

History of the Monroe Swiss Colony

Transcript of Notes from Minnie Etter

- 1964 -

Graciously provided by Mrs. Lois Rusch of Monroe, WA (2004)

Monroe Swiss Colony History – from notes of Minnie Etter (1964)

The Monroe Swiss Colony was started by coincidence. Frank and I attended a Swiss Concert given by Tacoma Edelweiss. and sponsored by the Auburn Swiss Colony, (of which we were members) in May of 1938. I thought and thought about a club around here, then one day in July of that year, Ewalt Schrag stopped at our place and asked Frank and I if we could get a few Swiss together and enter a float in the Evergreen Fair Parade.

We talked to the Weishaupts and they thought it was worth a try, so Hilda and I got busy and collected the names of 22 families, and we collected \$1.00 from each man. Then we wrote cards to all we thought would be interested, and we met at the Weishaupts and then we all decided to enter a float with William Tell as our main character. The float won first prize of \$25.00 in the parade.

We later called a meeting at the Etter's home, and elected officers.

Minnie Etter, President
Marie Marty, Vice President
Hilda Weishaupt, Secretary
Anna Rusch, Treasurer

Our float cost us \$8.40 leaving a balance of \$16.60. Dues of .50 cents a year were collected that day, (\$30.90) making a total of \$47.50 in the treasury. We had no meeting until April 1939, when we decided to give a concert with Tacoma Edelweiss as they were trying to raise money to go to the Saengerfest Tacoma to put on programs. They were to receive the first \$50.00 after expenses were paid, and then ½ of what was left, and if we did not make enough for first \$50.00, we should give then whatever was left, if anything.

The concert was held in the Monroe High School Gym. We collected all together \$153.50 for ads

102.80	at the door (@.50 however some comp. Tickets were given for ads.)
58.50	at Hall @ .50 with ticket stub from Concert
<u>67.75</u>	cash from lunch.
\$324.05	
<u>188.30</u>	Exp. Rent, Print tickets & programs
135.75	
<u>50.00</u>	1 st \$50.00 to Tacoma Edelweiss
\$ 85.75	to divide
\$ 42.85	our share

The meetings were then held in homes every month, paying the hostess \$2.00. The hostess was to put on lunch, and the Colony to pay for wine, beer, or whiskey, which ever was served.

Then as the Swiss Male Chorus, the Seattle Alpenroesli Society complained, they thought, as Seattle was closer than Tacoma, we should let them put on programs. So we decided to take them in and dividing net profit to be divided 3 ways, after

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expenses were paid. We all worked and collected ads, and we each netted \$124.53. Concert was held in New Wagner Auditorium, with standing room only. Mr. Studer said, "...They had to go almost to Snohomish to park." We had a big dance afterward in this hall. Sixteen musicians were on stage at one time; of course stage was larger than now.

The next year, 1941, we sponsored another concert with Seattle and Tacoma and we each received \$134.41. After the 3rd concert, we did not hold any more concerts, as the U.S. was in war and gasoline was rationed. But we still met and as our membership had grown, we rented this hall for \$3.00. Frank and I had to clean the hall before and after the meetings. When we ran short of money we drew money from the bank. After the War, we held several dances and always cleared around \$100.00.

Mrs. Anna Rusch resigned as Treasurer as it was hard to get in touch with her, she said, "...she was too far away." Then we elected Bill Wolfe as Treasurer, and in January 1945 he resigned, and Hilda Weishaupt was elected to be both Secretary and Treasurer.

Some time later the Grange moved to the old school house which they had bought, and then in April 1948 we held our meetings in the School House, but the rent was upped to \$5.00. Starting in November 1948, 2 ladies served meat at each monthly meeting. A small collection was taken at each meeting.

One Sunday the Executive -committee from the Grange came to our meeting and offered to sell us this Hall and Parking strip for \$250.00, but said we would have to buy the land, which the hall stands on, from Howard Harriman, since they only had a lease for 99 years, the place was to be used only as a meeting place for the Grange. If the Grange moved, then the land would go back to the Harriman Estate. So we went to see Mr. Harriman, but the Community Club had asked him before we did, and he had promised them, so he could not sell to us.

One member of both the Grange and Community Club offered the Grange \$251.00, but they said they had offered the Monroe Swiss Colony the hall, and as we said we would buy as soon as H.H. sold to us, they would not go back on their word, so it stood that way for almost a year. The Grange had built the Hall originally in 1909.

Then the Grange decided to tear down the hall, and was going to use what lumber they needed and would sell the rest, and they started to tear it down. One day as I was selling American Legion Poppies, I met H. H. in a beer parlor and I asked him, "what about selling the Hall to the Swiss now, as the Grange was tearing it down", and he said "Yes, I have waited on the Community Club long enough, and they could not raise the money." So I said, "Let's go sit down and talk it over." And I bought him a beer, and I took one myself. I took out the checkbook, and on the back of a check I made out a slip saying he would sell to the Swiss, and I gave him \$1.00 earnest money. He then set the date and time to meet at the lawyers.

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In the meantime, I got in touch with the Grange Executive committee, and told them as soon as H. H. signed, we would pay them, and at the Grange excu. Meeting Alma and Albert Steffen spoke in favor of our Club, the Grange said, "O.K."

This is what the Monroe Swiss Colony paid for the Hall in June 1951:

\$144.00	H.H.
250.00	Grange
18.10	Lawyer
1.00	Earnest Money
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\$413.10	

Since we only had \$166.00 cash, Tony Marty, Albert Weishaupt, and Frank Etter each put in \$75.00 for which we each got a note, but no interest. Then 28 members each put in from \$25.00 to \$100.00, no interest.

We then began patching what the Grange had torn down, and we also did some tearing down ourselves. In the front of the building were an old chimney and a partition, which was used as an anteroom that we tore down. And in the Kitchen where the bar is, was an old woodshed, which we tore down to make the Kitchen larger. There was no water, no toilets, no well, no bar, no dishes, no stove, no Insurance, only a few tables and a few benches, and the W.P.A. toilet that the Grange left, which is still here.

All who could work turned out. Most of the old members worked every day without pay, and we always brought our own dinner.

On October 8, 1951 we had our opening dance that proved to be our largest. We cleared \$208.49. Thereafter, dances were held every year, sometimes twice a year. Total from dances, to the best of my knowledge, we cleared \$2,095.49, plus beer. From our Dinners we cleared \$4,339.03. We had 12 dinners from 1953 to 1964. The notes were burned on December 5, 1954 at a turkey dinner. We had \$44.23 balance left.

We raised money in any and every way we could. We had Floats in several parades, and got 1st prize each time in our division. We sold Vanilla to get a coffee maker and some kettles. Sold lunches at 3 different Auction sales. We saved coffee bands to get another coffee maker and we had a man from Seattle to show films from Switzerland in the Wagner Auditorium, where we cleared \$139.32, including a dance, which was held afterward in this hall. We allowed Mr. Jensen from Seattle to collect the ads on the curtain, which is now in the dining- room; this netted us \$322.50 plus the renting out of hall.

Several years ago Marie Marty resigned as Vice President, and Frieda Kaelin was elected in her place. So you see, we all worked hard to improve the Hall.

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In conclusion let me thank each and every one who helped in any way. Also we are 26 years old now, and Hilda and I have held our office continually, and later today we will have election of officers, and I hope some one will take my place.

Minnie Etter
1964

1938 Monroe Swiss Colony Charter Members

A. Biderbost
Ernest Hirschey
Gus Ehrler
Jacob Sonderegger
Frank Felder
Frank Etter
Albert Steffen
Albert Weishaupt
Anton Marty Sr.
Peter Angerer
Hans Forster
Frank Bueler
E. Meier
Herman Zehr
E. Gehring
E. Geyer
W. Wolf
G. Graub
Conrad Schefer
Tony Rosselli
Steve Reichmuth
Albert Rusch