

MEINRAD AUF DER MAUR

1892 -1918



The story of
Meinrad Auf der Maur from Ried/Schwyz
born on September 16th, 1892
killed in action in the First World War in France, on June 9th, 1918

researched & written by Josef Auf der Maur
Lucerne / Switzerland, June 2016

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To all those who want to know more about
Meinrad Auf der Maur who was born
in Ried / Schwyz on September 16th, 1892
and was killed during the First World War
in France on June 9th, 1918.

It was 104 years ago (!) that a well-built young man with one or two suitcases made his way from Ried to Seewen railway station. His name: Meinrad Auf der Maur from Ried / Schwyz. He had a long journey ahead of him, first of all to Le Havre in France. From there it continued for six days over the "great pond", as people said then and long afterwards when someone went to America. No one could know then that he would be brought back dead to the cemetery in Schwyz only six years later.

My father, a brother from Meinrad, told us sometimes that his brother and our uncle was killed in the First World War. We never learnt more and we asked no questions. But I remained curious about it as I simply could not understand why my Uncle Meinrad went from America to France and lost his life in the war.

I told what little I knew about the story from time to time. Almost always I heard the same, "Write it down," because everyone else knew even less than I did. My wife also had the wish that I record it for our sons and both our grandchildren.

Uncle Josef Maria from Ried, a brother from Meinrad, knew more and told me about it long ago. About two years ago I began to ask for more information, from our relatives in America as well. I thought it would make a short, simple story!

But it developed ever more into a bigger one. Many answers led to new questions and where should I find answers to them? Letters went to various authorities, mostly without success. I spent hours in the reading rooms of the Swiss National Library and at the Ministry of Defence, again with little success. But there were helpful people there who directed me to unknown addresses in Internet where I could find out a bit more. I wanted to find whether or not Meinrad became an American citizen and if so, when. For a long time I found nothing. More about that in "his story".

I came to the end of my abilities using Internet. My youngest son, Andreas, took this over more and more. At first without success, he couldn't find anything. The great break-through came about a month ago. He found all kinds of things - documents about a hundred years old, some signed by Meinrad! There were also several photographs. A big find for me via Internet was the name "Cantigny" in France, the area where Meinrad died in action. Meinrad began to live!

With time, a bigger, when tragic, story began to develop. Life doesn't always write kind stories. With my story you can travel in your thoughts part of the way with Meinrad in the endless expanse and beauty of his new homeland, and feel his feelings, happiness and doubts, but also the hard last days, so near to his old home.

In this sense, greetings from: *Josef Auf der Maur, Lucerne*

The tragic story of Meinrad Auf der Maur from Ried/Schwyz, who was born on September 16th, 1892 and killed in action in the First World War in Cantigny, France on July 9th 1918 / 438 D in Auf der Maur-Book

Meinrad grew up on a beautifully situated smallholding below the chapel in Ried above Schwyz together with two sisters, Anna Maria born 1894 and Johanna Maria, born 1894, as well as three brothers, Johann Joseph Franz, born 1891, Josef Melchior, born 1893 (my father) and Josef Maria Karl born 1898. Their parents were Johann Josef Auf der Maur, born 1864 (438 D) in Ried / Schwyz, who died already in 1902 and Anna Nauer, born 1867 from Kaltbach / SZ .

The economic situation in Switzerland was far from rosy already for some years before the First World War. Unemployment was a sad daily reality for many. As a result, thousands of people, mostly young, left Switzerland every year. They searched for their fortune in a new, distant and unknown world as they had no other possibilities. America was the dream destination for many. They took their wishes and hopes with them on the long journey. Many found their fortune, but for others it was denied to them even there. Many of them were entirely on their own in their new home, very often without the least knowledge of the language of the land. They must certainly have been lonely.

Meinrad decided at the age of twenty to migrate, no doubt for economic reasons. In February 1912 he booked a passage with the "Zwischenbart" Agency on board the ship "Caroline" from Le Havre to New York which cost 535 Francs! (photocopy) That was a great deal of money in those days. From there he went, probably by train, to the area of Modesto, east of San Francisco in California. Nothing is known of his activity there but as there were many farms in those days in that area, it could be that he worked as a milker, like many others. The Swiss were very popular for that work. How did he get on in the vastness of his new home? Did it become home for him? What happened to the wishes and hopes that he brought with him into the new land? These are questions that only Meinrad could answer. Did he write of his experiences with enthusiasm or could one read of quiet disappointments? It certainly could not have been easy for him.

Either at the end of 1915 or the beginning of 1916, Meinrad had the chance to apply for American citizenship, which he did straight away. **He applied on February 4th 1916 (photocopy).** At that time Meinrad lived in San Francisco at 61, California Street, Market District (photocopy). He gave his occupation as "dairyman" (For those interested in more details, according to official records, Meinrad was 1.73 metres tall, weighed 80.7 kilos and had light brown eyes. Yet on June 5th 1917, his eyes were officially stated to be blue! So quickly can the colour change!).

His brother Johann who migrated to Nevada in the USA a year later, also received an offer to apply for citizenship, but hesitated to follow it. In a letter written on March 23th 1918 to a cousin, also named Meinrad, in Schwyz (454 D), Johann wrote that **Meinrad was already a soldier.** He also wrote that he had only met Meinrad twice in America - the first time when he arrived there and the second of in the Spring of 1914. "The train journey from Lovelock to San Francisco takes 16 hours and money for the train fare is very short." Johann also lived at first for about two years in Modesto but was of the opinion that the climate in higher Lovelock was better and as there were fewer Swiss people there than in Modesto, he learnt English much quicker! Johann would have liked Meinrad to join him in Lovelock and wrote to him about it several times, but he never managed to persuade him. It could well be that Meinrad wanted to lead his own life. His courage to make the long journey at 20 into the unknown says a lot about him.

From an unknown date, Meinrad lived in Pleasanton which is also in the San Francisco area, "Alameda County". He worked there on a dairy farm belonging to a Swiss couple, Felix and Mary Fuchs. On June 5th 1917, Meinrad **signed a document in Pleasanton to join the US Army** (photocopy). Presumably he stayed with Felix Fuchs until he entered the recruit school. (Incidentally, Felix Fuchs died aged only 52 exactly 10 days after Meinrad died in action in France.)

Some historical dates:

- 28th July 1914; The First World War broke out.
- 6th April 1917; America declared war against Germany.
- May 1917; Compulsory military service for all men between the ages of 21 and 30.
- 26th June 1917; The first quota of American soldiers arrived in France.
- By the first half of 1918 there were almost a million American soldiers stationed in France!
- 11th November 1918; An Armistice was signed. The war ended four days later.

(It was everywhere written and loudly proclaimed, "Never again war" yet only 21 years later it was again so far, the Second World War began on 1st September 1939!)

In September 1915 Meinrad began a six-month recruit school. Probably there was some "gentle persuasion" by the American Government which expected that new citizens, or those wishing to become citizens, should be prepared to do military service for the USA. That meant to be prepared to fight in Europe. Patriotism was always important in the USA and in those days obviously misused in some cases.

With time the Swiss Government felt this was going too far as it involved quite many young Swiss men. They negotiated with the Americans and protested that young Swiss men (and others) were hardly in America when they were forced in this way to do military service and partake in military action in Europe. **The negotiations were successful and the Americans stopped this method.** But it was clearly too late for Meinrad. He completed the training, almost certainly in Pleasanton as there has long been a military base there.

Probably at the beginning of 1918, not long after completing his training, Meinrad was shipped with a large quota of troops to Europe. Their destination was Saint-Nazaire in France. From there they went to the war zone in northern France. It is not known when Meinrad arrived. At first the new arrivals were under the command of French units in order to gain experience at the front with minor actions. Later they returned to their own American units. They took part in fighting actions independently from the French or English. In that way Meinrad was caught up, like thousands of others, not of his own free will, as a small wheel in the great wheel of the war history of 1914/1918 with such tragic loss of lives. But there was a bit of hope for him and his relations in Ried / Schwyz. According to a report in the "Schwyzer Zeitung" from August 14th 1918, the Swiss government made an appeal to release Meinrad from military service in France. They wrote:

"The Government did their utmost to release Meinrad Aufdermaur from his military service in France." All was in vain, even though they managed to release some other Swiss soldiers. It just wasn't meant to be."

With that Meinrad remained part of the great wheel of the war history. Fate took its bitter course. Was it "fate" or was it "predestined" ? With such a great "detour" ??

It is known that Meinrad's unit took part in 1918 in the first big offensive in France of the Americans against the Germans in the area of the small village of Cantigny. His unit, the 26th Infantry Regiment, was deployed to strengthen a weak point on the American attack front. The Cantigny area was a very important one for the Germans, a sort of observation post, and was accordingly well built out with cellars,

bunkers and tunnels. **The battle continued from the 27th until the 31st May 1918.** The Americans recaptured Cantigny and forced the Germans to retreat from the front. The village was lost under the rubble of that horrible war. (It stands today, small and peaceful with about a hundred residents.) **Meinrad experienced it all.**

An **American** report states that there were over a **thousand wounded and 199 killed** while a **different** report from Cantigny stated that "**2,000 American soldiers were killed in the five days of heavy fighting**". Which number is more realistic? As it happens, Meinrad did not belong to those statistics. **But he died only 9 days later at the age of 26 on the morning of June 9th 1918 in a battle near Cantigny.** Seven other soldiers / sergeants from his unit also died. (There is a monument south-east from Cantigny where the names of all the soldiers of the 1st Division who died in action in battle are engraved on five bronze panels. Meinrad's name must be amongst them.)

From short Code Words of the American army it is known that Meinrad died immediately. His fate was unchangeable, but at least he died without long suffering. How often must Meinrad have thought with nostalgia about his old homeland and the familiar home of his younger years? He was so near to home in France, but it was beyond his reach. His life began in little-known Ried above Schwyz, far from the big world and ended in the middle of the terrible noise of war of the biggest nation near the small, peaceful and almost forgotten village of Cantigny. **But war doesn't make a detour because of a small, peaceful village.**

During this time, his brother Johann (Lovelock, Nevada) and Meinrad often wrote to one another. Johann wrote that later in a letter to relatives. Johann sent cigarettes and tobacco to the front "which were always very welcome." Unfortunately, there is no further information about these letters. Johann received the last letter from Meinrad in the middle of June by which time Meinrad was already dead. Johann received the news of Meinrad's death only a month later through a telegram sent on the 10th July from the American authorities with the remark "**The news had been kept back for military reasons**" (!?)

The date of death on the memorial picture is July **8th 1918** - which cannot be correct. Johann wrote it was **June 9th 1918** in his letter to his cousin, Meinrad. This date is also on the official document of his unit, signed by the Division Commander, Summerall. It is also mentioned in the list of those who died in action in the newspaper, "The Sacramento Union", from July 8th 1918 that "**Private Meinrad Aufdermaur from Pleasanton was killed in action in France on June 9th 1918.**" This date was also written in nine newspapers in eight other American States.

Meinrad was brought back to Switzerland in a zinc coffin by American military personell and changed there to a normal one and buried. So he came back to his familiar home six years after leaving Ried / Schwyz. How many of his dreams and hopes were buried with him? It must have been a profound experience for the people of Schwyz. **Local newspapers must have surely reported about the large number of people who attended the funeral, but amazingly, nothing has been found about it in the two local papers, the "Schwyzer Zeitung" and "Bote der Urschweiz" and also no death notice.** The same applies to research done in the State Archives of Canton Schwyz. Nothing has been found in the death register of the parish of Schwyz **about the day of burial of Meinrad!**

Only a thanksgiving notice from 10th September 1918 appeared in both newspapers - without mention of a burial date. The family thanked all those "**who took part in the death prayers in Ried Chapel and in the church memorial service**". According to the "Auf der Maur-book" the memorial service took place on September 7th 1918. Under the date of August 21th 1918 with the title "**Church activities of the Parish Schwyz**" in the week 2nd to 7th of September, several Masses, Memorial Services etc. are mentioned. **At the end it mentions "the death prayers for Youngling Meinrad Auf der Maur, killed in action."** Nothing could be found in searches in the Swiss National Library in Berne about those days and afterwards until December 31th 1918 in both local papers.

Absolutely nothing could be found!

With so much "secrecy", comes slowly but surely the suspicion that Meinrad's funeral took place **"very quietly only with the immediate family"**, under pressure from the American Military Authorities. If so, was this probably **because of the already mentioned "military reasons"**? Also we have learnt nothing more from relatives and friends. Nobody knows anything further about this rather unusual story. **Or do members of the family wish it to be so? That can hardly be the case because of the traditional family values of those times.**

In order to find out more about Meinrad and his belonging to the US Army, research was also done, either in person or by Internet, at the military authorities in Bern. But this was without success. In a personal research at the Swiss Ministry of Defence in Bern, **all the information relating to 1917 / 1918 was thoroughly researched under the title "Swiss in the service of the USA during the First World War."** It was mainly about the American laws regarding the calling up of new citizens for military purposes. In the foreground was their deployment in France. There were many handwritten requests from parents and relatives to the American Military Authorities to release their son or brother from military service in France. A lot of suffering, doubt, despair and need was expressed, but also hope. Many requests were made from local communities and Cantons. There was nothing to be found about Meinrad even though the authorities of Canton Schwyz made a request for him to be released.

That is the tragic story of Meinrad Auf der Maur from Ried/Schwyz who emigrated at the age of 20 to far away America, full of hope and dreams of a better life. He was brought back home, a deceased soldier, only six years later. Meinrad took the risk to fulfil his dreams and that in a foreign land. But luck was not on his side, he paid a high price for his dream.

Meinrad was one of over 116'000 American soldiers who lost their lives in a few months of what was called the "European War". (Altogether there were millions.)

A further story connected to Meinrad as largely told to me long ago by Karl Auf der Maur from Ried/Schwyz, 732 D.

As is known, Meinrad was brought back to Schwyz by an American military delegation in a zinc coffin. The zinc coffin was inside a wooden crate that was secured with metal bands. Meinrad's full name and military classification with dates were imprinted on these bands. The zinc coffin returned to France with the military delegation. The wooden crate remained in Ried and the bands were removed and kept. The crate found good use for decades in the cow shed, dry fodder for the cattle was kept in it. Josef Auf der Maur, 1961, Ried / Schwyz remembers it well and still has the metal bands.

Not long after the funeral of Meinrad, a rumour began in Schwyz that remained for a long time. It was not at all sure that Meinrad really was in that coffin. America had thousands of dead soldiers so they had possibly, out of shortage of time, taken any soldier and laid him in the coffin and then secured it with metal bands and with the name and military classification.

This rumour that just any soldier and not Meinrad lay in the coffin troubled his brother, Josef Maria Karl Alois, (551 D), very much. (The brother of my father, Melchior, 535 D) "He would find that out one day so that everyone would know". He knew it was just a question of time. And so it came about. Shortly before Meinrad's grave was given up (after 16 years in those days), Josef Maria asked the grave-digger from Schwyz to let him know when he would be clearing the grave as he wanted to be there. He was interested, above all, to see the skull. Josef Maria had a good look at the skull when it was dug out and **it was indeed from his brother, Meinrad!**

His proof: Josef Maria knew that already in his youth, Meinrad had some teeth extracted and replaced with gold teeth, as was usual then, and he also knew exactly which ones they were. **Everything was exactly as he remembered.** He pulled the gold teeth (and several others, see picture) out with pincers and placed them in a glass container he had brought with him. They were carefully kept in Ried along with the metal bands. Whenever relatives came to visit from America in later years, Josef Maria proudly showed them **Meinrad's gold teeth and naturally the engraved metal bands from the crate as well.** That must have been a special and strange feeling for all as, after all, Meinrad was one of them.

Unfortunately there are no exact dates to be found amongst the available documents. It was only found out, after much questioning, just before completing this document whether Meinrad became an American citizen or not. More about that on a separate page. Further questions became irrelevant at the last minute. But when did he go to France and who demanded that his body be returned to Switzerland? Was it the wish of his family or did the American army arrange it? The different date of July 8th 1918 as the date of his death on the memorial picture could be connected with when the news of Meinrad's death was received by his relatives in Ried/Schwyz. It seems fairly sure that, as with his brother Johann in Lovelock/Nevada, the news of his death was very much delayed and **held back "for military reasons."** There was a report in the Schwyzer newspaper on the August 14th 1918 that **"The political department in Bern has informed the Schwyzer government that Meinrad Aufdermaur from Hagen - Schwyz died in action on the West Front in the service of the American troops."** That was all.

Even in that report, there was no date given. In all documents researched there is no specification as to when the relatives in Ried were officially informed of Meinrad's death. It can only be presumed it was **on July 8th 1918.** This date was apparently taken as the day of his death and so written on the mourning card. (Correct would be **June 9th 1918** as already mentioned.) His brother Johann in Lovelock received that date two days later on July 10th 1918 officially from the authorities in Washington.

It is possible that for some this report brings a lot that is unknown about Meinrad. Sadly there are still many question marks. But who knows, perhaps a general interest in Meinrad's story has been awakened and **possibly something forgotten comes forward and thereby some question marks can be replaced by good answers.** That might mean that perhaps a postscript can be added to Meinrad's story. **That would be great!**

Understandably, I was interested to find out exactly where "Cantigny" lies. I couldn't find it in a detailed Atlas, but in Internet under the heading "Cantigny 1918".

There was so much information there! Military reports, facts and numbers, photographs etc. in an unbelievable amount. Here and there somewhat contradictory. **Hell must have been let loose** in the area in and around Cantigny, especially from the end of May, 1918. A lovely, small, unknown village with an unwanted and very tragic story. It was brutally overrun by the war like many other places. **Meinrad must have experienced all that very closely in his short, but hard time at the Front. He must have seen a great deal of suffering and misery.**

*His life and his dreams were cut short in a brief moment
at the age of only 26 in this area.*

To this unavoidably hard end to the story of Meinrad,
the thoughts of an unknown, sensitive person:

"The sun can reflect even in a teardrop!"

A tough nut; Date of naturalization / was Meinrad a U.S. citizen or not?

The search for a possible date when Meinrad became an American citizen meant several letters and almost a flood of Emails. These were sent amongst other places to the American Consulate in Bern and to the Ministry of Defence, also in Bern. **Nobody could answer our questions** but they were all very helpful and gave us Email addresses **where we might find more information**. Unfortunately, without success, it looked like a hopeless situation. In spite of that, Andreas continued persistently with his intensive search from our side without result - **almost until the last moment!**

Then came an unexpected turn in the matter.

4th June 2016; Andreas sent an Email with the usual questions to the city council of Pleasanton, Alameda County. This was where Meinrad had lived for a short period of his time in America.

On the same day a reply came already from Mrs Ellen Holmgren. She gave the advice to try the "Museum on Main" in Pleasanton as they could have the information wanted.

9th June 2016; a request made to the "Museum on Main" in Pleasanton.

9th June 2016; A reply from Mr Ken MacLennan, the curator of Pleasanton Museum. He found a directory in which Meinrad Aufdermaur, and many others who had applied for American citizenship were listed. The information was unfortunately without any dates. **(Mr Ken MacLennan was the first person to give us any concrete information!)** After giving in a Declaration of Intent to apply for American citizenship, the person making the request has to wait three years before making an official request for possible citizenship. He suspected that according to the dates we gave him, Meinrad was never officially granted American citizenship. To clear up this question, Mr Ken MacLennan gave us the address of **"The National Archive" in San Bruno.**

10th June 2016; A request to "The National Archive" in San Bruno. An answer on the same day. Carol Wilson from the Archive gave us a standard answer "that no Emails are sent out, one can only apply to search through files at the place." (!)

11th June 2016; We answered that we were not from California, that we live in Switzerland. Upon learning this, Carol Wilson requested more information from us. We had nothing more to add, she already had everything. Four days of "silence" followed. **Then we experienced a day of joy!**

15th June 2016; Mr John Seamans from "The National Archive" in San Bruno informed us that the requested documents about Meinrad Aufdermaur had been found. He kindly made a copy of Meinrad's request for citizenship and sent it to us in an Email. (in the added notes) His answer reads: **"I have studied the information you sent and read through our information. I found Meinrad's Declaration of Intent to apply for American citizenship which was signed on February 4th 1916. The applicant then has to wait three years before officially applying for citizenship. Unfortunately, it appears that Meinrad died in action before he could do this. I enclose a photo of Meinrad's Declaration of Intent for your use". Greetings, John Seamans.** - Thank you, Mr John Seamans!

The persistent searching by Andreas that went on for weeks clearly paid off!

So Meinrad never became a citizen of the USA and therefore was half Swiss and half American when he took part in the war in France. **He would have become an American citizen at the beginning of February, 1919!** We would have wished him that. He would surely have been accepted with his military service for America as that gave him a high status. It appears that Meinrad was indeed treated like a US citizen after his death on the west front in France. **He certainly deserved that.**

In the documents listing those who died in action, it is written that he was a **US Citizen!** (Forced or voluntarily in the army ? **I choose the second one!**)

Chronology of the various dates about Meinrad Auf der Maur, 4th July 2016, Josef Auf der Maur, Lucerne

- 16th September 1892:** Birth of Meinrad in Ried / Schwyz
- January/February 1912:** Meinrad applied in Schwyz at the age of 20 to migrate to the USA.
His destination: San Francisco / Modesto, California.
- February 1912:** Meinrad booked with the "Zwilchenbart Agency" to sail aboard the "Caroline" to New York.
- 4th February 1916:** Meinrad signed a "**Declaration of Intent**" to become an American citizen.
- May 1917:** America introduced compulsory military service for all 21- 30 year old men.
- 5th June 1917:** Meinrad signed up in Pleasanton to join the US Army.
- Autumn 1917:** Meinrad received the order to report for a six month recruit school, probably at the Pleasanton military basis.
- Early 1918:** Meinrad was one of a thousands other soldiers sent to the Front in France.
- Spring 1918:** The Canton Schwyz authorities tried in vain via Bern to release Meinrad from the war. Local newspaper "Schwyzer Zeitung", August 14th 1918.
- 27th - 31st May 1918:** Meinrad took part in the biggest offensive against the Germans in the area around Cantigny. According to a report from Cantigny, 2'000 lives were lost. The Americans claimed 199 soldiers died and over 1'000 were injured. (What is true?) Meinrad survived it all.
- 9th June 1918:** **Meinrad lost his life in a battle near Cantigny at the age of 26.**
- 19th June 1918:** His former Swiss employer, Xaver Fuchs, Pleasanton died only ten days after Meinrad at the age of 52!
- 8th July 1918:** In the newspaper, "The Sacramento Union"/California, it was stated in a list of those soldiers who lost their lives, "**that private Meinrad Aufdermaur from Pleasanton was killed in France on the 9th June 1918.**" The same notice appeared in the newspapers of the States of Minnesota, Indiana, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Illinois, Arkansas and Utah.
- 8th July 1918:** This was most probably the date that the relatives in Ried received the official news of Meinrad's death. An obituary notice has not been found, it was not in any newspaper. On the memorial card for Meinrad, the date of death is given as June 9th 1918.
- 10th July 1918:** Johann in Lovelock received the news of his brother Meinrad's death by a telegram from the authorities in Washington. It held the remark:
"For military reasons we had to hold back the news"
(The same applied also for the relatives in Schwyz!)
- July / August 1918:** Meinrad's body was brought by a military delegation to Schwyz. The funeral took place soon after amidst only a small family group.
(No doubt "for military reasons"!)
- 21st August 1918:** In the local newspaper "Schwyzer Zeitung" mention was made of a "Service for Meinrad Auf der Maur from Ried who was killed in the war."

7th September 1918: Memorial service in Schwyz, the "Auf der Maur-Book" (from Franz Auf der Maur)

10th September 1918: A notice in the newspaper "Schwyzer Zeitung": "...thanking all those who took part in the prayers for the dead in the chapel in Ried and in the memorial service in church."

**30th March &
1th April 2016:**

Research in the "Swiss National Library", Bern - without success.

26th April 2016:

Search through the deaths register in the Schwyz parish; nothing found. No entry about Meinrad's funeral or any other information.

11th May 2016:

Research of documents for 1917 / 1918 at the "Swiss Ministry of Defence" in Bern, without success. (**) The theme of the search was "Swiss in the service of the USA in the First World War." (File: E2001A#1000/45#1841*)

31th May 2016:

Unfortunately there is as yet no further information about the possible naturalization of Meinrad in the USA. All possible sources in Internet have been searched. Letters sent to the American Consulate in Bern, the "Swiss Department for Foreign Affairs" and the "Swiss Ministry of Defence" in Bern. None of them could help us further but gave us new Internet sources that might be helpful, but nothing could be found to date.

9th June 2016:

Finally, a first trail as a result of an enquiry to the city administration in Pleasanton. A reply the same day informed us that the "Museum on Main" in Pleasanton was responsible for such information. An answer from Ken MacLennan: "A Declaration of Intent was on hand, but without date." His suggestion: Apply for more information in "**The National Archive**" in San Bruno.

15th June 2016:

An answer from John Seamans:
The document of Meinrad's "Declaration of Intent" had been found, signed on February 4th 1916 in San Francisco. He sent us a copy of it! **Naturalization was never completed**, there was a three year deadline from the date of signature. **His official naturalization would have been valid from February 1919 and Meinrad would have been duly proud to become an American citizen!**

For us from now on:

"Breathe in, sit back, work completed at last!"

Josef Auf der Maur, Lucerne & Andreas Auf der Maur, Zurich

Meinrad Aufdermaur

1892 -1918



The memorial picture-card "In pious memorian of Youngling Meinrad Aufdermaur...".



The metal band with Meinrad's imprinted name, military classification and date, from the zinc coffin with them his body was brought back to Switzerland - Schwyz. The glass container with Meinrad's gold teeth.

picture: Josef Auf der Maur 920 D, from Ried/Schwyz

Ueberseeische Auswanderung im Jahr 19 12

Agentur: Zwischenbart Nr. der Kontrolle: 452

Monat der Abreise aus der Schweiz: februar

Dampfer: Caroline

Einschiffungshafen: Le Havre

Ausschiffungshafen: New York

Bestimmungsort: San Francisco Cal

Passagepreis: Fr. 535.-

Persönliche Bezeichnung des Auswanderers:

Name und Vorname: Andersmann Menrad

Geschlecht: Männlich — weiblich

Heimat-gemeinde | Schumpf | Kant. | Schumpf
 (Land) | | |
 Wohn-gemeinde | | | Kant. |

Civilstand: Ledig — verheiratet — verwitwet — geschieden.

Hat dieser Auswanderer eigenen Beruf oder Erwerb? Ja — Nein.

Beruf oder Erwerb des Auswanderers | Formen |
 oder seines Ernährers | |

Geburtsjahr: 18 92

Certification of the “Oversea-Emigration” dated on February 1912:
 Ship-Passage from Le Havre, France to New York with the Emigrate-Ship “Caroline”
 (for 535 Swiss Francs) and final destination - supposedly by train - San Francisco.



The steamship “Caroline” from the french “Compagnie Générale Transatlantique”
 was in service for the passage “Le Havre, France - New York” since 1908.

22015

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
NATURALIZATION SERVICE

415 9

ORIGINAL

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

DECLARATION OF INTENTION

(valid for all purposes seven years after the date hereof)

Northern District of California,
City and County of San Francisco, } ss:

In the District Court of the United States

I, Meinrad Aufdermaur, aged 23 years,
occupation Seaman, do declare on oath that my personal
description is: Color white, complexion fair, height 5 feet 8 inches,
weight 171 pounds, color of hair dark brown, color of eyes hazel
other visible distinctive marks none

I was born in Schyz, Switzerland
on the 16th day of September, anno Domini 1892; I now reside
at 641 California St. SAN FRANCISCO, California.

I emigrated to the United States of America from Marseilles, France
on the vessel "Laurin"; my last
foreign residence was Schyz, Switzerland

I am not married.
It is my bona fide intention to renounce forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign
prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, and particularly to

The Swiss Confederation, of whom I am now a subject;

I arrived at the port of New York, in the
State of New York, on or about the 11th day
of March, anno Domini 1912; I am not an anarchist; I am not a

polygamist nor a believer in the practice of polygamy; and it is my intention in good faith
to become a citizen of the United States of America and to permanently reside therein:

SO HELP ME GOD.

Meinrad Aufdermaur
(Original signature of declarant.)

Subscribed and sworn to before me at San Francisco, Cal., this
4th day of February, anno Domini 1916.

[SEAL.]

W. B. MALING,
Clerk of the United States District Court.

By W. Colbreath, Deputy Clerk.

"Declaration of Intention - N° 22015", Meinrad applied on February 4th, 1916 of the "U.S. Department of Labor - Naturalization Service - Northern District Court of California", San Francisco.

Form 1 **391** REGISTRATION CARD **326** No. _____

X Name in full Meinrad Aufdermaur Age, in yrs. 19
(Given name) (Family name)

2 Address Pleasanton California
(No.) (Street) (City) (State)

3 Date of birth September 16, 1898
(Month) (Day) (Year)

4 Are you (1) a natural-born citizen, (2) a naturalized citizen, (3) an alien, (4) or have you declared your intention (specify which)? declarant

5 Where were you born? Schvijs Canton Schvijs Switzerland
(Town) (State) (Nation)

6 If not a citizen, of what country are you a citizen or subject? Switzerland

7 What is your present trade, occupation, or office? mikler by trade

8 By whom employed? A. Fuchs 3
 Where employed? Pleasanton, Cal

9 Have you a father, mother, wife child under 12, or a sister or brother under 12, solely dependent on you for support (specify which)? no

10 Married or single (which)? Single Race (specify which)? caucasian
no

11 What military service have you had? Rank _____ branch _____
 years _____; Nation or State _____

12 Do you claim exemption from draft (specify grounds)? no

I affirm that I have verified above answers and that they are true.

Meinrad Aufdermaur
(Signature of registrant)

If person is of African descent, fill off this colour

REGISTRAR'S REPORT **4-1-2. A**

1 Tall, medium, or short (specify which)? medium Slender, medium, or stout (which)? medium

2 Color of eyes? blue Color of hair? brown Bald? no
no

3 Has person lost arm, leg, hand, foot, or both eyes, or is he otherwise disabled (specify)? _____

I certify that my answers are true, that the person registered has read his own answers, that I have witnessed his signature, and that all of his answers of which I have knowledge are true, except as follows:

A. M. Rodriguez
(Signature of registrar)

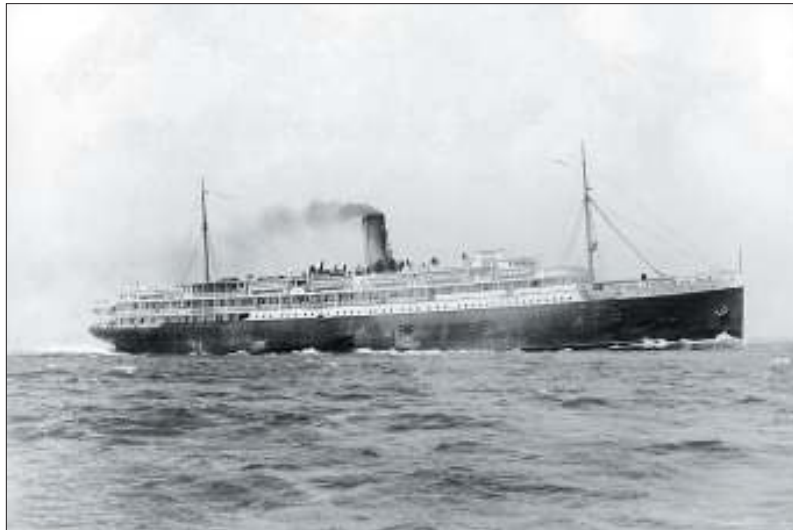
Precinct Pleasanton
 City or County Alameda Co.
 State California June 5, 1917
(Date of registration)

"Registration Card" of Meinrad Aufdermaur that he joined the U.S. Army on June 5th, 1917, issued in Pleasanton / Alameda County, California.

THE TWENTY-SIX INFANTRY IN FRANCE



Meinrad Auf der Maur entered in the First World War in France with the "26th Infantry-Regiment" in May, 1918.



The first troops of the "26th Infantry-Regiment" shipped overseas on June 13th, 1917 on board of the three military-transport ships "San Jacinto", "Momus" & the "S.S. Lenape" (picture) to Europe and landed in Saint Nazaire / France on June 27th, 1917.



Dugout while the war combat near Cantigny / France in May 1918.



Official document of the U.S. Army, dated January 1th, 1920, approved that "Meinrad Aufdermaur, Company "L", 26th Infantry Regiment, killed in action, June, 9th, 1918 near Cantigny / France."



The soldier cemetery near Cantigny / France.

Schwyz. (Eingef.) Der grausame Weltkrieg fordert unerbittlich Opfer, immer neue Opfer. So hat das politische Departement in Bern letzter Tage der Schwyzer Regierung mitgeteilt, daß Meinrad Aufdermaur vom Gagggen-Schwyz im Dienste der amerikanischen Truppen an der Westfront gefallen sei.

Mrd. Aufdermaur, geb. 1892, war der zweitälteste Sohn des Joh. Aufdermaur sel. in Nied und ist im Frühjahr 1912 nach Amerika ausgewandert. Im Herbst 1917 wurde derselbe als neugemachter Amerikaner zum Militär aufgeboten und nach einer sechsmonatlichen Rekrutenschule mit amerikanischen Truppen nach Frankreich und seit circa Ende April an die Front geschickt, wo ihn nun der Tod ereilt hat. Wann und wo er gefallen, war noch nicht zu erfahren und wird auch kaum genau zu erfahren sein.

Diesen Frühling war unsere h. Regierung und das politische Departement in Bern in verdankenswerter Weise sehr tätig, um den Mrd. Aufdermaur aus dem Militär in Frankreich zu befreien. Alles war umsonst, während bei einzelnen andern Schweizern eine Dienstbefreiung glückte. Es hat nicht sollen sein! Der liebe gute Meireb, der in Amerika sein Glück suchen und das Militärleben in der Heimat fliehen wollte, mußte nun in diesem schrecklichen Weltkriege sein Leben einbüßen. Das ist ein trauriges Schicksal eines Schwyzerbürgers und so wird es nun hundertern und tausenden von Schweizern ergehen, die für den fremden herzlosen Staat Amerika Blut und Leben opfern müssen.

Gottes Frieden der Seele des lieben Mitbürgers!

Beten wir immer mehr und inniger um Abwendung der Schrecken des Krieges, auf daß unser engeres Heimatland hievort weiter verschont werde.

**A newspaper article from the newspaper "Schwyzer Zeitung" from August 14th 1918
reporting the death of Meinrad Auf der Maur**

"The terrible World War is causing relentless victims, ever new victims"

This is how the Political Department in Bern informed the government of Canton Schwyz that Meinrad Auf der Maur from Hagggen-Schwyz had been killed on the western front in France in the service of the American Army.

Meinrad Auf der Maur, born 1892, was the second eldest son of the late Johann Aufdermaur from Ried who emigrated to America early in 1912. As a new American citizen he was called up for military service in 1917. Following a six-month recruit school, he was shipped to France with American troops and about the end of April sent to the front where he was killed in action. At present it is not known where he died and it will hardly be possible to find out.

This Spring our Government and the Political Department in Bern tried their utmost to release Meinrad Aufdermaur from military service in France - all in vain, even though they were able to release other Swiss citizens from the American military service. It was simply not meant to be! Meinrad searched for his luck in America, thereby avoiding military service in his homeland, only to lose his life in the terrible World War. That is the terrible fate of a Swiss citizen and will happen to hundreds and thousands of Swiss who will offer their blood and lives for the foreign, heartless State of America.

May God grant peace and eternal rest to the soul of our beloved citizen.
Let us fervently pray to avoid the terror of war and that our home country will be spared.

Newspaper "Schwyzer Zeitung" N° 65 from August 14th, 1918

Pfarrei Schwyz. — Kirchliches

in der Woche vom 2. bis 7. September.

Sonntag den 1. Sept.: Frühmesse an Sonn- und Feiertagen um halb 6 Uhr; 1 Uhr Prozession vom Frauenkloster in die Pfarrkirche, daselbst Predigt und Rosenkranz; 3 Uhr Kongregationsversammlung des Kathol. Jungmännerbundes im Kapuzinerkloster; halb 7 Uhr abends Rosenkranz und Segen. **Montag:** Dreißigster d. Jggl. Martin Fnderbigin, Ibach: 1. Jahrzeit d. Laver Fnderbigin, Ibach. **Dienstag:** Stiftjahrzeit d. Bruhin **Mittwoch:** Stiftjahrzeit d. Statthalter Joachim Weber. Hl. Messen des Müttervereins für verstorbene Mitglieder. **Donnerstag:** Stiftjahrzeit d. Genobesa Marty-Appert. **Freitag (Monatsfreitag):** 6 Uhr Kommunionmesse mit Generalkommunion der Kinder der 4. und 5. Klasse; 1. Jahrzeit d. Witwe Josefa Reichmuth-Anderrüthi, Unterdorf. Halb 7 Uhr abends Herz-Jesu-Andacht. **Samstag:** Nachtun für Jggl. Meinrad Aufdermaur von Ried, im Krieg gefallen.

Daily newspaper "Schwyzer Zeitung" N° 70, from August 21th, 1918:
"Saturday: Praying in the church of Schwyz for Youngling Meinrad Aufdermaur from Ried / Schwyz, killed in action..."

Danksagung.

Für die vielen Beweise aufrichtiger Teilnahme beim Verluste unseres inniggeliebten unvergesslichen Sohnes, Bruders, Schwagers und Onkels

Jgl. Meinrad Aufdermaur

Ried

sprechen wir der hochw. Geistlichkeit, sowie allen Verwandten, Nachbarn und Bekannten den herzlichsten Dank aus. In besonderer Weise danken wir für das Totengebet in der Kapelle in Ried, für die vielen geistlichen Blumenspenden und für die Teilnahme beim kirchlichen Gedächtnis für den Verstorbenen, ebenso allen die mit Rat und Tat uns beigestanden.

Wir empfehlen den teuren Verstorbenen auch fernerhin Ihrem frommen Gebete und liebevollen Andenken.

Ried-Schwyz, den 10. September 1918.

Die tieftrauernden Hinterlassenen.

"Note of thanks" of the family & beleaved for Meinrad Aufdermaur from Ried / Schwyz, of September 10th, 1918.



The parents house of Meinrad Auf der Maur with the imposing “Mythen-Mountains”, where Meinrad spend his childhood and youth, still to leave at the age of 20 years to the foreign America...



San Francisco with the “California Street” / Marcet District, (picture dated 1912) where Meinrad lived when he arrived 1912, across New York, in San Francisco.

Two opposed worlds!
The homey Ried / Schwyz and the big town San Francisco with the first skyscrapers.

Sources of further information, copies of letters, photos, information from Internet:

Josef Auf der Maur, 920 D, Ried/ Schwyz

Andreas Auf der Maur, 725 D, Zollikerberg/ Zurich

(Finder of the document, "Emigration Certificate" and the passage, Le Havre - New York, with the name of the boat. Document of entry into the US army.

Name of the employer in Pleasanton, document of Meinrad's Declaration of Intent etc.)

Virginia Roos, 570 D, Lovelock/ Nevada, daughter of Johann Auf der Maur

Elizabeth O'Connor, 639 D, Nepean, Ontario, Canada

SNB Bern, newspaper: tips for further research by the "**Swiss Ministry of Defence**" about documents and further possibilities in internet.

"**The American Consulate**" and the "**Department of Foreign Affairs**" in Bern:
No information about citizenship, but suggestions for further search.

Ken MacLennan, Curator of the "Museum on Main", Pleasanton, California

John Seamans, "National Archive" San Bruno/ San Francisco, California
Special thanks to both for a final clarification about the citizenship process.

English translation: **Susan Räber-Wilkinson**, Lucerne

Title, closing page & photo pages: **Andreas Auf der Maur**, Zollikerberg/ Zurich

Thanks to everyone who promptly supplied me with important information and who researched in Internet for me. Without your help it would never have been possible to put together such a detailed story about Meinrad, in spite of missing dates.

Also Greti, my late wife, played a certain part so that Meinrad's story got written.

Whenever I told her what I knew about Meinrad, she always said:

"Write it down for our sons and grandchildren".

Her wish has fulfilled, and the circle to learn about Meinrad has widened.

She would be pleased about that.

A special thanks to my youngest son, Andreas.

He searched further in Internet after I got stuck and hunted persistently for new channels, partly with sensational success. In addition he made things easier for me in preparing the series of pictures in the appendix.

June 2016, *Josef Auf der Maur, Lucerne*

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