NEW GLARUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Volume 5/Issue 1/April 2022

2021 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Larry Klassy, President

Jim Hoesly, Vice-President

John Freitag, Treasurer

Rebecca Forbes, Secretary

John Colstad

John Eglsaer

David Hustad

Jackie Judd

John Lienhardt

BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT

The Board held its annual membership meeting on Sunday, April 3 at the Chalet Landhaus. Fourteen Board members and their spouses, along with 21 members and their guests attended the gathering. The business meeting was conducted by President Larry Klassy who provided highlights of the past year along with a financial report from Treasurer, John Freitag. John Eglsaer shared an update on plans for painting the Collectibles building and securing bids for roof repairs as well as other building maintenance in the coming year. The Board will welcome volunteers to help with painting projects. Board members John Eglsaer, Rebecca Forbes and Jackie Judd, whose Board terms expired this year, were re-elected by meeting attendees.

Brian Bigler, who provided consulting services for the Hall of History exhibit enhancements over the past two years, was the guest speaker. Brian shared information about exhibit planning and design, the importance of displaying artifacts to generate visitor interest and using just the right amount of text to support interpretation of displays.

More information about finances appears on page 2 of this newsletter, followed by a summary of other information related to Historical Society and museum operations.

DONATIONS

Historical Society life member Pauline Ott passed away at the end of December and her family has donated memorial money received following her death to the Historical Society. Pauline directed many visitors who walked by Chalet Ott on 7th Avenue and stopped to admire her flowers to the Swiss Historical Village as well as the Chalet of the Golden Fleece Museum. The $820 will be used to support enhancements to the Green County Master Gardeners' prairie plot and for new projects to plant flowering perennials in other locations to enhance the museum grounds.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY HIGHLIGHTS 2021

Finance

The Historical Society recovered from its loss of $3190 in 2020 to end the year on a positive note with a net income of $35, 329. However, Treasurer John Freitag cautions that a large portion of that income came from the $20,904 donated by Canton Glarus, which is restricted to making improvements to the outdated Hall of History panels that provide information about the Canton. A grant plus some individual contributions are also reflected in the net income figure.

Other revenue came from these key resources: memberships - $2305 (includes two, new $500 lifetime memberships), admissions - $31,337, and net gift shop sales of - $4049. The revenue streams are offset by these major expenses: staff payroll and related taxes - $11, 444, utilities, telephone and other operating expenses - $6828, the Hall of History phase II exhibit along with other buildings and grounds costs - $6827, Insurance - $3452, and advertising - $2202.

As of the end of December 2021, the unrestricted cash balance (checking, savings and certificates of deposit) totaled $170,083, with the restricted balance from Canton Glarus previously referenced above at $20, 904 and the Historical Society's restricted fund, managed by the Community Foundation of Southwest Wisconsin, at $20,622. The combined balances total $211,709.

If you would like a copy of the entire 2021 financial report presented and accepted at the annual meeting, please email the Historical Society at admin@swisshistoricalvillage.org or call 608-527-2317 and leave a message. John will be happy to send a copy to you.

Membership

The Historical Society had 116 memberships as of the end of CY 2021. We lost a number of members during 2021 due to death and/or non-renewal however, 10 new memberships are among the total for 2021. Eighty-eight of the memberships represent individuals living in WI, with 52 of those 88 living in New Glarus. The other members live in California, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Washington. Two members live in Switzerland! Please consider recruiting new members or giving Historical Society memberships as gifts to increase our revenue.

Museum Attendance 2021

The total number of visitors to the museum in 2021 was 4171 individuals. The number of museum visitors was down when compared to attendance totals in 2019, even when adjusted for keeping the museum closed on Mondays in 2021. In 2019, the total attendance was 5259 persons. Of the 5259 visitors in 2019, 446 of those came to the museum on Mondays.

This year's attendance was closer to attendance in 2018 when we had 4624 visitors. The data reflects that the number of bus tours impacted the totals. In 2021 only 175 adults were associated with bus tours, while in 2019 we had 491 individuals. Likewise, the number of teachers and children touring the museum greatly declined from 2018 (491) and 2019 (162); in 2021 only 1 group of 21 children came to the museum. The school attendance was likely impacted by the continuing concerns related to COVID transmission. Harvest Fest saw 459 visitors in 2021 after the event was cancelled in 2020. This attendance number is just slightly less than the Harvest Fest 2019 attendance of 466 people.

The visitors who recorded their names and addresses in our guest book during 2021 hailed from all 50 states, with the exception of the State of Hawaii.

Newsletter and Marketing:

Former Board members, Ann Marie Ott and Erica Loeffelholtz, will work together to publish the newsletter in the months of April – November in 2022 with additional assistance from Todd Klassy. Submissions from other Historical Society members are encouraged and welcomed! In addition, they retrieve and submit photographs from the Historical Society's collection on a monthly basis to the Monroe Evening Times. The photos are published in the "Celebrating the Past" column of the Times. Former Board member Mary Funseth will update the Historical Society website along with the Facebook page to promote events sponsored by the Historical Society at the Swiss Historical Village for the coming season.

Museum Operations

The Board has decided to continue the six day a week schedule for operating the museum during 2022. The museum will be open Tuesdays through Sundays, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. beginning Saturday, May 28. The museum will also be open on the these Mondays during 2022: Memorial Day, 4th of July and Labor Day. Tour groups of 10 or more persons will be welcomed before May 28, pending completion of cleaning and exhibit and gift shop set-up tasks and will continue to be available through the end of October. The tentative plan is to close the museum shortly after Harvest Fest, which is scheduled for Sunday, October 9.

The Historical Society will be partnering with the New Glarus Public Library to host a number of community learning events at the museum during 2022. Watch for more information about the events in our newsletter, in the New Glarus Post-Messenger and on social media sites, such as Facebook.

NEW GLARUS REMEMBERED

At the annual meeting Duane Freitag, life member, former Board member and author, shared a touching tribute to the Swiss of New Glarus from the grandson of Sol Levitan, the Jewish pack peddler who settled at New Glarus and rose to become Wisconsin's state treasurer in the 1930s.

David Stephan Boner of La Jolla, California, wanted to express "how appreciative we are of the Swiss community of New Glarus." "My mother was very fond of the Swiss community and passed that along to me and I now to my kids," he said.

His mother, Ethel Levitan, spent her early childhood in New Glarus along with her brother Mortimer and sister Esther. The family moved to Madison in 1905. Ethel married Dr. Albert J. Boner, who was on the staff of the University of Wisconsin Medical College. She died when David Stephan Boner was about 11 years old and he and his father soon moved to California. David Stephan is now senior partner in a San Diego law firm that specializes in estate and business planning.

The comments came after his daughter Elizabeth had visited New Glarus this past summer. She was traveling cross-country with a friend and they were reading No Peddlers Allowed, a 1948 book about Sol Levitan that was written by Alfred R. Schumann. The book mentioned Levitan's days in New Glarus, so they decided to stop. They went to the Swiss Historical Village where Elizabeth purchased a copy of Duane Freitag's *Sauerkraut, Suspenders, and the Swiss* as a birthday present for her father. The book contains detail on the Levitans' life in New Glarus and Sol's days as an active supporter of Robert M. LaFollette. Mr. Boner then reached out to Freitag to express the family appreciation of New Glarus.

Sol died in Madison in 1940 and his wife, Dora, had passed away in 1934. Son Mort became a lawyer and worked for the Wisconsin attorney general. Among his accomplishments was writing the state's first Worker's Compensation law. He also contributed jokes to the Harvard Law Review. Mort remained single so there are no descendants with the family name Levitan. The Levitan's other daughter, Esther, married Sydney Goldstine of Muscoda. They had two daughters. The oldest remained single and the other, Roberta, was married to Herb Marcus, who was well known for his career in public relations in Madison and his previous work as a reporter for The Capital Times. Herb died in 2006 and Roberta in 2008. Their two children have moved on to Arizona and Oregon.

Sol Levitan and his partner Henry Steussy operated a large variety store in New Glarus. Levitan sold his share to Harris Marcus and Sons of Muscoda in 1919.

DID YOU KNOW?

Recent New Glarus community meetings are drawing attention to New Glarus Power and Light and water services. New Glarus has had its own Power and Light Company since 1902. At that time, the power came from a 30-horsepower double cylinder gas engine. The plant was designed by W.G. Kirchoffer, a Madison engineer, for around $6,000, including $340 for the well and $770 for the 50,000 gallon masonry reservoir. In 1913, the original water plant serviced 120 customers averaging 46,250 gallons a day. The electric plant had 150 customers. This photo is from the 1989 Bank of New Glarus calendar, available on the New Glarus Public Library website here: https://www.newglaruspubliclibrary.org/1989-bank-new-glarus-calendar

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

The Bank of New Glarus
Powering Growth in Our Community

Contact Us

New Glarus Historical Society & Swiss Historical Village Museum
612 7th Avenue, P.O. Box 745
New Glarus, WI 53574
608-527-2317
www.swisshistoricalvillage.org
admin@swisshistoricalvillage.org

NEW GLARUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY & SWISS HISTORICAL VILLAGE MUSEUM
612 7th Avenue, P.O. Box 745
New Glarus, WI 53574

Recipient Name
Street Address
City, ST ZIP Code