New Glarus Historical Society, Inc.
Swiss Historical Village

Newsletter Issue 2 (96) **June 1, 2016**

Board and Committee Updates

Election of officers was conducted at the May meeting of the Board of Directors. The officers for 2016 are as follows:
President – John Colstad
Vice-President – Peter Etter
Treasurer – Doris Arn
Secretary – Ann Marie Ott

The Board welcomed Roseann Ott as a new, on-call cashier and Barb Kummerfeldt as a returning, on-call tour guide this month.

The Building and Grounds committee is reviewing maintenance history of the buildings in the Village and considering priorities for routine maintenance this season, pending decisions related to log building repairs and/or restoration.

Based on an evaluation and recommendations by the Village Forester, two trees were removed on the grounds and others trimmed during the past month. All wood chips were retained on the grounds and used to prepare the area along the Farm Implement designated for the prairie garden installation. New Glarus High School students, led by Green County Master Gardener Volunteer (MGV), Mike Davis, spread the chips and prepared the site. Mike returned and with help from MGVs Linda Uttech and Ann Marie Ott, planted nearly 100 plants, representing 20 different varieties, all native to Green County. The plants were collected, grown and donated by MGV, Mary Nelson. Additional plants and signage will be installed in the coming weeks, using the grant funds awarded to the Green County MGV group earlier this year. See the plant list on page 4.

The Exhibits and Collections committee is planning for lighting improvements in the Farm Implement building this season. New additions to the archives and collections include: a 1910 Swiss Fire Helmet, a child's desk and chair from the 1930s, a collection of books about Switzerland for our library, a blue velvet wedding dress from the early 1900s, post cards of New Glarus and framed, baptismal and confirmation certificates from local residents, in the early 1900s.

Log Buildings Assessment and Restoration

The Board took action to seek estimates from area contractors, some identified as specialists in log building restoration by the Wisconsin Historical Society, for the installation of a structural support for the log church. Kurt Straus, a structural engineer involved in the evaluation of the log buildings designed a temporary support that, if installed, will allow visitors to enter the building as part of the tour. At present, visitors are limited to a doorway view along with the guide's narrative that communicates the history of the log church and the United Church of Christ in New Glarus over the years.

In addition, the Board reviewed an estimate for the restoration of the settler's cabin and as a result, has requested additional information and details about the contractor's plan. Requests for bids from additional contractors are also being sought for this restoration.

Open House

The New Glarus Historical Society Board of Directors welcomed firefighters and members of their family, as well as community residents to the Swiss Historical Village, Fire House Open House on Monday, May 9. The New Glarus Historical Society appreciates the ongoing collaboration and support of the New Glarus Fire Department in maintaining the Fire House exhibits. Visitors are impressed by the volunteer commitment to our community as well as firefighters supporting area fire departments through mutual aid. The exhibit includes not only early equipment and photos of the local department, but also contributions from the fire department in the Village of Glarus, Switzerland.

A Tale of Two Tunnels

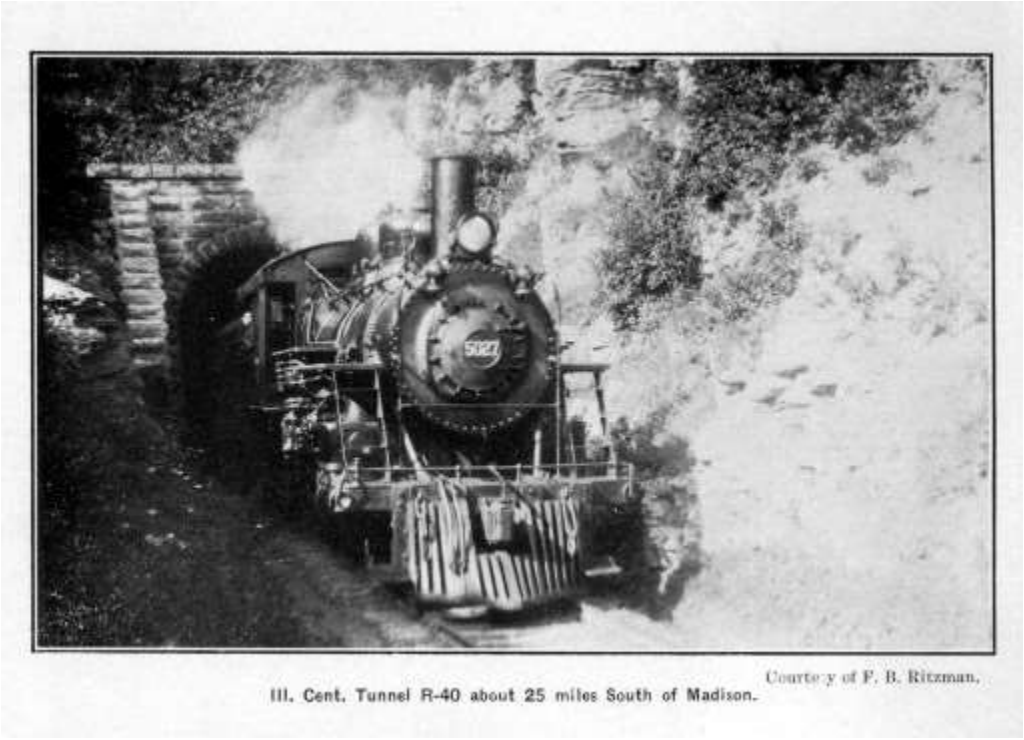

Photo courtesy of the Wisconsin Historical Society

In the 6th century B.C., the Greeks on the island of Samos needed to get water from a spring on the far side of a mountain delivered to their city. Under the direction of an engineer named Eupalinus, two crews dug through the solid limestone of the mountain from either end and - on both the horizontal and vertical plane - met in the middle, almost perfectly.

More than 2,000 years later, the Chicago, Madison and Northern Railroad (CM&N) needed to carry goods and passengers between Freeport, Illinois and Madison, Wisconsin through a 100-foot tall ridge of solid limestone a few miles east of New Glarus. Beginning in December of 1886, two crews working from the north and south ends began carving a quarter-mile-long tunnel through the ridge. On Dec. 1, 1887, they met in the middle. Replicating the celebrated engineering feat of the Greeks, the two tunnel headings were almost perfectly aligned, varying only an inch or less, in spite of the fact that the tunnel had to curve slightly in the middle.

The line was part of the Illinois Central's plan to connect Chicago to Madison and other parts north, with connections down to the Gulf States. A rival, the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul RR, was connecting Albany to New Glarus at the same time. The two lines would cross in Monticello, and area residents were poised to travel and send and receive goods to all points beyond. If only the CM&N could dig through that ridge.

From 100 to 200 men worked on the tunnel. Most of the laborers were "Italians", some recruited from New York with the help of a translator, and African Americans brought up from southern states where they had built railroads for the Illinois Central. The crews and their supplies needed to be housed on site, so "Tunnel City" grew up, boasting living quarters, a blacksmith shop, stables, offices, supply sheds, electricity and a telegraph. A "*commodious and attractive*" – and heated – building on the summit housed the engineers and foremen, and sometimes overnight guests from CM&N. In contrast, the laborers' quarters were nowhere near as comfortable.

"A boarding house for laborers, with a capacity of feeding and lodging a 100 men has recently been put up … The sleeping apartment contains fifty bunks

arranged in double tiers, and two men are assigned to each bunk. The bedding consists of an armful of marsh hay and a blanket, which luxuries are furnished by the house…A glimpse into the Italian quarters disclosed a room with sleeping accommodations for sixteen persons, a cook stove for preparing their meals, and all in a room sixteen feet square; one small window and a door being the only chance for light and air. There are several of these shanties." [Monroe Sentinel, March 23, 1887]

The crews had horses and mules, two steam shovels and, eventually, compressed air drills. For a time they also had "Stella", a small engine on the south side of the tunnel that pushed six cars loaded with debris from the tunnel towards the far side of Lynn Valley - almost a mile - where a large excavator worked. And the crews had dynamite.

"When blasts are fired everybody takes to the woods, and become star-gazers for flying rock. Pieces of rock weighing from 75 to 100 lbs. are frequently thrown 25 rods; in fact the woods are 'full of em.' Once this winter a piece of frozen earth was thrown up and struck the stable, breaking seven boards in the roof, and dropped down in the manger in front of two astonished mules. The blacksmith shop at one time was badly demolished, and all the buildings bear more or less the marks of the powerful blasts." [Monroe Sentinel, February 23, 1887]

Not all explosions were planned. *"'Tunnel City' was shaken from center to circumference on Tuesday…by an explosion of 400 lbs. of dynamite, which was stored in a small building … north of the engineer's office…when Samuel Wallace, whose duty it is to look after the dynamite, went to the building, he discovered the interior to be on fire, and Sammy 'stood not upon the order of his going,' but went at once. He only succeeded in putting about three rods between himself and the building, before the explosion took the place. Not a vestige of the building has since been seen, not even enough for a toothpick. Where it stood is a hole six feet deep.…Wallace sustained nothing more serious than a good shaking up."* [Monroe Sentinel, Nov. 9, 1887]

Laborers were being paid $1.50 a day (up from $1.25), but charged $3.50 a week for their housing. When their board was raised to $4.00, many of them left in September of 1887. The CM&N soon advertised wages of $1.75 a day; and with new and returning workers, the push was on. Day and night shifts kept the work going.

In spite of the flying rocks, Tunnel City became a popular spot for a "*pleasant picnic party*," many of these excursions and their participants reported in the news. It was not a picnic for the crews, however. The work was hard, dangerous, and the conditions difficult. *"One-hundred degrees in the shade … has been quite common all week".* [Monroe Sentinel, July 20, 1887]. The sweltering summer was followed by a dangerously cold winter, with temperatures at times registering 50 degrees below. *"The average thermometer is now practically useless until eight or nine o'clock in the morning."* [Monroe Sentinel, Jan. 25, 1888]

Tunnel construction was of great interest to the community. Equipment arrivals, departures and failures; rock falls, damaging spring eruptions, tragic deaths and accidents, explosions, disputes, snow blockages, delays and progress – all were noted and recorded in the Monroe Sentinel on a weekly basis, primarily by "Quill", a "correspondent" writing Monticello area news. Quill also commented on the laborers' activities (noting approvingly that the African American workers held religious services on Sunday) and reported when they finally left the area for other railroad jobs.

The last rail at the tunnel was spiked down on January 26. After 15-foot snowdrifts were finally removed from the track between Monroe and Monticello, the first train from Freeport to Madison ran on February 1, 1888. Twenty-one feet tall and fourteen feet wide, the tunnel shepherded steam engines and then diesels for more than 100 years, although there were challenges. Even in its last serviceable years, ice buildup could require the use of a pick ax to remove enough to get the train past safely, and hardhat protection from falling bricks or rock was advised.

Tunnel City is gone, the buildings long ago torn down or reclaimed by the woods, but you can visit the tunnel, now a main attraction on the Badger State Trail. Don't forget your flashlight, as the curve creates a disorienting black hole in the middle. And if you're a traveler, the ancient Greek tunnel on the island of Samos welcomes visitors too.

Attendance, Tours and Events – May 2016

Since the opening of the Village on May 1, we have welcomed visitors who reside in 13 of the 72 counties in Wisconsin. The counties represented to date include: Brown, Dane, Dodge, Douglas, Dunn, Green, Lincoln, Milwaukee, Kenosha, Rock, Sauk, Walworth, Washington, Waukesha and Winnebago.

Visitors from these states visited the New Glarus area and toured the Village: Alabama, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, South Carolina, South Dakota, and Virginia.

Entries in the museum guest book found these foreign countries listed as the home of our visitors: Belgium, Costa Rica, France, Germany, Hungary, Switzerland, Taiwan and the United Kingdom.

As of Memorial Day, we enjoyed sharing our history with three adult bus groups and three groups of students, some representing those studying German and 4th graders studying Wisconsin History and the story of immigration.

Insights

"*Awesome; will bring the whole family next time!"*
"Love the history"
"Impressive collection. . ."
"Enjoyed the tour and love the history. . ."

Follow us on Facebook

If you are a Facebook user, search for the Swiss Historical Village and "like" the page! The page was launched in May 2015 and has acquired 188 followers over the past eleven months! Watch for postings and photos about special events, our visitors, volunteers and exhibits.

Blue Star Museum

For the past five years, the Swiss Historical Village has participated in the Blue Star Museum program. This program begins on Memorial Day and allows active military men, women and up to five family members free admission to the Village. A valid military identification card is required to obtain this benefit. The free admission is offered to those serving in the National Guard and Reserve, too.

Echinacea pallida, or pale purple coneflower, is just one of 20 plus forbs and grasses chosen for the prairie plot. Others include:
Agastache foeniculum, Anise hyssop
Allium cernuum, Nodding Wild Onion
Baptisia alba, White Wild Indigo
Baptisia australis, Blue False Indigo
Bouteloua curtipendula, Side oats gramma
Echinacea purpurea, Purple Coneflower
Geum triflorum, Purple Prairie Smoke
Heliopsis helianthoides, Ox Eye Sunflower
Koleria cmacrantha, June Grass
Monarda fistulosa, Wild Bergamot
Parthenium integrifolium, Wild Quinine
Penstemon digitalis, Smooth Penstemon
Ratibida pinnata, Yellow Coneflower
Rudbeckia subtomentosa, Sweet Black-eyed Susan
Silphium inegrifolium, Rosin weed
Silphium laciniatum, Compass Plant
Silphium perfoliatum, Cup Plant
Solidago rigida, Stiff Goldenrod
Sorghastrum nutans, Indian grass
Sporobolus heterolepsis, Prairie drop seed
Symphyotrichum laevis, Smooth Blue Aster
Tradescantia ohiensis, Ohio Spiderwort
Verbena stricta, Hoary Vervain
Zizia aurea, Golden Alexander