

## **The Young Swiss Club of Chicago Its History from Mid- 1960's to Mid 1980's**

With the end of the old Swiss Club House on 635 W. Webster Avenue in Chicago looming, the Young Swiss Club moved in 1967 to the Swedish Engineers Society, 503 W. Wrightwood Avenue. This new home was quite a place, a large mansion , originally built in 1896 by a wealthy brewer. Walking up to the building, the entrance was flanked by two large stone lions. On the lower level of the building, the Swiss would meet many Friday nights for a "gemuetlich" evening or meetings. The two Fondue parties a year were in the classic rooms on the main floor. Wide stairways with ornate railing lead to the second floor with its "Grand Ballroom".

On April 20, 1968, the United Swiss Societies organized a special "Farewell Dinner and Party" at the old Swiss Club House. Many members of the Young Swiss attended this sentimental event. The same year, the Young Swiss Club celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a party in the ballroom on Wrightwood Avenue.

With a large influx of young Swiss that had arrived during these years, there were many activities to enjoy... - a Fondue Party in December and another in Spring, Christmas and New Years' parties.

In the Summer of 1969, many members traveled to New Glarus for a "Schuetzenfest" (Shooting Festival). The shooting results were sent via telex to the National Festival in Switzerland competing with over 200 other Swiss clubs around the world.

With all the young Swiss around, the Young Swiss Club became a matchmaker's heaven... - from the late 60's to the early 70's, at least 16 couples met at the club and ended- up getting married. Sadly, a few have passed, but all others are still married

In the Winter of 1972 the Winter Olympic Games were held in Sapporo, Japan. Not to be left out, the Young Swiss Club organized its own Alpine Skiing Competition in Tyrol Basin, Wisconsin and the "après-skiing" in New Glarus. (This Winter activity continued for over 35 years.)

Some of the other club activities in the 70's were the Fasnacht (Mardi Gras), Breakfast Rides in the Lakes of the Hill, "Gourmet Picnics" at Lake Geneva, Car Rallies, Jass Tournaments and canoe trip and grape picking weekends in New Glarus.

In 1973 a former American Legion Post on Laramie Avenue in Chicago became available. Between the United Swiss Societies (Werner Anderau, Pres.) and the Young Swiss Club (Peter Herdeg, Pres.) the money was brought together to buy the one story building at 2634 Laramie Avenue. During the following years, many days and nights were spent by volunteers to fix- up the place. After a tornado hit an over 100 year old Swiss barn in Highland, Illinois, a group of "strong" Young Swiss traveled to southern

Illinois and with chain saws cut many of the hand-hewn oak beams. Once back in Chicago, the beams were used to build an authentic Swiss Chalet "Aelpli Bar" inside the new clubhouse. From Swissair we received large photo panels with an aerial view of the Swiss mountains. This beautiful scenery, covering most of one wall in the Clubhouse, added the real "Swiss touch". .

In 1978 the Young Swiss Club celebrated its 20th anniversary "in style". A good size ship, the M.V. Trinidad, was chartered for a more than three hours cruise on Lake Michigan, a live band provided the music and a delicious buffet dinner was served..

On July 29, 1979 the first Swiss National Day (August 1) Celebration organized by the United Swiss Societies was held at the Swiss Clubhouse. Every other year this event took place at the spacious "Illinois Turner Camp" on the Fox River in Algonquin.

For many years thereafter, the new Swiss Clubhouse served as the meeting place of the Swiss Mutual Benefit Society, Swiss Singing Society, Swiss Ticino Society and every Friday the Young Swiss Club. The United Swiss Societies' "Novemberfest", the Swiss Ticino's Sunday dinners and the Young Swiss Club's Fondue Parties took place the Swiss Clubhouse.

The Young Swiss Club's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary was celebrated with a "Gala Dinner Dance" at the beautiful Nordic Hills Country Club in Itasca, Illinois

In the Mid 80's, the bills for the Swiss Clubhouse (liquor license, real estate taxes, roof repairs,...) were mounting. The shareholders decided to sell the building in 1987...

After the sale of the Swiss Clubhouse, the Young Swiss Club continued its activities by renting facilities, the first one being a Knight of Columbus Hall in Evanston.

Peter Herdeg  
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