

h e a d l i n e s

To the HHM&A community:

Thank you for letting me join you this summer! I had a blast diving into the Freeman, S.D. story.

This summer was a busy one at the museum as a variety of events and groups came through in addition to the bustle of daily operations. We kicked off the one-room schoolhouse series with the opening of a temporary exhibit and held two in-person programs. The library brought kids, we hosted the International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors for a day and Chislic Fest happened next door. Shout out to the incredible

staff, museum board, volunteers and members who make busy times like this possible!

As the intern, I spent this summer helping with the daily operations and researching and developing the interpretive text in different areas of the museum. Some of these spots include schools in Freeman (with a particular focus on Hutchinson County District 56 Diamond Valley and the Sunnyside Bible schools), railways and grain elevators and the evolution of farming in the region. I hope to also do something with natural disasters in the Natural World gallery before I leave, but my time at HHM&A is quickly coming to a close.

I have been lucky enough to have worked at a variety of museums both big and small. Besides the sheer di-



Intern Becky Hupp in one of her favorite places in HHM&A, the Unruh-Tieszen Wing.

versity of its collections, HHM&A is different from the others I've been at in another way—and one that I argue is the most important piece to any organization. The supportive and passionate membership of the HHM&A community is unlike any I have seen before. It is the type of network museum professionals work tirelessly to grow and maintain, and it is one of the main things that allows HHM&A to be the golden nugget between cornfields that it is.

Every member I have had the chance to interact with has been curious and excited about the stories, mission and developments happening in the museum. They are excited about the excellent and hard work the staff have put into telling the complex and diverse history of the Freeman area in a way

*Reflections from
HHM&A Intern Becky Hupp*

that is engaging yet thorough. The staff are able to continue making HHM&A an even more exciting place because of the outpouring of community support the museum receives.

Museums, and more generally the field of history, are being scoffed at as their functionality and their purpose in society are questioned. Exploring the past not only provides the background and foundations on which our present and future are building but it also encourages our natural curiosity and thought. Recalling and reflecting on the events of

the past is an act that every culture and people across the world engage in.

History is a beautiful, complex and layered drama with no set ending. Like life, it is not all good or all bad. History's stories are humorous and tragic; gleeful and angering; satisfying and uncomfortable. We are drawn to the stories of the past because they speak to us and connect us to others in ways nothing else can. Museums provide visitors the opportunity to learn about not only their own history but the history of their neighbors, which helps us build a more compassionate and caring community for the next generation.

As a lifetime lover and a researcher of history, I have very strong opinions on why exploring the past is vital to our own personal growth as people

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Unique, worthwhile days

I enjoy coming to work each day.

No two days are ever the same – and rarely what I expect! Sometimes that's frustrating (my to-do list seldom shrinks), but interactions with our guests, volunteers and staff make every day unique and meaningful.

This summer, we were fortunate to have Becky Hupp join us as an intern. I'm confident she'll go on to do great things, but (selfishly!) I hope she stays connected with us. She's been a wonderful asset. We're also glad to welcome back Chris Schwendeman to his role as facilities manager. It feels good to have our staff team complete once again.

But this is a large collection on a sprawling complex, and no matter how capable or dedicated our staff may be, we can't do it all. Our volunteers are essential. We're grateful for every moment they give. From our high school volunteers to those in their 90s, they bring energy, insight and dedication that are invaluable to our work.

And then there are our guests. Most are first-time visitors, often stopping on a whim as they travel through the area. Thus far in 2025, we've had guests from 39 states and 10 foreign countries... and counting!

We've welcomed families of all ages, and they often leave with big smiles. Almost all express surprise about what they find. One of my favorite recent comments: "That was the most amazing museum we have been to!" Some people are surprised to discover personal ties to the area and are thrilled to dig deeper in our archives library. Our "20 Questions" activity engages kids of all ages, and there are hands-on experiences scattered throughout the museum. It's always fun to see families or friends taking each other's photos in the old Model T in our gas station, behind the counter in the general store, and even inside the jail!

Guests with questions are happy to find answers. Like the couple from Arizona curious how corn is harvested. Or the gal from Washington who had heard stories about badgers and was excited to see one in our Natural World gallery. Descendants of Germans from Russia often study our house-barn model and enjoy stepping into the Ludwig Deckert pioneer home, as they imagine the lives and homes of their ancestors. Researchers spend hours poring over books, documents, maps and photos in our archives, finding bits and pieces that help bring their own histories to life.

The curiosity and enthusiasm of our guests makes our work worthwhile. Thank you all for your continued support – and for making my job such a joy!

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.



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

info@heritagehallmuseum.com • www.heritagehallmuseum.com

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Director's View

*Marnette D. (Ortman) Hofer
Executive Director/Archivist*

HHM&A 'school days' continue

The museum's focus on one-room schools that began in June continues.

On Sept. 28, a program starting at 2 p.m. at the Bethel Church, will feature recollections of one-room school days by teachers, students and patrons.

A Nov. 9 program at the Freeman Community Center starting at 2 p.m., will be a fun, interactive exercise based on the curriculum from one-room country schools.

Modeled after the "Are You Smarter Than a Fifth Grader?" television game show, the program will include competition involving local teachers, students and business people.

Then in December, although the museum is not sponsoring the event, the museum is serving as a resource for Freeman Academy staff and elementary students who will be recreating the classic one-room country school Christmas program on Thursday evening, Dec. 4.

The school theme will continue into 2026; watch for more details.



HHM&A planning volunteer, member event Oct. 26

On Sunday, Oct. 26, Heritage Hall Museum & Archives is hosting a Volunteer and Member Appreciation Event.

The museum doesn't function without our volunteers and members, so we want to have a party to let you know how much you are appreciated. There will be interactive activities, a short program, and apple pie ala mode. More information will be coming soon.

We hope to see you at our fall appreciation event!

and as a society.

But, what I think matters more to share are the words of the people who have come into HHM&A on the topic. Visitors express their worries about the loss of knowledge about different cultures and local events, as museums and history come under fire. They then share their appreciation for the work

HHM&A does in telling the story of the local area and the large array of objects on display. Guests have told me how museums like HHM&A bring history to life and help connect them to their families' experiences and their communities, and how they hope local stories like the ones told at the museum remain for generations to come.

Becky Hupp joined the staff at HHM&A as a summer intern in May 2025. She will continue working at the museum through mid-August when she resumes her post-graduate studies at the University of South Dakota. She is pursuing a Master of Arts in history with a certificate in museum studies.

Becky, who grew up in a farming family in O'Neill, Neb., developed an interest in and appreciation for history at an early age, but a trip to Washington, DC, where she visited the National Holocaust Remembrance Museum and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History Smithsonian as a high school sophomore, propelled her to pursue a career in history.

"I knew I wanted to help tell people's

stories," she says.

Becky graduated from Peru (Neb.) State College in 2024 with a Bachelor of Science in history and a certificate in public history. She enrolled in the graduate program in Vermillion a year ago, pursuing her research interest in women's roles in Great Plains agriculture, and public history.

Becky learned of HHM&A and the possibility of an internship through Dr. Nathan Bates' Introduction to German class. She joined other students in visiting the museum during the 2025 Schmeckfest. And although it was only her first visit, she applied for the internship by the time she left.

"It was the biggest small museum that tells a local story," she says. "When

Let us lovers of history make sure the next generation has access to these stories of real people who lived in extraordinary times by continuing to support our local museums, archives and libraries.

I have greatly enjoyed my time at HHM&A and cannot wait to see what the staff comes up with next.

I saw the Unruh-Tieszen Wing, I knew I wanted to be here."

Becky also has an interest in one-room schools, which fit perfectly into the museum's focus for the year; her grandmother taught in rural schools for more than 50 years. And, during an internship in 2022, she worked at Homestead National Historical Park in Beatrice, Neb., where she gave "Ranger Talks" in a one-room school.

Becky has plugged into HHM&A in a variety of ways – from research to welcoming guests to assisting with exhibits to presenting public programs.

We are pleased to share Becky's observations and perspectives about her time here with our HHM&A friends and members.

Who's got the button?

A recent office conversation about a jar of buttons, how country school teachers might have used them, and the classic children's hide-the-button game reminded me of a chapter book I once read in which the granddaughter would dig through and pull a button out of her grandma's button basket and then listen as grandma recounted the story behind that button.

In the museum there is a popular (and large – 4x8 feet!) two-sided display of old buttons collected and donated by Ella Preheim, her brother Harry and his wife, Ada, with thousands of buttons carefully mounted by shape, materials or theme. A further search in storage unearthed multiple containers of vintage buttons of every color and size.

Buttons date back to the Bronze Age and were believed to have been decora-



Curator's Corner

Heather Haggerty, Curator

tive rather than functional. Ornate buttons of gold and diamonds appeared in France in the 13th century and only royalty were allowed to have them.

Early buttons were made of available materials like bone or wood and evolved to everything from pearl to metal to glass. In the Industrial Revo-

lution, buttons became mass produced and in 1909, plastic was invented and buttons could be cheaply made and distributed. Yes, they were affordable and accessible to everyone, but they no longer were tiny works of art. Every household had a button jar or box to collect buttons that had lost their clothing; if only they could tell the stories of where they'd been!

Novelty buttons were a big thing in the early 20th century, especially ones with pictures hand painted or printed on them, or buttons in the unique shapes of fruits, flowers, animals, and objects. People began collecting them and still do today – 38 states have button societies and museums (like ours) display them.

So the next time you find a lonely button on the floor, pick it up and start your own collection!

Perspective from HHM&A Board Chair Jeanne Carter

It's been a busy summer at HHM&A

It is August already. I look forward to summer every year thinking of long days, family get-togethers, and all the other summer experiences we love. It would be wonderful if time would slow down so those good times could be savored a bit longer. But time just seems to speed up and now fall is right around the corner.

It has been a busy summer at the museum. The Chislic Festival always brings additional visitors to the mu-

seum and this year was no exception. There have also been several Harvest Host guests parking their RVs in the museum lot, taking in the sights of Freeman as well as visiting the museum. Programming this summer and into the fall is highlighting one-room schools. Be sure to check the website for the program schedule.

All the museum guests with whom I spoke this summer were amazed by our wonderful museum. Exhibits,

organization, variety, cleanliness and lighting are among the things they talk about. The museum staff and volunteers are to be thanked and congratulated for their dedication and excellent work.

Member support enables the museum to continue serving the Freeman area and beyond. Your gifts are what keep the lights on, enable meaningful programming and maintain the excellence this museum strives to uphold.

Thank You

To Our Most Recent Heritage Hall Museum & Archives Members

May-July 2025

Gold (\$1,000-\$2,499)

Bob & Lois Haar, Yankton
Owen & Allyson Hofer, Huntsville, Ala.
Merchants State Bank, Freeman
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Keith & Sharon Waltner, Freeman
David & Rachel Winters, Tulsa, Okla.

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Gifts in Memory/Honor of:

Clinton Bauer by Darlene Bauer, Freeman
Marian Gering by Brad & Marian Gering, Freeman, and Lucille Gering, Mishawaka, Ind.
Lynn Hofer by Barbie Hofer, Bridgewater, and Ellen Ortman, Marion
Tim L & Mary Waltner by Deborah Givens, Morgantown, Kent.



880 S. Cedar, Freeman, S.D.

All Members Receive:

- 12-month museum admission
- 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-deductable donations.

A gift in your will or estate plan ensures HHM&A continues to inspire future generations. Your legacy will help preserve our shared history. To learn more about leaving a lasting impact, we'd be honored to speak with you.

Heritage Hall Museum & Archives Membership

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Newsletter Preference: Paper edition Digital edition Both Digital/Paper editions

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\$30



SHOPKEEPER

\$50



CONDUCTOR

\$100



BRONZE

\$250



SILVER

\$500



GOLD

\$1,000



PLATINUM

\$2,500

All members receive benefits including annual admission to the museum:

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

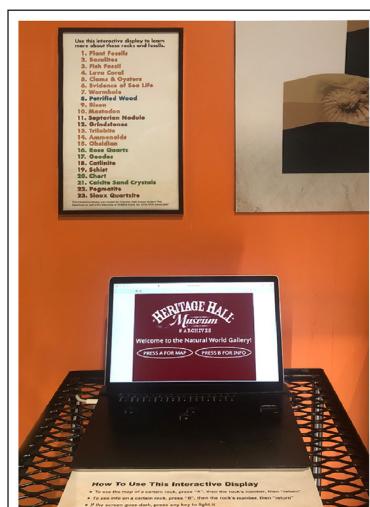
Summer 2025 HHM&A Headlines Photo Section



Heritage Hall Museum & Archives is focusing on one-room schools this year. A program at the historic Bethel Church Sunday, June 29, offered background and context. Ryan Mews, a museum board member, gave a broad look at how public schools were established. HHM&A Intern Becky Hupp shared details about the Diamond Valley School that served students south of Freeman for eight decades. The presentation also noted how rural schools sparked the creation of a teacher education program at South Dakota Mennonite College (Freeman Junior College and Academy) in 1903, and how the closing of rural schools ended that program and led to the 1985 decision to close FJC. There was also opportunity for attendees to identify schools on large maps of Hutchinson and Turner counties. Other one-room school programming is planned this year; see page 2 of the newsletter.



HHM&A collaborated with the Freeman Public Library Summer Reading Program's "Color Our World" theme at the museum on July 17. It included a scavenger hunt in the Unruh-Tieszen Wing, in which participants had to identify the colors of 20 exhibits or artifacts, a storytelling exercise in the Natural World Gallery, and a hands-on activity in which children printed a personalized coloring sheet.



Thor Aanenson, as a junior at Freeman High School last year, developed an interactive digital exhibit for the Natural World Gallery as part of an internship. The computer display shares details about rocks and fossils.

A new education exhibit at HHM&A includes the bell that welcomed students to Fairview School from 1913 to 1970 and other artifacts, photos and short histories of Freeman Junior College and Academy, Freeman Public Schools, one-room country schools, St. Paul Lutheran and Sunnyside Bible schools.

Summer 2025 HHM&A Headlines Photo Section

Photos by HHM&A Staff and Lisa Mueller Howard



2025 South Dakota Chislic Festival

Heritage Hall Museum & Archives was designated as the "Family Zone" for the 2025 South Dakota Chislic Festival, and welcomed guests from 10 to 7, Saturday, July 26. Special activities included a one-hour one-room school experience at the Diamond Valley School. HHM&A Intern Becky Hupp, HHM&A Board Member Lisa Mueller Howard and volunteer Joan Mueller Peters planned and led the session. The experience included conversation, penmanship, spelling, music (volunteer Mary Waltner played the organ) and recess – stickball, "lawn darts" and a rousing game of Duck, Duck, Goose.

HHM&A Facilities Manager Chris Schwendeman shows a young guest features of the model train, volunteer Janver Stucky demonstrates making rope, and volunteer Christine Graber assists a guest with letterpress printing.

