

Two scouts, Niklaus Durst and Fridolin Streiff, were sent ahead to find land in America for the Swiss colony. They made their way up the Mississippi River from St. Louis and found what they were looking for in the rolling hill country of southern Wisconsin. The land was cheap enough, \$1.25 an acre, with a good water supply, ideal for raising crops and dairy herds.

A total of 193 men, women and children left Glarus Canton for the long voyage across the Atlantic and the subsequent journey to their new home in a promised land. Only 108 made it to New Glarus. The 84 others settled elsewhere in the New World or died en route.

Land was cleared for crops, log cabins were erected. Dairy herds were launched. The hearty, hard-working pioneers began their new life.

They spoke the *Schweitzer Deutsch* (Swiss-German) dialect of the rural mile-high Alpine valley of their origin, a dialect spoken by the Swiss families of New Glarus to this day along with English.

"When we visit Switzerland people know immediately where we come from because of our dialect," Dennis Streiff, 57, explained.

"The Swiss are fascinated by the way we talk in a slow and singing fashion. Our dialect is a throwback to earlier times. It is a different dialect from the *Schweitzer Deutsch* spoken in Glarus today."

Since its founding 140 years ago, there has been a steady trickle of Swiss people emigrating to New Glarus. Many remain in Green County for the rest of their lives. Many move to other parts of Wisconsin, to Illinois, Colorado, California and other parts of the United States.

Descendants of nearly all the original families continue to reside in or near New Glarus, families with names like Aebli, Babler, Becker, Disch, Durst, Figi, Hefty, Hosly, Klassy, Kundert, Legger, Schindler, Schmid, Stauffacher, Trumpi, Voegeli and Wild.

Many Swiss families live in sturdy farmhouses more than a century old. Doris Streiff, 54, and her husband Dean, 55, both fifth-generation Swiss, live in an 1882 farmhouse. Streiff's great grandfather was Fridolin Streiff, one of two scouts sent ahead by the Swiss government to find land in America for the colony. His grandfather was the first baby born in the village.

Their daughter, Nancy Keegan, 22, spent a winter working and going to school in Unterwasser, Switzerland. For years, Swiss children have lived with the Streiffs while attending school in New Glarus.

Many homes and nearly all the stores and public buildings in New Glarus are Swiss chalet architecture. Several homes have *Schweitzer Deutsch* sayings hand painted on the outside. On one chalet, the sayings translate into: "This house is where we love to see you come and hate to see you leave. This house is mine and is not mine. I go out and you come in. Tell me who will be the last one in?"

There is a glockenspiel tower in the middle of town. Adorning the buildings are emblems of Swiss cantons and murals painted by artists from Switzerland. The huge Gothic, cathedral-like Swiss United Church of Christ looms over the small village. In front of the

church, built in 1900, is a statue to the memory of the village founders.

The Swiss connection is everywhere. The Upright Embroidery Factory manufactures Swiss laces and embroideries. The 21-year-old Roger Bright Band performs each year here in New Glarus and in Switzerland as well.

Edelweiss Stars, a group of two New Glarus men and four women who have been yodeling and singing together for 35 years, perform in Swiss clubs in the United States and Switzerland as well.

Gift shops are filled with Swiss items purchased by proprietors who go to Europe each year to replenish supplies.

For 50 years, townspeople have produced Friedrich Schiller's 1804 play, "Wilhelm Tell," in an outdoor amphitheater. It is performed twice in English and once in *Schweitzer Deutsch* every Labor Day weekend. The highlight of the production is Gessler the Tyrant's demand of Wilhelm Tell: "Thou wilt shoot an apple off the boy's head."

Each year 200 local people participate in the drama. The play is also presented annually in Interlocken and Altdorf, Switzerland.

Every summer busloads of Swiss vacationers come to New Glarus.

"They would come here and stay in hotels and motels in Madison, 25 miles north of here," said Hans Lenzinger, 38, a ski instructor who emigrated from his home in Unterwasser when he was 20. "From the moment I read about New Glarus in my history class in school I planned some day to come here," he said.

Five years ago, Lenzinger and three other local men built the 44-room Chalet Landhaus Swiss country inn so that visitors could stay in New Glarus.

The Swiss Historical Museum occupies a square block of the village. In it are a dozen historical structures including a replica of the 1849 log cabin Swiss church.

Outside the church are the original headstones of first settlers who were buried in the present church yard. The headstones were removed from the church grounds and placed in the historic village.

In the center of the historic village is the Hall of History, designed by a Glarus, Switzerland architect. The building is filled with photo displays and artifacts presented by the people of Glarus Canton to New Glarus.

The Swiss Americans of New Glarus keep their family records up to date in the Rathouses (Canton courthouses) in Switzerland.

"Here I am, four generations removed from Switzerland, yet this past summer my wife and I went to Switzerland bringing the latest information of our family to be added to our records there," Dennis Streiff noted. "We registered all our grandchildren who are six generations removed from Switzerland."

He said many American citizens in New Glarus have dual citizenship. "They do that so they don't need work permits to work in Switzerland for brief or long periods of time. It eliminates a lot of government red tape when visiting Switzerland if you have dual citizenship."

Swiss Consul General Holzer explained that the American citizens do not take an oath of allegiance to Switzerland. "We recognize the Swiss side of their heritage. If they submit their birth certificates and register, we recognize them as Swiss and permit them to live, work and be treated as citizens of my country."