150th ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE REPORT

Chairs: Marie-Simone Pavlovich & John Paluch

Members: Andre Frieden, Ursula Furrer, Martin Lagler, Sonja Manhart, Beatrice Weiss, Thomas Zoells,

Recognizing the approaching 150th Anniversary, the SBS Board created an ad hoc committee to prepare for the celebration of the founding of the Swiss Benevolent Society of Chicago in 1872 (Schweizerische Wohltätigkeitgesellschaft). The first meeting of the 150th Anniversary Committee convened on September 30, 2020 and the committee continued to meet every 4 or 6 weeks until shortly before our 150th Anniversary Celebration at the Great Central Brewing Company on May 1st 2022. During our many Zoom meetings, the committee brainstormed ideas, developed a schedule of events for 2022 and assigned tasks and responsibilities. Continuing with tradition, the committee focused on ways to include our sister organizations (Swiss Club, Swiss-American Business Council, Sister Cities International – Chicago-Lucerne Committee & the Swiss Consulate) as well as many other cultural organizations (Newberry Library, Chicago History Museum, Roosevelt University, Alliance Française, the Goethe Institute Chicago & the Swiss Center in New Glarus, WI) in our year of celebration. Early on, we decided that we should use the occasion to celebrate “all things Swiss” in Chicago and the Midwest and reach back into our city’s and region’s history to help us recognize the contributions of “the Swiss” to the economic, cultural and political development of the region.

On a number of occasions, serendipity led to “striking gold” as we strategized on identifying appropriate ways to celebrate and memorialize Swiss contributions to the growth and development of Chicago. A “spur of the moment” excursion to the Conrad Sulzer Regional Library on Lincoln Avenue by chair Marie-Simone and son Sascha led to the discovery that Conrad’s Sulzer’s brother Andrew had established the first commercial brewery in Chicago in 1833. This planted the seed for the idea of brewing a “Swiss Beer” to commemorate the contributions of the Swiss and provide for a beverage that could be shared during our year of celebration. The second chance meeting was at a Swiss Club Stammtisch gathering on July 17, 2021 on the Riverwalk in the shadows of the Wrigley Building and Tribune Tower. After an initial 45 minutes of chatter, banter and discussion, the co-chairs found themselves seated across from Andreas Miller, who under gentle questioning revealed that he was the Braumeister at the Great Central Brewing Company on South Wood Street. After many months of investigation, the committee had found a brewer who, with his most generous spirit would produce our Hop Swiss beer and also facilitate the use of the Great Central Brewing Company’s wonderful “Tap Room” for our main celebration on May 1, 2022.

The competition for the design of the beer label was won by Darcy Zoells and she and our other artists used their artistic skills to design coasters that were used as part of the promotional campaign over the course of the year. A special thanks to Adriana Poterash, Susan Bennett and Marie-Simone Pavlovich who produced designs that were used on our Hop Swiss Coasters. Hop Swiss beer helped to highlight the Swiss Benevolent Society at both annual and special events organized by Swiss organizations. Many cases of beer were shared liberally with our sister organizations at their functions:

**Friday, May 13**
20 Years of the Artist’s Atelier on North Damen – Lucerne Artists in Chicago

**Sunday, June 19**
Swiss Club’s Fathers Day Breakfast at Foster Avenue Beach

**Saturday, July 31**
August First Picnic organized by the Swiss Club

**Tuesday, August 2**
Swiss-American Business Council’s August 1 Reception: Focus 150 Years of SBS & Beer Culture in Chicago (Bill Savage)
The May 1st celebration was well attended by Swiss, Swiss-Americans and friends of the Swiss. The celebratory remarks began with a short history of the SBS by John Paluch (SBS president) followed by a delightful keynote with historical commentaries by Consul General Bruno Ryff and Deputy Consul General Jörg Oberschmied. We were honored to have a number of political dignitaries with substantial connections to “any and all things Swiss” including Nick Mathiowdis, representing Cook County Board President, Tony Preckwinkle, County Treasurer, Maria Pappas, County Assessor, Fritz Kaegi and CEO & President of the Swiss Center, Beth Zurbuchen. Culture and 150th Anniversary co-chair, Marie-Simone Pavlovich completed the celebratory remarks with a memorable poem “The Burial of a Dead Leaf” (Jacques Prévert).

After over two years of “pandemic isolation”, the 150th Anniversary Celebration was “the event of the year” for Swiss and friends of the Swiss. Our own Hop Swiss was launched at the celebration and the committee happily engaged Cristina Vannotti, a Swiss pastry chef and caterer based in Chicago. Cristina and her husband Roberto Hernandez provided an amazing array of Swiss appetizers and baked goods for our celebration.

The SBS helped to underwrite the 20th Anniversary Celebration of the Artists Atelier - Lucerne Artists in Chicago (Sister Cities International – Chicago-Lucerne) and our Hop Swiss beer was on full display and readily consumed at the festive and celebratory evening of performances organized by the Chicago – Lucerne committee. The 20 years of artists in residence at the Atelier on North Damen Avenue are now memorialized in an album published by the Lucerne Sister Cities Committee.

The foundation of our Society goes back to the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 and the Chicago History Museum rolled out a new exhibit focused on this tragic event in 2021. We organized a special tour of the exhibit for our seniors which was followed by a late lunch in the museum’s own North & Clark Café. The tour was attended by 10 of our seniors and SBS members. We are indebted to Erica Griffin (Elizabeth F. Cheney Director of Education) and the museum for hosting us and providing an informative introduction to the history of Chicago in 1871, the circumstances of the fire and the effects of the fire on the later development of the city.

The Swiss-American Business Council graciously offered to highlight the Swiss Benevolent Society and its 150th Anniversary during their annual August 1st Celebration, this year at the Swissôtel. We were able to present the history of the SBS and the contributions of Andrew and Conrad Sulzer on retractable banners. As platinum sponsors of the event, we invited Northwestern historian Bill Savage so speak on the history of beer. He provided an informative description of how the immigrant cultures in Chicago were influenced by beer and tavern traditions.

The Committee also took the opportunity to “Celebrate Swissness in Chicago” in a neighborhood that has significant Swiss Roots. The Sulzer Regional Library on Lincoln Avenue borders on Lakeview, where Conrad Sulzer had his homestead and contributed to the political, economic and social life in that area. Julie Lynch (Sulzer History Collection) and Chas Cassidy (CPL Exhibits Director) invited us to prepare an exhibit using items from their archives to document the contributions of Conrad Sulzer and to use retractable banners to present historical aspects of Swiss in Chicago as well as contemporary Swiss companies that add to the more than $300 billion in direct investment in the United State (Imports to Illinois in 2021, $1.9 Billion). We worked with Barry Callebaut, Rolllomatic and Tornos to produce banners that provide a thumbnail presentation of their companies, highlighting their products and their economic importance in Chicago and the Midwest. We also presented the historic Chicago Embroidery Company that, from 1890 on, had three generations of the Bodenmann family producing embroidered linens and other items on Swiss Schiffli looms before transitioning to
the production of custom embroidered patches. The exhibit at the Sulzer Library ran from September 15-December 15, 2022.

To open the exhibit Building, Brewing & Benevolence: The Swiss Presence in Chicago, we hosted an Opening Breakfast Reception and also sponsored a Family Day for Kids and Parents" - How We Rose from the Ashes: Chicago’s Rebirth from Scorched Earth to Skyscraper”. The event featured author Kate Hannigan presenting her graphic novel. The Great Chicago Fire: Rising from the Ashes. Refreshments were provided once again by Swiss pastry chef Cristina Vannotti.

The final event for the 150th Anniversary Celebration took place in Roosevelt University’s historic Rudolph Ganz Memorial Recital Hall. As part of their annual PianoFest, the piano department dedicated the final evening of performances to Swiss and Swiss-Heritage composers: Switzerland’s Voice in the 20th Century- Celebrating the Swiss Benevolent Society’s 150th Anniversary. Undergraduate and graduate students performed works by eight Swiss and Swiss-Heritage composers. A wonderful evening of seldom performed music allowed both the performers and audience to learn about some of the contributions of Swiss to classical and modern repertoires. The reception following the performances was prepared by Cristina Vannotti.

The celebration of the 150th Anniversary of the Swiss Benevolent Society of Chicago allowed us to highlight the contributions of Swiss and Swiss-Americans to the development of Chicago. The city was first incorporated in 1833, the year that Andrew Sulzer arrived and established the Haas and Sulzer Brewery. The Swiss came in relatively small numbers, but they brought with from their home country skills, values and incredible energy that allowed them to flourish and build good lives for their themselves and their families. The tradition of community and civic engagement was already in evidence with a Grütlivein and Sängervereine years before the Great Chicago Fire led to the creation of the SBS. The values and traditions of the Swiss community have been manifested in the care and support that Swiss show for other Swiss and for the border community. We are happy that we could celebrate and memorialize the Swiss during 2022. We thank the 150th Anniversary Committee members, the SBS Board, Ursula Furrer, our general membership and the many people and organizations that helped to make the year a success.

Sincerely,
Marie-Simone Pavlovich & John Paluch
Co-chairs, 150th Anniversary Committee
March 20, 2022
WHEREAS, the Swiss Benevolent Society of Chicago was founded on May 1, 1872, and incorporated in the State of Illinois on August 14, 1872, where the Society provided financial support to Chicagoans of Swiss heritage in the immediate aftermath of the Great Chicago Fire; and,

WHEREAS, the Society has continued to support needy individuals and families welcoming Swiss immigrants to Chicago and the Midwest over the subsequent 150 years; and,

WHEREAS, students in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Indiana have been recipients of the Swiss Benevolent Society (SBS) scholarships to the Concordia Language Villages for 25 years and graduates of Chicago Public High Schools have been recipients of SBS Merit Scholarships for 16 years; and,

WHEREAS, students of Swiss heritage have received SBS college scholarships for 49 years as the Society works to introduce Swiss culture to the broader Chicago population in cooperation with other cultural and educational organizations;

THEREFORE, I, J.B. Pritzker, Governor of the State of Illinois, join in the celebration of the Swiss Benevolent Society on its 150th Anniversary recognizing the regular contributions of the Society to the cultural, educational, and social life of Illinois.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Illinois to be affixed.

Done at the Capitol in the City of Springfield,
this TWENTY-FIRST day of APRIL, in
the Year of Our Lord, two thousand and
TWENTY-TWO, and of the State of Illinois,
two hundred and FOURTH.
Consul General Bruno Ryff and Deputy consul General Joerg Oberschmied penned a wonderful memorial to the SBS and the hard-working Swiss who contributed so significantly to the fabric of society and the development of the city and region.

The flag of Chicago has four stars, the second symbolizing the Great Chicago Fire. A terrible, destructive fire had destroyed important parts of this young and up-and-coming city, which had become an important transportation hub. Chicago did rise from the ashes in an astonishingly fast pace and has shown throughout its history that challenges introduce changes which lead to a stronger, more diversified city.

The foundation of the Swiss Benevolent Society of Chicago is directly connected to the fire tragedy. It is the second star on the map of Swiss organizations in Chicago, preceded by the Grüti Vereinigung. It was a gesture of solidarity between Swiss immigrants, some who had lost everything in the fire and did contribute to building and re-building this great city. Today we have four Swiss associations in Chicago and the Benevolent Society represents the first star, the oldest continuously operating Swiss association. 150 years old, still young and active. The scope has been adapted to the times over the decades, currently supporting mainly educational and art projects.

Clubs and societies are not adapting and thriving only thanks to the founding idea but thanks to the volunteer work of many individuals who have supported, promoted, and were actively involved in making things happen, including introducing changes. It is remarkable that the Swiss Benevolent Society can celebrate its 150th anniversary with pride and continued generosity.

As the current representative of a long line of Swiss Consuls, Honorary Consuls and Consuls General, it is therefore my privilege to express gratitude for all the great and generous individuals, who have contributed through these long years to this society and especially the current committee for keeping the balance sheet healthy, continuing to support worthwhile projects, and allowing us all to join in this remarkable 150 year history.

Together with my predecessor Joerg Oberschmied, who has kept the official Swiss presence in Chicago vibrant in his five years as Honorary Consul, we thank all the volunteers for their most valuable contribution.

Happy 150th Anniversary Swiss Benevolent Society!

Bruno Ryff  
Consul General

Joerg Oberschmied  
Deputy Consul General

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Swiss immigrant, Andrew Sulzer, and German, William Haas arrive in Chicago in 1833 from Watertown, New York, bringing, by ship, one hundred and fifty barrels of ale, a load of malt, brewery equipment and $3,000. Even though there are only 300 residents in the rough and tumble frontier town, the beer partners manage to establish the first successful commercial brewery and produce 600 barrels of ale in the first year of production. The growth of their brewery, directly connected to the local thirst for beer, follows the meteoric growth of the city over the next decades.

The Haas and Sulzer brewery changes hands many times in the first decade, and by 1841, the *Lill and Diversey Brewery* is the largest brewery west of the Alleghanies. In 1861 it undergoes a renovation that results in a formidable 4-story structure with 50-75 employees at the corner of Chicago Avenue and Pine Street (Michigan Avenue), across from the new Water Tower. In following decades, the brewing industry continues to grow, with over 32 breweries by 1860. Though the Great Chicago Fire dealt a death blow to the first brewery in Chicago in 1871, the city continued to develop its brewing tradition and became a leader in the field.

In this sesquicentennial anniversary year, the Swiss Benevolent Society is pleased to launch its own *Hop Swiss* beer in commemoration of the early Swiss settlers and those Swiss and Swiss-Americans who have supported their community through the good works of the Society.