The Third Annual Meeting of the Reactivated Swiss-American Historical Society
THE THIRD ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
REACTIVATED SWISS-AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

held in New York on December 29, 1966

I.

General evaluation

The Annual Meeting of the Swiss-American Historical Society, as announced on pages 3-5 of the November 1966 issue of our Newsletter, was held on December 29, 1966 at the Hotel Taft in New York. The business meeting at 10 a.m. was attended by 17 members, the luncheon, with recital by Mrs. Lilian Westphal, by 37 persons, eight of them guests of SAHS officers, and about 30 persons listened to the afternoon lectures. For a society with over 170 members scattered throughout the United States and Switzerland, and with up to now insufficient financial means to facilitate general membership travel, it would have been unrealistic to expect a larger attendance. The result of the meeting is quite promising for the future development of the SAHS. As our Board Member, Dr. Alice H. Finckh in Philadelphia, wrote to us after the meeting: "it was very pleasant, and there definitely seems to be interest in participating". In the business meeting, ways and means for a more efficient and independent course of activities of the SAHS were discussed so that the SAHS officers now have a better basis for their future work. Mrs. Lilian Westphal's charming recital of colorful Swiss emigration songs and stories touched our hearts. It was - as a new member wrote to us in special appreciation of this part of our meeting - "history with a wider appeal", not only to the specialist, but to every Swiss and friend of Switzerland. We shall follow this line in our future Newsletters.

Dr. Heinz K. Meier's account of his activity as a professor at the Institute of International Relations in Trinidad is the first comprehensive description available of this new intellectual venture in Swiss Technical Cooperation with developing countries. The Swiss Observer to the United Nations, Mr. Bernard Turettini, who as Ambassador to Trinidad had worked out the basic arrangements for the Swiss participation in that institute, introduced Dr. Meier and explained how the Swiss government had been asked to provide Swiss teachers. The editor of the Amerikanische Schweizer Zeitung* in New York, our Board Member, Mr. Franz X. Amrein, has agreed to publish Dr. Meier's lecture in his newspaper because of its general interest *(see its issues of April 19 and 27, 1967).

Dr. Thomas Gelzer's paper on the roots of the American and Swiss constitutions in ancient Greek political thought is a
well documented analysis of the basic similarities of both our nations through their common background in the best elements of European history. All our members and friends know Dr. Gelzer's text because, in the meantime, it has been published in the SAHS-Newsletter of January 1967.

Last but not least, our meeting also offered an occasion to get in closer touch with the hard core of members warmly interested in the development of our Society and willing to cooperate personally with us toward the achievement of our goals. Among them is our new Board Member, Dr. Leo Scheibert, Professor of History at Rutgers University, a Swiss specialist in immigration history, who will contribute to our Newsletter an article entitled "Patterns of Swiss Emigration: An Essay in Historical Demography", and another on Albert Gallatin (1761-1849), the prominent American statesman from Geneva who has been honored recently by a new postage stamp. His farsighted political philosophy merits the attention of everyone interested in Swiss-American history and friendship. There is still a lot to be done in research on Gallatin. Mrs. Helene H. Fineman, the Librarian for the Papers of Albert Gallatin at New York University, who attended our meeting as a guest, informed us that these papers will be available on microfilms in about three years. They are so numerous because Gallatin - according to Mrs. Fineman - apparently had no waste basket, but carefully preserved every bit of written paper in his possession. A full evaluation of his rich personality therefore will be greatly facilitated in the near future, a fact which is a real challenge to the Swiss-American Historical Society (*see April 1967 issue of the SAHS-Newsletter).

II.

The Business Meeting

1.) Reports

In their Annual Reports, the President of the SAHS, Dr. Heinz K. Meier, and its Secretary, Dr. Lukas F. Burckhardt, looked back on the second fruitful year of full fledged activity of the Society since its revival in December 1964. In our Newsletter, published four times in 1966, a variety of subjects have been treated, and the individual contributions hold to a high intellectual level. The Society is very grateful to the Swiss Embassy in Washington for letting us make use of their facilities for our Newsletters, which also serves as a means of communication with the many other Swiss and friends of Switzerland in the U.S. interested in Swiss-American historical and cultural relations. More difficult is the maintenance of a close link to our members, particularly regarding continuous payment of membership dues. This can be explained to a certain extent by the fact that our newly elected Treasurer, Professor Agathon Aerni at the Bank of America in San Francisco, has been given a temporary assignment by the Swiss Delegate for Technical Cooperation as Head of the Research Department at the Bank of
Uganda in Kampala. From May to December 1966, our Member, Mr. Ronald G. Fick, Assistant Trust Officer of the Wells Fargo Bank in San Francisco, a great-grandson of the prominent Swiss Consul Antoine Borel, and an active member of the San Mateo Historical Association, kindly took over Mr. Aerni's position. From the beginning of December 1966, the Treasury has been in the hands of Dr. Imre de Kosinsky, Assistant Vice President at the Swiss Bank Corporation in New York, where Mr. Aerni already had established an account for our Society. In full agreement with Mr. Fick, we now want to concentrate our financial transactions there, and we are very grateful not only to Dr. de Kosinsky, who is cooperating fully with us in all matters, but also to the Bank's Executive Vice President, Mr. Robert Granwehr, for having made possible this excellent arrangement which puts our Treasury on a stable basis. We very much hope that Professor Aerni, when he is back in San Francisco again, will serve us, together with Mr. Fick, in the development of our San Francisco branch where they have both started so much historical research on the important role of the Swiss element in that area.

According to Mr. Fick's Report checked and presented by Dr. De Kosinsky, the assets of our Society went up from $919.35 at the beginning of 1966 to $1455.47 on November 30, 1966. The officers performed their duties on a completely volunteer basis. The whole income came from membership dues. The only expenses were connected with our Membership Meeting of November 13, 1965. Dr. de Kosinsky is available to all our members for more detailed information.

After a discussion in which the need for a clearer regulation for the payment of membership dues was emphasized, the Annual Reports of the President, Secretary and Treasurer were unanimously approved by the Assembly.

2) Election of Officers

Because of his leave of absence in Trinidad as Professor at the Institute of International Relations in St. Augustine, Dr. Heinz K. Meier resigned as President; his advice, however, will still be fully available, due to an amendment of the SAHS Constitution, unanimously accepted by the Assembly, which states in a new Section 6 of Article VI:

"In order to preserve the knowledge and counsel of former Presidents, they shall be made honorary officers to serve in an advisory capacity to the elected officers."

This solves the dilemma created by the resignation of Dr. Meier whose authority as a leading specialist in Swiss-American history in the 19th and 20th centuries and as a pioneer in the revival of our Society should not be lost. It also gives us a welcome opportunity to confirm our traditional links to his eminent predecessor in the SAHS presidency, Professor Alfred Senn in Philadelphia, the grand old man of our Society.
Our Vice President, Mr. Emil J. Schaefer, 2302 Willard Avenue, Madison, Wisconsin 53704, resigned, but continues as Archivist for the Society's earlier publications. According to Mr. Schaefer's Report of December 19, 1966, the following numbers of copies of those publications were still available at his home:

Prominent Americans of Swiss Origin (1932): 17 copies (7 sent out in 1966)
The Swiss in the United States (1940): 239 copies (57 sent out)
The Swiss Record, Volume I (1949): 159 (1 sent out)
The Swiss Record, Volume II (1950): 456 (16 sent out).

Mr. Schaefer has served as a liaison with the generation of the founders of the SAHS, which dates back to 1927, and thereby has enabled us to preserve its continuity. As a former SAHS President he still will have access to the deliberations of our officers.

The Society expresses its hearty thanks to Dr. Meier and to Mr. Schaefer.

On the proposal of Dr. Heinz K. Meier the following officers were unanimously elected:

President: Dr. Augustin Maissen, Professor of Modern Languages, Utica College of Syracuse University, Utica, N.Y. 13502

Vice President: Mr. Philip R. Gelzer, Vice President, Geigy Dyestuffs, Division of Geigy Chemical Corporation, Ardsley, N.Y. 10502

Treasurer: Dr. Imre de Kosinsky, Swiss Bank Corporation, Swiss Center Office, 508 5th Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10020

Secretary: Dr. Lukas F. Burckhardt, Cultural Counselor, Embassy of Switzerland, 2900 Cathedral Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008.

3.) Conferments of Honorary Membership

According to Section 2 of Article IV of the SAHS Constitution, the Ambassador of Switzerland to the United States, Mr. Felix Schnyder, has been declared as an Honorary Member of the Society.

His predecessor, Ambassador Dr. Alfred Zehnder, Stodola-Strasse 10, 8053 Zürich, is now President of the Federation of Swiss-American Societies. Based on Section 3 of Article IV of the SAHS Constitution, the Assembly unanimously has conferred upon him Honorary Membership in the Society because of his continuing leadership in Swiss-American cultural relations.

Professor Alfred Senn, 207 Cynwyd Road, Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania 19004, and Mr. Emil J. Schaefer, who have dedicated themselves throughout their lives to the SAHS, have also been made Honorary Members by unanimous vote.
4. Election of Board Members

According to Section 1 of Article VII of the SAHS Constitution, the Board of Directors consists of 15 members of the Society who shall be elected for terms of three years by the meeting of members, in such a way that every year five of them come up for election or re-election.

The Annual Meeting of November 13, 1965, elected five Board Members for a term of three years, five others for a term of two years, and five for a term of one year (1966). Of these last five Board Members, three had agreed to be re-elected whereas two seats became vacant. Furthermore, Mr. Philip R. Gelzer, who had been among the Board Members elected for three years, had to be replaced because of his election to the Vice Presidency.

For Mr. Gelzer the Assembly unanimously elected for 1967 and 1968:

Dr. Leo Schelbert, Professor of History at Rutgers, The State University, 43 James Street, Newark, N.J. 07102.

For 1967-69 the Meeting unanimously elected or re-elected:

Mr. Franz X. Amrein, Editor "Amerikanische Schweizer Zeitung", Swiss Publishing Company, 1 Union Square West, New York, N.Y. 10003 (re-election).

Dr. Delbert Grütz, Librarian, Mennonite Historical Library at Bluffton College, Bluffton, Ohio 45817 (re-election),

Dr. William Ernst Kuhn, Professor of Economics at the School of Business Administration, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska 68508 (re-election),

Dr. Max Silberschmidt, Professor of History at the University of Zürich, specialist in U.S. history, Neustadtgasse 1, 8001 Zürich (new Board Member),

Dr. Carlo Henze, Secretary-Treasurer of the Swiss Society of Sciences in U.S.A., Inc., c/o Sandoz Foundation, Swiss Center, 608 5th Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10020 (new Board Member).

5. Amendments to the Constitution

a) The Amendment consisting in a new Section 6 of Article VI of the Constitution has already been quoted in paragraph 2 above (former Presidents to serve in an advisory capacity to the elected officers).

b) In Section 1 of Article IV of the Constitution the following two sentences have to be added:

"The Society year shall begin on January 1st. New members entering after August 1st shall not be required to pay the fees for the current year."
This amendment was proposed in order to clarify the financial obligations of members during the course of a year. Unanimously accepted in principle, this amendment is referred to the officers for its final formulation.

c) In Section 5 of Article VI a clarification is needed concerning the rights and obligations of the Treasurer to make payments out of the funds of the Society. They have to be defined in the Constitution. The possibility - rarely used up to now - of re-imburseing officers and lecturers for expenses in connection with an Annual Meeting merits special mention.

Such an amendment as required by the new Treasurer was unanimously accepted in principle and referred to the officers for its final formulation.

In the meantime, the following text has been worked out by the officers and will be submitted to the next Annual Meeting for approval:

Section 5 of Article VI as amended:

"The Treasurer shall collect the membership fees, donations and all moneys received for the account of the Society and deposit the same in a bank designated by the officers. The President, Vice President and Secretary are empowered to authorize the Treasurer, over the joint signatures of two of them, to sign all checks and vouchers or proceed with all payments which these officers judge necessary for the normal functioning of the Society or which they regard as a justified expense in the interest of the Society. For administrative expenses such as postage, telephone calls, etc., up to a maximum of $50.-- in any 6-month period, the Treasurer may make disbursements at his own discretion.

The General Meeting specifically authorizes the President, Vice President and Secretary to approve re-imbursement of those expenses - Hotel accommodations, meals, etc. - which are incurred by any of the officers of the Society attending its meetings or representing it or to those members whom they deem to be entitled to such re-imbursement."

d) The officers were given by unanimous vote the task to reformulate the whole Constitution according to the three amendments already voted by the Assembly and with further amendments necessary to fulfill the legal requirements to acquire tax exemption for contributions and gifts to the Society. The Constitution so amended shall be brought to a final vote before the next Annual Meeting.
6.) General discussion on the Society's activities

a) Several members expressed their concern about the danger of a tendency to lose contact with non-academic people by emphasizing too much a high scholarly level and neglecting a more general approach appealing to people of all walks of life. The officers are well aware of that problem. In order to be taken seriously by the intellectual world, the Society cannot lower its standards. On the other hand, its goal is to present and discuss historical and cultural issues as a challenge to all of us in their relation to our own lives. Mrs. Lilian Westphal's recital is a good example for this human approach; the poems and personal memories of Swiss emigrants, that she recited, brought us in touch with the life struggle of real people as expressed in their own reporting on their experiences in a strange new country. Mrs. Lilian Westphal added to our meeting the brilliancy of art. We are very grateful to the Foundation Pro Helvetia in Zürich for having made possible her American tour, and to Mrs. Westphal for having included her carefully prepared recital at our luncheon in her schedule.

b) Many proposals were made to foster an independent growth of the Society which, up to now, was to a large degree the work of the editor of the Newsletter. A series of SAHS publications should be envisaged. To be able to act on its own, the Society needs more financial aid. Membership in the Society should be made more meaningful. More meetings of members, on both local and regional levels, could enhance personal contacts among members.

The Swiss-American Historical Society certainly is at a crossroads. It has been able to arouse genuine interest among Swiss and friends of Switzerland all over the country, and the active cooperation of scholars and writers of rank is freely available. The response in Switzerland is also very encouraging. But in order to profit fully from all these possibilities, the Swiss-American Historical Society needs above all a stronger and more cohesive membership. In this connection the proposal made to create a committee for the acquisition of more members merits the full attention of the SAHS officers. More discussions will help to find the best way to overcome present limitations.

The Swiss-American Historical Society certainly can become an important factor in Swiss-American cultural relations if it concentrates on fundamentals.

L.B.