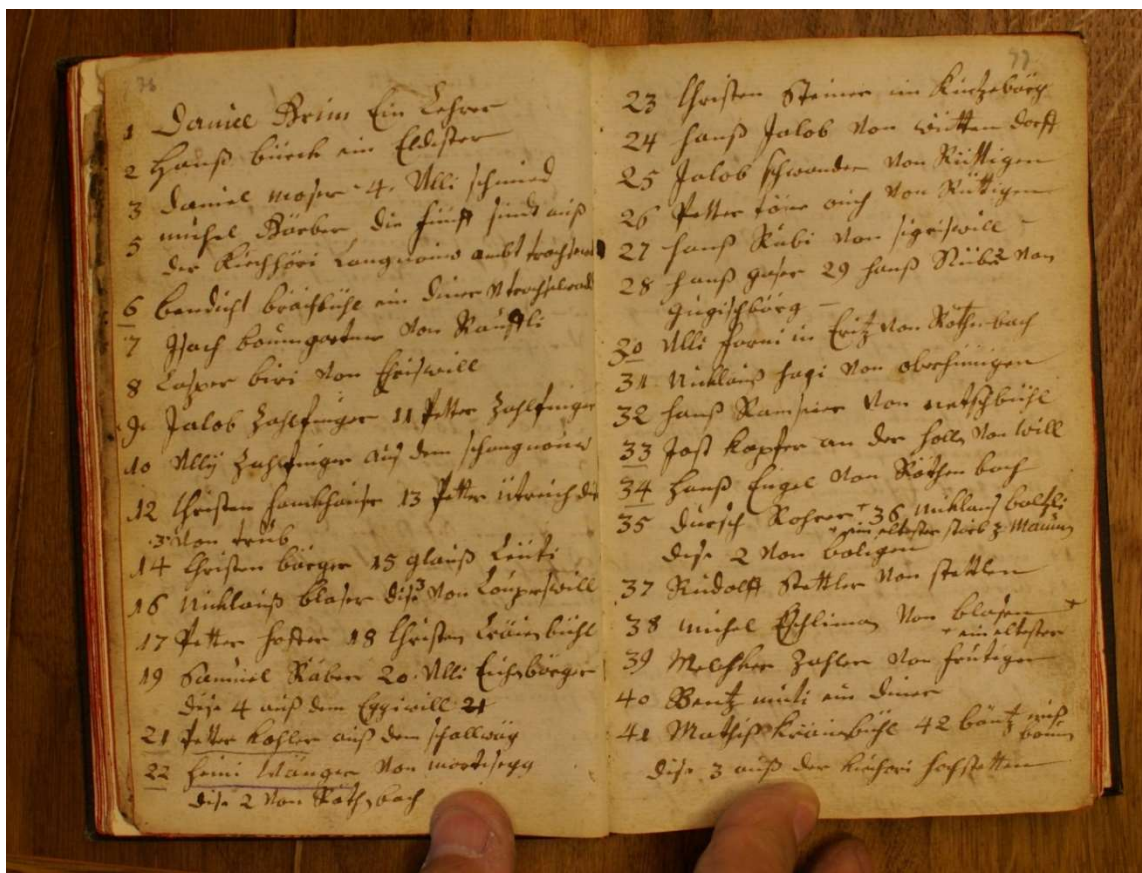


Figure 2: This photograph is from the Chronicles of Christian Schenk of Rothenbach. It lists individuals deported. Daniel Grimm and neighbor Hans Bürki are the first listed. The photograph came from a document by Hanspeter Jeker who has granted us permission to use the image.

Because of homesickness, however, he fled and returned to Langnau. After being arrested again and again, he was deported to Holland on July 13, 1711 on a ship named "Emmentaler" together with around 100 other Anabaptists.²¹

Nothing more is definitively known about the further whereabouts of Hans Bürki. Although some people have surmised that he immigrated to Landcaster County, PA in the United States (prior to the USA becoming a country), there is no good evidence to suggest this. A record of a Hans Burkhalter was found there, but his spouse's name is different. More likely, he fled to Court, Courgemont, Switzerland²² in 1731/1732.²³

So, what happened to Gibel? Remember that the farm was purchased by Hans' wife, Barbara, which she likely also managed. Barbara had at least 11 children. Assuming that Barbara was about the same age as Hans, she was around 60 years old in 1711. The State Archives of the Canton of Bern will help us determine

²¹ A list exists, but, unfortunately, I don't have it. The list is said to be printed by Ernst Müller.

²² <http://talesofourpast.com/hans-burki-a-story-of-persecution-and-perserverance/>

²³ According to Jecker (e-mail dated September 19, 2011), Hans Bürki is said to have died in Corgémont in 1736.

what happened to Gibel.²⁴ Bern had some Anabaptist files destroyed and lost forever (Wikileaks didn't exist then), but we do have a transfer record that survived. We find under the signature "Bez Trachselwald A 524" on pages 59 - 67 the notarial original of an exchange contract of September 19, 1731.²⁵ With this contract, Christian, Hans and Magdalena Bürki (all of Gibel) represented by their "Vogt" Peter Grimm (an old term for "Vormund" which is a legal representative), transferred to Michael Gerber of Langnau ([I18382](#))²⁶ the following assets: the house of Gibel together with forest, springs, and a quarter of the fish pond in Daniel Grimm's Moos. Again, we hear a reference to Daniel Grimm or his son, probably the owner in Gibelmoos. In return, the Bürki's would receive the right to allow their cow to graze on a hill in the area of Rämigrat.²⁷

The text begins like this:²⁸

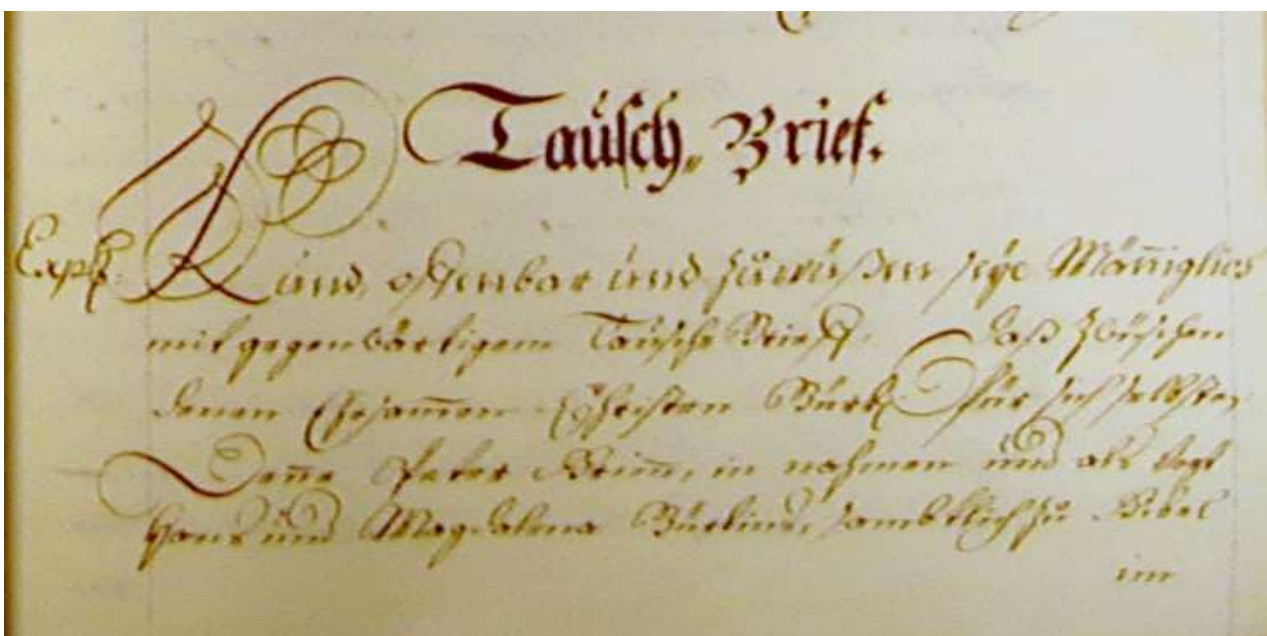


Figure 3: Beginning of Exchange letter between Michael Gerber and Hans Bürki

and ends with the date and signature of the notary:

²⁴ Bez Trachselwald A 524, pages 59 - 67. A friendly and helpful employee of the State Archives searched for and photographed the text. Many Thanks.

²⁵ Barbara Bürki would have been 80 years old and perhaps her death was the reason for the division of assets.

²⁶ An ID number is assigned to each person so that the person can be easily found in the online database at <https://www.gerberfamily.org>. You can also find the ID number on the Descendancy chart at the end of this document. Additional information about each person can be found at that website.

²⁷ You cannot find this mountain on the map today. On the Dufourkarte from 1860, it is still shown. It lies west of Gohlgrabens, a kilometer north of Langnau.

²⁸ To use Kurrentschrift, see https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deutsche_Kurrentschrift.

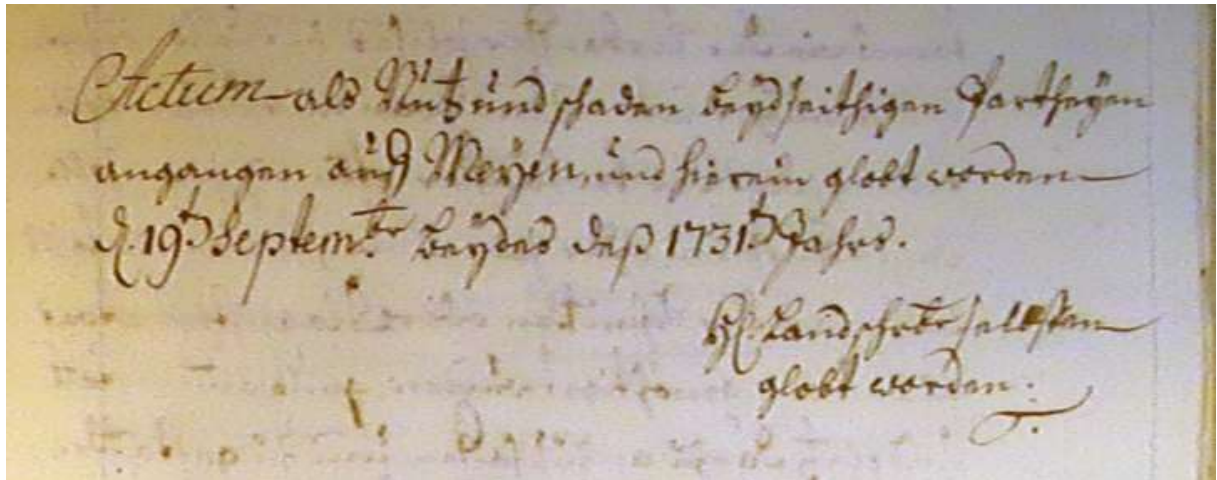


Figure 4: End of Gibel exchange agreement showing Notary's signature

A farm was exchanged for the right to move a cow to an alp in summer!²⁹ One would think this appears to be a bad exchange for the three Bürkis were there not some extra financial claims against Giebel over a few years. So, the farm was burdened with £14,500 in debt and unpaid interest. Remember, in 1691 Hans Bürki's wife paid 12,000 pounds for the farm. In addition, two "bad sisters"³⁰ had to have a right of residence, the remaining food supply as well as paid interest on virtual capital of 1000 pounds each. Since there was hardly any inflation at that time, the value of the house remained constant. Its owners were indebted and had to sell the farm. Additionally, the owner, Barbara Langenegger (Hans' wife), may have died.

Here is the relevant section from the original: Michael Gerber is referred to as "Gegentäuscher Gerber".³¹

²⁹ Such a right is said to be worth about the same as a single cow.

³⁰ I couldn't find out what "bad sisters" means. They may have been unmarried and therefore have acted as biological sisters to the new owner to continue to receive support. It is possible that they were handicapped and therefore could not support themselves. There also could be a transcription error. "Schleiss" was a term used to describe a sum of money which the heir to the farm received in addition to the right of residence and food for the wife of the deceased previous owner (Zähls Holz S 28/29). According to Hansruedi Hänni, the two Bürki daughters were Barbara born November 14, 1676, and Christina born February 4, 1687.

³¹ It is likely that the notary used this term for Michael to better describe the transaction. It was more of an exchange than a purchase.

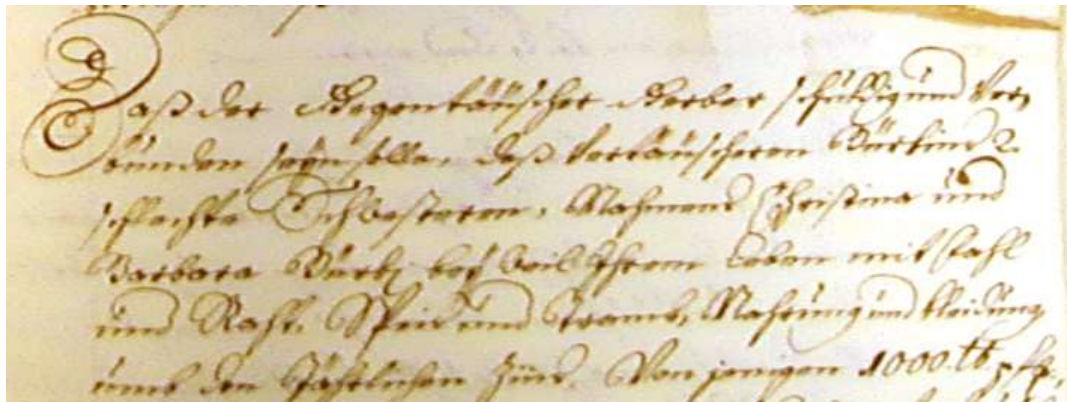


Figure 5: Text naming Michael as "Gegentäuscher Gerber"

This is the list of debts owed (including 1000 pounds that the Bürkis owed Michael Gerber, point 13: "And against your Gegentäuscher himself...Capital 1000."). The smaller amounts under the respective capital are the outstanding interest. On the right is a transcription of this page.

Figure 6: Sources of funds paid.

	Pounds
1. Frisching Capital	2000
5 Zins (units of interest)	300
2. Not. Wäber zuhänden Hofmeister of Graffenried Capital	3000
4 Zins	600
3. Landvogt of Bonstetten - Murten Capital	1200
3 Zins	180
4. Landvogt Steiger of Aubonne Capital	1000
4 Zins	200
5. Venner Frisching of Bärn Capital	1000
3 Zins	150
6. Christen Gerber, the purchaser's father, capital 1000 and additional capital	400
and 4 Zins	80
7. Hans Neuenschwander's children	300
8. Gilg Jakob of Habbach Capital	400
9. Peter Müller capital	400
10. Hans Meister of Sumiswald Capital	200
11. Community of Langnau 27 crowns or	90
12. Aforementioned bad sisters, Christina and Barbara Bürki	1000
13. And the purchaser's own capital	1000
Sum Total:	14500

An explanation about money and currency is necessary here.³² National currency in Bern at that time the was the pound (Pfund),³³ abbreviated as "L" or "Lb". A pound was originally used by the Romans which equated to 325 grams of silver. Charlemagne divided the pound into 20 shillings which equals 240 pfennigs or denarii. The pound was used in Bern in the 18th century but only as a unit of measurement. Pound coins didn't exist. Rather, transactions were made in crowns (krone) and batzen: a crown was worth 25 batzen, a pound was worth 13½ batzen.

So, the crown was worth almost twice as much as a pound. According to other sources, a crown was worth 3.5 times as much. Possibly, the relationship was different from canton to canton or has changed over time. The crown was abbreviated to Xr or Kr. Transcription errors are occasionally made and the pound symbol is interpreted as a crown symbol or vice versa. The Swiss franc was created in 1850 and was available as a coin in 1852. A Swiss franc corresponded to 5 grams of silver 900/1000, the conversion at the time of introduction (ie 1850) was about 1 franc = ½ pound. However, about 50 years earlier there was currency called "Franconia", which corresponded to 6.6 grams of silver, but it did not prevail as a form of general currency.

In addition to the pound or the batzen as a silver-based currency, there were also gold coins, mostly of foreign origin: doubloon (originally Spanish, later also minted in Bern), German thalers, and guilders.



Figure 7: Gold coins used as currency.

Gold coins were often used for special purpose. For example, a right to pasture a cow on the alp Blutenried was sold on 9/19 May 1645 for "400 pounds and a doubloon coin as a tip" to a Niklaus Gerber of Langnau by a David Gerber³⁴ in the Gohl (possibly a cousin or uncle of Michael Gerber, the Spycher builder and purchaser of Vorder Giebel).

³² There are entries about Geld, Pfund, and Franken (money, pounds, and francs) in the Swiss Historical Lexicon of Switzerland at <https://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/>

³³ Traces of usage of the term can still be found today. The expression "Fünfliber" (i.e., "Five-Pound") is understood as a five-franc piece generally understood by German-speaking Switzerland.

³⁴ Possibly individual number I2547 in the family tree found at <https://gerberfamily.org/getperson.php?personID=I2547&tree=TimGerber>.

Switzerland therefore looked to the introduction of the silver-based "francs" (1850) and soon after that was forced to mint a gold coin. First created in 1883 was a "Helvetia" and then in 1897 the "Goldvreneli"³⁵ which is still largely popular today.

If one interprets the currency symbol in the list above as Lb, (as pounds), the 14,500 pounds of debt later corresponded to 7,250 francs or 36.25 kg of silver. With a current (June 2011) silver price (900/1000) of approx. 860 francs per kg, the debt on Gibel would be around 31,000 francs, approximately the same amount in US dollars.

Michael Gerber was probably not known as an Anabaptist, otherwise he would likely have not been allowed to purchase the farm. The Bernese "Commission for Anabaptist Affairs" was abolished as late as 1743, and only in 1798 after the collapse of Old Bern did this canton have religious liberty instituted and the old laws and judgments against Anabaptists repealed. However, there were also Anabaptists who did not openly display their faith, half-Anabaptists, or those who even participated publicly in the "national church".³⁶ They lived their true faith completely in secret: Nicodemites.

Both the authors of "Zähjs Holz" and Tim Gerber assume that the buyer in 1731 was Michael Gerber, born 1697/1798 (individual ID: [I18382](#) at gerberfamily.org), and his wife was Anna Röthlisberger. So, at the time of acquiring the farm, he would have been 34 years old and would already have loaned the previous owner 1000 pounds, or 1/12 of the debt on the farm. He would have been married only 7 years before acquiring it and already had 4 children. He would have had the courage to farm despite the heavy workload. In addition, he would own an Alprechtes (a right to use grazing land on an alp) which what was actually "exchanged". That is of course possible, but somewhat industrious for a young man. In the exchange contract, however, there is clearly listed a Michael Gerber (or at one point "Gärber") as the purchaser, the son of Christian Gerber ([I5869](#)) living at the nearby farm called Oben im Dorft. Taufrodel (baptism records) clearly show this Michael as being born in 1697, his father was Christian Gerber, and it shows Michael's four children being born beginning a year after their marriage.

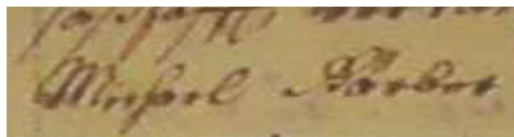


Figure 8: Michael Gerber (Gärber at one point) is clearly shown as the purchaser of Gibel on the exchange contract.

Addition by Tim Gerber: "Zähjs Holz" (p. 22, left column) shows a Christian Gerber ([I2524](#)) as a resident of Gibel in 1749 with the note "banned"; he was therefore probably an Anabaptist. This would have been Michael's eldest son. There is a family that emigrated to the Ohio in the United States due to persecution against Anabaptists.³⁷ The father of this family, named Christian, fled to Court in the Jura mountains of Switzerland where he had four children. Three of these children and one nephew fled to Sonnenberg, Ohio,

³⁵ Bern State Archives (Staatsarchiv Bern), sealed original document, signature F. Signau 1645, May, 9/19.

³⁶ *It is understood that at least two of Michael's children were an Anabaptist, but neither Michael nor his wife were noted as Anabaptists when they had their children baptized. Additionally, many if not most of Michael's and Anna's grandchildren were Anabaptist. The fact that both Michael and his father, Christian, had loaned money to Hans Bürki lends itself to the idea that Michael was at minimum a "sympathizer".*

³⁷ Historical Sketches of Seven Generations: Descendants of Deacon Michael Gerber, 1763-1938).

where they began to prosper. Descendants of this family visited Giebel and had special interest in an ancestor named Michael. They met with Ruedi Gerber, the owner of Vorder Giebel, as they believed that the Gibel farm was the farm of their ancestor. It is possible that Christian, the eldest son fled to the Jura mountains and became the father of the immigrants who populated much of Ohio with individuals with the Gerber surname.

But how did things continue on Gibel?³⁸

The farm was passed down to Niklaus ([I2527](#)), Michael's youngest son of his first marriage.³⁹ It was then passed down to Niklaus' youngest son, Christian Gerber ([I0505](#)). He was called "Christeli"⁴⁰.

Christian passed away in 1849. The division of his estate is available. The division of his estate is available and was valued at 48,988 pounds. This estate included the farm "Gibel", but did not include the value of the inventory and animals. The farm was previously passed down to the son, Niklaus, and to each of 10 heirs was transferred 4900 pounds (partly children, partly groups of grandchildren). In addition, in the past two generations, there have been 2 more farms purchased: Ober Hapbach and Gibelkelle. In these 3 generations, financial assets have increased by 50,000 to 100,000 pounds. The value in terms of the number of Francs had grown, not counting the two farms that were bought and the financial assets of those farms.⁴¹ Now things were going well for the Gerbers.

In 1839, Christeli transferred the Gibel farm to his son Niklaus ([I0461](#)). The Transfer of Deed sets the value of the farm at £45,000, or 13,500 crowns, or CHF 33,500. It is likely to be "old" francs. The crown was set at 3.33 pounds.

This is how the contract of assignment of Gibel from Niklaus to Christian began:

³⁸ To trace the genealogy of the Gerber family, Tim Gerber's website is www.gerberfamily.org indispensable! The easiest way is click on "HIS SIDE" at the top of the page and click the right arrow next to an individual to go back in time.

³⁹ According to records kept at Giebel, additional farms were purchased by Niklaus and gifted or sold to his sons as inheritance. They included Unter Hapbach and Hinter Bäregg. It also appears that the Giebelkelle house was included in the transfer of Giebel from Niklaus to Christian ([I0505](#)). The next time we see Giebelkelle in the records, it appears to have been given or sold to Michael Gerber ([I0496](#)) from Christian. – Tim Gerber

⁴⁰ Christian, or Christeli, Gerber was a well-known member of the Neutäufer, or Fröhlichianer, church.



Figure 9: Contract to transfer Gibel to son Niklaus.

and this is the setting of the value:

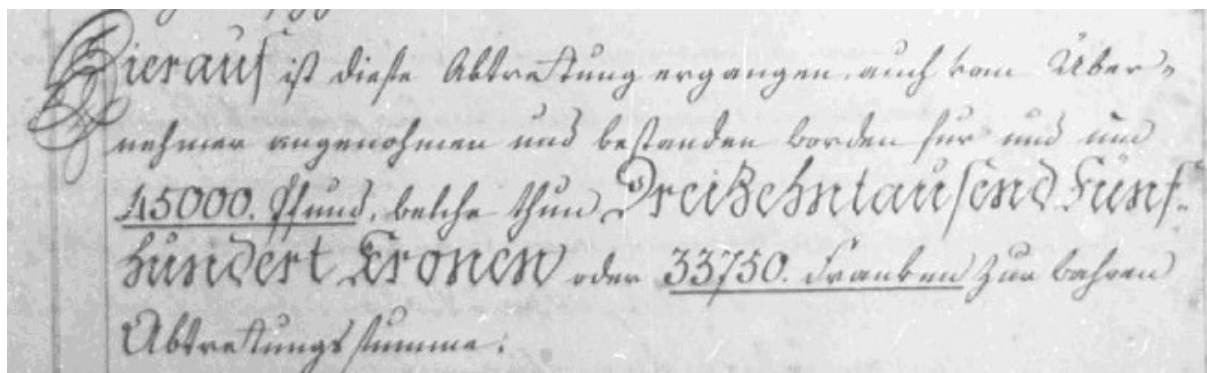


Figure 10: Statement of value for the transfer of Gibel and related properties.

Niklaus ([I0461](#)), Christeli's son and new Giebel owner, was probably a contemporary-minded person as he was probably the first to have the house (hereinafter written with "ie", i.e. "Gibel") insured against fire.⁴² The building was valued at £6,500 in 1849.

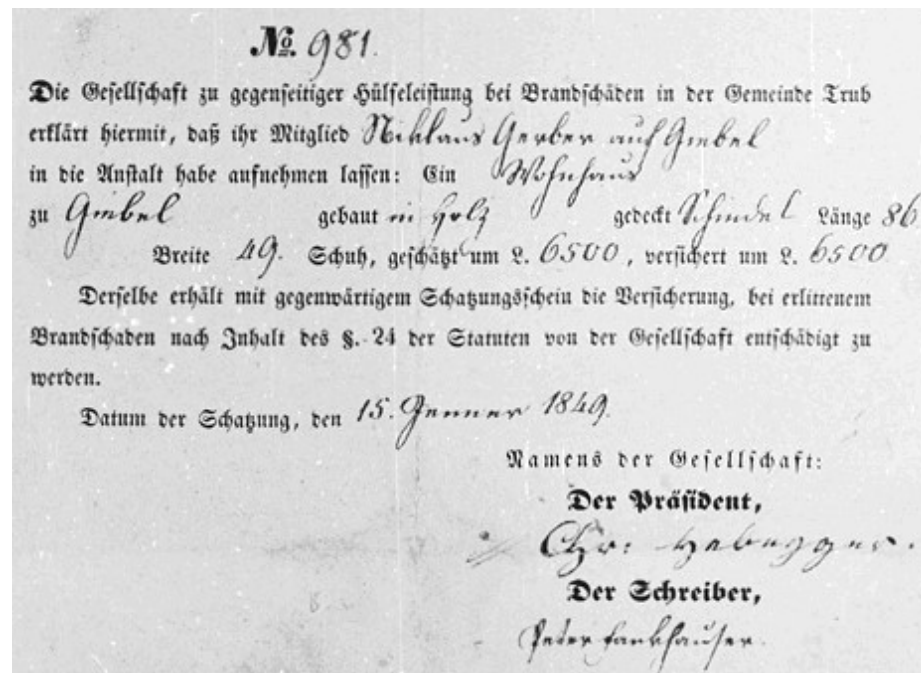


Figure 11: Statement of value for insurance purposes

The distribution of the inheritance and thus the amount of Niklaus' assets are not available. Based on a receipt for taxes paid, we know that Niklaus was still listed as the owner in 1850, and the farm was valued at 18,782.75 francs at that time.⁴³

⁴² The development of fire insurance in the canton of Bern is a story of its own. Acceptance in the canton of Bern goes back to the third town fire in Huttwil in 1834. The first Bernese fire insurance company was founded in 1806. Insurance is still compulsory with the cantonal company in the canton of Bern (and at very modest premiums).

⁴³ And, of course, that the property tax was 1% of the value back then!

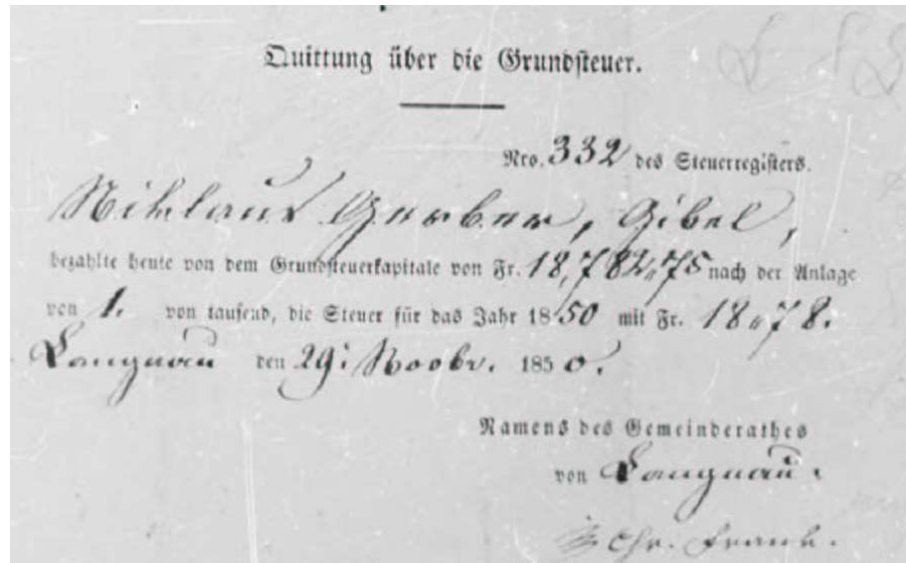


Figure 12: Statement of value for insurance purposes

In the years 1845-1860 the entirety of Switzerland was mapped for the first time. The map of Switzerland was called the "Dufourkarte" (named after the army leader General Dufour in Sonderbund War) and was on a scale of 1:100,000. Individual sections of the map are available online⁴⁴, and displayed here is the area around Gibel. It is interesting that the place name of "Gibel" is attributed to the wooded hill north of the farm. Perhaps the farm name has nothing to do with a gable on a house, but the name of the hill behind it (when viewing the farm from the southeast). It is shaped like a gable.



Figure 13: Map of Gibel area. You can see the triangular shape of the hill similar to a gable (gibel).

⁴⁴ <http://map.geo.admin.ch>. The current national map appears, but you can switch to the older Dufour map or the Siegfried map, which was created later.

Another 45 years later in 1894, Christeli's grandson, Christian ([I0388](#) born 1823), died. He was the son of Niklaus. His inheritance is available. There were assets of CHF 206,000 and debts of CHF 1,000. This was without the farm (still written "Giebel") which had already been transferred on May 18, 1892 to his son, Ulrich ([I0152](#)). Christian had a valid letter showing that he had received 65,000 francs.

Apparently, other farms⁴⁵ were bought again in this generation: Christian's son, Christian ([I2363](#)), was the owner of the farm, Gibelkelle.⁴⁶ The second son of Christian, Friedrich, was a farm owner on Bäreggfeld. Daughter Anna Elisabeth was married to Johann Jakob and living in Trüb, and daughter Emma was unmarried.

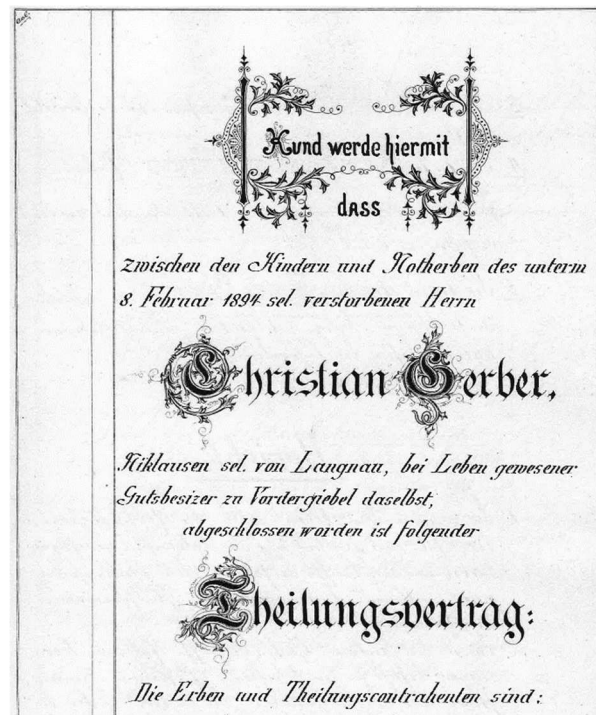


Figure 14: Inheritance agreement of Christian Gerber⁴⁷

Such an inheritance agreement consisted of around 30 pages (with Christian, about two thirds of it was for the compilation of wealth alone) and costed over 1,000 francs according to the receipt, even though the notary gave a nice discount of 37.80 francs.

⁴⁵ In addition to the farms listed above, we have a record of Michael Gerber of Gibel purchasing a farm in 1854 named Mittler Langenegg from a Samuel Burkhalter. This document came from Robert Gangloff. -Tim Gerber

⁴⁶ Christian was the father of Ernst and Friedrich Gerber who immigrated to Sabetha, Kansas at the turn of the century. Ernst's son, Theodore Roosevelt Gerber, was the grandfather of Tim Gerber, of gerberfamily.org.

⁴⁷ The "notherben" are the heirs entitled to a compulsory portion. In this case all of children were entitled.

Rechnung für die Zeit	
<u>Erlöse des Herrn Ch. Gerber</u>	
genuss. Güterbesitzer für Giebel	
Münner Anlagen	295.65
Münner Gabeifahr	762.15
Total	1057.80
	37.80
Bleiben	1020.00

Figure 15: Receipt for inheritance agreement

Christian was probably also an open-minded person: he even allowed himself to be photographed⁴⁸. However, we do not know exactly how old he was when he was photographed. He appears to be around 40 years of age. So, the photo would have been taken between 1865 and 1870. The following picture hung for several decades in the apartment of his granddaughter, Emma Gerber, in the Stöckli of Giebel and later in the nursing home.

⁴⁸ The first photograph was taken in 1826. It was made through the negative/positive process on silver halide plates invented by Talbot in 1835.

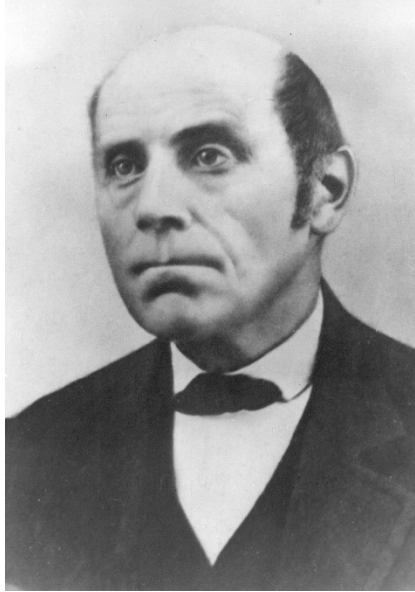


Figure 16: Photograph of Christian Gerber. This is the first known photograph of a Gerber from Gibel.

In 1919, another 25 years later, Christian's son Ulrich Gerber died. At that time the assets amounted to 153,000 francs, now including Vorder Gibel. The official value of the farm including three pieces of forest and path was 103,000 francs, and the farms Aussergrat (above Kröschenbrunnen) bought March 16, 1899 were valued at 20,000 francs, and Gratweidli was valued at 3600 francs. The purely-financial assets exclude real estate, and was therefore only around 26,000 francs.

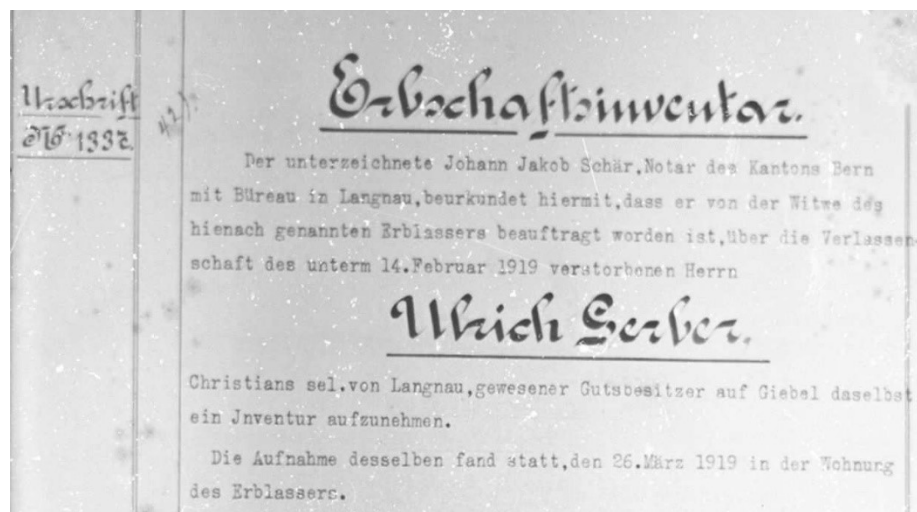


Figure 17: Document transferring Gibel to son, Ulrich.

Gibel continued to be spelled with "ie", i.e. Giebel.

Ulrich's wife Rosa (maiden name "Gasser") signed Giebel over to herself. Based on the old Bernese property and inheritance law, the introduction of the new civil code allowed for spouses to claim themselves as an heir. The document⁴⁹ begins like this:

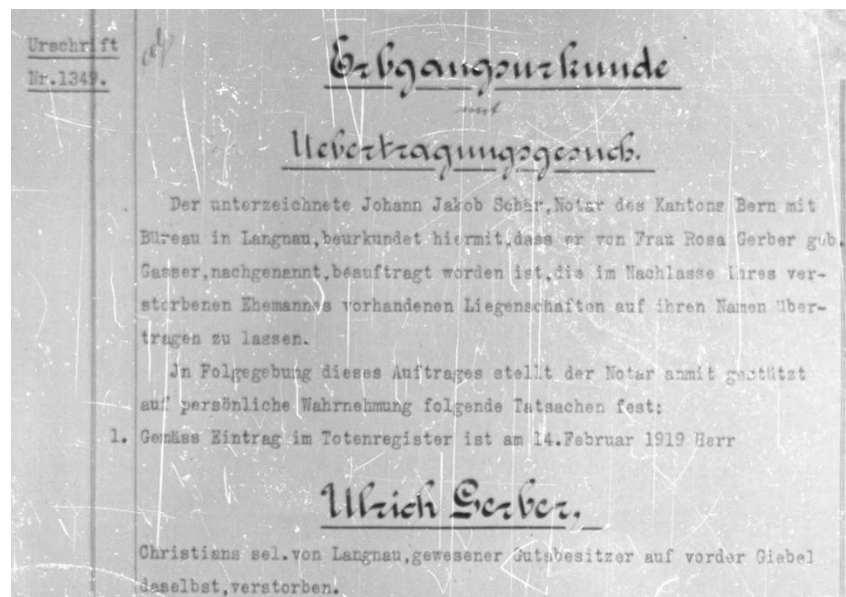


Figure 18: The front page of a document that gives the widowed wife the right to be considered a full-heir

and continues with the rationale why the wife and widow should be considered as full-heir:

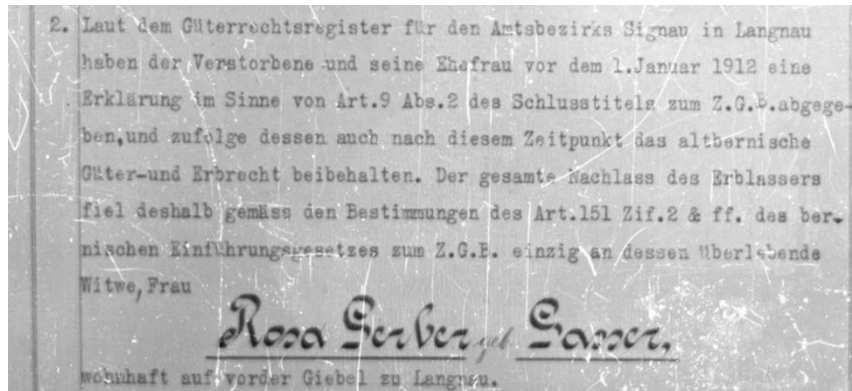


Figure 19: Rationale as to why Rosa Gasser should be given the rights of full-heir

After the death of "Giebel-Ueli" the farm was managed by his eldest son, Fritz Gerber (grandfather of the author of this document, Peter Gerber), who married Aline Studer a short time later. Because of the World War 1, Aline fled from Sennheim⁵⁰ in Alsace to Trubschachen. The marriage date is from the family booklet of Fritz and Aline.

⁴⁹ This is a transcript kept on Gibel that I photographed around 1973. The film has suffered, but the original can also be found in the Bern State Archives under the number given at the top left.

⁵⁰ Today the place is called "Cernay" and belongs to France. Before the First World War, Alsace belonged to Germany for a good 40 years (since 1871).

Familie: *Gerber - Studer*
 heimatberechtigt in *Lenzburg*

Ehe-Reg.
und wohnhaft in *Lenzburg*

Eheleute	Name und Vorname	Geburt (Ort und Zeit)	Trauung (Ort und Zeit)	Tod (Ort und Zeit)
Ehemann	<i>Gerber Fritz</i>	<i>Lenzburg</i> <i>am 11. Juni</i> <i>1893</i>	<i>Lenzburg</i> <i>am 21. Februar</i> <i>1920</i>	
	Beruf: <i>Landwirts</i>			
	Sohn des <i>Ulrich Gerber</i>			
	und der <i>Kristin geb. Gasser</i>			
Ehefrau	<i>Studer Aline</i>	<i>München im</i> <i>Städtchen</i> <i>am 21. Februar</i> <i>1888</i>		
	(frühere Heimat): <i>Leuzigen</i>			
	Tochter des <i>Johann Studer</i>			
	und der <i>Kristin geb. Gasser</i>			

Figure 20: Marriage certificate between Fritz Gerber and Aline Studer. This marriage began a line of Gerbers belonging to the author of this document. This line is no longer directly associated with Gibel.

Here the family in about 1926 (the youngest surviving daughter, Ruth, front right, would have been about 2 years old. She was born in 1924).



Figure 21: Fritz Gerber and Aline Studer family photograph

The youngest son of Ulrich, Ruedi (born on 12 January 1906), was the intended heir of Vorder Giebel. After he trained as a farmer, had come of age, married (March 9, 1929), he took over the farm. The previously mentioned brother, Fritz, left Langnau in March of 1929 with his wife and four children and moved to Küssnacht. Here he found a job at the Baer cheese dairy. This is from his "service booklet".

Abmeldung. *)						Anmeldung. *)					
Jahr	Monat	Tag	Gemeinde	Nr. der St.-Kontrolle	Unterschrift des Sektionschefs	Jahr	Monat	Tag	Gemeinde	Nr. der St.-Kontrolle	Unterschrift des Sektionschefs
1929	März	15.	Langnau	45	<i>[Signature]</i>	1929	Mai	20.	Küssnacht	774 9309	<i>[Signature]</i>

Figure 22: Service booklet of Fritz Gerber

Later, Ruedi passed Giebel down to one of his sons, and since then, it has been further passed down to one of Ruedi's grandsons. We expect it will soon be handed down to the next generation.

Hans Bürki would have it much easier today. He would not have had to flee to avoid persecution because of his beliefs. The Anabaptists are today respected residents of the canton of Bern. Until recently, a Mennonite held the position of Kantonsarzt, which is similar to a Surgeon General. How amazing is that!⁵¹

⁵¹ Personal details of this person is withheld at www.gerberfamily.com for security/privacy reasons, but one can see where he fits into the family tree by searching for individual number I26613.

This is Vorder Gibel⁵². I tried to photograph Gibel from the same location as the painter circa 1930. The spycher in the foreground appears much narrower than it did previously. There was once an outer wall that was not restored when the rest of the spycher was rebuilt 1980 practically to its original condition of 1735.



Figure 23: This photograph is of the farm called Gibel, or Giebel. Specifically, it is Vorder Giebel. The Stöckli to the right is where early Neutäufer meetings were held

Three remarks:

- 1: This is not a scientific academic work. Not all sources are identified in footnotes.
- 2: The identification numbers of individuals (Ixxxx) in Tim Gerber's family tree can be entered and searched in the advanced search tool. It is an ideal way to search since many "Gerbers" were called Niklaus, Micheal, Christian or Johannes.
- 3: This work is licensed under the license : CC BY-NC-ND

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/legalcode>

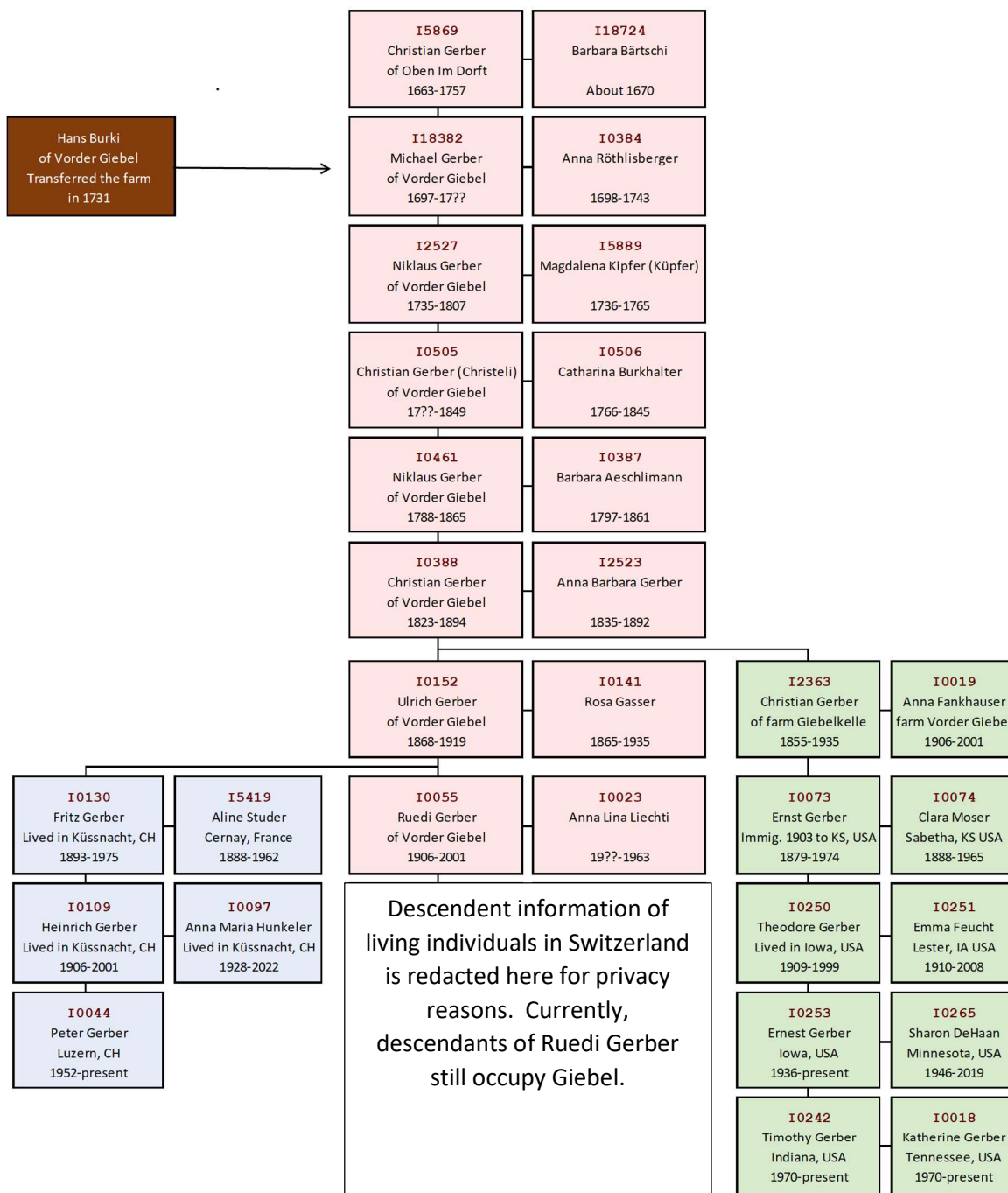
of the organization:

<http://creativecommons.org/>

⁵² Gibel is once again written without the "ie", at least on official maps and in official directories.

Decendancy Chart for Gerber Family of Vorder Giebel (Gibel) in Langnau

8-Aug-22



Ancestral line of this document's author

Residents of Vorder Giebel

Ancestral line of this document's editor

The Individual Number listed at the top of each box can be used to find the individual on our online database at <https://www.gerberfamily.org>
Click the "Search" button and enter the individual number in the ID box.

Home Search Logout (Edit Profile: administrator) Find Media Info English

Search | Advanced Search | Search Families | Search Site

First Name: Last Name: ID: Search

It is recommended that you do not search by name because many of the names have various spellings.