

h e a d l i n e s

The summer of '23

While the summer of 2023 has been marked by volatile weather and extreme heat across much of the nation, it's been a return to normal at Heritage Hall Museum & Archives. After three years of relatively few guests and activities because of concerns about Covid-19, the museum has enjoyed a steady stream of visitors this year.

It kicked off with more than 900 guests during Schmeckfest in March and it's continued in the months that followed. Individuals, families and groups have come to tour the museum, shop in the mercantile and do research in our archives. Most recently, more than 300 guests — including many families — spent time in our museum and historical buildings during the South Dakota Chislic Festival at the Prairie Arboretum on July 29.

Guest reactions have been over-



Heritage Hall Museum & Archives has welcomed frequent guests this summer.



New landscaping at the sign welcoming visitors this summer includes flowers that have been cared by Shirley Ries, one of our loyal volunteers.

whelmingly positive. They like the way artifacts are displayed, the improved lighting and how clean things are. They comment on how diverse and comprehensive the exhibits are.

The museum has welcomed guests ranging from a church group in Yankton to students from Orland Colony to the Freeman Academy Class of 1973 to members of SoDak Stamm. These groups all requested specific programs that explored various aspects of our shared history.

The summer of 2023 has also included projects that have bolstered our exhibits and “spruced up” the grounds, including planting flowers around our welcome sign, planting mulberry trees around some of our historical buildings and placing crushed rock around the perimeter of the museum and several historical buildings.

Development

The spring edition of Headlines noted the museum's participation in the American Alliance of Museums

Museum Assessment Program (MAP). From May into July, HHM&A Board President Marlan Kaufman, board members Brett Eisenbeis and Charles Schrag, and staff members Marnette (Ortman) Hofer, Terry Quam and Tim L. Waltner, met weekly online via Google Meet. Using a well-established process, the team explored the museum's mission, activities, programs, resources, governance and staffing by completing a workbook that is being evaluated by a museum professional.

Karrie Porter Brace, curator supervisor of The New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum in Las Cruces, is scheduled to visit HHM&A next month to tour the museum and meet with staff and leadership. The process will culminate with analysis and recommendations for programming, displays, policies, budget, governance and aspects unique to the museum.

Staffing

This summer brought good news

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Heritage Hall Museum & Archives

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The Director's Perspective

Whiplash: it's August. The summer season is winding down. County fairs are in full swing, teachers are getting ready to welcome students back to school, and some of us are pretty excited that cooler fall temperatures are just around the corner. Time marches on.

Although membership at HHM&A may not have been on your list of things to think about, I'd like to suggest that it should be.

Last August, we changed our membership structure so that instead of all memberships being due on January 1, they would last for an entire calendar year. If, for example, you renewed in August of last year, that date is noted on your Patron Passes and your membership is good through August of this year. While it is more "user-friendly," it does give **us** a bit more to keep track of.

So, some of you are receiving a membership renewal reminder letter with this issue of Headlines; just a gentle nudge to say that we value your ongoing support.

If you've already renewed this year, thank you. Our members – listed on the back page of this issue – are the bedrock of our work here; without you, we could not turn on our lights or open our doors. We are here because of you!

Too often we take the value of HHM&A for granted. In their comments, visitors have noted "top notch & informative," "a priceless treasure," "the Best in the West," and "the most remarkable small town museum I've ever visited!"

This is **your** museum. Help us continue to display this amazing collection, to tell the stories, and to maintain and care for all we've been entrusted with.

There are three basic membership levels. Those who go "above and beyond" are recognized as Sustaining Donors (contributions of \$250+). These people realize that to get things done, we need much more than basic memberships. They enable us to think big and develop a museum that is a place where guests can enjoy learning about the past while being challenged to live their lives with the same tenacity and determination that this community was built on.

On this page, we've shared several projects that are on our radar. We have more ideas and dreams, but this gives you an idea of where we'd like to go over the next year or so. But none of these things can happen without monetary support and individuals willing to give of their time, skills and expertise.

We invite you to consider how **you** can plug into our mission, either in person or from afar. We value each and every gift. Your support helps us move forward ... as time marches on.



Marnette D. (Ortman) Hofer
Executive Director/ Archivist

HHM&A projects

Heritage Hall Museum & Archives continues to explore ways to maintain and develop the buildings and grounds as we strengthen and expand our stories about the people and events that have shaped this community.

Some of the work continues to be done by staff and volunteers on an "as-needed" basis. But ultimately, the projects with the most impact are dependent on funding from grants and sustaining donations from members.

Here are six projects on the current "wish list."

- The Diamond Valley School needs to be renovated – inside and out – similar to the way the Deckert House was recently completed. That includes strengthening the stories about country schools throughout our community as part of a new exhibit.

- A security fence around the perimeter of our complex would add a layer of security and protection for the artifacts and buildings HHM&A has been entrusted with.

- Installing LED lights in the Kauffman Wing would provide better and more efficient light similar to what is now in the Unruh-Tieszen Wing.

- Renovating the archives/library with LED lights and fire-resistant walls, floor and ceiling would help protect the irreplaceable documents we have collected. It would also enable expanding storage and research space.

- The new color palette and new sign have dramatically changed the museum's exterior. That needs to continue; both the east and north sides remain the original yellow. There is also additional landscaping that needs to extend throughout the complex grounds.

- The Bethel and Johannesthal churches, Diamond Valley School and Deckert House lack uniform exterior signs identifying them and providing summary interpretation.

If you have an interest in any of these projects – or another project that you'd like to support – please contact the museum for more information.

Our Mission

is to preserve, educate and foster appreciation for the diverse natural and cultural history of the greater Freeman area, settled largely by Germans from Russia in the 1870s.

HERITAGE HALL
Museum
& ARCHIVES

PO Box 693 • 880 S Cedar St.
Freeman, SD 57029 • (605) 925-7545

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Marnette D. (Ortman) Hofer, executive director/archivist
Terry Quam, curator
Tim L. Waltner, communication/ education coordinator
Aundria Lankford, summer intern

The summer of '23 continued from front page

and bad news on the staffing front. The good news is that Aundria Lankford, a University of South Dakota student, is spending part of her summer as an intern at the museum. In addition to helping staff the museum – particularly on weekends – she has designed and activated an interactive kiosk for the Deckert House. She's been enthusiastic and willing to plug into a variety of projects; you'll find her observations about her time here below.

We also benefited from having two high school students, Kennedy Bechard, from Tea, and Estelle Waltner, from Freeman, helping fill part of the void created when our facilities manager, Brian Skinner left us in May to take a different job.

That's part of the bad news.

Brian's three years of service enabled us to make significant improvements at the museum. His absence – and the inability to attract a replacement – has delayed most of our facility improvement plans for the summer. While several members of the HHM&A Buildings and Grounds Committee are handling some of the immediate and pressing tasks, most of the facility projects have been delayed indefinitely.

Another disappointing development is the resignation of Terry Quam, who is leaving the museum at the end of August after seven years as curator. Terry has been key in cataloging and monitoring the status of our entire collection of artifacts. Her research and record-keeping have helped strengthen the professionalism of our museum.

You can read Terry's reflections in the article below.

While museum staff and volunteers are taking on some of Brian's and Terry's responsibilities, we are in desperate need of individuals who can join the staff in both positions – facilities manager and curator. These are paid and part-time positions. If you, or someone you know, has an interest in those posts, please contact the museum; stop in, call 605-925-7545 or email info@heritagehallmuseum.com.

This is also a reminder of just how important volunteers are to the museum. But what would be most valuable would be a volunteer who could help recruit, assign and assist volunteers in the wide range of opportunities and needs at the museum.

Goodbyes Terry Quam, curator for the past seven years, and Aundria Lankford, 2023 summer intern, are leaving HHM&A this month. Here are some of their reflections on their time at the museum.

Terry Quam

An item of interest from my time as curator has been learning the history of the area and the people. The museum has a wealth of information about the families that settled in this area. There are so many wonderful stories to share, making a person think about how much life has changed since pioneer times. People from all over come to visit the museum and they also have stories and memories to share.

The museum staff has worked on developing new exhibits and updating existing exhibits with signage, pictures and stories. Updating the Deckert House was time-consuming; many

hours were spent cataloging all of the artifacts, but it was rewarding.

The use of technology was a dream when I started at HHM&A and now we have wi-fi, QR codes, cameras and Promethean boards. I never dreamed that I would learn to clean taxidermy (fish, birds and other animals) but I did; the Natural World exhibit will be an asset for years to come.

Terry Quam, a retired school administrator from Menno, joined the HHM&A staff in 2017.

Aundria Lankford

Working as an intern this summer with the museum has given me some of my favorite memories since moving to South Dakota three years ago. When I arrived at the museum, I had no idea what exactly I would be doing. But now as the end of summer approaches, I feel like I have become a part of a new community and I am leaving behind a piece of myself in the museum, with the projects I have worked on, such as the interactive kiosk in the Deckert House. I'm also taking with me a new appreciation for the work that goes

into keeping history alive. I loved how the museum was always looking for new ways to improve and tell the story of the Freeman community. I hope to continue to come to the museum as a guest and volunteer when I can continue to contribute to what I believe to be one of the most interesting places in South Dakota.

Aundria Lankford (25) is a student at USD majoring in German and completing minors in Russian and International Studies. She will graduate in May and hopes to either complete a graduate degree focusing of global communication or find a job focusing on collaboration between nations.



Terry Quam is retiring as curator at the end of August after seven years at HHM&A.



Aundria Lankford, joined HHM&A as a summer intern from mid-May to mid August.

h e a d l i n e s

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January-July 2023

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We value your ongoing support through your memberships, donations and volunteer time. Your contributions enable us to continue and expand our mission of sharing our community's history.

We offer three basic membership levels and nine sustaining donation levels; please indicate your choices.

Thank you for your support.

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