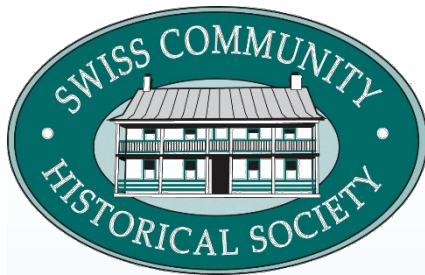


Fall 2017 newsletter



of Bluffton & Pandora

P.O. Box 5

Bluffton, OH 45817

Schumacher Homestead
8350 Bixel Rd.

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MEMBERSHIP

Annual Household - \$30

Annual Sustaining - \$100

Life - \$1,000

Mailing labels show your current standing. Mail checks for dues and donations to Marvin Diller at P.O. Box 5, Bluffton, OH 45817.

Homestead comes alive at Fall Festival

Saturday, Sept. 23
10 a.m. – 4 p.m.



Fall Festival—the premier event for the Society—will soon be here. Last year nearly 1500 people visited the Schumacher Homestead on this day!

Each visitor has the opportunity to tour the house, garden, workshop, and barn while sampling open fire popcorn, Swiss cheese, and cider. If something more substantial is needed, there is also soup and bread with apple butter. The homestead is alive with activities: bacon curing in the smoke house, woodworking in the workshop, needle workers in the house, broom making, and farm animals to feed and pet.

Child-centered activities include the straw maze, fishing in the creek, a slingshot range, and period games and toys. "Live the Past" lets children role-play as a visiting neighbor, early explorer, gardener or farmer, while completing tasks to earn stickers. One of the toughest is finding the *Appenzeller Spitzhauben* (a Swiss chicken breed and the national bird of Switzerland).

For the past two years, the Bluffton Scrap Artist Quilters have put on an incredible display. Both period and modern quilts are seen on the porch rails and throughout the house. We are expecting them back this year.

Support for Fall Festival has grown in both attendance and

sponsorship. In August we ask businesses and organizations to sponsor a site like the smoke house or "fishing hole" for \$100. Signs tell visitors who has sponsored each site. Please check out our sponsors and thank them the next time you see them!



2017 summer open houses

Having the Homestead open to the public this summer—every Saturday afternoon from 1 to 5 p.m.—was an excellent step in branching out to the greater community. In addition to providing a destination for visitors seeking a lesson in local history, open houses gave our growing group of docents more experience in touring with a variety of ages and stages.

We were not overwhelmed with crowds—a mixed blessing. Up until August 26, our final open house, guests numbered from 2 to 15 each week. On that final Saturday, the floodgates opened and our three docents on duty toured 44 visitors. A bonanza!

Our guest book records summer visitors from as far away as Florida and New York, Seattle and Idaho, China and Brazil. The majority came from out-of-town and out-of-state, although a goodly number came from Bluffton and Pandora as well. We hosted several families with young children, oldsters who had passed the house many times but had never been inside, and all ages in between.

Visitors came for a wide variety of reasons. Some came because of a Schumacher relationship. Others learned about the open houses

from the local news. A few were just passing by and noticed the "OPEN" sign. Nearly all had never had a guided tour, although some had enjoyed our Fall Festival.

One elderly gentleman was especially happy to have a special tour of the Homestead because his great-grandmother was Katherine Schumacher Steiner, the middle child of Peter and Elizabeth Schumacher. Katherine would have grown up in this house, when the house was still quite new.

Two of our docents enjoy playing the dulcimer and brought their instruments with them on their touring day—to everyone's enjoyment. One Saturday a local family arrived in their Sunday best, using our house and lawn as a beautiful backdrop for photographs.

At our August meeting, board members agreed that we should not lose the momentum gained with these events. So, next summer, we intend to repeat our Saturday open house schedule. Remember that for when you are having out-of-town guests!

In the months between now and next summer, we hope to see you at Fall Festival on September 23 and Christmas Open House on December 2. Come see what's new—and what's old—at our historic Swiss Homestead!



Swiss homestead docents

If you aren't familiar with the word "docent" (*DOUGH-sent*), it often is used for museum guides who give tours and inform the public about what is exhibited. At our historic homestead, we are pleased to have 25 dedicated docents who assist in interpreting our history for any and all who come to visit.

Some of us are farmers who have put carpentry skills to work and can tell you the "ins and outs" of restoring a house to what it once had been. Others are teachers (or retired teachers) from elementary school through college, who know how to keep school children in rapt attention. Some of us just love this place for what it is and want to help others catch the spark as well.

About half of us can trace our Swiss heritage back to the Old Country. The rest have come to embrace that heritage either through marriage or just plain love of what this homestead represents. One does not have to be a Schumacher, or Swiss, to appreciate the history of the Schumacher family and the homestead they built here a century-and-three-quarters ago.

And yes, we have done our homework. Some of us have researched the history of the Schumacher family in Switzerland and America– and preserved it electronically for docent use. Others have busied themselves in discovering what clothing was worn in this area in the 1850s or what games children might have played at that time. Some of us have worked (and are still working) on an inventory of all the furnishings, both in the house and those in storage. There are always things to do and new information to discover.

What is the glue that holds this group of docents together? It is a love for the place and the desire for others to appreciate what is here.

Would you like to join us? Contact Joanne Niswander at 419-358-0186.



in memoriam: Willis Sommer

The Swiss Community Historical Society is saddened by the loss of Willis Sommer, who died on June 23, 2017. Our Treasurer, active member, and friend, Willis came to Bluffton as a college student and went on to teach business and accounting, as well as serve as Vice President for Fiscal Affairs at Bluffton University. He volunteered on numerous boards and committees.

Thank you, Willis, for all you have done for our society. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family. (photo: Bluffton Icon)



Risser sleigh update

Dale Briedenbaugh, Jeff Althaus, and Seth Bixel (all SCHS Board Members) delivered the Risser sleigh to Woodlyn Coach in Millersburg, Ohio. The sleigh will be there a while, possibly a year, because the business has a long waiting list. It will be well cared for while at Woodlyn Coach.

The upholstery for the seat will be a burgundy red color. The top will be taken off and the metal blades will be completely painted black to resemble their original color. The wooden part of the sleigh will be repaired and the finial will be reattached. The restoration of the colors of the sleigh will be brought out with renovation techniques.

Woodlyn Coach will be working to make the sleigh the best it can possibly be without harming the value or integrity of the piece. We want the history of the Risser sleigh to shine through!

Thank you to all who contributed in some way to the restoration of the Risser sleigh!



Visit SCHS at www.swissmennonite.wordpress.com and on Facebook

**P.O. Box 5
Bluffton, OH 45817**

