



Switzerland



NEWSLETTER OF THE SWISS-AMERICAN SOCIETY OF PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

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Table of Contents:

Page One - 2026 Events and SASP Board

Page Two – Swiss American Historical Society Centennial Exhibit & Member Spotlight

Pages Three and Four – Greg May Albert Gallatin Lecture at Cathedral of Learning

Page Four – S-ASP Archive Book

Page Five – 50 Years Ago in the S-ASP, & North Park Observation Tower

Pages Six and Seven – Living Traditions: «Stäcklibuebe» and the Maypoles

Page Eight – 2026 Pro Patria Pin

Page Nine - Swiss Picnic Registration Form

Page Nine - Swiss Scholarship Legacy Donation Form

SASP 2026 EVENTS

August 2	<u>Swiss Independence Day Picnic</u> Richland Park Barn
October 24	<u>Swiss American Historical Society Centennial Exhibit</u> Cathedral of Learning
December (Date TBA)	<u>Nationality Room Holiday Open House</u> Pitt Cathedral of Learning
December (Date TBA)	<u>Christmas Luncheon</u> Teutonia

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SWISS AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY CENTENNIAL

**Centennial Traveling Exhibit of the Swiss American Historical Society (1927-2027)
Saturday, October 24, 1-4 pm (one-day only)**

The Swiss American Historical Society (SAHS) is celebrating its Centennial in 2027 and has organized a traveling exhibit to mark the occasion. Current plans are for the exhibit to come to Pittsburgh on Saturday, October 24, 2026 at the University of Pittsburgh Cathedral of Learning.

The traveling exhibit will appear in different museums, libraries, and community centers across the U.S. The exhibit will also appear in Switzerland. The purpose is to bring together members of the Swiss and Swiss-American communities, and have people learn more about SAHS and the various contributions of Swiss-Americans. The exhibit features eight banners on different time periods and happenings since its founding in Chicago, Illinois in 1927. Visitors will see images and information on SAHS contributions, publications, leaders, events, partnerships, and the impact of Swiss immigrants in America.

The SAHS was a major donor to the fundraising campaign for the Swiss Room in the Cathedral of Learning. In recognition of that prior donation, the Swiss Room Committee donated \$1,000 to the SAHS as a sponsor of the traveling exhibit. Further, the Swiss Room Committee issued a challenge to the Swiss-American Society of Pittsburgh to match that donation. The SASP board of directors approved this match at its May board meeting.

Tombola proceeds from this year's Swiss National Day picnic will be directed to support this matching contribution. Individual

donations to the exhibit would also be more than welcome. If you are interested in contributing, please let one of our board members know!

The SAHS was established to promote the study of the Swiss in America, Swiss-American relations, and Swiss immigration to the United States. The SAHS encourages American interest in Swiss history and culture, unites those involved in genealogical research, and serves as a link between Swiss-Americans, Swiss and Americans in fostering cultural awareness and mutual understanding.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: CLAY AND LINDA HEER NOBLES

We have been members of the club for more than 40 years. Matter of fact, we met 45 years ago at the Swiss picnic in 1981.

Linda traveled to Switzerland multiple times along with her parents, Pat and Henry Heer. Pat and Henry were very fortunate and got to travel to Switzerland over 15 times!

Henry had family there and they really enjoyed traveling to see them. We still have family in Zurich and keep in touch with them. Both of Henry's parents were born in Switzerland. Clay's grandfather, Adolph Kuhn, was also born in Bern, Switzerland. Henry was President of the Swiss American Society of Pittsburgh in the early 90's.

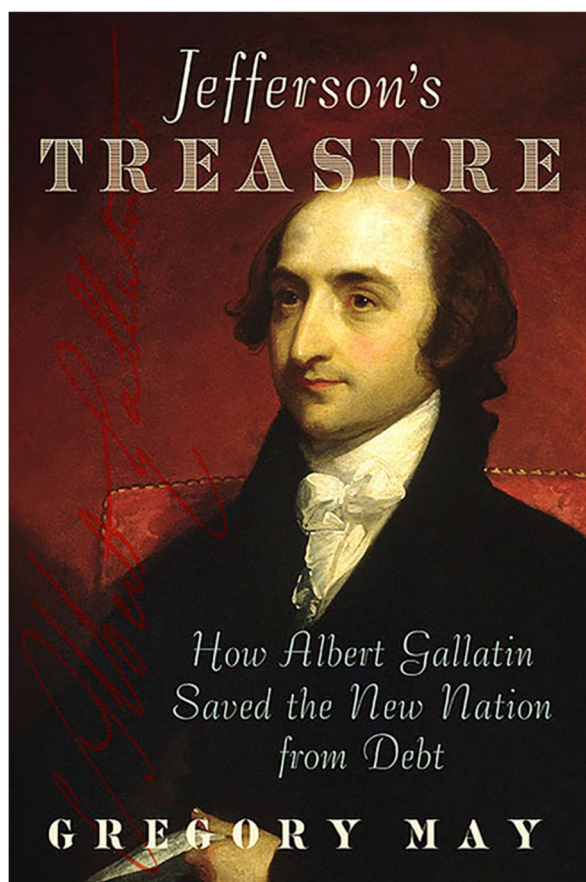
Both Henry and Pat enjoyed celebrating his Swiss heritage with all the members for many years. Both of them had dual citizenship with Switzerland and the USA.

We are looking forward to celebrating another Swiss Picnic this year.

Clay and Linda Heer Nobles

SWISS NATIONALITY ROOM COMMITTEE HOSTS PROGRAM ON THE LIFE OF ALBERT GALLATIN

THE UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH WAS THE SITE
FOR THIS IMPORTANT SWISS CULTURAL EVENT
THIS PAST APRIL 18



Greg May (the nation's foremost biographer of the Swiss Albert Gallatin) was invited by the Swiss Nationality Room Committee (SNRC) and the University of Pittsburgh Nationality Rooms and Intercultural Exchange Program (NRIEP) to appear at the University of Pittsburgh Saturday afternoon April 18, 2026 to present a program on Albert Gallatin, who is known as the Swiss Founding Father of the United States. Greg met attendees in the Swiss Room 321 before the lecture and he spoke in CL 332 for one hour and a half.



***Author and historian Greg May delivers
Gallatin Lecture at the Cathedral of Learning***

Greg traced Gallatin's life from his young Geneva years to his coming to the United States at age 20. After being involved with land sales and surveying, Gallatin sunk roots near Monongahela PA at an estate he called Friendship Hill (this is now a national park) and started a glass factory and a firearms company. As the 1790s went on, Gallatin served in the Pennsylvania Senate and House and was picked by Thomas Jefferson to be his Secretary of the Treasury following Alexander Hamilton. The Louisiana Purchase and Lewis And Clark expeditions, as well as the planning for the National Road, became reality under his watch.

Gallatin also served as Treasury Secretary for the subsequent administrations of Madison and Monroe, and later served the nation on the team signing the treaty that ended the War of 1812 and served as Ambassador to France and England at different times. After he left government, he moved to New York and founded the First Bank of New York and NYU. He became the nation's leading ethnographer of the native American tribes. Gallatin died in 1849 at age 89, the LAST Senator of the 18th century to pass away.

After the lecture, Greg sold and signed copies of his Gallatin biography *Jefferson's Treasure: How Albert Gallatin Saved the Nation from Debt*. A reception was held in the Croghan-Schenley room and the attendees were graced by the appearance of Ron Duquette, a perfect Albert Gallatin re-enactor.



Greg May with Gallatin re-enactor Ron Duquette

The entire SNRC and NRIEP staff worked together to produce this important cultural presentation, the first one from the Swiss Room since we showed *The Shepherds* movie 10 years ago. The SNRC especially thanks Kati Csoman and Rachel Whittier for their logistical assistance promoting and producing the event within the Pitt community.

There were about 45 people in attendance: SASP members, SNRC members and board, University of Pittsburgh students and faculty, and others. Greg sold ALL the books he came with. If you want to order the Gallatin bio, contact Fred Carlson at fred@carlsonstudio.com and he will connect you with Greg so you can get a signed copy directly from the author, who resides in mid-Virginia.

-Fred Carlson/SNRC

S-ASP Archive Scrapbook

A large scrapbook with a collection of S-ASP archives will be at the picnic to view for the last time before we donate the book to the Swiss Center of North America in New Glarus, WI. It includes newspaper clippings from as far back as the 1950s, and includes news items about things like early fundraising and folk festival activities, the PGH/CH 91 celebrations, the SwissRoots program, and highlights from Nationality Room fundraising and construction.

The scrapbook has pages large enough to fit a full-size newspaper page. It also has several empty pages, so we invite you to bring newspaper articles, photos, or other contributions to add to it so that it is as complete as possible before it goes to New Glarus. Even if you don't have things to add, we hope you will enjoy perusing it during the picnic!

50 Years Ago in the Swiss-American Society of Pittsburgh

You have to be able to read cursive handwriting in order to fully enjoy our Archives, which have been painstakingly scanned and uploaded to our website by Joseph Schaeffer. Fifty years ago was 1976, and of course since this year is America's Semiquincentennial, 1976 was America's Bicentennial. In April 1976, the club had \$2801.94 in its savings account (that was enough to buy at least four decent used cars at that time!) Trudy Kuenzi was authorized to provide Bicentennial souvenirs at the upcoming August 1st picnic, which was being planned during the executive board meeting. Children's and Adults' games were to be planned by Fred Jossi. North Park was the usual venue for the Swiss National Day picnic, but there was discussion at this meeting that its fees had increased, so Althea Nevsimal was assigned the task of checking with Schenley Park and Riverview Park. Hans Leumann was put in charge of selecting an appropriate gift for Fred O. Henzi, who would soon be celebrating his 101st birthday. He selected a nice bottle of cognac. Although Riverview and Schenley park reservations could be had for no cost, other than a refundable \$25 deposit, apparently inertia set in and the August 1st picnic was held again at Rose Grove in North Park. A catered buffet dinner was available for \$5.00 for adults and \$4.00 for children, or attendees could bring their own picnic baskets instead if they wished.

The Christmas party that year was held at Cranberry Hall on Route 19 in Warrendale. Prime rib "with all the trimmings" was the dinner, for \$10.00 per person. At the final board meeting of 1976, Membership Chairman Florence Cappe reported five new members had joined during the year, bringing the total membership to 226.

To practice your cursive reading skills, go to <https://swisspittsburgh.org/archives/> for more delights from our past.

North Park Observation Tower



The Allegheny County Parks Foundation is working hard to restore a North Park landmark that was designed in the style of Swiss landscape architect Paul Riis. As many of you remember, Paul Riis was the first director of parks for Allegheny County, serving 1928 to 1932. Over the years we have visited some of the well-known landscape sites he designed in South Park, with South Hills resident Anne Oyler from the Paul Riis Legacy Preservation Volunteers group. North Park also hosts some of Riis' sites, including the springhouse built in 1938 and labeled the "Fountain of Youth" (but don't drink from it! According to a nice feature article in Pittsburgh Magazine <https://www.pittsburghmagazine.com/what-is-pittsburghs-fountain-of-youth/> it's "more likely to make you sick.")

Back to the Observation Tower, the Parks Foundation is now seeking the final \$168,000 needed to complete its \$3.2 million restoration of the historic site. It was originally built in 1937 as a water tower, following the Paul Riis design style, but visitors soon discovered they could see a beautiful view if they climbed its 154-step spiral staircase. Over time the building deteriorated and was closed for safety reasons. In 2002 the park's master plan recommended restoration and the long road of fundraising began. If you would like to learn more about the project, or wish to make a donation, visit <https://acparksfoundation.org/observation-tower-campaign/>

Living Traditions in Switzerland

Lebendige Traditionen / Tradition vivantes / Tradizioni viventi / Tradiziuns vivas

«Stäcklibuebe» and the Maypoles

The terms 'Stäcklibuebe' or 'Stellbuebe' originally referred to conscripts beginning their military service who had just been assigned to their units. On the evening after their conscription, they did not return home but instead celebrated with a night of drinking and pranks. These included removing objects from people's front gardens and depositing them in a certain place, from which the village residents then had to collect them the next day. Following the introduction in 2003 of six large recruitment centres for the whole of Switzerland, the tradition of the 'Stäcklibuebe' almost died out.

In some communities in the cantons of Aargau, Bern and Solothurn, however, it is still practised to this day, and now there are even 'Stäcklimeitli' (female Stäcklibuben). They remove objects from people's gardens in the night of 30 April to 1 May, and some residents take advantage of the opportunity by leaving large unwanted items outside their houses in the hope that the revellers will carry them away. In many communities, the 'Stäcklibueben' also erect May poles, a custom which has earned them the additional name of 'Maibuben'. The 'Stäcklibuebe' and 'Stäcklimeitli' are also responsible for the Swiss National Day (1 August) and carnival bonfires, a custom which is partly linked to the traditional target shooting competitions.



Items assembled by the 'Stäcklibuebe' in Niedergösgen (SO) on the night of 30 April to 1 May
© Roger Flückiger, 2005

To erect May poles is an example for a tradition that was carried from generation to generation by the youth without any kind of organisation or association. The eldest indications for the existence of such a tradition in the Canton of Berne date from the 16th century.



Left: May poles erected by the 'Stäcklibuebe' ('Maibuebe) in Niedergösgen (SO) © Roger Flückiger, 2005

Right: 'Stäcklibuebe' in Bärschwil (SO) constructing the frame for the carnival bonfire with huge logs © Tanja Karrer, 2011

For more information on the Living Traditions in Switzerland, go to www.lebendige-traditionen.ch

2026 Pro Patria Pin

1. August-Abzeichen 2026

For 103 years, the Pro Patria Foundation has created and distributed the 1st of August badge. Proceeds from the badges benefit Pro Patria. The foundation uses these funds to support Swiss architectural heritage (renovations of historically significant buildings) as well as customs and living traditions.

This year's badge features Velcro- the white textile hook-and-loop fastener shows through the Swiss cross shaped hole on the red badge. Velcro's two woven synthetic strips—one with loops and the other with tiny hooks—mimic the mechanism of burdock burrs. Swiss engineer Georges de Mestral often took his dogs for walks in the countryside, where the burrs of the greater burdock (**Arctium lappa**) would come into contact with the dogs' fur and get stuck. He examined the burrs under a microscope and discovered tiny, elastic hooks that did not break off when removed from hair or clothing. Inspired by this natural phenomenon, Mestral developed the hook-and-loop fastener and patented it in 1951.

Even after VELCRO® reached the market in the early 1960s, hook and loop fasteners were slow to catch on. Manufacturers struggled to understand the purpose of such an unfamiliar system. They were accustomed to buttons, zippers or permanent stitching, and many questioned why they should change. It seemed possible that de Mestral's invention, like so many before it, would be dismissed as interesting but ultimately impractical.

[Then NASA came along.](#) While searching for a way to keep objects secured to walls in zero gravity, the agency discovered the VELCRO® brand fastener system.

Suddenly, de Mestral's hook and loop invention was no longer an oddity. It was space-age. It was cool.



Buzz Aldrin shows off his VELCRO® Brand watch band to Neil Armstrong on Apollo 11

By the mid-1960s, hook and loop fasteners began appearing in clothing, including high fashion. French designer Pierre Cardin embraced the material, helping propel it into the mainstream. With that cultural shift, de Mestral's invention was officially a hit.

The 2026 1st of August badge is reusable. Those who no longer wish to pin it to a blouse or jacket with a safety pin can attach the badge to a keychain or a dog collar instead.



The 2026 badge is manufactured by people with disabilities.

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

SUNDAY AUGUST 2nd 2026
at the Richland Park Barn in Bakerstown
2:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Schedule of Events

Price

2:00 p.m.	Social Gathering	\$25.00 – Age 13 & over
3:00 p.m.	Games & Activities	\$15.00 – Picnic Only (without Buffet)
4:00 p.m.	Schweizer Männerchor Helvetia	FREE – Children 12 & Under
4:30 p.m.	Buffet Luncheon	
5:30 p.m.	Tombola	

Things to Bring:

- S-ASP archive contributions! Please see page four for details.
- Tombola Donations to benefit the Swiss American Historical Society Centennial Exhibit- We especially appreciate authentic food or prizes which are related to Switzerland in some way!
- If you wish, you can bring a side, snack, 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 24, WITH YOUR CHECK PAYABLE TO THE SWISS-AMERICAN SOCIETY OF PITTSBURGH, to:

Lyndall Huggler
908 Fairview Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15238
lynbeth@msn.com

SASP SWISS NATIONALITY DAY PICNIC REGISTRATION FORM

Names:

Price (\$25 Buffet / \$15 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.