

Speech at the 100th Reunion 4. Juli 1916 in Fremont/Ohio

Dear members of the Hirt family

I bring you the greetings from Switzerland where your ancestors came from, Casper Hirt from Söll, Verena Vogt from Villingen. In the 16th century many Swiss persons were very poor and they hoped to find a better life in America. The first man from Villingen who arrived in 1835 was Abraham Baumann and at least in 1842 he bought a small farm in Riley Twp, which he enlarged in the following years. In 1848 the bad harvest in Switzerland was so strong, that the families suffered famine and many decided to follow Abraham Baumann, so the Kistlers, the House and Casper Hirt. Casper worked as a landlaborer, a suppo ee on the land of Abraham Baumann, who was a very hard boss and greedy for money, so Casper followed the goldrush, first to California, then to Australia.

In 1854 he came back to Switzerland and he saw the distress. He reported of the life in America and so more than thirty persons of Söll, Villingen and surrounds decided to emigrate. They thought it would be easier to travel with Casper Hirt over the atlantic ocean because he knew the american way of life and especially the foreign language.

A part of them bought land in the Black Swamp in Riley and Bellville Twp., so it was a hard work to clear the wild forest in order to get virgin and very fertile soil. The industrious ones were successful and enlarged their land. Other ones were satisfied with a small farm. So Casper Hirt bought at the beginning 80 acres and at the end he owned 350 acres.

A different part of the immigrants were craftsmen in Fremont, so the butchers Baumann, the bakers Vogt, the painters Fusterwald and Miller, the cabinetmaker Baumann, the shoemaker Fischer and the innkeeper Keller.

Most immigrants integrated themselves. They learnt the English language, they visited the reformed church, they married American or German wives. In later times

they forgot to speak German. Most of the immigrants became American Citizens, they were members of the democratic party and active in politics. Some of them made military service, some ones in the Civil war.

So the immigrants from St. Gall became Americans. But they didn't forget the European country where their ancestors immigrated from. Conbary Swiss people is interested in the fates of his emigrants to America. I had the possibility to stay as a guest in the house of Marsha and Bruce Hirt and made research about the immigrants from Switzerland to Sandusky County. At Hayes Library and in the Courthouse I searched information about the life of immigrants, I looked for pictures and finally I wrote this book with the title 'I live simply, but happily', that an immigrant told in a letter for his family. The book is written in German language; but I brought one to this reunion and you may at least look the pictures.

I wish to the whole Hirt family all the best, especially that this onehundredth reunion will be repeated until the twohundredth in the year 2116.

Max Baumann, St. Gall, Switzerland