

The founding of the Swiss Benevolent Society

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February when Mrs Matilda Schuler presented a Swiss flag to the Club. We did have a tremendous response to this function and a few pictures from this still do exist.

A further memorable event was the departure of the writer's family from Taranaki to Hamilton in 1954. The Vice-President, Mr John Stiener, got elected President and he organised a farewell present to the departing which amounted to a washing machine and a chiming mantel clock, which was quite overwhelming. It was as much of a strain to get away from Taranaki as it was to get away from Switzerland in 1939. One beloved countryman then told me that he wonders how I managed to get away from all of my friends. My reply was that I won't get away, I was merely going further afield to make new friends.

The Founding of the Swiss Benevolent Society

In 1932, encouraged by the Swiss Consul, Mr A. Blau, a few Swiss joined together to found the Swiss Benevolent Society in order to help all Swiss in need, which was at that time of considerable significance. As you remember from my translation of the first Swiss Club in Taranaki, there was a move afoot to have such a Society established there and was only terminated by its untimely end. We must realise the hardships of that time to understand the importance of such a move.

Mr E. Merz was elected first President, A. Ungemuth Secretary, Committee members, Fred Steyer, George Kerler, Tony Peyer and Albert Moosberger. As time went on Tony Peyer became President and E. Merz acted as Secretary. In 1941 Tony Peyer founded a Social Club section in addition to the Benevolent Society in Auckland. I believe that an old register of that section still exists and is in the hands of the Auckland Swiss Club, beautifully painted by O. Haltmeier.

The next President of the Benevolent Society became Dr. Bosshard, his first secretary was Ernst Gilgren and after him Miss Doris Peyer, now Mrs A. Binder. Dr. Bosshard tried to enlarge the sphere of the Benevolent Society and tried to get more outside members interested into the Committee, as well as more Aucklanders like the Gilgen Bros., Dr. Kaegi from Bombay, Joe Arnett from Springdale, Arnold Biland, Hands Oettli and Walter Risi from Hamilton.

A change of name from Swiss Benevolent Society to Swiss Society of New Zealand and a change of rules was the first move. A new Committee: Walter Risi, President; Dr. Ferdinand Kaegi, Vice-President and Arnold Biland, Secretary, and further changes in the publication of the Helvetia were contemplated. It was felt that a broader outline with a bigger and nicer monthly publication was necessary to arouse the interest of all the Swiss Clubs in the movement, which have come up in the time being as a general fulfillment of needs for togetherness in a far away from home place.

(To be Continued)