NEW GLARUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Roseann Ott at work in the Collectibles building

BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT

The Board returned to the Zoom meeting format for its October meeting. Ann Marie Ott submitted her resignation from the Board due to her recent move to Door County. Board member Loeffelholz's term expires in the spring and she does not intend to pursue a second term. As a result, the Board will form a nominating committee at its November meeting for the purpose of nominating candidates to fill the vacancies.

In financial matters, the Board continues to pursue information in order to transition to the use of QuickBooks software for Historical Society financial management; no decisions about options were made at this time. The CARES grant 90 day project period ended on October 31st. Treasurer Freitag will review spending for this period and allocate allowable expenses to the grant in order to produce the required report for the WI Humanities Council, which administered the grant funds.

The Board initiated discussion about options for displays in the north side section of the Hall of History for 2021. Board member Dibble will prepare an outline of possibilities for future discussion. Suggestions from Historical Society members are welcomed.

PROJECTS IN PROGRESS – THANKS VOLUNTEERS!

For those of you who know Roseann Ott, it's hard to imagine her lying down on the job! But someone caught her in that position recently as she was painting the interior of the Collectibles building. All of the artifacts were removed from the shelves and walls to complete the task. Those artifacts are now being examined and added to the inventory files. The Collectibles building exhibits will be reset in the spring. Thanks to Roseann and Gail Beal for their efforts on this project. In addition, Roseann recently volunteered to shop for the $300 worth of cleaning supplies covered by the CARES grant. Since stores are limiting the number of individual products one may purchase, Roseann needed to go to three different store locations to get a sufficient supply of products for us to use now and for the 2021 season. Lastly, the newly installed wood siding on the print shop was painted in October by volunteers from the Board who painted the south facing side of the building, too. The work was aided through the loan of Roger Clark's lift truck, which helped ensure the safety of our painters!

NEW EXHIBITS FOR THE HALL OF HISTORY

In this article, Board member Mary Dibble shares information about her work in developing and installing the Hall of History exhibits over the past 18 months, in collaboration with expert museum consultant Brian Bigler.

The New Glarus Historical Society is very fortunate to have access to an abundance of writings about the founding of New Glarus: first-hand accounts in journals and diaries, early church and school records, formal reports to the Emigration Society, and letters exchanged with relatives back in Switzerland. Swiss scholars and a number of local historians over the decades have preserved the history and made it available to everyone. It is to them we are indebted for the rich source material that allows us to develop new permanent exhibits for the Hall of History.

With an eye to the future, our goals are to install exhibits that meet museum standards, are constructed of permanent materials that won't fade or deteriorate, and that can tell the story on their own, without needing explanation by a guide. Because accuracy is so important, we've been fortunate to have Historical Society members Duane Freitag and Bob Elmer review the texts, correcting errors, chasing down questionable legends, and making sense of conflicting information.

The project began in 2018, and what we have been calling Phase I was completed this past spring with significant support from grants awarded by the Community Foundation of Southern Wisconsin (CFSW). The panels of text and images were designed and installed by Park Printing in Verona. Phase I includes a brief overview of the history of the Canton of Glarus and the story of the Glarner emigration to Wisconsin in 1845. Adding some history on Canton Glarus was necessary as the exterior panels that were installed on the Hall of History about 25 years ago have begun to show significant wear. We felt it important to assure that relevant information about the New Glarus founders' homeland and heritage be integrated into the emigration story and be vibrant for years to come.

The emigration story is remarkable, but it is also complicated. There were two journeys – one by the two land scouts and one by the large emigrant group. They partially overlap in time but are essentially separate. To tell both narratives clearly, a graphic artist with Park Printing designed an undulating timeline. Highlights of the two journeys stretch out along the timeline over two walls, with the emigrant group's journey above and the land scouts' journey beneath. The picture at the left depicts the timeline and its related information panels as well as one of the dioramas designed by consultant Bigler.

Most Americans have ancestors who immigrated to this country, and there is much about the Glarner emigrant group's journey that was typical for the times. We include information – such as sailing across the Atlantic "between decks" – that would have been common experiences for many of those immigrants, making it more relevant for a wide range of museum visitors. Professionally curated dioramas are one of the features of the updated exhibits. We contracted with Brian Bigler, a historical museum exhibit designer with expertise in artifacts from the 1800s and 1900s, under grants from the CFSW. He scoured our collections and selected each item to be placed on newly-constructed platforms to represent the story being told. If we didn't have an item, he had them replicated using historically appropriate materials. For example, he made "bindles" – bundles wrapped in muslin and tied with hemp rope – frequently used by 19th century immigrants.

Phase II tells the story of the early years of the settlement, from 1845 to 1910, from surviving to thriving. Much of the preparatory work has been completed. Mr. Bigler helped develop the arc of the narrative and designed a third diorama. The text and images have been selected, and Park Printing has done some initial designs. We originally expected to fund Phase II with Historical Society funds and donations, but we have no revenue this year due to the COVID pandemic. Consequently, we have applied for another grant from the CFSW to pay for a portion of the costs. If you are interested in helping with this project and are able to do so, donations of any amount would be very appreciated. Donations can be sent to the New Glarus Historical Society at P.O. Box 745, New Glarus, WI, 53574. We hope to have the Phase II exhibit installed by next spring and look forward to welcoming everyone back with fresh exhibits that share our amazing history.

IT'S BEGINNING TO LOOK A LOT LIKE CHRISTMAS. . . AND WE NEED YOUR HELP

We at the New Glarus Historical Society and Swiss Historical Village were so looking forward to celebrating the 175th anniversary of New Glarus this year, and so it was with heavy hearts that we decided to keep the museum closed for the 2020 season to help slow the spread of COVID-19. But the year's not over yet, and we still want to do something to celebrate our community.

This year, let's all celebrate 175 years of Christmas in New Glarus! We are collecting holiday memories from years gone by to share on our Facebook page. We have some wonderful historical treasures in our archives that we will share, but more than anything, we want to hear from you.

We invite you to share your own memories of St. Nicholas Day, Hannukah, Christmas and other winter holidays in New Glarus over the years. We would love to see your old photographs, cards & letters, beloved holiday recipes, reminisces, and other treasures. Depending on the volume of submissions we receive we may not be able to share everything this year, but all submissions will be saved in our archives.

Email submissions to admin@swisshistoricalvillage.org no later than December 1st. To share physical photographs and other documents, you can mail them c/o New Glarus Public Library, attn: Erica, PO Box 35, New Glarus, WI 53574. Please be sure to include your name, contact information, and whether the items are a donation to the archives, or if you would like them back after they've been digitized. (Local members are also welcome to drop items off at the library's curbside window during regular business hours.)

BRATZELIS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

One holiday tradition associated with New Glarus is making bratzelis. Other spellings of the name of this sweet treat, found in cookbooks in our archives, include: bräzeli, braetzeli and bratzli. The Historical Society's cookbook contains no less than 8 recipes for this delicate Swiss cookie and many other families with Swiss roots claim that their recipe could win first prize in a taste test. What makes the recipes different? Some believe brown sugar is better than white sugar and that lemon flavoring speaks to the taste buds more than vanilla, but in every recipe butter is required. Making this delicious treat, just four cookies at a time, can be challenging because bratzeli irons are no longer made for export. Pictured at the left is a an electric Jura Bratzeli iron purchased in Switzerland by a local resident in the late 1960s. The Jura is heavy, weighing nearly 15 pounds due to its cast iron plates and porcelain covered steel exterior. Before electricity, bratzelis were made using cast iron utensils on a wood stove. Several irons, each with unique designs, are among the artifacts in the Historical Society collection. Some of those irons make just two cookies at a time. Many households today rely on the Italian Pizzelle iron as a substitute for a Swiss iron. So, if you don't have a bratzeli iron, you can purchase the substitute pizelle maker from Esther's European Imports via her online shop at: https://shopswiss.com/products.php?cat=Bratzeli+Makers. Some believe if you bite into a bratzeli and it breaks in three pieces you'll have good luck!! So purchase a Historical Society cookbook for yourself or as a gift (write to admin@swisshistoricalvillage.org) and try all of the bratzeli recipes and decide for yourself which is best. Then see how much luck you can produce, too! Enjoy!!

Here's the recipe for *Sweet Bräzeli* contributed by Doris Arn, former Board member who passed away in September 2019.

¾ cup butter
¾ cup shortening
1 cup brown sugar
1 cup white sugar
4 eggs
4 cups flour
1 teaspoon vanilla

Beat butter, shortening and sugar; add eggs and vanilla, add flour slowly. Refrigerate overnight. Form dough into balls the size of a hickory nut, place one ball on each section of the Bräzeli iron. Close lid and bake until golden.

Note: Braztzelis will keep several weeks or more if placed in a tightly closed tin or other container.

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that the New Glarus Public Library opened for the first time on November 28, 1934? According to the New Glarus Post, the “free library” opened in the evening on that day from 7-9 p.m. and reported that 200 books in English and German had arrived from the traveling library in Madison. On duty was librarian Mrs. Appolonia Zweifel. She would also open the library on Saturdays in the afternoon and evening, from 1-5:30 p.m. and again from 7-9 p.m. A notice communicated that a fine of 1 cent per day would be charged for each day a book was kept beyond the time limit. The following week, the Post reported that 50 books had been checked out on the first evening that the library opened to the public.

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The Bank of New Glarus
and Sugar River Bank Branches

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