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The Black Wedding Dress

Recently, Karl and Ruth Waldvogel, members of the Hamilton Swiss Club visited Hockin House in Hamilton. Hockin House, built in 1893 is a late Victorian dwelling that was the residence of the first four superintendents of Waikato Hospital. It takes its name from Doctor Munro Hockin who died in office in 1939, the last superintendent to live in the house. The Waikato Historical Society are now housed in this building.

There is a black wedding dress on display there that has a connection to Switzerland and one of Hamilton Swiss Club's first Presidents - Arnold Biland. Arnold and Hedy's son Alex was a doctor at the Waikato Hospital for many years. The article that goes with the dress was written by Hedy Biland, Arnold's wife. Hedy also used to write "Hedy's Corner" for the Swiss Club. Hedy bequeathed the dress to The Waikato Historical Society. Here is her letter...Ed

The wedding dress came into my hands through my daughter-in-law's Grandmother who was born in 1880 in Switzerland. The Grandmother sent it as a gift to me and enclosed the following interesting information:

In the 1800's it was the custom in Switzerland for the bridegroom to buy the material for his bride's wedding dress. The bride's father, being a cautious man, bought 10 extra yards of the black silk so that there was plenty of material for necessary repair and the renewal work. The machine stitching on the dress is mostly original. Sewing machines were only just getting under way and the bride, whilst single, was presented with a sewing machine by a rich cousin. On account of his wealth, the future children of the bride had to call this cousin *Mr Cousin*. The sewing machine stitched beautifully. The cost of such a machine in those days was 60 francs – quite a considerable sum in

those early days. The bride's husband was a roof tile maker. He employed 20 men in his thriving factory at Meilen, near Zurich, Switzerland.

After the wedding, the wedding dress was worn by the former bride whenever important guests were entertained. She personally served the food at such dinners, dressed in the wedding dress. At her neck she wore a filigree brooch which the son of the wealthy cousin once brought her from India – quite a sensation in those days. The bustle cushion fell victim to moths and a new one had to be made. It was tied around the waist with a ribbon and this padding gave the dress the character bustle. The shoes were very dainty, made of softest calf leather, and had silver buckles on them. The heel was slightly raised and very curved. The Reticule held the handkerchief and smelling salts. It is all original as are the half-gloves.

After the death of the owner of the wedding dress her daughter had it hanging in the wardrobe until 1947. In that year there was a tremendous fête, celebrating an anniversary date of the Swiss city of Baden. The daughter, then nearing her 70's, decided to wear the wedding dress as she was one of the specially invited guests of honour.

Her mother had had a very tall statuesque figure and the dress had to be shortened and taken in width-wise. The white lace which had deteriorated, was replaced with the present lace which was enclosed with the dress along with instructions how to replace it.

To close this little history, some amusing and interesting sidelines were recounted to me by the donor of the dress...

The rich *Mr Cousin*, mentioned as the giver of the sewing machine, had one son who became an accountant. He worked in this capacity in one of the most famous, and still existing, hotels in Lucerne. The tourist season was for 6 months and for the other 6 months the enterprising accountant went to Benares, India, where he held a position with a firm there. The children of the former bride had to address this accountant as *Mr Junior Cousin*. He visited them every year on his way to or from India. However, he was not at all popular with the young fry as he never brought them a present.

There we have it!!! ED.



Tête de Moine Cheese

On the mountain pastures of the Swiss Jura, from spring to autumn, the cows enjoy the particular composition of the aromatic grasses and herbs, as well as fragrant hay in winter. These give the Tête de Moine AOP its unmistakable character, marked by its natural environment, and its incomparable flavour. It is in this region, in the monastery of Bel-lélay, that this cheese was created 800 years ago.

It is believed that the monks staying at Moutier - the mountainous zone of the Bernese Jura - manufactured this cheese, and hence the cheese takes the name 'Tete de Moine' meaning 'Monk's Head'. In 1982 the Girolle was invented, a machine which makes it possible to make 'rosettes' of Tête de Moine by turning a scraper on an axle planted in the centre of the cheese.

