

h e a d l i n e s

This panoramic view of the Unruh-Tieszen Wing at HHM&A shows the new layout, LED lighting and Graber Gas Station exhibit. Major renovations have been underway since fall. Other new exhibits include local dairy farming, the Freeman Fire Department, and Freeman entrepreneur Abe Kautz.



New look for Unruh-Tieszen Wing

While Heritage Hall Museum & Archives (HHM&A) felt the impact of Covid-19 with the number of visitors down by at least 90 percent, museum staff took advantage of the lull by launching a major redesign of the Unruh-Tieszen Wing. The building, home to the transportation and agricultural exhibits, now features new LED lighting and a brand new look.

Nearly every exhibit in the wing was either moved or refreshed in late winter and spring. In addition, several new exhibits debuted in late March. That includes a gas station.

In a news story in March, museum director and archivist Marnette D. (Ortman) Hofer offered perspective.

“I’ve been intrigued by the number

of gas stations in our community in the first half of the last century. We’ve been wanting to consolidate elements scattered throughout the museum for some time and creating a gas station exhibit seemed like a fun project.”

The HHM&A staff decided to utilize the northwest corner of the Unruh-Tieszen Wing to show what the interior of a vintage gas station might have looked like 80 years ago.

But once they started, staff saw the potential to do something even broader than initially intended.

The result was the decision to model the exterior on the Freeman Junior College Service Station that operated on Main Street in the 1930s and 40s on the site where Stucky Electric is located

today. The distinctive peaked-roof profile of that station was a common design in that era.

A Model T was placed inside the station “for repairs.” The interior also includes tools, parts and other items of those years. The exhibit includes a brief history of the FJC Service Station.

The new exhibit bears the name “Graber’s Service Station,” honoring Linden Graber and his late father, Cleon, who both played major roles in the museum’s development, particularly in the transportation exhibits.

Visitors are enjoying the new look, the brighter lights, openness and more spacious exhibits. We invite you to take a look at this refreshed area.

Heritage Hall Museum & Archives

PO Box 693 • 880 S Cedar St. • Freeman, SD 57029

(605) 925-7545 • info@heritagehallmuseum.com • www.heritagehallmuseum.com

The Director's Perspective

Over the past year and a half, we have all had to adapt to a lot of ups and downs and changes. The twists and turns were unexpected and challenging, but not insurmountable. We continue to move forward.

Adaptation is not new at the museum. Back in 2018, when we received a Deadwood Fund Grant for foundation work on our pioneer home, no one guessed that it would start to rain. And rain, and rain. It wasn't until 2020 that we were able to complete the project.

The delay led to a pivot in the the location of the house and scope of the project. We envisioned a farmstead just east of our main museum buildings. Our pioneer home would be the first building in an area designed to pay homage to the small-scale farms and rural way of life that built the Great Plains.

An area farmer offered us a big barn for the farmstead and we began making plans to bring it to our complex. But this spring, further exploration revealed that structural and logistical concerns were too costly and involved to continue moving the barn as planned. And so we've pivoted. And discussion continues.

When 2020 began, Covid-19 wasn't on our radar. We shut down the museum in mid-March, then cautiously reopened again in June, operating with a number of guidelines and safeguards in place. Now, with staff vaccinated and the country slowly opening up, we are pivoting again and are fully open. While still cautious, guests are now beginning to come once again. Another pivot.

But make no mistake; this past year was difficult for us. The loss of income from lack of visitors was devastating. And it was disappointing; we are here to share the story of this community, yet no one was visiting.

We are always trying to use our time and resources wisely. So we used that "down" time to look for new and interesting ways to carry out our mission. We know our work is critical to preserve the past and to guide our shared future.

Now we pivot again – to plant our feet on the ground and make the shift to this post-pandemic world. And we need *you* in this pivotal moment for our museum, and invite you to join us in this ever-changing journey. Your financial support doesn't just keep the lights on, it keeps the story – our story – alive.

We've always relied on you for support. After a year of unprecedented loss and change, that support has never been more important.



Marnette D. (Ortman) Hofer
Executive Director/
Archivist

Mosasaur surfaces in 'rock collection'

It seems only appropriate that an "unintentional museum" would unintentionally discover that – almost a century prior – Dr. Isaac P. Tieszen had given us a fascinating donation.

While evaluating our "rock collection," we unexpectedly realized we had a set of mosasaur skull fossils.

Dr. Tieszen's daughter, Ruby Waltner, explained that her father enjoyed collecting rocks and fossils, and that patients at his chiropractic office in Marion often gave him interesting specimens they'd found.

The mosasaur fossils donated by Dr. Tieszen have become a recent focus and an impetus to re-imagine our "natural world" exhibit. Experts at the Black Hills Institute of Geological Research in Hill City are currently building a replica of the mosasaur skull, a project that is graciously being funded by our Freeman area Lions Club.



Watch for more details about this project in the upcoming weeks.

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

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May 28 • June 25 • July 30
Aug. 27 • Sept. 24

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Boxed up; A textile storage project

Last fall, HHM&A received a \$300 matching grant from the Association of South Dakota Museums (ASDM) for our textile storage project. We purchased 11 archival boxes in a variety of sizes. They are an expensive purchase; an archival box for a wedding dress can cost as much as \$90.

Curator Terry Quam explains there is a deliberate and detailed process to putting material into the boxes.

Textiles that arrive at the museum must be vacuumed before they can be cataloged to remove soil and any insects that might damage the fabric. If there is any sign of moth infestation, items are wrapped, frozen for two weeks, unfrozen for 72 hours, refrozen for another two weeks, and unfrozen again before vacuuming and cataloging.

Quam explains that the archival boxes are lined with unbuffered acid-

free tissue paper to further protect the textiles from damage and help ensure longer life of the textiles.

As textiles are placed in the box, care must be given to fold the textile only where necessary, with crushed tissue paper placed in the folded areas to prevent creasing. Another layer of tissue paper is placed on top of the textile before closing the box.

Thanks to the ASDM grant, we were able to safely store various items including military uniforms and



Volunteer Mary Waltner, left, and curator Terry Quam place vintage feedsacks in a textile box. The special storage boxes ensure a safe environment for archived fabrics.

accessories, a fur coat, a band uniform, and a variety of handiwork items such as pillow cases, etc., and we have a few boxes left to fill.

Deckert House restoration continues

Some of you may be wondering when the 1879 Deckert House will reopen to visitors. Thanks to Valley Electric of Freeman, we are one step closer, as electricity is once again available in the house. This means that we have lights and power on site and can resume efforts to repair and restore the home.

In 2018, we received a Deadwood Fund Grant to move the house and put

a new foundation under it. One of the conditions of the grant was to place the home under an 8-year covenant. This means that we continue to be in conversation with the S.D. State Historic Preservation Office about what work is done and how it is done, so that the historic integrity of the home is maintained. We value their guidance, as this is



a one-of-a-kind structure.

This summer, we will begin repairs, both inside and out. Window and siding repairs and paint top the list. There is considerable cleaning that needs to be done inside, while outside, we are looking at a major “connection project” to connect the home to the main museum buildings with a sidewalk. We’d eventually like to add historically-accurate plantings, such

as flowers and trees that were typically found by homes of Germans-from-Russia immigrants. At the present time, we do not have the funds to complete that phase of this project.

There are many tasks to be done and we invite volunteers to help where they can! If you are interested in contributing monetarily to this project, please be sure to



include a note with your donation.

We are hoping that progress will be able to continue and that we can complete furnishings and displays in the home in time to reopen to the public next summer.



Extended hours planned for July 31 chislic festival

The South Dakota Chislic Festival will be held at the Prairie Arboretum Saturday, July 31. The museum will be open extended hours, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. that day. We're eager to welcome visitors and share "the rest of the story" about how our community was settled and developed over the course of the

last 150 years.

While the museum is not planning special programming, Marnette D. (Ortman) Hofer and Ian Tuttle will be presenting a program on the history of shashlik/chislic at the arboretum.

The museum is offering paid premium parking for festival visitors

on the east side of our complex. The parking entrance will be monitored near the Bethel Church on the southeastern side of the museum grounds.



Thank You

To Our 2021 Heritage Hall Museum & Archives Members

Your support enables us to continue developing our museum.

February-April 2021

Platinum

James Adrian, Marion
Dennis Epp, Freeman
Cal & Linda Graber, Hurley
Paul & Priscilla Hofer, Freeman

Silver

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Homesteader

Nathan Bates, Vermillion
Gary Jerke, Tripp
Dee Millar, Freeman
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We have also received several memorial gifts in recent months.
Gifts in Memorial/Honor of:
Arleen (Schrag) Amert by Ellen Ortman
Martin & Caroline (Ganske) Hafner and Heinrich & Jacobina (Dubs) by Marilyn Hafner
Emma E. Hofer by Vernon J. & Norma Hofer
Abraham Kautz by John D. Kautz
Dr. & Mrs. Ralph C. Kauffman by Ann Waltner O'Donnell
Viola & August Neuharth by Evelyn Blum
Maxine (Mueller) Ortman by David E. & Ann Marchand Ortman

You'll find complete list of our current members online at www.heritagehallmuseum.com



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\$75,000+



DIAMOND
\$50,000



SAPPHIRE
\$25,000



RUBY
\$10,000



EMERALD
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\$1,000



GOLD
\$750



SILVER
\$500



BRONZE
\$250



CONDUCTOR
\$100



SHOPKEEPER
\$50



HOMESTEADER
\$30

All members receive annual admission to the museum and archives, our quarterly newsletter and special pricing for museum events.

Shopkeepers: 2 annual admission passes; **Conductors:** 4 annual admission passes; **Bronze:** 6 annual admission passes.

Silver & Above: Additional passes and personal tours for six guests upon request. Recognition for **sponsoring businesses.**

"History is not a burden on the memory but an illumination of the soul."

Lord Acton

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.

2021 Heritage Hall Museum & Archives Membership Form

Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____ Phone _____ Total: \$ _____

HHM&A, Box 693, Freeman, SD 57029 • 605-925-7545 • info@heritagehallmuseum.com

21 things about 2021

On Sunday afternoon, April 18, Heritage Hall Museum & Archives invited local members for a visit in advance of the 2021 summer opening. About 40 people took advantage of the opportunity. It was a low-key gathering that included an informal program at the Bethel Church in which staff members Marnette (Ortman) Hofer and Tim L. Waltner shared details and updates about the museum they titled “21 things about 2021.” We’re sharing that with all of you in this “Extra Headlines” feature.

1. Independence. We officially became an independent organization in January 2021. But we value our historic relationship with FJC/FA and look forward to continuing to be good neighbors.

2. A Deckert House update. The historic Deckert House was moved last summer but remains closed as renovations – both inside and out – continue this summer; we plan to reopen next summer.

3. Facebook. We’re using social media to help share museum news with the public. Not everyone uses or likes Facebook, but it’s become part of our social fabric and we’ve stepped up our presence there. If you’re on Facebook, we encourage you to look, like and share. Sharing is particularly important and an easy way to broaden awareness of who we are and what we do.

4. We’re planning a new faith gallery. Faith is at the heart of our history and we will be creating a gallery that highlights our various faith traditions. It will be in that first room you walk into when you enter the museum (now the fine arts gallery). It will consolidate various elements from the museum and add historical context to tell this important story. The fine arts artifacts, by the way, will be incorporated into exhibits elsewhere in the museum.

5. The Farmstead. Our initial plans to move an old barn to the site directly northeast of the Bethel Church and restore it have proven to be too costly. We’re now exploring other ways to create a farmstead environment. Our immediate focus will be on providing access to the Deckert House and looking at options for enhancing that site.

6. The big fossil find. Most of you probably know about the surprising discovery of a mosasaur in our collection of rocks and fossils and the very rapid developments that followed including major funding for a renovated natural world exhibit. New board member Terry Waterman has been a key player in this exciting project.

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7. The Graber Service Station. This new exhibit in the Unruh-Tieszen Wing is a great example of a simple concept – consolidating similar elements and creating an interesting way to showcase them – becoming something bigger. It grew from just showing some tools to creating both an interior and exterior that takes visitors to another time and place. And we put a car inside it. If you haven’t seen it, be sure you check it out.

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8. Improvements to our historic church buildings have been an ongoing project. You can see it when you look around the Bethel Church. There are also major renovations at

the Johannesthal Church that will make that another gathering place. Those projects are a great example of the important work done by Brian Skinner, our facilities manager, in both maintaining and improving the museum complex – inside and out.

9. Inventory. You don’t see it, but one of the most important projects is documenting and recording the thousands of artifacts we’ve been entrusted with. It’s an extremely time-consuming, detailed process but it’s really important. It began more than a decade ago when Charles Schrag began the cataloging efforts as a museum intern, followed by Kelsey Ortman (now Pidde) and S. Roy Kaufman when he became curator. But Terry Quam, our curator has become our go-to person to identify, research and document our artifacts in a searchable, computerized format. This is for both artifacts on display and in storage. Since this began in earnest about five years ago, there’s a ton of catching up, especially considering our collection began in 1911! Terry estimates she’s cataloged between 4,200 and 4,500 items in the last 3-1/2 years.

10. Major gifts. We appreciate monetary gifts of all sizes. But major contributions make it possible for us to pursue major projects. We want to acknowledge those gifts ... and encourage others to include our museum when you think of your charitable contributions.



11. Mercantile. One of the most dramatic and visible developments in the past two years is our mercantile.

What began as a simple collection of a few items in our lobby has exploded into a full-fledged gift shop. It's a win-win-win. It's increased traffic, brought in new revenue and it supports local artisans.

12. Nametags. You may have noticed many of us wearing nametags. We're asking staff and volunteers alike to wear them. It's a simple – some might say trivial – thing, but image matters. It's a cue to guests that we're available to assist them, that we place value on who we are and it reflects a level of professionalism in our museum.



13. New lighting in Unruh-Tieszen Wing. If you've been to the agricultural and transportation area you've seen things in a new light – literally. This project, completed earlier this year, replaced the sodium bulbs with LED lights that are brighter, whiter and reduce energy costs. When we saw the dramatic change we realized that this is a change we need to make in the Kauffman Wing as well.

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14. Rearranging the exhibits in the Unruh-Tieszen Wing was a major winter project and the new look is a dramatic change that reminds us of the value of making changes that help make the museum experience new and fresh. I promise you'll see some of the artifacts there in a way you've never seen them before.

15. Signage and branding inside and out. We're focusing on how

we help guide guests through our museum. We're being more deliberate in how we structure our exhibits to strengthen how we tell the story of where we came from and who we are. That includes using words like "exhibit," "gallery" and "wing." Rather than Building 1, it's the Kauffman Wing and Building 2 is now the Unruh-Tieszen Wing. Not only is this more professional, it honors the two families who were instrumental in creating what we have today. New signage includes the exterior; we plan to paint and erect a new entrance sign this summer. We also plan to add better signage for our four historic buildings.

16. We are committed to strengthening relationships with the larger community. We deeply appreciate the core group of supporters who have enabled this museum to grow over the years. But we're also looking forward to building broader pride, ownership, involvement and support from the community as we move forward. There's no better example of that than the Freeman Lions Club joining us in the mosasaur project.

17. The "Voices of Conscience" exhibit planned for 2020 fell victim to Covid-19; the entire national tour of the exhibit was put on hold. But we're pleased to tell you it's scheduled to return here in the spring of 2022.

18. Speaking of Covid-19; we took a real hit last year with visits down by at least 90 percent. That essentially stopped all plans for programs. We're cautiously hoping to resume that this year. One thing we are doing now is starting "Family-Friendly Final Fridays." Starting next week, we'll be open until 8 p.m. the last Friday of the month with a special emphasis on encouraging parents (or grandparents) to bring kids. Lynell Hofer's model

train will be running and we're hoping to do some other special things to make for fun evenings. We plan to do this the last Friday of April, May, June, July, August and September.

19. Volunteers are essential to our mission; a four-member part-time staff is not enough for a museum our size. Some of you are volunteers and we appreciate the time you spend here. We're always looking for others who are willing to share their energy, experience and expertise. If you're interested, please visit with us.

20. Our new welcome center in that first room off the lobby offers guests context and perspective as we strengthen the concept of the museum telling a story; we're not just a collection of stuff. Our mission remains telling the story of the Germans-from-Russia immigrants who settled in Dakota Territory nearly 150 years ago. It's a remarkable story and this museum is testimony not only to them but to those that followed and worked to ensure this story isn't lost. We are the latest in a series of generations who've been entrusted to continue telling that story.

21. Finally, we salute you, our members. Your membership is critical to helping us in this important work. It's more than just your financial support. By becoming a member, you demonstrate your investment in and ownership of our shared mission. We thank you and look forward to a healthy partnership as we continue to build on the strong tradition that has evolved over the years. If you want to learn more, stop in or call 605-925-7545.



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