NEW GLARUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT

The Board continues to work on coordinating plans for the 2021 Harvest Fest after last year's hiatus. A priority is to contact artisans and craftsmen who have demonstrated their talents in previous years, as well as recruit new ones to ensure a wide variety of opportunities for Harvest Fest attendees to learn about the life experienced by the early settlers of New Glarus. The Board hopes to secure support from the New Glarus Chamber of Commerce for the popular horse-drawn wagon rides that bring visitors from the downtown business district to the museum on the hill.

Preliminary counts of visitors suggest attendance at a pace similar to 2019 despite the museum remaining closed on Mondays. The Board made a decision to operate the museum on Labor Day, Monday, September 6 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Much progress has been made by Treasurer John Freitag in transitioning the Historical Society accounting practices to Quick Books. The Board would like to publicly acknowledge a generous financial donation from members Dorothy and Bob Abendroth.

We welcome the following new members to the Historical Society: John and Mary Ott, Frank and Mary Jo Kilpatrick, Mary Steussy Peters, Ryan Baum, the Gary and Kristy Kasten family and the Mark Naess family.

STAYING SWISS – A NEW HALL OF HISTORY ARTIFACT

Todd Klassy and George Albright helped the Board of Directors obtain a talerschwingen bowl recently that will be placed on exhibit in the museum's Hall of History.

According to an article by Tatiana Tissot on the House of Switzerland website (www.houseofswitzerland.org), talerschwingen, a type of folk music, was first identified in Canton Appenzell and the Toggenburg region shortly after 1900. The music is created when a five Franc silver coin is spun slowly and continuously in a ceramic bowl. Typically three different sizes of bowls are used to produce different tones to accompany yodeling. Watch a video from the Swiss Center of North America featuring New Glarus Jodlerklub members Richard Arn, Heinz Mattman and Steve Streiff performing talwerschwingen at Turner Hall in Monroe, WI. https://www.facebook.com/the.Swiss.Center/videos/talerschwingen-jodlerklub-new-glarus-at-swissfest-turner-hall-monroe-swissconsin/423164311680118/

And if you can read German and like to try new games, you can download a Talerschwingen game application from Google Play here: https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=ch.appenzeller.Talerschwingen&hl=en_US&gl=US

RESTORED AND IMPROVED

Have you ever looked at this picture of the New Glarus Lumber Company in the UW Library online New Glarus photo collection, when the business was located in what is now the Village Park? The photo is thought to have been taken in the 1920s or 1930s. And then did you ever wonder what happened to those buildings and sheds? The history of the sheds was found documented in the Decmber 28,1940 edition of a lumber trade magazine called *The American Lumberman*. *The American Lumberman* was first published under the name the Lumbermen's Gazette in 1872. The magazine became *Home Center* beginning in 1972 and is still published today.

The title of the December 1940 article was titled "*Sheds Moved in Sections, Restored and Improved*." The article read as follows: "When the little city of New Glarus, Wis., decided to create a public park near the center of town, it needed, in addition to the space already acquired, that on which were the office and sheds of the New Glarus Lumber Co. The sheds, just a little less than 50 years old at the time, were considered to have many years of utility by the Ott brothers, who own and operate the company. It was decided, therefore, to move the structures across the street to a new location rather than abandon them and erect new buildings. The old sheds were cut int 34-foot sections, placed on new foundations, re-roofed and re-painted. In front of one of the sheds a new office and display room were built.

All of the lumber and other building material handled by the company is under roof, and most of it is stored in the structurally sound sheds which have stood for a half century, and with their new paint, look as if they might well stand for another half-century."

New office and display room built in front of 50-year old shed on new site

Main storage shed, also 50 years old, equipped with new doors

Fast forward to today, eighty years since the move, and we know the Ott brothers (Gilbert and Harvey) were right. The sheds stood the test of time and have been wonderfully remodeled into what locals and visitors enjoy today as the New Glarus Fest Haus.

If you'd like to view the entire edition of the *American Lumberman* from which the article was taken you can find it here: https://archive.org/details/sim_home-improvement-center_1940-12-28_3194/page/30/mode/2up

ANOTHER TRANSFORMATION

A transformative era in New Glarus began in 1962 when the Pet Milk Company, the village's primary employer, closed its condensed milk operation, displacing more than 100 employees and negatively impacting many area farmers who supplied milk to the plant. A first response was to create an Industrial Development Corporation, but knowing development could take time, citizens looked to the possibility of tourism as a means to address the economic problem. According to Steven Hoelscher, author of *Heritage on Stage, the Invention of Ethnic Place in America's Little Switzerland,* "the village elite brought several experts on Wisconsin tourism to the community, including marketing agents from the Wisconsin Dells, rural sociologists from the University of Wisconsin Extension and the Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce. . . Each suggested "the tourist angle." And although the success and increasing crowds attending the Wilhelm Tell pageant and visiting the Chalet of the Golden Fleece and Swiss Historical Village were indicators of possible success, a local resident noted "it was not enough just to be Swiss, we had to start *looking* Swiss." Local businesses began storefront remodeling to create a "Swiss-style" look. One business that did so in the mid-1960s was Roberts Drug Store and the completion of the project and grand opening was reported in the Capital Times:

"The building, over 100 years old has an interesting history. Built by pioneers at a cost of $2,725, it served as a schoolhouse until 1896 when a brick school was built. . . . After the new school was built, the building was purchased by Dr. Blumer as an investment. In 1905 it became a restaurant owned by Mr. and Mrs. Will Tollefson and Maggie and Mary Luchsinger. In 1920 the building and business were purchased by Mr. and Mrs. J.C Luchsinger. It was during this time that the building was enlarged with a kitchen being added to the north and later an addition to the west which served as a barbershop for their sons, Clifford and Ralph. Following the death of Mr. Luchsinger in 1939, Mrs. Luchsinger continued in the restaurant business until 1942. A series of operators followed until James Roberts and his father Arthur Roberts, Belleville started a drug store in the building in 1946. The Swiss front was designed by Don Ott of the New Glarus Lumber Company and son of Gilbert Ott, the late mayor of this city which was founded by Swiss immigrants more than a century ago." Today we know this building as the popular gift shop, the Bramble Patch. Photos are from the Don Ott family collection.

WILHELM TELL HISTORY

For the second year in a row the production of the Wilhelm Tell pageant has been paused after its original 82 year run. In addition, this year marks the 60th anniversary of the death of Gilbert Ott, who led the Wilhelm Tell Guild for many years and who was first to play the role of Wilhelm Tell, initially in German and then in English for a total of 24 years. It was reported that he regularly practiced shooting the crossbow at an apple set on a barrel at a distance of 50 paces, despite the "faked" scene in the actual play. He was quoted as saying "How could I be Tell, if I could not shoot an arrow through an apple." Ott performed his role of Tell for the last time on Labor Day in 1961, in great and noticeable pain from what was believed to be a back ailment. He was admitted to the hospital immediately following the performance and died of untreatable cancer the following month. While his community contributions were numerous, including serving as Mayor of New Glarus, he was perhaps more notable for his role as Wilhelm Tell. As a result, his death was acknowledged in newspapers around the area, in other states and numerous condolences arrived from Switzerland, copies of which are found in the Historical Society archives. The handmade , wooden shoes that Gilbert wore as Tell in the first production of the play in 1938 are displayed in the Collectibles building at the museum.

DID YOU KNOW?

Todd Klassy, son of Historical Society President Larry Klassy, has been publishing a popular local history quiz on Facebook over the past several months. Each week a list of trivia questions based on New Glarus and Green County facts are posted on the "You Know You are from New Glarus if.. . ." Facebook page. Page members may post their responses to the questions and Todd posts the answers to the questions about a week later. So if you love trivia, or reading anything about New Glarus, join the approximate 1500 group members and test your skills: https://www.facebook.com/groups/591257990954443/

Contact Us

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The Bank of New Glarus
Powering Growth in Our Community

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