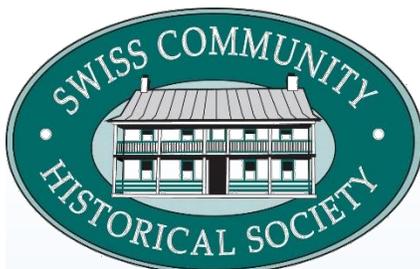


Summer 2017



of Bluffton & Pandora
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NEWSLETTER EDITORS

Wendy & Andy Chappell-Dick

newsletter



***Naked Farmer Rescues Woman
Foot Buried in Its Own Coffin
Woman Gives Birth Silently***

**Joanne Niswander's research shows
not a dull moment in the Settlement**

from an article by Paula McKibben/The Bluffton News

The Friends of the Library held their annual tea at the Bluffton Public Library on Thursday, April 27 with a readers' theatre program from the Swiss Historical Society taken from documents left behind and interviews with relatives. *[ed. note: This program will be repeated on June 25 for Swiss Day! See back page.]*

The food was delightful, but the program was fun and informative. Members of the Swiss Historical Society – Gary Wetherill, Judith Kingsley, Carrie Mast, Rich Bucher and Chris Moser, plus student Ben Eiden – portrayed characters who were among the first settlers here. Most of their comments were taken from actual letters and/or diaries. The entire program was written from these by Joanne Niswander; Wetherill acted as the narrator, weaving the individual narratives together.

The first half of the program began with Michael Neuenschwander and his diary, a very dry, factual account. He mentions, "Our fifth child, born in a boat house in LeHavre, June 11." They had traveled three weeks across France from Switzerland to get there to catch the boat. Once on the boat, it was one and one-half months later before they arrived in New Jersey.

Neuenschwander and his family left New Jersey and migrated to Wayne County, Ohio, where they stayed for 10 years until he had bought enough land in Putnam County on the Riley Creek to move there. His was the first log house on Riley Creek, and he was the first Swiss landowner.

On his trip to America, Peter Geiger, who suffered from seasickness, commented that there were porpoises the size of 150-200 pound hogs. In 1838, he commented that there were lots of very tall trees, many of them with six foot trunks. Wild grapes were abundant and hung from the trees. He was able to get a cord of wood from a single sugar maple.

continued -->

But, Peter's family really suffered here. His wife and daughter had the fever, his son cut his foot with an axe, and Peter fractured his leg in an accident.

Much of the second half of the program came exclusively from P. B. Amstutz's book "Historical Events of the Mennonite Settlement in Allen and Putnam Counties, Ohio." In 1925, Amstutz, aware that the original histories of the early settlers were dying with them, interviewed children and grandchildren of the original settlers, recording stories that they had heard from their predecessors.

Take David Luginbuhl, for example. His foot had been amputated and buried in its own coffin. When he died, the rest of his body went into a coffin and was buried elsewhere.

Another Luginbuhl, John, along with his neighbors needed a market for their crops and furs. It was practically impossible to get to the big markets in Toledo because of the swamp, so they decided to build a raft and float down the Blanchard and other rivers to get to Toledo. This worked. They got to the market and sold their products. Unfortunately, it was too difficult to raft back up the river, so the men had to walk back with all of their purchases.

This was a hardy bunch. John Geiger had raised flax in Switzerland, but he had no spinning wheel to make the thread. As a result, he walked to Findlay through the forest, found the factory producing spinning wheels, bought one, ate a meal, picked up the spinning wheel and walked home, all before dusk.

Even harder were some of the women. John Neuenschwander's wife had a baby during the night without waking her husband. In the morning, she gave it to him as a surprise.

However, this story about Peter Schumacher, a resident of the Schumacher Homestead owned by the Swiss Historical Society, indicates how trenchant members of the community could be. While watching out of his window during a rainstorm, he saw a woman and a man in a wagon washed off the wooden bridge spanning the Riley. The man was able to hang on to the wagon, but the woman was washed downstream. Peter left his dry home, took off his clothes, jumped into the Riley and rescued the woman. Later, he was called to the church to answer for his nakedness. He stood, admitted the charge, and said: "There is the woman I rescued. She is safe with her husband and six children. Maybe some others have need to make confession." According to the Amstutz record, "He turned and faced his accusers silently. One by one they walked out of the church."

acquisition

Making food attractive, along with setting a pretty table for meals was of importance to many of our Swiss settlers. A recent acquisition/donation to the Society is another example of how the people of our area could achieve this goal with glass butter molds with interchangeable print designs and a wooden handle. The set includes a larger glass bowl and two small glass pieces for the designs. The butter molds and bowl originally belonged to Rhoda Niswander Hilty, mother to Herman Hilty, grandmother of donor, Rachel Hilty Friesen.



Swiss sayings

The colder days of May brought some "old wives tales" into our dinner discussion. Have you heard any of the following? Are they distinct to the Swiss settlers? Do you have any to add?

There are always "three bad boys" (sorry guys) in the first half of May that bring cold weather and the threat of frost. Do not plant less hardy plants until May 12. (Emma Kiener Gerber)

When planting a tree, always put a rusty nail in the hole with the roots. It gives needed iron to the tree. (Amos Gerber)
When lilacs bloom profusely, it will be a good year to grow field corn. (Kathryn Bame Gerber)

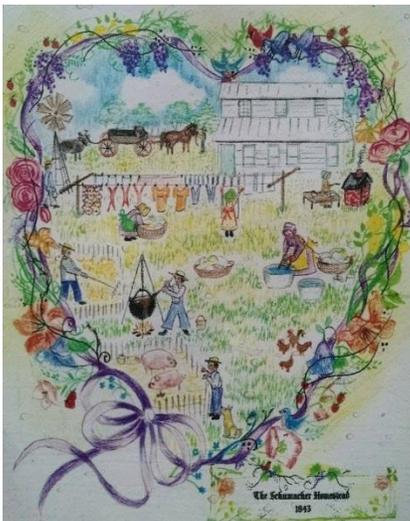
Plant flowers by the sign of "Posey Woman", a sign of the moon, still found

today on the astrological calendar, still printed by the Citizen's National Bank of Bluffton. Do not plant vegetables on the "Posey Woman" days, or your plants will flower but not produce much fruit. (Emma Kiener Gerber)

-Kaye Philips

Note from Kaye: I must add a comment about a recent discussion at church between my mother and another Swiss descendant in our community. Mom asked her if she remembered the "bad boys of May" and the dear lady rattled the saying off in the Swiss language. Mom was surprised and asked about her speaking Swiss. The dear lady said she couldn't speak Swiss, but at that moment the phrase came to her in Swiss loud and clear. Amazing!

open homestead



The Schumacher Homestead is open to the public every Saturday this summer from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Docents will be available to interpret the homestead's history. The barn will also be open, on the last Saturday of each month, only. Admission will be \$5.00 per person, waived for members. Admission is also free to all children 16 and under, accompanied by an adult. Yearly SCHS memberships of \$30.00 will be available on site. Areas open to visitors each Saturday afternoon:

- 1843 House (restored)
- Summer Kitchen (reconstructed on original foundation)
- Workshop (restored)
- 1850's Kitchen Garden
- Outdoor Bake Oven
- 1854 Barn (last Saturday of each month)

Thanks to Mary Anne Moser and Cheryl Slotter, our two docents on hand June 3. They had TWO visitors - one a gentleman from Illinois with ties to the Basingers and a woman from Columbus. They were in Findlay at a meeting and had heard about this so they drove down to check us out. Cheryl gave them a great one-hour tour before they had to be on their way.

sincere thanks

... to the donors for the sled project. The sled will be taken to Woodlyn Coach this summer to begin the restoration.

... to all the volunteers who work hard behind the scenes preparing and caring for the Homestead! We are grateful for lawn mowers, gardeners, house cleaners, cookie bakers, and those restoring the east end of the farmhouse (most of which are not in costume)!

Join us for Swiss Day!

Sunday, June 25, 2017

Ebenezer Mennonite Church

Hams and other meat dishes are in the oven, yeast rolls are raising, casseroles, salads, cookies and pies are being prepared. Everyone is invited to our annual summer potluck.

Potluck Meal: 12:30 p.m. Bring one hot and one cold dish and table service. Short business meeting following the potluck.

Program: 2:30 p.m. "Letters from the Swiss Settlement 1840-1860," which was also presented at the Friends of the Bluffton Public Library's Spring Tea

Schumacher Homestead will be open to visitors after the program.



Gather to celebrate our heritage, history, learn more about the area and participate in one of the best potluck meals around!

Bluffton, OH 45817
PO Box 5

