

Another interesting story was uncovered from the Monroe Evening Times of 1915. This story began in New Glarus in 1881 and is almost unbelievable. The main subject of the story is Fabian Strieff, who was living in New Glarus township with his father, Fabian, and younger siblings, Barbara and Christian, in 1880.

Fabian Streiff, who was employed by Oswald Freitag, left home one Sunday morning in August 1881 and entered the woods near New Glarus to hunt wolves, which were numerous in the county at that time. He was a "lover of hunting and one of the most successful of those going after wolves." When he didn't return, search parties scoured the entire surrounding countryside and found nothing. His relatives never heard from him again, so they accepted the fact that he had met with an accident and been eaten by wolves.

Imagine how surprised the family was in 1915 when the postmaster in New Glarus told them that he had received a letter, more than three decades later, that Fabian Streiff was still living. He would have been about 64 years of age and was in the Whiteside County Farm home in Morrison, Illinois. The letter, which contained the names of some of Streiff's relatives, was written by a kind farmer named William Kennedy, who resided between Stockton and Elizabeth.

Fabian's cousin Peter Streiff answered the letter. Other relatives Fred A. Streiff and Alfred Strieff, of New Glarus, and Christ Streiff and Jacob Figi, of Monticello, went to Stockton, Illinois on Wednesday, November 17. They were successful in finding farmer Kennedy, who had written the letter for Fabian. Kennedy's wish that the letter would make it to the relatives in the New Glarus area was granted. The farmer had also made sure that Fabian was being taken care of in the county farm in Albany, Illinois until the family arrived.

Fred and Alfred Streiff returned to New Glarus while the other two men continued on to Morrison and Albany, Illinois to complete the identification of the man and assure "themselves he is a former resident of New Glarus, a fact of which there seems to be little doubt."

While living in Illinois, Fabian went by the name of Casper "Cappy" Snyder and worked for a farmer near Morrison named Henry Reedy. After Streiff had aged and become somewhat infirm, Reedy let him go. Streiff did the best he could to survive for about a year after that when he decided to walk back to his old home (New Glarus). He got as far as Elizabeth, about 60 miles, when he became too weak to continue on. It was here that he met Mr. Kennedy who wrote the letter and made sure that he would be safe.

In speaking to a reporter after his return to New Glarus, Streiff stated that he was glad to return to his old home. The journey from New Glarus to Morrison 34 years earlier was made on foot and the trip back home was made in a large touring car. "Somewhat infirm, the wanderer was nevertheless alert and cheerful and contemplated with pleasure the return to his kindred."

After Streiff returned home his relatives, Fred Streiff and Jacob Figi, both prominent men in Green County, did some investigating. It was determined that he had worked all those years for no pay. The relatives "brought the matter to the attention of the Whiteside County courts and Judge W. A. Blodgett appointed T. J. Lahey, Fulton, Illinois as conservator for Fabian Streiff."

Attorneys McMahon and Rogers were then employed by Lahey as conservator, "on the showing that Streiff was feeble minded" and a suit was brought against Henry Reedy for \$25,000 for the wages due Streiff for his long service, as well as for the interest on that money. During the time that Streiff

# \$25,000 IN WAGES ASKED BY LOCAL RIP VAN WINKLE

SUIT FILED AGAINST ILLINOIS  
FARMER NEW GLARUS MAN  
SERVED FOR 34 YEARS.

## STORY STRANGER THAN FICTION

This headline from the December 7, 1915 issue of the Monroe Evening Times is a tease about Fabian Streiff's disappearance from New Glarus in 1881.

worked for Reedy, Streiff “received only his board and sufficient clothing to cover his nakedness.” The census records showed that he was also given a room in the farmer’s home.

The Monroe Evening Times reported on April 26, 1916 that the case had been settled out of court with Streiff receiving \$3,625 for more than 30 years of work.

Census records showed that he was living with the Reedy family, Henry and Lena and their five children in 1900, and then Henry, Lena, and their youngest daughter, Bessie, in 1910. As reported in the newspapers his name then was given as Casper Snyder. Henry Reeder was about ten years older than Streiff.

Fabian’s obituary, from the Wisconsin State Journal of June 19, 1934, gave a bit more information. He passed away at the Green County Farm at the age of 82. After returning from Illinois, he lived with Fred B. and Peter Streiff for 15 years. His brother, Christian, of Monticello, was the only survivor listed.

It was never explained how he ended up getting that far from home, about 50 miles northeast of Davenport, Iowa, except that he walked there. Nor was an explanation given for why he used a different name. According to the newspaper, Streiff was unable to read or write, which could be why he did not communicate with his relatives at all during this time. However, the census said that he could read and write. It seems that he could have had someone let his family know that he was all right, but that obviously never happened. As with so many things in the past, we will never have answers for all of our questions.