

h e a d l i n e s

HHM&A receives MAP report

“Heritage Hall Museum & Archives is a remarkable small institution.”

That’s the opening line of the summary report from the Museum Assessment Program (MAP) following a 2023 self-study and a site visit from an expert peer reviewer.

HHM&A was one of about 75 museums chosen to participate in the nationwide American Alliance of Museums (AAM) program. The organizational assessment helped the museum leadership and staff gain insight into its program, governance and mission, and to identify priorities and strategies. A team of staff and several board members met weekly in the first half of 2023. In September, Karrie Porter Brace, a museum professional from New Mexico, came to Freeman for a three-day site visit.

The report focuses on both strengths and weaknesses that the board and staff will be exploring in detail in the



weeks and months ahead.

While the report is affirming of the museum’s program, it also addresses a wide range of issues to pursue in order to strengthen its mission. “Their greatest challenges,” the report says, “are addressing their fiduciary responsibility and inadequate staffing.”

“As a fledgling independent organization, the participation in MAP provided us a mirror of how museums organize and operate effectively and professionally,” says Marlan Kaufman,

who was president of the HHM&A Board and a participant in the weekly MAP meetings. “Suggestions for directing the focus and activities of the board are particularly important to the future success of Heritage Hall Museum & Archives.”

The report includes several key recommendations, including:

- Support, guide, and train the HHM&A governing board so that they may provide necessary fiduciary

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Museum gearing up for Schmeckfest

Heritage Hall Museum & Archives is planning for Schmeckfest 2024 guests and is using last year as a model.

“We enjoyed the return of Schmeckfest last year after a three-year hiatus due to Covid-19,” said HHM&A Executive Director and Archivist Marnette (Ortman) Hofer. “The influx of more than 900 guests during the two-day event last March was a reminder of people’s interest in the traditions and heritage we share.”

The museum will open at 10 a.m. and remain open until 7 p.m. on

March 15 and 16, with special programming beginning at 1 p.m. While details are still being finalized, that will include a full slate of demonstrations and programs. It includes acknowledging the 150th anniversary of the arrival of immigrant groups in what became the greater Freeman area, including the Lutheran, Mennonite, Hutterite and Reformed communities.

“From traditional craft demonstrations to programs about our local history to our always-popular Heritage Pickers, who offer 10-minute descrip-

tions about selected artifacts, we’ve got something for everyone,” she said. All demonstrations and programs are included with museum admission.

And, like last year, the museum is extending its regular admission to both days with wristbands that will enable Schmeckfest guests to come and go both Friday and Saturday. That includes the \$20 family pass for parents and children (through grades 12).

A detailed schedule will be published in the Freeman Courier and posted online at heritagehallmuseum.com.

Heritage Hall Museum & Archives

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Celebrating new beginnings MAP continued from front page

We're in a new year and a time for new beginnings.

January marked the start of a new year for our HHM&A Board (listed below) and we are happy to welcome Rod Janzen to the group. Rod was my history teacher many years ago at Freeman Junior College and Freeman Academy, and I like to blame (or credit) him for getting me hooked on history.

In the months ahead, Rod and the rest of the board will be delving into our final report from the Museum Assessment Program. Participating in MAP was one of the opportunities open to us when we became an independent 501(c)(3) in 2021. The 28-page MAP report is full of kudos and concerns, and now the work begins as we dissect the details and translate them into action.

The past few months have also marked new beginnings amongst our staff, and we are happy to report that we have a new facilities manager! Joe Dennis recently joined our team to fill the position left vacant last May.

One of the main people who helped us keep things moving forward last year until a new facilities manager was hired was Donovan Friesen, who recently completed his last term on the HHM&A Board. We've appreciated Donovan's upbeat attitude and his willingness to tackle just about anything.

Donovan plans to continue to volunteer at the museum as chair of the buildings and grounds committee. If you are interested in joining him or being a part of any of our other committees – collections management, development, finance, governance or programs – let's talk. Thanks to technology, our committees can - and do - include members from a distance. Or, if you'd like to join our list of volunteers who help out now and then, give me a call. There are always a myriad of projects and possibilities that we would love to have assistance with.

And in just one month, we hope you can come visit the museum during the annual Schmeckfest activities held next door at Freeman Academy. We're excited to share with all our guests the many changes in the museum over the past year!

This year, we will mark 150 years since the wave of Germans-from-Russia immigrants began making their homes in the greater Freeman community. They came seeking new beginnings and new opportunities.

Their commitment and perseverance are an inspiring model in our own new beginnings and new opportunities, as we continue our mission to celebrate and share their stories.



Director's View
Marnette D. (Ortman) Hofer
Executive Director/ Archivist

resources and ethical leadership.

- Increase personnel resources, retaining the staff in full-time positions to focus on institutional needs, collections management, and programs.
- Work with local leaders and community development organizations in southeastern South Dakota to determine how HHM&A could better meet the needs of its residents, improve its relevance as a regional cultural venue, make cultural resources more recognizable, and attract more tourism.

Arrival on the Prairie Gallery being updated

Museum visitors this spring will discover a new look in the Arrival on the Prairie Gallery. A renovation project began last December when HHM&A Board Member Viki Graber spent a week as a volunteer, painting the walls in the room and making changes to the display cases. In the weeks that followed, staff – with assistance from other volunteers including Teresa Dick, Donovan Friesen, Janice Graber, Dan Haggerty and Solomon Ortman – have continued the project.

The improvements will continue into the summer, bolstering the exhibits that tell the story of the arrival of the immigrants in the 1870s. It includes a section featuring the Hutterites who were part of that migration. And, it will continue to include the history of the American Indian tribes who lived here prior to that.

"It seemed appropriate to make some of these changes in conjunction with this year's 150th anniversary of the start of the wave of Germans-from-Russia immigration to Dakota Territory," says Tim L. Waltner, communication and education coordinator at the museum. "We're adding new artifacts and display elements to the gallery to enhance our storytelling."

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
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HHM&A welcomes trees at Bethel Church

In November, the museum invited the community to help decorate the inside of the Bethel Church. The staff hung garland and old-fashioned white lights on the wrap-around balcony and put up a Christmas tree on the stage; it included vintage decorations.

The perimeter of the sanctuary was opened up to accommodate the 12 trees from local families, businesses and organizations that literally surrounded the church with color and light. The church was open during regular hours and also open free to the public on the first three Saturdays of December.

A community carol sing-along, led by Jeanne Carter and accompanists Heather Haggerty and Mary Waltner, was held on Dec. 2.

Residents of Freeman Regional



A Dec. 2 community carol-sing held at the Bethel Church.

Assisted Living (formerly the Salem Home) came for their own carol sing-along on December 12.

The 12 trees reflected the themes and interests of the sponsors. While not a competition, the museum invited guests to weigh in on a people's choice award. That went to Kevin Albrecht and his mother, Betty (Graber); their

tree had the distinction of being the oldest. The feather tree came from the Harry and Tillie (Preheim) Graber family and is the first tree that Betty, their daughter, remembers. The tree was decorated in the circa 1940's style of its era, including a number of original ornaments and candles.

Our 2023 tree sponsors were: Betty/Kevin Albrecht Family, CorTrust Bank, Et Cetera Shoppe, Fensel's Greenhouse, Freeman Academy, Freeman Courier, Freeman Dental Center, Freeman Shopping Center/Ace Hardware, Chantel and Stewart Hofer, Russell and MarJean Waltner, University of South Dakota and Vision Care Associates.

The project, which was supported by the HHM&A Program Committee, was deemed a success and plans are to repeat it in 2024.

Mutter knows best (maybe?)

It seems like it's been a long winter, doesn't it? Do you feel like you've been swimming in a cesspool of germs? Treading your way through a sea of viruses and bacteria? Is your medicine cabinet overflowing with a variety of modern-day potions?

Well, I'm here to offer you some alternatives based on a framed display of home remedies from museum storage titled "Mutter's House Mittel" (Mother's Home Remedies). The date of it is unclear, but it contains "turn of the century medicine as practiced in the Freeman community" and was compiled and donated by Verlyn Waltner. It lists a wide array of ailments and accompanying treatments made of commonly found items like tallow, beets and beeswax, and area plants such as tansy, peppermint and yarrow.

Please note my medical expertise is limited to what Google tells me and I've been known to get lightheaded at the dentist, so experiment at your own risk. Perhaps you'll find some relief, or you may decide that the cure is worse

than what's ailing you. At the very least, you will have discovered new uses for onions, and people may keep their germier selves away from you due to the smell...

For common coughs and colds

- Mix honey with cut-up onions. Let stand and drink the juice. Chew coffee granules to get rid of the onion taste.
- Gargle with kerosene in water for a sore throat.
- Rub throat with lard and wrap a woolen sock around the neck.
- Drink juice of vinegar, honey, chopped onions and garlic.

For sores or infections

- Put fresh cow manure over the infected sore and wrap. Good for a rusty nail.
- Take sheep wool, burn it, and let smoke go over the infected area.
- Bake onion until soft and put on sore.

Eye issues

- Apply warm urine.
- Use a teaspoonful of milk in a little melted butter and wash eyes when

they are glued together in the morning.

- For inflamed sores, make a poultice of finely scraped raw potato and apply to the eyes before going to bed.

Earache

- Drop warm lard into ear.
- Blow cigar smoke into ears.

For boils

- Throw onions in hot coals, cut in half, mix with ashes and put on boil to draw.
- Boil white bread and milk and use as a poultice.

Happy experimenting! Oh, and the next time you have the hiccups, drink water and think of a person who is lying.



Curator's Corner
Heather Haggerty, Curator

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