



Calumet County Historical Society Museum

**Open Sundays June-September 1:00 to 4:00
or by appointment**

The Swiss in Kloten

By Robert Sherwood

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The Swiss presence in Calumet County, Wisconsin is not large. But a recent visit to the Calumet County Historical Society Museum showed that if you know where to look, there are traces of this group, who often were mistaken for Germans due to their language.

The first clue as to Swiss influence in the county would be the hamlet of Kloten just west of Chilton. Now a lonely intersection of Highway F and Highway C is a far cry from the Kloten, Switzerland the suburb of Zurich where the major international airport for the country is located.

A February 2000 article in *The Post-Crescent*, a newspaper from nearby Appleton, WI tried to narrow down the Swiss roots of the community. According to the article, the former owner of the now closed Kloten Oasis, Bruce Laughrin, shared how the town was named. According to him “A woman who was 102 years old came to a function at the Oasis. According to the woman, in the early days, there was no mail service to Kloten. Women in the community too turns walking to Stockbridge, .., to collect mail for their neighbors. One day, a mail carrier who took the mail to Stockbridge from Fond du Lac offered to bring the mail,” to the women. This would save hours of their day and miles of walking. One issue remained, mail could not be delivered to a place that had no name. “The women decided that the woman who had to walk the farthest to get the mail could name the community. The woman named it after her birthplace in northern Switzerland. It has been Kloten since.”¹

Kloten had a public school, as well as a parochial school attached to St. Elizabeth’s Catholic Church about a half mile south of the crossroads. The current St. Elizabeth’s church was constructed in 1889. In the cemetery, it is possible to identify some Swiss immigrants among those German and Austrian immigrants interred there.

Notable moments in Kloten history.

*In 1885 a roller-skating rink was opened in Kloten by Emil Krause. The early marketing was a simple one, \$.10 for admission, but each admitted was “entitled to two ‘beers’”.²

*Those familiar with Kloten will know it as a farming area, but in February 1914, Carl Ziegler opened a skunk farm. Why a skunk farming? That is a question that is still unanswered.³

¹ Jones, Ben, “Swiss Crossroads” *The Post-Crescent*, (Appleton, WI) Feb. 13, 2000.

² “The City And Its Suburbs,” *The Neenah Daily Times*, (Neenah, WI) Mar. 30, 1885.

³ “Skunk Farm Near Chilton,” *Green Bay Press-Gazette*, (Green Bay, WI), Feb. 21, 1914

*In July 1916 Ms. Herman Reichwald was found dead in the backyard of Mrs. Oscar Moehrke who lived in Kloten. Reichwald, from Chilton, appears to have suffered from depression and the signs pointed toward suicide. ⁴

*In late 1921 the decision to extend electricity from Chilton to Kloten was announced much to the delight of families there. ⁵

*Kloten resident Alfred Neuber saw lightning strike his house during a storm in 1924. Damage was limited to the “splintering the roof boards.” ⁶ Two years later Mrs. Joseph E. Schneider was killed when a lightning strike hit the field where she, her husband and children were in as they tried to make it to safety prior to the storm arriving. The rest of the family survived after being stunned by the strike. ⁷

4 “Commits Suicide With Apron String,” *The Post-Crecent*, (Appleton, WI) Jul. 18, 1916

5 “Will Extend Lines,” *Green Bay Press-Gazette*, (Green Bay, WI), Oct. 28, 1921.

6 “Local News,” *The Sheboygan Press*, (Sheboygan, WI), Jul. 28, 1924.

7 “Mrs. J.E. Schneider Killed By Lightning,” *The Green-Bay Gazette*, (Green Bay, WI), Jun. 26, 1925.

Solomon Graf

BIRTH 20 Sep 1842 Zürich, Bezirk Zürich, Zürich, Switzerland

DEATH 18 Jun 1926 (aged 83) Chilton, Calumet County

BURIAL Hillside Cemetery Chilton, Calumet County

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/128247469/solomon-graf>



David Graf

BIRTH 17 Nov 1855 Zürich, Switzerland

DEATH 27 Apr 1917 (aged 61) Brant, Calumet County

BURIAL Hillside Cemetery Chilton, Calumet County

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/114415104/david-graf>



On Display at the Calumet
County Historical Society



This cupboard was built by Solomon Graf, a Swiss cabinet maker and farmer of the city of Chilton, Wisconsin, 1904. Donated by the family of Solomon Graf.