

## NEIGHBORHOODS

## LOUISVILLE'S TIES TO A SWISS TOWN

Author's research discovers connections to Einsiedeln, a village near her; she will be in town in April

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*Our History*

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People in Louisville with last names of Fuchs, Kaelin, Zehnder, Bisig, Tanner, Schoenbaechler, Ochsner, Kurzi, Oechslin, Birchler and Lacher most likely have connections to the town of Einsiedeln in Switzerland, a Swiss author has discovered.

Susann Bosshard-Kälin, also a journalist and researcher who lives in a village outside of Einsiedeln, learned of the Louisville connections during a 2006 professional trip to St. Meinrad monastery about 65 miles from Louisville — a daughter monastery of one in Einsiedeln.

She talked to a man of Swiss heritage who told her about descendants of Einsiedeln families living in Louisville. He then got in touch with one of them, Vicky Birchler Ullrich, a distant cousin, and Ullrich assembled descendants at her house to meet with Bosshard-Kälin.

The Swiss researcher now plans to write an article or book about the connections between Louisville and Einsiedeln, drawing on information from family trees the descendants showed her going back to the 19th century.



The late Paul Bisig is shown with his dairy delivery truck, circa 1960.

COURTESY OF MIKE BISIG

### Interviews

Bosshard-Kälin, who has written books related to Swiss immigration, will be in Louisville April 14-23 to conduct interviews with people about their Swiss ancestry, accompanied by a videographer, photographer and another historian, Heinz Nauer, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Luzern.

They plan to come here after flying to Chicago and visiting the Swiss Center of North American in New Glarus, Wisc.

Their research proposal is titled "Einsiedeln Elsewhere: Ties Between a Swiss Village and the American City Louisville Kentucky." They envision either a special issue of the Swiss American Historical Society Review on the topic or a full-fledged book.

Ullrich and Jeffrey Haeberlin, also a descendant of Einsiedeln immigrants, will coordinate the interviews. Anyone with close ties to Einsiedeln is encouraged to write to einsiedeln.elsewhere@gmail.com or call (502) 650-8714.

### History

In 2014, Bosshard-Kälin also perused the 2014 white pages of the phone book, which she said showed an "astonishing number" of Einsiedeln names.

Ullrich, who has Zehnders on the other side of her family, said there were many Swiss immigrants who settled in Louisville, beginning in the mid-19th century, and the majority of them came from Einsiedeln, which was in a German-speaking part of the country.

Today, more than 90 percent of those



The two older men at right, Dominick Zehnder and Zacharias Birchler, are Vicky Ullrich's great-grandfathers. They are at Zehnder's Gardens in 1891. Zehnder's was at Bardstown Road and Baxter Avenue, where KFC is today.

COURTESY OF BOB AND VICKY ULLRICH

Einsiedeln, she said. Ullrich and her husband, Bob, are working on a book, "Germans in Louisville," that looks at Louisville's German connections.

### Swiss Park

For those in Louisville without Swiss ties, Swiss Park and Hall in Germantown may be the most recognizable site connected to Swiss history.

Located on Lynn Street between

Shelby and Preston streets, the park was created in 1925 by the Gruetli Helvetia Society, a Swiss association formed in 1850, according to the Encyclopedia of Louisville.

Ullrich belongs to the society's Swiss Ladies group.

A hall was erected soon after as a meeting place for the society, and the park became a popular summer gathering place for the Germantown commu-



COURTESY OF BOB AND VICKY ULLRICH

Zacharias and Catharina Birchler and family, from Einsiedeln, Switzerland, circa 1870.

nity — for dances, bingo games, church socials, cookouts and celebrations.

But attendance tapered off by the 1960s, and the society stopped providing entertainment in 1971. The park was closed after that except for special events, before being renovated and reopened in the 1980s.

In 1993, the society sold the property to the Fraternal Order of Police Deputy Sheriff's Lodge 25, which reopened the park for summer parties.

Another well-known site was Zehnder's Gardens biergarten, Baxter Avenue and Bardstown Road, where KFC is today, stretching to Grinstead Drive.

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