NEW GLARUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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B.2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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The largest photo in the group above is labeled B.Duerst, Director

BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT

After returning to the Board in September 2019 to fill the role of Treasurer following the death of Doris Arn, Ann Marie Ott has stepped down from the position. The Board unanimously elected John Freitag to fill the vacancy.

The Board discussed developing a business membership category for the Historical Society, but no decisions were made at this time.

We welcome new life member Matt Figi. Matt chose to direct his life membership fee to the Historical Society's endowment fund managed by the Community Foundation of Southern Wisconsin (CFSW). Directing his donation to CFSW reflects Matt's desire to safeguard the sustainability of the organization.

Board member Dibble provided an update on planning and work with museum consultant Brian Bigler for the second phase of enhancements to the Hall of History exhibits. The Board has reviewed and commented on the text for this phase. Dibble will meet with staff of Park Printing to secure an estimate of the cost for the project. We intend to seek a grant through the next cycle of the CFSW's New Glarus Community Funds program, as we have done in the past, to reduce the overall costs for the new exhibit.

The Buildings and Grounds committee is making plans to paint the print shop following the refacing of the front of the building earlier this year by Roger Clark. Plans are also being made to remove overgrown bushes from the north side of the entrance building this fall. The interior of the Collectibles building will receive an update over the next two months with plans to remove old, vinyl floor coverings, polish the existing wood floors and brighten the interior with new paint. Roseann Ott is taking the lead for this maintenance project with costs covered by the CARES Act grant award received last month.

RECENT DONATIONS

Betty Stanek of Waunakee donated an early photo of the New Glarus "Mannerchor." Betty's father, W.M. Meier was a member of the group following his immigration to the area from Switzerland in 1924. Mr. Meier was a cheesemaker at the Silver cheese factory near Monticello. In the 1940s he purchased a Vernon County cheese factory and moved there. While the photograph has no date, we believe it was taken in the early 1930s.

ALPABZUG

This article reflects excerpts from a presentation created by Historical Society member D. L. "Lee" Camarigg. Lee had planned to share it with the public at a Historical Society event celebrating the 175th anniversary of the founding of New Glarus. Lee hopes to travel to New Glarus next summer when we'll be able to hear about his trips to Elm to witness the Alpabzug first hand.

The Alpabzug (bringing the cows down from the Alp) is an opportunity to celebrate the bounty of the summer. Much like a county fair, the cows and even the goats were cleaned and decorated for a parade through the village. Every weekend in September various Swiss villages celebrate their Alpabzug.

Historically, the village's milk cows were taken to the Alp (highlands) during the summer, to graze the meadows there. The grass that grew on the land close to the village was necessary as winter feed for the cows. It was cut, dried on tripods, and then stored for the winter. The barn was a portion of the house, either the basement or adjacent to the living space.

Each family in the village had at least one cow. The cow would calf in the early spring (March / April), then fresh (again giving milk). In late April / early May, one family from the village would be delegated to take the cows to the Alp. They would spend the summer living in the Alphütte (cabin), milking the cows and making cheese. The Alphütte incorporated space for both cheese production and living. Meanwhile in the village the neighbors would make hay for the family delegated to go to the Alp. Periodically, supplies would be brought up to the Alphütte from the village and cheeses taken down. The milk production of each cow was recorded so that the cheeses could be allocated by production.

While the cows were in the Alp, the villagers relied on goats' milk. Each family had at least one nanny goat for milk. As soon as the goats were milked, a youth commissioned by the village to be the Goat Herd would go up the main street accumulating the goats, taking them to higher grounds and watching over them during the day. In the evening, he would bring them back to the village to be milked again. Today, it is much the same with dairy farming, albeit instead of each family having a cow, a dairy farmer will have several cows. They still take the cows up to the Alp for the summer, where they have a modern milking barn with an adjacent plant for cheese & butter production.

In this photo, the cows are down from the Alp. This dairy farmer in Elm with the help of his wife and young son (not in the photo) is bringing in the cows from the pasture close to the village for evening milking. The large white bags contain the grass that was harvested in the fields close to the village all summer.

In September as the weather in the Alp turns, the cows are brought back to the village for the winter months. The farmers are now required by law (animal protection) to have the cows down from the Alp before September 30.

Thanks, Lee! We look forward to your full presentation next summer.

SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

This article is a reprint from the September 22, 1937, edition of the New Glarus Post. It commemorates the first meeting of the Green County Historical Society from which the seeds were sown for the New Glarus Historical Society. The information about the founding of the New Glarus Historical Society, at the bottom of the page, is drawn from documentation recorded by member Duane Freitag.

"For the first time in the history of the County, a meeting was called in Monroe, on Tuesday evening, for the purpose of organizing a County Historical Society. The aim of the meeting was fulfilled and the fifteen or so interested people present completed the organization of the "Green County Historical Society" with the election of officers. These Officers are: President, Carl Marty, Sr., Monroe, 1st Vice-President, Dr. John Schindler, Monroe, 2nd Vice-Pres, Mrs. Ray Bast, Monroe, Secretary, Miss Dorothy Potter, Monroe, and Treasurer, J.J. Figi, New Glarus. Request for a charter and constitution from the State Historical Society are to be made by the following Committee: Rev. R. Rettig, Miss Potter and Mrs. E.N. Churchill. At the next regular meeting to be held at the Monroe library, on Monday, October 18, it is hoped the charter will be present, other charter members welcomed and more plans for the future perfected.

The aim of this organization is that the county will work together as a whole to preserve the history and records of the county as well as those relics and antiques which are still left from the early pioneer settlers. Plans and ways and means of carrying out such plans are varied and they must be carried out slowly and a little at a time.

One of the questions still to be decided, which is of importance to New Glarus, shall all of these exhibits or antiques be kept together in Monroe or shall our Swiss relics be kept here at New Glarus in a fit place. Suggestions were made that plans be made in the newly purchased park property here either in a log cabin or Swiss house for the perseverance (sic) of Swiss relics here in New Glarus where they have the most significance. That question is for the people of New Glarus to answer.

Another suggestion made was that separate units be maintained, preferably all in a group at Monroe for the four predominating groups that settled Green County, namely the Scandinavians, Irish, Swiss and New Englanders. It is hoped to organize to work for exhibits of all of these.

Other lines of or work for the Society to attempt in time are: Preserving official records; completing histories of townships, families, etc.; marking historical trails; equipping some old abandoned cheese factory with equipment used in the early days of cheese making; with the aid of the state, putting up a miners' shack in the New Glarus woods park and preserving old Lead Road and Indian relics there; preserving relics of the Daughters of the American Revolution, of the Civil War and of the World War. In fact, the preservation of anything having any historical value instead of letting antique dealers snap them up for a few cents as they are doing now in Green County.

The time to act is now! Members of the society will welcome any suggestions from interested persons and are hoping that the next meeting on Oct. 18 will be very largely attended.

Those present from New Glarus were: J.J. Figi, Fred Ott, Rev. R. Rettig, Mrs. Gilbert Ott, Mrs. W.W. Stauffacher and Mrs. Arthur J. Theiler."

Just two years later in 1939, and again in September, the New Glarus Historical Society held its first meeting in the Chalet of the Golden Fleece, the home of Edwin Barlow. At that meeting J.U. Freitag was elected the first president of the organization, and a constitution and by-laws were drawn up that fall. Plans evolved to create a historical village to preserve items from the Swiss Colony, and the first log building was opened on the land leased from the Village of New Glarus.

In this anniversary month, please act now and recruit someone new to join the Historical Society. Give a gift of membership to your friends and family members so that our Society will continue to grow and the rich history of our community and Swiss heritage will be preserved for generations to come. Membership information can be found on our website here: https://www.swisshistoricalvillage.org/giving-opportunities

ANOTHER ANNIVERSARY

Many of us think of September 11 and remember the terrible, terrorist attacks on our country. But for the people of the village of Elm, Canton Glarus, September 11 marks the anniversary of a much earlier disaster, the catastrophic landslide of 1881. The landslide killed and buried 114 people, destroyed 83 buildings and covered over 200 acres of land. Caused by slate mining activities, which had been taking place in the area since 1861, the mine was also destroyed. Many families in New Glarus can trace their family ancestry back to the Village of Elm. Names of those who lost their lives in the landslide are listed on a plaque on the protestant church in Elm.

For more history about the village of Elm and pictures of the landslide visit Patrick Wild's Glarner Family Tree website here:
https://www.glarusfamilytree.com/elm

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

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