



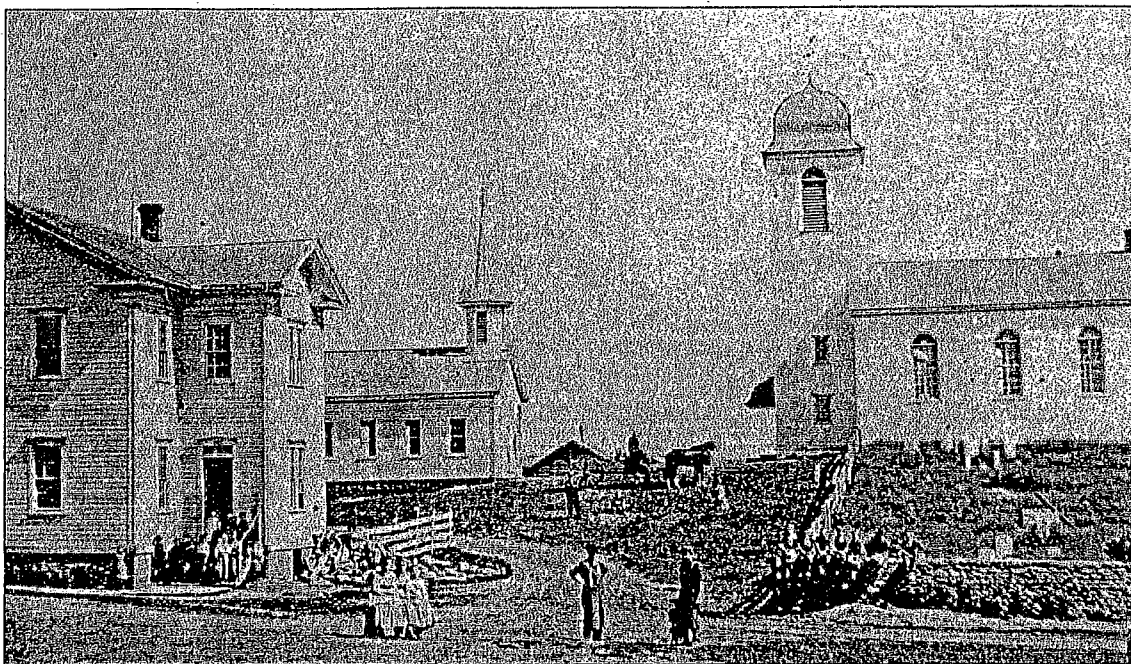
Pioneer Cemetery of New Glarus

By Duane H. Freitag
Compiled in 2003

Unbeknownst to many people in New Glarus – residents and visitors alike – the remains of many of the community's early settlers lie under the grassy south lawn of Swiss United Church of Christ in the center of the village's business district.

Today only two in-ground tombstones give a clue to passersby that the lawn is a historic spot for those who trace their ancestry to the Swiss colonists who came to Green County in 1845 and the years immediately following. For the historian, very little has been written about the cemetery and there is scant mention of it in the few records that exist on the early years of New Glarus. This monograph is an attempt to gather in one place what little can be authoritatively said about the pioneer cemetery.

The land that comprises what was once known as the "Alten Friedhof" (old cemetery) is a rectangle, about 2,160 square yards, that today is bounded on the south by the sidewalk along 5th Ave., on the west by the pioneer monument, on the north by the Swiss Church foundation, and on the east by a concrete walkway. The area was once



This is probably the oldest photograph that shows the pioneer cemetery. The photographer had a number of people pose for him, including schoolchildren on the schoolhouse steps at the left, some girls on a bench set up in the street, several men including tradesmen with full leather aprons, and some boys holding their hats in their hands while sitting on the stone wall that once marked the southern boundary of the cemetery. Note the brush in the cemetery. The lack of trees in the cemetery, the existence of the Sunday School building (top left, built in 1868), and the better condition of the paint or whitewash on the church tower (when compared with the photo on Page 9), suggest this photo was taken in the late 1870s or 1880s.

enclosed by a fence and, at least on the south side, a stone wall. Judging by existing tombstones and photographs, the graves were in rows running east and west. The site was used for burials from the earliest days of the colony -- possibly immediately after the pioneers arrived in August of 1845¹ -- through early January of 1874. It is surmised that most graves were dug next to each other somewhat in the order of death, as would have been the case in Switzerland, rather than in various family plots. For example, the two tombstones that remain in the cemetery, for Johannes and Barbara Luchsinger, are not together (he died in 1862 and his wife in 1868, events that placed her remains several rows to the south and further east from his).

While tombstones exist for 44 burials, the cemetery certainly contains the remains of many more people -- likely beyond 300. Pastoral records of Swiss Church show 322 funerals from 1850 through 1873.² Joshua Wild, who came to New Glarus in 1851 and kept a notebook of various data that interested him, recorded 333 deaths in the Swiss colony from 1850 through 1874 under the heading "25 Years of New Glarner

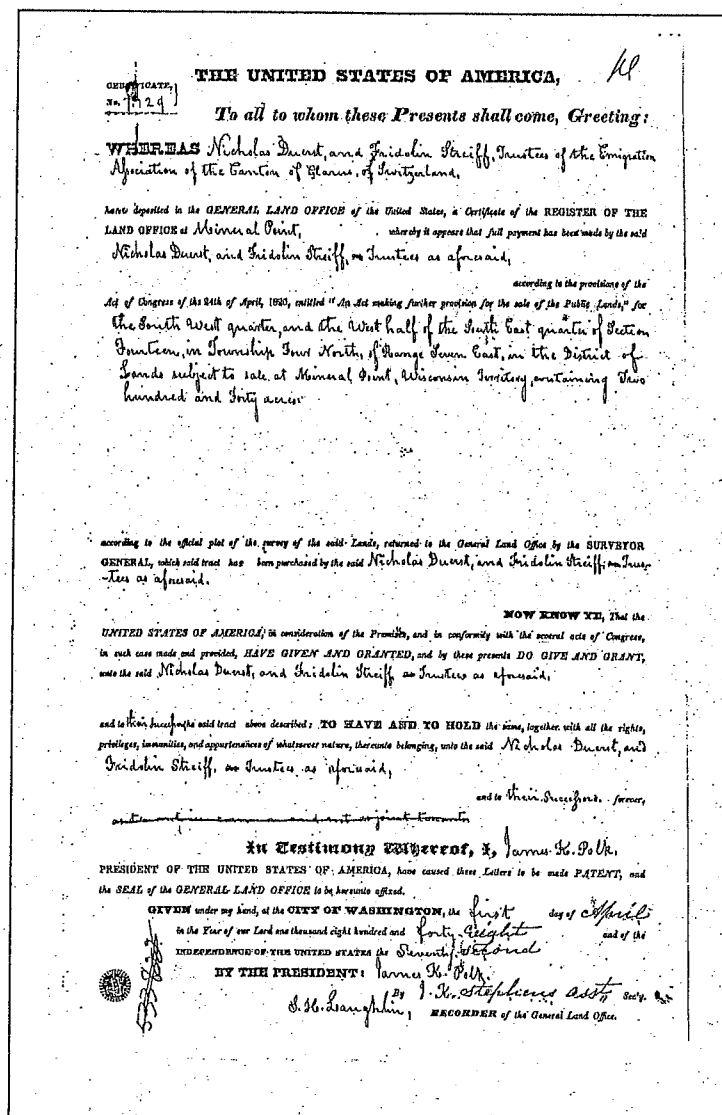
¹ Thomas Schmid, age 3, son of Mathias and Anna Katharina Schmid, died near Wiota or Gratiot, Wis., as the colonists were making the final leg of their journey to New Glarus. The author of the article on New Glarus in the 1884 *History of Green County, Wisconsin* (Union Publishing Co., Springfield, Ill.) was very dramatic in writing: "Sadly the parents carried the mortal remains of their boy to the end of the journey, and buried him tenderly-- their first sacrificial offering to God in 'New Glarus'" (pp. 1033-1034). The death is also mentioned on p. 204 of Leo Schelbert's *New Glarus 1845-1970 -- The Making of a Swiss American Town*.

² *The First One Hundred Years of the Swiss Evangelical and Reformed Church*. New Glarus, Wis. Walter J. Stuckey, pastor. June 25, 1950, Records and Statistics section, p. 1.

Cemetery." He broke down his list by age, and an amazing 45% of the deaths were children age 1 year or less.³ These figures do not count the deaths during the first five years of the colony.

Unfortunately, no complete record exists of who is buried in the pioneer cemetery or where, if there ever was such a list, and all but the two Luchsinger tombstones⁴ were removed from the cemetery long ago.

The cemetery site is part of the original 1,200 acres of land purchased on July 17, 1845, for the proposed Swiss colony by Nicholas Dürst and Fridolin Streiff, advance agents for the Emigration Society of the Canton of Glarus.⁵ Dürst and Streiff, with the help of two other men, were busy building a shelter on the site when two representatives of the main party finally found them along the Little Sugar River in early August. John Luchsinger, in his treatise on the Swiss colony that was published in the *Wisconsin Historical Collections* in 1879, said the shelter was a little cabin "near the east wall of the old graveyard...;



The land patent for part of Section 14, Town of New Glarus, which includes the cemetery site, was issued in 1848.

³ Notebook on the early days of New Glarus. Joshua Wild. Original in New Glarus Historical Society archives. Wild's death list is near the back of the notebook and details how many males and females in various age groups died each year.

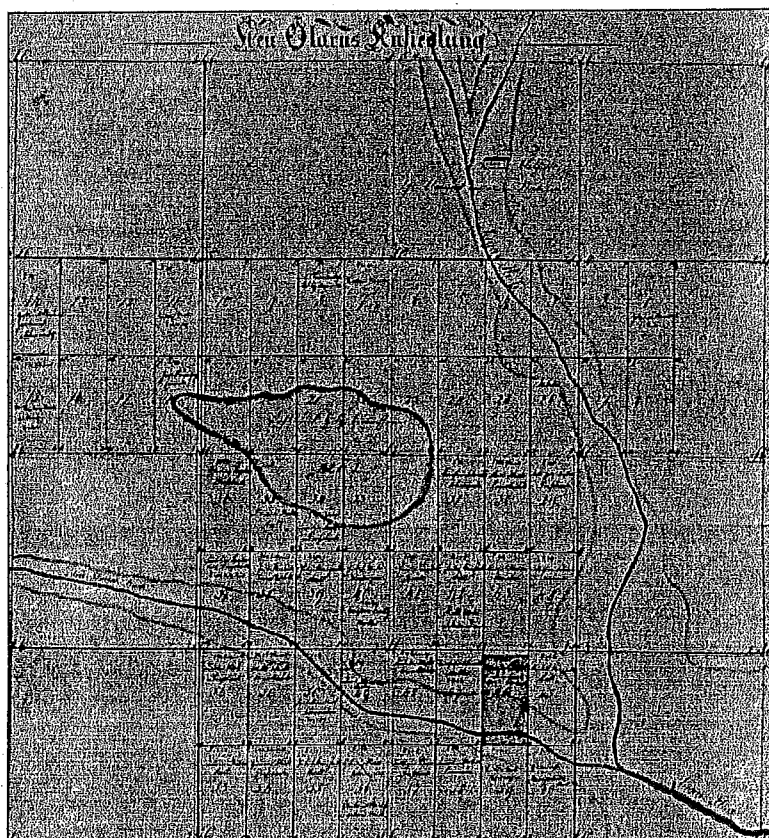
⁴ These tombstones are not the originals. They were probably replaced in the 1920s during the period when the cemetery property was cleared off. The original headstone for Johannes Luchsinger is in the Swiss Historical Village collection. The original for Barbara can be seen in a photo on Page 9. The couple's son was the John Luchsinger who served in the Legislature in the 1870s – perhaps he was the one who saw to it that his parent's graves were permanently noted with ground-level markers.

⁵ The land patent, which was applied for and paid for at Mineral Point in 1845, was completed in Washington, D.C., on April 1, 1848. It, along with patents for the rest of the colony land, can be viewed online at the Bureau of Land Management's internet site. The file number for this part of the colony land, which is on Section 14 of the Town of New Glarus, is W11950_461.

it was a small affair, and is only recollected, and referred to, as the primitive hut of the settlement.”⁶ Miriam Theiler Abplanalp noted in her centennial history of New Glarus that when the main body of colonists arrived they set about building a large structure in addition to what had already been provided. “A large excavation was made in the hillside (which later became the ‘old graveyard’ on the hillside which is currently the front lawn of the Swiss Evangelical and Reformed

Church). . . . Posts were set in the ground and a roof made of boughs and wild hay. The sides were afterwards enclosed with boards hauled from Galena. The floor was first the bare earth; later it was covered with split poplar logs, the riven side uppermost. There were no windows or chimneys.”⁷ Luchsinger says the building was “located near the west wall, and within the enclosure of the old grave-yard, and close to where the district school-house now stands” (the building that is now Roberts Drug Store).⁸

Dürst and Streiff previously had the colony land surveyed and divided into 20-acre parcels, per the instructions they received back in Switzerland.⁹ What became the cemetery site was in the east-center part of parcel 26.¹⁰ When the village proper was platted by a surveyor in 1850, the unincorporated “village” consisted of parcel 26 and the southern half of parcel 25 (the next plot to the west). Then



The original colony land was subdivided into 20 acre parcels. Number 26 became the village center.

⁶ *The Swiss Colony of New Glarus*. By John Luchsinger. Wisconsin Historical Collections. Vol. VIII, p. 416. Published 1879. Luchsinger, born in Switzerland and educated in Philadelphia, came to New Glarus in 1856. He served in the Wisconsin Legislature for several years. Mathias Dürst's emigration diary refers to plural "huts" having been built by the advance men.

⁷ *New Glarus' First 100 Years*. Miriam B. Theiler. Campus Publishing Co., Madison, WI, 1946. p. 17. Theiler, a graduate of the University of Wisconsin, was editor of the *New Glarus Post*, which her parents and grandfather had operated beforehand.

⁸ *The Swiss Colony of New Glarus*. Luchsinger. p. 420.

⁹ *New Glarus, Wisconsin -- Mirror of Switzerland*. Millard Tschudy. 1995. Green County Printing. Pp. 3-4.

¹⁰ The parcels were each 1/32nd of a section of land. Parcel 26 was the E½ of the SE¼ of the SW¼ of Section 14 of Town IV North Range VII East (the surveyor's township eventually become the Town of New Glarus).

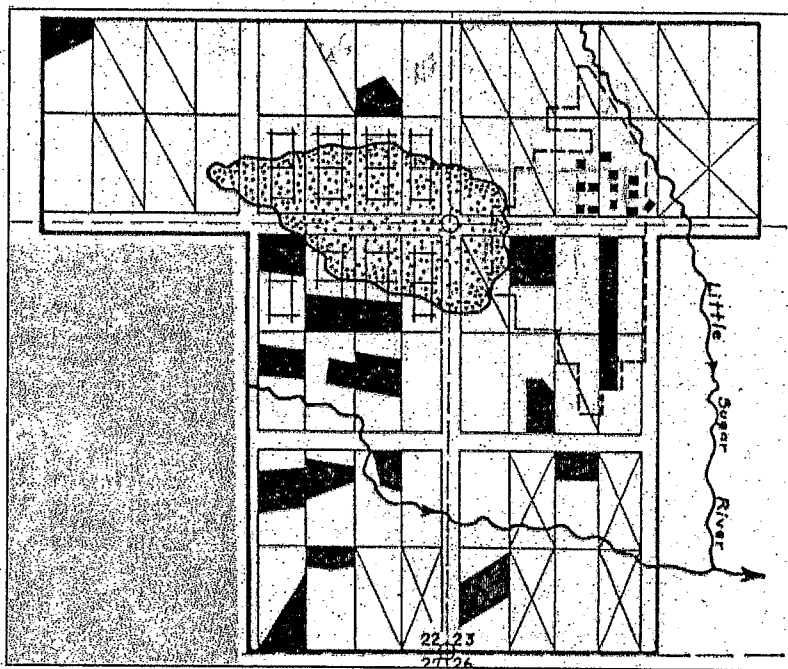
the cemetery property could be described as Lots 7 and 8 of Block 2, Original Plat of New Glarus. The Emigration Society sold all of its original land purchase to the settlers in 1855/56 and title to the cemetery property evolved to Swiss Church.

Exactly why this area was set apart as a cemetery is no longer known.

However, prior to the village being platted, the first log cabins were clustered to the south and west of the site. A decision was apparently reached early on that parcel 26 would be the center of the settlement, including land where a church would eventually be built.

John Jacob Tschudy, who came from Switzerland in the fall of 1846 to help administer colony affairs (he replaced Dürst, who had returned to Switzerland in late 1845), recalled in later years that "lot No. 13 was selected as the village plat, and had 13 cabins at the time. There were 20 cabins in the whole colony."¹¹ Presumably he meant parcel 26 and "No. 13" was a typographical error, since parcel 13 was at the west end of the colony land along what would now be Durst Valley Rd. The village parcel was also mentioned by Rev. Wilhelm Streissguth in a report sent back to Switzerland after his arrival here in the summer of 1850 as the first pastor of Swiss

Church. He said that he was allotted land on the north half of parcels 25 and 26 and that it was among the best land. "At the north end one acre was broken for a garden. I shall hardly need more for cultivation so long as I am alone. The house is to be built on the northern line; the site satisfied me as the best from the beginning."¹²



This sketch of the colony land in 1846 shows the cluster of log cabins (small squares), which would have been in plots 25 and 26. Most homes were in the village area and families would have walked out to their farmland. Today plot 26 would be roughly the 8 blocks with the New Glarus Hotel and the Post Office on the southern end to the old Town Hall and lumberyard on the north. The dark areas above are cornfields. (This and previous illustration adapted from sketches in Switzerland, published in Leo Schelbert's *New Glarus 1845-1970*.)

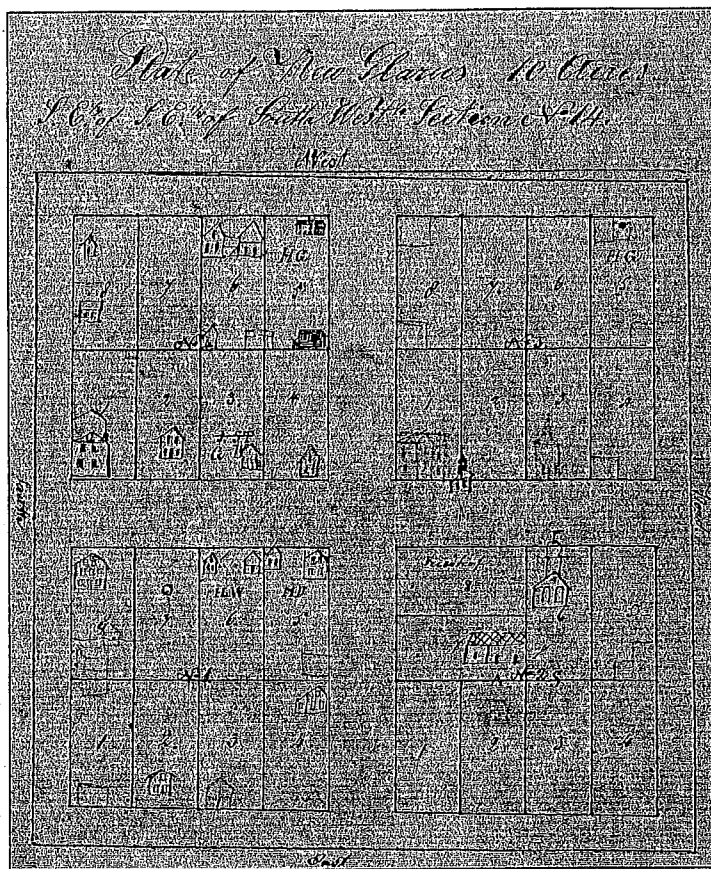
¹¹ *Additional Notes on New Glarus*. J. Jacob Tschudy. P. 444. The notes were at the end of Luchsinger's piece in the Wisconsin Historical Collections, Vol. VIII, published in 1879.

¹² "Documents New Glarus in 1850." Report of Rev. Wilhelm Streissguth. *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 1935, p. 328. Translated from a pamphlet issued in Switzerland in 1851. Streissguth gives a long philosophical report on what he found at the colony, including a lot of complaints on the difficulties the colonists experienced and criticisms of the leadership. His descriptions of the countryside are interesting, but the report lacks much specific information. Parcel 25 was the 20 acres to the west of Parcel 26. For many years the Swiss Church parsonages remained in that same area.

In anticipation of Streissguth's arrival, a 20 by 39 foot log building was built west of the cemetery (roughly behind where Roberts Drug Store is now) for school, church and general community use. Eventually that land was designated for school purposes

while the lot at the top of the knoll adjacent to the cemetery was reserved for a permanent church building.¹³

However, burials at the site *probably* preceded construction of the log church. Based on church family group records, at least 10 people died in the roughly five years between the colonists' arrival and the beginning of Streissguth's pastorate and record-keeping. The number may be higher than that because Tschudy, in his first report after arriving in the colony, already had noted that "up to Nov. 20, 1846, there were . . . seven deaths in the settlement."¹⁴ The only nearby cemetery in existence in the earliest days of the colony was in the Yankee settlement at Green's Prairie (just north of present-day Postville on Postville Rd.). It was to that settlement that the first road was laid out by Dürst and Streiff, connecting New



Joshua Wild's sketch of Blocks 1-4 of the village, looking west, show the cemetery (Friedhof) next to the church. Note that he sketches the cemetery out into what would be the street. Lot 7 also became part of the cemetery.

Glarus to other points in the Territory of Wisconsin. The burial site, once known as the York Prairie Cemetery, had its beginnings in 1846.¹⁵ Today the Green's Prairie Cemetery is deliberately overgrown with prairie grasses and flowers. Some tombstones

¹³ Several histories describe the log church as 20 by 30 feet. However, the replica in the Swiss Historical Village is 20 by 39 feet. It seems likely that the building was the larger size and perhaps an old-style script "9" was misread years ago as a "0". While tradition puts the log building on the same site as the present church, Streissguth in an 1852 letter to the Emigration Society very clearly says the building was on Lot 1 of Block 3 and describes it as "the school which is still being used as a church" (see p. 72 of *Die Welt ist hier weit*, a special printing of the Canton Glarus Historical Society yearbook in 1995). Millard Tschudy also noted the correct location (see p. 21 of *Mirror of Switzerland*.) Luchsinger says that when the stone church was constructed in 1858 the log building was used by the school district for several more years.

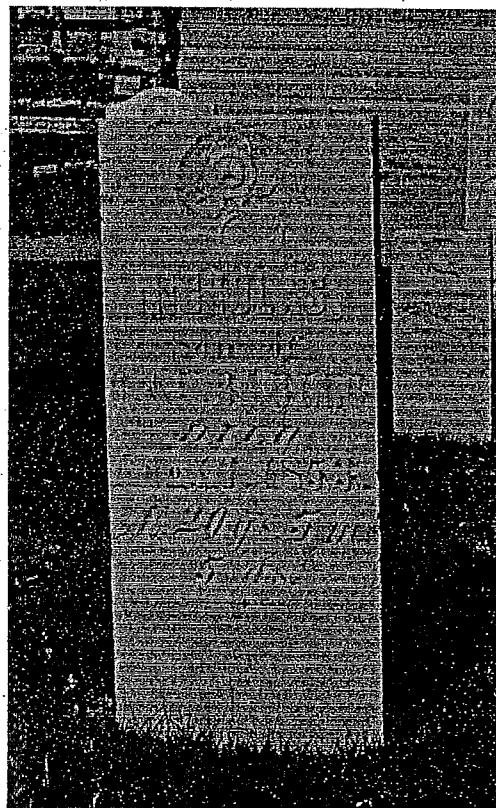
¹⁴ "Additional Notes on New Glarus." J. Jacob Tschudy. *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, Vol. VIII, p. 444.

¹⁵ *History of Green County, Wisconsin*. Union Publishing Co. Springfield, Ill. 1884. P. 1152. The earliest burial is said to have been Joanna Green, who died Oct. 21, 1846. She and her husband had moved to the settlement from Wetherfield, N.Y., in 1839. The settlement was named for them.

are a faded jumble, while others remain very legible. There is no obvious trace of any early Swiss burials there. Also, it would seem unlikely that the clannish Swiss would have buried their loved ones anywhere other than at their new home. While it is certainly possible that some burials were on family farms as they were developed, it was just as likely that once there was a community cemetery remains were disinterred and moved to the common burial ground. Other area cemeteries all were developed after the founding of the Swiss colony: A small cemetery northwest of old Exeter began in 1850; the Monticello cemetery next to Zwingli Church in 1852; the oldest of three Dayton area cemeteries in 1852; the Norwegian cemetery at the York church in 1861 (Norwegian settlement of the Town of York began in 1851).¹⁶ With one minor exception, there is no indication of a colony cemetery elsewhere. The only possibility is that the group of Swiss immigrants who came from Bilten, Canton Glarus, in 1847 and settled in the Town of Washington may have started a cemetery – either on what once was the John E. Marty farm southwest of New Glarus (Section 34, Town of New Glarus) or possibly the tiny cemetery along Highway C west of Monticello (Section 12, Town of Washington).¹⁷ Therefore, it is likely that most if not all of the early colony burials were in the “Alten Friedhof.”

The earliest remaining tombstone from the pioneer cemetery is for Nicholas Babler, who died Aug. 10, 1853. The 21-year-old single man was struck by lightning while harvesting wheat.¹⁸ He was 13 years old when he arrived in New Glarus with his parents, who were among the original colonists. The second oldest stone is for Peter Jenni, who died in 1858

-- the year that the log church was removed and the white stone church was built. Of



The oldest tombstone from the cemetery, now on display at the Swiss Historical Village, is for Nicholas Babler, an original colonist who died when he was struck by lightning.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* Monticello information, pp. 1003-1004. Dayton and Exeter information, p. 485. York information, p. 1152. Permanent settlement of Green County began in the 1830s after the Blackhawk War. The county was created in 1838 with Monroe as the county seat. Early burials there were at the site of what is now the Monroe Senior Center (the former Green County Normal School), but the remains were removed to Monroe's Greenwood Cemetery when that was developed in 1859.

¹⁷ “Reminiscences of Early New Glarus.” *New Glarus Post*, Aug. 9, 1939. Page 1. Article notes that church services were held on what was the John E. Marty farm and that traces of an early cemetery remained. (The farm, on the east half of the southwest quarter of Section 34, Town of New Glarus, would be along Highway N today.) The cemetery reference may be to the graves in Section 12 Town of Washington (see p. 35 of 1873 plat map).

¹⁸ Notebook on the early days of New Glarus. Joshua Wild. Excerpts translated from German by Paul Grossenbacher in January 1979. pp. 1-7. Original in New Glarus Historical Society archives.

course there were many deaths before those dates, including large numbers during an 1852 scarlet fever epidemic (17 children) and an 1854 cholera epidemic (22 adults).

Given the dimensions of the cemetery, and closely inspecting the earliest photographs, there appears to be roughly 15 rows of graves with roughly 25 graves per row, for an approximate total of 375 gravesites. In an early photo there is a grassy area that runs north-south slightly to the west of the center of the cemetery. Whether that was an intended greenway or is the site of earlier burials without tombstones, is anyone's guess. The known and likely burials, detailed in a separate compilation, total 292 (not including at least 68 unnamed infants). The seemingly large numbers of burials are really just an indication that pioneer life here, as elsewhere, was difficult and death commonplace.

Although the Swiss Reformed Church was organized in New Glarus in 1850, it wasn't until nine years later that the congregation had a formal constitution.¹⁹ That document included a clause that the church organization would be charged with administering the property, including the cemetery. The pastor's job included "escort deceased members to their last resting place, and by such occasion deliver prayer and sermons according to custom" of the Zurich liturgy. The pastor was to keep a register of deceased members.²⁰

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St. Martin's Church, New Glarus, Wis. 1855					
No.	Date	Name	Age	Place of Birth	Remarks
1.	17. Jan. 1855	Adam Altmann, Peter	60	Germany	1855
2.	18. Jan. 1855	Eliz. Streiff, (P. & Peter)	16	Germany	1855
3.	23. Jan. 1855	Peter Altmann, (P. & Peter)	16	Germany	1855
4.	24. Jan. 1855	Marg. Altmann, (P. & Peter)	16	Germany	1855

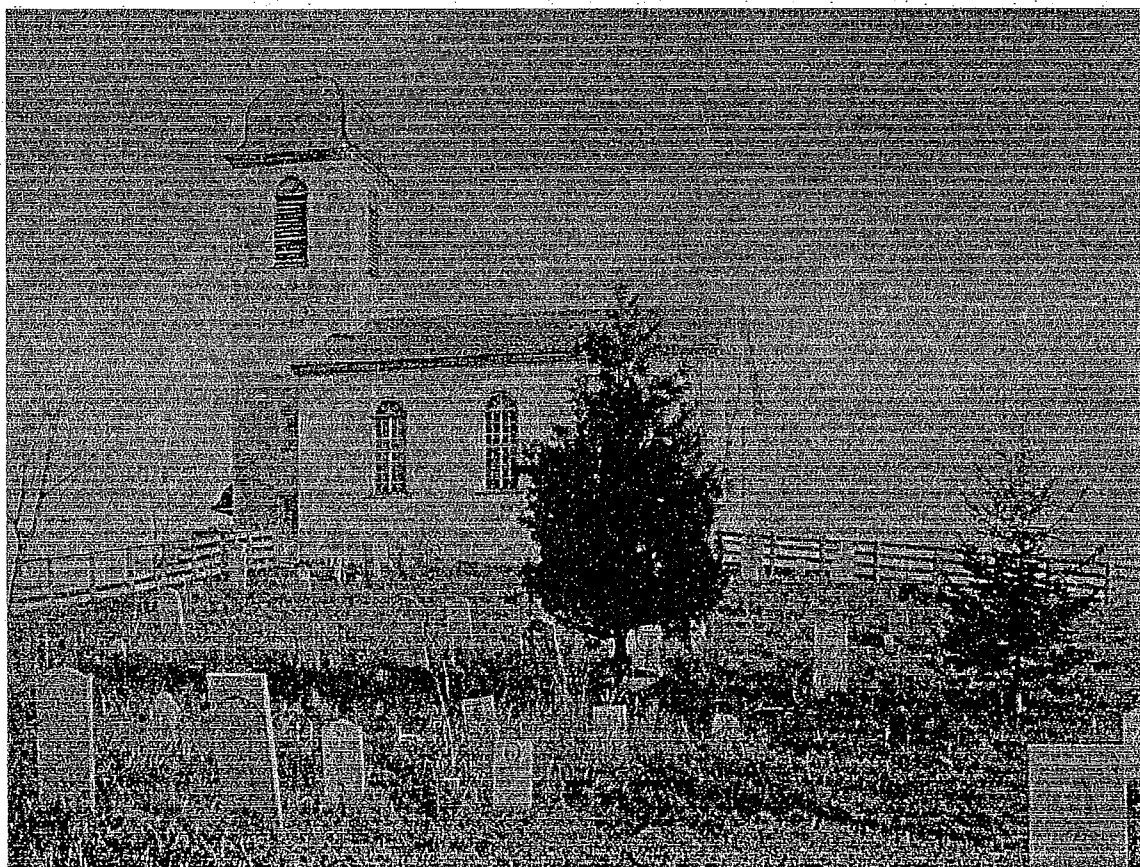
The beginning of Pastor Streissguth's register of the 12 deaths and burials that took place in 1855. The lists are very sobering to read, especially for the epidemic years of 1852 and 1854.

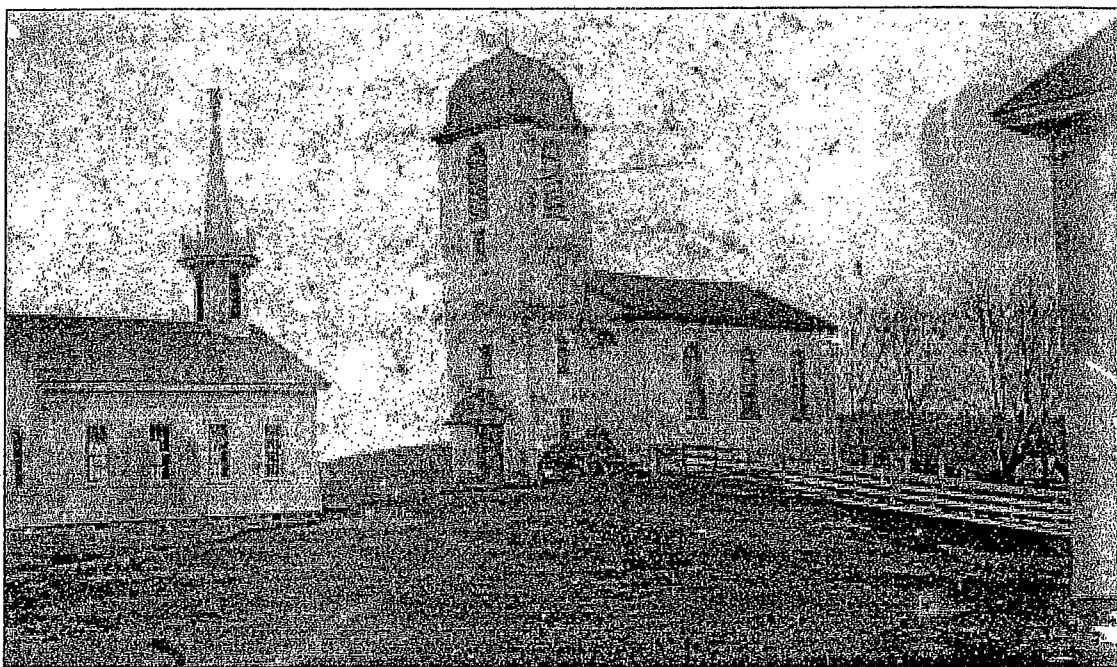
¹⁹ *The First One Hundred Years of the Swiss Evangelical and Reformed Church*. New Glarus, Wis. Walter J. Stuckey, pastor. June 25, 1950. P. 4 of text.

²⁰ Swiss Church Constitution of Jan. 31, 1859. Article IX, Paragraph 3, and Article XI, Paragraph 6. Translated from German by Paul Grossenbacher in 1975. Copy in New Glarus Historical Society archives.



These two photos, probably taken shortly before the stone church was torn down in 1900, are perhaps the best that exist of the cemetery. In the above photo, note the grassy area just to the left of center, running up to the church. (The electric, telephone or telegraph wire at the forefront dates this photo near the turn of the century.) The closeup below was taken from the cemetery's southeast corner at a different time by Monroe photographer H.G. White. Legible tombstones include Barbara Luchsinger (left), whose grave still has an in-ground marker, and Peter Streiff (right front), a stone now in the Historical Village collection.





This old photo of the stone church shows the former Sunday School building at the left and the fence enclosing the pioneer cemetery. The back of the school house (now Roberts Drug Store) is at the right.

As the Swiss colony continued to steadily grow, the cemetery eventually ran out of space. Some people also thought it was a mistake, for esthetic and space reasons, to have located the burial ground in what became the center of the village's commercial district.²¹ In 1873, the Swiss Church congregation paid \$250 to Dr. Jacob Blumer for land at the western edge of the village and organized a new cemetery corporation to manage the site. The new space was about four times as large as the old cemetery. The new cemetery property was dedicated Jan. 25, 1874. Additional land was purchased from J. Henry Legler in 1906 and again in 1919. In 1928 the congregation voted to set up a committee of three to have control and charge of all cemetery property and trust funds. Previously the consistory had the cemetery under its care and control.²²

The 1884 *History of Green County* noted that there were three cemeteries in New Glarus, which is still true today. "The oldest one is adjoining the church of the colonists. The grounds forming the quaint church yard, becoming filled with the dead of the congregation."²³ Previously, Henry Geiger had donated a half acre of his farmland to the German Methodist Church for use as a cemetery (this is the former Evangelical United Brethren cemetery further west on 6th Ave. that has now been incorporated into the Swiss Church cemetery operation).

An interesting look at an early funeral can be found in comments by Daniel Dürst, a son of agent Nicholas Dürst, after he visited New Glarus in 1892. Although this

²¹ *The First One Hundred Years of the Swiss Evangelical and Reformed Church*. History of Congregation section, p. 5.

²² *Ibid.* History of Congregation section, Pp. 8 – 11.

²³ *History of Green County, Wisconsin*. Union Publishing Co., Springfield, Ill. 1884. P. 1031.

would have been after burials in the Pioneer Cemetery ended, it gives a look at what a funeral there might have been like:

During the first 20 years the cemetery was around the church. It is now located 10 minutes to the west outside the little city.

On April 15 I had the opportunity to attend a funeral. A young man who was a harnessmaker by trade and the father of three minor children was being buried after dying of pneumonia.²⁴ Many participants had gathered at the home to pay respects to the too early departed. His earthly remains were placed on a hearse which led the funeral procession to his eternal rest while bells sounded. After the arrival of the hearse at the cemetery, the black colored casket with two bent-down handles was set at the side of the grave. After the minister said the final words a fitting song was sung for the deceased. At the end of this graveside service the casket was placed in a finished box and lowered into the ground. The funeral service impressed me greatly and the lifting song at the cemetery was heart felt.²⁵

After the old cemetery was no longer used for burials, less and less attention was paid to it. And as the years went by, more of the earliest settlers who might have been tending graves were dying or moving away.

Then in 1900 the Swiss Church congregation began building a new, larger church building on the knoll. The cornerstone laying ceremony was held Sept. 2, 1900.²⁶ With a much larger foundation than that of the old white stone church, it is possible that some of the graves had to be moved. Indeed, some residents of New Glarus repeat the story that that was the case. However, no evidence could be found by the author to prove any graves were moved. A survey of available German and English newspapers published in the area at the time of the church construction did not reveal any mention of graves being moved. There are no known burials in the current Swiss Church cemetery that were for deaths before the cemetery began to be used, which would have given credence to the idea that some remains were transferred to the new site. Minutes from a congregational meeting of June 15, 1900, show several entries about maintaining the cemetery but nothing about moving graves. Anton Ott was concerned that "the last

²⁴ Swiss Church death records indicate the man was 37-year-old Clemens Truttmann from Küssnacht, Switzerland, who died Apr. 13, 1892. His widow was Maria Haegeli Truttmann. The couple had a four-year-old son and a two-year-old daughter. Their second daughter (Bertha, who married Sam T. Hefty) was born three days after her father's burial. Clemens' grave is in the northeast section of the Swiss Church cemetery, under the pine tree in the Haegeli plot, Lot 3 of original section.

²⁵ *The Establishment and Development of the New Glarus Colony*. D. Dürst, 1894. Translated from German by Peter Etter of New Glarus. A copy of the original and translation is in the New Glarus Historical Society archives. Nicholas Dürst returned to Switzerland after the colony was established. His son was the school administrator in Diesbach, Canton Glarus.

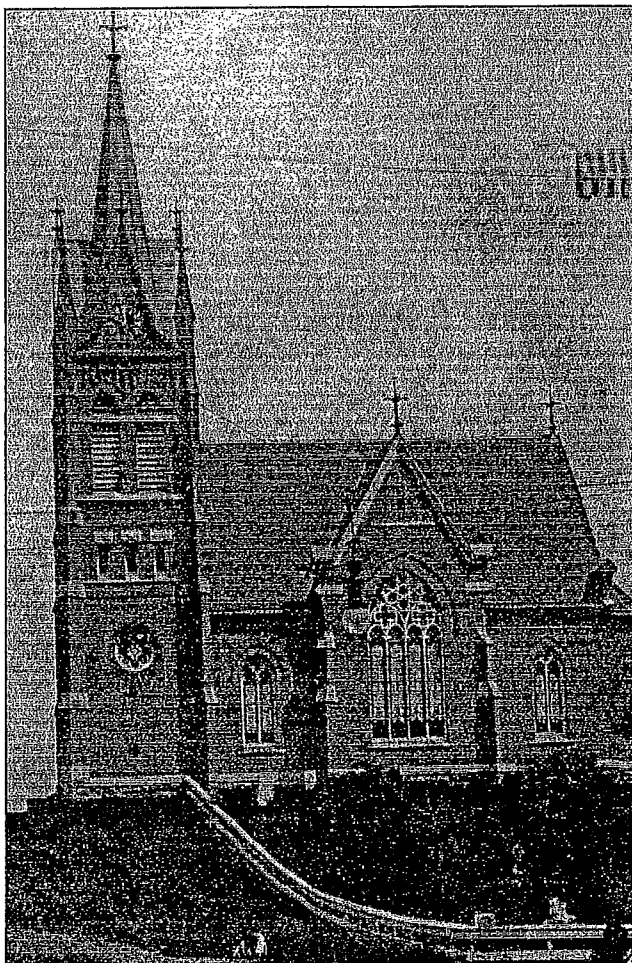
²⁶ Details of the program can be found in the *Deutsch Schweizerischer Courier*. See Page 4 of the Aug. 28, 1901, issue under "Vom Pfarramt" (from the Pastorate) for an announcement of the program, and Page 4 of the Sept. 4, 1901, issue under "Wochenchronik" (chronicle of the week) for an account of the ceremony.

resting place of the dear old departed ones should not be destroyed" but there was only support for bringing the cemetery into a better condition.²⁷

So other than a slight adjustment to the cemetery fence due to the construction, not much else happened until 1914. By then there was a strong sentiment in favor of leveling off the old cemetery and converting it into a "flower park." A report in the New Glarus news notes column of the *Monticello Messenger* at that time said "there are about 50 tombstones standing over graves, not one of which is kept up. A nice flower park would greatly improve the appearance around the church."²⁸ One motivation for doing something was the approaching 70th anniversary of the founding of New Glarus.

The years 1913-15 were ones when the Swiss colony had reached a comfortable maturity. Income in the farming community was nearing its zenith. A sewer system was being installed in the village, the main streets in the commercial district were being paved, and a second village well was put into service. New "downtown" buildings included the New Glarus Hardware and Implement Co. and the Nic Zweifel garage, where the Masons organized a new lodge and met for many years on the second floor. An addition was put onto the village school building, doubling its size. A tin shop was added to the Helvetia Milk Condensery. The Farmers Cooperative Stock Co. was organized and began shipping livestock by railroad. And next to the old cemetery, Swiss Church hired the Gmur brothers to repaint and re-varnished the interior of their building (after pastor Anton Roth died in Chicago, a new pastor was obtained, church membership rebounded and a new parsonage was built).²⁹

But the "Alten Friedhof" remained forlorn.

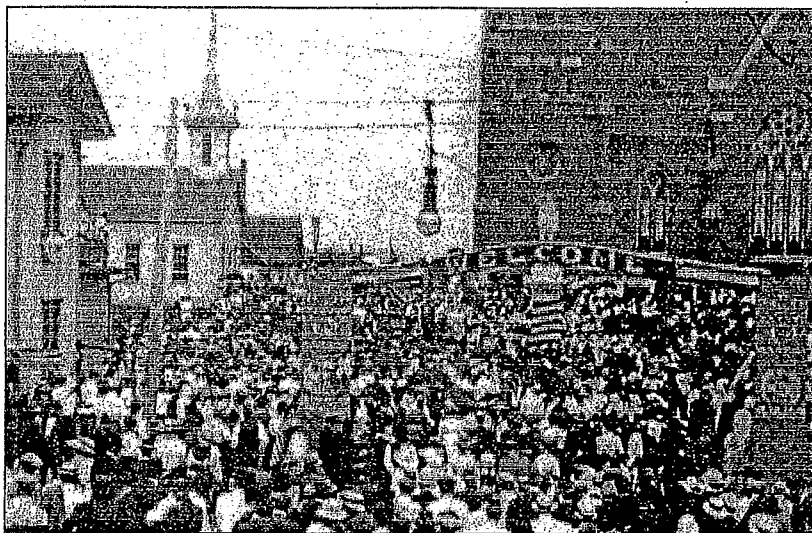


The red brick Swiss Church replaced the stone church in 1900. The wooden fence marking the perimeter of the old pioneer cemetery remained.

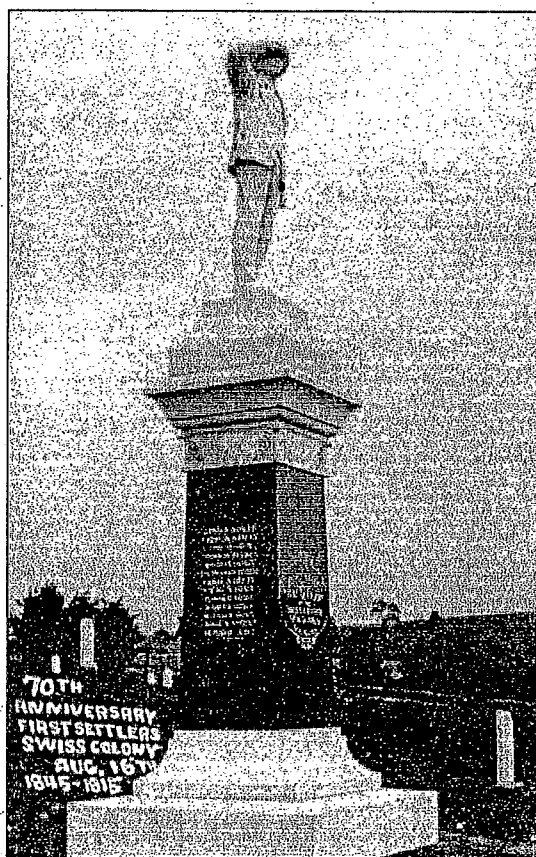
²⁷ Minutes of meeting of June 15, 1900. Siegrist's record book. Page 84, items 4 and 6. Original in Swiss United Church of Christ office. Recorded in German by John P. Luchsinger, secretary.

²⁸ *Monticello Messenger*, July 22, 1914. Page 10. New Glarus News Notes.

²⁹ *Monticello Messenger*, weekly issues from January 1913 through December 1915. Various columns of the New Glarus News Notes and other articles detail construction projects and church events in the village.



A large crowd gathered on a rainy Aug. 15, 1915, for the unveiling of the pioneer monument adjacent to the old cemetery. Below you can see that the fence along the west side of the cemetery had been removed around that time period.



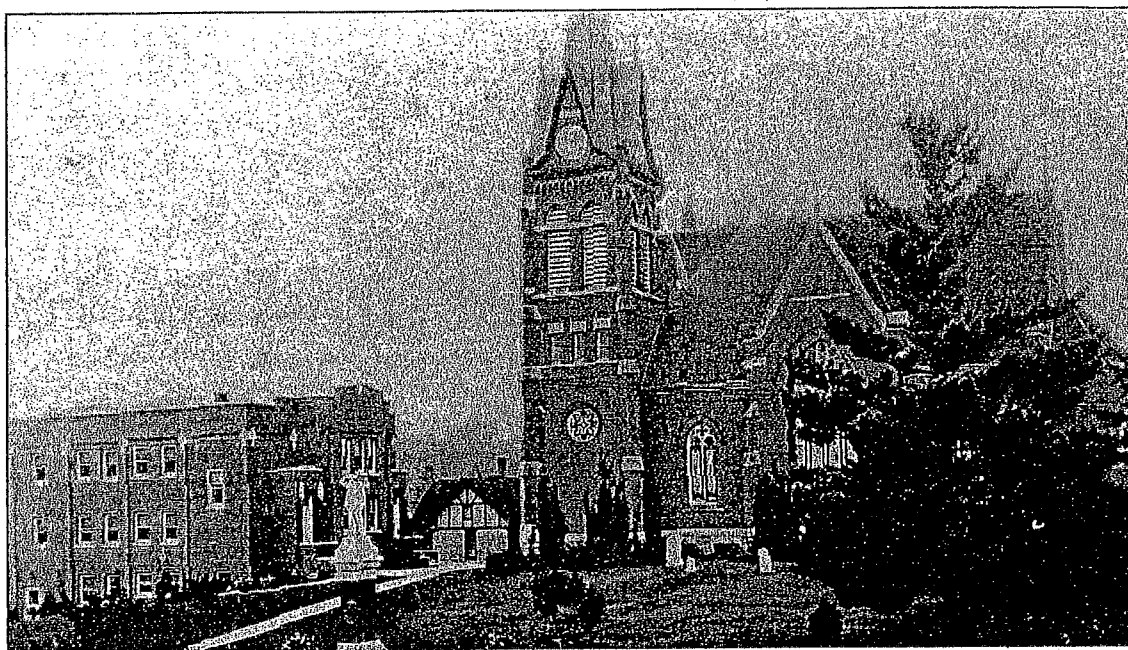
On Monday evening, July 22, 1914, a meeting was held at the New Glarus Town Hall to discuss erecting an Old Settlers Monument. Although attendance at the initial meeting was small, a committee was appointed to raise funds by circulating a subscription list. The committee members were Oswald Babler, Melchior Schmid and Nicholas Duerst. The man who corresponded

for the *Monticello Messenger* was obviously a strong supporter of the idea. "It seems to us that no greater benefit has been derived by us than through our old settlers and they deserve a substantial remembrance so that their names may stand before the world for years to come," he wrote.³⁰

Nothing immediately came of the plan to transform the pioneer cemetery, but by July 30, 1915, it was reported that "several evenings ago this week members of the [anniversary] committee and others have been at work in cleaning up and mowing the grass in the old cemetery. Everything is being done to make it as beautiful as possible."³¹ A week later it was noted that "the old cemetery by the church presents a different appearance at the present time, the effect of a good cleaning and mowing to which it was treated last week. We hope that the time is not far distant when the people will consider changing this long neglected cemetery into a beautiful park, full of flower beds, evergreens and

³⁰ *Monticello Messenger*, July 22, 1914. Page 10. New Glarus News Notes.

³¹ *New Glarus Post*, July 30, 1915. Paragraph on Page 1.



In the years after the 1924 construction of the Zwingli House, left, some tombstones still remained

ornamental shade trees. This would not be a place for picnics or celebrations, but simply a beauty park on the order of Forest Home in Milwaukee.”³²

Although the 70th anniversary parade and events were dampened by rain, a large crowd gathered next to the old cemetery to watch the unveiling of the Old Settlers Monument on Aug. 15, 1915. The monument was placed in what would have been the center of a roadway leading up to Swiss Church if the street had not been closed off. Apparently either at the time the monument was erected, or shortly thereafter, the fence along the west side of the cemetery was removed.

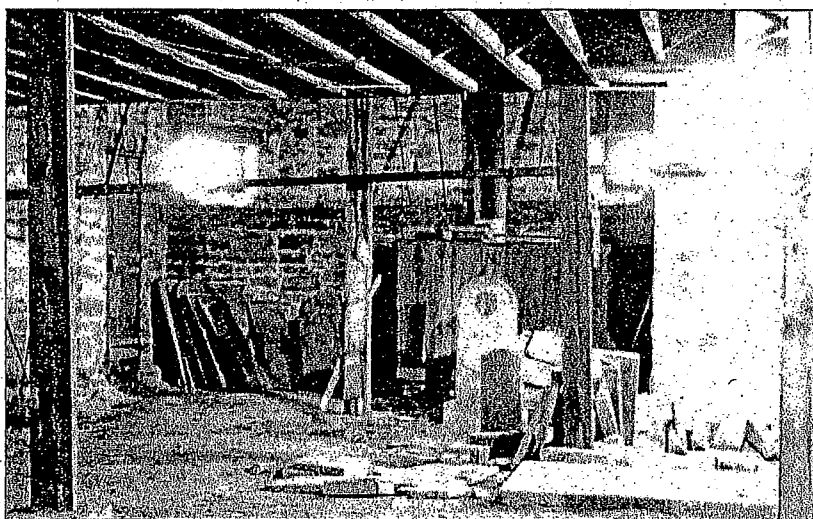
The following January, when the Swiss Church congregation held its annual meeting, it was decided that in the spring an effort should be made to fill in sunken areas, level off mounded areas and generally bring the cemetery up to good condition “in order to protect the graves and take care of them.”³³ As this work began, some of the tombstones may have been removed and placed into storage in the church basement. However, the bulk of the stones were more likely removed after May of 1917, which was when the current pipe organ was installed in Swiss Church.³⁴ Later photos of the unfinished basement show the monuments stacked up near the bellows for the organ and it would seem unlikely that once they were put in the basement anyone would have wanted to move them around.

³² *Monticello Messenger*, Aug. 4, 1915, Page 8. New Glarus News Notes. It should be noted that Forest Home cemetery, now surrounded by the south side of Milwaukee, actually was a place of frequent outings and picnics years ago, besides being the city’s premiere burial site.

³³ Minutes of annual meeting, Jan. 17, 1916. Page 111 of original Siegrist’s record book in files of Swiss United Church of Christ. See last item. Recorded in German by J.J. Figi, secretary.

³⁴ *Monticello Messenger*, May 16, 1917. New Glarus News Notes. P. 8, describes arrival of the organ and plans for dedication service Sunday, May 27, with services in the forenoon, afternoon and evening, during which time “Walter J. Zimmerman of Chicago will give the new instrument a thorough test in an organ recital. The organ is said to be one of the finest in this section of the state.”

Again in 1921, a decision was made at the annual church meeting that the "opportunity to fix up the old cemetery with flowers and shrubs was given over to the church council" (consistory).³⁵ Additional landscaping was done on church grounds in connection with completion of Zwingli House in 1923-24. Photographs from the 1930s show that a few tombstones remained, including some large ones near the church



The old tombstones remained stacked up for many years in the unfinished basement of Swiss Church, next to the organ pump and bellows.

building. So apparently, the removal and storage of the tombstones was a gradual event that started with the construction of the Pioneer Monument. One stone, for Fridolin Hefty, was still there into the 1950s.

At the time of the renovation of the basement of the current Swiss Church building in 1957, the tombstones were

removed from their long-time storage. They were then put on display at the Swiss Historical Village in New Glarus, where they remain as curiosities today. All of the monuments display typical Canton Glarus family names with the exception of Jacob North. (He was the son of Michael North, an immigrant from Alsace who had a vineyard west of what today is the New Glarus Woods state park. North is the anglicized version of their family name, Nord, which appears in some church records.) Most of the work of placing the stones at the museum was done by Orion Paulson and Herbert Gmur, both now deceased. They found the monuments unbroken, except for one.³⁶ Only three of the surviving tombstones are for original 1845 colonists: Fridolin Legler and his wife, Barbara, and Nicholas Babler (all are in the third row). The tombstones include monuments from what were probably the last two burials in the old cemetery in early January of 1874: Sophie Elmer and Ursula Walliser Salmen. Some years later the tombstones were looked at by Al Divine, of the University of Wisconsin -- Madison, an expert on tombstone carvings. He said that he believed all were carved by Joseph D. Mosher of Monroe, who he said was one of the best engravers of that time in southwestern Wisconsin.³⁷ However, a few of the monuments have other stonecarvers mentioned. Inscriptions include Mosher and Duerst 1873, Matter and Burg of Monroe

³⁵ Minutes of annual meeting Jan. 17, 1921. P. 116 of original Siegrist's record book. See penultimate item. Recorded in German by J.J. Figi.

³⁶ *The Capital Times*, Madison, Wis. Undated feature story by freelance writer Ray Barth. Clipping in New Glarus Historical Society archives.

³⁷ Undated memo in cemetery file in New Glarus Historical Society archives. There are two "marble shops" listed in the Monroe business directory on P. 136 of Helen Bingham's 1877 *History of Green County, Wisconsin* (Burdick & Armitage, Milwaukee): Evan Busby and J. D. Mosher.

1863-64, and R. L. Rostbrouch (Nicholas Babler stone). The stones appear to be all made of the soft Georgia marble that was widely used during that era. The Historical Village collection also includes a small stone with a German inscription about a child who is now at peace in heaven. That stone apparently came from an orchard area near Mabel Hamilton's house in the old "Held's Flat" area of northwest New Glarus.³⁸

A few years after the Pioneer Cemetery was no longer the site of burials, New Glarus got its own monument maker. John Peter Schmid, who learned to be a marble cutter in Switzerland, came here in 1878 and opened a shop at what would now be 301 2nd St. (catty-corner from the Primrose Winery), doing most of the marble cutting for New Glarus and the surrounding area.³⁹

With the passing of more than 125 years since the last burial in the old cemetery, there likely is very little in the way of human remains in the ground. The bones of the many children who were buried there are particularly apt to have completely disintegrated, according to forensic specialists. When some work was being done on the church in connection with the recent remodeling and expansion, workers found a 7-inch metal casket handle and some nails, screws and a spike near the southeast corner of the building.

Today the cemetery presents a pleasant appearance, with its shade trees and flowers and shrubbery framing the Pioneer Settlers Monument. The new walkway along the south side of the church may be covering some graves, but finally the area is being kept neat in the historic manner of the Swiss.

³⁸ Statement based on information given by the late Paul Grossenbacher to several Swiss Historical Village guides.

³⁹ *History of Green County, Wisconsin*. Butterfield. Pp. 1036-1037. The undated note from Al Devine, in the New Glarus Historical Society archives, includes the comment that most of Schmid's work is in Catholic cemeteries. A plat map from 1891 shows a "marble works" at the north end of the block and the Peter Schmid estate owning the rest of the block.