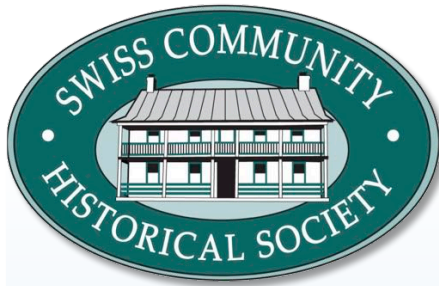


Spring 2020



of Bluffton & Pandora
P.O. Box 5
Bluffton, OH 45817

Schumacher Homestead
8350 Bixel Rd.

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newsletter

We bought a barn! On December 19, 2019, the Swiss Community Historical Society formally purchased an 1850s Swiss Settlement barn from Dan and Cindy Basinger. The building will be disassembled and moved to the Schumacher Homestead to be transformed into a Heritage Center with classroom space, artifact display, offices, and rest rooms.

Preparing to build a modern replacement for their farm, the Basingers hated to see the barn stripped for timbers or moved out of state. Their partnership with the historical society is a cornerstone in the capital campaign that will expand the Schumacher Homestead's ability to host larger groups and longer visits, as well as to provide modern conveniences year-round.

Business leaders, families, and individuals are supporting the project with financial and in-kind gifts. If you would like to partner with others in bringing this wonderful addition to the homestead, contact Capital Campaign director Julie Stratton at 419-302-0369.

Pictured above L-R: Dan Basinger, Cindy Basinger, Seth Bixel, Julie Stratton, Jeff Althaus.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Help us create a heritage center from an historical Swiss barn. Donate today!

(419) 204-1926

swisshistoricalcampaign@gmail.com



JOANNE NISWANDER: "WHY SHOULDN'T I?"

By Rachel Friesen and Susie Gratz

Although Joanne Niswander had been a long-time member of the Swiss Community Historical Society, along with her late husband Dean, and had enjoyed attending Swiss Day and occasional visits to the Schumacher Homestead, it was not until 2011 that she really got involved with the society.

In January 2011, Joanne was asked to help organize an Interpretation Committee, along with Mary Anne Moser and Rachel Friesen. Building on earlier work by others, the group prepared written materials for docents, training videos, and costume guidelines. Joanne personally trained quite a few docents and was tour coordinator until 2019. She also chaired the committee from 2011 until 2018. A highlight for Joanne was helping prepare two Spring History Programs, one about the Schumacher family, and the other concerning previous owners, residents, and caretakers of the homestead.

Organizing this committee did not prepare Joanne for the surprise she received when her cell phone rang in the fall of 2011 while she was visiting her daughter at Cape Cod. It was president Phil Kingsley, asking her to serve as a member of the board! Joanne's first response was, "Why should I?" But she thought it over and answered her own question: "Why shouldn't I?" Joanne was a member of the board for eight years and found great satisfaction in that work.

Joanne was instrumental in establishing summer Saturday Open House at the homestead. For three seasons, she collected attendance data, admission fees, and anecdotes at the end of each Saturday afternoon. She then wrote fascinating and humorous pieces about the day's experience for the benefit of the other docents.

As a docent, Joanne especially enjoyed talking with those who had never visited previously. "We opened people's eyes to what is right here." It was also fun to visit with those who had a connection with the house, such as Schumacher descendants and former residents. [CONTINUES NEXT PAGE](#)



From Joanne's docent reports:

"historical tidbit from the Bluffton News ... 'Legend has it that the Neuenschwanders (our Mennonite pioneer Michael and his wife) were headed for Indiana and stopped for the night beside a spring. The next morning Neuenschwander decided to settle right there, despite his wife's protest that the croaking of the frogs was too loud. "That's just it," he is supposed to have said. "they will keep us company (on lonely days)."

"Our docents ... didn't have time to sit around and look for things to do, that's for sure! We had a total of 33 visitors for this cloudy, dark and sometimes rainy day.... Next week we'll hope for a full day of sunshine (or clouds, if that is what brings the people!).

"Did you know that the Schumacher House was built in Putnam County--but now it's in Allen County? No, we didn't move the house. But the county lines were rearranged in 1847-48 when Auglaize County was created."

"It's been a wonderful experience, something I never thought I would be doing between years 80 and 90," Joanne says. Now as she retires at age 90 from historical society involvements, the SCHS Board and the members of the Interpretation Committee express appreciation for her wisdom, her sense of humor, her willingness to try new things, and her dedication and hard work on behalf of SCHS. She is an example for all of us!

Joanne Niswander and Rachel Friesen greet guests at the homestead in 2019



FACEBOOK SAMPLER

By Kaye Phillips Our early Swiss settlers would have most likely not celebrated Valentine's Day, but this Valentine was given by one Swiss boy to a Swiss girl in the late 1920s to early 1930s. The two were married and were my beloved grandparents, Robert Gerber, 1913-1985 (son of Amos Gerber, 1887-1955 and Emma Kiener Gerber 1888-1979) and Kathryn Bame Gerber, 1915-2009 (daughter of Samuel Bame, 1887-1961 and Sarah Diller, 1880-1949).



Kaye posts items and responds to viewer inquiries on the SCHS Facebook page: facebook.com/SwissCommunityHistoricalSociety



Join the Swiss Community Historical Society for the Spring History Program with Gary Wetherill.

Lifeways of Ohio's Native People—A Look at the Material Culture of Ohio's Original Inhabitants

Gary has been a student of Native American culture for nearly 50 years with an emphasis on the Plains and Rocky Mountain Plateau tribes. When the Bluffton Boy Scout Troop was asked to staff an "Indian Village" at the village's 2011 Sesquicentennial, his research turned to the Native people of Ohio. His presentation will center on the material culture (clothing, housing, hunting, etc.) of Ohio's original inhabitants. Objects, photos, drawings and books will be on display.

Sunday, April 5

2:30-4:30 p.m.

Maple Crest, Patio Room

700 Maple Crest Court, Bluffton

The program is free and open to the public.
Refreshments will be served.

Visit SCHS at www.swisshistorical.org and on Facebook

P.O. Box 5
Bluffton, OH 45817

