New Glarus Historical Society, Inc.
Swiss Historical Village Museum

Newsletter Issue 5 (106) **August 1, 2017**

July Board of Directors Meeting

Like many locations in New Glarus, the museum grounds suffered from recent storms that moved through the area. A large section of a tree fell onto the roof of the schoolhouse. We are fortunate that no damage was identified when the tree was removed.

We also finalized details for the annual church service in August while plans for a Wine Walk in collaboration with the Wilhelm Tell Guild have been temporarily postponed at the Chamber of Commerce's request. We also discussed plans for Harvest Fest.

The Board accepted the resignation of Board member John Eglsaer who resigned from his position due to time constraints related to family concerns. We thank John for his service during the past six months. The Board is considering development of a job description for Board members for recruitment purposes, modeled after one implemented by the Green County Historical Society.

The Settler's Cabin log and mortar replacement is complete and we are waiting for the final bill which is expected to come in under the original estimate. We thank Michael Yaker of Woodjoiners and local resident, Keith Rockett for their excellent work. Landscaping to improve drainage around the cabin remains pending. Visitors to the museum continue to make voluntary donations to the log restoration projects and the total amount received since May 1 through the end of June is $115.

Upcoming Events

The Swiss United Church of Christ is sponsoring its annual cemetary walk on Saturday, August 5. The guided tours will start on the grounds of the Swiss Historical Village highlighting the lives of persons associated with the original tombstones at the museum. The tour will continue in the Swiss Church Cemetary to the west of the Museum. A second tour will take place at the Evangelical United Brethren Cemetary located just west of the New Glarus village limits on Highway 39.

Join us for the 58th annual commemorative church service which will take place on Saturday, August 12 at 5:30 p.m. The service will be conducted by Reverend Kim Moeller of the Swiss United Church of Christ. Music will be provided by the New Glarus Männerchor accompanied by Shirley Lueschow on the organ. The service will take place on the patio of the Hall of History.

Mark your calendars for Monday, September 18. The New Glarus Historical Society is co-sponsoring the visit of author Eric Schlehlein who will present "*Forged in Blood, How the Iron Brigade earned its metallic monikor"* based on his novel, *Black Iron Mercy*. Some early residents of New Glarus were members of the Iron Brigade. The event will take place at the New Glarus Home Chapel beginning at 6:30 p.m.

July Visitors

The Adventure Caravans Camping Group from Livingston, Texas toured the Village in July. Visitors from other States not previously recorded hailed from Pennsylvania while new international visitors came from Denmark and Poland. Racine County residents were recognized as visitors this month, too. Several travelers from Canton Glarus, Switzerland visited the museum in July. One Glarner wrote "zigerschlitz" or "homesick" in our guest book after visiting the museum.

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Stocking the Streams

On July 20th, Niklaus Dürst, an agent of the Glarus Emigration Society noted that " . . in this very place, (New Glarus) took the first food, caught the first fish in the brook.. ." In mid-August, when the rest of the Glarners arrived and made their first camp on their new land, Mathias Dürst noted "the Little Sugar River is full of fishes that feel much like being at home." Although the plentiful fish were appreciated as a means of sustenance, a later diary entry suggested that the frequency of consumption and the new manner in which they might have been prepared brought some problems as well. This quote comes from a description of the communal sleeping arrangements the immigrants experienced upon arrival: ". . . one had the misfortune to step out at night, which we did very frequently because our stomachs revolted at unsalted fish."

The Wisconsin Fisheries Commission was stocking fish around the state as early as 1881, transporting the fingerlings in milk cans on railroad baggage cars and later, a specialized fish car. By the 1930s, roads improved and fish were delivered by truck. http://dnr.wi.gov/wnrmag/html/stories/1998/jun98/hatch.htm

Green County benefitted from the Commission's hatchery efforts. The April 18, 1934 edition of the New Glarus Post announced "5000 trout were placed in Green County streams, some as long as 11 ½ inches." The Little Sugar River near New Glarus was included in the list of Green County streams.

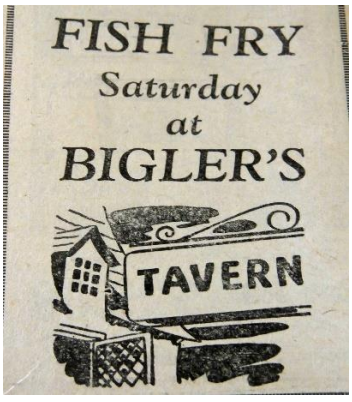
The Civilian Conservation Corps was employed to work on trout stream improvement through land clearing during this era. The goal was to increase the fish population by 300 fish in each of the 7000 miles of trout streams found in the State of Wisconsin.

Fish were being raised locally at the Green County Rod and Gun Club on the Fred Hammerly property four and one half miles west of Monticello. The New Glarus Post reported an unexpected release following a heavy rain in June 1934. "1000 fingerlings washed into the creek. . . .brook trout 2 to 4 inches long and rainbows that are slightly smaller." However, many of the little fish didn't get away thanks to the efforts of Fred Voegli, Richard Amelong, Fred Hammerly and Don Trickle. Louie Wyss and Louie Ubert were also credited with assisting in the rescue efforts.

Stocking streams in Green County continued in the early 1940s: "1500 trout 8 inches long placed in Hefty Creek, New Glarus and Sylvester Creeks." In another Post reference 20,000 bullheads were placed in Green County's Skinner Creek and Sugar River. In April 1950, the Post reported that this year was the first time the Little Sugar River received no plantings due to few results in previous years. While Hefty Creek in the Town of Washington was stocked with 750 of the favorite German Brown Trout, pictured below.

Despite the lack of stocking fish in the Little Sugar River during this timeframe, local and state efforts apparently paid off because in the 1950s; one could find reports in the New Glarus Post about the "big ones!" Green County streams were producing! While opening day in May 1950 was not very successful according to the Post, "low in yield of the wily fish. John, "Chuck" Zwiefel landed a 21 inch German Brown in Hefty Creek. Doral Gmur gave the Little Sugar a try north of New Glarus and got three, the largest a German Brown 15 inches long." Female anglers were out, too. "Mrs. Henry J. Steussy bagged a 14 and 13 ½ incher in Hefty Creek, too."

Those who weren't so lucky were reminded weekly that Bigler's Tavern was the place to go if "the big one got away!"



A Tinsmith's Tale

On August 17, 1845, the last of a group of emigrants from Glarus, Switzerland, arrived at the site of their colony in Wisconsin Territory. The land had been purchased just a month before, and there was only the roughest of shelter on site, but it was the welcome end to a difficult journey that had begun four months earlier. Just how challenging was it?

This wasn't an individual or a family crossing the ocean to settle in an established city. Rather, this was an entire colony looking to establish their own town in a frontier, and it required a level of planning and logistics not dissimilar from that needed in the colonizing efforts of European countries in the 1600s. Emigration from Glarus was not economic adventurism, however. It was a solution to serious problems: high unemployment, food that was scarce and expensive, a growing population and limited land.

The planning began about a year earlier by officials in the various communities who formed themselves into the Glarner Emigration Society. They had to grapple with how to get an entire group of people from here to there, find the right land for them to settle, and assure that the little colony had everything it initially needed to survive.

Despite the planning, the journey seems to have been plagued by Murphy's Law – "Anything that can go wrong will go wrong". Therefore the actual journey required not just courage and resolve, but also by-the-seat-of-the-pants decision-making and the occasional intervention of Luck. Most of our information about the journey comes from Mathias Dürst, a tinsmith who was emigrating with his wife Verena, 11-year-old son and 6-year-old daughter. He was an indefatigable diarist, and fortunately his travel diary was translated years ago and made available in various publications. His words, written more than 170 years ago, help tell the emigration story in our museum's Hall of History. And like any well-loved story, it bears retelling, particularly at its anniversary.

The Emigration Society had planned for 140 persons (or about 155, according to other sources). But about 193 persons arrived at the Biäsche Inn on the Linth Canal to embark on the voyage. Suddenly, and before they had even begun, the preparations were inadequate. Nevertheless, Casper Jenny, representing the Society, sent them on their way on April 16, 1845, with a rousing speech, ending with: "Dear sons and daughters of the fatherland, farewell to you all!"

The group had to get from the Biäsche to New Dieppe in the Netherlands from where they would sail to Baltimore. To do so, they went from town to town on waterways using a variety of transports. They travelled on a barge to Zürich, where they had to make additional arrangements because the shipmaster there was not prepared for so large a group. A bit further they reached the Rhine River and travelled northwest, switching from riverboats to steamboats, a canal boat and finally coastal ships. Along the way, they had to find and pay for their own accommodations and provisions in each town, a source of controversy from the beginning and a situation for which many were unprepared. They learned as they went how to discern the swindlers from the fair businessmen. Those who couldn't afford lodging slept on benches on the boats. On the 2nd of May they arrived in New Dieppe.

They were delayed there for 11 days. Dürst occupied this time making tin dishes for the group. Then, on the 13th of May, the three-masted ocean vessel weighed anchor for America. Within two hours many were seasick. The voyage across the Atlantic was one of misery and hardship, testing resolve, physical endurance and tempers. Many suffered from sea-sickness and dysentery. The food was both insufficient and unpalatable. Notably, there was no fruit. Dürst wrote: "….the ship's provisions, which are designed, if not to kill human beings outright, yet to make them sick, are uneatable." He described violent storms: one rolled the ship back and forth so forcefully that at times the deck rail was below water. Storms would often be followed by days of such calm that the ship frustratingly made no progress. Yet there were also a few good days, when the sun shone, the ship flew across the water, and people sat on deck, conversing and singing.

They disembarked at Baltimore on June 30. There they were to have been met by Wilhelm Blumer, a Swiss living in America, who had agreed to assist the emigrants in reaching St. Louis. But Blumer wasn't there. Two "experts", Judge Niklaus Dürst and Fridolin Streiff, had been sent ahead from Glarus to locate and purchase land for the colony, and St. Louis was the agreed-upon place for them all to meet. Now newly deposited on American soil, the group would have to get there on their own. They made a number of contacts and eventually secured arrangements. As before, they needed to string together a variety of transports. They boarded railroad cars to take them to the Pennsylvania Canal. This was the first time any of them had ridden in a train. Dürst wrote: "This day was for us the most beautiful and joyous of the whole voyage up to now…. We rode with the speed of the wind…." Their goal was to reach the Ohio River at Pittsburgh, where they could travel down to the Mississippi and then up to St. Louis. But first they had to cross the Alleghenies.

And so they rode the Allegheny Portage Railroad, an engineering wonder built just eleven years earlier. (It is now a National Monument.) Dürst accurately described the complicated process of being hauled with their boats over and under the mountains and then deposited in the canal on the other side.

The Glarners then travelled the Ohio and Mississippi on various river steamers. The trip from Baltimore to St. Louis took 21 days and, as in Europe, they needed to find their own accommodations and provisions along the way. They were delayed at times as was not unusual in river travel, and when they arrived in St. Louis they were met with another unpleasant surprise.

The experts had arranged for a local man, Johann Kasper Wild, to assist the group when it arrived. But Wild's wife was very ill, and Dürst wrote: "He could do nothing for us, not even give us anything to eat, so distressed was he." And the experts were not there. So the emigrants were on their own again, "a flock without a shepherd". There was a letter, however, from Wilhelm Blumer (the no-show in Baltimore) stating the experts were in Peru, Illinois. They were not. Instead, they were at that time on the site of the new colony in the Territory of Wisconsin preparing it for the emigrants. They had sent a letter to Wild with the news, but Matthias Dürst and his group never received the letter and had no way of knowing that. So on July 27, Matthias and another emigrant, Paulus Grob, set out for Peru in an attempt to find Judge Dürst and Fridolin Streiff.

This is where we lose documentation of the main emigrant group, for Dürst's narrative naturally follows him and Grob in their search for the Judge and Streiff. Dürst and Grob boarded a steamship that ran aground so many times it took five days to reach Peoria. From there, they traveled by foot and by wagon to Peru, where they discovered that the experts had moved on to Mineral Point in Wisconsin Territory. From here on, they had the help and companionship of John Freuler, a fellow Glarner they encountered at Peru who had experience of the area. A series of stage rides with layovers at stage stations and a ferry crossing got them to Galena, from where they struck out on foot. Arriving at Mineral Point five hours later, they were told that the experts had purchased land 30 miles to the east. They'd need help getting there.

The search for the Judge and Streiff challenged more than the financial constraints of Dürst and Grob. When not travelling on established conveyances, they had to find their way on land where they could travel for many miles without seeing a soul, a building of any kind, or even, on occasion, a trail. The men were confused by rutted roads that crossed each other and offered no indication of where they were headed. Of the prairies, Dürst wrote: "In the vacant land we saw today, all Glarus would have room…." They had to find farmhouses where they could shelter, get food and drink and hopefully get useful directions that they could understand. With help from the people they met along the way, and after 12 days of travelling mostly by horse-drawn wagon or on foot, they found Judge Dürst and Fridolin Streiff at the site of their new home: "….there was neither track nor road. A boy showed us along a piece further in the proper direction, until we saw men. Grob and I had taken another direction, but had to turn back because we could not cross the creek…. Judge Dürst and Mr. Streiff saw us floundering along and…. came to meet us".

Matthias Dürst and Judge Niklaus Dürst left the next day for Galena, with plans to catch a steamship for St. Louis to collect the rest of the emigrants. Writes Dürst: "Freuler….came with us a short way to cut a road through the woods and to mark the trees so we should not get lost….we took some stakes along, to drive into the prairies the better to find the return route." At Galena Luck finally intervened.

Before the Judge and Matthias could get a steamer going south, the Glarner group pulled into Galena on a steamship from St. Louis. Judge Dürst immediately began seeing to the needs of the group, and then sent 18 of the men ahead to help prepare shelter at the site. The men walked for 3 or 4 days. An exhausted Matthias Dürst, though reluctant to leave his ailing wife, led them. The Judge hired wagons in Galena to carry the group's possessions and those among them that were unable to walk, and this final group arrived on August 17th. They were now settlers on the Wisconsin frontier. Not all of the original group that departed Glarus in April arrived at the colony. Some had dropped off, seeking futures in towns along the way, and seven children died. The first winter in Wisconsin was particularly difficult, but within a couple of years, the settlement had found its footing.

Mathias and Verena Dürst had three more children, born in New Glarus. Mathias died there in 1857 at the age of 43, leaving an invaluable legacy.