NEW GLARUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT

Donation Match Opportunity. The Board is excited to announce a match opportunity for donations to the museum's Hall of History project. The Hall of History project is a substantial undertaking. The exhibits are being renovated in three stages, with the first stage to be completed by the 175th celebration in 2020. We are using the professional input of a consultant, through a grant from the Community Foundation, and the talents of a graphic designer and printing company with extensive experience creating historic exhibits. *An anonymous community member has pledged to match any donations made to the project between now and the end of the year, up to a total of $1,000*. Please consider helping us meet this goal. We will share more information on the progress of the project in next month's newsletter.

The Board extends an invitation to the membership to join them for the annual church service at the Swiss Historical Village commemorating the arrival of the first settlers of New Glarus. The event will take place on Saturday, August 17 at 5:30 p.m. The New Glarus Maennerchor will be gracing the service with their music.

American Legion Centennial Display

The New Glarus Historical Society is joining the New Glarus Steussy-Kuenzi American Legion Post #144 in celebrating its 100th anniversary with a temporary display in the Hall of History now through the end of the museum season, October 15. Legion member, Carey Schneider contacted the Historical Society in 2018 to alert us to the anniversary. A WWI uniform, belonging to Jacob Bruni was identified in the Historical Society's collection and Mary Funseth loaned the WWII uniform belonging to John Streiff, Jr. for the exhibit. The uniforms are displayed on forms acquired as a result of a Community Foundation grant award in November 2018. The display includes a short history of the American Legion, information about the soldiers for whom the local Legion Post is named and a list of New Glarus residents who served in WWI and WWII. Volunteers that worked to create and install the display include: Roseann Ott, Rebecca Forbes, Gail Beal and Ann Marie Ott.

Victorian Hair Wreaths – A Unique Art Form

By Stephanie Janssen

Marcus Tullius Cicero, a Roman orator and philosopher, said, “the life of the dead is placed in the memory of the living.” This quote accurately fits the ancient art that is Victorian hair wreaths.

This art originated in the 17th and 18th centuries, where there were high mortality rates for infants. Saving hair, for use in the future for craft projects was a common practice. However, it was Queen Victoria, who ruled in Britain from 1837 to 1901, who created the boom of hair wreaths or different hair crafts. In 1861, her husband, Prince Consort Albert, died, which caused the queen to publicly mourn her love the rest of her life. Because of this mourning, Queen Victoria wore a locket of her husband’s hair around her neck. This decision spurred a trend among both Americans and the British alike. A trend of wearing different items made of hair to mourn loved ones.

Hair art could take many forms. Hair jewelry allowed Victorians to carry a part of their loved ones with them in bracelets, rings, brooches, watch fobs, even buttons. Hair from a deceased family member was made into a mourning wreath for remembrance.

A mourning wreath could be made up of one family member’s hair or hair from the entire family. As family members died, hair was saved in a special mold. When enough was gathered, the hair was fashioned into flowers and leaves by twisting and sewing it around shaped wire forms. The purpose of a family hair wreath was to tell a story about the family and their history. The same as, for example, a modern-day family tree, which shows all family members and the different relationships between them. The open end at the top of the wreath symbolizes the deceased’s ascent to heaven. Wreaths were then placed in shadow boxes and displayed, mainly in the home, with the open end up, like a horseshoe.

Not all wreaths were for mourning, however. Churches, schools and other groups might make a hair wreath from the current congregation or school. Everyone would contribute hair to be woven into the correct shape.

Another form of hair art was sculptures, which would be covered with a glass dome and set on a parlor table. The making of different forms of hair art was primarily a middle-class womanly task, which involved consumer culture. It was a way to take care of your family and your home.

There is only one place in the world today, that is an official hair museum. Leila’s Hair Museum in Independence, Missouri. The owner is Leila Cohoon, a hairdresser. Leila bought her first hair art piece in 1952, which would spur her later collection. Today, the museum possesses of over 600 hair wreaths and over 2,000 pieces of hair jewelry. Some contemporary artists work with hair: Melanie Bilenker layers her own hair between resin to build domestic scenes. Mona Hatoum uses hair to reference fragments of self in her installations.

At our museum, we have a few hair wreaths in our collection. These were donated by J. J. Figi and records indicate the pieces were made by Mrs. Kathryn Eichelkraut. Two pieces are on display in the Collectibles building of the museum. A braid or "watch fob" made of hair is on display, as well. The maker of this piece is not documented in museum records.

Today, despite everything, the craftsmanship of these historic pieces are still able to be seen. Every knot in a strand or petal of a flower formed by hair and wire reflects an intimate relationship between artist and absent subject.

A New Industry Comes to New Glarus

Reprinted, in part, from PET Dairy Chats: 50th Anniversary Edition, November 1960

The year 1960 marked the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Helvetia Milk Condensing Company and the 50th anniversary of the PET Milk plant in New Glarus. The company routinely published a newsletter called PET Dairy Chats and published this article in its New Glarus, November 1960, 50th anniversary edition. At the time, Fred Meyer was the District Manager and Harlan Wernle served as plant manager. Manager Wernle wrote: "Fifty years is a long time. However, if conditions are pleasant, progressive and beneficial, then the years pass rapidly and can be called golden years. The Pet Milk Company has, for 50 golden years, been privileged to serve the New Glarus area as an integral part of its economy. For 50 years, a trust has existed between patrons, employees, businessmen and the company. Not once has this trust been broken by anyone. From this trust, all have benefited, making our community an outstanding one."

The following article from PET Dairy Chats reflected on the beginning of the New Glarus plant:

"The first decade of the 20th century was drawing to a close when the Helvetia Milk Condensing Company located its seventh plant at New Glarus. Our company was then 25 years old, and had established six plants in other parts of the United States.

On June 28, 1910, *Der Deutsch Schweizersiche Courier*, the New Glarus German language paper of that period, carried the following excerpt from *the Highland (Illinois) Union*: "The six factories of the Helvetia Milk Condensing Company, which are found in different sections of our country have for some time been unable to supply the demand. For several weeks the seeking of a new field for another factory has been in progress. Different places in northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin came under consideration, and the decision fell on the Swiss colony in New Glarus, Wisconsin.

On Tuesday morning, Louis Latzer, president of the company, returned and reported dealings and purchase of real estate, agreements with milk producers and owner matters had been consummated. Architect Helfenstellar of St. Louis has instructions to prepare plans immediately, so that the work of building may start without any further delay. The new factory is to be similar in size to the local factory, and it is hoped by the middle of September or beginning of October, the work will be completed. Last summer , several citizens from New Glarus attended the Schuetzenfest (shooting festival) in Highland, where they saw old acquaintances and made new ones. The community has a well-developed milk industry, as well as creameries and cheese factories. These boosted new forms of the milk industry in New Glarus. New Glarus is a village on the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul railroad, with a real Swiss citizenship."

Helvetia Milk Condensing, late 1910

Pet Milk Plant in the fall of 1960

Did You Know?

Patron numbers were assigned to farmers that brought their milk to the Pet Milk plant each day. The numbers were assigned in the order that the farmers arrived to deliver their milk. November 30, 1910 marked the first day of plant operations. This is the list of the first ten patrons of the plant: 1. Ed Zwickey 2. Fred Stuessy 3. John S. Duerst 4. Alvin Ott 5. Oswald Freitag 6. John Schuler (M.J. Hoesly Farm) 7. Jacob Hefty 8. Joe Steiner 9. J. C Hoesly 10. J. H. Kundert. In 1960, seven of the ten farms were still producing milk for the plant, however ownership of most of the farms had changed over time. That said, the PET Dairy Chats publication reported that not one of the 10 farms had been lost as a patron to another milk company.

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

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