

Chapter 5

The Landis Family and the Anabaptist Movement

The Landis family played a leading role in the Anabaptist movement in Switzerland in the early 17th century; however, it is unclear how far back before this their religious activism extended. The most prominent figure was Hans Landis, whose place in history is marked by his being the last Anabaptist to be martyred in the canton of Zürich in 1614. It is possible that members of the family were involved with religious reform movements well before this time, although the evidence remains sketchy.

One problem in assessing some of the statements made in earlier Landis family histories in the USA – all of whom were Mennonites at that early stage -- is that there is a clear pride in portraying our family as being descendants of religious free-thinkers, which has led to unsupported generalizations. Ira Landis, for example, states that Heini Landis, the first member of the family who settled in Hirzel, “fled” from Pfäffikon (on the south shore of Lake Zürich), then settled in Menzingen, and shortly afterward settled in Hirzel by 1467. Ira notes that “the coat of arms in Zug for the Landises shows a man rowing a boat across the lake (as though escaping...)” Although the reason for Heini Landis’s alleged flight isn’t stated, the implication is that it was to escape religious persecution since (so Ira asserts) members of the family were involved in the Anabaptist movement “from its earliest days.”¹ This appears to be sheer speculation. If Heini Landis was fleeing religious persecution already by 1424, this was a century before Conrad Grebel and the birth of the Anabaptist movement. We might also note that the image of a man rowing a boat would be an appropriate coat of arms for a family which, according to Swiss historians, originated on the boat-landings of Lake Zürich, and it does not necessarily reflect a flight for religious freedom!

Another example is the statement by Eshleman² about John de Landuno of Ghent, whose name he speculates may have been a Dutch form of Landis – “around 1350 John de Landuno, a learned man, broke from the Catholic Church, embraced Anabaptism,” and was tortured to death by the authorities. Again, we should note that Anabaptism did not exist as a movement in 1350, it came into being almost two centuries later. There is no evidence that John de Landuno was an ancestor for the Landis family in Switzerland. We do not need to cast about for speculative ties with religious martyrs such as John de Landuno, since we have a *bona fide* martyr in our family tree, Hans Landis of Hirzel, Switzerland.

A final example is the statement by Ezra Eby,³ who claimed that his Eby family, along with other families such as Landis, Herr, Graaf, Myli, Schank, and Witmer, had joined Waldensian congregations that were established on the southwest shore of Lake Zürich in the early days of the Reformation. The implication is that the Anabaptist congregation in the Hirzel area had ancient roots since there were points of similarity between the two creeds. This assertion merits in-depth exploration.

¹ Landis 1954, p. 134.

² Eshleman 1917.

³ Eby 1889.

The Waldensian Connection?

The origin of the Waldensians is somewhat unclear. It is usually traced back to a fundamentalist movement founded by Peter Waldo in Lyon, France, around the year 1173. Waldo was a successful silk merchant, but he decided to follow the example of Christ and he gave away all his possessions to the poor and adopted the life of a mendicant, wandering about preaching the Gospels. His followers were known as the "Poor Men of Lyon." A similar movement developed about the same time in northern Italy (the "Poor Men of Lombardy"). As these names imply, they embraced a creed of asceticism, dressed simply and practiced a lifestyle of poverty. Waldo translated parts of the Bible and he emphasized biblical fundamentalism as a moral guide, especially Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. They severely simplified church liturgy and ritualism and rejected all external symbols, such as sacraments, religious images, the altar and the crucifix, priestly vestments, veneration of saints, indulgences, and prayers for the dead. Although the Waldensians nominally remained within the Catholic Church and some even continued to attend Mass, they naturally aroused strong clerical opposition. Their advocacy of lay preaching undermined the priestly hierarchy. Waldensian preachers were notorious for their memorization of long passages from the Bible. Other points of similarity with Anabaptism included their rejection of the swearing of oaths, the bearing of arms, and their doubts about the validity of infant baptism. Their belief that the Eucharist should be interpreted only as a symbolic reenactment of the Last Supper presaged Zwingli by at least three centuries. At the Third Lateran Council (1179) the church denied their right to preach, and when they persisted doing so they were branded as heretics in 1184. Waldo then established his own church, with himself as a bishop, and he began to ordain ministers. After its members (the "*Vaudois*") were exiled from France, they spread into Württemberg, Bavaria, Austria, down the Rhine into the low countries, and eventually as far east as Poland. In an attempt to prevent their continued growth, the Pope placed the entire valley of Lucerne and much of northern Italy under a religious interdict in 1453. Finally, in 1487 Pope Innocent VIII launched a pogrom of extermination against the Waldensians. By that point they were estimated to have had between 300 and 400 congregations and about 200,000 adherents.⁴

The number of Waldensians had already dwindled by that point and many of them later converted to Zwingli's Reformed Church in 1532 after an accord was reached at Cianforan. A few congregations survived in the Alpine valleys of the Piedmont, west of Turin, where some persist to the present day. One estimate is that by about 1560 Waldensian congregations also existed in the rural areas of the cantons of Zürich, Bern, Luzern, and Schwyz, attracting Swiss converts.⁵ It is difficult to determine how much credence should be given to this claim. It was a popular theory from the 17th through the 19th century that Waldensianism was the direct precursor to Anabaptism. The idea should be taken seriously since it was asserted by such prominent early chroniclers as Sebastian Frank and Thielman van Braght.⁶ Certainly the general spirit of

⁴ Seibt 1972.

⁵ Eby 1889.

⁶ Thielman van Braght 1660.

Waldensianism, as well as several of its specific beliefs, paralleled Anabaptism. Neff,⁷ however, rejects the theory, and he suggests that Frank may have invented it in order to forge a more reputable ancestry for Anabaptism and to oppose the disparaging label of radical Münsterite at that time. Neff also notes that most Waldensian congregations had died out in Switzerland about 100 years before the birth of Anabaptism in 1525, and that by the 17th century the surviving Waldensians had reinstated the swearing of oaths and even resorted to using weapons to defend themselves. None of the early Anabaptists among Conrad Grebel's followers were reported to have been Waldensians.

The assertion that the Landis family had been early members of a Waldensian congregation is intriguing, but the evidence for it unfortunately remains unknown. Eby does not cite sources for this notion, and it is probably best regarded as speculation reflecting a popular idea in the 19th century, as well as a desire to amplify the family's early involvement in the Reformation. The time frame he implies for this conversion is rather late, since the number of Waldensians in Switzerland had greatly declined by the late 16th century. There is no mention in the early Swiss records of a Waldensian congregation on the hillside above Horgen.

The Point of Conversion by the Landis Family to Anabaptism

The assertion that some members of the Landis family converted to Anabaptism in the earliest years of the movement merits critical scrutiny. In the 1937 Landis Family Reunion Report, Ira Landis states, "very early in the Anabaptist movement thru the preaching and martyrdom of the first and later leaders, the Landises with their neighbors... formed a congregation nearby called *Horgerberg*. In faith and practice the Landis family was a leader from the first." Again, in the 1959 report, Ira Landis states that "in January 1526 already, the name Landis was associated with the Anabaptist movement...one year after its start."

Although the references for this assertion are not given, there is an early document in the Zürich state archive that refers to the Landis family. It is a commentary on Heinrich Aberli, one of the more radical associates of Conrad Grebel, dated January 13, 1526:

He [Aberli] was also for a time in the house of Landös [in Zürich] and read to him out of a small book. Adelheit Schnorffin was there, who is now deceased. After preaching, he left. A while later he returned to her, since she lay in bed and was sick. He comforted her, and then left once again. A while later Landös sent for him and he returned to Schnorffin. Then she requested the sign of God's will, with much weeping. He baptized her, and the Landös he alone was in the room.⁸

This may be the document to which Ira Landis referred in his 1959 report. This document clearly shows that an early member of the Landis family, living in Zürich (near the village of Zollikon, where the first Anabaptist congregation came into being), was sympathetic to the Anabaptist creed of Heinrich Aberli, but it does not suggest that he was "a leader from the first."

⁷ Neff 1959.

⁸ Cited in von Muralt and Schmid 1952, p. 162, my own literal translation

Another early reference, probably to this same Hans Landös, is found in the transcripts of the trial of Jacob Grebel (father of Conrad, one of the Anabaptist leaders), held in October, 1526. Jacob Grebel was a wealthy iron merchant and he had risen to become one of the most prominent citizens in Zürich. He served as magistrate (*Vogt*) of Grüningen, and as representative of the canton of Zürich to the Swiss Confederacy. He had arranged scholarships for his son at Vienna and Paris, but withdrew funds in exasperation when Conrad began to lead a dissolute, carefree lifestyle. Jacob was again dismayed after Conrad returned to Zürich in 1519 and became involved with the circle of early Anabaptists. In a sad twist of fate, both father and son died a few months apart. Conrad died while in hiding from the authorities in 1526; a few months later, Jacob was charged with having illegally appropriated pension funds and he was executed in disgrace. The transcript of Jacob Grebel's trial contains the following passage:

Hans Landös, shoemaker, testified that when Conrad Grebel was his neighbor, he [Grebel] at one time spoke and complained how poor he was, that his father was giving him nothing, and if an occasional poor man came to his door, he had nothing to give him. He pitied them, and if his father would only give what he owed him and had accepted for him! It amounted to about 1,000 Crowns, for which he wanted to sue his father as for his own property. The witness advised against this: "He ought not to bring shame on his father."⁹

This passage does not indicate that the relationship between Landös and the Anabaptists was particularly strong. In fact, all it states is that Hans Landös was a neighbor to Conrad Grebel, and that Hans disapproved of Conrad's actions. Ira Landis reports that Conrad Grebel lived at 5 Neumarkt street in Zürich.¹⁰ On the basis of this information, we may assume that Hans Landös lived next door, and it is likely that when Heinrich Aberli visited him (as discussed above), it was at this residence.

Other than these two references, there is no clear evidence to indicate that any member the Landis family was involved with Anabaptism from its beginnings, let alone with the earlier Waldensian movement. It is perhaps relevant to note that the families in the Horgen and Hirzel area comprised one of the largest contingents in Zwingli's army at the battle of Kappel on October 11, 1531, when Zürich's army was defeated by a combined force from the Catholic cantons. Zwingli himself was killed in this battle, along with 16 others from the parish of Horgen, including Heini Landis.¹¹ This clearly shows that most of the families on the Horgenberg, including at least one member of the Landis family, were still willing to take up arms at that time.

Although members of the Landis family may have converted to Anabaptism during its early years, the baptisms, marriages, and deaths of their loved ones were still routinely recorded in the Reformed Church book of Horgen. The church books begin in 1545, and the first baptismal records for the family appear in 1546. No mention was made in these early records about the Landis family being *Täufer*, as ministers commonly noted back then. We would expect infant

⁹ Cited in Harder 1985, p. 466.

¹⁰ Landis 1954, p. 96.

¹¹ Kläui 1952, p. 175.

baptism to be a sensitive issue, yet surprisingly these baptisms continued to take place and even the names of godparents are recorded. This shows that during these early years the Landis family on the Horgenberg didn't completely avoid the Reformed Church.

It's true that during these earliest days the Anabaptists may have continued to register births and baptisms with the local pastor because it was customary, or because of official pressure. The Anabaptists were forced to hold their services in great secrecy because of the relentless persecution by the authorities, which intensified after 1528. In Canton Bern the officials initiated house-to-house surveys twice each year to ascertain the names of those who were attending Reformed Church services and receiving the sacraments, as was mandated. They kept strict baptismal and marriage registers to aid in the detection of those who declined these rituals. The children of those who weren't married in the Reformed Church were declared illegitimate, and therefore not legal heirs. Those who refused to have their children baptized were called "soul killers" since they were supposedly risking eternal damnation for their children. In order to ferret out the Anabaptists in the remotest areas of the canton, the authorities enlisted the services of bounty-hunters, known as "Anabaptist hunters" (*Täufer Jäger*). In response, the Anabaptists may have just supplemented the services of the Reformed minister with their private communion services and adult baptisms in the evening. Over time, as the congregation became more organized, they developed their own leaders who superceded the Reformed minister.

The approximate date for the emergence of an Anabaptist congregation on the Horgenberg is not clearly documented. Kläui¹² notes the absence of reported Anabaptists in the Horgen area in the 1520s, although he acknowledges that they may have existed. He states that, in contrast to some other areas in canton Zürich and Bern, there was an apparent absence of religious strife in Horgen during these early years and even some carefully guarded sympathy for the traditional Catholic faith. The minister assigned to the parish, as well as the parishioners, preferred to keep an even hand in deciding spiritual matters.

The evidence suggests that the majority of the Landis family in the parish of Horgen converted to Anabaptism later, between 1570 and 1580. Clasen¹³ surveyed the archives in Switzerland and southern Germany in an attempt to quantify the number of Anabaptist converts by time period. He states that the names and dates shown in his study mark when they first appeared in historical records, typically corresponding to the point when they converted to the creed. In *Horgenberg* the earliest Anabaptist convert cited is Hans Kleger in 1534. The first recorded Anabaptist in the Landis family that he shows is Hans Rudolf Landis, whose daughter, Barbali and wife, Annali "Bruppberger," were listed as "Täufer" in Horgen on August 25, 1570. On September 5, 1575, there is an entry in the Horgen churchbook for the baptism of his son, Hans, which states "*das Kind ist ein Täufer Kind.*"¹⁴ Rudolf eventually converted his parents, Hanson Landis and Katherine Schinz, to Anabaptist beliefs and he also appears in the records at nearby Richterswil. His brother and sister-in-law, Hans Landis and his wife Barbara

¹² Kläui 1952, p. 172.

¹³ Clasen 1978.

¹⁴ Literally, "the child is a baptist child." In German, the Anabaptists were called "Täufer" (baptists) or "Wiedertäufer" (rebaptizers), referring to their belief in adult baptism.

Hochstrasser, also seem to have converted about this time. On May 29, 1580, their daughter Margaret was baptized in the Reformed Church, but Hans was listed as an Anabaptist.

Another clue to when Hans Landis joined Anabaptism is found in the hymn dedicated to him in the Amish song book, the *Ausbund* (the hymn will be translated later in this chronology). In verse 20 Hans is quoted as saying that he, like the prodigal son, had “returned 30 years ago.” This could be interpreted as a poetic way of saying that he converted 30 years ago and returned to God’s ways. This verse probably was based on the remark Hans made when he was interrogated in 1614, shortly before his execution -- “[I]n all of thirty years I have never wanted to attend your [church] services because you do not lead a better life and [path].”¹⁵ Hans may not have been giving a precise date for his conversion, but since this remark was made in 1614, it indicates that it was around 1584.

Hans Landis the Martyr, and the Later History of Anabaptism in Canton Zürich

By 1540 the numbers of Anabaptists in the reports of the Swiss authorities had plummeted drastically as a result of the policies to systematically suppress the congregations. However, some persisted in the remote parts of canton Zürich and further east in Grüningen into the 17th century. The Zürich officials passed another edict against Anabaptism in 1585. Anabaptists were threatened with heavy financial penalties unless they joined the Reformed Church. In the face of growing popular discontent, the officials vacillated between levying fines against known Anabaptists and calling for vigorous reform of the clergy. The amount of the fine was based on the frequency with which a person attended Anabaptist services. As an added check, they levied a fine whenever a person failed to attend Reformed Church services. They also attempted to isolate the Anabaptists by prohibiting any economic transactions with them. Others in the community could be fined if they did business with a convicted Anabaptist, or even if they extended hospitality to them. As the confrontation accelerated, the government tried to induce the Anabaptists to either give up their practices or to emigrate. Some chose to leave, many going to Moravia where the Hutterites had settled earlier in 1530s. Other refused and thus it developed into a test to see which side had the largest following.

The most active center in the 1580s was on the western shore of Lake Zürich, near Horgen and Wädenswil, in the outlying villages secluded on the hillsides. The Landis family played a central role in the struggle for religious freedom of the Anabaptists during this final chapter of the religion in Switzerland. They drew the attention of officials and several documents are available in the Zürich state archive about specific members of the Landis family.¹⁶ Their story has been enshrined in the collective memory and traditions of the Mennonite and Amish religion as representing a hallmark of oppression. Most of them suffered tragic fates, unusually horrible even for those turbulent times when tragedy was commonplace.

¹⁵ Document 14, September 29, 1614, in Lowry 2003, p. 143.

¹⁶ I was able to photocopy and translate some of these documents in 1993. Later, after corresponding with James Lowry, he translated and published several of these documents pertaining to Hans Landis (see Lowry 2003).

The most famous member of the family in the Horgen area was Hans Landis (1544 - 1614), who became a leading spokesman and representative for the Anabaptist congregations in their confrontations with the civil and religious authorities during these twilight years of the movement. He has been memorialized in Mennonite and Amish traditions as the last Anabaptist martyr executed in the canton of Zürich. Two well-known near contemporary sources preserve stories of Hans Landis and his children. The most famous is *The Bloody Theater, or Martyrs Mirror*, a chronicle of the sufferings of the early martyrs of Anabaptism, which appeared in various versions by the Mennonites in Holland. The earliest version appeared in 1615, one year after the execution of Landis, and the 1660 version by Thielman van Braght remains in print today as a classic reference work on this period of history. Another source is the *Ausbund*, the oldest surviving hymnbook of the Swiss brethren, which is still in use today by Amish congregations. It is regarded as the oldest hymnbook in continuous use by any Christian sect. Some of the hymns date back to 1537, and it is claimed that several were composed by martyrs as they lay imprisoned. Additions were made to the book as it was reprinted in various editions over time. Hymn number 132 commemorates Hans Landis. The later editions of the *Ausbund* contain an appendix which reprints the report presented to the Dutch Mennonite church in the 17th century, entitled "A true account of the hardships which the brethren around Zurich had to suffer for their faith's sake between 1635 and 1645." This account contains details on several members of the Landis family.

The precise birthdate for Hans the martyr is unknown, but the records available indicate around 1544. Hans was reportedly "in his 70th year" at the time of his execution in 1614.¹⁷ The church book of Horgen records the baptism of his brother, Hans Heinrich Landis, on April 19, 1553. A census of Hirzel in 1589 lists both of them, so they should not be confused, as seems to have been done in those cases where Hans' birth year is listed as 1553.

Hans was the son of Johann "Landös" and Catherine Schinz from the village of Hirzel, located on a forested hill (the *Horgenberg*) west of Horgen. This village was incorporated as part of the parish of Horgen until 1697, which explains why many of the older records cite Horgen as the point of origin for the family. Hans married Margaret Hochstrasser (her surname is reported in some sources as "Hochstretter"), and they had at least four children: Verena (a form of Veronica), Felix, Rudolf, and Hans (jr.).¹⁸

Hans Landis and his brother Heini first emerge in the official records in October, 1589, when 15 Anabaptists were arrested for holding religious services and held in custody at Horgen. They included Hans Sommerauer, Uli Suter, Jacob Hochstrasser, Uli Ertzinger, Walti and Hans Pfister, and the brothers Hans and Heini Landis who were the center of the congregation on the

¹⁷ Kläui 1948. Rev. Heinz Schuchmann's notes and publications give the birth year as 1544, and possibly as early as 1539 (his source for this speculation is not cited). Best 1990 cites the birth year of 1553. Wilcox 1995 and I agreed that Hans' birth year was 1544, based on the early statement that Hans was in his 70th year when he was executed. Samuel Wenger 2005 cites a date of 1543.

¹⁸ My line of descent in the family stems from Hans Landis the martyr, through his son, whom I will refer to as Hans II, and grandson Caspar. Caspar Landis will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

Horgenberg. Hans Landis was the most prominent leader. He was both a preacher (*Prediger*), and also a congregational representative (*Vorsteher*).¹⁹ Hans usually held the gatherings in the privacy of his house or barn, but he also preached further south to the farmsteads on the Wädenswilberg, below Horgen on the shore of Lake Zürich. There were about 40 persons in the congregation, but undoubtedly there was a much larger number of sympathizers. Heini stated that he “never preached” to the people, but that they “simply prayed together,” and that “they had done nothing to anyone.” He added that he was “not ready to listen to the church,” that it was “against his conscience,” and that they would “stay with the New Testament, which they understood.” Hans Landis remarked that “they alone [the Scriptures] are the signs for his soul...[that] he searched for the well-being of his soul [and] he will not turn away from it, but stay with it, to take another stand is against his beliefs.” Jacob Hochstrasser and Uli Ertzinger likewise stated that they had done nothing but pray, that they hoped they had done good works, and that they also were not ready to return to church.

The report of October 5, 1589, described Hans Landis as follows:

Much has been found out about the *Wiedertäufer*s from Jacob Stauben and Hansen Schächli, bakers who live on the *Horgenberg*. They do gather on *Horgenberg* as many as 40 people, or even more. The leader is Hanns Landis in whose house they meet. He is an evil, treacherous, and dangerous wolf, who leads many people astray. (Cited in Clasen 1989; Kläui 1948, 1952).

It was increasingly apparent to the authorities that the Anabaptists could not be fined out of existence, and their numbers would not dwindle by threats. They were especially concerned to identify those persons within the congregation who served as caretakers for the charity funds, which buffered the people from the power of the government. The congregation on the hillside above Horgen seems to have mobilized considerable resources for this purpose. In addition to an annual tithe paid by each member, the fund was supplemented by legacies, such as 100 Pounds from the estate of Felix Staub and an additional 100 Pounds from the wife of Hans Staub. The fund was invested partially in grain and it was managed by Jacob Isler *auf dem Bodenhof* (a farmstead near Hirzel), who was described by the authorities as formerly being a “worldly man.”

¹⁹ See Loserth 1956. In the earliest years, Anabaptist congregations had minimal hierarchy, they were organized around persons with knowledge of the Bible and oratorical skills who could demonstrate moral leadership. By the 17th century, some role distinctions had developed, especially in communal groups such as the Hutterites. A deacon might advance to ordination as a full minister (*voller Diener*). He could become a *Prediger*, sometimes referred to as *Diener am Wort*, who taught the word of God and ministered to the spiritual needs of the people, officiating at adult baptism, the group communion ritual, or other services such as marriages. A *Diener der Notdurft* was in charge of more pragmatic affairs, such as managing the charity fund and congregational property. The more influential ministers were the Elders (*Aeltester*), sometimes also referred to as bishops, who might serve as representatives for the congregations in a region. These *Vorsteher* would attend disputations and other important meetings in which matters of belief would be determined.

Later the congregation owned the *Hallauergütli* near Sihlbrugg, a farm valued at about 700 Pounds. The proceeds of the farm were used for charity purposes, which the authorities alleged was a temptation for others to join the congregation. They were particularly concerned about the secrecy of the congregation, since “many things take place among them which one cannot discover.”²⁰

It should be noted that members of the Landis family were among the more economically secure families in the area.²¹ These small farmers, who owned their own houses and farmsteads, bore the brunt of the government’s fiscal and civil policies and they had provided the core of the opposition to the civil authorities during the previous century, rather than the landless day laborers who had little income. They also were the major source of support for the Anabaptist congregation’s charity funds, which helped bolster the resolve of the poorer members of the congregation to deal with the fines levied by the authorities. It was customary in Swiss villages at that time to assist families in need. For example, in the village of Birmensdorf, northwest of Hirzel, the records show that a paralysed woman was given one loaf of bread weekly and one pound of pork monthly from the community alms fund. Another family in the village, which earned its living from spinning silk and making wooden clogs, received a weekly allowance of two loaves of bread weekly and a monthly allowance of 15 *Batzen* (about 1/10th of a *Frank*, or 1/3rd of a *Thaler*). The tradition of the charity fund was consonant with their communal values, and it became an important practice in the Anabaptist congregations (Guth 1988).

A report by Hans Jacob Biber, the magistrate of Horgen, dated September 29, 1608, confirmed the identity of the principal persons in the congregation. Eight major Anabaptist families were named, including “Hans Landis and his entire household,” and “his brother [Heini] and his household.” Also listed were Jacob Hochstrasser from Wetzswyl,²² and Uli Ertzinger from Guldinen. Biber mentioned that there were many other families involved with the Anabaptists, either publicly or privately, whom he could not name.

After this report, both Hans Landis and Jacob Isler, the treasurer, were arrested and jailed in the Wellenberg, a fortified structure in the mouth of the Limmat river in Zürich. They were questioned extensively on their beliefs and a report was filed on Oct. 5, 1608.²³ An attempt was made to convince them to recant and to join the Reformed Church. Landis professed his faith in the Trinity and stated that if one truly believed in the Gospels, this should be reflected in one's behavior. He felt that it was necessary to be baptized anew, as stated by Christ when he said “He who believes and is baptized, the same shall be saved.” He argued that this biblical quotation implied that children should not be baptized until they had reached an age when they could understand and have faith. He rejected attendance at the state church services because “in such an ungodly world no preaching and admonishing will do any good,” and he should not be required “to attend the preaching of such ungodly people.” Landis also rejected participation in

²⁰ Kläui 1948, p. 204.

²¹ Exact values of their estates when their property became confiscated are available in *Reichsthalers*, which will be cited later.

²² Wetzswyl is near Stallikon, not to be confused with Wädenswil, which was sometimes referred to at that time as “Wädenschwyl.”

²³ See Document 1 in Lowry 2003, dated Oct. 5, 1608.

the Communion ritual unless the ungodly people were excluded. When he was accused of civil disobedience, Landis replied that he would recognize the government only when it protected the righteous, punished evil, and was guided by God-fearing persons. He refused to divulge the names of others in the congregation or their meeting places.

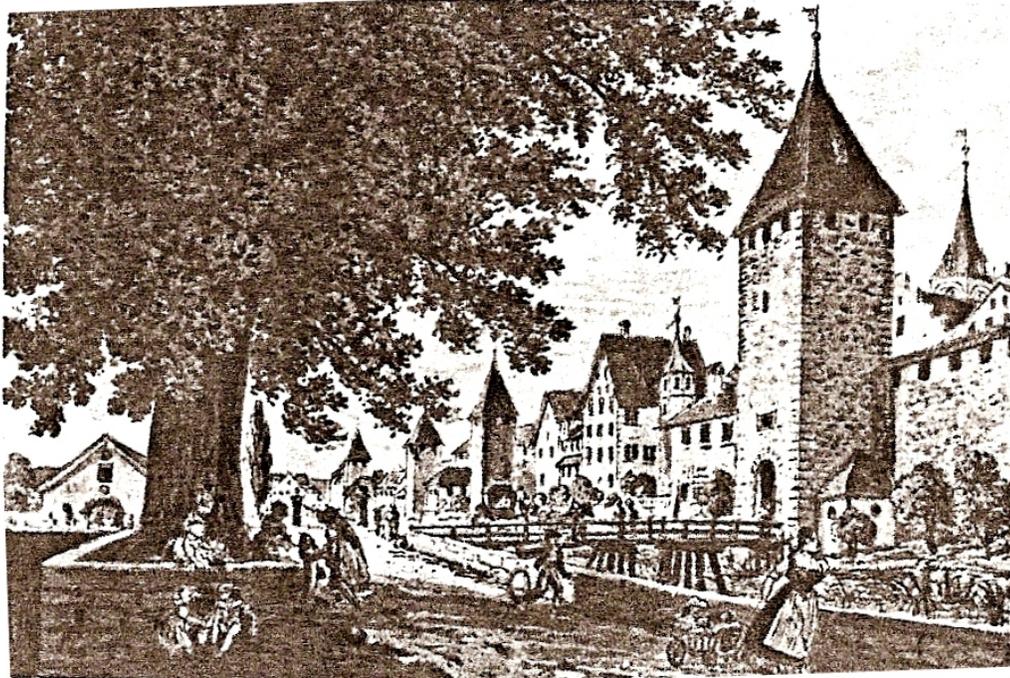
Landis persisted in his “stubborn ideas and spiritual pride,” but because it was winter the authorities decided on December 22, 1608 that he should “lie in irons in a warm room” in the Zürich hospital until they determined what to do with him. The rather humane punishment of being confined to a “warm room” in the hospital in the cold season indicates that the authorities were tempering their actions at that point, perhaps in an effort to avoid arousing the citizenry. Hans was provided with food and drink by sympathizers, and reportedly they also secretly smuggled him a tool which enabled him to escape on December 31, 1608.²⁴



The Wellenberg

²⁴ Kläui 1948, p. 205; 1952, p. 187 describes it as a *Näpper*. Lowry 2003 pp. 17-19 states that the word may be more accurately translated as a drill or an auger, rather than a file.

Heini Landis and Jacob Hochstrasser were also arrested and confined in the Katzentor.²⁵ Uli Ertzinger from Guldinen was reportedly imprisoned in the Wellenberg. Jacob Isler was held for several months in 1609. He denied that he was the treasurer for the congregation in Horgenberg, and he refused to divulge information about those who made financial contributions to the fund. One morning the door to Jacob's cell was left open and he too managed to escape.²⁶ He was arrested again later after tarrying to make purchases for his pregnant wife, and was imprisoned in the Wellenberg. Isler was eventually released and he returned to live in the vicinity of Wädenswil.



The Katzentor

After his escape, Hans Landis, managed to return to Horgen and Wädenswil, where he resumed his religious activities. The sympathy of the masses was so strong for the Anabaptists in these areas that it was difficult for local authorities to arrest them or to impose penalties. The magistrate (*Vogt*) of Wädenswil reported on October 8, 1612, "they have such a large following that no one wants to lay hands on them." Occasionally it was reported that bailiffs who came to arrest the *Täufer* were surrounded and roughed up by mobs of sympathetic townspeople.²⁷ In

²⁵ The Katzentor (the "Cat-Gate," also referred to as the *Wollishofer Tor* in older records) was one of the nine major fortified gates in the wall surrounding the old city of Zurich. Herrmann Trachslers 1969 provides a description of the gates. The name derives from the point where the *Katzenbach*, a small stream, intersected with the old city wall.

²⁶ Document 2 in Lowry 2003, dated Sept., July, 1609.

²⁷ Bender 1955, p. 1044.

other parts of Switzerland the Anabaptist congregations were rather small, but in the Horgen area their numbers were reaching a critical mass which caused growing concern to the authorities.

The stage was set for the final act of this showdown with the Anabaptists, pitting Hans Landis against Johann Jacob Breitingner (1575-1645). Breitingner was a minister who had been promoted to the head of the Zürich Reformed Church in 1613, a position which he held until his death. Breitingner was an astute politician and he was dedicated to bringing about fundamental change within the Reformed Church in order to keep it intact. When he took office he recognized that both the civil and religious structures had deteriorated in the canton. Inevitably Breitingner was drawn into confrontation with the Anabaptists.

In January 1613 a new mandate was issued by the Great and Small City Councils of Zürich against Anabaptism, which largely repeated the system of fines that had been instituted in 1585. They also commissioned a disputation with the Anabaptists to give them the chance to explain their beliefs. The first disputation was held at Wädenswil castle on January 26, 1613, summoned by *Bürgermeister* Rahn and prelate Breitingner.²⁸ Fifteen Anabaptists appeared under promise of safe conduct from the authorities, including Hans Landis and Rudolf Bachmann, two “elders” who represented the congregations. The pastors of the Reformed Church at Horgen, Wädenswil and Richterswil were in attendance. Landis spoke first and thanked them for the opportunity to speak, and reminded them that they were already familiar with his religious beliefs. He declared that he was willing to accept civil authority in all matters except those which violated their conscience, and they were willing to pay taxes and fines. Breitingner stated that since the Anabaptist beliefs were so diverse, it was impossible to understand the basic tenets of their faith. Landis then introduced Gallus Fuchs of Richterswil, who stated that he had been converted by a brother from Moravia, and then delivered a lengthy exposition on Anabaptist beliefs. Landis questioned why sinful people were allowed to participate in the Communion ritual in the Reformed Church. Breitingner responded that it would be presumptuous for them to exclude people, since only God could judge the unworthy. Near the end of the disputation, Gallus Fuchs brazenly stated that the Reformed Churches in Hirzel and Hütten should be turned over to the people and then the popularity of the two faiths could be determined by the number of people who attended their services or those of the pastor! The authorities burst into laughter at such “insolence.”²⁹

This meeting, of course, ended in failure. Hans Landis and Breitingner had reached a stalemate in their duel of biblical verses, and Gallus Fuchs had thrown down a public gauntlet to the authorities.

A second disputation was held at Grüningen, with a report filed on March 3, 1613.³⁰ Sixteen Anabaptists attended, again under guarantee of safe conduct. About 40 Anabaptists and their places of residence were mentioned in this report. Hans Landis was not mentioned, so it is possible that this second meeting was intended for the Anabaptist congregations on the eastern side of Lake Zürich, which were outside of Hans’ usual areas of ministration.

²⁸ See Document 3 in Lowry 2003, dated Jan. 26, 1613. See also the summary by Kläui 1948, p. 206, and Delbert Gratz’s serialized translation Jan. & Apr. 1969, Apr. 1970.

²⁹ Clasen 1972, p. 68

³⁰ Document 4, March 3, 1613 in Lowry 2003.

After these two disputations, the authorities felt they had no recourse but to enforce with full severity the mandate forbidding Anabaptism, which included penalties of fines, confiscation of property, forced emigration, and even the possibility of execution (Bender 1955b, p. 1045).

On May 10, 1613 officials at Wädenswil reported that they had arrested Hans Landis and Gallus Fuchs, but the other Anabaptists had gone into hiding.³¹ Four others -- Jacob Isler and Hans Meili from Wädenswil, Paul Degia (also named Galatz, born in Milan, who lived in Wädenswil), and Stefan Zehnder (or Zeender) of Birmensdorf were also eventually arrested and imprisoned in the Wellenberg in Zürich. They were interrogated for several weeks in an attempt to force them to recant their beliefs and to accept the state Reformed Church. None of them wanted to listen to the authorities. Throughout the interrogations, Hans Landis remained "stiff-necked" and a "wretched, constant talker."³² He admitted that he had baptized and married several members of his congregation. Jacob Isler and Hans Meili stated that they recognized the government, but doubted that it was "truly Christian." Landis cited scripture to the effect that Christians should not participate in government, nor should they help to defend the canton against enemies in the event of an emergency since Jesus had admonished his followers to turn the other cheek. The authorities again offered to let the Anabaptists emigrate, and even allowed them to sell their estates and take their possessions with them. Landis commented that the earth belonged to the Lord, and no one had authority to compel them to leave the country. Some of the brethren seemed to vacillate, and they asked for one year's time to depart, but also for freedom to return if they wished. Finally, in exasperation, the authorities threatened to make an example of them by condemning them to a term of hard labor at galley service (as oarsmen on boats). They emphasized that this punishment was not only because of their disobedience to the Reformed Church, but also because of their challenge to sovereign civil authority, which if left unchecked could "snatch away the obedience of the subjects," which "no government can tolerate."

On August 25, 1613, all six brethren were taken to the Fish Market,³³ where their sentence of six years galley service was publically announced. They were to be delivered to the French ambassador at Solothurn.³⁴ At Altstetten they were given a final chance to emigrate. Landis replied that they had had 14 weeks to think it over, and they would persevere to the end. He was "now over 70 years old and anyway cannot live much longer." In any event, the value of his estate would not allow him enough money to emigrate and to relocate his family. Zehnder, with a touch of bravado, added that they would not fear a life on the seas since these also were created by God. Three of the brethren (Isler, Meili, and Degia), however, wavered in their resolve and despite being repeatedly shoved by Landis, they finally consented to leave. The other three,

³¹ Document 5, May 10, 1613 in Lowry 2003.

³² See Document 8, Aug. 5 and 28, 1613 in Lowry 2003. *Kybigler Hartneckigkeit* was a common phrase used to describe Anabaptist "stiff-neckedness" at that time.

³³ The Fish Market (*Fischmarkt*) was the major street paralleling the Limmat River in Zürich where the sentences of those who were condemned to death were proclaimed. Later, Hans Landis had his death sentence read there.

³⁴ Solothurn is some 55 miles to the west of Zürich. Solothurn tower was built in 1548 and it was destroyed many years ago. Ira Landis 1954, p. 136.

Landis, Fuchs, and Zehnder, remained firm in their convictions and they were taken to Solothurn to await transportation.

Being sentenced to serve on the galleys was an extremely harsh punishment, even by the standards of those days. At Hans Landis's age it amounted to a sure death sentence. There was considerable public outcry against "selling people to galley slavery with the French Papists," and vigorous protests were sent by Mennonite congregations in Holland. Even some of the Reformed clergy had misgivings about the penalty. The government of the canton of Bern eventually abolished the punishment in 1616, then reinstated it for the "best" (i.e. the most recalcitrant) *Täufer*s, but finally abolished it permanently in 1617. The sentence against Hans Landis and his compatriots was not carried out. On the way to Solothurn some sympathetic Bernese Anabaptists had offered to pay ransom of about 300 *Gulden* to the French ambassador. Soon after their arrival at Solothurn, food and a "file" were smuggled in to them which allowed the three men to cut through their chains and escape. Once again, Hans Landis had managed to escape -- in the same manner as before in 1608. Hans returned to his home and resumed his ministerial activities, baptizing some new converts and performing a marriage ceremony.³⁵

Soon after, on Sept. 9, 1613, Hans Landis was recaptured. The record of his interrogation contains some bizarre passages, which may reveal the fears of the authorities about an outbreak of war.³⁶ Hans was accused of proclaiming that an angel had left the door open for him to escape from the prison at Solothurn. The interrogators also made odd remarks about huge armies being mobilized in the cantons and fireballs being seen in the sky above the "city hall of the Raetians," between which a man was seen stretching out a bloody arm. These were undoubtedly allusions to their fears that Hans' religious disobedience (which they regarded as naïve and "vacuous") would lead to turmoil and bloodshed.³⁷ As always, Landis remained clear and focused in his responses and he mustered a skillful defense. He replied that he had escaped not by the act of an angel, but by means of tools that were smuggled to him. Landis refused to betray those who had helped him. He also elaborated on the charity funds of the Anabaptist congregation. After the grain had been harvested at Hirzel, about 15 bushels had been stored in

³⁵ For the original reports pertaining to the arrest and sentencing of the six Anabaptists to galley slavery and the later interrogation of Hans Landis, see Lowry 2003 Document 6, May-Aug., 1613; Document 7, June-Aug., 1613; Document 8, Aug. 5 and 28, 1613; Document 11, Sept. 13, 1614; and Document 12, September 1614.

³⁶ Lowry 2003, p. 103, also notes that these passages in Latin are unclear.

³⁷ Raetia was an old Roman province, encompassing the Upper Rhine to Lake Constance, Upper Swabia, southern Bavaria and Tirol. These were the areas that had been wracked by the Peasant Wars in 1525, which might well explain the comment about fireballs in the skies above the Raetians and other portents of bloody warfare. Document 25, March 14, 1669 in Lowry 200 addresses this point. It notes that in 1613 the authorities were greatly concerned about impending war (the Thirty Years War broke out in 1618), which they feared would spill over into the Swiss cantons. They were making preparations for these dangers at their borders, including mobilizing the citizenry for military duty. The Anabaptists aroused their concerns because they refused to participate in the military and stated that they would not defend the Fatherland.

the house of Rudolf Staub, and most of this was distributed to the poor. Hans' brother had been impoverished some 20 years before and had to rely on charity, so out of gratitude his brother later was able to donate the grain to repay this debt. The congregation had no store of wine and no financial reserves since they had loaned all the treasury to the poor, free of interest, and they had no formal treasurer. When he was asked if he considered their government to be Christian, he replied that he did not wish to judge them and they were Christians if they carried out what God commands. Jesus said that the authorities may exercise dominion over others, but Christians should not. One should obey God more than men (Acts 4). Hans repeated that he would not belong to the Reformed Church if sinful people were not banned from it. When they asked him who was blameless, he replied "Those to whom God gives grace and whom God has cleansed." It was not enough to hear the Word of God, but one has to follow it as well. The interrogations revealed him to be a man who was very firm in his faith, knowledgeable enough to avoid being confused by biblical arguments against him, and prepared to accept whatever fate would bring. While he was in prison Landis' courage and strength of conviction aroused admiration among many people

On September 26, 1614 the magistrates and clergy escalated their threats to Landis, ostensibly not because of his religious beliefs but rather on the basis of his civil disobedience and rebellion. He was again offered the opportunity to emigrate, but he responded as before that "the earth is the Lord's and not man's" and that God had granted it to him as well as to others. They judged him to be a rebel who "wanted to be his own lord and master regardless of the honorable authorities," and this could not be tolerated since it would lead to "the destruction of all governmental authority established by God, and the end of all obedience of subjects" (Kläui, 1948, p. 210).

The city council was torn over the appropriate penalty to administer – some wanted him to be outlawed with his ear cut off, but finally they agreed on the death penalty by the sword, to be carried out the next day on September 29, 1614. Hans was led to the Fish Market where his sentence was read aloud. He then asked how far it was to the place of execution, and the executioner told him not far. On the way, Hans told the weeping people along the way, "do not weep for me, for I hope to make a steadfast journey." The clergymen who accompanied him commented that Hans showed no signs of repentance, to which Hans replied that he did not consider the accusations against him to be a sin. He also did not want to save his confessions to the end, lest he be like the foolish virgins (Matthew 25:2) who were unprepared for the coming of Christ.³⁸ When they reached the designated place, the executioner was emotionally moved and said, "Well, my grandfather Hans, is it not true that you have been looking forward for a long time with joy to this hour?" Hans replied, "Yes, indeed, I have long awaited joyously this hour," for in this hour he would see his God and Father with his own eyes. The executioner offered him a final chance to speak what was in his heart. Landis answered, "I know not what more I should say, other than that I wish all men to realize their sins and repent, that they might be saved, and it is my sincere hope that all mankind should find their salvation and be blessed." He had forgiven all men, including the executioner. He then knelt and was beheaded. He died "willingly and

³⁸ These speeches by Hans Landis are also quoted in the *Ausbund*, which is likely based on Document 14, Sept. 29, 1614, in Lowry 2003.

gladly." Afterwards the executioner announced, "with tears in his eyes," that God knows he was not guilty of this man's blood.³⁹

The original narrative on Hans Landis first appeared in *The Bloody Theater, or Martyr's Mirror*, compiled by Thieleman J. van Braght in about 1660. The entire passage is as follows:

...In the year 1614, at Zurich, in Switzerland,...a pious witness of the divine truth, named Hans Landis, a teacher and minister of the Gospel of Christ, who had gone up the river Rhine, where he had his place of residence, to feed and refresh with the Word of the Lord some souls that were hungering and thirsting for righteousness.

When the council at Zurich learned of this, they, instigated by the disposition of the envious scribes and Pharisees, could not tolerate this, but instantly caused it to be forbidden him, as though they had thought thereby to hinder the true progress of the word of the Gospel. But he, who knew with Peter, that we must obey God's commands more than the commandments of men, had such love to the truth, and to the young sucklings on Zion's breasts, that no human threats could induce him to forbear feeding them with the true food of the soul. Hence the enviers of the same apprehended him, and sent him ironed from Zurich to Solothurn, to the papists, expecting that he should forthwith be sent to sea or upon the galleys; but through the help of good-hearted people he was there released; but subsequently apprehended again and taken to Zurich, where he was rigorously examined concerning his doctrine, and when he would in no wise desist from his godly purpose or from his faith, they showed in him, that their decree of eighty-four years previous was not yet forgotten, neither had the spirit of it died of old age; for, according to the import of the same, they sentenced him from life to death, and hence, in the month of September of the aforesaid year, 1614, for the sake of the truth he was beheaded as a true follower of Christ. Which they nevertheless would not acknowledge, but pretended, and persuaded the common people, to deceive them, that he was not punished and put to death for his religion, but for his obstinacy and disobedience to the authorities...

Having through our good friends B. Louwr and H. Vlaming come into possession of a certain extract from a letter dated, A.D. 1659, July 19-29, from one of the preachers at Zurich, who witnessed the death of the afore-mentioned martyr, we have deemed it well to add it here, that is, as much of it as is necessary to be given here for fuller information.

"Further you remember," he writes, "that Hattavier Salr. witnessed the beheading of Hans Landis, which I also still remember well, having seen it myself in the Wolfsstadt, the whole transaction being as fresh in my recollection, as though it had happened but a few weeks ago."

Continuing, he speaks of his personal appearance and the manner of his death, saying: "Hans Landis was a tall, stately person, with a long black and gray

³⁹ Document 10, Jan.-Sept., 1614 in Lowry (2003).

beard, and a manful voice. When he, cheerful and of good courage, was led out, by a rope, to the Wolfsstadt (being the place made ready for his execution), the executioner, Mr. Paull [sic] Volmar dropped the rope, and lifting up both of his hands to heaven, spoke these words:

'O that God, to whom I make my complaint, might have compassion; that you, Hans, have come into my hands in this manner; forgive me, for God's sake, that which I must do to you'.

"Hans Landis comforted the executioner, saying that he had already forgiven him: God would forgive him, too; he well knew that he had to execute the order of the authorities; he should not be afraid, and see that there was no hindrance in his way.

"Thereupon he was beheaded. After his head had been struck off, the executioner asked: 'Lord bailiff of the Empire, have I executed this man rightly according to imperial law and sentence?' Otherwise it was customary to say: 'This poor fellow', etc. As though he believed that he died saved and rich.

"The people were of the opinion, that the executioner by dropping the rope meant to indicate to Hans that he should run away, it was also generally said: that if he had run away, no one would have followed him, to stop him." So far the aforementioned extract.

Further Statement. -- It is also appropriate to give here what has been stated to us through credible testimony, namely, that when the afore-mentioned Hans Landis was standing in the place of execution, to be put to death, his dear wife and children came to him with mournful crying and lamentation, to take a last and final adieu and leave from him. But when he saw them, he requested them to go away from him, in order that his good resolution and tranquillity of heart for the death awaiting him might not be disturbed or taken away by their weeping and grief; which having been done, and he having commended his soul into the hands of God, the quickly descending stroke of the sword put an end to his life.⁴⁰

Another famous account on Hans Landis is given in the *Ausbund*, the collection of religious hymns which survives from the days of the Swiss brethren, still in use today by the Amish. Hymn number 132 commemorates the story of Hans. It was composed within one year after his death.⁴¹ It consists of 46 lyrics, which I have translated below.⁴² I have focused on being as faithful as possible to the original wording rather than attempting to render it into English verse. The dialect is archaic Swiss, and the composer switches between third person and first person with alacrity in the middle of some verses:

⁴⁰ Thielmann van Braght 1660, pp. 1103 -1105

⁴¹ Document 18, May 22, 1615, refers to the *Ausbund* and the hymn to Hans Landis (see Lowry 2003, p. 159).

⁴² I did this translation independently in 1994. Since then, it has also been translated by Lowry 2003, and other translations have also appeared .

The 132nd Song

A beautiful new spiritual hymn, about an early Christian, Hans Landis, who lived by the Zürich sea, about how he was executed at Zürich, and his journey brought to a noble end. -- It happened on St. Michael's Day, in the year 1614. To be sung in the style of "*Kommt her zu mir, spricht Gottes Sohn.*"

*Ich hab ein schön neu Lied gemacht,
Und mich geflissen Tag und Nacht,
Dasselb von neuem g'sungen,
Von einem frommen Christen gut,
Hans Landis man ihn nennen thut,
Ich hoff es sey mir g'lungen.*

*In tausend und sechs hundert Jahr,
Vierzehne darzu offenbahr,
Zu Zürich ist geschehen,
Dass er mit seinem Tod und Blut,
Christum sein Wort, das ewig Gut,
Bekennet und verjähren.*

*Nun merk ein jeder frommer Christ,
Wie er der G'mein vorg'standen ist,
Thät Gottes Wort verkünden,
Da er sein Lauf vollendet hat,
Sein Glauben bezeugt mit der That,
Thät sie gleich überwinden.*

*Doch möcht ich vor auch melden das,
Wie vor ein'm Jahr er g'fangen was,
In Zürich hart versperret:
Zween ander Brüder mit ihm b'hend
Die sind vorm Rath aufs Meer erkennt,
An Ketten hin geführet.*

*Gen Solothurn sind sie geführt,
Ins Königs G'walt gar hart versehrt,
An Ketten hart verwahret.
Doch sind sie b'hend durch gottes G'walt
Gleich wiederum erlöset bald,
Das hat man wohl erfahren.*

Nun merket weiter und fürbass,

I have made a beautiful new hymn,
And I devoted myself day and night,
In order to sing this new story,
About a pious, good Christian,
Hans Landis he was called,
I hope I may succeed.

In the 1,000 and 600th year
With 14 added thereto,
In Zurich it happened,
That he with his death and blood,
Christ his Word, the eternal Treasure,
Confessed and affirmed.

Now let each saintly Christian note,
How he stood before his congregation,
Preaching God's word,
As he finished his life's course,
His faith was confirmed by the deed,
By doing which he triumphed.

Yet I want to announce to you,
How he was imprisoned a year before,
In Zurich, harshly locked up:
Two other brethren held with him,
They were condemned before the Council
To service on the sea, taken in chains.

To Solothurn they were led,
In the king's jail harshly constrained,
Locked securely in chains,
Yet through God's power,
They were soon released
That became verily known.

Now note more and further,

Wie er jetzt wieder g'fangen was,
Bey seinem Weib und Kinder:
Die Mutter und die Kinder sein,
gaben ihm Trost der Liebe fein,
Liessen sich willig finden,

Und hond ihn g'fangen hingeführt,
Zu Zürich in Wellenberg versperret,
Und ihn da streng verhöret:
Von seiner Lehr und auch vom Tauf,
vom Estand und vom Nachtmahl auch,

War bitterlich probiret.
Und dräuten ihm gar hart darben,
Wie dass er nicht mehr werth thät seyn,
Lebendig aufs Meer z'verkaufen,
Sondern er müsse mit dem Schwerdt
Gericht werd'n und zum Tod geführt,
Das ist bald g'sehen draufe.

Als man ihn aus der G'fängniss hat
Geführt also ein Lämmlein zur Schlacht,
Thät viel volk um ihn weinen:
Hans Landis sprach mit seinem Mund,
Weint nicht um mich zu dieser Stund,
Gott thuts gut mit mir meinen.

Merk was die Predicanten thon,
Hant das g'mein Volk vermahnen thun,
Sie solten für ihn bitten:
Er sey verstockt und gar verirrt,
Damit er wird in Kenntniss g'führt,
All seiner Süd und fehlen.

Hans Landis sprach mit Worten g'schwind:
Ich achte das für keine Süd,
Das ihr mir für Süd halten.
Ich hab gelehret Gottes Wort,
Darzu g'wandelt in grosser Sorg,
Gott woll nun darob walten.

Weiter hand sie ihn g'sprochen an,
Er soll sein Süd bekennen thun,

That he once again was arrested,
by his wife and children:
The mother and his children,
Gave him the solace of pure love,
which they willingly gave.

And they led him away under arrest,
To Zürich in Wellenberg enchained,
And interrogated him harshly:
About his teachings and about baptism,
Marriage and also about communion,

He was cruelly examined.
And they threatened him severely,
That he wasn't worthy even,
To be sold to a life on the seas.
But he must with the sword,
Be dispatched and led to death,
Which happened soon thereafter.

When he was taken from the prison,
Led as a lamb to slaughter,
The people around him wept:
Hans Landis spoke with these words,
Weep not for me in this hour,
God intends good with me.

Note what the clergymen did,
They warned the common folk,
That they should pray for him:
For He was hardened and erring,
So that he would be led to the recognition,
Of all his sins and mistakes.

Hans Landis spoke with swift reply:
I do not acknowledge that as sin,
Even though you hold me as a sinner.
I have taught God's word,
Walked thereby with great care,
May God accordingly judge.

They spoke further to him,
That he should confess his sins,

*Dass er erlang die Gnade.
Er antwort ihnen also b'hend:
Ich hab mein Sünd vorlängst bekennt,
Fürcht es wär jetzt zu spate.*

*Doch schlag ichs Reich Gott's niemand ab,
Dass ich der G'schrift auch glauben mag,
Sond Besserung nicht sparen:
Damit es uns nicht auch ergieng,
Wies den thörichten Jungfrau'n gieng,
Das hat man wohl erfahren.*

*Merk wie so far mit manchem List,
Sie ihn versuchten zu der Frist,
Und Thäten ihm fürhalten
Den Schächer an dem Creutz behend,
Der Gnad erlangest an sein'm End.
Er thät sich nicht dran halten,*

*Sondern gab ihnen Antwort bald:
Hat mit dem Schächer ein andre G'stalt,
'S Wort sey ihm nicht verkündet;
Es wird uns zeitlich g'nug geseit,
Darum sind zu der Buss bereit,
Dass wir die Gnade finden.*

*Noch weiter er wird angereedt,
Warum er von ihn'n ausgehn thät
Von ihrer G'mein und Lehre?
Hans Landis antwort ihnen g'schwind,
Drum dass ihr nicht unsträfllich sind,
Und euch zu Gott nicht kehret.*

*Dann ich glaube gar festiglich
Wer Gott vertraut, dem manglet nicht,
Dem wird sein Lehr und Leben*

So That he may obtain grace.
He answered swiftly:
I have confessed my sins long ago,
I fear it's too late now.

I wish no one kept from God's kingdom,
For I also believe the Scriptures,
Spare no effort at conversion:
So that it will not also happen to us,
As happened to the foolish virgins,⁴³
This we indeed know about.

Note that with much cunning,
They tempted him with a reprieve,
And offered to him,
As with the thief on the cross,
Who received mercy at the end.
This did not distract him.

But he promptly answered them:
That it is not the same as with the thief,
Who was not taught the Word,
It has been taught to us soon enough,
For us to be prepared for repentance,
So that we can find grace.

Yet further he was quizzed,
About why he left
Their congegation and ministry?
Hans Landis answered quickly,
Because you are not sinless,
And you do not turn to God.

For I believe firmly that,
Whoever trusts God lacks nothing,
To him his teaching and life will

⁴³ The reference to the "foolish virgins" is from Matthew 25:2, the story of the five virgins who came to meet the bridegroom to attend an evening wedding but who forgot to bring lamp oil. This parable was commonly used in Anabaptist sermons as an allegory, with the intended meaning that people should be prepared for the imminent Second Coming of Christ.)

*Viel guter Frücht und Nutzbarkeit,
Bringen allhie in dieser Zeit,
Das wird ihnen Gott geben.*

*Gottes Reich nicht in Worten staht,
Darum greifends an mit der That,
Wend ihr ewig Freud haben:
Wend ihr sprechen: o Vater mein,
Müsst ihr aus Gott geboren seyn,
Und seinen Worten glauben.*

*Nach der Lehr und Gebrauch Christi,
Desgleichen sein'r Aposteln Schein,
Thäten wandlen und laben:
So dörfst es weder Zwang noch Noth,
Sondern ich wolt gern früh und spat
Mein G'meinschaft mit euch haben.*

*Sie wend ihn noch nicht bleiben lon,
Hielten ihm für den verlohrnen Sohn,
Lasst ihnen Antwort fahren:
Wie er in guter Hoffnung stuhnd,
Dass er mit dem verlohrnen Sohn,
Umkehrt vor dreysig Jahren.*

*Darzu auch seine Sünd erkennt,
Gott bitten um Verzeihung b'hend,
Und auch zu allen Zeiten:
Auch jetzt in dieser G'fangenschaft,
In deren ich jetzt bin behaft,
Dass er mir helfe streiten.*

*Da hat man ihm zu trinken bracht,
Und also er nun getrunken hat,
Danksaget er Gott eben,
Und saft: ich glaub auch vestiglich,
Gott hab mir meine Sünd verzeicht,
Hing'nommen und vergeben.*

*Da trank er noch zum andermal,
Darum ich auch das sagen soll,
Und wolt da nimmer trinken:
Dann ich hoff und glaube gewiss,*

Bear fruit and be productive,
Abundantly in this time,
Such will be given to him by God.

God's kingdom does not stand on words,
Therefore seize it with deeds,
If you want eternal joy:
When you say: Oh, my Father,
You must be born of God,
And believe in his Words.

According to the teachings and practices of Christ,
And the examples of his apostles,
They walked and lived:
So there should not be either force or deprivation,
Otherwise I would gladly day and night
Have my fellowship with you.

They still didn't leave him alone,
And considered him to be the prodigal son,
He gave them this answer:
How he stood in good faith,
That he, as the prodigal son,
Had returned (converted) thirty years ago.

And he also confessed his sins,
And asked god for forgiveness,
At all times:
Also now in this imprisonment,
Which I am now experiencing,
Pray that He will help me struggle.

They brought him something to drink,
And after he drank,
He gave thanks to God,
And said: I believe steadfastly,
God has pardoned me my sins,
Taken them away and forgiven them.

And then he drank once more,
And about that he also wanted to say,
And I will never again drink:
For I hope and truly believe,

*Dass mich Gott hienach im Paradiess
Wohl werd speisen und tränken.*

*Nun lasst uns weiter merken dass,
Wie ihn die G'lehrten fragen das,
Ob er nicht Glauben gebe,
Dass er sich da versündet hab,
Dass er viel weidertaufet hab?
O nein, gar nicht, thät sagen.*

*Und sprach darzu noch weiter drauf,
Dann er hab sonst niemand getauft,
Sey dann von Süd abg'standen:
Und habe wahre Buss gethan,
Den wahr'n Gott's Glauben g'nommen an,
Mit Christo auferstanden.*

*Diess ist der recht Vefehl Christi,
Und Brauch seiner Aposteln frey,
Thut uns die G'schrift auch lehren:
Darbey man billig bleiben soll,
Und Gottes Wort lahn gelten wohl,
Das begehrt ich vom Herren.*

*Die Predicanten fragten mehr,
Wer ihn hab b'ruft zu seiner Lehr?
Thät ihnen Antwort geben:
Der ewig Gott im Himmelreich,
Das glaube ich ganz vestiglich,
Der hat mir den G'walt geben.*

*Ein G'lehrter sprach zu ihm mit List,
Du weist dass du überzeuget bist
Mit dem göttlichen Worte:
Gar nicht, gar nicht, sprach er zu hand,
So ihr mir G'schrift nicht gelten land,
Meint ihr dass ich mich fürchte.*

*So ihr aber G'schrift gelten lond,
Thun ich bey meinem Glauben b'ston,
Bin gar nicht überwiesen:
Dess ich in guter Hoffnung stand,
Und kaget mich do gar nichts an,*

That God will provide me in paradise,
With all food and drink.

Now let us also note that,
The learned ones asked him,
If he didn't believe,
That he had sinned,
Because he had rebaptized many people?
Oh, no, not at all he said.

And he said thereto further that,
He has baptized no one other,
Then when they confessed their sins:
And did true repentance,
And believed in the true God,
Resurrected with Christ.

This is the true command of Christ
And the practice of his willing apostles,
This the scriptures also teach:
Whereby one may remain righteous,
And hold confirm God's Word,
This I desire from the Lord.

The clergymen asked further,
Who has summoned him to his teachings?
He gave them the answer:
The eternal God in the kingdom of heaven,
I believe this firmly,
He has given me this mission.

A learned man said to him cunningly,
You know that you can be convinced
By the words of God:
Not at all, not at all, he answered him,
Since you have no scriptures to convince me,
You think that I am fearful.

If you can produce scriptures,
I stand firm in my belief,
I am not at all deceived:
I stand in good faith,
You can accuse me of nothing,

In allem meinem G'wissen.

*Darum ihr Predicanten schon,
Ob schon ihrs Evangelion
Lehren und auch verkünden:
Laben und wandlen nicht darnach,
So bringt es feine Frücht darnach,
Das solt ihr billig finden.*

*Da hand die Predicanten g'seit,
Er hab wider die Oberkeit
Gehandelt und gelebet:
Er solle hie bekennen thon,
Dass er im selben unrecht thun,
Thut ihnen Antwort geben:*

*Er hab wider die Oberkeit
Nichts g'handelt das die G'schrift verbeut,
Bey der G'schrift soll man bleiben:
Dann es ist uns nicht g'nug darbey,
Allein in Christum z'glauben hie,
Sondern auch um ihn z'leiden.*

*Die G'lehrten fragten weiter an:
Hans Landis, hast due jedermann
Verzeihen and vergeben?
Er sprach, he ja zu aller Stund,
Und auch euch mit lachendem Mund,
Hab er gänzlich vergeben.*

*Ich will hie weiter melden fort,
Da er ist kommen au das Ort,
Zu seiner letzten Stunde:
Hat Bekanntniss seins Glaubens than
Am selben Ort vor jedermann,
Sprach er mit seinem Munde:*

*Ich glaube das ganz vestiglich,
Gott hab mir meine Sünd verzeicht,
Hing'nommen und vergeben:
Durchs bitter Leiden Jesu Christ,
Und nicht um meiner Werken ist
Geschehen, das merkt eben.*

I am in good conscience.

Therefore you clergymen,
Profess to teach and spread
Your evangelical doctrines:
You do not live and act accordingly,
So it will not bear fruit,
You will eventually find that out.

Then the clergymen declared,
That he contradicted the authorities
By his actions and life:
He should confess here,
That he had done wrong,
And he gave them this answer:

He has not done against the authorities
Anything which the scriptures forbade,
One should hold to the scriptures:
And it is not enough
To only believe in Christ,
But we must also suffer with Him.

The learned ones asked him further:
Hans Landis, have you
Forgiven and pardoned everyone?
He said, yes, at all times,
And also you, with a smiling face,
He has completely forgiven.

I want to report further,
That when he came to the place,
Of his final hour:
He confessed his beliefs
At this same place before everyone,
He spoke these words:

I believe firmly,
God has shown me that my sins,
Are absolved and forgiven:
Through the bitter sufferings of Jesus Christ,
And not through my deeds
Has it happened, remember that.

*Der Nachrichten mit seinem Mund,
Fraget Hans Landis zu der Stund,
Ob es ihn thäte freuen?
Er sprach: ja g'wiss mit seinem Mund,
Er hat mich lang auf diese Stund
Verlanget und thun freuen.*

*Und sprach darzu noch alles das,
Warum solt mich nicht freuen das,
Ich glaub in meinem Herzen:
Ich werd jetzt in dieser Stund schon,
Mein Gott Vater ins Himmels Thron,
Mit meinen Augen sehen.*

*Da man ihn an die Richtstatt g'führt,
Fröhlich war er in seinem G'müth,
Thät sein Gebät verrichten
Zu unserm Gott ins Himmels Thron,
Der wölle uns auch nicht verlohnen,
Und b'wahren ewiglichen.*

*Der Nachrichten thät als ein Freund,
Da er ihn wolt richten, als verkündt,
Thät ihm Erlaubniss geben:
Zu reden hie nach seinem Muth,
Und nach sein'm Lust und Willen gut,
Zuletzt in seinem Leben.*

*Zu reden weiss ich nicht viel mehr,
Dann ich möht allen Menschen sehr
Wünschen und von Herzen gönnen:
Dass sie ihr Lebens Aenderung
Thäten, und wahre Besserung,
Dass sie zum Laben kämen.*

*Hierauf ist er fröhlich und bald,
Niederkniet als ein fromm Held,
Und liess sich willig finden:
Und ist gerichtet mit dem Schwerdt,
Mannlich abg'schieden von der Erd,
Thät sie gleich überwinden.*

The executioner with these words,
Asked Hans Landis at that hour,
If he was joyous?
He said: yes, surely, with his own words,
He has long awaited this hour
And he rejoices in it.

And he also added,
Why should I not rejoice,
I believe in my heart:
That I will within this hour,
My God Father on the throne of heaven,
See with my eyes.

When they led him to the execution place,
Happy was he in his courage,
As his prayer demonstrated
To our God on heaven's throne,
Who will not desert us,
And watch over us forever.

The executioner acted as a friend,
Since he had to execute him, as ordered,
And gave him permission:
To speak forth from his heart,
According to his desire and will,
For the last time in his life.

I don't know much more to say,
Than that I would wish for all persons
From my heart's desire:
That they change their lives
Deeds, and truly improve,
That they might attain eternal life.

After that he joyfully and without hesitation,
Knelt down as a pious hero,
And willingly resigned himself:
And was beheaded by the sword,
Valiantly left the earth,
And by that act he triumphed.

*Der Nachrichten sprach mit sein'm Mund,
Und weinet auch von Herzens Grund,
Also gar inniglichen:
Ich bin unschuldig an diesem Blut,
Das glaub ich fest in meinem Muth,
Ob schon ich hab müss'n richten.*

*Es thät ihm in dem Herzen weh,
Ihme und seinem Söhne zwee,
Thun bitterlichen weinen:
Dass man also ein frommen Christ
Vom Leben zum Tod hat gericht.
Sie thäten es gut meinen.*

*Also erlanget er die Kron,
Bey gott die ewig Ruh und Wonn,
Thut sie gleich überwinden:
Und ist gedultig in der Noth,
Und trägt das Creutz bis in den Tod,
Und liess sich willig finden.*

*Mit seinem Hausg'sind hand sie gethon,
Wie Esdre am letzten thut g'schrieben ston,
All's aus dem Haus thun jagen:
Haus und Hoff zu ihren Händen g'non.
Ist das g'mäss dem Evangelion?
Thu mir, o Singer, sagen.*

*Also will ichs hie bleiben lan,
Und die Sach Gott befohlen han,
Der wö sich unser erbarmen:
Und geben uns die ewig Kron,
Mit Landis unserm Bruder schon,
Durch Jesum Christum, Amen.*

The executioner spoke these words,
And wept from the bottom of his heart,
Very fervently:
I am innocent of this blood,
This I believe firmly in my soul,
Although I had to execute him.

It pained him in his heart,
He and his two sons,
They wept bitterly:
That a pious Christian
Was dispatched from life to death.
Though they meant to do well.

Therefore he achieved the crown,
The eternal rest and reward with God,
May you likewise overcome:
And be patient in suffering,
And carry the Cross until death,
And be resigned to this willingly.

With his household they did,
As Esdras wrote at the end,
All was seized in the house:
House and farm were taken into their hands.
Is this in accordance with the scriptures?
Tell me, oh singer, tell me.

So I want to let it remain here,
And leave the matter to God's commands,
May He have mercy on us:
And give us the eternal crown,
With Landis our brother,
Through Jesus Christ, Amen.

Where was Hans Landis Executed?

Before we leave these moving accounts of the fate of Hans Landis the martyr, one final detail needs to be explored. Where exactly did the execution take place in old Zürich? This merits clarification because many people today claim to be descendants of Hans Landis (including myself), and some may wish to visit Zürich to see where our ancestor so nobly met his death. The hymn in the *Ausbund* states that the execution took place at the *Richtstatt*, meaning

simply “the place of execution.” Kläui⁴⁴ adds a further detail when he states that the death sentence was read and the execution took place at the *Richtstatt am Fischmarkt*, referring to a street known as the Fish Market along the shore of the Limmat. However, the *Martyrs Mirror* account adds further details, that the death sentence was “read” at the *Fischmarkt* and then Landis was taken to the *Wolfsstatt* where his execution took place. The specific statement is as follows, taken from a letter received in 1659 “...from one of the preachers at Zurich, who witnessed the death of the afore-mentioned martyr... ‘Further you remember,’ he writes, ‘that Hattavier Salr. witnessed the beheading of Hans Landis, which I also still remember well, having seen it myself in the Wolfsstadt.’”⁴⁵

Lowry⁴⁶ regards *Wolfsstatt* as a misnomer, a mistaken form for *Walstatt*, which is an archaic term meaning “the place of judgment, decision, or execution,” an alternate form for *Richtstatt*. The caption to the photo in Lowry on p. 135 states that the beheading of Hans Landis “...took place several hundred yards downstream” from the Wellenberg prison, which was located at the mouth of the Limmat river. Apparently, then, Lowry agrees with Kläui’s notion that the execution took place along the river bank, perhaps in front of the City Hall (*Rathaus*) which was on the *Fischmarkt*.

Can these contradictions be resolved? It’s true that handwriting can be easily mistaken in old German script, especially with older spellings, which might have led to confusion between *Walstatt* and *Wolfsstatt*. However, there are statements in two documents in Lowry that clearly point us in a different direction -- toward the main moat outside the old city walls. Document 10 (Jan.-Sept., 1614, p. 108) states that Hans Landis was supposed to be executed “at the gravel” (*auf dem Grien*), but he preferred the “main moat” (*Hauptgrub*) because that lay further away. When they reached there, he was prepared for the sword “in the little house” (*in dem Häußlin*). Document 14 (Sept. 29, 1614, p. 146) likewise states that he was led “to the little house at the main moat” (*in das hauptgruoben hüßli*), and in fact this phrase is repeated twice. Surely this wasn’t due simply to mistaken handwriting, since the documents were translated by Lowry himself.

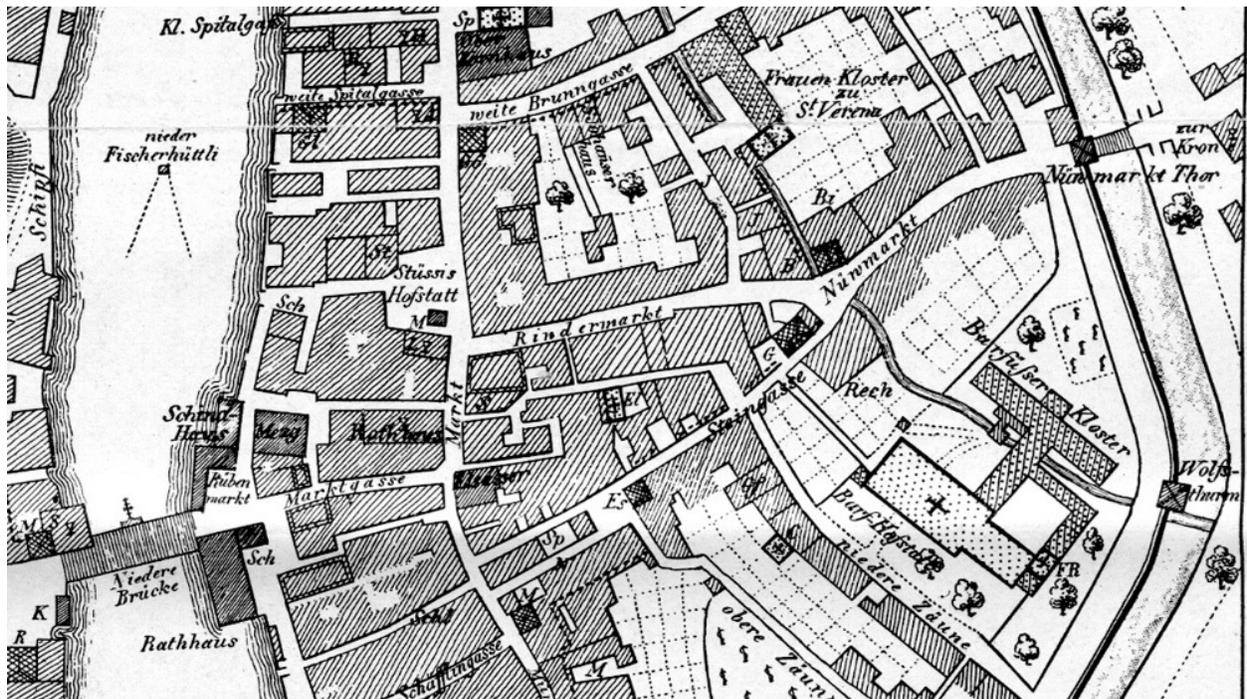
Some of the mystery of Hans Landis’ place of execution may be resolved if we study old maps that are available for Zürich. At that time Zürich was surrounded by a wall, outside of which was a deep ditch or moat (referred to as the *Graben* or *Gruben*). There were nine major gates (*Thor*) leading into the city, each with a fortified tower (*Thurm*) and a bridge over the moat. There were also several smaller towers at various points with narrower crossing foot paths.

One of these fortified gates in the eastern wall was the *Katzentor*, where Heini Landis and Jacob Hochstrasser were imprisoned in 1609. The “Market Alley” (*Marktgasse*) angles toward the old wall from the City Hall, intersecting with “Cattle Market” (*Rindermarkt*) and “New Market” (*Neumarkt*) streets, then it passes through the main gate at the *Neumarkt Thurm*, which was south of the *Katzentor*. The *Wolffs Thurm* (Wolfs Tower) was a smaller tower further south of the main gate, where the wall was adjoined by a stream known as the *Wolfbach*, which flowed into the

⁴⁴ Kläui 1948, p. 209; 1952, p. 191

⁴⁵ Thielmann van Braght 1660, p. 1104

⁴⁶ Lowry 2003, p. 108

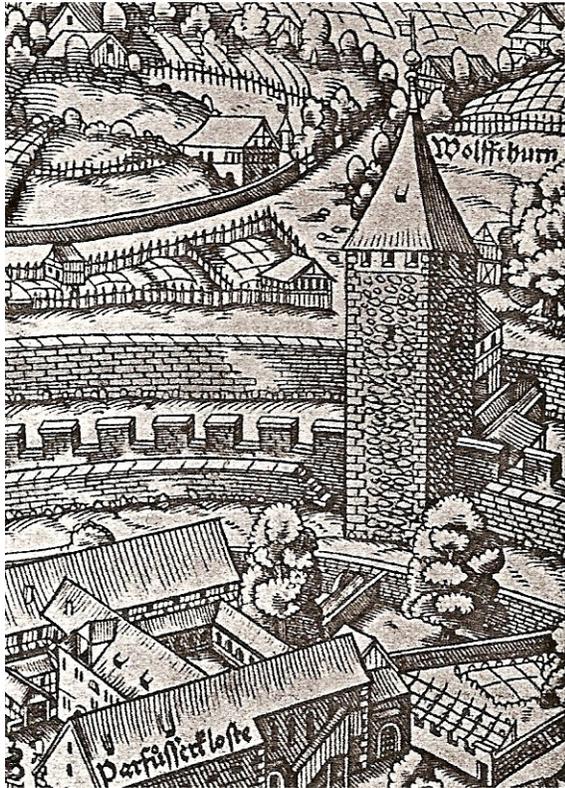


The City Hall (*Rathaus*) at the foot of the Lower Bridge (*Niedere Brücke*), with streets leading through *Markt-gasse*, *Rindermarkt*, and *Neumarkt* with path to the *Wolfsturm*.

moat. The *Wolfsturm* is shown on old maps directly behind the “Bare-feet Cloister” (*Barfüsserkloster*), which is known today as the *Obmannamt*. There was apparently a foot path angling south from the *Neumarkt*, past the Cloister, to the *Wolfsturm*.

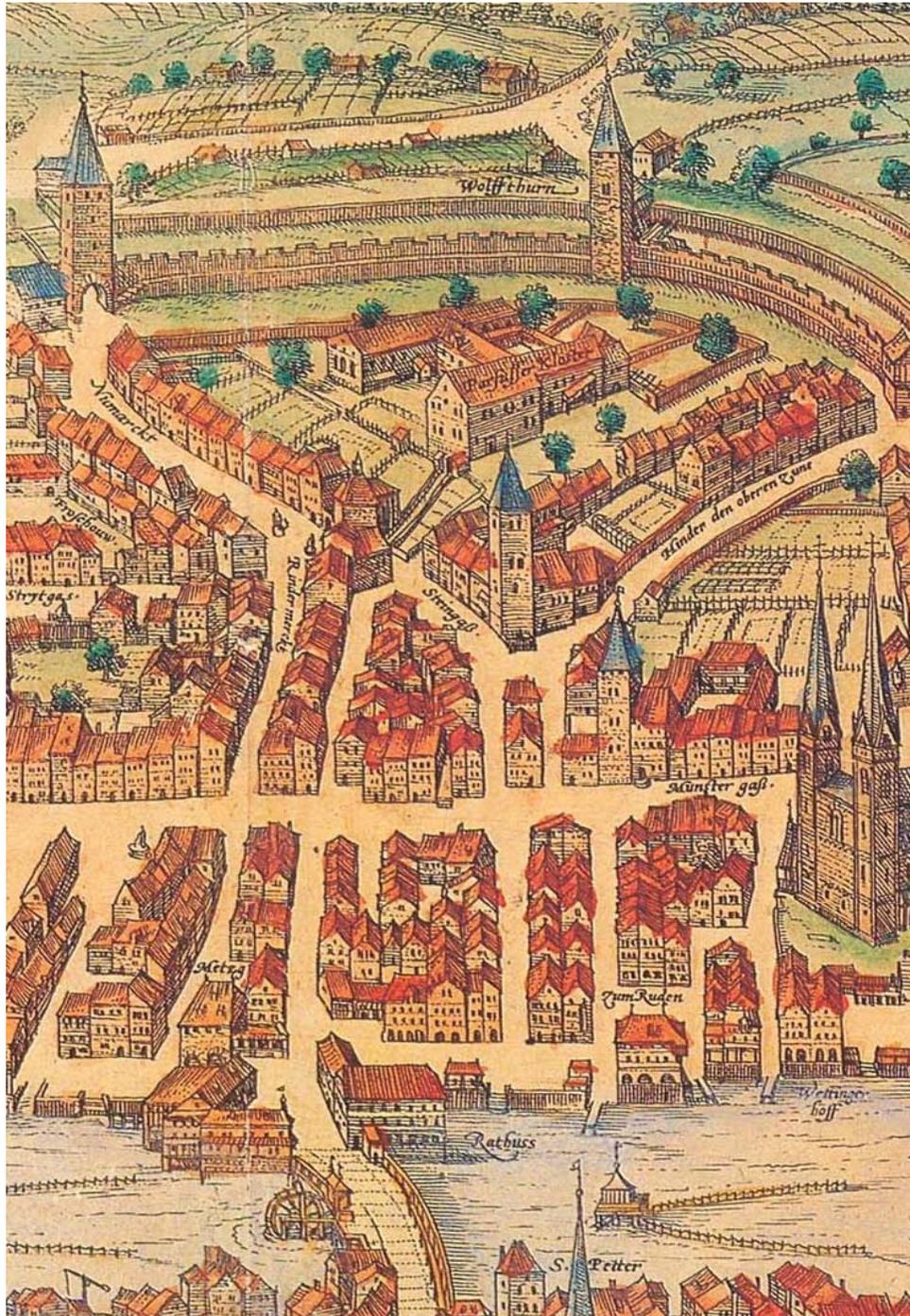
Piecing all this together, the reference to Hans Landis’ execution taking place at the *Wolfstatt* may not have been due to a simple misreading of old handwriting. It is an easier assumption that *Wolfstatt* may have been an alternative reference to the *Wolfsturm*. We can reasonably assume that the death sentence was read at the City Hall, which is on the Fish Market at the base of the main bridge crossing the Limmat river. This was a highly public place and it would have been appropriate to make judicial announcements there. After his sentence was read, Hans asked “How far is it to the place of execution?” He was told that he had but “a little piece of earth still to walk.” Indeed, this seems to have been the case. The documents in Lowry do not mention that the execution took place on the shores of the Limmat river, rather they specify “the little house at the main moat.” Old woodcuts of the *Wolfsturm* indeed show a small structure attached to a foot bridge crossing the moat, which in fact looks very much like a “little house.”

The old city wall with the *Wolfsturm* and *Katzentor* have long since been torn down. Where the city wall once stood, there now is a major traffic thoroughfare which rings the old town. This is typical of most old European cities today – the old moats outside the original city walls usually have been filled in and turned into *Ringstrassen*. The spot where the *Wolfsturm* once stood is today on the edge of the street known as *Seiler Graben* (the name harkens back to the old moat), across from the canton government courthouse. In the summer of 1994, I visited Zürich



and stood near this spot. It bears no marker, yet there was an oddly compelling quality to the place. The street sign had a red smear of paint on it, as if it were a reminder of the violence that had taken place there. Where such a man once stood and looked death in the face for his unshakeable convictions, there now flows the din and congestion of modern traffic. The sheer incongruity of this experience made me ponder deeply all that had transpired there. It also made me feel that Hans had indeed triumphed over death because one of his descendants had returned and stood witness there 400 year later.

Close up view of the *Wolfsturm*, showing the “Little House at the Main Moat” behind the tower (from an old illustration ca. 1576)



Map of Zürich (mid 1500s) showing the City Hall (Rathaus) at the foot of the bridge on the Fischmarkt, with the Rindermarkt and the Neumarkt leading to the moat (Graben) and the Wolfsturm .

The Fate of Hans Landis' Immediate Family

As is stated in the *Martyrs Mirror*, Hans Landis was the last Anabaptist to be executed in the canton of Zürich. However, this does not mean that deaths caused by the government ceased after this incident. Several others, including members of the family, died during the following years as a result of the inhumane suffering while imprisoned.

Hans Landis' wife, Margaret Hochstrasser, was at least 60 years old when Hans was executed (making her born in about 1554). After his death the Zürich city council confiscated the property left behind by the Anabaptist families that had fled the country without reaching accommodation with the authorities. Hans' estate was confiscated because they feared that if the family remained in their house it would become a "new nest and hiding-place of Anabaptist teaching."⁴⁷ The family was summoned to Zürich on February 23, 1615 and told that they could keep their property if they would join the Reformed Church within two weeks, otherwise they would be arrested and fined. If they chose to emigrate, they would be allowed to take their possessions with them. Margaret refused, stating that she was past 60 years of age and she soon expected to reach her natural end. On May 22, 1615 she was interrogated by the *Bürgermeister* of Horgen, Herr Holtzhalb. His report stated that although he and his counselors "spoke kindly and gently with her" and urged her to abandon her beliefs and return to the church, "she would not reconsider." Due to her advanced age she was confined in the hospital. On May 24 he wrote:

It is being considered what to do. She cannot be [swayed by being] talked to or interrogated. She will not be converted, and it would not be good to let her stay alone. That is why she shall be taken to the *Spital* [hospital], held in the death room, bound, and given only the most basic care. No one will be allowed to speak to her or to enter the room, in hope that she may in this wise listen and be converted.

Kläui speculates that the authorities hoped that the sermons delivered to the sick in the hospital would eventually soften her attitude. She was interrogated periodically by the Reformed minister in an attempt to win her conversion. It is not known how long she was held and her fate is not recorded

The death of Hans Landis was the climax of the confrontation of the Anabaptists with the civil authorities and the Reformed Church. Johann Breitingger, who became the head of the Reformed Church of Zürich in 1613, found that many people were disturbed by the execution and he had to justify this rash action. He realized that the only way to keep the Church intact was to institute reforms and to eliminate some of the root causes that were driving people to the Anabaptist faith. In his early years in office, Breitingger was a well-meaning reformer and his actions succeeded in defusing the situation for the next twenty years. He improved charity programs for the poor as well as the quality of parochial education for the children. A new Reformed hymnal was introduced in 1615, symbolizing his openness to change. The following year he succeeded in abolishing the punishment of galley slavery, which was regarded as

⁴⁷ Kläui, 1948, p. 210

barbaric by most other countries at that time. The death penalty was restricted to persons who were extreme social agitators. He also established a set of regulations for the clergy governing their conduct, along with a tribunal to enforce them. In 1630 he issued a memorandum discussing the methods for dealing with the Anabaptists. He recommended that clergy use debate to point out the errors of their beliefs, and that great patience be shown otherwise the clergy would have "bad conscience on our side, and the sectarians will only become more hardened." Breitingen's major concern was that the Anabaptists attend the Reformed Church services, even if they did not believe in the church structure. His methods appear to have had success. In 1633 he ordered a census of the canton of Zurich to determine the number of Anabaptists. Detailed reports were filed by the pastors of each parish over the next two years, and the results showed a total of only 182 Anabaptists in the canton. Although clearly an undercount, this suggested a drastic reduction in their numbers, and many had undoubtedly emigrated by that time.

The majority of these census reports simply give the bare facts about the residents, including the names of each married couple and their children, their ages, the farmsteads on which they dwelled, and their religious status. Occasionally, a pastor added comments and evaluations about the residents, which are very revealing of attitudes at that time. One of the most interesting is the census of the village of Birmensdorf. In 1633 the pastor reported that Stefan Zeender, "an honorable preacher of the Anabaptist brethren," was living in the village with his wife. He added, "this Anabaptist is, due to his incessant instigation and running to and fro, a highly detrimental poison and weed. This is not only within the parish but also in the whole free office. He does have a fine house, some arable land and vineyard, and about two stacks of hay, but is considerably in debt."⁴⁸ The pastor also recorded that Barbara Meyli, the widow of Felix Lambrecht, was residing on a farmstead in the hills outside the village. He comments:

This Anabaptist woman occasionally sells wine and cider during the year. So on the holy day of Christmas in the year 1634, young people were sitting with her till two o'clock in the night. In religious matters, she is so ignorant that she sent me to Stephan Zeender when I wished to talk with her. She announced: "What he believes, she believes, too." On the other hand, she has seven children who go to church and are well at home.⁴⁹

Nearby was another resident named Andreas Graad, who was described as "a very coarse, ignorant man, whose faith is also founded on Master Stephan." The pastor continued, "when this Graad was imprisoned together with Hans Landis in 1614, he had promised to go to church. Because of this vow, (which he never did fulfill for even one hour nor did he wish to do this) he is actually excluded from the Anabaptists about 23 years and so a free one without divine service." Concerning another resident, Hans Hochstrasser, he adds "some years ago Hans Hochstrasser was cited before an honorable marriage court for lewd cohabitation with

⁴⁸ Guth 1988, p. 139.

⁴⁹ Guth 1988, p. 139.

honest people's wives with the promise of great gifts. At that time, he had promised to attend church, but he has not kept that promise. He and his wife were banished from the Anabaptists ten years ago." Concerning Jagli Hochstrasser, the son of Hans: "this young Hochstrasser is a real devil's child, who does not shudder about anything, except at the sermon of God's word. He spends his time day and night with young boozers. Where wine is purchased or a boozing takes place, he is sure to be present. Consequently, the Anabaptists did not really wish to accept him in 1627, and excluded him again. God have mercy upon him."⁵⁰

These annotations by the pastor are quite revealing of life in small Swiss villages at that time. The Anabaptist preacher, Stefan Zeender, we might recall, was imprisoned with Hans Landis in 1614, sentenced to galley slavery, and escaped with him at Solothurn. Unlike Landis, Zeender was able to avoid execution. After returning to his home village he apparently resumed his proselytizing activities with undiminished vigor. Although the Reformed pastor calls him a "poison and weed," it is interesting that he also refers to him as an "honorable preacher"! The report on Andreas Graad, who apparently was also imprisoned with Landis and Zeender, indicates that imprisonment did indeed have a deterrent effect on some of the Anabaptists.

The Renewal of the Campaign Against Anabaptism in Canton Zürich, 1635-1645

Johann Breitinger's relatively milder policies toward the Anabaptists during his early years in office changed in the mid-1630s. The underlying factor in the renewed campaign against the Anabaptists was the heightened military belligerence of the authorities in Zürich and Bern, which peaked at that time during the Thirty Years War (1618-1648). Although the Swiss Confederation had managed to avoid the conflagration raging north of their border, Breitinger led a war faction in the Zürich council arguing hotly for intervention on the side of the Protestant Swedish forces. In his tirades, Breitinger charged that Swiss neutrality was a disgrace, they should join the crusade against the Catholic forces of the Holy Roman Empire. He warned that war was inevitable, the Catholic Swiss cantons were preparing to invade Zürich on all sides, and there was the additional looming threat of French expansionism.⁵¹ Hirzel was of special concern because it was near the border with the Catholic cantons in inner Switzerland, and it was on that spot that Zwingli's forces had been defeated in the previous century.⁵² In anticipation of these threats, both Zürich and Bern were building their military strength. Despite Breitinger's best efforts to lure Zürich and the other Protestant cantons into the conflict, cooler heads prevailed in the Swiss Diet, bolstered by the severe defeat of the Swedish army at Nordlingen in 1634.

The pacifist Anabaptists were a thorn in their side. The proud military spirit of the patrician families had always led them to despise the mentality of these "Christians lacking in self-defense and vengeance," which could also serve as a broader role model for non-compliance with the authorities.⁵³ They smarted at the perceived arrogance of the Anabaptists, who constantly complained of their corruption and who refused to attend the Reformed Church. As

⁵⁰ Guth 1988, p. 139-140.

⁵¹ Luck 1985, p. 195.

⁵² Winkler 1974, p. 71.

⁵³ "Christen ohne Verteidigung und Rache."

the Zürich authorities strengthened their military reserves, they kept a watchful eye on any sign of internal discontent. They quickly lashed out in 1646 when a rebellion flared briefly in neighboring Wädenswil against a new one-percent property tax that was levied to strengthen the military forces in the canton. The rebellion drew sympathetic responses throughout the canton, in Knonau west of Hirzel and in other places, including Horgen. The authorities responded with a massive display of military might. A dual pronged sea and land force swept the entire west bank of Lake Zürich. Although the residents in Horgen and its hillside were not major instigators of the rebellion, soldiers occupied the area and they thoroughly combed the neighboring villages for dissidents.⁵⁴

The Anabaptists were the chief scapegoats for this policy of suppressing any form of dissent in the canton. There had been 20 years of relative calm since the death of Hans Landis, but the census reports of 1633 provided the authorities with a list of names which proved to be an irresistible temptation for them to stamp out the sect once and for all.

The Amish hymnal, the *Ausbund*, contains a supplementary report ("*Wahrhaftiger Bericht*") written by the Dutch Mennonite, Hans Müller, which describes the events between 1635 to 1645. This information, supplemented by that in *The Martyrs Mirror*, provides us with the sad details of the fate of the Anabaptist families in Horgen, Hirzel, Wädenswil, and other nearby villages in canton Zürich.

The first sign of trouble was in 1635 when four Anabaptist preachers -- Rudolf Egli of Zürich, Ulli Schmidt and Felix Urnne from Klonau, and Hans Müller from Uetickon -- were arrested and held for several months. Urnne was freed, but the other three were kept for 22 weeks and subjected to intense interrogations. In 1636 several disputations were conducted by authorities in various parts of the canton to induce the Anabaptists to attend the Reformed Church. The first two were held on March 17 and August 17 at Wädenswil, Knonau, and Groeningen. Large numbers were summoned to appear. The authorities and church officials vascillated between entreating them to cooperate, belittling them, and threatening them, all without success. An underlying motive for these meetings appears to have been to confirm the names of every practicing Anabaptist in the canton, to determine their leadership, and the extent of their resources. A third meeting was held on September 8 at Zürich. At a fourth meeting later that year the authorities required the brethren to provide an inventory of their estates, including both "movable and immovable property," with a rather lame promise that "not one sliver should be taken therefrom." Eight Anabaptists from Horgen and Hirzel were involved in these proceedings in 1636, three of whom belonged to the Landis family. One of them, Jacob Suner (sometimes called Rudi in other records), was a Dutch Anabaptist who had married one of Hans Landis' daughters (the wedding had been performed by Hans). The final meeting was held in May of 1637. Although the brethren were given letters of safe conduct as an inducement to attend, Breitinger lost his patience and announced "either you attend the State Church or you go to jail and die there." A total of about 170 adults and 300 children were involved in these proceedings. They were retained in prison for about 20 weeks, during which time they remained in contact with their brethren through letters, who encouraged them to remain steadfast. Realizing the hopelessness of their situation, the brethren repeatedly asked permission to sell

⁵⁴ Kägi 1867, pp. 99-126.

their property and to leave the canton, but the authorities refused. Eventually the Anabaptists were released, but the authorities then launched a campaign of ruthless harrassment. The *Ausbund* recounts how over the following eight years, each of these families was systematically dealt with, one by one.

In addition to the towers along Zürich's city wall, such as the Kazentor, there were two major structures which were used to imprison larger groups of Anbaptists at various times. The Oetenbach was a small cluster of buildings, located near the west bank of the Limmat river. The *Martyrs Mirror* (p. 1119) refers to it as a "convent." Old maps of Zürich also label it as "*Oetenbacher Kloster*" (cloister).⁵⁵ The Dominican nuns who resided there served as nurses in the hospital on the premises.⁵⁶ In the 1520s, during the contentious early days of the Reformation, most of the nuns and the monks left the cloister. In 1525 the Zürich city council closed the monasteries and convents throughout the canton. Since the *Oetenbach* contained a hospital, some of the nuns were allowed to remain to staff the facility. Cloisters tended to be relatively fortified structures, which made the *Oetenbach* appropriate for use as a prison. At that time it probably had many vacant rooms. The major prison in Zürich was the *Wellenberg*, located in the middle of the Limmat near its mouth at lake Zürich. The beginnings of this structure date back to the Romans, and it was used in Zürich over the centuries as a prison for the worst criminals.⁵⁷ The *Wellenberg* was a much worse place in which to be incarcerated due to its location in the river, which made it susceptible to extreme cold and damp. Contemporary reports show that the prisoners complained of mold growing on their clothing, causing it to fall from their bodies in shreds after a few weeks! The dungeons were usually dark and vermin infested. The prisoners were constantly shackled and plagued by insects.

Until the mid 17th century, the most commonly mentioned place of incarceration for the Anabaptists was the *Wellenberg*, along with the common criminals. The guards tormented them at night to prevent them from sleeping. They were interrogated to determine the exact size of their estates in order to confiscate their property with ruthless efficiency. The authorities were particularly interested in determining who had custody of the various charity funds that the congregations had established. While they were imprisoned the brethren were systematically starved to weaken their resistance. Although none were formally executed, several succumbed to illness while in bondage due to the inhumane treatment, or soon after their release. Soldiers and bounty hunters entered the homes of the brethren at will, took whatever they could lay their hands on, and terrorized their relatives. "Even as ravening wolves among a flock of sheep...[the *Täufer Jäger*] raged and stormed, broke open doors and windows, ran with bare swords through the houses, and afterwards drank and rioted worse than solders."⁵⁸ A curious detail in many of these accounts is that the brethren often "escaped" from imprisonment – as happened twice with Hans Landis. This suggests that the prisons were poorly guarded, or more likely that the guards

⁵⁵ The Oetenbach is labeled as a cloiser on Johann Ludwig Gottfried's map of Zürich, dated 1638.

⁵⁶ Gäbler 1986, p. 59

⁵⁷ The *Wellenberg* burned in 1799 during the French occupation, and it was finally torn down in the 19th century.

⁵⁸ Thielmann van Braght, *Martyrs Mirror*, p. 1110

were susceptible to bribes. Several times their fellow prisoners and the local people (non-Anabaptist sympathisers) brought them food. It is also possible that after the authorities had extracted all the information they desired from a prisoner, they may have deliberately left the cell door unlocked to tempt him to escape, which would give them legal cause for recapture and even more harsh treatment. In spite of what appears to us as a rather callous disregard for due process, the authorities were usually careful to justify their actions and record the interrogations, the transcripts of which are still preserved in the Zürich archives.

Twelve brethren were arrested in 1637 and confined in the Oetenbach, some for 22 weeks, others for the duration of the year. One of the group, Rudolf Egli, was the deacon in charge of the congregation's charity funds. Egli (who had also been arrested earlier in 1635) was released, but his house and estate were confiscated and sold for 6,000 Guilders. The authorities summoned him once again for information on the charity fund, but he had meanwhile fled into hiding. Enraged, the authorities arrested his wife and threatened her, and even "placed a hangman by her side to cause her great anguish." She finally revealed where the charity fund was kept, and they expropriated the entire sum.⁵⁹

Hans Landis II and Elizabeth Erzinger

The next lineal ancestors in this chronology are Hans Landis II and his wife Elizabeth Erzinger. Hans II followed in the footsteps of his father and also became an Anabaptist preacher (*Prediger*) for the congregation in the Horgenberg area. Elizabeth (born about 1591), was the daughter of Uli Ertzinger from the village of Guldens in the parish of Egg (sometimes also referred to as "Guldinen" or "Eggersberg" in old records). Uli Ertzinger, we recall, was among the group of Anabaptists arrested in 1589, which included Hans and Heini Landis. Hans and Elizabeth had a large number of children, fourteen in all, six sons and eight daughters. The children were Caspar (born in 1614), Hans (born 1615, the inheritor of the family estate in Hirzel), Margaret (born 1617), Elsbeth (born about 1620), Hans Heinrich (born 1621), Rudolf (born 1623), Anna (born 1626), Jacob (born 1628), Verena (born 1629), Barbara (born 1632), Maria (born 1633), Hans Rudolf (born 1635), Elsbeth (born 1636), and Margaret (born 1638).

On May 3, 1637, the governor (*Landvogt*) at Wädenswil invited three brethren, Hans Landis II, Peter Brubacher, and Jacob Rusterholz to the castle for interrogation, with the guarantee that they would suffer no harm. After arriving at the castle, they participated in a choir service, which apparently was misperceived by the authorities as a signal that they were ready to cooperate. The three men were asked if they would also be willing to attend church services. When they declined, they were imprisoned, despite the initial assurances that this wouldn't happen. Landis and Rusterholz were soon released. Brubacher, however, was retained and subjected to intense interrogation. He was sent to the *Oetenbach*, where he remained for 40 weeks, suffering greatly from harrassment by the guards and deprivation of food and water. Finally he was released, along with 12 other prisoners. In July, 1640, the authorities again pursued Brubacher, and "acted with much tyranny that one would have thought that the stones

⁵⁹ Worth 1,000 Guilders according to the *Ausbund*, whereas the *Martyrs Mirror* specifies 2,000 *Reichsthaler*.

would have cried out.” His house was confiscated, his family evicted, and all his possessions, including farm and livestock, were sold for 9,000 Guilders. Despite the fact that his three children attended state church services, they also were briefly imprisoned.

After being released from imprisonment at Wädenswil in May, 1637, Hans Landis II was again imprisoned that same year at *Oetenbach*, this time for 20 weeks. Although his wife and children attended church services, they also were treated ruthlessly. His daughter, Margaret, was imprisoned for 60 weeks. Hans wrote his wife, testifying to the earnestness of his faith. Fortunately his original letter has been preserved in the Zürich State Archive. In the summer of 1994 I had the opportunity to read this document.⁶⁰ The ink is faded and the paper is soiled, as one might expect of something written in these circumstances:

1. I wish you my friendly greetings, my dear wife, and also
2. all of you, above all through Jesus Christ our Lord and
3. saviour, amen.
4. I am, furthermore, letting you know what my circumstances are, that I
5. am well and healthy, and completely consoled by God’s grace,
6. may the almighty God watch over me and preserve everyone in His truth
7. until then, amen. I want to let you know that the men have come to us twice
8. since I have been imprisoned here, and they will return to us some more;
9. therefore, pray to God earnestly for us that He may give us the will
10. to speak and to be silent when it is necessary.
11. Furthermore, I ask you, my dear house-mother that you diligently watch
12. over the children, and admonish them to pray and to
13. sleep and to be God-fearing, as you well know what I spoke with
14. you about when I was still with you. And you, children,
15. I exhort you to be very obedient; if
16. the Lord makes me free again I will be able to show you further
17. how to be a true steward of His commands throughout the land, with your
18. whole will, and with Christ’s will; nothing else should be heeded than
19. God and the word of His blessed commands, and this should be
20. truly praised by all of us, and pray to God earnestly
21. for us that we are also of a mind to do this for you all, amen.
22. Heinrich, when you are out herding, take very good care of the cattle
23. and let them graze on straw, but with Hirzi and Brandi
24. and Bruni it doesn’t matter, and have them butchered into mixed wieners,
25. if their bellies are thick in weight I will be well
26. satisfied, and also send us sausage and meat; you should make
27. the meat well-cooked so that it is good to eat cold,
28. and do it as I discussed with you, as I

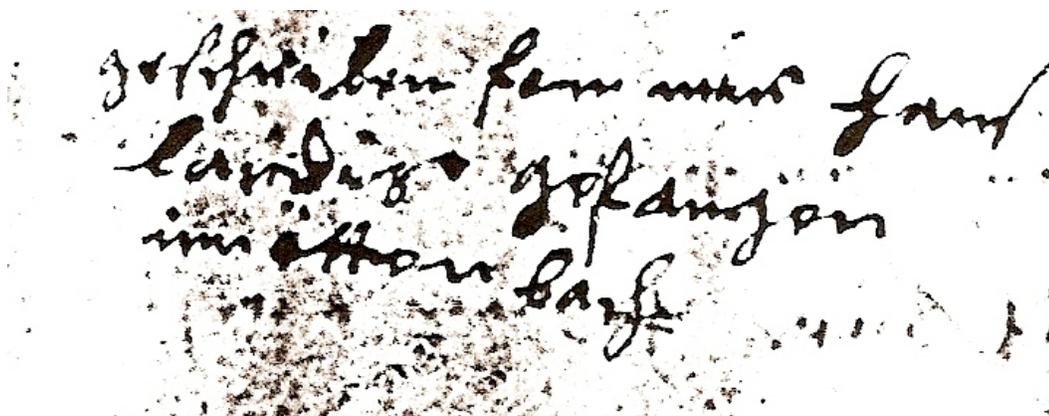
⁶⁰ The Zürich State Archive identification number for this letter is EI,7.6, Nr. 2. I wish to thank Michael Wilcox for initially calling this letter to my attention. I translated both of these letters in my article – see Wagner and Wilcox 1995.

29. did it when I was butchering.

1637

30. (Back of page:) written by me, Hans Landis, imprisoned in the Oettenbach

31. to my married sister in the Siten, residing in the lower house.



“Geschrieben von mir, Hans Landis, gefangen im Ottenbach”
Written by me, Hans Landis, imprisoned in the Ottenbach

In the final passage Hans was apparently instructing his son, Heinrich, to take three of their cattle, “Hirzi,” “Brandi,” and “Bruni” to the butcher for slaughter and to have them turned into cooked sausage. Some of this should be sent to him, which he could eat cold. Such attentiveness to mundane details of managing the farm was not unusual in correspondence at that time, especially considering that families had to support members who were imprisoned, and they were presented with a bill by the authorities.

There is also a second letter in the Zürich State Archive which until now has been mistakenly regarded as being written by Hans Landis the martyr.⁶¹ Neff (1955b) cites this letter as such in the *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, and the index in the Archive also repeats this mistake. However, it is apparent from both the handwriting and the contents that it was written by Hans II, not by his father. At the bottom of the first page of the document the date “1614?” has been scrawled by an archivist, but on the second page the date “1637” clearly appears at the end. The contents are as follows:

1. I, Hans Landis, wish friendly greetings to my entire
2. household, above all I am also letting you know that I am alive and
3. healthy, and completely consoled by God’s grace, may God grant it
4. truly, amen
5. I am letting you know by this letter the timing of the household tasks, so

⁶¹ The second letter is in this same file of documents, EI 7.6

6. take good care of the cattle and keep the hay very clean,
7. and if you put the threshed straw in the pit to use for fodder
8. it would be bad beforehand to stir manure beneath the reed-
9. straw; it is not good to lay it first on the ground when you cut
10. the reeds by hand, it is much better to use it in the summer, and also
11. better, if you fodder the straw in the pit, to (let the cattle) eat half of it .
12. It would be good enough to use the rear (piece of land?) for this half
13. portion, and this reed-straw, as I have instructed; but
14. if you place the cattle there beforehand for grazing it will stir up the dirt.
15. I know that the household cannot take on too much. I must entrust
16. myself and you to the will of the loving God, in His protection and shelter;
17. pray to God for us so that we may also be of a mind to help one another
18. since we ourselves are very imperfect with each other.
19. I don't know whether or not I will be coming to you, I entrust myself
20. to the commands of the loving God, in His shelter and protection, truly, amen.
21. Concerning my beloved children, it is my heartfelt desire
22. for you that you behave yourselves very quietly, that you now by yourselves
23. pray to God truly, and be obedient to your mother.
24. It is a great obligation and also a great reward for those who are obedient
25. to their father and mother. I would like you to come together again for eternal life,
26. if we diligently live and abide by His will.
27. For this, my children, be very desirous
28. and have much love for each other, I ask you truly
29. to do this with your entire will. If you do so, it would bring you
30. a great treasure after this time in eternal life.
31. Further, my Elsy, I am letting you know that you should take very good care,
32. be nurturing, and if they don't follow (obey) then (you) the mother (will)
33. need to be stern, because they are young; and concerning this, my dear Elsy
34. I exhort you, if you have milk, give it to Caspar's child with
35. good will. It is a good charity, and he should then also be of assistance
36. to you, I think. There is nothing else that I need to encharge you with,
37. other than to be mindful of the love He shows
38. towards this earthly realm, I resign myself to what the Lord has sent me.
39. It would please me now very much if you would all love each other
40. equally, and take good care of the house and
41. be very, very diligent with the chores as much as you are able, as I
42. would do if I were there.
43. Nothing else should be heeded but God's commands (and trust) in His protection and shelter,
44. Who is truly praised by all of us, pray to God for us that we do this,
45. and also for yourselves, through Jesus Christ, amen amen.
46. I would like very much, my dear Elsy -- you asked about to whom

47. I loaned the Doms BÜchli,⁶² which I received from Hans Uli
48. Hürlimann; I would like you to send a copy to me
49. as soon as you can; ask around (to see) if there is another (copy),
50. I don't know to whom I gave it, the innkeeper probably
51. knows who has it; and if you can get one to me
52. send it so that I can write to pass the time. It will soon become
53. warm again outside and the days long; I would greatly prefer to be doing (things) outside for
54. a long time, rather than this useless sitting.

The account in the *Martyrs Mirror* (p. 1110) states that while Hans was imprisoned, the authorities sold his farm, "realizing 7,000 Guilders from it, which they kept for themselves." Another source states that the authorities sold his farm to Jägli Treichler in Horgen for 7,200 Pounds. Four thousand Pounds were confiscated by the state as a penalty.⁶³ Hans apparently owned other property in addition to this farm. Kläui states that he owned the farm, a house, another "half house," two barns, and eight cattle, which had been acquired as a settlement after his father's estate was confiscated around 1614. The total value of this property (including the farm, valued at 7,200 Pounds) was about 11,000 Pounds. This indicates that Hans Landis II was one of the wealthier Anabaptists in the community. We might recall that in August, 1614, when his father, Hans Landis the martyr, was being interrogated about the charity fund in his congregation, he mentioned that his brother (Heini?) had been poor some 20 years before and he had to rely on charity, so in gratitude Hans' son, who was reportedly well-off at that time, had donated grain to the congregation to repay his uncle's debt. It seems likely that Hans II was the son that was referred to in this anecdote.

The "true account" (*Wahrhaftiger Bericht*) which appears as an appendix in the *Ausbund*, contains two references to Hans II. My freely rendered translation of page 849 is as follows:

Hans Landis, an ordained minister in Horgenberg, was arrested in 1637 and taken to Zürich, placed in Oetenbach in a dungeon, and imprisoned for about 20 weeks, and was released with 15 of his compatriots in 1638 through God's help. After his release he was continually pursued and driven from one place to another. As one source said, he often didn't have a house to stay in, so strictly was it forbidden by the authorities for us to house or shelter him, and also neither food nor drink, nor charity in any fashion could be shown; and he and his wife and children and children's children were all reduced to poverty; yes, also them [the family], who had given in so much to the [state] church and who recognized the cross. His daughter Margaret Landis was also imprisoned and taken to Zürich, placed in Oetenbach, and was imprisoned there for 60 weeks, then she was released with God's help. Then they took his house, farm, and all other possessions that they could, sold them and kept the proceeds, so he lost 500 Gulden.

⁶² The *Doms-Büchli* to which Hans refers in line 47 is the *Confessio* of the martyr Thomas von Imbroich (1558), who opposed infant baptism, has been reprinted in the *Ausbund*.

⁶³ Kläui, 1948, p. 211.

It should be noted that the financial details differ in the *Ausbund*, the *Martyrs Mirror*, and Kläui's account. In one account his farm was sold for "7,000 Guilders," whereas according to Kläui it was sold for 7,200 Pounds, and the *Ausbund* says he lost "500 *Gulden*."⁶⁴ The figure "500 *Gulden*" is cited in various places in the *Ausbund* as the value for other confiscated estates, so this may have been simply a standard phrase, a rough estimate, and the details in the accounts may be somewhat loose.⁶⁵

Fortunately the original records for the confiscated estate of Hans Landis and Elizabeth Erzinger have been preserved in the Zürich State Archive,⁶⁶ as well as for the the estates of over 40 other Anabaptists throughout the canton. The descriptions of events in the *Martyrs Mirror* and the *Ausbund* are quite graphic, but they fail to mention the fact that after the estates were sold, the authorities did not simply expropriate all the money for their own purposes. Rather, they became trustees for the estates and strict accounts were kept each year listing all income (*Annemen*) credited to the accounts and expenditures (*Ausgeben*). When Anabaptists were imprisoned in the Wellenberg or the Oetenbach, their estates were charged with the cost of their support. Their children were usually boarded with other families in the community, who received a fee for this

⁶⁴ Guilders and *Gulden* are, of course, equivalent terms (the former is Dutch, the latter German).

⁶⁵ Some of the differences in the accounts seem to stem from different currency standards in use at that time in the Holy Roman Empire. Each principality or city-state issued its own variety (including the *Kurpfalz*, Baden, Trier, Hesse-Darmstadt, France, Bavaria, Nassau, and so on), and the values fluctuated. Modern historians also differ in the equivalencies cited for these currencies. Hans Schmocker, a specialist in the interpretation of Swiss manuscripts, has presented what may be the most reliable classification for this region of the empire. There were three major currency systems in use in Switzerland during the 16th and 17th centuries. The Pound (*Pfund*) system was most common, based on units of *Pfund*, *Schilling*, *Pfennig*, and *Heller* (so named after the city of Halle in Swabia, where it was first coined). One *Pfund* equaled 20 *Schillings*, one *Schilling* equaled 12 *Pfennigs*, and one *Pfennig* equalled two *Heller*. The second system of currency was based on the *Krone* which equaled 25 *Batzen*, and one *Batzen* equaled four *Kreuzer*. The third system was based on the *Schweizerfrank* (equivalent to the *Livre Suisse* in French), which equaled 20 *sols*, and one *sol* equaled 12 *deniers*. As if this weren't complex enough, the imperial currency was also in use. One *Reichsthaler* (from which our word "dollar" is derived) was generally worth three Franks, or 3.5 Pounds, or two *Gulden*. The Rhenish *Goldgulden* (gold Guilder) became a popular standard in the 13th century; one *Gulden* was equivalent to one *florin* (so named because it was first coined in Florence). Various silver coins also were in circulation, such as the *Groschen* or the *Weisspfennig*. One *Goldgulden* was equivalent to 20 *Weisspfennigs*, or 240 *Heller*. To achieve some semblance of order in this chaos, several currency unions (*Münzvereine*) came into being to set uniform standards and to control for counterfeiting and fraudulent devaluation. One way to conceptualize the currency is in terms of the average daily wage earned by a skilled worker, such as a stone mason -- about 38 *Pfennigs*, or slightly more than three *Schillings*. Unskilled workers received about half this amount (see Schmocker 1988, and Reinhardt 1961).

⁶⁶ Zürich State Archive (*Täuferamt, Wiedertäuferen Gut*, FIII, 36b.1)

service. They were compensated for providing clothing to the children, and the village schoolmaster was paid for providing them with an education. As we shall also see, children who rejoined the Reformed Church could claim a share of the account when they reached adulthood.

Annual financial records exist for the estate of Hans Landis and Elizabeth Erzinger from 1640 (report Nr. 1) through 1679 (Nr. 40). In March, 1640, the estate (*Hof und Gütern*) was confiscated and sold to Hans Jagli "Treickler" (Treichler) of Horgerberg for the sum of 3,400 Pounds, plus 300 Pounds and 15 Schillings tax. The Treichler family didn't pay the full amount in one lump sum. The cost was amortized over several years and credited to the account of Hans and Elizabeth. Various members of the Treichler family made payments. For example, Martin, Rudolf, and Caspar Treichler jointly paid 180 Pounds to the estate in 1641, and Martin Jagli Treichler paid 130 Pounds. Other members of the Landis family continued to use the farm lands, perhaps for grazing and other purposes. Heinrich Landis the cow-herder (*der Kueher*), stated to be the son of Hans and Elizabeth, paid five Pounds per year to the estate from 1647 through 1651. He is undoubtedly the same Heinrich who was addressed in the letter written by Hans Landis while imprisoned in 1637. Ulrich Landis, a weaver, also paid into the account from 1649 through 1651. Eight Pounds were deducted from the account in 1641 to pay for a *Sägerlohn* which Hans Landis owed to Hans Rudolf Stocker, a miller (perhaps a fee for cutting wood).

Of special importance for the researcher, the expenditures from the account of Hans and Elizabeth contain details pertaining to their children who were boarded with other families. Caspar, Margaret, Elisabeth, Barbali, Heinrich, Verenli, Rudolf, and Maria are all mentioned by name. The youngest child, Margaret (stated to be two years old in 1640) initially stayed with Heinrich Herster, but she spent most of the following 10 years with Ludi and Barbara Staubli, who received from 25 to 60 Pounds per year for her keep. Verenli boarded with Regula Egli for several years, who received 40 Pounds annual fee. Barbali stayed with Johann and Regula Schärer, who also received a 40 Pound annual fee. Maria, said to "16 or 17 years old" in 1649, stayed with Anna Leitsli

Payments were debited to the family account in 1645 for Susanna Pfister, wife of Caspar Landis. She was in Oetenbach prison at the time, and the caretaker received one Pound, 16 Schillings, and eight heller for her keep. Payments were also made at this time for Caspar and Susanna's two older children. Their daughter Barbali boarded with Jagli Rusterholz from Wädenswil, and their son Hans Rudli boarded with Heinrich Rusterholz, of the same town. The annual fees for their care ranged between 25 to 50 Pounds per year. Grätz,⁶⁷ citing Fritz Landis of Mosbach, Baden, states that the property eventually reverted to the sons of Hans II, although the documentary evidence for this statement is not clear.

Hans II was eventually released from prison, along with 15 other brethren, but he was hounded by the authorities, who watched his every move. No one in the community was allowed to provide him with food or shelter. A report filed in 1657 (to be discussed in the following chapter) suggests that Hans Landis II and his wife were both deceased by that time.

⁶⁷ Grätz 1970.

Verena Landis

Verena, the daughter of Hans Landis the martyr, was married to Jacob Suner, an Anabaptist weaver from Holland. Hans Suner, probably their son, became a middleman with the Dutch Mennonites and on several occasions he arranged for relief to be supplied to the Swiss congregations. In 1643 Verena was placed under house arrest in her home near Zürich. She was reported to be “elderly” and too ill to be transported to prison (born in 1587, she would have been 56 years old at that time). The shock soon caused her death within that year.

...[A]n old sister, named Verena Landis, was surprised in the night in her own house, with dreadful raging and storming; in consequence of which she was so frightened that she fainted, yea, became sick, and hence could not go with the thief-catchers. When they could not get her away, she had to promise to remain a prisoner in her house, which promise she kept. But as they treated her very harshly, and provided her with very bad food, certain death ensued a short time afterwards.⁶⁸

Felix Landis and Adelheid Egli

Hans' son Felix and his wife Adelheid (Heidi) Egli were also members of the congregation in Hirzel. Adelheid seems to have converted later than other members of her husband's family. In 1633, at the age of 40, she was said to have been a convert for seven years. They had three children, Hans, Heinrich, and Maria. Around 1642 Felix and Adelheid were imprisoned in Oetenbach tower in Zürich. Felix died, but Adelheid escaped four years later. The account in the *Ausbund* is virtually identical with that in the *Martyrs Mirror*:

He was treated most unmercifully; for he was not given anything to eat for many days, so that even some criminals that were confined near him in another place, took pity on him, and with difficulty, managed to get some food to him, through an opening between them. But when the doorkeeper perceived this, he was put into another prison. Finally, however, they gave him some food; but he was so impaired in his body (through shinking of his bowels, as it seems, on account of having suffered hunger so long), that he could not bear food any more, but prepared himself for death.

Yet in his greatest distress he was carried to church, during the sermon, where he, O dreadful inhumanity! was thrown under a bench; but he soon after gave up the ghost, which he had commended into the hands of God.

His wife Adelheid Egli, who was also imprisoned in Othenbach, was kept there almost four years.

In that time she was treated not only unmercifully, but also shamefully; they threw her into many a stinking corner, stripped her twice in her bonds, and

⁶⁸ Thielmann van Braght 1660, p. 1121

for a time took away her clothes from her every night; however, she afterwards, with a good conscience, escaped from her bonds.

But in the meantime the authorities had broken up their family, put out the children among strangers, and then sold house and furniture, realizing from it 5,000 guilders, all of which they kept for themselves.⁶⁹

Kläui varies slightly from this account in that he reports that Felix's property brought more than 6,000 Pounds when it was sold.⁷⁰ The financial archives in Zürich contain records for the confiscated estate of Felix Landis and his wife, including entries for payments to the families with whom their children were boarded.⁷¹

Rudolf Landis

Rudolf, the remaining son of Hans the martyr, was an enigmatic person about whom only a few tantalizing scraps of information have been preserved. Unfortunately, some of the information is contradictory.⁷² He and his wife, Anna Baumann, resided on the farmstead of Untere Seiten. The Hirzel churchbook shows that they had eleven children: Ulrich (born 1621), Klein Verenli (born 1623), Joseph (1624), Jacob (1625), Bartholomeus (Bartli, 1627), Hans Rudolf (1629), Judith (1631), Catharina (1633), Margaret (1635), Hans Jacob (1637), and Cathri (1639).

According to Kläui, Rudolf's property was confiscated by the state in 1638, along with other members of the family. He and his wife recanted their faith, and Schuchmann indicates that they were expelled from the Anabaptist congregation because of "bad morals."⁷³ The financial archives in Zürich do not contain a specific file on Rudolf Landis and Anna Baumann.

Oswald Landis

Oswald Landis, another prominent member of the family who converted to Anabaptism, is also discussed in the commentaries of the *Ausbund*. He was the son of Rudolf Landis and Anna Bruppacher, and the nephew of Hans Landis the martyr. Oswald is described as an old man in the account (born in 1577, he was 63 years old in 1640, the date cited). The language in the commentaries concerning Oswald is archaic and not totally clear. The entire passage is given below (in my very literal translation).

⁶⁹ Thielmann van Braght 1660, p. 1120.

⁷⁰ Kläui 1948, p. 211

⁷¹ Zürich State Archives FIII 36b.18

⁷² The Hirzel Chart states that Rudolf was born in 1590; however, his name was included on the 1633 list of *Täufer* in Hirzel and he was stated to be 30 years of age at the time (yielding a birthdate of 1603). His wife, Anna Baumann of Durzen, was included on the 1633 list, also stated to be 30 years of age and an Anabaptist convert for eight years. Wenger (2005) shows Rudolf as born Aug. 1583 in Horgen, and died in 1639.

⁷³ "...wird wegen Sitte Verfehlung aus der Täufergemeinde ausgeschlossen."

This elderly brother was imprisoned by the servants of the authorities together with his elderly wife, his two sons and their wives and two innocent suckling babies. They were taken to Zürich and imprisoned in the Oetenbach. When this happened they suffered great anxiety, pain and heartache, especially concerning the little innocent children. Within one evening the two sons with the two innocent children escaped from the enemy's hands with a clear conscience. The old man and his wife were then freed, but his son and son's wife were reduced to poverty. Their possessions and their children were given to a godless, poor servant [of the state], so the children also experienced anxiety and need as a result. Further, the above reported man [Oswald] had four other sons who attended the [state] church, and [despite this] the authorities confiscated their house and farm, and 1,000 Guilders that were legally earned from it, all of which came into their hands [of the authorities].

The narrative concerning Oswald Landis in the *Martyrs Mirror* is virtually identical to that in the *Ausbund* and adds no additional details.

The Zürich State Archive⁷⁴ contains the financial records for the estate of Oswald and Anna Schächli, from its initial confiscation in 1640 through 1668. Three of their sons, Hans Heinrich, Rudolf, and Oswald Landis (jr.), utilized the estate in 1640 and paid 140 Pounds fee to the authorities. This same fee was routinely recorded from them each year thereafter. In 1640 expenses were also debited to the account for Susanna Biber, described as Oswald Landis (junior's) widow, aged 47, and her two children -- Bertheli 18 and Annali 14. Expenses were also paid for the support of the wives and children of Hans Jagli and Hans Heinrich, the sons of Oswald (sr.), apparently while they were imprisoned. In comparison with some of the other accounts, there is little detail in the financial records for Oswald and Anna's account.

Other Anabaptists in Canton Zürich

By 1639 the authorities in Zürich began to receive protests from various quarters regarding their heavy-handed treatment of the Anabaptists. The city council in Amsterdam sent a letter supplicating them to be more moderate in their actions. This prompted the Zürich magistrates to issue a manifesto that year justifying their actions. They repeated their standard charges that the Anabaptists had separated themselves from the state church, refused to obey the city council, and that it was their duty to compel these people by force of arms to do what was right. The Anabaptists issued their own response, restating their standard defense that they had not separated from the church, but rather returned to the earlier, proper Christian faith. The persecution continued unabated.

Stefan Zeender in Birmensdorf, imprisoned several years earlier with Hans Landis the martyr, resumed his proselytizing activities afterwards and he was finally arrested again on September 23, 1639 at Klonau. He was placed in irons at Oetenbach for about one year. Stefan was elderly by this time and became ill from the dampness in prison. Finally, he "fell asleep in

⁷⁴ Zürich State Archive FIII 36b.6

Jesus.” Other members of the Landis family were also imprisoned and had their property confiscated at this time. Caspar Landis, the son of Hans II, and Hans Jacob Landis were imprisoned in the Wellenberg in 1640, along with Felix Landis, Conrad Strickler-Landis, Hans Rudolph Baumann-Landis, Oswald Landis-Schappy, and some other persons who may have been in-laws -- Jacob Rusterholz, Uli Furrer Hofmann, Hans Huber Syfrig, Hans Jägli Asper, Elisabeth Hofstetter, the widow of Heinrich Ritter, Barbara Bruppacher, and Michael Bruppacher's widow, Verena. Conrad Strickler-Landis was elderly at that time, and in 1644, after the authorities extracted a tax of 400 *Gulden*, his estate was given to his son. Most of the others had their properties confiscated, each bringing only a few hundred “Pounds” in value. Hans Jacob's estate was worth 2,931 Pounds.⁷⁵

By around 1640 over 40 Anabaptist families were deprived of their homes and estates in the canton of Zürich. The records of these confiscations have been meticulously preserved in the Zürich State Archives.⁷⁶ The incomes from these sales were used to pay the expenses of their trials and the cost of their imprisonment, with the remainder being set aside for any heir who was willing to join the state church.

⁷⁵ Hans Jacob Landis who was imprisoned with Caspar Landis in 1640 was probably the son of Oswald Landis.

⁷⁶ In addition to Hans, Hans Jacob, Felix, and Oswald Landis, the files for other Anabaptists that I found in the Zürich State Archive include the following: Jakob Rusterholz (Zürich State Archive file number FIII, 36b.2), Conrad Strickler (b.3), Hans Rudolf Baumann (b.4), Uli Furrer and Barbel Hofmann (b.5), Hans Huber (b.7), Jaggli Asper (b.8), Elsbeth Hofstetter (b.9), Barbara Bruppacher (b.10), Michael Bruppacher (b.11a), the Hallauer Gütli (b.11b), Jakob Schneider of Richterswilerberg (b.12), Uli Schneider of Richterswilerberg (b.13), Rudolf Bachmann of Richterswilerberg (b.14), Barbara Frey of Richterswilerberg (b.15), Werner Pfister of Wädenswilerberg (b.16), Peter Bruppacher of Wädenswilerberg (b. 17), Ulrich Hasler of Männedorf (b.20), Uli Oetiker of Männedorf (b.20), Burkart Ammann and wife Eva Rüdlinger of Männedorf (b.21), Heinrich Meyer of Männedorf and Bühlenkung (b.22), Hans Müller of Uitikon (b.23), Rudolf Egli der Wannenmacher and wife Martha Pfänninger of Zürich (b.24), Hans Kuntz, a butcher, residing on the Kuttelgasse in Zürich (b. 25), Katarina Frey, and Thoman Schnebeli, millers from Affoltern and “a. A. selig Witwe” (b. 26), Adelheid Gut of Zwillikon (b. 27), Jakob Isler of Stallikertal (b. 28), Felix Urmi of Baregg (b. 29), Hans Merili of Dägerst (b. 30), Müller, of Maschwanden (b. 31), Heinrich Frick of Buch bei Knonau (b. 32), Anna Schewlin of Aeugst (b. 32a), Jaggeli Gachnauer, a. d. Fischental and Margaret Peter (b. 33), Jacob Baumgartner of Ettenhausen (b. 34), Joggeli Egli of Bäretswil and Lisabeth Leutenegger (b. 35), Hans Spörri hinter der Burg Greifenberg, and Anna Kägi (b. 36), Jorg Weber on the Mühlikram in Bäretswil (b.37), Hans Müller of Edikon (b.38), Jagli Müller im Breitacker, Bäretswil (b.38a), Jörg Peter of Strahlegg (b.39), Joggli Hess and Elsbeth Bachmann of Bäretswil (b.40), Anna Frei of Schalchen, parish of Wildberg (b. 41), Uli Müller i.d. Au., parish of Zell (b.42), and Anna Thumysen (b.36b).

Landis Family in Hirzel, Switzerland, earliest records to ca. 1650⁷⁷

- 1 Johannes Landös (Landis)**, b. ca. 1521, marr. **Katharina Schinz**, b. ca. 1524. In 1547 lived in Hirzel.
- 11 Hans Landis**, b. 1544, “the martyr” executed in Zürich 1614. First marriage to **Barbara Hochstrasser**, b. ca. 1550, d. by 1580. Second marriage to **Margaretha Hochstrasser**, b. ca. 1554. The family resided at *Untere Seiten* in Hirzel.
- 111 Hans Landis**, bap. Dec. 31, 1581 Horgen, marr. **Elsbeth Erzinger**, bap. Oct. 16, 1593 in Egg. In 1633 they lived at *Obere Seiten*, Hirzel.
- 1111 Caspar Landis**, b. ca. 1614, the surgeon (*Schärer*). In 1649 he lived at Sprürmüllli in Hirzel. Recorded as one of the emigrants in 1657 to Jepsheim, Alsace. First marriage to **Susanna Pfister**, b. ca. 1613, canton Zürich, d. before 1661 in Alsace. Second marriage to **Catherine Danherr** from Herzogenbuch in Canton Bern; she died in 1687 in Durrenenzen, Alsace. (The children of Caspar Landis will be shown on the summary table at the end of the following chapter).
- 1112 Hans Landis**, bap. Mar. 3, 1615 Hirzel, d. Aug. 5, 1629 in *Rote Ruhr*. He inherited the family estate in Hirzel.
- 1113 Margaretha Landis**, b. Oct. 12, 1617 Hirzel. Remained unmarried and lived with her brother Caspar in 1643; imprisoned in the Oetenbach.
- 1114 Elsbeth Landis**, b. Mar. 1620, lived with her brother Caspar at Hirzel in 1643.
- 1115 Hans Heinrich Landis**, b. Nov. 1621 Hirzel, died before 1670 Alsace. Married **Barbara Buehler** on Feb. 1643 Hirzel, living next to Caspar Landis at *Kalbisel*, Hirzel in 1643; emigrated with Caspar his brother to Heildelsheim, Alsace. Seven children (shown on genealogy chart in chapter on Alsace)
- 1116 Rudolf Landis**, bap. Nov. 23, 1623 Hirzel; marr. Christina Mettler, bap. Jan. 27, 1622 Hirzel. (Rudolf’s children will be shown on the summary table at the end of the following chapter).
- 1117 Anna Landis**, bap. Mar. 12, 1626 Hirzel.
- 1118 Hans Jakob Landis**, bap. Mar. 11, 1628 Hirzel, d. May 21, 1699. His first marr. to Elisabeth Hotz, second marr. to Verena Bürgisser. Jakob was a linen weaver from Frosdchweiler.
- 1119 Verena Landis**, b. Aug. 1629 Hirzel.
- 11110 Barbara Landis**, b. Apr. 1632 Hirzel.
- 11111 Hans Rudolf Landis**, b. Feb. 1635 Hirzel, d. July 4, 1637 Hirzel.
- 11112 Elizabeth Landis**, b. Nov. 1636 Hirzel, d. July 4, 1637.

⁷⁷ This summary table focuses on the siblings and immediate descendants of Hans Landis “the martyr” in Hirzel and nearby farmsteads, especially those who are mentioned in this chronicle. For a detailed summary of all Landis descendants see Samuel E. Wenger 2005. For the sake of consistency, I am following his genealogical numbering system. My lineal ancestors in this chronicle are underlined.

- 11113 Margaret Landis**, bap. Dec. 16, 1638 Hirzel; removed from foster care by her bro. Rudolf, moved to Alsace, marr. Joseph Casson on June 23, 1664 Markirch.
- 11114 Maria Landis**, b. ca. 1641, bap. Reformed at Markirch on Aug. 25, 1658, "age 16 or 17."
- 112 Rudolf Landis**, b. aug. 1583 Horgen, d. 1639; marr. Anna Baumann. Resided at Untere Seiten. Renounced Anabaptism and joined Reformed Church.
- 113 Heinrich Landis**, b. Jan. 1585 Hirzel.
- 114 Verena Landis**, bap. Feb. 12, 1587 Horgen, marr. Jakob Suners, a weaver from Holland.
- 115 Adeli Landis**, b. May 1588 Horgen.
- 116 Felix Landis**, b. May 1589 Horgen, d. ca. 1642. Married three times: marr.(1) Margaret Strehler, marr. (2) Magdalena Haas, marr. (3) Adelheid Egli.
- 117 Jakob (Jagli) Landis**, b. feb. 1591 Horgen, d. Jan. 16, 1636 Hirzel. Marr. (1) Barbara Schäppi, marr. (2) Elsbeth Trinckler. An Anabaptist in Hirzel.
- 118 Margaret Landis**, b. Nov. 1594 Horgen. Marr. (1) Ulrich Bruppacher in Wädenswil; marr. (2) Hans Rudolph Baumann. They were Anabaptists.
- 12 Ulrich Landis**, bap. Nov. 18, 1546 Hirzel. Brother to Hans the martyr.
- 13 Rudolph Landis**, bap. Sept. 17, 1548 Horgen, marr. Anna Bruggbacher ca. 1570, both Anabaptists.
- 131 Heinrich Landis**, bap. Mar. 25, 1571 Horgen.
- 132 Caspar Landis**, bap. Apr. 5, 1573, d. Ca. 1602 Horgen.
- 133 Hans Landis**, b. Aug. 1575 Horgen, d. 1612, widower in Hirzel 1640.
- 1331 Hans Landis**, b. Nov. 12, 1598
- 1332 Caspar Landis**, b. 1600, d. Sept. 5, 1629 Rote Ruhr, a table and furniture maker.
- 1333 Rudolf Landis**, b. Feb. 1603, marr. Barbara Ritter, moved to Richterswil, then Markirch 1709 with son Heinrich, Anabaptist, listed as widower.
- 134 Oswald Landis**, bap. Mar. 31, 1577 Horgen, d. Mar. 4, 1650 Hirzel. Marr. (1) Margaret Schneveli, marr. (2) Anna Schappi, marr. (3) Catharina Bruppacher; Anabaptists, jailed at Oetenbach 1640.
- 1341 Hans Jacob Landis**, bap. Aug. 10, 1600 Horgen, d. Mar. 20, 1656 Weiler, Germany, his wife Verena Pfister attended the Steinsfurt meeting in 1661.
- 13416 Hans Rudolf Landis**, bap. Jan. 6, 1637 Hirzel, d. before 1701; attended the Steinsfurt meeting.
- 1348 Hans Heinrich Landis**, bap. July 21, 1611 Horgen, attended Steinsfurt meeting.
- 13410 Rudolph Landis**, bap. Feb. 11, 1616 Horgen, marr. Barbara Scharer, Anabaptists.
- 13413 Oswald Landis jr.**, bap. May 10, 1626, d. Aug. 28, 1671 Hirzel.
- 14 Anna Landis**, bap. Feb. 13, 1550 Horgen, d. at birth.
- 15 Anna Landis**, bap. July 28, 1551, died before Feb. 1562.

- 16 **Hans Heinrich (Heini) Landis**, bap. Apr. 19, 1553 Horgen, d. July 1, 1662 Hirzel; marr.
Verena Bertschinger, Anabaptists.
- 17 **Agatha Landis**, bap. Mar. 28, 1555 Horgen.
- 18 **Ludi Landis**, bap. May 6, 1560 Horgen.
- 19 **Anna Landis**, bap. Feb. 5, 1562 Horgen.