

A Walser family name on the Internet: <http://mengelt.info>

BY CHRISTIAN MENGELT, BLAUEN, SWITZERLAND

My ancestors were Walser; this has been extensively proven historically. Whether or not and to what extent I can be regarded as a Walser myself is, however, questionable. My grandfather, who grew up in Hinterrhein, «migrated» with his family down the Rhine. I am a member of the Walservereinigung Graubünden, have also the citizenship of Splügen, but neither my dialect nor my type of life are «Walser style». The question arises about my Walser awareness. Being a Walser was always characterized again among other things by emigration and opening up of new surrounding areas. Emigrants from upper Valais settled in the 13th century various regions of Graubünden, and in the 19th century numerous Rheinwald Walser were forced to migrate out into the wide world.

The exciting book by Sabina Wanner Simmen about the Rheinwald emigration in the 19th century has, furthermore, prompted me to follow



the family name Mengelt in the New World. For this, the Internet opens up new possibilities of approaches and information exchanges. In addition, I am not only interested in the genealogical data of the family history, but also the worldwide existence and effect of the descendants who live today. With our homepage, we intend, therefore, to also further this exchange.

This way, I was able find out among other things a lot of exciting information and interesting stories about several Mengelt families in the USA. For instance about John Patrick Mengelt, the former major basketball player of NBA, the first professional division of the USA.

John is a descendent (great-grandson) of Martin Mengelt from Splügen, who emigrated in about 1855 with his wife Ursula, born Rüedi, and six children to America. John P. Mengelt was born in 1949 in LaCross, Wisconsin, grew up in Elwood, Indiana, and studied at the University of Auburn, Alabama. Today, he lives with his family in Lake Forest at Lake Michigan, near Chicago.

There is, therefore, a specific link on our homepage to the family tree of Martin Mengelt, 1811-1892, and his numerous American descendants until the present time.

My brother Jürg Mengelt, Sarnen, has over many years collected extensive investigations to the family tree of our Mengelt families. Starting with Anton Mengelt from Splügen, 1720-1797, the descendents cover 7 generations; the data of the younger 8th and 9th generations are still to be completed. We hope to be able to interest via the Internet perhaps also the younger generation in the origin of our ancestors and the history of the Walser families – and also to seek and keep up contact and exchange between natives and emigrants embracing both language and country.



The “Mengelt family crest” that is shown here has probably been derived from the coat of arms of Tirano (black eagle and red cross-beam). The Historical Lexicon of Switzerland mentions an Alexander Mengelt, Podestat of Tirano in 1553, as well as a Caspar Mengelt, Podestat of Toglio in 1573. “Podestat” was the name of community administrators in the Valtelline, a vassal state of The Grey Leagues (Graubünden) in the 16th to 18th century.

Thus family history joins with contemporary history over the centuries up to our present days.

You are invited to join the Mengelt web sites. We were appreciated to get exiting messages about historical and current events, pictures and scripts from Mengelt's around the world. If you have any question, suggestion, or contributions please e-mail: kontakt@mengelt.info