

h e a d l i n e s

Museum extends engagement

As 2024 draws to a close, a consistent theme is emerging: engagement.

Of course, Heritage Hall Museum & Archives welcomes guests who tour the museum, explore the exhibits and visit our historical buildings. Those visits invariably spark memories and engage conversations about childhood, grandparents and historical reflections.

But this year has also offered unique experiences that go beyond those visits. Obvious examples are activities launched as part of Schmeckfest and the South Dakota Chislic Festival.

But visits from school groups in May also engaged students as they learned to make ropes, print words on paper in the print shop and answer 20 questions about artifacts in our exhibit halls.

In June HHM&A collaborated with Freeman Public Library in a hands-on summer program about geodes.

Joining the Harvest Hosts program brought new opportunities to engage with guests who also made our parking lot their overnight destination.

A series of Sunday afternoon programs in summer featured panelists who shared details of the immigration wave that began 150 years ago and built up the larger community. A presentation by the Mueller sisters, Joan and Lisa, shared details about their historical novel "Katy," and their research,



Sec. David Flute, secretary with the office of South Dakota Department of Tribal Relations, reads the book "The Medicine Quilt" to Freeman Academy elementary students in the Arrival on the Prairie Gallery at Heritage Hall Museum & Archives Oct. 18.

which included time in our archives.

Engagement continued in September with a program by *Freeman Courier* publisher Jeremy Waltner who explained how and why the city of Freeman grew to the southeast from the depot.

HHM&A staff was asked to present a program for the two Swiss Mennonite Churches (North and South) whose shared history goes back to the 1870s migration from Russia.

Freeman Public School junior Thor Aanenson has an internship with the museum. He spends an hour each school day at the museum. His research will update the exhibit of rocks and fossils in our Natural World Gallery. Incidentally, the Freeman Community Foundation recently awarded him and the museum a \$2,000 grant

for that project.

But one of the most exciting collaborations was with the Indigenous Peoples' Celebration that Freeman Academy hosted on Oct. 18 featuring a presentation by South Dakota Department of Tribal Relations Secretary David Flute and singers and dancers from the Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe. About 700 people, mostly elementary and high school students from five area schools, attended the program that was also open to the public.

While the museum was not a sponsor, Karla Rupp, who leads Freeman Academy's first- and second-grade classroom, included the museum in the project. She and Nick Schrag, who teaches grades three and four, brought their students to the museum before the event to explore the American Indian artifacts on display in the Arrival on the Prairie Gallery. Their goal was to become more familiar with the culture through the museum. Rupp asked the museum to host a post-celebration gathering so the FA students could engage with Sec. Flute following the public program.

Sec. Flute read to students in grades 1-4 the children's book "The Medicine Quilt," by Margaret Doom, an author from Wagner. The book was inspired by the true story of the Freeman Network for Justice and Peace and Wagner

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Heritage Hall Museum & Archives

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'Wow! I had no idea'

This is the time of year when we pause to reflect on all that has happened and thank everyone who has been a part of our journey. It's been a busy year!

According to our guest book, we've had visitors from over 70 South Dakota communities, all but 15 U.S. states, and at least six foreign countries.

When guests return to our lobby, it's always fun to hear their reaction to what they've seen. By far, the most common sentiment we hear is, "Wow! I had no idea..."

Being part of the Harvest Hosts program (welcoming self-contained RVers) has been especially rewarding. Here is one guest's review: "This is an incredible Harvest Host and is much more than an overnight stop, this is a destination unto itself. Were it not for the Harvest Host program I may never have visited here and I would definitely be the poorer for it. The museum is truly a gem, impeccably clean, archived, and arranged... a joy to lose track of time and take in all that there is. We definitely enjoyed our stay here, touring the Museum each day and strolling through the Arboretum next door for hours as well. We look forward to returning here in the future."

Comments like these make all our hard work worthwhile! This year, we've hosted some incredible community programs, learned a lot, and had plenty of fun (see Heather's column for proof!). Coming up, we will transform the Bethel Church into a winter wonderland of Christmas trees.

Still, running a museum is not easy, and we cannot do this without your help. Last year, our insurance costs doubled – our thanks to those who stepped up to help us pay that bill. All of our historical buildings are over 100 years old. They need special care, paint, repairs and monitoring. There are many projects inside that need to be tackled as well. And while our goal is to make our programs available online, we are facing challenges finalizing the videos with few resources.

But while challenges remain, our amazing guests, their heartfelt appreciation, and the growing excitement for our programs show we're on the right path. Help us keep the momentum going!

Whether you're a long-time supporter or someone who just recently discovered us, we invite you to consider joining the cause. Your gift – whether it's a one-time donation, a membership renewal, or a special end-of-year contribution – ensures we can continue to grow and thrive in 2025.

Thank you for being a part of this journey, as we work to preserve and celebrate the amazing history of this region.



Director's View

Marnette D. (Ortman) Hofer
Executive Director/Archivist

Decorated trees return to Bethel Church

For the second year, Heritage Hall Museum & Archives has invited businesses, organizations and families to sponsor decorated trees for "Christmas at the Bethel Church." They will be displayed starting the day after Thanksgiving and continue through December.

A Christmas Carol Sing-Along has been scheduled at the church on Saturday afternoon, Dec. 7 starting at 2 p.m. The church will be open free to the public from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. that day. Light refreshments will be served.

The museum is also extending its regular hours – noon to 4 weekdays – to include Saturdays, December 14 and 21, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., to give additional opportunity to tour the museum and the Bethel Church and explore the HHM&A Mercantile, which features items created by local artisans. You'll find details in the full-page insert in this issue.

HHM&A is also making the Bethel Church available to any organization, business, family or church group as a venue for their special programs during the holiday season. To learn more call 605-925-7545.

Schwendeman joins museum staff

Chris Schwendeman joined the HHM&A staff as facilities manager in mid-November.

"Chris brings a variety of skills, a knack for seeing what needs to get done, and a willingness to plug in wherever he can,"

said Marnette D. (Ortman) Hofer, HHM&A executive director. "We're pleased to welcome him to our team."

"I'm really looking forward to learning more about Freeman and being part of the museum, and the Freeman community," Schwendeman said.



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

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Tim L. Waltner, communication/education coordinator

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Engagement continued from front page

Horizons. Sec. Flute also met with Freeman Academy's high school government students and explained more about the Department of Tribal Relations, and answered questions from both groups.

"It was a really good day," Sec. Flute told the *Freeman Courier* following the museum visit. "These kids had some really good insight and a lot of questions, and — again — that brings me hope that these presentations will open and expand a young person's mind to want to learn more, not just about Indian people, but about everybody in their community."

Rupp told the *Courier* the activities on Oct. 18 "touched peoples' hearts in ways that I never expected."

The museum took a much lighter approach on Nov. 1 when it hosted children – and several adults – seeking 16 miniature skeletons scattered throughout the exhibits as a unique fun way to explore the museum. You



Bobby Johnson, Jerome Kills Small and Rose Bazemore shared Native perspectives and stories in their Nov. 10 "Sunday afternoon visit," sponsored by HHM&A at the Freeman Community Center.

can learn more about that in the story below.

Most recently, engagement was on display with a Nov. 10 program the museum sponsored at the Freeman Community Center.

Titled "150 Years; A Native Perspective," it featured Bobby Johnson, a Lakota traditions teacher at Roosevelt High School in Sioux Falls; Jerome Kills Small, a Lakota elder from Pine Ridge; and Rose Bazemore, a Dakota activist and speaker from Vermillion, who facilitated the conversation.

Bazemore described the gathering as a Sunday afternoon visit.

"There was a time in this community when Sunday afternoons, people

would go to other people's houses just to visit," she said. "The good thing about visitation is that there's no (expectation for) action."

In their "Sunday afternoon visit," lasting nearly two hours, Bazemore, Johnson and Kills Small shared personal stories that reflected their history, their perspectives and their values.

"As we tell our stories, we cross the lines of boundaries of race; boundaries of religion," Bazemore said. "None of that matters as we tell our personal stories, as we open our hearts. To be human is to be a storyteller. Our storytelling becomes vital to our relationships and our well-being."

continued on next page

When work isn't work

Some days at the museum are more eventful than others—greeting guests and shoppers is always interesting, entering new artifact data into the collections management software, not so much.

And then sometimes something comes along that sparks the creative mind and expression and becomes just plain fun. Since last year, we've talked about the possibility of a "Night at the Museum" type event around Halloween, and while I can't take credit for the idea of the Bare Bones Skeleton Hunt we hosted on November 1, I did get the pleasure of planning where all the skeletons would be hidden and pretty soon they all had taken on personas. The skeleton sitting on the foot model in the doctor's office? Why



Curator's Corner
Heather Haggerty, Curator

that was Count Scapula of course, complete with a Barbie-size stethoscope and medical bag. Climbing up a ladder to carefully place Amelia Scarehart (donning a knitted aviator

cap and scarf) on the wing of the biplane gave me a new birds-eye view of the Unruh-Tieszen wing—there are so many things in there! Various large, creepy dolls also came out of storage to make an appearance; Dora may or may not still be floating around out there...

So while I had fun, it was sheer delight to welcome young visitors (many of them here for the first time and some in costume!) and listen to their voices echo in the museum as they searched and found the 16 skeletons. As we look to engage more with the community in the next year, I can assure you that there are lots more ideas floating around for this event next year! More human assistance (and creepy dolls) are very welcome!

"I loved Rose's comments about the power of storytelling," said Marnette D. (Ortman) Hofer, executive director and archivist at HHM&A.

"The stories that Rose, Bobby and Je-

rome shared gave us new insights and understanding of their culture. Stories have the power to connect all of us in a personal, real and meaningful way that can bring us together, despite any

differences we might have.

"And sharing the stories of this region is what we strive to do here at the museum every day," Hofer said.

Thank You

To Our Most Recent Heritage Hall Museum & Archives Members

August-October 2024

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Keith Hofer & Joann Smith, Marion
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All members receive:

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- Half-price admission for children
- Reduced admission for events
- "Headlines" quarterly newsletter
- 10% HHM&A Mercantile discount

We acknowledge memberships at the Bronze Level (\$250) and larger as tax-deductible donations.

We've included a remittance envelope with this newsletter for your convenience when mailing your year-end HHM&A membership/donation.

Memberships are good for 12 months.

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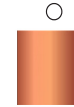
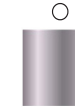


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All members receive benefits including annual admission to the museum:

Homesteader: 1 pass; Shopkeeper: 2 passes; Conductor: 4 passes; Bronze-Platinum: 6 passes



HERITAGE HALL *Museum* & ARCHIVES

November 2024

Dear museum members and supporters,

As we watch crops being harvested, leaves falling from the trees, and the days getting shorter, it is a time for reflection on the past year and anticipation of what might come next. It has been a wonderful year for the museum. There have been artifacts added to displays as well as exhibits updated to maintain the highest quality of historical authenticity. The Natural World Gallery, with our mosasaurus taking center stage, is continuing to be revamped.

It was a summer and fall of entertaining and informative programming centering on the 150th anniversary of the Germans from Russia coming to the area. Other programs included the early history of Freeman and the surrounding area and seeing the immigration from the viewpoint of the Native people who were here centuries before the white immigrants.

It is especially heartwarming to see the school children visiting the museum, hearing their excitement, and seeing their eyes widen as they experience activities of their grandparents and great-grandparents. The rope-making activity is especially popular. The museum's first ever "Skeleton Hunt" was held this year. Children received trick-or-treat candy, and admission to the hunt was a donation to the Bethany Food Pantry.

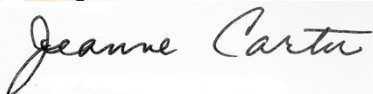
There have been Harvest Host members who have used the parking lot to spend a night or two in their campers. All of them have been amazed at the wonderful museum and have said they will spread the word. And the word is spreading. Museum visitors come from all over the country and the world. We have something incredibly special in this tucked away part of our state.

In December, the museum will host the second Christmas tree display. Individuals and businesses will decorate Christmas trees that will be displayed in the Bethel Church. Last year the display created a magical holiday experience for young and old. There will also be a community carol sing. Last year the audience raised the roof with their joyous singing.

Besides the artifacts, historical buildings, and programs, the other important part of the museum's success is the professional staff. Marnette, Tim, and Heather dedicate hours each week to create a welcoming, educational, and authentic museum experience for visitors. However, there is still another part to the museum's success. It is you, museum members and supporters, who give the museum the dollars to continue telling the story of southeastern South Dakota to present and future generations. Thank you for caring about the stories and lives of the past, taking care of the museum's present needs, and enriching museum experiences for future generations.

All donations are tax-deductible. Every donation, no matter the size, helps the museum continue its mission. Thank you for being a partner with the museum as it continues to grow, enrich, and educate. Consider being a Legacy Donor through a planned gift to the museum. We recommend you consult with your attorney or financial advisor if this is a possibility for you.

With gratitude and thanks,



Jeanne Carter, HHM&A Board Chair

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In addition to our regular hours from
12 to 4 Monday-Friday, we will be open

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Dec. 7, 14 and 21

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