NEW GLARUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT

The Board met at the end of May using *Zoom* technology for the first time.

Officers of the Board of Directors were unanimously re-elected and are listed on the left.

The meeting agenda primarily focused on exploring options related to opening the Swiss Historical Village Museum to visitors. Challenges include staffing the museum, conducting tours using social distancing, ensuring frequently touched surfaces and particularly our small bathroom facilities are adequately cleaned and sanitized. On a positive note, we recognize that the museum grounds offer an opportunity to more easily maintain a distance from others in the outdoors. However, Board members are concerned about monitoring visitors' adherence to any expectations we might place on them, based on guidance for "amusement" and retail venues, especially in the close quarters of the entrance building. While current COVID-19 infection rates are very low in Green County, tourism will potentially increase the risk for our staff and volunteers, many of whom are older than 60 years of age, due to exposure from visitors coming from areas where infection rates are greater. The Board will hold a special meeting in mid-June to review the results of additional research on procedural changes we may need to implement before making a final decision.

In financial matters, Treasurer Ott presented the Board with income and expense forecasts based on operations' scenarios that reflect delayed opening dates, less than daily operation of the museum and not opening the museum for the 2020 season. In coming months, we will explore fundraising options to reduce our anticipated losses. Immediate donations are welcomed and appreciated.

The Board is happy to report that the exterior of the north side of the Print Shop has been restored by expert carpenter Roger Clark. Clark has assisted the Historical Society for many years, ensuring our buildings are maintained in a manner that protects the contents, to the greatest extent possible. In addition, Roger replaced doors in the sausage shop, cut and painted lettering for the sausage shop and smokehouse and built platforms for the new displays planned for the Hall of History. Members of the Board's Building and Grounds Committee will paint the newly installed front to complete the print shop project. We thank Roger for his generosity in performing this work at reduced prices. See the " work in progress" picture above left.

FOOD & FEED SACK FASHION

Have you been looking for alternatives to readily available products during your "stay at home" experience? Perhaps you have memories of your own or from parents' or grand-parents' stories about the challenges of living during times of hardship such as the Great Depression, World War I or World War II. One approach to frugal living and making do with items on hand was using food and feed sacks to make a wide variety of items for domestic use, including clothing.

After many early years of purchasing products in wooden crates and barrels, retailers switched to packaging bulk items in cotton fabric bags around 1880. This approach was driven in part by the availability of sewing machines. In the first years of production, company logos were printed on the bags used to sell flour, sugar, salt and animal feed. Women bleached the bags to remove the logos and then proceeded to make dish towels, diapers, and even underwear for other members of the family. In the 1920s, bag manufacturers began producing sacks with prints similar to fabrics for sale in general stores due to the increased demand for these cheap alternatives to fabric during the Great Depression. Paper labels were attached to the bag so that more fabric was available for making items. Bags used for sugar, flour and salt were most desirable due to the tighter weave of the fabric when compared to those holding animal feed.

Businesses selling their feed products in printed bags found women joining their husbands shopping for the farm seeking their favorite prints. According to the Collector's Weekly publication, three million Americans wore at least one article of clothing made from these bags by 1942 and one mill reported printing bags in 1000 different designs. Some retailers commissioned artists to create Disney and movie motifs (picture Gone with the Wind), landscape designs and art deco styles in brighter colors. Some bags presented border style prints designed specifically for making pillow cases or curtains. Sizes of bags were standardized around the time of the second World War: 50 pound bags measured 34 by 38 inches and 100 pound bags measured 39 by 46 inches. Typically, three 100 pound bags were required to make a dress, which increased sales for these merchants. After World War II the feed sack fashion trend declined due to the much cheaper cost of bags made from a type of paper for 10 cents, while cloth bags production cost was 32 cents per bag. However, evidence of feed sack prints remains present through the 1960s and particularly in areas where the Amish sect reside.

Fabric from food and feed sacks was also used in quilt making. One such quilt, was made by Elda Schiesser in her teens and is part of the quilt collection at the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS). According to information and photos provided to the WHS by Elda and Linda Schiesser, Elda made this quilt as a 4-H promoted thrift project. Flour sacks were collected from a relative's bakery and from her Dad, who raised chickens on their farm. She recorded every detail associated with making her quilt in her 4-H record book. The entire quilt making process from beginning to end took 65 hours and cost her just $2.02 for supplies. When she received a fourth place display prize at the State Fair, Elda expressed her disappointment. The judges' feedback noted the quilt could have used fewer colors in its design. To read the entire history of Elda's food and feed fabric quilt visit: https://wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS2784

Collecting vintage fabric of this type (identified by chain stitching along one edge of the fabric) and using reproduction print fabric for quilts remains popular today. Do you have items made of vintage food and feed sack patterns in your collection?

GLARNER SCULPTURE COMMEMORATES JOURNEY

Eva Oertli created the sculpture displayed in the grass triangle between the west end of the Hall of History and the Settler's Cabin as part of an art history initiative sponsored by the Glarus Art Society in the 1990s. The sculpture was a gift from Oertli following its unveiling as part of the 150th anniversary celebration of the founding of New Glarus.

The 1994 Swiss publication celebrating the work of a number of Glarnese artists described Oertli's sculpture, as follows:

"A semi-sphere seamlessly rises from the stump forming a fragment of the globe. For once the focus is not as customary, on the North and South Poles, but instead on a relief-like elevation of the European continent which is perched on its vortex. Upon this is an old-fashioned model of an overseas trunk, which seems packed and ready to go, at the very top is a pair of heavy shoes. Shoes, suitcase and globe: These three motifs revolve around the theme of movement and travel. The objects are involved on different levels. The shoes speak of travel in miniature, they protect the human foot while in locomotion. The suitcase is a witness to greater movement, and longer absence. The semi-sphere of the earth suggests a pan-continental journey."

Article author Madeleine Shuppli notes that Oertli in her sculpture "reminds us of those people who undertook the difficult journey, some unwillingly, many heavy-heartedly. And it is exactly as a result of the artistic assimilation of the historical events which determined her choice of lead as the working material, giving implicit expression to the burden these people carried."

Oertli created this sculpture as a young artist, working with her sculptor father. She studied the medium at the Academy in Munich, Germany, focusing on the female human head. She continues to produce art at her home studio in the Village of Ennenda, Canton Glarus and one may view images of her more recent work by visiting her website at: https://www.evaoertli.ch/

CRADLE OF COMFORT

This cradle, displayed in the small Settler's Cabin at the Swiss Historical Village was made by Oswald Babler in 1876 for Jacob and Verena Marty Stuessy. The Steussys originally lived three miles southwest of New Glarus. As you may know, Oswald Babler was among the original emigrants that founded New Glarus and was ten years old at the time of his journey to America, in 1845.

From notes that accompanied the donation to the Historical Society in 1965 and retained in the archives, we learned that all of the Steussy children, 4 boys and 3 girls, were rocked in this cradle. In 1898, the cradle passed to Jacob and Verena's son Jacob E., and his children, three boys, a girl and a set of twins (girl and boy), slept in the cradle. When Jacob E.'s daughter Marion was married in 1937, she took the cradle to her farm, and her three children also had their turn in the cradle. According to the family, the cradle always had a corn husk mattress called a "tick" and the corn husks were changed from time to time. Does your family have an item that was passed along for several generations? If you do, we'd love to hear about it and share your story in a future edition of the newsletter. Use the contact information found on the last page of this newsletter to send in a photo and your story.

WALKING THE PERIMETER

Looking for a new destination for a stroll? Take a walk around the perimeter of the Swiss Historical Village Museum. You can take a navigate the perimeter of the grounds with ease, including using the north/south sidewalk that connects Sixth and Seventh Avenues along the museum parking lot on the east side of the grounds. Spring flowers are blooming and the prairie plot plants are poking through the ground near the Farm Implement Building. Much work has been done to paint and repair buildings, including new wood on the north side of the print shop, paint on the Sausage Shop and removing old, overgrown shrubs from the areas near the entrance and exit doors of the entrance building. We acknowledge the many hours of volunteer time donated by Board President Larry Klassy this spring to make the Museum more attractive and welcoming to our visitors.

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

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