



# Switzerland



**NEWSLETTER OF THE SWISS-AMERICAN SOCIETY OF PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA**

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### SASP 2021 EVENTS

July 31	<u>Swiss Independence Day Picnic and Board Meeting/Elections</u> Richland Park Barn
December	<u>Nationality Room Open House</u> Pitt Cathedral of Learning
December	<u>Christmas Luncheon</u> Teutonia
December	<u>Sami Klaus Event</u> Teutonia

### SASP Board

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## NASSA Pittsburgh 2024

We are now just two years away from the 43<sup>rd</sup> North American Swiss Singing Alliance Saengerfest, which will be hosted by the Pittsburgh Swiss Singers (Schweizer Maennerchor Helvetia of Allegheny City). Pittsburgh previously hosted the Saengerfest in 1939, 1971, and 1997. The Saengerfest is expected to bring about 400 people to Pittsburgh and will feature Swiss choirs from across the USA and Canada.

We also plan to bring performers from Switzerland! The Grand Concert will be held on Friday evening, June 21, 2024, at Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall. Be sure to mark your calendars for June 20-23, 2024, for what promises to be an outstanding celebration of Swiss culture in Pittsburgh!

Lyndall Huggler  
NASSA Pittsburgh 2024 Festival President

## April 22, 2012-Today Celebrating the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Swiss Nationality Room

Room 321 at the University of Pittsburgh Cathedral of Learning

Written by Nancy Flury Carlson, current Chairman, Swiss Nationality Room Committee (SNRC)

Edited for *Switzerland* newsletter by Fred Carlson, SNRC member

The Swiss Nationality Room was dedicated on April 22, 2012, ten years ago. In celebration of this anniversary, the Swiss-American Society of Pittsburgh newsletter is delighted to present this overview of the room's history originally presented to the Nationality Council of the NRIEP at the University of Pittsburgh by Chairman Nancy Flury Carlson back on April 14, 2022.

### Notable Swiss in Pittsburgh History

From the 1820s to the present, most of the Swiss immigrants to Western Pennsylvania were from the German-speaking Bern and Basel cantons. Although many German-speaking immigrants were grouped together as "Deutsch," perhaps as many as 1 in 6 immigrants from the Rhineland to New York City were Swiss.

Notable Swiss in our region include:

Albert Gallatin, born in Geneva in 1761, was called "America's Swiss Founding Father" by biographer Nicholas Dungan. He was in the PA legislature and served as Secretary of the Treasury under Presidents Jefferson and Madison.

Jacob Negley, whose father, Alexander, came from Switzerland and purchased land in Highland Park in 1778. The Negley-Gwinner-Harter House on Fifth Avenue was built for Jacob's son William.

Henry Bouquet, a Swiss mercenary who commanded the Royal Americans, is best known for his victory in the Battle of Bushy Run.

Christian Isaly was a cheesemaker who immigrated in 1833 and whose family founded Isaly's Dairy Companies.

Even Henry Clay Frick had Swiss roots. His grandfather Johann Nicholas Frick immigrated from Switzerland in 1767.



"Isaly's" by [joseph a](#) is marked with [CC BY-NC-SA 2.0](#).



"Negley-Gwinner-Harter House" by [joseph a](#) is marked with [CC BY-NC-SA 2.0](#).

L: Isaly's Restaurant Façade  
R: Negley-Gwinner-Harter House in Highland Park  
(Creative Commons credits)

## 1940s-1990: The Dream

Like many other cultural groups, Swiss people in Pittsburgh formed social clubs and organizations dedicated to athletics and singing. Swiss groups in Pittsburgh had discussed the idea of a Swiss Nationality Room and engaged in fundraising through participation in the Pittsburgh Folk Festival and other cultural events. The Swiss-American Society of Pittsburgh, founded in 1966, became the focal point for Swiss activities. Members of this organization also talked about the desirability of creating a Swiss Room, but no concrete efforts got off the ground.



Photo from Pittsburgh Post-Gazette circa 1960, SASP archives; l-r: Trudy Kuenzi, Paul DeBrunner, Frank Fischer, Walter Heer

Left: Deed of Gift presented in the Braun Room December 1998; l-r: Maxine Bruhns, Dr. Burkhold Holzer, Nancy Flury Carlson, Fred Carlson, Dr. Heinz Kunz; photo SASP archives



## 1990s: Vision

In the mid-1990s, the first major step toward significant fundraising took place. Dr. Heinz Kunz arranged a donation of Swissair tickets that the Swiss-American Society of Pittsburgh raffled. In February of 1998, earnest discussions between Heinz Kunz (Honorary Consul) and Fred Carlson (President of the S-ASP) culminated in the formation of the Swiss Nationality Room Committee through the guidance of Maxine Bruhns (NRIEP Director). Heinz Kunz was the Chairman and members included Edith Bottonari, Catherine Hebert, Patricia Heer, Fred and Nancy Carlson, Evelyn Baker Ruffing, and Walter Schaller.

A March 1998 fundraiser event at the Teutonia included a dinner and Silent Auction of Swiss-themed donated items. The goal was to raise the \$5000 needed to present to Pitt in order to reserve a room. The event raised over \$11,000, providing more than enough to get started and in December of 1998, committee members presented the \$5000 check to Maxine Bruhns and Dr. Burkhold Holzer, then the Director of UCIS, in a Deed of Gift ceremony. The Swiss committee chose room 321 as our future Swiss Room.

## 1998-2006: Mission

More people joined the room committee, attracted by the excitement of advancing our room ideas to reality. New members included Jhon Smith, Charles Buenzli, Annemarie Frick, and in 2006, Philip Bottonari leveraged his professional expertise in fundraising to institute innovative annual and major giving programs.

The SNRC created a fundraising booklet to inform potential donors about the university's Nationality Rooms tradition, the history of the Swiss in Pittsburgh, and our conceptual ideas for a room based on the theme of education, honoring noted Swiss educators including Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. This booklet included German, French, Italian, and Romansch translations, in recognition of the four official languages of Switzerland. Elements of the conceptual design were based on the Zürich Room in Switzerland's Landesmuseum.

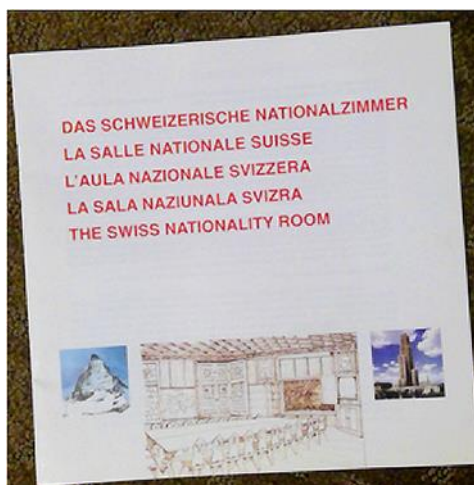
The committee had made a good start in raising money, but needed to expand its outreach to donors beyond the Swiss-American Society of Pittsburgh. The initiative gained exposure through discussions with contacts in Switzerland, outreach to Swiss Americans throughout the country, and promotions in the magazine for the Swiss abroad, *Swiss Review*.

In December 2005, Swiss architect Justin Rüssli visited the Nationality Rooms at the invitation of committee chairman Heinz Kunz, and agreed to become the artistic designer of the Swiss Room. He had previously designed the Swiss Ambassador's residence in Washington DC.



Group meeting January, 2006 (l-r): F. Gloor, W. Schaller, E. Ruffing, M. Mülli, A. Frick, C. Buenzli, J. Smith, E. Bottonari, H. Kunz, C. Hebert, F. Carlson (E. Ruffing)

SNRC 2006 meeting at NRIEP; l-r: Frank Gloor, Walter Schaller, Evelyn Ruffing Baker, Michael Muelly, Annemarie Frick, Charles Buenzli, Jhon Smith, Edith Bottonari, Dr. Heinz Kunz, Catherine Hebert, Fred Carlson; photo courtesy Evelyn Ruffing



5-language booklet translated in the 4 official languages of Switzerland and English to inspire world-wide fundraising from Swiss Abroad and in Switzerland; courtesy Fred Carlson archives

## 2006-2010: Strategy

In 2006, Swiss Ambassador Raymond Louretan instituted a program called Swiss Roots, highlighting famous Swiss-Americans including Ben Roethlisberger, whose great-grandfather had come to the US from the Emmenthal region. Ben agreed to be an honorary Swiss Nationality Room Committee member, which enhanced our fundraising ability, and he signed numerous football items that we were able to auction. The Swiss Roots program sent Ben on a trip to Switzerland, and the Committee planned for a gala fundraiser in Pittsburgh called *Swiss Touchdown*, where Ben would appear, to celebrate his return. Unfortunately, the committee cancelled the plan due to gaps in funding and logistics. In an unnerving coincidence, Ben had his motorcycle accident in June 2006, just days before the gala would have taken place - which would have prevented him from attending.

Fundraising efforts were redirected from the gala that never took place to a structured outreach to potential high-value donors. Through personal outreach by Philip Bottonari, Heinz Kunz, and Honorary Consul Dominique Schinabeck to several individuals and organizations, several large donors offered significant contributions in the form of match challenges and outright gifts, bringing us closer to our goals. Throughout the 12-year fundraising period, over 400 individual donors and 20 corporate donors, including 12% from Switzerland, had contributed to the room fund. Major bequests came from the estate of Florence Jacob, from Edward Graf, and from Sam Isaly.

In 2008, Philip Bottonari identified Richard Sink as a woodworker capable of creating the furniture, walls, floor and ceiling. Richard introduced the committee to the work of David Houser who executed the window designs. Heinz Kunz made multiple efforts to source a Kachelofen from Switzerland, but ultimately the solution was to have one crafted locally. Evelyn Baker Ruffing leveraged her expertise in architectural history to identify craftsmen for ironwork and the creation of the symbolic room key.





SNRC visit to Richard Sink Mountaineer Woodworking Studio, French Creek, West Virginia, 2009; l-r: Dr. Heinz Kunz, Fred Carlson, Richard Sink, Maxine Bruhns. It turned out that the roundtrip mileage from Richard's studio to the Cathedral of Learning is 321 miles—the same number as our room!



2006 Announcement of the Swiss Roots program including Pittsburgh Steelers Super Bowl winning QB Ben Roethlisberger by Ambassador Raymond Louretan; courtesy Swiss Review in the SASP archives

## 2010-2012: Reality Construction and Dedication

During June and July 2011, demolition began on Room 321. Even then the question of the Kachelofen had not been solved. Finally, local Swiss businessman Ed Graf sponsored the custom building locally of a Kachelofen. It is roughly a 2/3-sized version of one built in 1647 by his ancestor Hans Heinrich Graf. The original is in Schloss Wulfligen near the Graf family ancestral home in Winterthur. By the start of January 2012, the floors, walls, tables and chairs were completed and the first class was taught, happily, by Arthur Erbe, an English Literature faculty member of Swiss heritage, and Vice-Chairman of the Swiss Nationality Room Committee. Over Spring Break 2012, the window wall, bay area ceiling and benchwork were completed. The frieze and lectern were brought in the week before the dedication in a supreme example of Swiss precision.

The dedication ceremony took place at Heinz Memorial Chapel on April 22, 2012, followed by a reception in the Commons Room that featured Swiss cookies and foods, and a performance by the Schweizer Männerchor Helvetia. Links to the Dedication Booklet and photos from the Dedication Ceremony are available at <http://www.swisspittsburgh.org/>



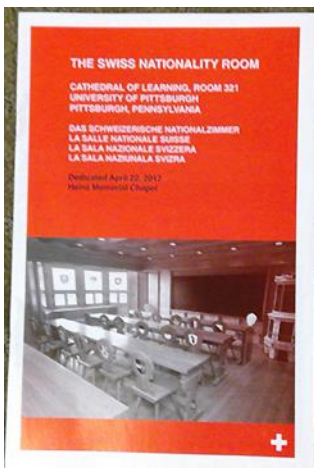
May 2011 Demolition begins in the old room 321 interior. Drop ceiling has been removed readying for new construction above the proposed beam and paneled wood ceiling. Photo courtesy SASP archives.



At the construction site Room 321 with crown molding in place and wall panels installed, December 2011; l-r: Walter Schaller, Maxine Bruhns, Evelyn Ruffing Baker, Nancy Flury Carlson, Dr. Heinz Kunz, Fred Carlson, Edith Bottonari, Philip Bottonari; photo Evelyn Ruffing SASP archives



Kachelofen moved into place, March 2012. Anders Anderson, tile and relief craftsman, and PJ Dick workers.



Swiss Nationality Room Dedication booklet April 2012. Writing by Kunz, Carlson, Schinabeck. Edited by Carlson, Bruhns, Nancy Carlson, Jhon Smith, Nancy Kunz and Evelyn Ruffing. Designed by Fred Carlson. Printing by William Bahnzaf-Journal Printing, Jeannette PA. One of the best booklet favorites in the Nationality Rooms gift shop inventory.



Dedication Day April 22, 2012 in the Cathedral of Learning Commons. Helvetia Maennerchor performing with alphorn. Photo by Alex Patho, Jr.

## 2012-2022: Operational

Although it was a great relief to have raised the funds to build the room, we next faced the challenge of raising enough money to fund our Scholarship endowment. Our goal was \$100,000, which we believe will fund one scholarship per year in perpetuity. We reached that goal in December 2018 with a challenge initiated by Heinz and Nancy Kunz. The fund continues to grow and we have given six scholarships to date, beginning in 2016, although unfortunately the 2020 scholarship had to be surrendered because of the pandemic. Our scholarship recipients have worked with the UN, CERN, the University of Lausanne, and our 2021 winners will be working with the World Health Organization and a Nursing in Switzerland program.

Our event planning is a struggle as we have more good ideas than concrete plans of action to accomplish them. Our first event was a screening in the Swiss Room of a documentary film in Swiss-German *The Shepherds*.

We have enjoyed decorating the room over the years and participated in the Holiday Open House, as we had been doing for years as part of our original fundraising efforts. Our committee has found and created virtual content in support of Pitt's online events during the pandemic.



Holiday Open House in the Cathedral of Learning Commons Area. Walter Schaller making fondue with SNRC/SASP merchandise and hand made confections for sale. Photo courtesy Evelyn Ruffing, SASP archives.

The Swiss Nationality Room committee is a strong 18 members, one of the largest room committees in the NRIEP. We meet once a year formally to conduct business mainly related to scholarship awards and ongoing maintenance reporting. As the university opens further, we hope to .continue to bring visitors to the NRIEP at the Cathedral of Learning at the University of Pittsburgh and show off our lovely Swiss Nationality Room! We welcome members of the Swiss Pittsburgh community to become new members of the SNRC. Annual dues are a low \$25/family, \$15/individual and \$5/students!

The Pitt facilities and the Swiss Room itself provide many chances to offer Swiss cultural programs in person to the university and ethnic communities in Pittsburgh. We welcome your ideas and more importantly, volunteer time to help us present such events for the university, Oakland, and greater Pittsburgh audiences.

## Lebendige Traditionen / Tradition vivantes / Tradizioni viventi / Tradiziuns vivas Straw Weaving in the Freiamt (Canton Aargau)



The Freiamt region of Switzerland is famous for its straw culture. It is thought that the craft of straw weaving first arrived in Switzerland from Italy in the 16th century. Straw weaving was practiced at home until the 20th century. The straw barons exported various hat models and the well-known Freiamt trimmings around the whole world. Regional patterns were carefully protected and passed down through generations. The practice of straw weaving and creating new patterns and designs continues to this day. The highly popular tradition of straw weaving is preserved by the “Strohmuseum im Park” and the “stroh-in-form” organization, which was founded in 2010 and has around fifty active members throughout Switzerland, as well as a broad international network. Thanks to its qualities as a cheap natural product, straw played an important role in the Freiamt region beyond its use for weaving. In Wohlen, for instance, the Fasnacht celebrations are opened with “Strauschnitt” (straw cutting) ceremony, while the Berchtold’s Day (2 nd January) celebrations in Halwil feature the “Straumaa” (straw man).

A lady’s hat woven from whole straws and decorated with straw ornaments © Ottilia Leemann, Oberwil-Lieli

For more information on the Living Traditions in Switzerland, go to [www.lebendige-traditionen.ch](http://www.lebendige-traditionen.ch)



**SWISS-AMERICAN SOCIETY OF PITTSBURGH  
SWISS NATIONALITY DAY PICNIC REGISTRATION FORM**

**SUNDAY, JULY 31 2022**  
at the Richland Park Barn in Bakerstown  
2:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Schedule of Events

Price

2:00 p.m.	Social Gathering	\$20.00 – Age 13 & over
3:00 p.m.	Games & Activities	\$10.00 – Picnic Only (without Buffet)
4:00 p.m.	Schweizer Männerchor Helvetia	FREE – Children 12 & Under
4:30 p.m.	Buffet Luncheon	
6:30 p.m.	Tombola	

Things to Bring!

- Tombola Donations to benefit the Swiss Nationality Room Scholarship Fund!
- Food to Share (not required, but we are grateful to the Buffet Luncheon participants who also bring a salad, side dish or dessert to share!)

Directions – Route 8 to Red Belt / Bakerstown, proceed North on Heckert Road at the stop sign, then turn right at Van Velsor Drive into the Richland Township Park

***PLEASE RETURN THE BELOW REGISTRATION FORM, BY JULY 20, WITH YOUR CHECK PAYABLE TO THE SWISS-AMERICAN SOCIETY OF PITTSBURGH, to:***

Lyndall Huggler  
908 Fairview Road  
Pittsburgh, PA 15238  
[lynbeth@msn.com](mailto:lynbeth@msn.com)

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**SASP SWISS NATIONALITY DAY PICNIC REGISTRATION FORM**

Names:

Price (\$20 Buffet / \$10 Picnic / 12 & Under Free)

1. _____	\$ _____
2. _____	\$ _____
3. _____	\$ _____
4. _____	\$ _____
5. _____	\$ _____
6. _____	\$ _____
TOTAL	\$ _____

## **Leave a Swiss Legacy – in Pittsburgh!**

Thanks to the generosity of many donors, the Swiss Nationality Room Scholarship has sufficient funding to allow the University of Pittsburgh to award one scholarship each year to help a Pitt student realize their dream of living and learning in Switzerland.

Yet there will undoubtedly be years in the future when the awarding of a larger or multiple Swiss Room Scholarships will be highly desirable given the quality and needs of our student applicants.

**Consider helping to make that possible by including a gift to the Swiss Room Scholarship in your will.**

Sample wording for your will: *I give and devise to the University of Pittsburgh – of the Commonwealth System of Higher Education, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 15260, the sum of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to be used for the support of the Swiss Nationality Room Scholarship Fund.*

When considering charitable giving, you should talk with your tax, legal, and financial advisors.