



Switzerland



NEWSLETTER OF THE SWISS-AMERICAN SOCIETY OF PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

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<u>S-ASP EVENTS</u>	
December 7 12-2	<u>Christmas Luncheon & General Assembly Meeting</u> Teutonia
TBA 2025	<u>Spring Cultural Event with Nationality Rooms</u>
TBA 2025	<u>Swiss Nationality Day Picnic</u>

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Grüezi, Bonjour, and Bon Giorno!

As we prepare to enter 2025, it is time to look back at the events of the past year and to what is coming in the new.

In the beginning of 2024, we updated our web presence with a website redesign and the addition of a Facebook page. You can now follow us for updates on our activities at:

swisspittsburgh.org

facebook.com/swisspittsburgh.

We also have a new email address for general inquiries at:

contact@swisspittsburgh.org

Over the Summer of 2024, our sister organization, the Helvetia Männerchor, hosted a successful gathering of the North American Swiss Singing Alliance. Several of our members attended and reported that it was a wonderful event.

Also over the Summer of 2024, we hosted our annual 1. August celebration. More than 60 people attended and enjoyed traditional Swiss games, like Steinstossen, and traditional bratwurst and other Swiss delicacies.

Turning to Fall 2024, we had another hike through South Park hosted by the Paul Riis society, which honors the legacy of the Swiss-born architect of the Allegheny County Parks System.

Looking forward now into the new year, we are looking to plan a Swiss cultural event in Spring in combination with the University of Pittsburgh Nationality rooms. Stay tuned to

our website and Facebook page for more information.

We also have committed to donate the archives of our organization to the Swiss Center of North America for preservation, but are working on scanning them for our own records first.

Finally, we continue to plan updates to our website that will make it easier to engage with you, our members.

Thank you for being a part of our community. As we enter into this season of celebration, let's continue to celebrate the connection to Switzerland that brings us together!

Mit freundlichen Grüßen,
Joseph Schaeffer
President
Swiss-American Society of Pittsburgh

Christmas Luncheon and Notice of Annual Meeting of General Assembly

We hope everyone will join us for the upcoming Christmas Luncheon on December 7th at the Teutonia! We will again start off with a short holiday concert by the Kinderchor, so please try to arrive punctually at 12pm. Samichlaus (Swiss Santa Claus) will then visit and bring some treats for the children, including homemade Grittibaenzli (small bread men). Children 12 and younger are free of charge, so we hope many of your younger guests will be in attendance to meet Samichlaus! The Luncheon will conclude with the 2024 annual business meeting of the General Assembly where we will elect directors and officers for 2025.

2024 Swiss Nationality Day Picnic

Congratulations to our Steinstossen winners:

Suzanne Maddamma hurled the Stein an incredible 18'2", besting our top male contestant by 8 inches!!!
Silver and Bronze went respectively to Sylvia Emmenegger McCoy (12'5") and Ellen Porter (12'2")

The Men's Steinstossen winners were:

Gold-Matt Maddamma 17' 6"
Silver-Rick Carlson 17' 4.5"
Bronze-Alex Frick 17' 2.25"

Our beloved wooden Turtle Race game made a reappearance after several years off thanks to Bruce Kuenzi. The kids had a blast hopping their colored turtles to the finish line with Bruce's lively direction and commentary egging them on!

A new addition for the children this year was a manipulative diorama of the Swiss Alps. Children learned about Swiss culture through play while posing model train figurines of cows, farmers, wildflowers, and other pastoral elements. A Playmobil Alpine Lodge set is also featured- a Bed and Breakfast with hosts in Tracht, a guest family who of course have trekking poles, and an assortment of traditional food and beer steins. Thanks to some artists of Etsy, we were even able to find tiny Swiss Cheese platters and Toblerone bars! There were children playing with the diorama at almost every point of the day, and we are excited to bring it back at future picnics for their continued enjoyment. Several photos of the diorama are featured on the next page.

Thanks to all who worked to make this event possible!



Above: The Steinstossen winners: Matt and Suzanne Maddamma.

Below: Schweizer Männerchor Helvetia:



The new interactive diorama at the picnic was a hit with our younger guests!



Paul Riis Birthday Celebration

The Swiss-American Society of Pittsburgh joined with the Swiss Nationality Room Committee and the Paul Riis Legacy Preservation Volunteers to organize a hike for Paul Riis on Saturday, October 5, 2024 at 10:00 AM in South Park. Paul Riis (1876-1944) was a Swiss-born landscape architect who served as the first director of Allegheny County Parks from 1928 to 1932. He designed numerous nature-inspired features in both North Park and South Park, including the fully restored Cascades, a group of stone-rimmed pools near the parking lot at Oliver Miller Homestead, where we started and ended our hike. Twenty-one hikers were led by Anne Oyler, the leader of the volunteer group that maintains the Riis landscape sites in collaboration with the park rangers of South Park.



We visited the Vale of Cashmere, a site that had been lying in ruin until Anne and her friends started excavating it after they had noticed it on a hike over ten years ago. One day the park rangers came by and challenged them to “drop your tools!” because they were not supposed to be making any changes to the historic location. Eventually Anne’s group worked through the process of gaining permission to continue restoring the site, which is a group of stone-ringed pools. Unlike the Cascades, there is no water in the Vale of Cashmere, except for occasional times when heavy rains fill the lower pool. Anne’s group usually meets for a couple of hours one day per month during nice weather to continue their work. They welcome new participants, so if you might be interested in learning more about Riis-designed structures, visit the Paul Riis Legacy Preservation Volunteers website at <https://paulriis.org/>.

Learning About My Swiss “Roots” by Patricia Schaeffer-Dresler

I learned about my Swiss Great Great Grandfather in an accidental fashion....after I became engaged to a Swiss man in Zurich, Switzerland!! In 1974, I had an internship with SwissAir. I had just started my graduate studies at the University of Zurich in 1975. My parents came to visit me that Fall to meet my fiancée Peter Schaeffer. While growing up, I knew that I came from a family of immigrants from Germany, Poland, and Ireland. My father was especially proud of his German descent, and had never mentioned the fact that my GG Grandfather John Senn was actually from Solothurn, Switzerland. John Senn emigrated to the US in 1855 where his six children were all born including my Great Grandmother Bertha Senn. Perhaps her Swiss heritage was overlooked because she was both the daughter of a German immigrant (her mother), and then married a German immigrant herself. Needless to say, it was a surprising detail I had not known before starting my adventures in Switzerland.

JOHN SENN & CHILDREN



Patricia Schaeffer's Great Grandmother, Bertha Senn

In 1976, Peter and I were married in a civil ceremony in Adliswil (Canton Zurich). Because of the marital laws at that time, I was automatically given Swiss citizenship. We then traveled to Los Angeles, CA where he began his graduate studies at the University of Southern California. It was important to both of us to maintain ties with my family in Denver, and his in Zurich. So we saved our pennies and traveled back to Zurich as often as possible. In 1987, our son Joseph was born while we were living in Illinois. We then made a strong commitment to visit his family every other year. We also included Swiss culture, language, and traditions in our own home life. (Favorite: St. Nicholas Day!!). While we spoke English at home, we also included Swiss German, especially with music and children's songs. Because we raised Joseph in the US, it was important to me that we support our bi-cultural heritage. We were fortunate to spend a year in Zurich when Joseph was 12 while Peter was on sabbatical at the ETH (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology.)

Two years ago, Peter and I visited Solothurn, and went to the cantonal archives to find information on John Senn, or his brother Anastasius Senn. As far as we know, Anastasius was from Kestenholz in Solothurn. After several hours perusing the meticulously kept files there, we found no record of either man, nor any documentation from baptismal records. It has raised an interesting thought for me about their religious background, which I hope to pursue in the future. This past Fall, Peter and I again attended his family reunion (on his mother's side). We also visited the Engadin, and Sils Maria where he spent many summers on his mother's family farm in the Fex Tal.



Solothurn's
City Center
-from the
Schaeffer's
recent trip

Switzerland has changed considerably over the 50 years we have been together (as has the USA as well!). This is a story that Peter can share better than me. So I have two reasons to celebrate my Swiss heritage—as a descendant of a Swiss immigrant, and also as a Swiss citizen myself. I learned Swiss German to communicate with family, though I continue to struggle with the grammar and pronunciation. I admire the Swiss commitment to respecting the four national languages of Swiss/German, French, Italian, and Romansch. I share the Swiss commitment to direct democracy, even if women only got the right to vote in 1972! I appreciate the emphasis on social responsibility, including the sheltering of refugees from war-torn countries (including Kosovo previously, and now Ukraine.) Plus, as everyone knows, the cheese, chocolate, wines and Swiss foods are delectable. Of course, the trains still continue to run on time and most people respect clean streets! And the scenery and those mountains and lakes are breathtaking. My secret favorite? Always the cows!

Where did the Pittsburgh Swiss come from?

-by Fred Carlson, former Vice-Chairman of the Swiss Nationality Room Committee

My hope is that this article finds interest in our current Pittsburgh area Swiss-American community. In early 2012, I compiled the final version of the Swiss Room Donor Book, honoring our 400+ donors to the Swiss Room project. Using testimonials from donors in that book, I have found many descriptions of regions where our early Pittsburgh Swiss had emigrated from in Switzerland. I felt this report might spur 'ah-hah' moments among our members who can see where their own ancestors were from.

The 10 Jacob siblings' parents were from Canton Bern late 19 th century.

Albert Flury was from Zuchwil in Canton Solothurn.

The Oelers and their 453 descendants in the US came from Hinterforst-bei-Alstaetten, Canton Saint Gallen.

Besides Pittsburgh, the 6 generations of Swiss since the initial emigration have stayed in Pittsburgh but also have moved on to Williamsport, PA, and the Swiss communities in northern Indiana.

Art Rudolf, Albert Flury's cousin, was from Erstfeld in Canton Uri.

Alex Weilenmann was from Winterthur in Canton Zurich.

The Fisch family came from Canton Thurgau in 1928.

The Leuenberger family came from the small farming village of Melchnau, Canton Bern, a stone's throw from the Luzerne border.

The Josef Schaller and Kenzelmann families came from Zeneggen, Canton Wallis/Valais.

Jhon Smith's ancestors, the Rudolph Wirz family, came from Zetswil in Canton Aargau.

Andy Schwarz' great grandfather Josef Sebastian Wiget came to the area from Adelboden farm in Steinen, Canton Schwyz in 1868.

Earl Mounts' ancestor was Hans Durig, born 1641 in Hettiswil, Canton Bern who then emigrated to Pennsylvania.

Suzanne Maury's great-grandfather was Nicholas Voegtly, who emigrated from Canton Basel to Pittsburgh in 1822. This community of Baseler Swiss collected in the Deutschtown area of Allegheny City (Pittsburgh's North Side) and were members of the first Evangelical German Lutheran church in the region. The graveyard was uncovered in the I-279 construction and had to be moved and re-identified elsewhere.

These 12 examples could be the start of a larger conversation among S-ASP members about their specific Swiss ancestry. We welcome other members of the S-ASP contributing to the newsletter on this topic!

SWISS-AMERICAN SOCIETY OF PITTSBURGH CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON REGISTRATION

Date: December 7, 2024

Time: 12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Place: Teutonia Männerchor, 857 Phineas Street, Pittsburgh

Price: \$25.00 per person / Children 12 & Under FREE

Please make plans to attend the annual Swiss-American Society of Pittsburgh Christmas Luncheon and Annual General Meeting at Teutonia! Please arrive punctually, as the Kinderchor is planning to do a short concert of German Christmas songs at noon! Samichlaus will also be visiting the children with treats including Grittibaenzli!

The luncheon will feature Teutonia's traditional buffet. Coffee/soft drinks included; alcoholic beverage available for separate purchase. Price includes sales tax and gratuity.

After the luncheon, we will have our annual business meeting. We will not be having a Tombola, but please feel free to bring cash as we will be doing a 50/50 for the Swiss Center of North America

Please email (ecarlson118@gmail.com or call (412-335-9659) Ellen Porter to register, by Friday, Nov 30th, so that we can confirm with Teutonia our estimated attendance. Payment can be made on the day of the event (cash or check payable to the "Swiss-American Society of Pittsburgh").

PLEASE NOTE THAT THERE WILL NOT BE A TOMBOLA THIS YEAR!

SWISS-AMERICAN SOCIETY OF PITTSBURGH 2025 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Please remit your membership dues for 2025 with this notice!

We look forward to another year of activities that will give us the chance to connect with our Swiss heritage and culture.

Please remit your \$15.00* dues payment (check payable to Swiss-American Society of Pittsburgh) by January 31, 2025, to:

Richard Engel
SASP Membership Secretary
5713 Wesleyann Drive
Gibsonia, PA 15044-9448

** You also have the option to become a Life Member upon payment of \$300.00 (which may be paid in four annual installments of \$75.00).*

Also, please let us know if you can help with: Board of Directors / Auditors / Folk Festival / Swiss National Day Picnic / Christmas Luncheon / Events Helper / Publicity / Newsletter / Website / Swiss Singers / Swiss Nationality Room / Membership Recruitment / Anything Else That Floats Your Boat!

Enclosed are my Swiss-American Society of Pittsburgh dues (\$15.00*) for calendar year 2025.

*(*optional \$300.00 for a new life membership, which may be paid \$75.00/year for 4 years)*

Name: _____	Additional Family Members at this
Address: _____	address or at college (name / age):
_____	_____
_____	_____
Phone(s): _____	_____
e-mail: _____	_____

I am willing to help the SASP in the following ways:

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.