

h e a d l i n e s

Interns' skills bolster projects

The addition of two summer interns has energized several projects at Heritage Hall Museum & Archives.

Ryan Mews and Madeline Hofer have been working at the museum from late May into August.

Ryan, a graduate student at USD, is working toward his master's degree in history and a certificate in museum and archive studies. His internship, which is for credit, has focused on research of the historic Ludwig and Susanna Deckert house that's been part of our museum since 1979. His efforts are helping implement the final phase of a major renovation project that included relocating the house from its first location on our grounds (south of the museum) onto a new foundation east of the museum.

He has been poring through documents, family records and other resources to flesh out the story of how the Deckert family came to settle in Rosefield Township of Turner County and the history of the family and house in the century that followed.

Ryan's been struck by the versatility of the black kitchen that is (literally) at the center of the wood-frame house. He also noted how much of a tinkerer Ludwig was.



Interns Ryan Mews and Madeline Hofer joined the HHM&A staff this summer, working on several key projects, including the history of the Ludwig & Susanna Deckert House and family.

"He was always looking for ways to improve things," he says. "There's evidence of that throughout the house."

Ryan has enjoyed his internship and the research that has included interviews with descendants of Ludwig and Susanna and learning more about not just the house but also the family.

"I like the investigative aspects of my time here ... learning how things are integrated and how these people left their mark on things," he says.

A Freeman native (daughter of Colin and Michelle L. Hofer), Madeline is a student at Dordt University and is using her digital media production skills in the Deckert House project.

She is creating a multi-media, interactive presentation based on Ryan's research and other items from the museum's archives. This information will be available to guests via an electronic kiosk in the house. A Freeman Community Foundation grant helped fund this project.

While Ryan's internship has a singular focus, Madeline has participated in a wide range of projects in addition to her work on the Deckert House kiosk. The museum board agreed to hire an intern, in large part, to help with staffing

during the summer months when we have extended hours and increased traffic. Madeline has covered most weekends and helped welcome guests during our special events this summer.

Madeline was attracted to the internship "because it's something close to home and related to my field."

She is also using her video skills in recording stories and details of our artifacts and exhibits, including interviews with community residents to document their knowledge, perspectives and insights.

Madeline also used her skills to help us on another project that emerged, coincidentally, when she arrived.

continued on page 3

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

One morning as I was going through the museum, turning on lights for the day's visitors and often "plugging in" cords into outlets, I mused that we use the same term for people. When individuals help out an organization or get involved with a project, we say that they're "plugging in." In both situations, the act of "plugging in" brings new light and new life to the organization, the project, or the exhibit. Without someone (or something) to "plug in," there is no energy or forward movement. There is no life.

Recently, an increasing number of people have been "plugging in" to our museum and archives. Our cover story introduces you to two of them. Through their summer internships, Ryan and Madeline have brought new life and energy to several projects here. We will be sad when they return to school later this month.

Thor Aanenson and Michelle Hofer have brought their skills and interests to the development of our Natural World Gallery and both children and adults will enjoy what we are creating in that space. Last year, Terry Waterman and the Freeman Lions Club "plugged in" as well, donating funds to purchase the casting of the mosasaur fossil that will be on display in the center of this gallery.

Ellen Ortman has "plugged in" to the archives, and in July, she shared her research into the nicknames from the East Freeman Mennonite community. We love when researchers "plug in" to our mission and share their efforts!

People entering our lobby are immediately taken with the mercantile displays created by our volunteer mercantile manager, Monica Hofer. We are so thankful she has "plugged in" here, helping us promote local artisans and authors.

A number of individuals have donated funds to the Deckert House project. Others have painted, or donated items to display or shared memories and stories.

And on page 4 of this newsletter, a photo shows my new office door. I can't tell you how excited I was to get a "real door," and my modern, air-tight office is all thanks to the generosity of Ellie Unruh, who saw a need and donated the funds to make the renovation happen.

There are so many ways that people can "plug in" to what is happening here at HHM&A, and I invite you to consider doing just that. Help us breathe new life and energy into the exhibits and displays. Help us share the stories of the greater Freeman community. Help us encourage people to visit and discover the rich history preserved in our museum.



Marnette D. (Ortman) Hofer
Executive Director/ Archivist

Summer programs return

It's been a busy summer at our museum, a welcome change after Covid-19 brought things to a halt in 2020 and a crawl in 2021.

On June 5, we hosted an "Afternoon Tea with Phyllis Schrag" at the Prairie Arboretum Interpretive Center, a fundraising event organized by museum board members and staff.

"East Freeman Nicknames" took the stage Sunday afternoon, July 10. Ellen Ortman, a longtime archives volunteer, shared her research and compilation of nicknames among community residents who trace their roots to the Swiss Amish. The program at the Salem-Zion Mennonite (North) Church was our first attempt at livestreaming and, despite some technical challenges, proved popular with those unable to attend in person. We're eager to build on this programming option in the months to come.

We've also partnered with several community events this summer.

On June 3, we welcomed bicyclists on the Ride Across South Dakota (RASDak) including a short program about our vintage bicycle exhibit created for the summer months. We're repeating it at 7 p.m., Aug. 26 as part of our summer "Family-Friendly Final Friday". We'll be open until 8 p.m.

We conducted several tours and showed our "Three Groups, One Story" video to members of the Central Plains Mennonite Conference

continued on back page

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

info@heritagehallmuseum.com • www.heritagehallmuseum.com

HHM&A Board of Directors

Donovan Friesen, chair
Jeri Butkus, vice chair
Jeanne Carter, secretary
Cheryl Koch, treasurer
Jeff Buechler, Chantel Hofer, Norma Hofer, Marlan Kaufman, Charles Schrag, Kevin Waltner, Mary Waltner, Terry Waterman

Staff

Marnette D. (Ortman) Hofer, executive director/archivist
Terry Quam, curator
Brian Skinner, facilities manager
Tim L. Waltner, communication/ education coordinator
Monica Hofer, volunteer mercantile mgr.

AFTERNOON PROGRAM BY GARY WALTNER

'From Russia To America'

Stories of immigrants who settled in the Freeman area in the late 1800s.

Sunday, Aug. 21 - 3 p.m.

Bethel Mennonite Church

Admission Will Be Charged

Natural World Gallery coming to life

Our museum has been working aggressively to refresh our Natural World Gallery. Spurred by the “rediscovery” of a mosasaur fossil in our collection, museum staff has reimagined the stories we’d like to tell in that space. That includes the animals, the land – including the grasses and trees – and the forces of nature that settlers had to deal with ... and that we continue to face. We also will pay homage to the rocks and fossils and taxidermy tradition that were at the core of establishing this museum in the early 20th century.

Our efforts include constructing walls that create a 20’x50’ space on the east side of the Kauffman Wing. Local artist Michelle L. Hofer is helping us

by selecting our color palette, designing and helping turn the large iron beams into “trees,” and creating a life-size profile of the mosasaur that will be featured on the floor of the gallery. A photo of the Turkey Ridge Valley by local publisher/photographer Jeremy Waltner has become the backdrop for our diorama of mounted animals.

But the involvement of Thor Aanenson,

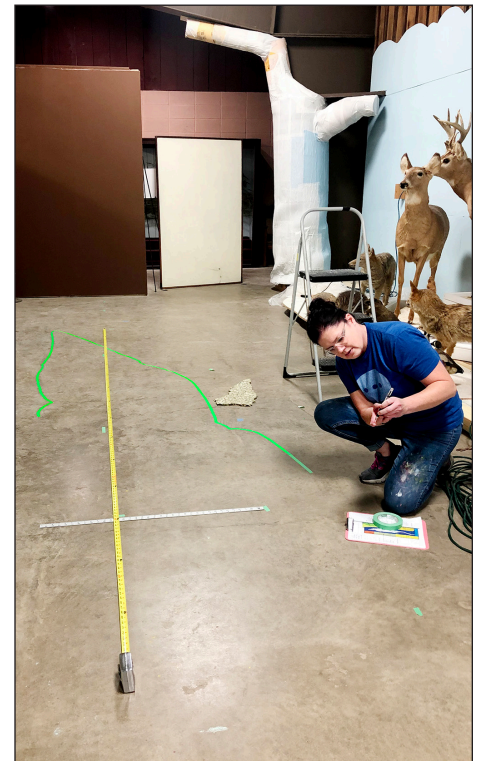
who will be a ninth grader at Freeman Public this fall, is particularly exciting. Here are excerpts from a news story that appeared in the June 9 *Freeman Courier*.

“During a tour of the Heritage Hall Museum & Archives for an online class, Thor discovered a mosasaur fossil in the museum that will be a feature of the in-progress Natural World exhibit. As a self-proclaimed dinosaur-loving nerd, Thor decided he wanted to get involved in the development of this exhibit. Aanenson applied for a grant for the museum, which is being awarded \$1,500 for signage and other Natural World exhibit materials. In addition, Aanenson is completing a research

project for the museum about the mosasaur species. This project will be a collaboration with local science teachers. Tim L. Waltner, HHM&A Communication/Education Coordinator, wrote in support of Thor’s application, “Having the involvement and perspective of a teenager in helping tell the natural world story of our community is particularly helpful, as we see the museum as an



Marnette D. (Ortman) Hofer and Thor Aanenson with the check from the Freeman Community Foundation for the museum’s Natural World Gallery project.



Michelle Hofer creates a profile of the mosasaur on the floor that will be a central feature of the Natural World Gallery.

educational partner with schools, not only in the larger Freeman community but in schools across the region.”

We are looking forward to adding Thor’s contribution to the gallery, which – although it will continue to be a work in progress – we hope to open this fall. Watch for more details about that in the weeks to come.

continued from front page

We installed Square, an inventory management and payment platform. It simplifies and streamlines the business aspect of the museum. Madeline, who worked with Marnette and mercantile manager Monica Hofer, took the lead on entering information and building the platform for all our admissions and mercantile sales.

“I really enjoyed it,” she says of helping install Square. “I have a business minor so it was a good fit.”

In addition, Madeline has joined her mother, Michelle, in helping create a

new environment for the museum’s Natural World Gallery. (See above).

While she grew up familiar with the museum, Madeline says she appreciates “the way the museum is trying to tell a specific story.”

Rather than just a collection of things, “it’s more connected.”

She also observed that “it’s been fun to work on a team.”

“It has been wonderful having interns with us this summer,” says executive director/archivist Marnette D. (Ortman) Hofer.

“Ryan has gotten to do a deep dive into researching the Deckert house ... something I have been unable to devote time to.

“Madeline has proven herself invaluable in a number of ways, including using her technology skills to put together the Deckert House kiosk presentation.

“Having Ryan and Madeline here has meant that we can move some projects to the front of our list, and the impact of their few months here will be seen for many years ahead,” she said.

h e a d l i n e s

continued from page 2

held in Freeman June 16-18.

We extended hours to welcome guests at Freeman Academy's Ribs and More on June 25, the MCC Relief Sale on July 9 and the South Dakota Chislic Festival on July 30.

We were pleased with the turnout by chislic festival guests. More than 200 people visited our museum and mercantile, including many families. Our new chislic exhibit will remain in place in the Kauffman Wing to help document the link between the immigration story we tell and chislic.

On May 28, we welcomed descendants of Charles J. and Fannie Kauffman and their sons, Lloyd and Ralph, who both played important roles in the birth and development of our museum. The multi-generational tour of the museum was a wonderful

tribute to the legacy that continues in the museum. We enjoy these family visits. If you're interested in scheduling one, call 605-925-7545.

A big improvement, funded by a generous donation from Elda Unruh – a community native living in Bluffton, Ohio – transformed both the exterior and interior of the museum office on the north side of the lobby. The sliding "patio doors," part of the museum since the beginning, were replaced with a "real" door, the interior was insulated, sheet-rocked and painted, and new carpet was installed. This improves climate control and offers a much more professional setting



for visitors who meet with our staff.

At the same time, the western portion of the archives was converted to a staff work area. Segregating it from the archives offers a better space for visitors coming to do research.

These improvements reflect our ongoing efforts to provide a welcoming environment for our guests.

Thank You

To Our Latest 2022 Heritage Hall Museum & Archives Members

Your support enables us to continue developing our museum.

May-July 2022

Platinum

Complete Media - Matt Luke, Sioux Falls

Robert & Lois Haar, Yankton

Silver

Frances Mae Core, Bluffton, Ohio

Freeman Courier - Jeremy Waltner, Freeman

Hutterite Centennial Committee, Freeman

Bronze

Marlow & Lorraine Deckert, Freeman

Ken & Deanna Kehn, Benson, Ariz.

Salem Mennonite Home, Freeman

Lillian Schroeder, Sioux City, Iowa

Conductor

Jerry & Elaine Glanzer, Bridgewater

John & Sara Schrag, Freeman

Winona Senner, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Dale & Lois Link Solberg, Freeman

Leo & Blanche Tschetter, Arlington

Shopkeeper













Lynn Rieskamp, Cincinnati, Ohio

Sam & Linda Sorenson, Freeman

Homesteader

Terry Graber, Newton, Kan.

Nancy Schmidt, Freeman

											
HOMESTEADER	SHOPKEEPER	CONDUCTOR	BRONZE	SILVER	GOLD	PLATINUM	EMERALD	RUBY	SAPPHIRE	DIAMOND	FOUNDER
\$30	\$50	\$100	\$250	\$500	\$750	\$1,000	\$5,000	\$10,000	\$25,000	\$50,000	\$75,000+

All members receive annual admission to the museum and archives, our quarterly newsletter and special pricing for museum events.
Shopkeepers: 2 annual patron passes; **Conductors:** 4 annual patron passes; **Bronze:** 6 annual patron passes;
Silver & above: Additional passes and personal tours for six guests upon request. **Recognition for sponsoring businesses.**

*"History is not the past but a map of the past, drawn from a particular point of view, to be useful to the modern traveler."
Henry Glassie*

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

2022 Heritage Hall Museum & Archives Membership Form

Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____ Phone _____ Total: \$ _____

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

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