New Glarus Historical Society, Inc.
Swiss Historical Village Museum

Newsletter Issue 3 (104) **June 1, 2017**

Board of Directors May Meeting

The Board focused its efforts on planning for building and grounds maintenance during the month of May.

Coplien Painting from Monroe will paint the Hall of History this season. Coplien painted a number of other buildings on the grounds in previous years and has provided us with high quality services.

In conjunction with the Settler's Cabin restoration, the Board is considering landscaping changes that divert rainwater away from the foundation of the cabin and ensure the ventilation screens on the south and north sides remain open. Estimates for the work are being pursued and will be considered at a future meeting.

Master Gardener Volunteer Mary Nelson, grew and donated over 100 annual and perennial plants to enhance our flower beds at the entrance and various places around the grounds. Master Gardeners are also collaborating with us to create a map of the prairie plot that will identify the native plants in the plot and which can be shared with visitors.

The annual church service commemorating the arrival of the first settlers will be held on Saturday evening, August 12 and Harvest Fest is scheduled for Saturday, October 8. Watch for more information in coming issues of the newsletter or on our website.

Settler's Cabin Restoration

Donations continue to arrive to support the restoration of the original Settler's Cabin on the grounds of the museum. Since January we have received $400 from members and almost $60 in donations from visitors to the museum. New logs with perfect corners fitted to the old were placed on the east and north walls. While the plan originally called for replacing all of the mortar in the building, the plan was changed. The existing mortar carries through from the outside to the inside wall and removing it could damage the remaining original logs. Mortar has been ordered in a color that will look much like the existing chinking. New logs will weather to a soft grey and over time, may not be noticeable to those who have not followed the restoration this spring. Windows are being repaired and will be re-installed in their original positions.

East side base log replacement

North side log removal prior to replacement

A Few Good Milkers

It was mid-August, 1845, and the travel-weary Swiss emigrants had finally arrived at the site of their new home in Green County. A week later, several emigrants purchased "the first three cows and three calves", according to Niklaus Duerst, and he helped them herd the cattle to the new colony. "However", he wrote, "one of these cows and one calf ran back on the way."

The New Glarus colony had better luck the following spring. John Luchsinger (1884 History of Green County) related how the colonists heard that drovers from Ohio were bringing cattle to Exeter, a lead mining settlement several miles to the east. Ohio farmers were generally happy to find a few good milkers in the lot they bought from drovers. So how did the New Glarners fare? The cattle were undoubtedly of mixed lineage, and some probably of dubious quality, but the Swiss picked the best of the herd for $12 apiece, enough for one for each family. Nobody in the area had much positive to say about the new colonists' farming abilities, but everyone seemed to agree on one thing – they knew cattle.

This early stock had to spend their first winters outside on only hay rations, but they produced milk and offspring during the rest of the year. And the colonists began producing butter and cheese in their homes. In the fall of 1846, the settlement had one bull, 18 cows, 15 heifers and 25 calves, all individually owned. In 1849 it could boast one bull, 49 cows, 40 heifers and 51 calves.

According to Dieter Brunnschweiler (New Glarus 1845-1970, 1970), the New Glarus settlers had from early on devoted a good portion of their land to pasture and their labor to dairying. When the bottom fell out of the wheat business in the late 1860's, they were better prepared to make the necessary shift from wheat farming than were others in the region. And they did so quickly. Somewhere along the way, they began to not only increase the size of their herds, but also improve the quality of their milk cows. They needed sturdy, sound cows that produced a large amount of milk with a good amount of milk fat. At some point, many New Glarner dairymen turned to a breed from the Netherlands, the Holstein-Friesian.

A Massachusetts man, Winthrop Chenery, is credited with promoting the importation and breeding of the "Dutch" cattle after buying a cow from a Dutch shipmaster in 1852, impressed by how much milk she had produced during the ship's voyage to America. As the Holstein breed's fame spread, established herds could be found in Ohio and Iowa by the 1870's. And the Holstein eventually made its way to Wisconsin.

By 1880, New Glarus Township claimed 2,080 milk cows. By 1947, 96% of the 53,000 milk cows in Green County were Holstein. Not surprisingly, Brown Swiss could also be seen grazing in the pastures. Over the decades, the dairy farmers powered New Glarus to national acclaim through improvements in the care and feeding of their cattle and thoughtful breeding. Some raised the science of breeding almost to an art form.

When H. Otto Elmer and Esther Hoesly married on January 24, 1918, they received a registered bred Holstein cow as a wedding present from her father. And Otto knew cattle. Together with his son, Ralph, born in 1922, he turned the farm where he was born into a highly regarded Holstein breeding operation - the Elmer Brook Farm. Applying knowledge, skill and dedication, they bred registered Holsteins that were in demand not just throughout the country, but also in Canada, Mexico and South America.

Otto and Ralph Elmer with an award-winning cow

Among their many award-winning cattle were three Gold Medal Dams and three cows that produced more than 200,000 pounds of milk in their lifetime. An Elmer Brook cow and bull appeared on the cover of *Holstein-Friesian World* magazine, and a photo of the Elmer Brook Farm was featured in a *National Geographic* article. When they retired and sold the herd in 1970, they had received 20 consecutive Progressive Breeder awards. And it all started because the Swiss could pick out the good milkers.

Walt Disney and Adventures in Dairyland

How many young people do you know whose ambition and desires for the future focus on dairying? Just before the appearance of the Mickey Mouse Club, Disney Studios sent magazine style pamphlets to schools throughout the United States advertising its plan to produce eduational programs that would help children think about possibilities for future careers. It's 1955 and the first series planned by Disney, in partnership with TransWorld Airlines (TWA), were Airline Pilot and Airline Hostess. The American Dairy Association was recruited to support the next series, which in transition focused somewhat less on the occupation of farmer, but rather on the dairy industry overall, *Adventures in Dairyland!*

The cover of the hard to find Adventures in Dairyland booklet from the American Dairy Association. Do you have one?

Why was this program important to New Glarus history? Local residents played key roles in the eight part series and the music of the Edelweiss Stars and Rudy Burkhalter was featured in the finale as Annette Funicello and the Mousketeers sang the *Edelweiss Polka* and *Teach Me How to Yodel.*

The series introduced its audience to dairying and farm life through the eyes of Mouseketeers, Annette Funicello and Sammy Ogg, They were joined by Kevin Corcoran, who played "Moochie" McCandless, a member of the farm family featured in the film. Other child actors played prominent roles in the film, sharing farming experiences and fun with the Mouseketeers. Numerous friends, neighbors and 4-H club members affiliated with the Dr. Ira Sisk family of Verona, on whose farm the production was filmed, received parts in the production. A local Verona dance group called the "Hoe Down Hut," was also selected as part of the cast.

Ernst Zenter, member of the Edelweiss Stars played Paulie, the McCandless family's hired man who yodeled to call the cows and taught Annette and Sammy how to yodel!

Other area residents appearing in the film, included Clayton Streiff, another singer in the Edelweiss Stars, who played Nels, while Willy Ruef and Carl Luescher demonstrated their skills and Swiss heritage by playing the alphorn during the film.

The farm and dairy scenes were filmed during the month of June 1956 at the Sisk farm along the Sugar River near Verona while remaining scenes for the series were filmed in Burbank, California. The Sisk family farm home served as the set for McCandless family scenes, too. According to a news article in the Madison Newspapers, the arrival of the trucks carrying all of the equipment necessary to convert the farm into a working movie studio, was divulged within the announcement of Sisk's daughter's upcoming wedding, also scheduled to be held on the family farm. Imagine the excitment when word spread through the community that newly identified star and cast member Annette Funicello was arriving in Madison at the airport and when she did she was wearing her Mouseketeer outfit! Filming took place at the University of Wisconsin Agricultural College for a day, in order for the Sisk family wedding to take place without interference as a result of ongoing filming.

The Hollywood stars stayed at the Loraine Hotel in downtown Madison and worked six days a week traveling to and from the Verona farm by limosine and bus. When the filming concluded, Annette and Sammy held an autograph event at the hotel which brought 3000 children and parents to downtown Madison without any advance announcement of the party.

The American Dairy Association retained the rights for this particular series which aired between November 5 and 14, 1956. No copy of the entire series has been identified as available for purchase by the general public. However, a You Tube clip, featuring the Edelweiss Polka and yodeling scene can be viewed and enjoyed at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kApDKLzt0QA

Correction:

The May newsletter stated that President Wilson was re-elected in 2016. The correct year was 1916. In addition, a thorough discussion of the complex politics in Green County during this time period can be found in the book Sauerkraut, Suspenders, and the Swiss, by Duane H. Freitag (iUniverse, Inc., 2012).

May Visitors

We welcomed groups from the Friendship Force Exchange, German language students from Middleton, residents of LaCrosse, 2nd and 3rd graders from Albany, and the Art League of Janesville. Visitors from Wisconsin represented the counties of Brown, Calumet, Dane, Door, Eau Claire, Kenosha, Kewaunee, LaCrosse, Manitowoc, Marathon, Rock, Washington, Walworth, Waukesha, Waupaca, Waushara, Vernon and Vilas. Out of state residents included visitors from: California, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Texas. International visitors hailed from Belgium, France Ireland and Switzerland.

Open House Day was sponsored by the Village of New Glarus on Saturday, May 13th. The event brought 84 visitors to the museum where free admission was offered as part of this special event. We estimate approximately one third of the visitors were local residents and residents of Green County. Out of state visitors found the free admission an extra bonus as they shared positive comments about the bountiful artifacts, beautiful grounds and interesting information shared by our guides.

Fishing for Supper

May marks the opening of fishing season in our area. The Centennial Edition of the New Glarus Post, published in 1946 included this fishing story:

"When the colonists arrived, there was scarcely any food on hand, as their arrival had not been so soon expected and the necessary provision had not been made. In this emergency, the streams were largely drawn upon for food. As there were not many hooks and lines, the part was divided--- some caught fish and others, bait, namely grasshoppers. The fish which they caught, were eaten without seasoning, their salt having given out. "

Action in the Archives

Five dedicated and helpful New Glarus High School students spent a morning in the archives in May, sorting, trimming and filing newspaper clippings from area and international publications which were acquired over a number of years. The archives currently has 30 binders of clippings going back to the 1930s. The students' efforts added five more binders of materials to the collection.

The project proved to be interesting work as some students took advantage of their German language skills to translate details of articles from Swiss newspapers and magazines to determine if the information was about New Glarus or Glarner history. We reflected on reports of price changes and compared them to costs of goods today. One student was amazed to find a sensational report of the anniversary of a robbery and murder that took place in the area. Another student, looked closely at a ten year old photo depicting a local festival and announced, "hey, that's me!!" We appreciate the students' support and look forward to working with them again in the future.

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