NEW GLARUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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2019 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT

The Board elected Jim Hoesly as co-Vice-President for 2019 at its May meeting as noted at the left.

The Board intends to sign a contract with Susie Weiss to provide cleaning services at the museum this season. Susie replaces Roseann Ott who has provided cleaning services the past two years. Roseann cleaned the buildings prior to opening the museum in May and coordinated with the New Glarus Fire Department to clean and polish the fire trucks housed in the Fire Haus.

The stone chimney on the Community Building is in need of repair and the Board accepted a bid to rebuild it in the near future.

In advance of the community-wide clean-up day, the Board is sorting items in the museum shed. Items used years ago, such as old tables and chairs and signage that are no longer useful will be placed on the curb for pick-up. No artifacts will be discarded, unless they are in such poor condition that they can never be used for research or exhibits.

Work continues on planning new exhibits in the Hall of History to celebrate the 175th anniversary of our community's founding. We are collaborating with the Swiss Center of North America to make contacts in Switzerland with individuals who may have an interest in the project. The Hall of History exhibits have resulted from input, donations and artifacts from Canton Glarus since the building was opened in 1969.

The Board thanks the 15 members who transitioned to electronic delivery of the newsletter! This change will save us nearly $100 annually in postage cost.

Recent Donations

Madeline Glaeden recently donated a hand knit, ivory colored tablecloth or bedspread made by Jeanie Komprood of New Glarus. This beautiful, delicate piece was knit with very small needles and fine, fingering yarn. The item measures 100 inches by 88 inches.

Making our Museum Work

The opening weekend of the 2019 season was a great success bringing 154 adults and 59 children (about 45 children in a school group) to the museum which was greater than Memorial Day weekend attendance last year. Visitors expressed many positive comments about their experience and our exhibits as well as how pleasant it was to spend time on the grounds of the museum. Our first international visitors came from Canada, China, the Ukraine and Canton Glarus, Florida, New Hampshire, Colorado, Illinois, Minnesota and Virginia were the residences of visitors with many coming to visit from other parts of Wisconsin. In addition, our first two active military guests received free admission as the Historical Society participates in the Blue Star museum program. The success of this opening weekend and the season to come are not only dependent on good weather, but on the hard work of many volunteers to prepare the museum for the opening each new season.

To arrive at the beginning of the season, we must reflect on the end of the previous season. The Historical Society has been working to increase its adherence to museum best practice guidelines for the care of artifacts in its collections and displayed in the museum buildings. Collections care guidelines recommend avoidance of extremes in temperature and humidity, especially for textiles, artwork and other fragile items. Although space for storage in the off-season is at a premium, we do our best to bring in the items that fall into these categories and store them in the basement of our entrance building. The entrance building basement is heated and dehumidified throughout the winter with a Board member checking the furnace daily to ensure its function. Some examples of items stored during the winter include: bridal gowns made with fabric from the Swiss Miss, quilts and other bed linens, photographs of early settlers, early Fire Department hats and uniforms, church books and original church sacramental items such as the tin communion cup and baptismal fonts. Recently, the Historical Society submitted a grant application to the Wisconsin Historical Society to obtain additional shelving and archival storage boxes to aid the effort.

Volunteers Ann Marie Ott and Rebecca Forbes work with weddings gowns. Two cabinets in the Collectibles buildings were reset for the 2019 season.

The efforts to manage the Historical Society and museum don't stop when the museum closes at the end of October. Plans are made to integrate new donations into existing exhibits and plan for new exhibits. Records are updated to reflect the new and changed locations of artifacts in order to keep track of them.

In April, the cleaning begins inside and outside and is supported by New Glarus High School Seniors through their community service activities, supervised by members of the Building and Grounds Committee. In addition, our prairie plot is cleaned up in the spring through the efforts of the Green County Master Gardener and other volunteers.

While the initial work is complete, many projects still require attention and we welcome members, your friends, family or other members of the community to keep the museum well-maintained and looking its best for our visitors. If you would like to volunteer, or know someone whose time and talents would support the Historical Society in these efforts, please email us at: admin@swisshistoricalvillage.org or call us at: 608-527-2317.

Gifts Galore

Gift shop sales of souvenirs and mementos during Memorial Day weekend were brisk. The gift shop acquires goods for sale through wholesale purchase, vendor consignment and donations of new and gently used items from individuals. Prices are set to align with other retail outlets or may be set by individual vendors. Following the construction of the entrance building in the 1980s establishing a gift shop was recommended by a University of Wisconsin consultation as a means to increase revenue for the Historical Society.

Revenue from gift shop sales has averaged $3897 annually for 2014 through 2018. The total net profit for this, five year period totals nearly $19,500. The profit margin benefits greatly from the volunteer efforts of Gail Beal, who has managed the gift shop for nearly the entire time period it has been in operation.

Beeswax Christmas ornaments became one of the first gift items available in the shop and remain a best-seller yet today. Gail works with a number of local businesses and crafters to secure items for consignment. Sales of these items account for approximately 85% of our sales. Examples include Swiss themed napkins and placemats, coffee mugs, bells, keychains, music CDs and Swiss army knives. Edelweiss inspired jewelry is a popular item as well as fondue and chocolate pots and kitchen items made by Swiss manufacturers. The other 15% of our profit comes from sales of soda, water, cheese, chocolate, food and snack items. Gail, with help from Treasurer, Doris Arn has worked with a Chicago based wholesale importer to obtain a wide selection of Swiss-German style products such as rösti, spaetzle, home-made noodles, sauerkraut, mustards, and seasonings that tempt visitors to return home with a taste of New Glarus. In addition, Gail sources local honey, maple syrup, jams and homemade goatmilk soaps to please visitors, too. Hand-crafted items include aprons for adults and children, scarves, quilted items, knit afghans, baby fleece wraps, tooth fairy pillows, fleece wraps, to name a few. Stenciled and carved signs and custom made Canton shields become memories of a special vacation or trip to America's Little Switzerland.

Important to the Historical Society's mission is education about our roots. To that end, we offer a variety of books written by local authors, such as Kim Tschudy and Duane Freitag, that provide photos and written history about New Glarus. Popular with those who have connections to Glarner family history is the translation of the diary of Matthias Dürst by Professor Leo Shelbert. This account preserves the memories of the emigration journey of the first settlers. In addition, several cookbooks written by Doris Streiff and the Historical Society compilation of recipes is available in the shop to ensure continued appreciation for traditional cuisine.

Members of the Historical Society receive a 10% discount on all purchases, so do make a plan to stop by and shop for those special occasions throughout the season.

Gift shop before set-up

Gift shop after set-up

Sprechen Sie Schweizer-Deutsch?

The Historical Society was contacted recently by an older woman from California. Ursula is interested in connecting with any local resident who can and would like to speak Swiss German. She was born in the Village of Mollis, Canton Glarus and immigrated to this country as a very young child. She lost her mother several years ago and as a result does not have opportunities to speak her first language. You'll be surprised, she doesn't have an accent! If you are interested in connecting with Ursula, please send your email address to: admin@swisshistoricalvillage.org and we will help you make the connection with her.

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

The Bank of New Glarus
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Contact Us

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