NEW GLARUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT

June's meeting focused on event planning for the rest of the season as well as reviewing and updating organizational policies and procedures.

The Board is seeking input from the membership on ways to recognize and celebrate the 175th anniversary of the founding of New Glarus. We would like you to submit suggestions for ways in which the New Glarus Historical Society could commemorate this anniversary in 2020.

To share your input, please send an email to our Historical Society email account at: admin@swisshistoricalvillage.org or by writing and sending your comments to New Glarus Historical Society, P.O. Box 745, New Glarus, WI 53574. Thanks for your help!

Policies reviewed, updated and adopted since the first of the year include: by-laws following the annual meeting, membership and rates, collections and donation, use of the facilities, archives access and use of Facebook for advertising.

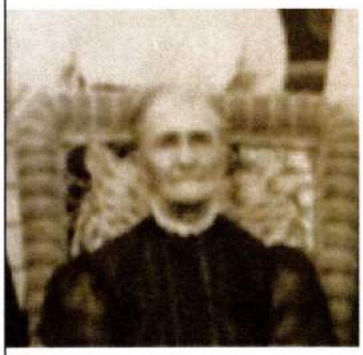
Join Us for a Celebration!

Please join us to celebrate the installation of the mural of the north side of the Hall of History on Sunday, July 29 from 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Member admission to the museum is always free and all visitors will enjoy refreshments with a chance to meet the artist, too! The mural was painted by Emida Roller of Verona, a member of the Grace Church in New Glarus. A portion of the original mural remains from the era when Paul Grossenbacher, Swiss immigrant and Historical Society President/member for many years, painted the original. Over time, weather caused deterioration and several panels to be removed. Ms. Roller has created an image that fits with Paul's remembrances of his homeland. A large collection of hostas has been planted by Board member Larry Klassy over the years below the mural. Green County Master Gardener volunteers are working to establish additional perennials in the lower tiers of the flowerbed. The mural creation and installation was funded with a grant from the Southern Wisconsin Community Foundation.

HISTORY MYSTERIES – A CHAIR, A PIN, AND A PAIR OF SHOES

What do you do when an antique family item passed on to you did not include information about the original owner, the story of how the original owner acquired it or any other information to help you understand its importance to your family? First, comes regret. Why didn't I ask about the item when I had the chance. Perhaps it was an item sitting in the basement and never used or, in contrast may have been displayed in a relative's home for so long that it blended into the background. Second and sometimes, set aside the regrets because with a bit of sleuthing, perhaps you will solve some mysteries by looking at old pictures. You might be surprised what you find as described below!

The wicker rocking chair on the left, was gifted from Dora Streiff Ott to Ann Marie Ott at the time of the birth of Ann Marie's son. Grandma Dora could not remember who the chair belonged to at the time. Recently, Ann Marie acquired a collection of old family photos and after looking closely at the photos solved the mystery of the chair. Here's the chair in a photo. The woman pictured at the right is Dorathea Speich Legler, Dora's grandmother.



The pin on the left was found in a box of old jewelry belonging to Pauline Ott that Pauline asked Ann Marie to sort for her. Another picture of Dorathea Legler solved the mystery. The picture on the right shows Dorathea wearing the pin, The pin's stone is missing in the photo of her, too.

The pair of shoes on the left were always displayed on a desk in Dora Ott's living room. The desk came from her father's, (John Streiff) blacksmith shop. After examining the toddler photo of Dora on the right, using the zoom feature in a computer photo application, we believe the tiny, leather shoes are likely those being worn by Dora in the photo.

So before you begin your regrets about an item in your possession, start looking at old family photos and maybe you'll find a few clues to solve your mystery. Better yet, start asking about your family history when you have the opportunity to do so!

LOG BUILDING'S TROUBLES SOMEWHAT LIKE THE ORIGINAL *BY DUANE FREITAG*

With the re-opening of the Historical Village's replica schoolhouse/church, it can be noted that recent concerns over the building's condition ironically somewhat mirror what happened with the original building.

The replica, donated by the community's Wilhelm Tell Guild, was completed in 1952 and has undergone several major repairs since then. The original, paid for by assessments and donations, was built in 1849 as the Swiss colony's schoolhouse. In 1850, the town government and Swiss Church were organized there and Swiss Church continued to use the building for religious services until opening its first permanent church in 1857.

That new church building, which is often referred to as the white stone church, was on the site at the top of the knoll where Swiss Church is today – a site that had been reserved for that purpose. The log cabin schoolhouse was roughly in today's grassy area south of the Zwingli House, part of an area designated as the school lot when the village was platted in 1851.

Minutes of early school district meetings reveal constant maintenance of the log building until it was finally replaced in 1867.

English-language school was first held in New Glarus in 1847, set up by colony manager J. Jacob Tschudy under laws of the Territory of Wisconsin. For the first several years, classes were held in homes until the log schoolhouse was constructed. Peter Jenny Jr., who immigrated from Switzerland in 1847 as an 18-year-old single man, taught in the log building for six years besides running a farm east of the village.

The New Glarus School District was finally reorganized in 1852 under statehood/township laws. That year a tax levy of $25 was approved to pay for the "weatherization" of the log schoolhouse. The project included framing the south side of the building, shingling the north side, and repairing the windows and interior walls. At the same meeting, Swiss Church was given the right to use the building whenever it wanted. The following year, school district electors approved siding the two other sides of the building and agreed to allow the church pastor, Rev. Wilhelm Streissguth, to select one day a week to hold German language school in the building.

In 1855, $19.66 was set aside for more repairs to the building and for purchasing maps and books for the school. Two blackboards were added in 1857, but the schoolyard remained unfenced.

By 1858, the district paid $1.75 to Peter Zweifel for bricks to level the building and $2.50 to stonemason Samuel Luchsinger to build a chimney. There was a later payment to carpenter/cabinetmaker Peter Disch for repairs, to general store owner Fridolin Egger for glass, and an expenditure of $1.61 for a pail and dipper for those thirsty students.

Finally in September of 1866, after the Civil War, the construction of a new wood frame schoolhouse was authorized to be done over the winter months. That building still exists as the location of the Bramble Patch store. The district borrowed $700 from Rudolf Kundert to help pay for the construction.

The next year the old log schoolhouse was put up for auction. An unknown person paid $67 for the building, including foundation stones. According to several histories, the material was used to construct a home about three and a half miles east of New Glarus.

Anton Ott, an enterprising farmer who had been clerk of the school district and treasurer of Swiss Church for quite a few years, purchased five of the school house "seats" for $15. Historical Village records do not indicate who donated the two original benches that are in the replica building, but perhaps they were among the five saved by Anton.

DID YOU KNOW?

Visitors to the Museum and archives of the New Glarus Historical Society come from all parts of Wisconsin, the United States and the world! Since the museum opened on May 1, we have identified residents of these Wisconsin counties: Barron, Brown, Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Eau Claire, Grant, Green, Jefferson, Kenosha, Lafayette, Marathon, Monroe, Outagamie, Pierce, Polk, Racine, Richland, Sauk, Sheboygan, St. Croix, Trempealeau, Walworth, Washington, Waukesha, Waupaca, Winnebago, and Wood. Visitors from 27 of the 50 states in the U. S. have checked into the museum and international visitors came from Canada, Chile, England, Israel, Russia, South Korea, Switzerland, Taiwan and the Ukraine.

We thank the Bank of New Glarus for their support in publishing the New Glarus Historical Society newsletter.

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

Contact Us

New Glarus Historical Society & Swiss Village Museum
612 7th Avenue, P.O Box 745
New Glarus, WI 53574
www.swisshistoricalvillage.org
608-527-2317
admin@swisshistoricalvillage.org

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612 7th Avenue, P.O Box 745
New Glarus, WI 53574

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