NEW GLARUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Volume 1/Issue 5/August 2018

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT

Planning for the 175th anniversary of the founding of New Glarus is in progress. Preliminary ideas include:

- special events focused on early New Glarus history in each of the months the emigrants were traveling to Wisconsin (April through August)
- updates and enhancements to exhibits in the Hall of History
- partnering with our friends and colleagues in Canton Glarus to update information about Glarus on the large panels outside the Hall of History
- holding a walk-a-thon to raise money for the Historical Society and commemorate the emigrants' walk from Galena to the New Glarus site

The exterior of the Hall of History received a facelift recently via new paint by Coplien painting and repair of the peeling veneer on all of the doors by Roger Clark. Thanks to Roseann Ott for painting the doors and the relief map kiosk displays on the patio of the building. A roof repair to improve drainage on the Hall's flat roof remains on the schedule of work for 2018 which will complete the immediate maintenance needs for this museum centerpiece.

Recent Donations

We are working with a descendant of Fridolin Streiff (the Civil War veteran) to obtain a bed head board, footboard and rails made by Fridolin to add to our collection of artifacts. However, the bed is currently kept by the family in the Pacific Northwest and we have learned that shipping is very expensive. Do you know anyone making a road trip to that area and back to Wisconsin? If so, please contact us if you believe that person might be willing to assist with transporting this important historical item for us. Contact information appears on the last page of the newsletter.

Our appreciation goes to members Douglas Camarigg and Barbara and Curtis Nelson for their financial contributions to the New Glarus Historical Society. Your gifts allow us to meet our needs for archival supplies to maintain and preserve documents, photographs and other artifacts in our collection.

Other items recently donated by member Bob Elmer include: early Pet Milk cans and Pet can opener, a ruby glass souvenir mug from New Glarus, fabric, lace and pillowcases made by Upright Swiss Embroideries and a number of articles to sell in our gift shop to benefit the Historical Society. Thanks, Bob!

"LETTERS FROM OUR SOLDIER BOYS"

"We will be glad to publish any letters received by parents or relatives from their soldier boys. Any personal matter could be omitted. Bring in your letters."

So read an insert printed in the *New Glarus Post* throughout 1918. And did they bring in their letters!

During 1917 and 1918, young men from New Glarus and the surrounding area joined the rapidly expanding U. S. armed services to fight Germany and Austria alongside their allies, England, France and Russia. Some of what they saw and experienced they described in their letters home, and families shared these with their community through the *Post*.

Letters were written from trains, training camps, troop ships crossing the ocean and from the trenches on the western front. They were written by infantrymen, cooks, Navy midshipmen, and a Marine sharpshooter, among others. All showed curiosity, camaraderie, courage, humor and a bit of homesickness. Here are some excerpts.

Leaving Home:

"We had a dandy trip passing through 10 states, also through the Ozarks of Missouri and the Catskills. I certainly enjoyed every minute of our trip. The Red Cross served us with coffee, sandwiches, post cards, candy, smokes, etc. The people along the way turned out in great shape. In Toledo, Ohio bells rang, whistles blew and every body seemed to be around us also at Buffalo, N.Y. but at Scranton, Pa. we got some real coffee with cream in it, served by pretty Red Cross girls and we all have great praise for Scranton." (Leo Gmur, Co C, 123rd, M G Bn)

In the Training Camps:

" They sure do make you clean. That means a bath, shoe shine, shave, and a complete change of cloths every day and on top of that you have to get a hair cut every week whether you need it or not. ... Now we drill almost every other day with a 40 lb pack on our back besides carrying a rifle, which weighs 8 1/2 lbs." (Pvt. Emil Bruni, Co. B -4, Separate Battalion)

"We done good shooting at the range all the Camp Grant men qualifying on all targets. We had the opportunity to see the artillery shoot on a 3 1/2 mile range and it sure was some sight, the shells they shot could be seen plowing through the air and where they hit there were shell holes large enough to hide a team of horses in them. I seen a shell laying there and I thought it would be nice to send one home by parcel post but when I came to carry it, I found out that it weighed 60 lbs. Well I changed my mind. ...P.S. The night before we left Logan a Monroe boy that is in the same Company I am got a brick cheese and two loaves of rye bread from his mother. Well orders were no rations to be taken along and we knew that we would be inspected before boarding the train so we were up against it. ... We finally struck a plan. And the result was I got thru at 1 o'clock in the morning tearing open the lining of our overcoats, making sandwiches which we deposited safely there and sewed up the lining again and at night when we were lying on our berth eating sandwiches and laughing how we slipped one over on our officers and it certainly tasted fine." (Leo Gmur)

"I'm in a swell company but they are busting us up now. ...I haven't been signed yet because I made a good record on the rifle range. I made 243 out of a possible 300. Making me a "sharp shooter" for which I will get $3 extra a month and a medal. It sure is a swell thing and I'm proud of it too. I wouldn't part with it for anything. ... I might be detailed on a machine gun or an aeroplane gunman, or be a "sniper". In the first two cases you do all the firing and arming. A "sniper" is a fellow that goes out by himself in "No mans" land and sneaks around hunting for any enemy out posts." (Pvt. Emil Bruni)

On Duty:

"We midshipmen have to stand all different watches on the ship. We do everything from passing coal to steering the ship. Just now I am on a lifeboat crew. If a man goes overboard, we have to pick him up. When a man goes overboard in a danger zone, he's out of luck for the ship doesn't stop for him. There is a radio operator aboard from Janesville who

knows several people in and around New Glarus. When I was in the wireless room we had many a long talk together during a night watch. I can think of nothing more that would get by the censor, so I'll stop." (Walter Schindler, USS Missouri)

"Somewhere in France":

"... the more I see of France, the better I like it. The girls aren't so stuck up as those of New York and they are just as pretty. ... I would like to get on a destroyer. They look mighty nice and a fellow gets lots of liberty. I don't have to spend much money to have a good time. The Navy has a big Y.M.C.A. over there and women are running it. It's homelike as can be. ... They get up concerts for the sailors and have fine times." (John Hoesly, USS Geo. Washington)

"The poor people are all wearing wooden shoes. When you hear a couple of kids coming down the street, you jump out of the way thinking there is a horse almost on top of you and you turn around to see what it is and find it is only some wooden shoes, so we just turn around and excuse our self and find the joke is on us." (John Hoesly)

"I have seen a lot of things here in France, buildings that were built in 1492 and 1610 and a French penny of 1098 and 820. I like France better than England, although they are both behind the times." (Pvt. Emil Tschudy, 164 U.S. Inf., Co F)

" This is my first time so far away from home and would be glad to get back soon again. We have pretty hard drilling and practicing of all kinds and sometimes get so tired that I can hardly walk. We are moving to the third line trenches and I don't think it will be long until we will be fighting. ... At the place we're at now, we hear the roar of the guns and get lots of gas mask practice. ... The old men and the girls and women do the work around here. Every boy who is able to carry a gun goes to the front." (John Haegeli, C. K. 356 Inf.)

"Well I am still alive and was lucky so far. We have done some hard fighting this summer and are still at it. It has been four months that we have been at it every day you might say and had some hard battles to fight. We have lost a lot of the boys that we started from Monroe with, but we get the Co. filled up again and go after them again, but I think if we get out this time we will get a rest for we sure do need a rest. ... I know that some of the New Glarus boys are over here but did not see any of them yet. ... We have seen some of the nicest parts of this country and most of the big cities and we saw part of Paris four o'clock one morning. Paris sure is a nice city, but some of the small towns are old looking. They are built out of stone and some are over hundred years old and sure do look it, for there's grass on the roofs." (Cook Paul Zimmerman, Co. H, 127 Inf.)

"I have been where we can look over the top and take a look at the boche* trenches and also real Germany. Of course we had to be a little particular where we looked over but still we did it. The first morning we were there we got a pretty bad barrage. We didn't realize what it was at first, and after we came to we were a little nervous. After that we didn't mind it so much. ...Well I can say one thing I've seen the boche emblem, the cross on an airoplane. They came so low to our trenches, and of course the boys did quite a bit of shooting at them but they are not afraid of that." ("Lowney")

"Farming we are way ahead in the U.S. They have an ox hitched to a cart and a driver walks long side of the cart with a long stick in his hand. This must be the way our grandfather's often told us about. It looks funny but at that they get along alright, slow but sure. The farmers must be busy filling silos now around New Glarus and if it will take this letter as long as it took the Post to reach me it will be Christmas. At the first town we stopped I saw Art Theiler... One of our boys got a letter the other day from a pal and Leo Gmur is in his company. We will all be together again before long at least we are all ready and we can't hardly wait for the time to come to get in action." (Cook John Disch, Co B, 331st, M. G. Bn)

Over time, as the *Post* was delivered to many of the enlisted men, they wrote letters to the *Post* to communicate with each other, until they could see each other back home again.

* *boche:* disparaging slang term for a German soldier

BROWNIE TROOP ADOPTS THE SCHOOLHOUSE

We are pleased to announce that New Glarus Brownie Troop #7531, third grade girls from the New Glarus Schools, led by Historical Society member Carrie Czerwonka, has adopted the Schoolhouse at the Swiss Historical Village. The girls will help us keep the space clean, learn to monitor the condition of the artifacts and offer our late afternoon visitors a glimpse of a busy and happy schoolroom! In exchange, the Troop will hold meetings once or twice a month in the schoolhouse during the months the museum is open. We look forward to this new partnership with the Brownie Troop and, like our collaboration with the New Glarus Fire Department, hope that others in the community may choose to work with us to adopt a building, too!

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

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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

NEW GLARUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY & SWISS VILLAGE MUSEUM
612 7th Avenue, P.O Box 745
New Glarus, WI 53574

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