

Hunziker: Moosleerau, Leimbach, Gontenschwil

by Peter Steiner

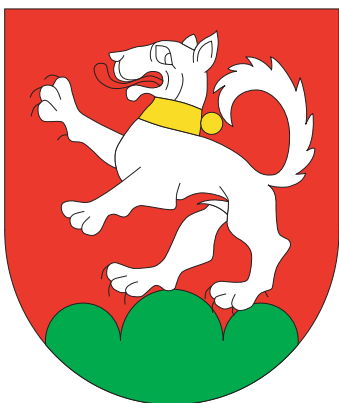
The Hunzikers from Leimbach and Gontenschwil are of one lineage. The assumption in «History of old Gontenschwiler Families», that the Hunziker progenitor of Geisshof (hamlet near Gontenschwil) came directly from Leerau to Gontenschwil, is erroneous and must be corrected. But lets start at the beginning.

The place of origin of this widely branched surname Hunziker is known to be the hamlet named Hunziken, situated above Geuensee in the Luzerner Suhrental. Earlier, as far back as the Middle Ages, numerous Hunziker descendants left their small village. Travelling down the valley, they settled in Reitnau, Attelwil, Leerau, Staffelbach, Schöffland, Muhen, and yes, even in the city of Aarau. Kirchleerau and Moosleerau became a virtual Hunziker center; especially the latter. Here Hunziker rapidly developed as the main surname. After 1600 the two Leerau already counted 20 families bearing the Hunziker name. One of them was the family of Melchior Hunziker in Moosleerau. Notably, he was known in his village by two added surnames, as «Hentzman» and as «Hegi's son».



Coat of arms of the Hunziker from Moosleerau

Only the second name, Hegi, was used by his descendants. Aside from this, he is the key figure in our brief Hunziker history. He appears in a Leimbach house register of 1647, alongside five other homeowners, as «Melcher Huntzigker called Heggi from Lerauw». He is identical with the above Melchior.



Coat of arms of the Hunziker from Leimbach

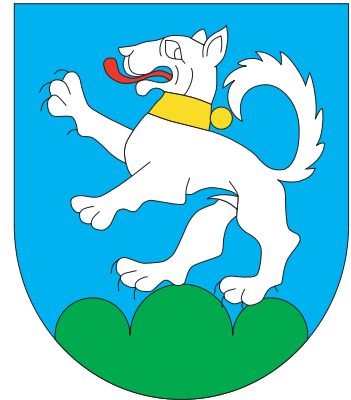
A crucial document in the Community Archive in Schlossrued proves the precise connection between the Hegi-Hunziker branch of Moosleerau and the Hunziker lineage in Leimbach. And why is it in Schlossrued? The explanation is simple: The lords of the Schloss [castle] Rued had jurisdiction not only over Ruedertal, but also over Leerau. Changes in ownership of real estate and lands therefore were recorded in Schlossrued. From one such entry in 1653 we learn the following: Melcher Hunziker, called «the old Hege», owned two farms; one in Moosleerau, one in Leimbach. Because of old age he transferred ownership to his sons, who planned for a division of the property. Uliman (or more precisely his sons, since Uliman was already dead), Melcher junior and Lux (Lucas), from the father's first marriage, took over the farmstead in Leerau.

Hans and Fridli, sons from their father's second marriage, were given the farmstead in Leimbach. The daughters were paid off.

The matter of the Leimbacher homestead had a record. Apparently already in 1593/1607 a Fridli Hunziker of Leerau lived on the same farm. He may well have been an uncle of Melcher. And since Fridli apparently had no male descendants, the farm probably went to the nephew Melcher after his death. His son, Lux Hegi or Lux Hunziker, ran the farm since

at least 1643. His halfbrother Hans moved to the farmstead in Leimbach in 1647 after getting married in Leerau. After signing the property division contract in 1653, Lux moved back to Moosleerau. Hans stayed in Leimbach; then he was joined by his brother Fridli. But Hans died that same year. Their father, Melchior, who probably never lived in Leimbach, was buried in Moosleerau in February 1655. Fridli then moved his mother to live with him in Leimbach.

And what about the Hunzikers in Geisshof? The key to their lineage can also be found. Of the two brothers in Leimbach only Fridli, with the help of his three sons, created an enduring branch. Melchior, born 1648 in Leimbach, (the son of Hans who died young), married Verena Bolliger from the hamlet Rechten. They brought their first child to be baptised in Reinach the following year. But shortly after that Melchior moved to the Geisshof. As is already mentioned in the Gontenschwiler Book of Families, Melchior obtained citizenship rights in Gontenschwil a few years later. In 1751 the Hunzikers in Leimbach, however, attained citizenship rights in that newly formed community once the «Steckhof» (hamlet without connection to a village) was discontinued.



Coat of arms of the Hunziker from Gontenschwil

In addition they retained their old citizenship in Moosleerau. How they managed to retain this old citizenship rights for more than a century, is at present a puzzle. Another interesting point: to this day, the Hunziker families in Leimbach as well as in Geisshof can verify their common descent through their old surname Hegi.

Bibliography

- P. Steiner, Die alten Familien von Gontenschwil (The old families of Gontenschwil), yearbook of the HVW 2000, p. 26.
- Robert Oehler, Die Hunziker von Aarau, Aarau 1962.