New Glarus Historical Society, Inc.
Swiss Historical Village Museum

Newsletter Issue 2 (103) **May 1, 2017**

Board of Directors April Meeting

Preparations for the 2017 Museum season was the focus for the April meeting of the New Glarus Historical Society's Board of Directors meeting.

In order to be compliant with requirements for credit card security, a new credit card machine with "chip" capability was acquired and a second phone line to host the machine was installed at the museum.

The following individuals are returning as guides this season: John Marty, Larry Klassy, Ann Marie Ott, Steve Gmur, Marie Pagel, Peter Etter and Michael Schieldt. Students Stephanie Janssen and Miranda O'Rourke will train in May and join the guide group in June. Dennis Streiff retired from giving regular tours this season. Cashiers returning and working this season include Gail Beal, LouAnn Bodenmann, Judy Reuter, Phil Hanna, Steve Gmur, Miranda O'Rourke and Roseann Ott.

The Board honored retiring Board members Peter Etter and John Marty for their many years of leadership and service awarding them lifetime memberships in the Historical Society. Peter served on the Board for 16 years and John served for 22 years. We are thankful for their willingness to continue to serve as guides at the museum.

Items removed from buildings for winter storage are being returned to the displays. Roseann Ott was hired to do the spring cleaning in all of the buildings in preparation for opening day. Firemen from the New Glarus Fire Department washed, waxed and polished all of the fire trucks in the Feuerwehr Haus; volunteers included Andrew Ott, Peter Ott, Paul Burk, Kraig Henderson, and Brock Allen Reeson.

Clean-up at the museum will continue into the first week of May when volunteer students from New Glarus High School will spend part of the day at the museum. One group will help with grounds clean-up and window-washing. Another group will spend time in the archives assisting with organizing newspaper clippings about New Glarus over the years and organizing library shelves.

Settler's Cabin Restoration

Restoration work on the Settler's cabin was initiated near the end of April by Michael Yaker, *Woodjoiners*. In the picture below, you see Michael beginning to remove the rotted log at the base of the east side of the building. In the background behind the cabin, you see the end of one of the white oak logs that Michael obtained through the sawyer he works with in Dane County. Several other logs are stacked near the cabin and will be individually hewn and fitted to replace logs. All of the cement chinking between the logs will be removed and replaced with a product that will allow the logs to "breathe" which will contribute to longer life.

To support financing the restoration, in addition to the Community Foundation grant and generous donations from members and visitors, the Board has submitted a grant application to the Scholl Foundation in the amount of $10,000. The Scholl Foundation funds projects for 501 (c) 3 organizations in the areas of education, social service, healthcare, civic/cultural and environment. Organizations chosen for funding will be notified in November.

A Place Between

Courtesy of the Wisconsin Historical Society

The above "Sedition Map" was printed in the *New York Sun* on March 21, 1918, the shaded areas indicating those parts of Wisconsin "*most infected with Pro-Germanism*". You will note that a large part of Green County is one of the areas of "*the most violent hostility to the President's policy and the war aims of the nation*." It was prepared by the Wisconsin Loyalty Legion, a citizen-based organization that was founded to vigorously promote lock-step loyalty to the government during World War I. Why would Wisconsin merit such attention – and condemnation - from a New York paper? And did it matter?

To understand how this situation developed, we need to go back to 1914. War had broken out in Europe. Great Britain, France and Russia were allied against Germany and Austria-Hungary, and the United States was trying to remain neutral. The U.S. also had its own problems. Workers were organizing and demanding fair pay and safe working conditions, risking prison and brutal repression. Women, facing the same risks, were fighting for the right to vote. The prohibition movement was in full voice and social workers were railing against poverty and child labor. Finally, there was a growing nativist movement of those who wanted to rewrite history and claim America for Yankees. These societal strains were exacerbated by a recession, significant income inequality, and sharply rising food prices.

When President Wilson declared the country's neutrality, he was supported by the majority of Americans. Wilson was re-elected in 2016 under the slogan "He kept us out of war". However, as the war overseas progressed, various provocations by the Germans, such as the sinking of American merchant ships by U-boats, began to turn American sentiment against them. The country became increasingly divided over whether to enter the war. Some of the most vocal war opponents hailed from Wisconsin.

Wisconsin was independent and innovative in its politics. It was the home of the Progressive movement and "Fighting Bob" La Follette, and had a significant Socialist population. Milwaukee had elected a Socialist administration, and Wisconsin's delegation to Congress included a Progressive (La Follette) and a Socialist. The Progressives and Socialists sympathized with the labor movement and viewed calls to enter the war as efforts by banks and industry to increase their profits. When Wilson asked Congress for a declaration of war against Germany on April 2, 1917, La Follette was one of six in the Senate to vote "No". In the House, 9 of the 55 "No" votes came from Wisconsin.

What was the sentiment in Green County? The *Monroe Evening Times* gives more clues than the New Glarus papers do. The Monroe city council included an official referendum in its spring election of April 3, 1917, not without some heated controversy: "*Under existing conditions, do you favor a declaration of war by congress?"* The scheduled referendum gained wide notice. On March 31, 1917, the Emergency Peace Federation based in New York took out a large ad in the *Monroe Evening Times* asking Monroe citizens to vote against the war: *"Americans of the West. We of the East appeal to you to keep our country out of war...."* On April 3, Monroe cast 95 votes for and 954 votes against the war.

On April 6, the United States declared war on Germany. Now the U.S. just needed an army and the money to prosecute that war. The only way to raise and support an army was to sell the war – literally and figuratively – to a divided American people. The Wilson administration came up with a plan: the Federal Reserve would coordinate the sale of Liberty Bonds to the American people through state and local organizations, and the newly formed Federal Committee on Public Information would produce the propaganda.

The first step in the propaganda campaign was to give the people a new target for their anger and frustration – the barbarous Hun. Anti-German sentiment, including virulent suspicion of German Americans, was not just accepted; it was promoted. And super-charged citizen patriot groups like the Loyalty Legion popped up to agressively carry out the campaign.

This wasn't a small thing. In 1910, there were a little over 8 million people of German birth or parentage living in the United States, about 9% of the total U.S. population. German-Americans were the largest ethnic group in Wisconsin – 30% of Wisconsin's population had German ancestry - and German was the second most commonly spoken language. Hundreds of newspapers in the country were published in German, including New Glarus's *Deutsch Schweizerische Courier*. And as in many other churches in many other towns, services in New Glarus's Swiss Church were given in German, using hymnbooks, prayer books and bibles printed in German.

On April 6, President Wilson declared that all male German immigrants 14 years of age or older who were not naturalized as U.S. citizens be designated as "alien enemies" and subject to certain restrictions, including required registration. The Espionage Act was passed two months later. It included a requirement that newspapers printed in German have a certified translation before they could be mailed, putting many German-language newspapers out of business. As paranoid fervor increased, the Sedition Act was passed in May 1918. It threw out the 1st Amendment and made it a crime to speak anything disloyal. Criticizing the draft, Liberty Bonds, the war or the government could send you to prison for years.

The expression of anti-German bigotry and hysteria ranged from the silly, like renaming sauerkraut "liberty cabbage", to the dangerous – vandalism, threats, public shaming, beatings, tar and feathering, extortion, and internment. Institutions, such as churches and schools, were targeted as well as individuals. And sometimes the formally organized citizen groups were the persecutors.

So how did New Glarus fare during this time, when people with German-sounding last names and the German language itself were being targeted? In the April 12, 1917, edition of the *New Glarus Post*, the following measured notice from village president C. A. Hefty appeared: "…. *As evidence of our loyalty and patriotism I urge that flag or emblem of the union be displayed at every business place and home within our village. Whatever our individual idea or feeling with regards to the war-problem may have been, is now a thing of the past, and as American Citizens we should refrain from discussing the situation either in private or in public.*" Over the following two years, New Glarus citizens participated fully in purchasing Liberty Bonds, actively supported the Red Cross with money and volunteer work, followed war-time food requirements, and engaged children in war–support activities through the school.

Traditional cultural events also took place. The January 31, 1918, publication of the newspaper advertised a "Schweizerabend and Swingfest". Kilby was celebrated. And the Swiss Church continued giving services in German, not initiating the once-monthly English service until 1924. German classes also continued at the school, even though some communities had banned them. And the local newspaper?

The first New Glarus paper began publishing in German in 1897. Beginning in 1912, New Glarus had two papers, the German-language *Deutsch Schweizerische Courier* and the English-language *New Glarus Post*. Many, if not most, households received both newspapers. The Swiss paper regularly featured brief updates on each canton, information that did not appear in the English paper. This continued until April of 1917, the month war was declared, when the German-language newspaper became a supplement of the NG Post. In May of 1919, the supplement designation was discontinued, but the NG Post continued to print some sections in German through June of 1920.

In frightening times, it seems that New Glarus found a way to support the troops yet maintain traditions; it found a place between. And at least until about 1970 it was possible to have a beer and supper in the Glarner Stube on a Friday night and hear nothing but Schweizerdeutsch.

Further Reading:

A discussion of anti-German hysteria and persecution masked as patriotism can be found in the article "Prussianizing Wisconsin", printed in the Atlantic Monthly in January of 1919, starting on page 99: https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015030109543;view=1up;seq=115

The history of the Wisconsin Loyalty Legion and other citizen groups can be found in the Wisconsin Magazine of History, Vol 53 No.1, Autumn, 1969: http://content.wisconsinhistory.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/wmh/id/25293/show/25243/rec/31

Genealogy Resources

On April 11, the New Glarus Public Library hosted an evening educational session on genealogy resources. Board Member, Ann Marie Ott joined representatives of the Green County Genealogy Society, the Green County Historical Society and the Swiss Center of North America and shared information about the genealogy/historical references available in the museum archives. The library retained copies of the resources offered by each organization for those who wish to use them in the future.

The New Glarus Historical Society has an extensive collection of documents, photographs and artifacts housed at the museum to support curriculum development and research.

An appointment is necessary to access the museum archives; we regret that we are unable to accommodate walk-in requests to access our archives. Although we will attempt to accommodate all requests, some documents in the archives may be too fragile to make available for public review.

You may want to start your research online with the University of Wisconsin Digital Collections, where a number of photographs and documents from our collection can be found. You will find a link to the University Digital Collection on our webpage devoted to Education and Research: www.swisshistoricalvillage.org/resources/

Our Partner – The Bank of New Glarus

We extend a special thank-you to the Bank of New Glarus for partnering with the New Glarus Historical Society to print this newsletter for distribution to our members. The Bank of New Glarus became the first bank in New Glarus in 1893. Ten years later, the bank became a chartered State bank and has always been community owned.

The Bank of New Glarus®
and Sugar River Bank Branches
www.thebankofnewglarus.bank

Help Us Grow!

Spring is for planting seeds and what better time to grow our membership but the month of May?! Please consider recruiting a new member for our organization. Plant a history seed for the love of history and consider giving the gift of membership in honor of Mom or for any other special occasion. In addition to 40 Lifetime members, the Historical Society has 54 annual memberships. Could we grow to 75 memberships this season?

Membership levels are as follows:

- Individual - $20
- Couple - $30
- Family - $40
- Lifetime - $500

Benefits of membership include:

- Free museum admission
- Newsletter subscription- April – November
- 10% discount at the museum gift shop
- Invitations to Special Events

To obtain a membership, please send name (s), mailing address, email address and payment by check to: New Glarus Historical Society, Attn: Membership, P.O. Box 745, New Glarus, WI 53574

Heirloom Gardening

Speaking of planting seeds, gardeners are beginning to take a historical approach to their floral and vegetable gardens by planting heirloom seeds. The term "heirloom" was first used on the cover of a 1981 bean seed catalog published by John Withee's Wanigan Associates. The term was popularized in the years following by the Seed Savers Exchange, an organization based in Decorah, Iowa, whose mission is "*to conserve and promote America's culturally diverse but endangered garden and food crop heritage for future generations by collecting, growing and sharing heirloom seeds and plants*." The term heirloom has come to mean a plant variety that is "open – pollinated" and when planted, the seeds will show all the characteristics of its parents. An heirloom has not typically been crossed with another variety, however, if it has, the seeds and resulting plants must retain its characteristics for more than 50 years to be considered heirloom. Are you planting heirloom seeds this season?