



Celebration time is here again

The Swiss Celebration will be on July 25 and marks the 45th year that the Grundy County Swiss Historical has held this heritage event. It all started when several of the older members of the Swiss Colony thought it was time to get together to honor the memories of their parents and grandparents. The older members were passing on and something needed to be done to keep alive the stories and traditions of the settlers. You may remember the first Swiss Celebrations were held at the Swiss Memorial School and were mainly a reunion of several Swiss families. In the beginning there were many families of Swiss ancestry still in the area so the reunion approach worked well. As time went on and families began to spread out from the area the reunion plan gave way to a more inclusive pattern. Today many members of the Society never had connections to the colony, but they felt that keeping the tradition alive was a good cause.

The big change in the Celebration tradition came when Rose Marie Stampfli passed away in 2001. Her tireless efforts and devotion to the society will be a lasting memory since she also gave her life's savings and thirty-three acre farm to the Society. This is a debt the community will never be able to repay. Since acquiring the farm many changes and repairs have been made to restore and refurbish the old structures of the homestead. The house, cheese house, and barn have all had new roofs and structural repairs. We have also added outdoor toilets, city water, underground electrical lines, built a concession and band stand. All of it has been paid for by matching grants from either the state or county and generous support from the membership. As you can imagine grant money has stopped flowing for the time being but the farm still needs more work. The next structure that needs attention is the little log cabin just behind the band

stand. It is believed this little house was the first dwelling used by the Swiss settlers in the early 1870's. It is in imminent danger of falling down and badly needs restoration.

Our goal for 2009: Save a little cabin

Since grant money is in short supply the Society will have to raise and pay for the restoration of the log cabin through donations. If possible, we will harvest logs and timbers from the back side of the farm and reconstruct the cabin as it was or may have been. There are no records or pictures so we will be doing a lot of guess work. We hope to use a few original logs and timbers to show the workmanship of the builders. One can see from the little building that the need for shelter was important and just having a roof overhead was crucial. This little cabin is what the Society is all about. It is about the struggles of these hardy Swiss who came to Grundy County and despite hardships became a major influence in the county and region. To restore this little cabin we will need your help. Therefore, we plan to use some of our resources from this year's Celebration to start work on this cabin.

Termite Protection Completed

In an ongoing war with nature's little bugs, we have had most of the structures on the farm treated for termites. We are not able to undo what the termites have already done, but we can slow them down. We also had the old house treated for the very aggressive wasps that have moved in. No more running for your life at the back door, I hope.

Entertainment this year

Last year Tony Zraggen let us know that they wouldn't be able to come back with the alphorn band. I was disappointed but perfectly understood their situation after three wonderful years. It was time for a change. As luck would have it a lady came to the band stand last year at intermission and told me she played the accordion. It turned out that she is the leader of a band that is well recognized in the Nashville area as one of the best brass ensembles in the area. They feature brass instruments, drums, yodeling, and an alphorn. The name of the band is Die Musik Meisters and is led by Karen Yatusis, a native of the Austrian Alps. Karen is a school teacher from Smyrna and also raises llamas.

Gate Fees Raised & Food Vendors Increased

Entry rates to the celebration will increase this year. We will be charging \$5.00 per adult and children under 12 who are with their parents are free. The cost of the band and fewer corporate contributors has forced us to raise the rates. Still this is a real bargain. Where else can you hear an authentic German/Austrian Band and enjoy a day on a beautiful old farm, eat bratwurst and drink a beer for an entry of only \$5.00? This year we are increasing our food vendor base due to the crowds that we had last year. We were not prepared for the demand that hit us last year. That won't happen this year.

Caretakers

Unfortunately, we will be looking for a new caretaker family this fall. Amy and Caleb have been great. They are like any young family who wants a place of their own. They have bought several acres in Coalmont and will be moving in November. We wish them well. We are looking for recommendations for a new family.

Pass the word

July 25th is the date of the Swiss Heritage Celebration. It starts at 10 and ends at 4. It is also a good time to renew your membership in the Swiss Historical Society. Just stop at the membership desk in the souvenir stand and ask to be renewed. It is still just \$15 per year, \$25 per family.

Grady's Oxen Team



Grady Partin is becoming famous. His oxen team is making a big impression in the area and there are calls for him to show these beautiful animals around. We are very lucky to have Grady in our group. You know that the last year the oxen were just calves but this year they are full grown. They are a beautiful sight and a big attraction at the Celebration.

Grundy County Historical Society Heritage Center

At our December annual meeting the Board voted to spend \$1200 per year to offset utility cost and to support efforts of the GC Historical Society in establishing a Heritage Center in Grundy County. Their efforts are about to pay off. The GCHS has bought the old 1st Nat. Bank Building in Tracy City and will start a museum of Grundy County's history this fall. Our Society will have a room in the museum that is dedicated to the Swiss Colony. It will be a secure place for our archives and artifacts and a place for genealogical research by anybody looking for their ancestors. There will be banners that hang behind the exhibits that narrate a brief history of the Colony and direct those interested to documents that cover details. The leader of this effort is Oliver Jarvis and he has devoted many hours to making this project successful.

Hope to see you at the Celebration
John Baggenstoss, Pres. GCSHS

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