

## From the Garrett of Johanna Spyri



Just north of Zurich Switzerland lies a little village in the mountains called Hirzel. Set amongst rolling hills and valleys with a view of the Alps in the distance, is where Heidi author Johanna Spyri made her home with parents and five brothers and sisters. She was born on June 12<sup>th</sup> 1827 under her maiden name Johanna Louise Heusser.

Her father was a doctor and built a very large house known as Doktor Haus, to accommodate his large family, a few aunts, and the many patients who came there to seek medical treatment. The house acted as a clinic, pharmacy, hospital, and a rehabilitation center all in one place.



Her mother was the pastor's daughter and was involved not only in her husband's medical activities but also was very active in charity work through the church. Among her other talents was poetry writing. Several of her poems were turned into hymns. Inside the pages of Heidi are written many hymns. Not only was it a church going era but I wonder if Johanna was inspired by her mother's own hymn writing efforts.

Inside her family home, Johanna spent countless hours reading, playing music and games with her siblings and she loved handwork very much. Embroidery and knitting were some of the things she liked to do best.

Just near the village church you can see the school where Johanna went to elementary school.



It's still there today and houses the Johanna Spyri museum.



Let's have a look inside.

Here is a little sitting area along with school desks and teaching tools.



The kitchen



And here is a little eating area.



After elementary school, she went to Zurich for 3 years, where she studied French and music. It was here that she met the great Swiss writer Conrad Ferdinand Meyer.

From Zurich she went to live a year in the French speaking part of Switzerland, in a little village called Yverdon.

Back from her year in Yverdon, Johanna immersed herself in reading and helped tutor her sisters.

At the age of 25 she met and married her husband Johann Spyri. Now married, Johanna and her husband lived in Zurich where he practiced law.

Johanna had one son, Bernard.



Did you know that Johanna Spyri was a great reader and didn't write until she was in her late thirties? She published her first work in 1871. She was 40 years old when Heidi was published. Heidi was published in two parts. The first part was published in 1880 and the second part was published in 1882.

In 1884, Johanna had some very great sadness enter her life and that was the death of her husband and son.

From this point on, she gave a lot of her time and money to her favorite charities. She loved travelling, listening to music, and discussing books, art, and politics with her friends and other people she would meet along the way.

Five years after the publication of Heidi, the book was translated into English and then became known throughout the world.

Johanna Spyri died on July 7<sup>th</sup> 1901 and is buried with her family in Zurich.



Johanna Spyri, author of Heidi

