

THE VILLAGE *Voice*

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WORKING TOGETHER page 2
OLDEST MENNONITE GRAVE MARKER? page 4

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DIRECTOR'S DESK

BY GARY DYCK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I love the name of our museum – the Mennonite Heritage Village (MHV).

Mennonite because it is a significant historical group that has experienced a lot in it's young 500-year-old journey from medieval Europe to today.

Heritage because we all have a heritage that can ground us as we go into the future. In a dizzying world of unceasing innovation, tragedy and developments, it is important to have heritage that can hold us.

Village because we are an actual village with a long straight street with housebarns, blacksmith shop and a windmill at the edge like many Mennonite villages for centuries before us.

However, a wider meaning of village should also be included. When I was young, villages were not cool, but now with our ever-increasing cities it has become precious again. People are moving back from the city to the village in greater numbers. My first home was in the village of Piney with a population of 101. As COVID-19 carried on, Piney and many other villages in the area developed new suburbs for people to move to. It is precious to be part of a smaller community, to know the people you meet on the street and to have the time and heart to work together when needed.

This year was a challenge for MHV. Just when we were starting up for a new summer season we had to close our doors due to the next COVID-19 wave on May 7th. When we reopened in July it was a joy to see the people enjoying our 'Demonstration Saturdays'. While some museums were only seeing a handful of people on weekends MHV still had dozens even hundreds of people coming out most weekends. For the September long-weekend we were finally allowed to host a major event

– 'Summer in the City visits Fall on the Farm'. I know it brought refreshment and enjoyment to many. From my office window I can see the visitors coming in and out. They always look more relaxed and peaceful after a visit to MHV.

This summer we also repainted our animal barn and several picnic tables, restored the barn portion of the Chortitz housebarn and stabilized our pond. As part of the well-being initiative at MHV we are also developing a trail that goes around the whole pond. We also provide a brochure on how to make your visit to MHV a therapeutic one.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition of the Village Voice and can support the mission of Mennonite Heritage Village with your year-end giving. Check out www.mhv.ca for ways to give and the latest information on our upcoming events and exhibits.



Caption: The Steinbach and Area Garden Club and some youth planted 700 seedlings along the MHV shoreline this summer.
Credit: Gary Dyck



WORKING TOGETHER

BY PATRICK FRIESEN, DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR

Summer-in-the-City visits Fall on the Farm

When COVID-19 public health pandemic precautions caused the cancellation of the planned Summer in the City festivities in June, the organizing committee of the festival reached out to the Mennonite Heritage Village with a proposal for collaboration. With the hope of relaxed restrictions on public gatherings, the idea was hatched to combine elements of Summer in the City with our planned Fall on the Farm festival. Typically, Fall on the Farm is a one day festival day held on Labour Day. The plan was for Summer in the City to bring the Cultures, Kids,

Seniors, Artists, and Worship elements of their festival to combine with our Fall on the Farm in order to make a full weekend festival. The plan called for MHV to host the event, providing the space and logistics for the weekend in addition to the demonstrations and food already planned. Our goal was to provide a safe, social festival that would allow our community to reconnect with friends, engage with the many cultures represented in our community, and enjoy the company of neighbours.

Once the plan had been set in place the various committee members together with their volunteers booked tents, recruited more volunteers, contacted various vendors. Coming along side were some key partners, namely the Celebrate Canada Grant, as well as RocketRez as key sponsor allowing the entire weekend to be free of charge to visitors.

As the weekend approached, we were in regular contact with public health making sure that our

Continued on page 6





2022 EXHIBIT - LEAVING CANADA

BY ANDREA KLASSEN, SENIOR CURATOR

Commemorating 100 Years since the Mennonite Emigration from Canada to Mexico

On March 8, 1922, the first train carrying Mennonites arrived in San Antonio de las Arenales (later Cuauhtémoc), Chihuahua from Canada, a country these immigrants felt had betrayed them. Throughout the 1920s, a total of nearly 8,000 Mennonites from Old Colony, Sommerfelder, Chortitzer, Bergthaler, and Kleine Gemeinde communities would leave Manitoba and Saskatchewan for northern Mexico, beginning in 1922, and for Paraguay four years later.



Caption: A group of Mennonites wait at the train station in Altona, Manitoba for the train that will carry them to Mexico, ca. 1920s.

Credit: Mennonite Heritage Archives, MAID PP-22 - Photo Col. 639-17.0

In 2022, Mennonite Heritage Village, in partnership with the Plett Foundation and the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada, will be marking the hundredth anniversary of this milestone event with an exhibit focusing on this story of Mennonite emigration from Canada to Mexico. The planned exhibit will be displayed in the Gerhard Ens Gallery at Mennonite Heritage Village from May to November 2022. After this initial display of the full exhibit, a smaller version will be available to travel to host organizations across Canada, with a focus on locations that are important to this history of “Kanadier” Mennonites leaving Canada for Mexico and the return of many of their descendants throughout Canada, but especially from Ontario west to British Columbia.

The exhibit will focus on three main themes. “Leaving Canada” will highlight the factors that led to the Mennonite emigration from Canada, with special focus on the Mennonite resistance against the changes to public school legislation in Manitoba and Saskatchewan in 1916 and 1917. “Life in Mexico” will explore the early years of life in Mexico, which were difficult for the migrants. And the third theme, “Legacy,” will look at the profound effect that the exit of the most traditional Mennonite communities from Canada had on Mennonite life and identity in this country, the dispersion of Mennonites throughout Latin America, and the return of the “Kanadier” Mennonite descendants to Canada in the later twentieth century and continuing today.

Do you have an object with a story to tell about this Mennonite migration to Mexico? We need your

help! Mennonite Heritage Village, together with its partners in this project, are currently seeking artefacts for inclusion in this exhibit. Mennonite Heritage Archives (Winnipeg, MB) is looking for archival materials that tell this story including oral interviews, photos, correspondence, diaries, and journals. Mennonite Heritage Village (Steinbach, MB) is looking for artefacts, which could include clothing, items relating to farm and home life, travel items, toys, or any other item with a story to tell that relates to the emigration of Mennonites from Canada to Mexico. If you have materials that you would like us to consider for inclusion in the exhibit, contact Conrad Stoesz, archivist at Mennonite Heritage Archives (cstoesz@mharchives.ca) or Andrea Klassen, senior curator at Mennonite Heritage Village (andreak@mhv.ca).



Caption: Wooden threshing machine on display in the foyer of Museo Menonita in Cuauhtémoc, Chihuahua, Mexico. Mennonites arrived in northern Mexico in 1922 with their belongings and agricultural equipment, including this threshing machine, to start new lives and livelihoods in this new environment.

Credit: Andrea Klassen

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WEDDINGS AT MHV

BY JENNY FROESE, PRIVATE EVENTS COORDINATOR

Summer of 2021 is coming to an end, and looking back at the past year, we have achieved many momentous events. Our beautiful space has provided over 60 Meetings & Services, 12 Ceremonies & Receptions, and numerous other events this past year! Plenty of stunning couples have tied the knot on our unforgettable historic sight, and we are so proud to say that we got to be a part of their special day!

Being the Private Events Coordinator at MHV is more than a job to me; it's something I'm very passionate about. I have the privilege to experience one of the most important moments in people's lives and the start of their journey together. From helping you choose the perfect reception and ceremony space for your group, to helping you with the set up, I will execute your plans flawlessly and offer helpful tips along the way. I am committed to making your wedding experience as enjoyable and stress-free as possible!

We offer a 2-day wedding package for \$2800. This allows couples time for set up, decor and rehearsal the day before your event. The package includes one of two event halls, tables and chairs,



Caption: Michelle and Zachary on their wedding day - October 10, 2021

Continued on page 7



OLDEST MENNONITE GRAVE MARKER?

BY ERNEST N. BRAUN

This headstone is the oldest surviving Mennonite headstone known on the Mennonite East Reserve and may be the oldest one in all of Manitoba.



Caption: The stone in its original place in 1950s amid underbrush and rocks somewhat south of the cairn now identifying the cemetery.

Credit: John Warkentin, *The Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba*, Steinbach: HSHS, 1960, page 67. Plate 3-3. York University Libraries, Clara Thomas Archives & Special Collections, John Warkentin Fonds. Used with permission.

It was photographed in the Alt-Bergfeld cemetery in the later 1950s by Prof. John H. Warkentin who included it in his 1960 doctoral thesis. At that point the stone appeared to be in its original place, over the grave of Peter Klassen, born February 10, 1811, in Schönhorst, Chortitza, the son of Abraham and Agatha Bollee Klassen. Peter later moved to the new Bergthal Colony, settling in the village of Heuboden, likely just after he married Sara Kroeker in 1839. In the spring of 1875 they emigrated with three grown children, to become one of the pioneering families of the village of Bergfeld on the East Reserve, Manitoba, in 1875-76. There is no record of his entering a homestead, although a Peter Klassen received a patent for NE 6-5-5E, probably his son Peter K. Klassen. He is listed in the 1876 Brotschuld¹ for Bergfeld, but died September



Caption: Headstone, with digital overlay to show the inscriptions "P K 1877". The headstone was photographed by Ernest N. Braun in May 2021, at the site approximately where the cultivator unearthed it over forty years ago.
Credit: Ernest N. Braun (used with permission)

25, 1877 of causes unknown. The headstone inscription was etched in fine calligraphy, probably by son Peter Klassen who went on to a long career as village teacher in Bergfeld, whose Latin P and K letters, preserved in some school booklets, are identical to those on the stone.

The Mennonite village of Alt-Bergfeld was sold with all its land and buildings in 1923-24 in preparation for the move to Paraguay. Investors owned the property till 1937 when James Robertson bought it. During the time that the land was farmed by the Robertson family the cemetery was not fenced in so that the cattle could keep the grass short and the weeds under control. Another photograph taken by Abe Warkentin in about 1973 still shows the stone in place amid underbrush, but as the land reverted to pasture, whatever markers existed (rough unmarked field stones, or wooden stakes with perhaps a piece of tin nailed to them) were lost.

So it was that in about 1980 the owner of the land at that time, William B. Braun, noticed the stone when his cultivator snagged it while turning over some pasture land in the area. He stopped to pick it up, turned it over and noticing the inscription, he took it home. Upon his death it came to his son Harold, who stored it in his shed. Had the stone been left outside, weathering on the soft limestone would by now have left the lettering indecipherable. Harold preserved it intact until spring 2021 when he contacted Ernest N. Braun, long-time

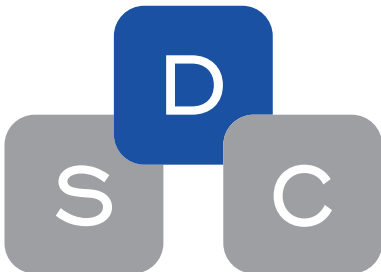
Alt-Bergfeld aficionado (whose ancestors are also buried in that village cemetery) and passed the stone to him to look after in an appropriate fashion. In the meantime, a cairn listing all known deaths had been erected in the general area where the cemetery was presumed to be, and marks the spot today. Access is permitted by the current owners provided permission is obtained in advance.

On September 13, 2021, a great-granddaughter of Peter Klassen, Katarina Wiebe with her son Rev. John Wiebe entrusted the stone to Mennonite Heritage Village, represented by senior curator Andrea Klassen. As a displaced cemetery stone, this artifact may not have an actual owner, and since its original place has been lost, the Wiebes respectfully consigned it to the Museum for other members of the family and the public to view. This notice will also serve to alert other descendants, many of them in Paraguay, about the stone.

¹ The *Brotschuld* is a record of monies lent to Mennonite settlers by the Government of Canada after the disastrous grasshopper plague in 1875. Records were kept for 1876, 1878, and 1880. Individuals/families are entered by village.



Caption: Mrs. Katarina Wiebe, age 99, and her son Rev. John Wiebe transfer the headstone of their ancestor Peter Klassen 1811-1877 to Andrea Klassen, senior curator of Mennonite Heritage Village, on September 13, 2021. The photo was taken in front of the semlin on the museum's grounds, as this type of sod house would likely have been the type of dwelling in which Peter Klassen lived at his passing in Bergfeld. Harold and Karen Braun, long-time custodians of the stone, were on hand to witness the handover. Martin and Donna Reutter, current owners of the village site, were unable to attend.
Credit: Mennonite Heritage Village





AUXILIARY NEWS

BY EVELYN FRIESEN, AUXILIARY REPORTER

Trudie Kehler and Elsie Kathler have faithfully tended the Auxiliary’s vegetable garden in the North field of the Village this past summer. Their efforts yielded mounds of potatoes, carrots, beets, corn, herbs, etc.. Monies generated at our Veggie Sale will add to our year-end donations for ongoing projects at Mennonite Heritage Village.

Along with a few helping hands the ladies are pictured among rows of unearthed red potatoes—stopping for a drink of water and a well deserved rest.



Saturdays were special event days at the Village in July and August of this year. In addition to various other projects, it was a weekly opportunity for the Auxiliary to manage the outdoor sales at the Waffle Booth ‘Tis indeed a spot where visitors love to congregate—meeting



friends in the shade of the patio umbrellas while they savour those heart-shaped waffles smothered in Vanilla Sauce. Most were happy to “distance in line” while they watch the special treats being baked to a golden brown by the experienced cooks on the cast irons.

Using a treasured recipe passed on by the late Nellie Ginter, deep fried Rollkuchen were also a hit on weekends..... and that, thanks to several of our members who are quite adept at making those scrumptious fritters.

Due to continuing COVID19 restrictions, some of our earlier plans continue to be postponed. However, in keeping with Manitoba’s 150th celebrations, a delightful musical called “Pier 21” is still on the agenda. As well, we are hoping to feature a special Film Night sometime soon.

In the meantime, we are still sewing bib-aprons, quilting, cooking jams aand jellies, serving regular lunches at local Rotary Club meetings, etc.. Tune in to the MHV Website to learn of our current activities.

Following one of our recent business meetings, Elsie Kathler led us along a newly created Butterfly Path—a colorful array of flowers that line the steps leading up to the Windmill. The Path was planned to attract the winged beauties that look for a place to call home during our summers in Manitoba.

From there we walked over to the Dirk Willems Peace Gardens—a beautiful, serene setting by the pond, where a touching bronze monument invites reflections of love and peace.

And, Gary Dyck has just presented us with a new Wish List from the MHV Staff soooo, yes!!! after careful review, we’ll want to keep on keeping onraising funds and working for MHV!!!



DAY CAMP REFLECTION

BY LAUREL WOLFE, EDUCATION ASSISTANT



Caption: Laurel Wolfe, Education Assistant leading a group of campers in a printing press demonstration.
Credit: Joseph Plett

From creating online resources for classrooms to helping with manual labour on the museum grounds to interacting with children at day camp, summer 2021 at the Mennonite Heritage Village was one for the books. I learned something new almost every day about what goes on behind the scenes at a museum in preparation for the public. Specifically, being involved in the education department, I had the privilege of helping develop plans for the day camps. We had children as young as four join us for some weeks, and for our first ever Apprenticeship Week the age group included fourteen-year-olds.

Being involved with the Apprenticeship Camp all the way from the planning stages through to completion was a unique experience. Since it was something new to MHV, we were able to see exactly how ideas transferred from our imaginations into hands-on activities that the kids participated in. Along with that, it was remarkable to see the time and energy the volunteers gave to help us come up with those ideas and then actually work with the kids and

Continued on page 7

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VILLAGE BOOKS & GIFTS

BY NITA WIEBE, SHOPKEEPER AND RECEPTIONIST

Thriving in the Midst of Challenging Times

Summer 2021 was one for the history books! After a winter of preparation, we had become accustomed to the idea that plans are made but the possibility of plan 'B' or 'C' being needed was high. May 1st arrived and we welcomed guests back to the restaurant, the grounds and the outdoor village. Spirits were high and guests were enjoying being out. Then, one week after opening, in response to the 3rd wave of Covid 19, the Provincial regulations came into effect. We were closed! And our plans 'B' and 'C' rolled out...no Livery Barn Restaurant? We have take out and delivery. No Gallery opening? We have virtual tours.

But through it all, Village Books & Gifts, as a retail space, remained open. And our phone lines were busy as potential guests tried to figure out which parts of our complex were open, what was closed, what restrictions were in place? Part of our job at reception is to make people feel welcome and give them the information they need, to the best of our ability and I have to admit that some days were tough because we had to say "no" when we really wanted to say "yes".

Then came July and we were once again open for visitors, and they started to arrive. Vaccinated and from across Canada and Europe, people came. Curious to explore our Gerhard Ens Gallery, visitors stopped at Village Books & Gifts to peruse our section on 'Mennonites at War' books. And they were grateful to be out travelling, engaging in thoughtful conversation, and just enjoying the atmosphere here at the Village. Yes, they purchased the new comedic T shirts and the new windmill magnets but I was struck mostly by our visitor's generous spirits, even those we had to turn away due to the restrictions in place. Having heard stories of bad behaviour directed towards service people in other places, I was grateful too, for the mostly awesome visitors of

MHV in the summer of 2021, there was sense of understanding, and enjoyment exhibited.

We were able to enjoy our first Author's night in 2 years mid September and what a great evening we had! And we look forward to our Christmas Market and folks dropping in to shop our unique selection of books and gifts as the holidays approach. Hope to see you soon!



Caption: (L-R) Andrew Unger, Mark Reimer, Nita Wiebe, MaryLou Driedger taking part in the Author's Night in September.



WORKING TOGETHER CONT'

BY PATRICK FRIESEN, DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR



safety plan completely met guidelines in place to ensure as safe an event as possible. One of the requirements for the event was to always keep capacity under 1500 people. After some investigation we were able to find an application that would allow us to monitor capacity across multiple entrance/exits.

After cancelling all our big festival events in 2020 and most of 2021 we were finally preparing to welcome more people on our site. Saturday came and the people started to arrive. At first it was just a few, but by the afternoon we were humming along. A variety of cultural groups provided entertainment on the main stage next to the windmill. Meanwhile, the children's entertainment area was bustling with kids (and some of the adults) enjoying the entertainment, balloons, bouncy castles, and candy.

Sunday kicked off with a worship service featuring music by Rescue Story and sermon by Phil Callaway. The sunny weather and smell of waffles cooking on the outdoor irons was hard to resist and many stayed for a lunch of golden waffles and white sauce on Sunday. More music could be heard all afternoon coming from the main stage while horse wagons made numerous trips around the grounds showing visitors all the sites of the village. Our barrel train only stopped to reload passengers at it gave ride after ride to eager children and a few adults.

After a day of managing our capacity limits on Sunday we began Monday wondering if we would repeat attendance. The day kicked off by celebrating our delayed Canada Day festivities with speeches by dignitaries, music, flag-raising,

and Canada Day birthday cake. By 11:00am we had reached our capacity and a line-up had started to form outside the Village Centre. Everyone was patient and was able to enter and enjoy the many demonstrations, musical artists on the stage, children entertainment and all the good food.

Approximately 9000 people attended the festival throughout the entire weekend. The Summer in the City committee along with all our staff and volunteers worked tirelessly to make the weekend a great success. Since that weekend we have been asked several times whether we will do it again. While we are not sure what it will look like, we did learn that we can work well together and that the more that we can collaborate the better we can serve the local community. We are so grateful for all the people the worked to make this event possible and all the sponsors that helped to make it a free event for visitors.



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WEDDINGS AT MHV CONT'

BY JENNY FROESE, PRIVATE EVENTS COORDINATOR

sound system, complimentary grounds access for guest viewing and group photos, access to a prep kitchen, as well as all after hours fees.



Artistic Heritage buildings are also available, suitable for ceremonies, or other services. Heritage building and grounds rental fees are \$325 per location. Boasting 40 acres here at the Village, there are several spectacular locations throughout the grounds suitable for your special moment.

Have you been trying to find the perfect place for your dream wedding? Come see our beautiful venues with countless options. You won't be disappointed!!

Contact Jenny, MHV's Private Events Coordinator for any information regarding venues and events.

Email: jennyf@mhv.ca

Call: 204-326-9661 ext. 227

Event Testimonials

The guests loved the venue! The summer pavilion is beautiful, with large floor to ceiling windows to let in lots of light and can be opened right to the ceiling which was perfect for dancing inside and out. The guests so enjoyed touring the museum before and after the ceremony. The staff went over and above, answering emails, very accommodating. super friendly and fun to work with.

Jessica

Lots of beautiful buildings to use for pictures, a variety of places to choose for ceremony and reception. The food from the restaurant on site, Livery Barn was fantastic. We received so many comments on the venue and food because it was unique and lots of people never knew about it.

Elizabeth K.



MHV had decorated for Christmas. We took a peek, and it was perfect. We had a warm winter wonderland in their beautiful Auditorium. The reception room has vaulted wood beam ceilings. The caterers had lots of room to work. This venue is so special. If you're into a historical location with great summer photography options and a whole lot of character, you've found just the place.

Shelly P.

The venue is beautiful and perfect for photos. I would highly recommend it. It's totally worth every penny!

Ashley



DAY CAMP REFLECTION CONT'

BY LAUREL WOLFE, EDUCATION ASSISTANT

teach them skills that pioneers would have used on a regular basis. The apprenticeship campers made a dinner bell in the blacksmith forge, printed a word that they put together for the printing press, learned how to harness and drive horses, and became master embroiderers. While those are only several examples of what they were able to participate in, each week the campers also learned about Mennonite culture and history from interpreters in the original buildings on site.

At the very beginning of the summer, when we received the news that museums had to close and classrooms were not allowed to do field trips, my co-worker and I got hard at work developing interactive online games that teachers could use in school to encourage their students to take an interest in Mennonite history. By the time we had finished compiling these resources, it was near the end of the school year, so we received limited feedback. Nevertheless, this process showed me how to use information already available (such as the history preserved in the museum) and turn it into useful materials for other individuals and groups.

Special to the MHV is the work environment. All the other staff that I met and interacted with were incredibly friendly and welcoming. It was easy to talk to anyone and often laughter could

be heard echoing through the air as jobs were checked off our lists. Although co-workers were the people I most often found myself working alongside, volunteers also pulled a lot of weight by taking care of the gardens and implements found at the museum. Each volunteer had a story to tell of their connection to the museum and Mennonite culture and they loved sharing those anecdotes. Overall, the opportunity to be involved with the Mennonite Heritage Village was a blessing and gave me many useful tools for a potential future career in education.





THANK-YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

BY PATRICK FRIESEN, DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR



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