NEW GLARUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT

The Board addressed a variety of topics at its July meeting. Securing an additional cashier beginning in mid-August is a high priority for the Board. Please consider helping out or refer any individuals that may be willing to serve in this capacity to us at: admin@swisshistoricalvillage.org or by telephone at: 608-527-2317.

Documenting artifacts in our collection has been another priority for the Board due to an accumulated backlog of donations. Ruth Pauli, a librarian began supporting this effort during the month of July. We welcome her to our group of volunteers.

The Board acknowledged the fine work done by Green County Master Gardeners Linda Uttech and Mary Hillstrom to maintain plantings on the grounds of the museum, in particular the prairie plot next to the Farm Implement building.

The Wine and Chocolate Experience event planned for last month was cancelled. The Board is considering volunteering to work at Oktoberfest as a means to raise money for the Historical Society. Please contact us if you would like to help with this effort.

The Board connected with photographer Jarryd Lowderm who lives in Canton Glarus, for assistance with getting the Glarus information panels made for the outside walls of the Hall of History.

DONATIONS

A collection of classic housedresses from the 1950s and 1960s, discovered in a box of vintage quilt fabric, was recently donated by JoAnne Buesser. Three of the dresses in the group appear in the photograph on the left. Joanne and Linda Schiesser provided other photos and information for the article, *In Homage to the Housedress,* which appears on the following page. Katherine Disch donated an antique dress form dating back to the 1930s or 40s that will be used to display the dresses in the Collectibles building, in the near future.

The Board also thanks member Sherry Anderegg for a monetary donation received along with her recent membership renewal. Monetary donations are always welcomed and are especially needed at this time to complete the Collectibles building painting project. Please consider making a donation of any amount! Every little bit will help us cover the costs and any excess funds can be put towards other needed building maintenance in the year ahead.

IN HOMAGE TO THE HOUSEDRESS

By Ann Marie Ott

The COVID pandemic brought many changes to American culture, including a shift to using technology to work from home, rather than commuting to one's traditional office space. As a result, the daytime uniform for many working women changed dramatically, shifting from required business suits in some industries, coordinated pants outfits in others and occasional blue jeans on "casual Fridays," to comfy clothes, such as sweatpants and slippers beneath everyday knit tops, suitable for video-conferencing. This look at a woman's uniform from an earlier era, the house dress, was sparked by a special find and donation to the collection of the Historical Society.

Historical Society life member and local historian, Linda Schiesser, acquired an affinity for fabric as a result of her grandmother's long quilting history and Linda's own teaching career in Home Economics. Her neighbor, JoAnne Buesser, approached Linda with a box of vintage fabric last fall, with a hope that Linda could help her find a new home for the fabric. JoAnne had saved the box after the death of her mother-in-law, Louisa Buesser, in 1992. Much to JoAnne's and Linda's surprise, at the bottom of the box were well-worn house dresses, several without their buttons, likely saved with plans to include the dress fabric in future quilts. Now the best examples of these dresses, donated to the Historical Society, will be included in a new display under development, designed to pay homage to this classic frock and the hard working women who wore them.

JoAnne shared that Louisa nearly always wore a house dress, with a cardigan sweater added to the ensemble in colder weather. She reported that Louisa did put aside her house dress for helping with the milking chores in the barn. But, Louisa's standard, perhaps those dresses with a bit more trim or fancy buttons, would not only be worn to do housework, but be suitable for a Ladies Aid meeting at the Swiss Church or shopping downtown.

Fashion historians report that the earliest version of the house dress was called the "Mother Hubbard. " The loose fitting, shift style garment allowed a woman to set aside her corsets and other stiff undergarments in the 1800s. Utilitarian, made of cotton, with no form fitting features, women at that time might even wear the gown during a pregnancy. Later, house dress fashion became a bit more form-fitting with nipped in waists, front closures, matching belts and functional patch or inset pockets. Some say that designer Diane Von Furstenberg was inspired by 50s housedresses and created the "wrap dress." In rural areas, some women may have made housedresses from fabric saved from flour and feed sacks, or inexpensive checked gingham, adding rick rack and bright bias tape to personalize the dress. One of Louisa's summer dresses displayed this country look.

While Louisa, clad in pink and blue plaid, may not have been as glamorous as Jane Wyatt in *Father Knows Best* or Barbara Billingsley in *Leave it to Beaver* and their TV housewife fashions, Louisa's look and style is truly representative of an era in fashion history. Perhaps Louisa was inspired by the television housewives! Two dresses in the group were very likely sewn by Louisa and are adorned with rhinestone buttons and lace trim, an example of one pictured at the left. Labels in two other dresses confirmed that they were purchased at a J.C. Penney's Department Store or through a Penney's catalog, and online research verified them as dating to the 1950s and 1960s, based on those labels.

Perhaps you'll be inspired to go retro and choose a house dress for your wardrobe. Vintage house dresses can be found online and range in price from $5 to $95 dollars.

Louisa Barbara Marty was born in New Glarus on October 2, 1908, the daughter of John Dietrich Marty and Barbara Hoesly and a descendant of some of the original New Glarus immigrants. She married Alois Buesser, a Swiss immigrant from Canton St. Gallen in 1937 and they farmed on the north side of New Glarus, while Alois also operated the family construction business. Louisa passed away in 1992. A artist's drawing of the family home and barn is pictured at the left.

GLARNER ROCKS

By Duane Freitag

Unless someone with an interest in geology asks, tour guides at the Swiss Historical Village seldom mention the rocks that are under the relief map at the entrance to the Hall of History.

The ten rocks are various specimens from Canton Glarus that have been part of the society's collection since 1982. Most prominent for the history of New Glarus is the large slab of Schiefer (slate), which was once mined in the Sernftal region of Canton Glarus where many early immigrants came from.

According to records on file in the archives, the rocks were collected by Christian Streiff of Ennenda, who described himself as a "glacier-pilot." They were shipped to the U.S. at the same time as the large plywood panels about Canton Glarus that once were on the exterior of the Hall of History, which was opened in 1969. Customs records show that in addition to the plywood items there was another package weighing 250 kilograms (about 551 pounds) and valued at the time at about 500 Swiss francs. It contained "one box with homeland stones for garden decor during the exhibition at New Glarus."

Correspondence that has been preserved – all in German – indicates that the Swiss had some concern about securing the rocks once they were here. "It has already been figured out how a theft can be prevented," one of the letter writers noted. "The cost of procurement and transportation to Chicago are paid for by private donors."

The rocks are visible on the east and west side of the relief map display, with a locator map on the north side showing where the items were found. Streiff detailed five types of rocks: shale (the slate), granite, limestone, conglomerate, and river rocks. The letters noted that the granite had just broken off from an area near the top of the Tödi mountain – at 11,857 feet the highest mountain in the Glarus Alps. The samples of river rocks – generally rounded and polished by flowing water – were taken from the Linth River that flows through the center of the canton. The conglomerate (a sedimentary rock that looks somewhat like concrete) was found in the area of Bilten, home to the 1847 immigrants.

The rocks have some significance relating to the geologic process of mountain building. In 2008, part of the canton was declared a UNESCO world heritage site – the Swiss Tectonic Arena Sardona. The tectonic area represents a major break in the earth's crust called the Glarus Thrust. The village of Elm is a key point to view the elements of the geological process, including the chain of mountain peaks above the village called the Tschingelhörner, which contains the well-known Martinsloch. There also is a visitor center in the former schoolhouse in Elm that has seven stations providing details on the theories behind the Glarus Thrust.

Lower in the main valley, near Netstal, is a limestone quarry. Large blocks from the quarry are used in landscaping. And, because the oldest sedimented limestone layers are found near the surface in Canton Glarus, they provide a high degree of purity in calcium carbonate which used in a variety of industrial products.

DID YOU KNOW?

It's August and nearly almost impossible to wait for that first bite and sweet taste of corn on the cob! Have you had yours yet? This photo postcard belonged to Clarence "Kelly" Anderson of Belleville, now deceased. Kelly farmed in the Town of Montrose between New Glarus and Belleville before retiring and living above Borland's in Belleville. A note on the postcard said only "Belleville, WI." Do you think that everyone might have taken the first bite at the same time? If you recognize anyone in the photos, please contact us!

Contact Us

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The Bank of New Glarus
Powering Growth in Our Community

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