



State of Tennessee  
Department of State  
**Tennessee State Library and Archives**  
403 Seventh Avenue North  
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0312

**GRUETLI SWISS COLONY  
COLLECTION  
1857-1999**

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**MICROFILMED**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Gruetli Swiss Colony Collection, 1857-1999, is centered around items collected by various individuals and focuses on the Gruetli Swiss Colony in Grundy County, Tennessee. The Gruetli Swiss Colony Collection is a gift of Mrs. Dola S. Tylor of Winchester, VA; Dr. Clopper Almon of College Park, MD; and the Grundy County Swiss Historical Society of Grundy County, Tennessee.

The materials in this collection measure 2 linear feet of shelf space. There are approximately 66 items included in this collection. There are no restrictions on the materials. Single photocopies of unpublished writings in the Gruetli Swiss Colony Collection may be made for purposes of scholarly research.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Gruetli Swiss Colony Collection, containing approximately 66 items, spans the period 1857-1999. The collection is composed of assorted correspondence, newspaper clippings, personal items, essays, minutes, membership lists, church records, statutes, money order registers, a resident index, and a thesis. All of the items in this collection relate to the Gruetli Swiss Colony in Grundy County, Tennessee. The arrangement of the collection is alphabetical.

The Gruetli Agricultural Union materials, located in folders 1 and 2, are centered around the Gruetli Agricultural Union. They contain a member list and meeting minutes. The Agricultural Union Minute Book is in German.

The Gruetli Community Church materials, located in folder 3, are centered around the church records. They also contain information regarding the Gruetli Community Council and a few community meeting minutes. The Gruetli Community Church Records in this collection are English typescripts of the original German documents. (See microfilm accession number 1717 for the original Gruetli Community Church Records, which are written in German.)

The Gruetli Families materials, located in folders 4 through 9, are centered around various families of Gruetli including the Amstutz, Angst, Baggenstoss, Marugg, Schild, Olgiati, and Stampfli families. Three items of note are found in the Marugg-Schild Family folder. One item is a ribbon that was found in an old book in the attic of Mrs. Barbara (Marugg) Schild's home. The ribbon reads, "SCHWEIZER UNTERSTÜTZUNGS VEREIN GEGRÜNDET 1857 NASHVILLE, TENN." Translated to English the ribbon says, "Swiss Support Organization Founded 1857 Nashville, Tenn." Another item of note in the Marugg-Schild Family folder is a pamphlet, written by Martin Marugg, dated 1937, and titled *Reading German the Phonetic Way*. A third item of note in the Marugg-Schild Family folder is a genealogy of Luzia Sprecher. There is also an interesting item in the Stampfli Family folder. It is a report card belonging to Ernst Stampfli. The report card is written in German and is dated 1896-1908.

The Gruetli Statutes, located in folder 10, are the original colony statutes from 1900. They are written in German. Also contained in this folder is a typescript copy of the Gruetli Residents Index of 1898.

The newspaper clippings, located in folder 11, are centered around the history of Gruetli and give brief glimpses of the lives of some of the Gruetli colonists. Included in the newspaper clippings folder is a newspaper article written in Chinese.

The published works, located in folder 12, are a compilation of various magazine articles and books regarding Gruetli. Included in the published works folder is a book titled *Forgotten Colony* by David E. Clayton. It contains a complete history of Gruetli and has a plat map in the back of the book. The plat map lists the owners of the original tracts of land in the colony. Also contained in the published works folder is a cookbook from Henry Flury Staple and Fancy Groceries Old Country Store and Deli.

The Selmer Reinhart Neskaug thesis, located in folder 13, is centered around the history and agricultural aspects of Gruetli. The thesis is dated August 1936, and contains interesting information about some of the first settlers of the colony.

Boxes 2-4 of this collection contain original bound registers of money orders issued and received from the post office at Gruetli, Tennessee. One item of note is the Register of Swiss International Money Orders issued from the post office at Gruetli, Tennessee from October 1873-November 1874. Please note that the registers have been microfilmed and may be found on microfilm accession number 1717.

For additional documentation on the Gruetli Swiss Colony please see: microfilm number 303, *The German Swiss Settlement at Gruetli, Tennessee* by Frances Helen Jackson; accession number 1969.304, Sketches of Gruetli, Grundy County, Tennessee; and accession number 1974.42, Gruetli Swiss Cemetery. All previous items are contained in the holdings of the Tennessee State Library and Archives.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

### **Gruetli Swiss Colony**

During the 1860's, Switzerland was in the middle of an economic depression. The Swiss started looking for a new land where they could make a good living. In 1867, the Swiss Emigration Society dispatched Captain Eugene H. Plumacher to look for a settlement in the United States. The United States President at that time was a Tennessean, Andrew Johnson. President Johnson asked Captain Plumacher to consider finding a place in Tennessee for the new settlement. Captain Plumacher decided on Tennessee because the landscape reminded him of his homeland. Captain Plumacher asked Peter Staub, a Swiss manufacturer and later mayor of Knoxville, to purchase the land and then promote and sell the land to the Swiss. Staub sold the land at an average price of 50 cents an acre.

The Swiss began arriving in the area, which is now Gruetli, in early 1869. The Swiss endured terrible hardships and deplorable living conditions on the trip from Switzerland to the United States. When they reached their new homes they were sorely disappointed. They had expected to find green fields for farming but instead they found a forested wilderness. After discovering that their new home was not all that they had hoped for, some of the Swiss returned to Switzerland and some remained in the United States only to move further east in search of tamed land. But, the largest majority of the Swiss immigrants stayed in the Gruetli area and, through hard work, made it a home.

Source: Information in the biographical note was gleaned from various items within this collection.

## CONTAINER LIST

### **Box 1**

1. Gruetli Agricultural Union -- Member List and Minutes, 1872-1874, n.d.
2. Gruetli Agricultural Union -- Minute Book, 1873-1879
3. Gruetli Community Church Records, 1869-1968
4. Gruetli Families -- Amstutz Family -- Correspondence, 1997
5. Gruetli Families -- Angst-Baggenstoss Family, 1886-1981, n.d.
6. Gruetli Families -- Marugg-Schild Family, 1857-1999, n.d.
7. Gruetli Families -- Marugg-Schild Family -- Velma Schild Johnson, 1980-1996, n.d.
8. Gruetli Families -- Olgiati Family, 1976-1989
9. Gruetli Families -- Stampfli Family, 1896-1985, n.d.
10. Gruetli Statutes and Residents Index, 1898-1900
11. Newspaper Clippings, 1932-1996, n.d.
12. Published Works, 1936-1998
13. Thesis -- Selmer Reinhart Neskaug, 1936

### **Box 2**

Original bound register of money orders issued from the post office at Gruetli, Tennessee, July 1871-November 1898

### **Box 3**

Original bound register of money orders received at the post office at Gruetli, Tennessee, August 1871- March 1937

### **Box 4**

Original bound Register of Swiss International Money Orders issued from the post office at Gruetli, Tennessee, October 1873-November 1874