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Swiss Heritage Preserved at New Glarus Museum

by Duane H. Freitag

Born of Depression-era nostalgia, the Swiss Historical Village at New Glarus, Wisconsin, continues to be among the state's most well-known ethnic heritage sites.

Its development over many years was accomplished by a mix of descendants of the colonists from Canton Glarus who founded the community in 1845, later immigrants from Switzerland, and now non-Swiss who have moved to New Glarus and have embraced its history. Today the museum complex consists of 14 buildings focusing on various aspects of the community's past. Visitors can tour the buildings on their own or with a guide who provides additional interpretation.¹

Brad and Gail Beal, who moved to New Glarus in 1968 when Brad took over a local business, are typical of the newcomers. "Are you Swiss?" was an early greeting, Gail recalls with a smile. "How important is that?" she wondered. They both quickly discovered that it did not matter as they continued to devote nearly 50 years

¹After being closed in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Swiss Historical Village was open in 2021 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily except Mondays during the summer tourism season. It will likely have similar hours going forward. Attendance peaked many years ago before tourism patterns changed—the number of visitors in a year had reached 40,000 in the 1970s and '80s—but the outdoor museum still attracts many people including bus tours. In 2019, visitors came from every state except Rhode Island. Foreign visitors were from Europe, the Mideast, Asia, and Central and South America. In 2021, visitors were from every state except Hawaii. New Glarus is about 120 miles northwest of Chicago and about 25 miles southwest of Madison, Wisconsin. The museum web site is www.swisshistoricalvillage.org.

to make the museum a success. After working as a bank teller and volunteering in school classrooms, Gail took on the task of greeting visitors at the Historical Village, managing its gift shop, and serving on the sponsoring historical society's board of directors. Brad spent 30 years on the board, many of them as president. He has performed countless maintenance projects and was instrumental in saving a Civil War canon that had once been mounted in front of the New Glarus public school and is now in the museum.²

The development of the Swiss Historical Village had its roots in discussions during the late 1930s that led to the organization of a county historical society. Among the wide range of ideas initially discussed was to build separate museums in different communities to honor the county's various ethnic groups. The Swiss of New Glarus quickly acted on that idea and informally set up their own historical society.

A key player at the beginning was Esther Stauffacher. A descendant of an original colonist and other early immigrants from Canton Glarus, she was widely known for her intense interest in the community's history and Swiss activities. She would often host visitors in her large farm home at the edge of New Glarus, treating them to a Glarner Swiss meal.³ During the organization's formative years, she lamented that "some months, a struggling few turned out to our meetings to keep the spark alive."⁴ But that core group carried

²The Civil War artillery relic is actually a "Parrott Rifle" that was used on a ship during the Union blockade of the lower Mississippi River. It was surplus equipment obtained in 1900 by local veterans. The weapon was eventually plugged and mounted in front of the New Glarus public school. Many residents remember playing on it as children. Before it was put on display at the museum, the weapon was restored and made operational by Battery G of the 2nd Illinois Light Artillery, a Civil War re-enactment group based in northern Illinois. The weapon is occasionally fired at Civil War re-enactments and appeared in Turner Pictures 1993 film *Gettysburg*.

³Lois J. Hurley, "'Zoklas' and 'Ziger' for Lunch!" *Wisconsin Agriculturalist and Farmer* (July 13, 1940), 16-19. Zokla is a Glarner version of the Germanic *Spätzle*. Ziger is a colloquialism for *Schabziger*, the hard green cheese manufactured in Canton Glarus and often grated onto or into Zokla. *Schabziger* is the oldest trademarked product in Switzerland.

⁴Phyl Anderson, with Elda Schiesser, *Swiss Historical Village: The History of the New Glarus Historical Society, Inc.* (New Glarus Historical Society, 1976), 12.

on. Included were a banker, the weekly newspaper editor, the county board chairman, the lumber yard manager, a farm machinery sales representative, dairy farmers, and recent immigrants from Switzerland. Usually their spouses were working along with them.

As children, many in the group knew the last of the pioneer settlers of New Glarus and heard their stories of the settlement's early days. Kathryn Theiler, whose family ran the weekly newspaper for many years, recalled listening to her great-uncle Jacob Ott who had immigrated to New Glarus with his father in 1850. Jacob was "never too tired to tell us children stories..." she wrote in her newspaper column. "He would sit leisurely in his chair and we at his feet for hours. He told us of the small group of log huts and of the small herd of cows some of the families had."⁵ Those memories, along with ones of the once-rousing *Chilbi* celebrations of their youth, the *Schutzenfests*, and the occasional *Hornussen* games, spurred interest in saving and sharing those cherished parts of their Swiss heritage.⁶

⁵ Duane H. Freitag, *A Common Treasure: The Challenging First Decade of the Swiss Colony of New Glarus* (Wasteland Press, 2019), 360. Quoted from Kathryn Theiler's columns in the 1939 *New Glarus Post*.

⁶ A delightful account of what *Chilbi* (or *Kilby*) had been like in New Glarus appeared in the *Century Magazine* in 1901. The well-known writer Warden Allan Curtis had been visiting many areas of the Midwest, observing dances. Of New Glarus, he wrote:

"The Swiss have many dances, but that of Kilby Monday is the greatest....The balls are managed for pecuniary profit, and the managers in order to draw a crowd, provide transportation for all the girls within a radius of several miles. The management which secures the most and the prettiest girls also secures the greatest number of paid admissions from the men.

"At a Swiss ball, it is the correct thing for a man to wear his hat. The Norse, French, and Yankees, who together make up perhaps a fourth of the male dancers, do not follow the custom; but the Switzers speed around in tall, funeral felt hats, the crowns truncated cones, the brims wide and flapping.

"The Swiss girls are pretty. They are rustic, but dress with fairly good taste, though the ethnologists say that Alpine people are dowdy. Well, the Swiss girls look well at their parties, anyway. And you may talk to them, though their men do not....

"The ball begins at half-past seven, and they are all there at the last dance, which ends at half-past five in the morning. Ten hours of dancing, and such dancing!... The closing bars of each *schottische* (they still polka and *schottische* in the country) are accompanied by a mighty rataplan of the ample feet of the whole multitude, cheerful, hilarious, exultant, deafening."

Curtis concluded his article by saying "you will see more national traits and more interesting ones at a Swiss dance than at a dance of any other nationality, for the Swiss have preserved both their nationality and their customs better than any other race in the West."

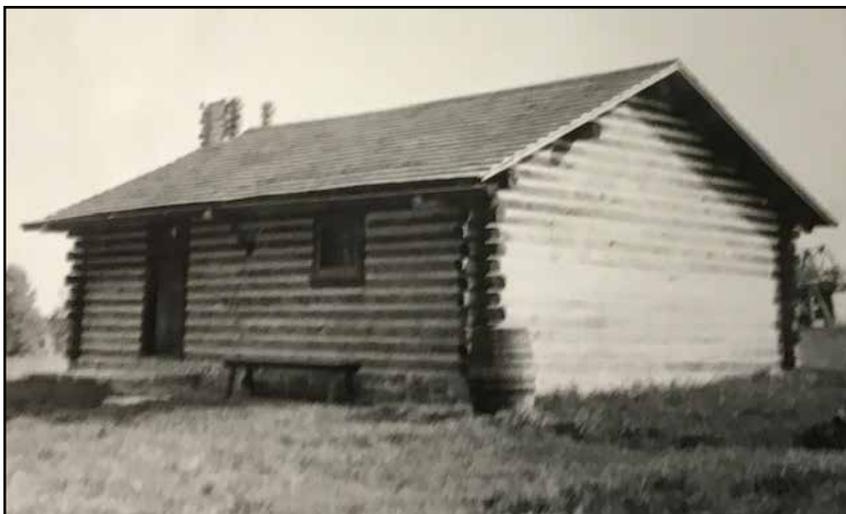
Many still spoke an older Glarus dialect of Swiss-German.⁷

As ideas for the Historical Village museum began to firm up, Jacob Rieder, a local architect, drew a landscape concept plan with nine log cabin buildings. Rieder, a native of Chur, Canton Graubunden, had emigrated in 1913. He spent a year in Canada and then some time in Milwaukee before settling in New Glarus. Meanwhile, a suitable site was secured for the project—four open acres near the western edge of the village that had once been one of the woodlots for the Swiss colony. The current owners were heirs of Gabriel Schindler—he a descendant of colonist Abraham Schindler who was among the 22 who died during the settlement’s tragic 1854 cholera epidemic. The heirs, who included the widely known Dr. John Schindler and Rear Admiral Walter Schindler, were eager to have this unique development part of their family heritage.⁸ The village of New Glarus held title to the land through a tax settlement and in turn was willing to grant the history group a 100-year lease.

Although there were donations of logs and native limestone materials for the first cabin’s foundation, progress on an initial building was minimal. Mrs. Stauffacher kept up hope, noting that “the sad part of it all is that our unusual history is fast becoming lost to the younger

⁷ A study made in 1966 and 1967 by Brian A. Lewis, then a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, showed that the surviving dialect was mainly that of the Canton Glarus “hinterlands” [the southern Linth River valley and the *Sernftal* that are now part of the new municipal designation Glarus South] where a majority of the original colonists came from. Lewis wrote that the Swiss-German dialect survived at New Glarus because of the relative remoteness of the community, the attraction for later Swiss immigrants, and an insignificant number of other nationalities in the area. Swiss-German survives today, but in a vastly smaller amount. Lewis concluded: “It can safely be said that this is the last stage of its development in New Glarus.” The results of his study were published in 1970 in the yearbook of the Canton Glarus Historical Society and in *New Glarus 1845-1970* edited by Leo Schelbert and published by Kommissionsverlag Tschudi & Co., AG of Glarus, Switzerland.

⁸ John Schindler was a medical doctor who co-founded the Monroe Clinic at Monroe, Wisconsin, and achieved national best-seller status in 1953 for his positive-thinking health book *How to Live 365 Days a Year*. His brother, Walter Schindler, was a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and became a highly decorated career officer during and after World War II. He achieved the rank of vice admiral and ended his career as commandant of the 8th Naval District. John died in 1957 and Walter in 1991.



The original log cabin museum, shown in an early photo, was opened in 1942. Credit: New Glarus Historical Society.

generation, and unless the community supports our project . . . there is no doubt that, in time, most of our history and traditions will be forgotten.”⁹

Finally, despite World War II being underway, the first log cabin building was completed and dedicated on September 27, 1942. Known originally as the “community building,” some thought it was like the first structure that housed the colonists. That was not true, as the immigrant group lived under a bowery until their first cabins were built in the fall of 1845. Those cabins were much smaller than the new one. Many items from the Swiss colony’s past were quickly donated. Mrs. Stauffacher became curator and primary caretaker of the little one-cabin museum, which was open for visitors on Sunday afternoons from April through September. She continued that role until her death in 1945.

Banker Johann Jakob Figi (known as J.J. Figi) then took over the curator role and spent many Sunday afternoons greeting

⁹Phyl Anderson, with Elda Schiesser, *Swiss Historical Village: The History of the New Glarus Historical Society, Inc.* (New Glarus Historical Society, 1976), 14.

the handful of visitors who stopped at the cabin. His father, Paulus Figi, had immigrated from Canton Glarus in 1868 and like many others was a farmer. The collection soon literally filled the log cabin to the rafters, making it at times difficult to entertain groups of visitors.

A popular item that was eventually on display in the cabin was a large carving of a mountain ibex. It had been part of Switzerland's exhibit at Chicago's 1893 Columbian Exhibition and again was displayed in the 1933 Chicago World's Fair.¹⁰ But many other items, while having their origin in the Swiss colony, were not much different from what one could find in similar museums—spinning and weaving equipment, early quilts, candle molds, pewter, once-precious pieces of china, Civil War memorabilia, intricate needlework, and handmade farm tools.

Figi labored on even though the historical society as a formal organization had lapsed in 1947. He, too, was a character about town, being very active in church activities, the volunteer fire department, and many community projects. His motivation was the adage “life is what you make it.” He served several terms as president of the historical society after it was reorganized in 1956, and died in 1959.

It took until 1952 before a second building was completed. It was another log cabin—this one a replica of the Swiss colony's first schoolhouse that was also used for town meetings and church purposes before a permanent church was built. The primary donor of funds for the project was the Wilhelm Tell Community Guild, the organization that has been sponsoring the community's annual outdoor production

¹⁰ The Alpine ibex or steinbock was carved from maple in Switzerland. It weighs about 200 pounds and is now on display in the museum's entry building. It had been in the possession of Chicago's long-time Swiss consul Arnold Holinger for many years. His family gave it to Ernest Lohse of Neenah, Wisconsin, who donated it to the Swiss Historical Village. The ibex was hunted to near extinction in much of Switzerland in the nineteenth century. It was successfully reintroduced in the Swiss National Park in Canton Graubünden in the 1920s. In Canton Glarus where hunting has been forbidden in the Freiberg Kärpf game preserve near Schwanden since 1548, the ibex was successfully reintroduced in 1958.

of Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell* since 1938.¹¹ The museum building's focus has been on its role as a church and prominent display has been given to a communion pitcher and chalice made by a tinsmith who was an original 1845 colonist. Also on display from the original building are two benches. They are still used and holding up well. The building was dedicated September 7, 1952, with the usual community flourish—taking part in the dedication was local pastor Rev. Lynn F.B. Tschudy whose great-grandfather J. Jacob Tschudy was colony manager from 1846 to 1851. The structure was not built with the same attention to construction detail as the first cabin and has provided challenging maintenance issues in recent years. As additional buildings were constructed for the museum, no more would be log structures.

It was during this era that the Gmur family took on some unusual roles. Herbert Gmur, son of an 1893 immigrant from Amden, Canton St. Gallen, Switzerland, used his handyman skills on lots of projects and served on the board of directors. The family lived across the street from the little museum and sons Gary and Steve found themselves sometimes opening up the buildings for visitors when no adults were around. While it was common for tour buses to stop, there were no restrooms at the museum in those days. "It was not unusual for the guide to gently rap on our door and ask if one or more of the guests could use our bathroom," Gary recalls. "These poor people were thoroughly embarrassed by the situation and one-by-one would slink into and out of our home and bathroom." At their father's urging, the museum eventually added restrooms, appropriately labeled *Buebe* and *Meitli*. Gary's career in education saw him move on to another

¹¹ Although the Labor Day weekend pageant was performed throughout World War II for patriotic reasons, it was cancelled for the past two years due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Prior to that, the German language version of the *Tellspiele* was discontinued and the lengthy script tightened up for the English presentation. A key source for Friedrich Schiller when he wrote the drama was Canton Glarus' famed historian Aegidius Tschudi's *Chronicon Helveticum*. Woven into his account of the struggle for independence in central Switzerland is the beloved *Wilhelm Tell* story that, like many parts of Tschudi's history including that of his own family, has been proven to be a fabrication based on various legends and traditions.

part of Wisconsin while Steve remained in the New Glarus area. A long-time State of Wisconsin employee, Steve has served on the New Glarus Village Board as well as the historical society board and sings with the *Männerchor*. Back when he was in high school, he saw an opportunity to make some money and installed a 1950's era soda pop machine behind one of the buildings. Now he continues his decades-long career as a museum docent, using his community memory and gentle voice to tell lots of stories of New Glarus.

When the 1960s arrived, volunteers were eager for the addition of a cheese factory, since a key part of the Swiss colony's history was the development of the "foreign type" cheese industry in Wisconsin. Items from the area's first Swiss cheese factory had been donated and a building finally was opened in 1961. It is set up like the old cooperative factories that once dotted the countryside around New Glarus—there is a wooden pulley device for lifting bulky milk cans to a weighing scale, a large copper kettle with necessary paddles and cheese harp for heating and curdling the milk, a system for transferring the curds to the pressing table, and counterbalanced beams to apply pressure for squeezing out the remaining whey.¹² The original plans for the museum village included a cheese hut, but that was never developed. Historically, cheese manufacture in the area had migrated from the farm kitchen to a cheese hut and then to the cooperative factories.

Museum visitors learn that in the early years, the largest cheese production was of limburger cheese and brick cheese (invented in 1875 by Swiss immigrant John Jossi near Watertown, Wisconsin). During the Swiss Historical Village's annual fall festival, a small wheel of cheese is made in the factory. With the large production of cheese in the area,

¹²A lot of the old equipment had been collected and donated by the much-beloved folk artist Carl Marty of Monroe. The factory looks much like one of Marty's paintings. Marty, from Gachnang, Canton Thurgau, had immigrated in 1887 at age 13 to be with his cheese-maker father and then was managing his first cheese factory at age 16. He later became known for his paintings, his poetry in German and English, and his Progressive politics. He died in 1960. His granddaughter, Carol Showalter, recently self-published an account of this interesting family—*My Grandparents, My Idols* (Vision Printing & Graphics, Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin, 2019).

the county seat of Monroe became a major storage and shipping point. Today it is the home of the National Historic Cheesemaking Center, a nice complement to the little New Glarus factory.

In succeeding years, more buildings were constructed. One was to house a collection of blacksmith tools, another was for a collection of farm machinery and tools, and then another to house the local volunteer fire department's old equipment. After Wisconsin ended the use of one-room rural schools in 1962, the New Glarus Historical Society was able to obtain two of those buildings for use at its museum. One was turned into a "general store" enabling a wide variety of collectibles to be on display. The other continued to be a schoolhouse. However, in later years when a new entry building was desired, the schoolhouse had to be moved again to a different location as the south-facing site was needed for the new welcoming center. Brad Beal said that the architectural advisors told him, "You need a southern exposure for your entrance and to create a feeling [with steps] of going up the mountain." Again Brad met the challenge, getting the old schoolhouse jacked up from its foundation and finding a house mover to finish the job.¹³

A highlight of the operation of the museum came in 1969 when a modern "Hall of History" building was opened in the center of the museum complex. It was essentially donated by the people of Canton Glarus and designed by three Swiss architects working in tandem with local architect R. Wayne Duerst. The building became the starting point for tours and continues to be an introduction to what is housed in the other buildings. The original exhibit was on the textile industry of Canton Glarus. It was the great downturn in that industry in eastern Switzerland in the 1840s that prompted the organized emigration to a "new" Glarus in Wisconsin in 1845. The

¹³The Swiss-style entrance building, constructed in 1979, was designed by Design Shelters, an architectural and general contracting firm based in Madison, Wisconsin. The building includes space for a gift shop, archival storage, and board meetings. Previously the historical society board met in homes.



This log home, from the early years of the Swiss colony, was added to the museum in 1976.

Hall of History was dedicated in August 1970 when the community was celebrating the 125th anniversary of its founding. Among the celebrants were about 250 residents of Switzerland, including Dr. Fritz Stucki, *Landammann* of Canton Glarus. He was joined on the speaker's platform by Wisconsin Governor Warren P. Knowles and immigrant Paul Grossenbacher.

Fluent in his native Swiss-German, Grossenbacher was playing an increasingly important role at the Swiss Historical Village. He was often the person turned to when translating needed to be done, or special bilingual tours needed to be given, or an emcee was sought for a festival event. His deep base voice was already well known from his roles in the local *Männerchor* and *Yodlerklub*, and his portrayal of Gessler in the community's *Wilhelm Tell* drama. Born in Burgdorf, Canton Bern, Grossenbacher had immigrated in 1929. While working at a nearby farm he met Verena, a neighbor girl from Canton Glarus

who started to teach him some English. They eventually married and both helped out as the museum developed.

In a most appropriate comment at the Hall of History dedication, Grossenbacher noted that New Glarus Swiss were often visiting the motherland, but few from there visited New Glarus. “*Es ist glich wyt vo New Glarus uf Glarus, vi vo Glarus uf New Glarus,*” he reminded the gathering [it’s the same distance from New Glarus to Glarus as it is from Glarus to New Glarus]. Since then, visitors from Canton Glarus have been common.¹⁴

After Grossenbacher died in 1990, some of the translation duties were continued by Doris Arn, who served as historical society treasurer for nearly 30 years. The former Doris Gruetter had emigrated to the U.S. from Gretzenbach, Canton Solothurn, Switzerland, in 1961 and married local farm implement dealer Richard Arn in 1967—a descendant of an original colonist and other early Swiss immigrants. Doris, who died in 2019, kept an even keel on the history group’s finances, which often were stretched due to the ongoing maintenance costs of an outdoor museum. She had replaced Henry M. Schmid, an irascible character, who nevertheless had contributed much to the community’s Swiss-related tourism. A charter member of the New Glarus Historical Society, he later became co-curator of the Chalet of the Golden Fleece, a former private home designed by architect Jacob Reider that remains a tourist attraction with its expansive collection of international curiosities.¹⁵

¹⁴ “A Leader from New Glarus,” an interesting account of Grossenbacher’s life by his daughter Elmira Root-Grossenbacher, was included in the book *Amerikas Little Switzerland erinnert sich*. The book was published in Switzerland in 1995 for New Glarus’ 150th anniversary celebration by the *Schweizerischer Verein der Freunde von New Glarus*. The article can also be found on the website of the nearby Monticello Area Historical Society. An interview portrait of Grossenbacher was included in the 2013 Swiss American Historical Society publication *Emigrant Paths*. It recounts his immigration and ends with his role helping the Swiss Historical Village.

¹⁵ The Bernese Oberland-style chalet was built in 1937 for world traveler, collector, and thespian Edwin P. Barlow. Prior to his death in 1957, he donated his home to the community as a museum. The chalet houses Barlow’s eclectic collection of items from all over the world, especially Switzerland. It is open for visitors on a limited basis during the summer tourism season. The chalet is on the National Register of Historic Places.



The New Glarus Männerchor entertained visitors during the Historical Village's Harvest Fest in September 2021.

Many older museum volunteers remember Schmid's confrontation with the Wisconsin Department of Revenue that resulted in representatives of the non-profit historical society appearing in county court for a settlement.

For several years supporters in Switzerland provided new displays for the Hall of History—one on Swiss who played prominent roles in American enterprises and another on the story of Wilhelm Tell. Since then the content has focused on the story of the Glarus emigration and early years of the Swiss colony. During 2020, while the museum was closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the presentation was reorganized by member Mary Dibble, providing more data for those who are touring the museum on their own. Mary's Swiss ancestry goes back to Oswald and Barbara Kubly, who were among the many immigrants from Canton Glarus who joined the colony in 1853. A large panorama of the Linth River Valley of Glarus again dominates

the front exterior of the building and flags there represent the new three regions of municipal government in the canton. The international support continues, with the people of Canton Glarus giving a 20,000 Swiss franc gift (about \$21,500) to the museum in the fall of 2021 for upgrading informational displays about the canton. The gift was in recognition of the Swiss settlement's 175th anniversary.

During the busiest years at the Historical Village, two former farm wives with their own distinctive careers played prominent roles. Margaret Duerst, who for many years was an employee of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, served thirty years on the board of directors, ten years as president. Her careful attention to details in managing the museum sometimes found her peacefully settling disputes among the volunteers. Elda Schiesser contributed her talents for 21 years, particularly in developing the society's archives. She was already well known for her leadership work in 4-H and the University of Wisconsin Extension homemakers program. In 1995, she and her daughter Linda published *The Swiss Endure*, a chronological listing of a wide range of community events. In later years, Elda was best known for her *Scherenschnitte*, self-taught from a book purchased during a 1985 trip to Switzerland. Both women kept up their interest in the museum into their 90s—Margaret died in 2011 at age 92 and Elda in 2017 at age 99.

There also have been volunteers who have a Swiss ancestry and an interest in history, but no particular tie to New Glarus. Prominent among them include Edward R. Hauser, a professor of beef science at the nearby University of Wisconsin in Madison. He was a Wisconsin farm boy, the son of immigrants from Weidlisbach, Canton Bern. After he retired, he joined as a docent at the museum, especially providing his expertise to those interested in the dairy farming aspects on display. He died in 2014.

While the various buildings at the Historical Village house a wide variety of items rooted in the Swiss settlement, five displays rank as unique:



The Swiss Historical Village at New Glarus welcomes visitors during the summer tourism season.

Embroideries and laces—For many years, New Glarus was the home of an embroidery factory and outlet store that drew tourists and seamstresses alike. It began in 1924 when New Glarus succeeded in getting Chicago’s Embroidery Products Corporation to have its factory in the village. The corporation was a consolidation of five Swiss-style embroidery companies. The new factory operated with imported Swiss Schiffler looms, manufacturing many items such as aprons, curtains, handkerchiefs, and religious altar cloths from patterns that were often of Swiss or German design. While not initially successful, Swiss immigrant Arnold Weiser revived the operation in 1935 as the Upright Swiss Embroidery Company and built it into a successful firm, even producing military insignia and chevrons during World War II. Weiser arrived in New Glarus in 1935, having immigrated from Wolfhalden, Canton Appenzell Ausserrhoden.

Weiser was aptly described by native historian Robert A. Elmer, now of Florida, in his quarterly newsletter as a “cigar-smoking and sometimes gruff character, [who] became renowned as one of the most unlikely bridal consultants in the Midwest.”¹⁶ Changing times forced the Weiser family to eventually close the company and their popular outlet store and sell the looms. The factory building, which had been expanded, was demolished in 2019. The pleasant clickety-clack sound of the looms is only a memory now. However, its fascination lives on at the Swiss Historical Village where there is a recently enhanced display about the factory and its products. Typical embroidered fabrics and laces are on display, along with a sample of the large paper spools (like the old player piano rolls) that were programmed with designs for the looms.

Pioneer gravestones – Many museum visitors are intrigued by the 41 old gravestones that are displayed in front of the log church. They are real and are from the Alten Friedhof [old cemetery] that now comprises the front lawn of Swiss United Church of Christ in the center of New Glarus. The stones began to be removed in 1915 when the cemetery became the site of an imposing monument to the Swiss colonists. That was before the time when removal of the markers would not have been easily allowed. Four of the stones are of original 1845 colonists, with the oldest from 1853. Most of the family names are typical of Canton Glarus. If the stones could talk, they could tell stories of deaths by drowning, lightning strike, diphtheria and cholera, of Civil War illnesses, and of course the struggles of pioneer life.

Print shop – While it is not unusual to find a newspaper print shop in similar museums, this one is special in that it is the whole shop that was once used to produce the weekly newspaper

¹⁶ Robert A. Elmer, *Family History Notes* (Fall 2009), 2. Elmer also published a book, *Glarners in America*, that chronicles the achievements of immigrants from Canton Glarus and their descendants. The book is available through Amazon.com.

in New Glarus. After the paper modernized its production methods in 1967, Dr. Fred G. Blum Jr. recognized the historical value of the old equipment and purchased it for eventual donation to the Swiss Historical Village, which constructed a building to house it in 1971.¹⁷ Many older visitors recall how they learned old-fashioned hand typesetting in high school. The New Glarus newspaper was started in 1897 by immigrant John Theiler as a German-language paper. Theiler had immigrated ten years earlier after a brief apprenticeship with a newspaper in Thun, Canton Bern. In America, he first worked in the cheese industry. Then he started the *Neu Glarus Bote* [Messenger], soon changing its name to the *Deutsch-Schweizerischer Courier* [German-Swiss Courier] and printing news of Switzerland as well as of the community. In 1910, he began an English language sister paper—the *New Glarus Post*—as an active advocate for the Democratic Party. After his son Arthur took over the operation, the emerging change in language use prompted him to combine the papers under the name *New Glarus Post*. The new paper was almost entirely in English, with occasional items and a popular small-town humor column by his father continuing in German. Among items on display are original type cases, a Linotype, stereotyping equipment, and a Civil War era flat-bed press.

Settler’s Log cabin – Serendipity had a lot to do with this charming little cabin arriving at the museum in 1976. It was a fitting contribution for America’s bicentennial year. The 14x16 foot cabin had been constructed on Swiss colony land in 1850-51. In succeeding years, additions were made and eventually the cabin was hidden within a frame home. The cabin was re-discovered in 1975 when the house was torn down. Jacob Tschudy, a volunteer at the museum, recognized

¹⁷Fred G. Blum, Jr., an ophthalmologist, wrote an extensive account of his life adventures and other family stories in 2017 before his death, “The People and Places I have known,” can be found on the website of the Monticello Area Historical Society. He and his wife moved to the family homestead farm southwest of New Glarus in 1965 and they became noted for their conservation efforts and heritage preservation.

the structure's importance as a rare example of a home from the early years of the Swiss colony. He supervised its careful dismantling and reconstruction at the Historical Village. Jacob and his wife, Irene, had been long-time curators of the Wisconsin Historical Society's Historymobile—a large mobile home that was outfitted as a traveling museum to take items from the state collection to communities around Wisconsin in the 1950s and '60s. Jacob's grandparents had come to New Glarus in the 1850s. The cabin was donated by Harold Hoesly, on whose farm it was found. It is now outfitted with typical furnishings of the infant Swiss colony, including an Alpine-style butter churn. Research in recent years has uncovered details about the building of the cabin that were mentioned in early letters by the colony managers.

Bee House – One would have to travel far and wide to see another example of a Swiss style *Bienenhaus*. This little structure was built in 1994 after the family of Gottfried Barth donated his Swiss-style beekeeping equipment to the Historical Village. Barth, an area farmer and cheesemaker, had immigrated from Canton Bern. He had ordered the *Bienenekasten* [bee boxes or hives] from a Swiss beekeeping catalog and built a structure to house them in 1924. The museum's bee house, which contains Barth's hives, was constructed by Brad Beal and Chuck Phillipson following design photostats. Visitors are attracted by the colorful exterior landing boards that serve as entrances to the various hives. The interior of the building provides views of the hive boxes and assorted old beekeeping equipment. One of the advantages of the bee house is that it provides better winter protection for the bees. While often seen around Switzerland and in some other European countries, the *Bienenhaus* is apparently declining in popularity.

The volunteers who help out at the museum all have special memories of the time spent there. For many years, the state's Wisconsin highway map had a label next to New Glarus that said "Swiss Village." Occasionally, people would arrive at the museum

expecting to find a cute Alpine village of many chalets—and maybe even the Alps. In 2009, there was a surprise visit from Choong-Hyon Lim, a yodeler from South Korea, where there are a number of yodeling clubs.¹⁸

Occasionally the historical society has had college-level interns assisting with museum and archive programs.

New Glarus is often the subject of travel articles and the Swiss Historical Village usually gets part of the attention. The community's unique history and the growing success of the dairy industry were first noted in the 1870s by James D. Butler, a former University of Wisconsin professor and widely known lecturer. Various newspapers then began paying attention to celebrations in the village that included one in 1891 marking the 600th anniversary of the founding of Switzerland. In 1907, noted author Charles Burr Todd, writing for the *New York Evening Post*, tracked down Marcus Hoesly, who was an infant when the colony was founded. Marcus told of the early days and the rise of cheesemaking. Todd found the village largely Americanized by that time. Perhaps the most complete capturing of a way of life that has largely faded away came at the end of World War II when the *National Geographic* magazine featured New Glarus.¹⁹ While the Historical Village documents the true Swiss connections of New Glarus, at times the Swiss of New Glarus have had to add some elements that are connected in the public mind with Swissness—chalets, Wilhelm Tell, Heidi, alphorns, cheese fondue. That was noted some years ago by journalist Calvin Trillin in the *The New Yorker* magazine. He quoted Richard Arn, who was then Village of New

¹⁸ While it is impossible to mention all of the other people who have dedicated many hours to keeping the Swiss Historical Village viable over many decades, some of those from recent years not mentioned in this article include: Larry Klassy, Marie Pagel, Louann Bodenmann, Peter Etter, John and Sandra Colstad, Ann Marie Ott, David and Carol Hustad, Robert Elmer, John Marty, Judy Reuter, Dennis and Marion Streiff, David and Ruth Wild, Eva Zweifel, Millard Tschudy, and Virgil Boll.

¹⁹ William H. Nicholas. "Deep in the Heart of 'Swissconsin'." Photography by J. Baylor Roberts. *National Geographic* (Vol. XLI, No. 6, 1947), 781-800.

Glarus president, as saying, “We are trying to keep our heritage, but we are trying to make it a salable commodity, too.”²⁰

While the Swiss Historical Village focuses on the history of New Glarus, the nearby Swiss Center of North America has become a collection point of artifacts and records of Swiss groups throughout the United States. It has an extensive library on many aspects of Switzerland. Visitors are welcome there also, but an appointment is recommended.

²⁰ Calvin Trillin, “U.S. Journal: New Glarus, Wis.” (*The New Yorker*, January 20, 1975).