NEW GLARUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Cabin - Schroeder Studios Postcard 1950s

BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT

The Board made plans to advertise in Bus Tours magazine next season to increase bus tours during 2020, the New Glarus 175th anniversary year. An offer of the donation of part-ownership interest in a parcel of land in Adams Township was declined. Although the Board recognized the generosity of the donor, the Board decided it was not in a position to manage the legal issues related to real estate and family trusts. Secretary Loeffelholz is working on ways to create a digital catalog of materials in our archives. The Board is considering creating a video-graphed oral history of the vintage farm equipment in the Farm Implements building which would document what the equipment is and how it was used.

Historical Society Challenge Then and Now

It's summer 1941, the New Glarus Historical Society is looking forward to building the first structure, a cabin on the grounds now known as the Swiss Historical Village. A series of fundraising events was initiated and New Glarus resident, Esther Streiff Stauffacher, President of the Green County Historical Society, spoke to the attendees of the first event. "The sad part of it all is that our unusual history is fast becoming lost to the younger generation, and unless the community supports our project 'up on the hill' for a museum, there is no doubt that, in time, most of our history and traditions will be forgotten."

Forward to September 27, 1942 when a festival drew 600 attendees to celebrate the completion of the cabin. Mrs. Stauffacher served as the first curator and spent time noting the donations of artifacts that arrived from not only New Glarus, but from around Green County. The January 29, 1944, edition of the New Glarus Post includes a Historical Society report where Stauffacher notes "400 historical relics" in the Society's inventory. Today, through the generosity of area residents, artifacts fill fourteen buildings. Esther's concern voiced in 1941 remains today. We hope that you consider sharing your time, talents or resources to keep local history alive. See page 2 for pictures of work done to restore our first museum building.

First Museum Building Restoration

Over the past several years, the Historical Society took steps to make repairs to the log structures on the museum grounds to address deterioration of the buildings caused by time and weather since they built or placed on the grounds. The first priority was to replace logs in the Settler's Cabin, the second project was to stabilize and reinforce the structure of the log church and final project in the series was repair of the chimney of the cabin or Community Building, as it is called today.

The Community Building, the first building on the grounds of the museum was designed by Jacob Rieder, a Swiss architect and builder who is also known for his design of the Chalet of the Golden Fleece and a Chalet for Ernst Thierstein, now owned by Kris and Penny Kubly. The original chimney on the cabin was made of limestone about six feet above the ground and then finished with a log surround to the top. Swiss native, M. G Staub was the stonemason that worked with Rieder to build the chimney.

Since the building was completed in 1942, the logs naturally deteriorated, the chinking between the logs fell out and squirrels could be seen scrambling up and down the structure adding to the breakdown of the log surround. Rather than replicating the original design, the Board chose to replace the small, narrow logs with limestone masonry to prevent a second round of deterioration of the structure. Ernie Pulver, a skilled mason from rural Belleville who followed in the footsteps of his father Robert, was hired to build the new part of the chimney and the results are stunning. Ernie was able to replicate the style of the original stonework and after a short while natural weathering will blend the new with the old stone. The actual cost of the materials and labor was approximately $6000. Mr. Pulver discounted the price of the work significantly as a donation to the Historical Society, for which we are extremely grateful. Please plan a visit to see the beautiful work in person and do consider making a special donation to the Historical Society to offset the cost of this project.

The "Cinderella" of the Centennial

Planning is underway to commemorate and celebrate the 175th anniversary of the founding of New Glarus in 2020. The Chamber of Commerce is holding public meetings to seek local input and the Historical Society is making plans to enhance displays in the Hall of History.

New Glarus residents have a long tradition of memorializing the arrival of our ancestors with the first documented event celebrating the 25th anniversary of the community. Celebrations continued about every ten years thereafter and included speeches, music, dancing, sporting events, pageants, prayers and large gatherings of visitors to "see the Swiss."

World War II put a damper on plans for the celebration of the New Glarus centennial anniversary, with only a memorial service scheduled for August 16, 1945. However, the Centennial Celebration Committee was committed to its charge to plan and hold a real celebration and noted in its report to the New Glarus Post on February 21, 1945: "the celebration planned for August of this year will be postponed until the first normal year after the war." Committee members included: Gilbert Ott, Chairman, Ray Meythaler, Secretary, Fred Ott, Treasurer, and Reverend Walter J. Stucky, Alfred Ventur, E.N. Fuhrman and Dr. E.D. McQuillin.

How does a "Cinderella" without Swiss roots fit into the plans for celebrating the 100th anniversary of New Glarus?

The New Glarus "Cinderella" made her appearance in patriotic red, white and blue, an advertising stamp published with assistance from the State Department of Agriculture to raise money for the Centennial Celebration. "Cinderella" is a stamp collecting term for commemorative stamps that are not issued by the United States Postal Service and are not valid for postage.

However, the U.S. Postal Service was included in Centennial planning. In February, 1945, a joint meeting of the Monroe Stamp Club and New Glarus Centennial Committee members resulted in a resolution to petition legislators to issue a commemorative 3 cent stamp. Their resolutions noted "The event (100th anniversary) is deserving of observing that this little band of Swiss Pioneers by their hard work and perseverance shaped in a large measure the agricultural destiny of a commonwealth , as so have their descendants by their industry carried on and progressed to make Green County today one of the richest farming districts and Swiss Cheese centers of the world." The group hoped their resolution would encourage citizens of Green County to lobby its legislators to issue the stamp.

Senator Alexander Wiley, representing Wisconsin in the U.S. Senate agreed. He proposed a bill, S. 532, to the 1st Session of the 79th Congress. "*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled*, That the Postmaster General is authorized and directed to issue a special series of 3-cent postage stamps. Of such design as he shall prescribe, in commemoration of the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Swiss colony at New Glarus, Wisconsin, and the birth of the swiss-cheese industry in Wisconsin." The bill was referred to the Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads. State Legislators passed their own joint resolution, urging their counterparts in Washington to support the proposal. Mrs. Robert Marty, representing Green County and Gordon Crump, publicity director of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, traveled quickly to Washington, D.C. to promote the stamp.

Unfortunately, despite all efforts, including a repeat proposal in Congress, the request was denied in March 1945. One letter suggests that patriotic themes related to the war effort were the Postmaster General's priority. A copy of a letter in the Historical Society archives from Postmaster General Frank C. Walker to Senator Robert M. LaFollette, Jr. acknowledges the Senator's efforts and evidence of great interest in the stamp: "I do not see how you could have evidenced greater interest in this matter or followed up the original application with more energy and enthusiasm that you have." Inspector General Walker goes on to note that the New Glarus Centennial will be listed for consideration for the 1948 commemorative program which may include the State of WI anniversary among its stamp issues.

Despite the disappointment the "Cinderella" made it to the ball! The advertising stamp was issued and sold to celebrate the Centennial year. Rebecca Theiler, New Glarus High School Senior, won the $5 contest prize for the slogan that appears on the stamp, "A Bit of Old Switzerland, Transplanted and Flourishing."

The New Glarus Post, in its August 15, 1945, edition, reports that the Centennial Committee says "stamps are selling well with half the amount made already sold." The stamps were sold for 1 cent each and the community was urged to "use freely on all mail" and "place the stamp on the back of all envelopes." The Swiss American Fraternal Society of Milwaukee ordered 5000 stamps and planned to serve as a distributing center for other Swiss societies throughout the United States. Schmitt Brothers Cheese in Richland Center ordered 6000 stamps and the Post article also reported that "orders came from the Swiss Consular agency in Baltimore, Omaha, NE, Detroit, MI, Decatur, IL and elsewhere."

However, like Cinderella's lost slipper, this Cinderella's designer's name is missing. No reports identified the individual who designed the stamp. Perhaps a Prince Charming will find it, come forward and solve the mystery for us.

Contact Us

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Did You Know?

In the summer of 1945, families had to plan carefully for preserving those wonderful strawberries, raspberries and other fruit available during the season. The Office of Price Administration issued an announcement in the New Glarus Post that households could apply to receive up to 20 pounds of sugar for canning purposes for each family member, up to 8 members. Because sugar stocks were at the lowest reported, the current allocation was reduced from the previous year when 25 pounds per person was allocated with no maximum limit. The expectation was to use 1 pound of sugar for each 4 quarts of canned fruit. To receive this special allocation, a family had to submit a form documenting the number of jars canned in the previous year and an anticipated number of jars for the current season.

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

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