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Swiss Roots a site not filled with holes

By James M. Beidler
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So many Web sites are filled with all style and no substance that it's refreshing to find one that has some real meat to it.

Such is the case with Swiss Roots, which lives up to its name by offering a number of helpful aids for researching ancestors from the tiny landlocked European nation of Switzerland.

While it's somewhat obvious that the site was primarily conceived as a device to help market Switzerland for tourists, that fact does not detract from the fact that there is a lot of good information on this site.

For instance, visitors to the Web site can do a surname search of several databases.

One of the databases is a "revised" version of the online Ellis Island database (applicable to immigrants between the 1890s and 1920s) in which Swiss Roots has tried to correct misinterpretations of the original records made by the volunteers who created the database.

Another database is the invaluable Swiss Family Name Handbook, which links surnames to communities of citizenship.

In the primer to Swiss genealogy that the site provides, it's pointed out that the Swiss have citizenship on both the national and local level — with the local level of citizenship not necessarily determined by where the individual lives now, but by where the paternal ancestor lived.

There's also a facsimile of an early 20th century geographical dictionary of Swiss villages on the site (warning: It is written in German), as well as links to Web sites of the actual villages (most of the towns appear to have them, including photos of the area).

The site also offers a basic genealogy vocabulary list in German (there are also French- and Italian-speaking Swiss, but about two-thirds of the population speak German).

There are also non-genealogy parts to the site, including listings of Swiss holidays, customs and recipes for traditional Swiss foods. There's also an interview with Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger, who the site says is planning a trip to see his ancestral nation of origin.

The stated goal for Swiss Roots is to bring together the Swiss and American people, especially Americans with Swiss heritage. Among the sponsors of Swiss Roots are Switzerland Tourism and Swiss International Airlines.

The URL for the Swiss Roots is <http://www.swissroots.org>.

The Palmyra Area Genealogical Society continues on the theme of "publishing a genealogy" with a tour of Wert Bookbinding Inc. in Grantville scheduled for 1 p.m. May 16.

There will be a meeting concerning the tour at noon that day in the Community Bible Church, 1849 S. Forge Road, Palmyra. The Community Bible Church is located between Palmyra and Campbelltown south of the Reigle Airfield on Route 117.

To register and for transportation information contact Robert W. Keller Jr. at (717) 838-9755 or email rwkjr@evenlink.com.

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