New Glarus Historical Society, Inc.
Swiss Historical Village Museum

Newsletter Issue 4 (105) **July 1, 2017**

Board of Directors June Meeting

The Board focused its efforts on planning for the annual church service, ongoing maintenance and other special events during this month's meeting.

Restoration work is progressing on the Settler's Cabin with windows repaired and re-installed as well as mortar work started on the north side of the cabin. We thank Mike Nevil of the New Glarus Hotel for a recent donation of $250 for the project.

Miriam Seitz, was hired to help us maintain the plantings on the grounds of the museum. The Board also discussed options for staffing to ensure we have sufficient coverage to operate the Museum on a daily basis.

June Visitors

Tour groups included members of the Philatelic American Topical Association, Prairie Coach Trailways from South Dakota, Keawaunee Home and Community, The Calico Capers Guild, Oakwood Village, the ADRC of Sauk County and Tonya's Big House for Kids.

We welcomed Amy Legler's summer school class the week of June 19th to the School House. Family and friends enjoyed an old-time picnic celebration on Friday to conclude the session.

Visitors from Wisconsin represented the counties of Clark, Grant, Polk, Sawyer and Winnebago. Out of state residents this month included visitors from: Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, and South Dakota. International visitors hailed from Brazil, Canada, Germany, Great Britain, Iceland, Spain and Viet Nam.

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Collaboration in the Community

The New Glarus Historical Society is collaborating with the New Glarus Public Library to improve its archives and increase the accessibility of materials to persons interested in researching personal and local history. Erica Loeffelholz, Assistant Director of the Library, met with Mary Dibble and Ann Marie Ott, members of the Historical Society Collections and Archives Committee, to learn more about the collection of materials maintained at the Swiss Historical Village Museum. Erica made recommendations for creating electronic inventory files of materials from the current subject matter and individual name paper card catalogues. She also provided information about the use of technology and digital archiving approaches that are employed by public libraries. The Historical Society and Library previously collaborated to create a collection of digitized photographs that remain available on the following website:
https://uwdc.library.wisc.edu/collections/wi/newglarus/

Next steps include: reviewing the historical materials available at the New Glarus Public Library, reviewing the organizations' policies and procedures for acquisition, maintenance and retention of materials, and scheduling regular meetings to discuss the potential for collaborative approaches to maintaining collections and sharing information in the future.

Erica Loeffelholz and Ann Marie Ott compare notes.

An Inventory of our Town

The New Glarus Public Library has recently initiated a strategic planning initiative in collaboration with staff of the South Central Library System. A meeting held at the New Glarus Home Chapel in June found attendees discussing what makes New Glarus unique, what is important to our community and what interests the community has for the future. Additional meetings will be held in the coming months with other community residents.

Interestingly, taking an inventory, thinking ahead and making plans is not a new idea. An editorial published in the New Glarus Post in January 1929 proposed an inventory of "all the things our town has on hand," and encouraged readers "to add or subtract from it as they see fit." The list is as follows:

"1. A beautiful setting, amongst the hills and valleys.
2. A healthful climate with all varieties of weather.
3. Good soil and plentiful water whereby and through which a good living can be made by the farmers in this community and because of that fact the people of our village also can make a good living.
4. A thrifty, energetic, ambitious group of inhabitants who are proud of their town and their community and will do what they can for its advancement.
5. A good market for the products raised and made in this surrounding country, mainly cheese and milk.
6. Plenty of employment to be found right at home by those who desire to work in factories, business places or on farms.
7. Good school facilities for our children with a conscientious and capable corps of teachers in charge.
8. Two churches in our midst each of which under the leadership of a fine, earnest, hardworking pastor, exerts a tremendous influence for good in the community, which should be appreciated and assisted by all our citizens and whether they are members of these churches or not.
9. Good, warm homes, plenty of clothing and food for a very large percent of our population.
10. A fine system of paved and graveled streets.
11. A good electric light power plant and waterworks and sewer system.
12. An excellent group of businessmen who make it their business to serve their community in business connections and otherwise, working together for the good of our town through the New Glarus Commercial club.
13. A company of Volunteer Firemen who are willing to risk their time, sleep, life or limb to save our homes or other property from destruction by fire.
14. Other organizations such as church societies, lodges, patriotic orders that provide for social activities and athletic organizations which provide the clear sport for those taking part and for the spectators.
15. Our community band which is supported by the taxpayers, who always strive to see that we get our money's worth.
16. Two prosperous banks, whose officials take good care of our money.
17. Beautiful and clean homes, yards and gardens, orderly and clean streets, alleys and backyards.
18. All the above assets seem to give credit only to the men folks, so let's not forget our wives and children—the finest found anywhere—who make it worthwhile making New Glarus a splendid community to live in."

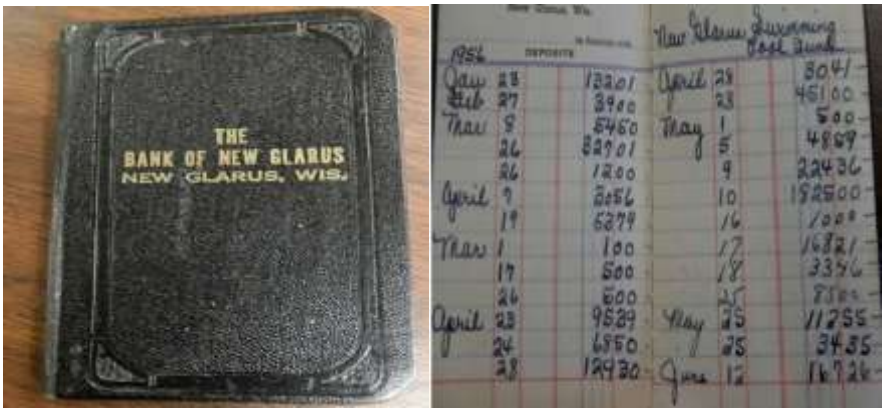
The editorial goes on to say that after taking an inventory, a businessman "needs to make a list of all of the things he needs to go on running his business successfully." The editorial also notes that "these things could not all be attained in one year but they are objects to be worked for, one at a time, slowly but surely." What do you see in the inventory and list of needs that are now complete and what remains for consideration? The editor noted that it was a good sign to have a longer list of assets than needs. The list of needs are as follows:

"1. A community building for civic and social purposes.
2. More facilities for outdoor recreation for young and old including a swimming pool, good skating place, playgrounds for the children.
3. A public library for the use of all of us to broaden our views and make us less selfish and more willing to work for the good of others as well as ourselves.
4. More interest among our inhabitants for worthwhile things in the community, i.e. attending church, providing really good music and other good, clean entertainment.
5. Added facilities and courses at our high school such as an agricultural course, domestic science or a course in German.
6. More adequate health examinations and health protection for our school children.
7. More unselfish, hearty, free willing cooperation between the men, women and children of New Glarus and the vicinity. "

"A Swimming Pool in 56."

One of the needs identified in the editorial inventory of New Glarus published in 1929 included more facilities for outdoor recreation for young and old, such as a swimming pool. A pool committee representing 12 community organizations was formed in Fall 1955 and kicked off fund-raising in January 1956 with this slogan: "A Swimming Pool in 56." The committeee, headed by Jacob S. Disch, set a goal to secure pledges and donations of $18,000 to begin work. The group had initially made plans to create a natural pool south of the village limits, but State Health Department requirements forced them to abandon those plans due to potentially contaminated water.

Fund-raising was furious with the entire community engaged in the effort. The Edelweiss Stars hosted a music festival, the New Glarus Bakery sponsored "Dough for the Pool," and more than one community group pledged $1000. One donor noted "Kiddies are our future" and children were active in the drive. They held a penny collection at school, set up lemonade stands, planned a plant sale and presented a magic show. No donation amount was too small! See the donation of $1.00 recorded on March 1 in the bank book pictured below. In just eight short months the committee's goal had been met and construction could begin!



The cover of and a page from the New Glarus Swimming Pool Fund bank book.

The project was not without controversy as the site for the pool was debated and money, acquired from the 90th and 100th New Glarus anniversary celebrations, was reallocated from funding a band shell to the swimming pool.

Excavation of the site for the pool began in September 1956 following State approval, with work continuing into November. Work resumed in Spring 1957 with a delay in June for chlorination equipment delivery. Volunteers from the New Glarus Fire Department and Business Association painted the pool to ensure it could open in 1957.

A grand opening celebration was held on August 28, 1957 with 750 bags of potato chips and 40 gallons of lemonade consumed. The water temperature was a chilly 68 degrees and the newspaper reported "the air was cool." Ken Roth, a student at the University in LaCrosse was the first recreation director and lifeguard.

Sixty years later, the community's citizen efforts are remembered for bringing this outdoor recreation for enjoyment for young and old local residents and visitors to New Glarus.

"Today is our future's past"

Three Memorable Fourths

New Glarus held its first Fourth of July celebration in 1853. It was attended not just by the Swiss settlers, but also by neighboring families, like that of little Elizabeth Moore from Irish Hollow. The following is an excerpt from her memoirs, *This Side The Gully* (manuscript in New Glarus Historical Society Archives).

"New Glarus was celebrating that Fourth of July, but it was a Swiss celebration. Gessler was there and William Tell, to shoot the apple from his son's head. There were Swiss Wrestling and Swiss dances in the dining room of the hotel, where a Swiss music box with weights that reached to the cellar floor, dispensed dance music when the weights were wound up. In a side room were chairs and a long table, on which stood glasses and pitchers of beer. Thither the dancers repaired to rest and refresh themselves between dances. The dance was the waltz. Round and round the couples would glide while at certain intervals in the music the men would stamp their feet and emit wild whoops. Then their pretty partners would giggle and blush and circle more dizzily than before."

Forty-five years later in 1898 the New Glarus newspaper described a very different 4th of July celebration:

"The glorious 4th of July with all its explosions and amusements" left people happy but with *"a few burned fingers and many buzzing noggins and perhaps also empty money bags".* There was a parade – the New Glarners loved parades – but this one was different from those of previous years where the floats celebrated the region's industries. This parade instead boasted as its main draw a representation of the battleship USS Olympia built on a wagon and pulled by a team of horses. The "ship" was 36 feet long and 10 feet wide with a mast that topped out at 24 feet. Fabric was used to simulate armored plating and two large casks – "hogsheads" – were used for the turrets. *"Turret guns"* were fashioned out of chimneys from the mill, and stovepipes from the old school house were converted into four *"automatic guns".*

Friedolin Streiff played the part of Admiral Dewey with Joachim Klassy acting as *"first mate"*. Anton Hoesly and Albert Vogeli represented *"two worthy gunners"*. Three men were assigned to the horse team *"for added safety"*.

And what about the "explosions" and "burned fingers" referenced above? Well, apparently – and astonishingly - rifles were shot through the stove pipes throughout the parade to imitate artillery fire, so that the so-called guns were noticeably damaged, looking to the eye of the newspaper reporter as though New Glarus's parade ship had taken a direct hit in battle.

Why the war theme? It was July 4, 1898, and the United States was in its second month of the 3-month Spanish American War. In May Admiral Dewey and his flagship the USS Olympia had defeated the Spanish in the Battle of Manila Bay in the Philippines. But the US navy and cavalry were still engaged in numerous battles in Cuba, and the National Guard unit from Green County had been called up. So the war was more than just Over There. Being Swiss-Americans, however, they filled the rest of the day with gymnastics, choral groups and speeches in German and English, as well as 13 girls with flags representing the first 13 states and boys on horseback representing "*the Union*".

The paper covered the 4th of July again in 1912 (the town enjoyed a boys' choir, parade, ballgame and speeches) and then not again until 1920:

"The parade was on the comic order, due mostly to the fact that it is too expensive to get up something more elaborate….There was music by the New Glarus Concert band….The audience sang America and Miss Veronica Freitag read the Declaration of Independence." Two speakers completed the morning program. *…"The afternoon festivities opened with a waterfight. As no arrangements could be made with outside teams two local teams gave an exhibition. Oliver Stamn and Leroy Kubly defeated Henry Klassy and Ray Werndle. The latter two were game enough but lacked the experience of the other two. …. The big event of the day was the ball game between Blanchardville and New Glarus in which the former came out the victors by a 4 to 3 score. …. In the evening the band gave a concert and a pavement dance and dance at the Wm. Tell Hall brought the day to a close. No accidents of any kind marred the day."*