NEW GLARUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT

The cool and rainy weather in early May apparently delayed some tourist travel plans this season as we find attendance numbers for weekends in the month of May lower than in 2017. The Friday, Saturday, Sunday attendance in 2017 was 288 visitors and 248 visitors in 2018. We hope that end of the month bus tours as well as several scheduled in early June will bring us back to our typical rates.

We are extremely pleased to report that the log church will again be open for visitors shortly after the first of June. Michael Yaker, *Woodjoiners*, with support from local timber-framer/carpenter Keith Rockett, installed the stabilization columns and steel tie rods outside and inside the building, according to specifications provided by a consulting structural engineer. While the columns do alter the look of the original structure, it is now safe and stable and the columns are expected to weather to the same "old grey" color as the rest of the building. The cost for the work totaled $3700, much, much less than the original estimate projected by the architectural consultant who evaluated the log buildings in 2015.

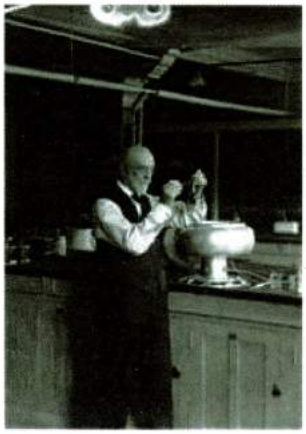
Another milestone was recognized in May as we purchased a laptop computer and printer/scanner for the Historical Society. The purchase was funded in part by the generosity of Kim Tschudy who donated the proceeds of royalties received from the sale of his books about New Glarus and Green County. These pieces of equipment will support digitizing our records and making information about our archives holdings and artifacts more accessible as we transfer hand-written information into electronic documents.

Meet our Museum Coordinator

Earlier this year the Board of Directors voted to hire a museum coordinator for the 2018 season. As a result, Miranda O'Rourke, rural Brooklyn began her duties as coordinator on May 18. Miranda is a museum operations veteran having worked as a guide and cashier over the past two seasons. Miranda's reliability, flexibility and positive outlook makes her a great fit for piloting this position as well as her interest in family history. After working with us the past two years, she learned there's a bit of Swiss in her family tree, in addition to her Irish heritage. Miranda just completed her Sophomore year at University of Wisconsin-Whitewater where she is majoring in Social Work with additional focus on psychology and health promotion. Welcome!

BABOCK ENSURES WISCONSIN BECOMES AMERICA'S DAIRYLAND

Milk has been an important part of the area economy since the time the Swiss settlers of New Glarus had documented the first 37 cows in the Village in 1846; the original livestock purchase was made with money loaned to them by the Glarus Emigration Society. Today, according to the United States Department of Agriculture's most recent statistics (2016), New Glarus farmers, along with their counterparts throughout Green County, own a total of 29,000 cows which reportedly produce more than 600 million total pounds of milk annually. This production total ranks in the top tier of total Wisconsin production. But in the early days of dairying, following the collapse of wheat production in our area and Wisconsin as a whole in the 1880s, some less than honest farmers in the state were tempted to skim the butter fat from the milk they sold or even water down the milk to increase their profits. No standards or simple tests for milk quality existed at the time and did not become available until after the arrival of Professor Dr. Stephen M. Babcock at the University of Wisconsin's Agricultural Experimental Station in 1888.



Dr. Babcock was born in 1843 in New York, a prominent state in the development of the dairy industry in that era. His pursuit of higher education took him to Tufts University as well as the University of Göttingen, Germany where he received his PhD. in organic chemistry in 1879. He took his first research position in his home state of New York, focusing on the nutrition of livestock. When he was unable to continue this particular research upon his arrival in Wisconsin, he focused instead on testing milk quality given his laboratory experience and interest in agricultural chemistry as a whole. *Photograph courtesy of the Wisconsin Historical Society.*

By 1890, Dr. Babcock had perfected a simple test process to determine the amount of butterfat in milk and developed equipment that could be easily used by farmers and others using milk to produce butter and cheese. The process begins with pouring a sample of milk into small bottle that has a slim neck with line markings on it. A specific amount of sulfuric acid is added to the milk sample, which dissolves everything but the fat particles in the milk. The bottle or test tube is then placed in a small centrifuge and spun manually for several minutes. The spinning forces the fat into the neck of the bottle and when the bottles are removed from the centrifuge, the tester can read the fat percentage results using the markings on the necks of the bottles.

Babcock's first test machine was displayed at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. It was again displayed in the Paris Exhibition in 1900, the Pan American Exposition in 1901 and the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1904 where it won the grand prize for exhibits. The international attention and praise held promise for great financial rewards for Dr. Babcock, but he declined to apply for any patents for his invention. He felt the results of his work were only to benefit humanity as a whole. The lack of patent led to a brief period in 1894 when George W. Burchard, the editor of *Hoard's Dairyman* magazine, attempted to give credit for the invention to himself.

The benefits of the Babcock test became readily apparent: no more questions about farmers' credibility and the quality of the milk being brought to market. Farmers had production incentives and could use the information from the tests to make herd breeding and feeding decisions to increase the ratios of butterfat in the milk. According to the history documented through the Babcock House non-profit organization, milk production grew 900 percent over a period of 30 years as a result of stock breeding data associated with the Babcock butterfat testing method.

But Dr. Babcock didn't stop with butterfat testing. A mere seven years later, he had additionally developed a cold storage method for curing cheese that helped to grow the cheesemaking industry. Following that development, his laboratory associates, inspired in part by Babcock's work, had made improvements to cream separators and further researched the nutritional needs of cattle which led to the discoveries of Vitamins A and B in the laboratory that Babcock managed at the University.

This is the House that Babcock Built, by Craig A. Kohn, noted that Stephen Babcock's laboratory was known for his "happy way of viewing things and his merry resounding laugh which were constant sources of pure and unadulterated delight," according to his friend Louis Kahlenberg. Kohn also reported that despite the myriad of discoveries and progress that came from Babcock's laboratory, he rejected the technology of the telephone in his own home and when forced to install one in the lab, he said it "was too much bother to answer." Babcock's University laboratory became internationally known and he was the first recipient of the Capper Award in 1930 when he received a $5000 award for his outstanding contributions to American agriculture. Known for not liking to make speeches he joked that "Well, I think I'll buy peanuts" when asked about the prize and he was regularly seen at University sporting events with a bag of peanuts in his hands, according to Kohn.

In his retirement, Dr. Babcock did indulge himself in the results of technical progress when he bought a car and spent many hours touring southern Wisconsin up until the time of his death at age of 87. Again, he had a focus on humanity, donating his home and estate to the University of Wisconsin. While his original home on Lake Street in Madison was eventually torn down for a parking lot, another house was built and named in his honor and remains a cooperative housing organization today for agriculture students. In 1940, the State Department of Transportation adopted "America's Dairyland" as the slogan on the millions of Wisconsin license plates, reflecting the State's leadership in the dairy industry, thanks to our famous University of Wisconsin Professor. Dr. Babcock is also memorialized at the University more than 125 years later where his notable butterfat test is used to produce a variety of favorite ice cream flavors sold to and enjoyed by thousands of visitors to the University campus' Babcock Hall.

The New Glarus Historical Society has a Babcock tester and equipment in its collection which is displayed in the cheese factory at the museum. Some visitors reminisce about their experiences using the tester on family farms. One gentleman noted how his mother complained about all the little holes that appeared in his overalls from less than careful use of the sulfuric acid in the test!

To view an explanation and recorded demonstration of the Babcock test by Professor Emeritus, David L. Nelson (Biochemistry), use this You Tube link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hJoC3AyZBYk

WELCOME NEW VOLUNTEERS

The New Glarus Historical Society welcomes two new volunteers to our ranks!

Caden O'Rourke, Belleville High School Junior and brother of our museum coordinator, Miranda O'Rourke will take on responsibility for creating and posting pictures and information on our Facebook social media page. If you are a Facebook user, search for Swiss Historical Village and "like" us! We hope to acquire 500 "likes" by the end of the season, if not before.

Rebecca Forbes and her family joined the New Glarus Historical Society in May and will be helping maintain our flower pots and beds as well as assist with archives documentation and research requests. Becca and her family recently moved to New Glarus from Madison. A long standing interest in genealogy and research experience related to documenting the history of historic homes brings Becca to our Historical Society.

If you have an interest in sharing your time and talents with the New Glarus Historical Society, email us at: admin@swisshistoricalvillage.org or contact Miranda O'Rourke, Museum Coordinator at: 628-527-2317.

DID YOU KNOW?

Green County was not only known for milk and cheese production in the early 1900s, but also for its purebred livestock, too. The Wisconsin Agriculturalist newspaper, published on August 20, 1903 reported: "A prospective buyer of purebred livestock can find almost anything he wants in that line in Green County, Wisconsin. He can go there depending that if one breeder does not have what he wants, another will, and if he wants to buy, he will come home owning something. The trip will not only be one of business, but also of pleasure, for Green County stockmen are right good fellows as well as business men."

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