

Built Envi- ronment

Ndiritu - Mühlefuhr

**Alessandro Tempini, Angela Thomas,
David Bissels, Natascha Brühwiler,
Matilde Von der Lage & Luna Grünen-
felder**

The Great fire of Glarus



The great fire of Glarus, Chromolithography, 1870

The Great Fire of Glarus – 1861

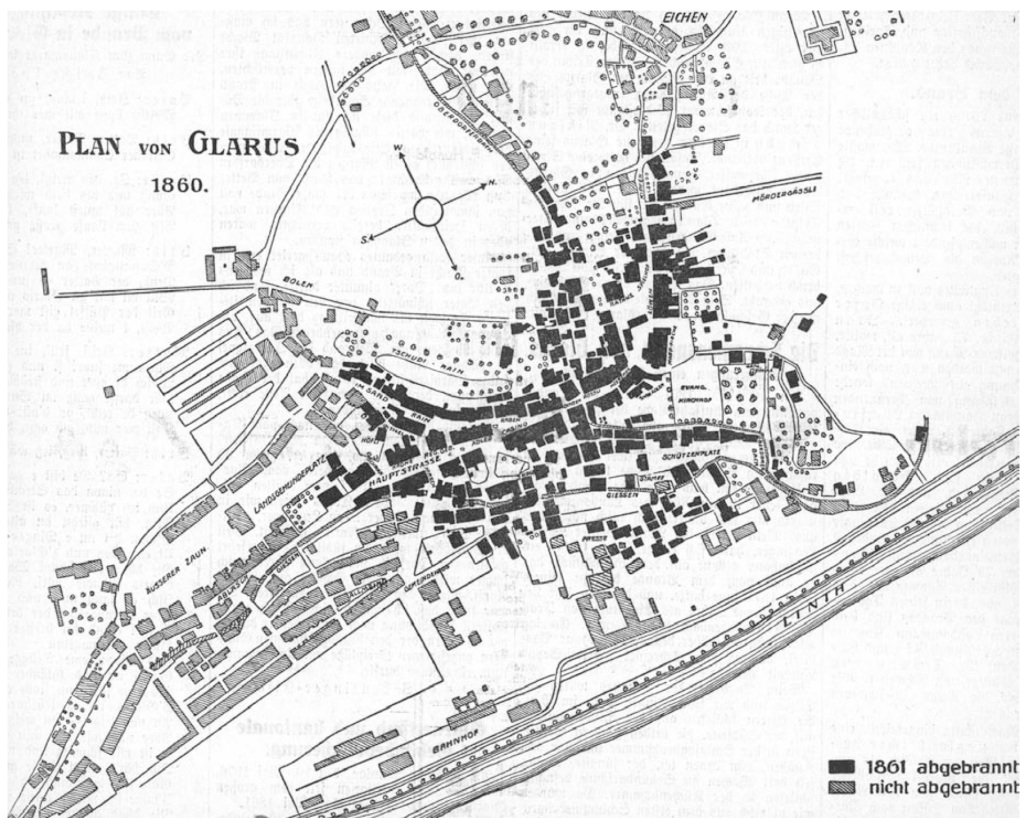
On the night of May 10–11, 1861, a devastating fire broke out in Glarus, rapidly spreading due to strong winds and the prevalence of wooden buildings.

The flames destroyed nearly two-thirds of the town, including over 500 buildings, churches, and factories, leaving more than 3,000 people homeless.

Many lives were lost, including that of Johannes Trümpi, the president of the criminal court, and his family. The

town's infrastructure was reduced to ashes.

The fire became a major media event, attracting attention both locally and abroad. In response, nationwide charity efforts were organized. Thousands of individuals, associations, municipalities, and cantons contributed donations, reaching a total of 2.7 million francs, which helped cover part of the 10 million francs in damages caused by the disaster. This solidarity effort highlighted the strength of the community in the face of tragedy.



Plan of Glarus before the fire ,1860



*Photos by Joseph Brogelie of the
aftermath of the fire,
11. May 1861*

Reconstruction of Glarus

The Rebuilding of Glarus

After the devastating fire of 1861, Glarus was rebuilt in just three years, thanks to the plans of Bernhard Simon and Johann Kaspar Wolff. The new layout featured a grid-like street system with wide, elongated roads, drawing inspiration from cities like La Chaux-de-Fonds, New York, and St. Petersburg. This design aimed not only to modernize the town but also to prevent future fires by improving accessibility and airflow. In addition to the urban layout, Glarus completely banned wooden buildings in the town center and requiring fireproof materials for houses with wooden shingles.



*New plan for
Glarus with the
prevailing grid
structure for by
Bernhard
Simon and
Johann Kaspar
Wolff, 1861*



*Left: aerial view
of Glarus and
its grid, 1919*



*Right: La
Chaux de
Fonds*

Worker Housing and Industrial Influence

Following the rebuilding of Glarus, many row houses were constructed to house the growing number of workers employed in the textile industry.

These “Arbeiterquartiere” (worker districts), particularly in Glarus and Ennenda, featured tightly packed, uniform housing blocks that bore a striking resemblance to the brownstone neighborhoods of New York.

In contrast, the factory owners built their grand villas within the town itself, often near their factories, reflecting their status while staying close to their businesses.

This distinct separation of housing styles still defines the urban landscape of Glarus today, showcasing the town’s industrial heritage and social structure.



Aerial view of Ennenda with row houses and villas, 1925



Row houses in Ennenda, 2025



House Sunnezyt of merchant Balthasar and Rudolf built around 1781/82

Legende: - Gebiete 1879-1918

- Gebiete 1925-1932

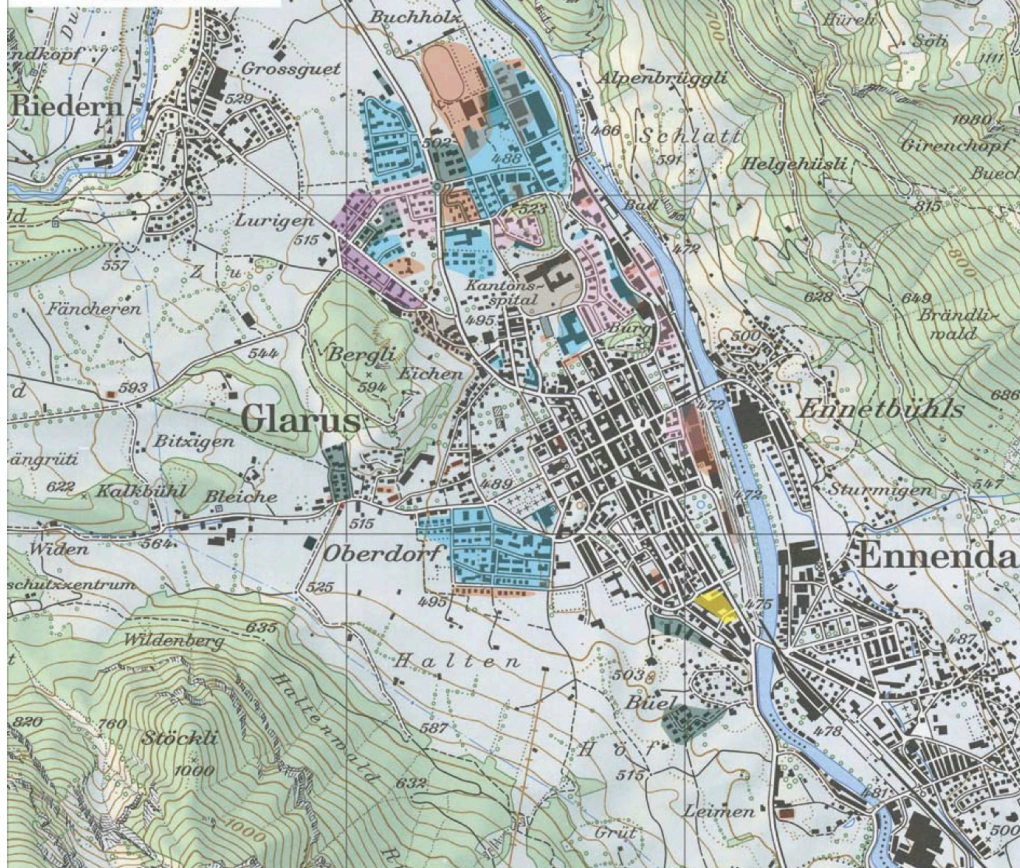
- Gebiete 1932-1943 (gelb)

- Gebiete 1943-1958 (rosa)

- Gebiete 1958-1978

- Gebiete 1978-1989

- Gebiete 1989-2008



Development of Glarus and Ennenda from 1879 to 2008

IKA Kartensammlung

Emigration of Glarner

Emigration to the United States

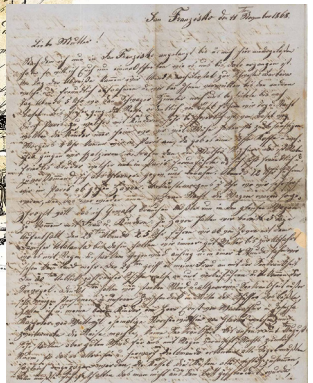
In the 1840s, the Swiss canton of Glarus faced economic hardship due to a downturn in the textile industry and widespread crop failures, leaving many in poverty. To address this crisis, the Glarus Emigration Society was established in 1844, offering loans to help settlers start a new life in America. In 1845, two scouts, Nicolas Duerst and Fridolin Streiff, were sent to find a suitable location, eventually purchasing 1,280 acres along the Little Sugar River in southern Wisconsin. The land, though rugged and untamed, reminded them of their Swiss homeland.

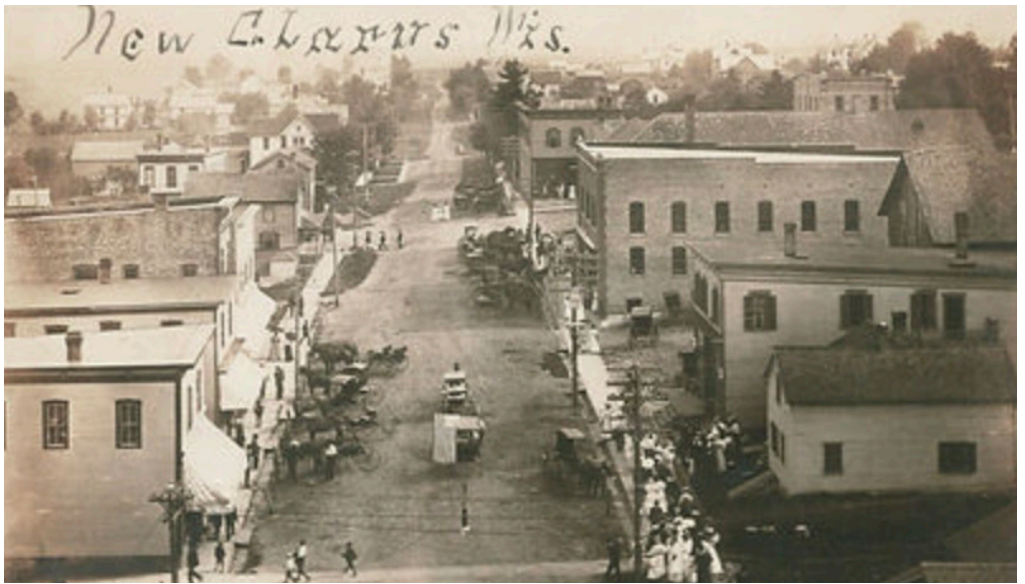
Before the Swiss settlers arrived, the land had been inhabited by Native Americans for centuries, with a well-traveled Indian trail passing just south of what would become New Glarus. That same year, the first emigrants arrived, working to build homes and establish farms in the wilderness. Despite many hardships, they created a thriving community that preserved Swiss traditions, architecture, and customs. Today, New Glarus remains a living testament to both its Swiss heritage and the history of the land's early inhabitants.

**In July of 1868
family Heer
leaves Glarus
for the USA,
Illustration by
Marco Heer**



**First letter sent by Rudolf Heer
to his mother, during his journey
in 1868**





Main street of New Glarus, 1930



Chalet of the golden fleece in New Glarus, Wisconsin built ca. 1938



Reformatory church of New Glarus, Burnt down in 1899



Milk condensing company in New Glarus, 1910

