



# OFA Bulletin

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Oberholtz	Uberholtzer	Overholser	Oberheuser
Overhults	VanHulser	Overhuls	
Overhalser	Overhalt	Atherholt	Obold
Uberholser	Overholtzer	Overholt	
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## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Dear OFA Members,

While it is not quite Summer, many people are making plans for different events including gatherings such as family reunions. How about the 2021 OFA annual family Reunion, since the 2020 Reunion was canceled?

Starting at 9 AM, we will have our Reunion at Paradise Park in the big open pavilion. This is on the east side of Paradise PA, along Route 30 at the Railroad bridge. We will meet there from 9-12 Noon, then break to eat at our choice, or have a bag lunch at the park. Bottled drinks will be provided at the park.

At 2 PM we will meet at the 1719 Hans Herr House in Willow Street, about 6 miles away. Tour price is \$15 each. Since our 100th Reunion there in (I think it was 2010), they have built a full size Native American Longhouse. It is a real treat to see and experience. Please RSVP if you wish to go to the Herr House, so they can schedule tour times.

If you have any of the COVID-19 such as fever or chills, shortness of breath or trouble breathing, loss of taste or smell, chest congestion, nausea, coughing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, sore throat, or diarrhea, please take care of yourself and consider others by not coming to the 2021 OFA Family Reunion on August 7, 2021. If you do come, wearing of masks will be necessary.

Mike Shrader

**Overholser Family  
Association Bulletin**  
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Editor - Dennis L. Oberholtzer  
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Paradise, Pa. 17562  
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Welcome New OFA Members!!!

Fred Oberholzer, South Africa

**CONTRIBUTIONS  
and  
CORRESPONDENCE**

Please send all contributions to:  
**Geoffrey Martin, Treasurer**  
24 Avalon Way  
Union, NJ 07083

**New Way to CONTRIBUTE!**

You can support the OFA by visiting our website  
at [overholser.net](http://overholser.net) and clicking the Donate button.  
We have PayPal for your convenience. Please e-mail  
[gmartin@overholser.net](mailto:gmartin@overholser.net) if you have any questions.

**OFFICERS**

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<b>WEBSITE</b>	<b>Kris Overholt</b>	<b>OverholserFamilyAssociation</b>

The OFA needs volunteers to fill a two year term as officers. Please consider the minimum amount of time it takes to fill these positions. The Association is strong in membership and financially sound. But we need your input and help to continue.

## The Naked Forest

The ALPS! When one thinks of Switzerland what comes to mind? High mountains covered with heaps of snow! Or how about all those beautiful lakes and streams with lots of fish. Or how about the beautiful villages, dressed in a paradise of green meadows. Maybe you are a skier or mountain climber. What brings your dreams to life while contemplating Switzerland?

It takes a lot of research to find the origins of a particular mountain. Especially times that go back over a thousand years! It is my goal to reveal to you a chronological progression of the mountain of Oberholz. Wild, majestic, and naked to the mind of humans till the 8th century after the start of the Common Era. The mountain of Oberholz was almost completely unknown to human occupation till then. For many centuries the Helvetians lived in the lowlands of Switzerland, residing along the lakes and rivers. They did not have the know-how to build and survive in the upper regions of the Alps.

Mostly known as lake-dwellers, the Helvetians had a tough life, living more as a hunter-gatherer society rather than a farming community. When the Alemanni first began invading the Helvetian territories in the second century CE, they too were more of a hunter-gatherer peoples. Originally called Suevi, the Alemanni were people who still lived in four-pole tents, draped in canvas. They were portable homes, far more antiquated than the RV (recreational vehicle) of today. They used wooden bowls and spoons, ate a lot with their fingers, and clothed themselves with animal fur. The next hut was styled like a modern Swiss mountain shed, still portable.

During the 4th century CE, the Alemanni were defeated by Clovis and the Franks, and were given refuge in the territory known today as eastern Switzerland. They moved alongside Helvetians. For a time. But many decided to move higher into the mountain lands, seeking solitude from continuous fighting with the neighbors. By the 8th century, lands to the east and

west of "the Mountain", (as the huge slopes of the Oberholzer mountain was called), were being populated. People from Lake Zurich were beginning to travel inland, but were keeping below the *Geheyst*, that part of the mountains that were steep, dark, thick, and heavy with shadowy, trees that were superstitious to the mind.

"The name Oberholz suggests that primeval forest still stood on the site of today's village during the Middle Ages. Not only Oberholz, but an extended vast hilly strip of land, which extends from the Zurich Oberland to the headwaters of the Toss, remained almost untouched by the immigrating Alemanni. As a result, the inhabitants of the surrounding villages referred to this forest area corresponding to the steeply rising hill as a mountain. Likewise, the numerous forest clearing names, most of all Ruti, forest and wood, indicate the late settlement. The general term mountain was also used for this region on the St Gallen side until the 15th century. In the course of time the area name Uznaberg developed from this, which meant the whole mountain between Uznach and Dagelschberg. From the 7th to the 10th century, this extensive forest area formed an unproblematic border belt between the old heathen settlement regions of the Linth area and the Zurich Oberland. "

- translated by Dennis L Oberholtzer from *Leben im Grenzbereich* by Alois Stadler

## *Obituaries*

**Kenneth Eugene Landes** Feb 23, 1932 Preble Co near Eldorado OH - May 14, 2021

Husband of Thelma Louise Filbrun; elder at Old German Baptist Church; s/o Lee R Lanes and Alma M Brubaker. Farmer, milking cows until 1987.

**Clair E Martin** age 78 passed away April 10, 2021 s/o Albert L Martin & Mabel Eshleman; born in Clay PA, husband of 57 years to Carolyn L Oberholtzer. member Millport Mennonite Church, owner Parkview Garage for 30 years, Served with Gideons Inter.

**Carolyn O Kendall** 11/1/1939 - 5/23/2021 Wife of the late Daythal L Kendall, and d/o Rev Gordon Arthur Oswald and Claire Stroeble. Carolyn was OFA Treasurer for several years.

- Charlie Kendall

It is with sad hearts the Officers just learned that our former Treasurer Carolyn O Kendall passed away on Sunday May 23rd. Her and her husband were staunch supporters and attendees during many years of there lives.

## Naked Mountain to Castle

From the previous article we can see the progression of human involvement in the life of the Mountain. The homesteading family became known not by what they did for a living, such a shoemaker or graf, rather, John L Overholt of Virginia notes that "Oberholz was used as a place name in the 13th Century." This can even be found as early as 1217 that the people of Oberholz belong to the Wald Catholic Church.

Most people in Europe did not have surnames. Even the kings and queens of the land. In order to distinguish the different people of the same name, the noble class began being noted as So-and-so *von* and the place name. So-and-so would be their given name, a first name. This would be followed by *de* in French, or *von* in German. It simply meant *from*. Lower class people would not be noted with a surname until the Reformation.

Having the fact that the people of the Mountain were given a place name before the 13th century is evidence of there long term existence on the mountain before the appearance of a castle. A what?

"Only in the 11th and 12th century did more settlers penetrate these border forests and found farms and hamlets. On the one hand this happened from Uznach, Eschenbach, and Goldingen. On the other hand the clearing people came from early settlements around Pfaffikon, Durnten, and Hinwil. The founding of the Bubikon and Ruti monasteries, as well as the Parish Forest in the 12th century, herald the end of this Medieval Secondary access. A similar development can be demonstrated in large parts of the Alpine foothills. [This was all remembered by the local people.] The forest clearing work made a deep impression on the medieval poet Walther von der Vogelweide (1170 - 1230). He complained: "*The world has changed a lot in the course of my life. In place of the forests, open meadows and arable land have arisen. Where the forest has been cut down, the field is prepared.*"

- translated into English by Dennis L Oberholtzer from *Leben im Grenzbereich* by Alois Stadler

The progression of deforestation to annually productive land was not an easy one. There were no gas-powered chain saws. There were no lumber trucks to carry off the downed trees. Branches had to be piled and burned. Tree trunks had to be burned out of the ground. The long trunks had to be cut to length, then drug out of the area. Alois explains the progression of human development:

"The founding of the farm in the upper wood is at the end of a clearing and settlement movement of the 12th century, because the small high valley of Oberholz was the last and most remote piece of the farming land between Bachtel and Tosstock. The local names in the lower and upper wood, today Niderholz and Oberholz suggest that these forests, in the 11th & 12th century, delivered lumber to the emerging village of Wald. Finally, the upper forest was cleared and provided space for the foundation of a new settlement, which were later only used as summer pastures because of the barrenness. The neighboring field names Geheysch and Wolfsgrueb mark the final boundary between the settlement area and the rest of the mountain forest. The seclusion and late settlement meant that the name in the upper wood is still used today as a place name and not as a proper name."

- translated into English from *Leben im Grenzbereich* by Alois Stadler

During the 11th to 13th century, the Crusades to the Holy Lands heated up. As this editor compiled his family tree, he noticed an important fact. Many of his family lines left Switzerland to go on the Crusades. This was quite a surprise! The history books never mention Switzerland as part of the Crusades. Of course the country was not yet in existence. Only particular places are mentioned. Lake Constance, King Louis and the Hohenstaufen. And especially King Richard the Lion-hearted. But no Swiss! Well, Oberholzers were part of the Crusades. See the Overholser article on the Coat-of-Arms. And then there were knights who "held down the fort."

On Oberholzer mountain, there are ruins of a castle from the 15th century! It stood "on the hill south of Oberholz at 950 meters above sea level. A rugged Nagelfluh rock bears the name Frundsberg Ruin today. Some friends of local history suspect a medieval knights

castle was there (Ritterburg). Indeed, between 1259 and 1277 a knight from Frundsberg appears as a witness in documents; 1259 is the name Vrung, Miles de Vrungspere. In 1276/77 the documents name him Knight Wernher von Vrungisberc. Since these documents concern property in the immediate vicinity, it must be assumed that the knights of Frundsberg really came from Gebend. This is also indicated by the names of the other witnesses in these documents. Finally, the Walder year zeitbuch from 1498 names Ulrich von Frundsberg as the founder of the Parish Church."

- translated into English from *Leben im Grenzbereich* by Alois Stadler

There are stone ruins of a foundation of a castle. They can be seen on Google Maps. People tend to think of castles only made of stone. That is not true until the 15th century. Most of the earliest castles were made of wood. And the Frundsberg Castle is no exception. Archaeologists need to return to the area to search for carbon remains of the castle. Still there in 1498, it was likely destroyed in 1525 during the Peasants War.

The castle was not started until the mid 1200's. The first document extant of the castle concerns a Miles de Frungspere from the Counts of Toggenberg. Within two decades, Knight Wernher of Frundsberg is also recorded in documents. He is assumed to come from Gebend. But seeing how the Counts of Toggenburg controlled the area, it is more likely Wernher was a son of Miles, and became a knight. Alois suggests he was a local farmer's son who was in the service of rulership as a soldier. This is unlikely, for the wealthy used family members to control extended regions of their domain. So it is possible Knight Wernher was an Oberholz descendent and a descendant of the House of Toggenburg.

Here is also the view of the original family. The Burger of the Mountain would have been an Oberholz. And it was mentioned earlier that the Oberholz family descends from the Counts of Toggenberg. Thus we have a double ancestral characterization. Fellow witnesses for Frundsberg were "Rudolf, Miles de Berge, Cuonradus de Mose, & Johannes de Dieneberch." While these names seem insignificant, they are mostly of French or most likely Burgundian origin, using the *de* as a designation. In order to give more validity to the Castle

ruins, today's Ski-Lift is given the name 'Ski-lift Frundsberg', as it begins near the top of the castle hill.

The Oberholzer family had to be on the mountain before the castle, or the area would have retained the Frundsberg name. Instead, it retains the term Over the Grove of Trees, the place designation of the surname of the people who originally settled there first.

## **Oberholzers Go To War**

In 1240 Emperor Frederick II Hohenstaufen, a relative of Werner Stauffacher, gave a charter to Schwyz that was similar to the one given the Canton of Uri. While it took over half a century, the Swiss began to have freedom.

By 1291, Pierre of Savoy was suzerain of western Switzerland, along with Rudolf of Habsburg being sovereign over eastern lands of the future nation. Men from Uri, Schwyz, and Unterwalden, signed what is known as the three *Waldstatte*, form the *Ewige Bund*, which is an everlasting league for the defense of their common rights and interests.

In 1307, Werner Stauffacher, a knight of the House of Hohenstaufen, living in Steinin in the territory of Schwyz, and thirty-two other companions of central Switzerland took an oath on the Rutli to free the country from oppressors. In 1309 Henry VIII confirms charters drawn up by the Schwyz and Uri, future cantons of the new nation. It also granted liberties to Unterwalden, placing them under direct Imperial jurisdiction. These confederates then renew the alliance with Zurich.

These acts of self-preservation and independence led to a sense of freedom which the people of Europe found a need to defend. In 1315 the Swiss gather to vanquish the Austrian overlord Duke Leopold at Morgarten. Leopold is slain. The forest districts renew the Everlasting League of 1291.

The Counts of Toggenburg were overlords of the Oberholz Mountain. By 1336 the Counts had allied themselves with Zurich, who was in continual war with the lord of Rapperswil over a disputed inheritance. Austrian dukes were closely tied to Rapperswil, as Count John was a Habsburg, and Ulrich of Bonstetten both held the reigns of the territory. But in 1351, a man named Braun led conspirators to take the dukes hostage. Zurich then became the fifth canton of the Confederates. Albert, Duke of Austria demanded the Zurichers to rebuild the town and castle of Rapperswil in August 1351 at their expense. He also wished to claim Glarus, but in November the confederates occupied the territory without incident, and on June 4th, 1352 Glarus was received into the confederation as the sixth canton.

In 1370 a Parson's Ordinance (Pfaffenbrief) was drawn up to abolish special exemptions of the clergy, and to provide for the preservation of peace among the confederates of Switzerland.



The original *geheyst* forest on Oberholz Mountain extended far beyond the Wolfsgrueb to the Tosstock and the Highlands. In the rearmost part, a last clearing yard was built between 1350 and 1400, which was later called Boo. That farm later divided into Upper Boo and Lower Boo.

The Swiss towns joined the league of southern German towns. At this time there were major conflicts with the Austrian bailiff residing in the wooden castle at Rotenburg. The men of Luzerne demolished and burnt Rotenburg in 1385. The next year there was a call to arms by the leaders of the Swiss Confederates. Duke Leopold III of Austria was planning to put down the insurrection by the people of the Central Swiss territories.

"Hostilities had begun at certain points. The people of Glarus, took up the quarrel of the Swiss, destroying some castles in their neighborhood. Zurich, which expected to be the first attacked, had received a federal garrison within her walls in Spring of 1386. But Leopold's plan was not that of the confederates. Leaving five thousand men, destined to keep Zurich in alarm, he advanced at Brugg on July 1st, 1386, with four thousand horses and a well of armed infantry. After some days had passed, the army skirted the eastern bank and the green lake of Sempach, marching on Lucerne. It was harvest time, and reapers were putting the sickle to the corn."

Oberholz mountain was asked to join the call of Glarus. Hans Huppi, head of the family of Oberholz, gathered his able-bodied men across the mountain valley, and went to join the battle at Sempach. Harvest time would have to wait a few days. Hans Huppi is known to have led the Wald team as Captain in the Sempacher War of 1386. "On the morning of July 9th the Swiss appeared, coming out of the woods which traversed the route leading to Lucerne by Rotenburg. The Austrian duke hurried to arrange his army for battle, but as the landscape did not lend itself to calvary movements, he ordered the horsemen to dismount. Formed in a large and deep square, with serried ranks and set lances they marched on the enemy, leaving the infantry behind because they would not divide the honor of punishing the peasants. Presenting the confederates with sharp steel, they attacked with so much impetuosity that sixty men were killed, along with the magistrate Gundoldingen being wounded, before the Austrians lost a single man. But that soon changed. "

- Quote by *The History of Switzerland, Page 576*

All accounts of this battle mention the sudden change! When all was going as badly as possible, and the long lances of the cavaliers were slaughtering the front ranks, without allowing the Swiss halberds to reach the enemy, this is what a pious and faithful confederate did - he seized as many lances as he could and bent them under his weight, so that the confederates advanced through the breach and broke the order of the nobles'

*Continued on page 12*

## Plagues on Oberholz Mountain

With the world steeped in the Covid Virus, it would be helpful to notice how plagues have affected populations in Europe since the Roman Empire. Here we will observe some definitive records of Oberholz mountain, as well as some estimates determined from both the population on the mountain and the percentages of deaths in surrounding Europe at a particular year.

From 1 CE (AD) to 450 CE, the population of Europe dropped by 60%. From 500 to 800 CE the Population only doubled. The Antonine Plague lasted from 165 to 180 CE. There were outbreaks of plague from 251 to 266 CE.

In 525, Europe lost about **a third** of its population to an unknown plague.

In Europe during the dual year of 542-543 there were an estimated **33% of Europeans died** from the bubonic plague.

Youth death averages: By age 1, 25% of births did not survive. By age 12 another 25 %. Wars would take another 10%. By compiling this evidence it could be estimated the population to have **dropped 70% from 1 CE to the end of the Dark Ages**.

During the Carolingian years 800 to 1100, life expectancy grew by about five years from 35 to 40 years. **Population grew by 80%**.

Black Death of 1315: A third of the population of Europe died. While the evidence reveals lesser deaths in Southern Germany and Switzerland, it is still likely to have been a **25% loss** of life. This may be why the homestead at Oberholz did not grow into a hamlet until the 14th century.

1450 CE: **60% died** of plague

### The 1611 Plague on Oberholz Mountain

Deaths from plague in Oberholz were 6 adults and 14 children

The following is a list of deaths in Oberholz during the 1611 plague. There were about ten families in Oberholz at the time, and only three with a different surname: Furrer, Schmucki, and Huber. Hans Huber and son Jakob Huber worked as hands for Ackermann Oberholzer. These are still unconnected:

<u>Death Date</u>	<u>Unconnected name</u>
July 29, 1611	Alt Ackermann Oberholzer
	Hans Huber & son Jacob Huber worked as farm hands for Ackermann Oberholzer
August 9, 1611	daughter Anneli Oberholzer
August 16, 1611	Konrad Oberholzer
October 12, 1611	Kathrin, wife of Gross Jakli Oberholzer
October 11, 1611	Heinrich Oberholzer, s/o Gross Jakli
November 6, 1611	Eseli Oberholzer, d/o Gross Jakli
October 25, 1611	Child of Gross Jakli
October 13, 1611	Paul Furrer, s/o Christian Furrer in Oberholz, probable bro/o OS1121 Elsbeth
October 26, 1611	<i>Klaus Oberholzer in home outside the hamlet of Oberholz (Ussere Gade)</i>

October 14, 1611 Barbara, wife of Klaus Oberholzer  
October 26, 1611 two children of Klaus Oberholzer

October 22, 1611 Hans Oberholzer  
October 26, 1611 Barbara Oberholzer, d/o Hans Oberholzer  
November 6, 1611 Hans Jakle Oberholzer, s/o Hans Oberholzer  
October 28, 1611 Child of Hans Oberholzer

October 25, 1611 Barbara Oberholzer, d/o von Spurheini  
October 30, 1611 Jacob, child von Spurheini  
November 7, 1611 Elseli, child von Spurheini

October 25, 1611 Child of Hans Gratzis Oberholzer

REF: *Leben im Grenzbereich*, Alois Stadler 2007, page 28, Huber story from page 26

**1658 Plague strikes Uznach 1612** Bernhard and Ulrich Oberholzer join church in Goldingen

About the year 1200 there were only four homesteads above the deep forest line on the Mountain. By 1611 there were 10 families living in the Oberholz hamlet, the Frundsberg Castle was destroyed, and there were six additional farms and the Rueti Monastery. Today, there are more individual houses but no more hamlets, villages or towns.

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## *More **O**bituaries*

**Frances C Oberholtzer** 84 yrs, died January 17, 2021 formerly of Manheim PA

**Laverne E Martin** Waynesboro PA JL Line January 19, 1960 - January 9, 2021

Lavern visited the editor's home last year to give the OFA a couple copies of his new genealogy book. It was a shock to hear of his passing. This is another reminder to take the time to write down, visit the old ones, and compile your genealogy. The big genealogy sites do not have all, and they are not totally reliable. The idea that someone will write it down just does not happen. It can happen with you!

**Etta M Ulrey** 107 years old from North Manchester IN, June 17, 1913 - May 1, 2021

Etta was d/o Simon Blocher and Lucy Wagoner Wife of Jacob Ulrey 1901 - 1982  
Old German Baptist Church of North Manchester

**Harold Overholt** Feb 3, 1937 Virginia Beach VA - Feb 9, 2021 Keysville GA

In Berlin GER helping to build Friedensheim, a community center for refugees & World War II victims.

**Laura Jean Oberholtzer** age 96 on Feb 28, 2021 Abington PA

**Edwin "Toby" Oberholtzer Jr** Sept 22, 1955 - Sept 4, 2020 Glenside PA

**OFA REUNION**, Southeastern PA, August 6th, 2021 NO FRIDAY NIGHT EVENT.

**AUGUST 7TH, 2021:**

SATURDAY MORNING 9-12 AT PARADISE PARK;

Noon - 2 PM GO TO LUNCH AT RESTURANT OF YOUR CHOICE or a BAG LUNCH AT THE PARK;

2 PM JOIN US at HANS HERR HOUSE, in WILLOW STREET FOR A TOUR. \$15 per person

**Please RSVP the number of your family that will be coming, so we may arrange tour times. E-mail or leave a message by phone 717-687-6950 to Dennis or Earline.**

Since the St John's United Church of Christ is not available this year, Dennis & Earline Oberholtzer has rented a pavilion at Paradise Park, Paradise PA. This is about 7 mile east of Lancaster PA. Dennis will be speaking on our probable connections with the Dukes of Lorraine from the 12th century, and how they homesteaded Oberholz Mountain. There will be details not in this Bulletin.

**Brubaker Reunion** In CANADA for 2022, see the Brubaker Website for details.

Check out the OFA Website: <http://www.overholser.net> or Contact Us at [info@overholser.net](mailto:info@overholser.net)

If you need more information, contact one of the OFA Websites, or one of the OFA Officers.

**Send us your O meeting place and date so we can post it here in our Bulletin.**

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**War** continued from page 9:

ranks. It was then that counts, cavaliers, and servitors fell pell-mell together. Even Leopold fell dead in the melee from the ardor his men vainly tried to restrain. The confederates lost 116 men, while the Austrians lost almost 700.

The news spread swiftly of this victory. The disgrace of the nobility became known beyond the limits of the Austrian empire. Hans Huppi returned to Oberholz mountain to reap the harvest waiting them. One wishes there was no such thing as war.

**We are now on FACEBOOK:**  
***Just type in Facebook: Overholser Family Association***