

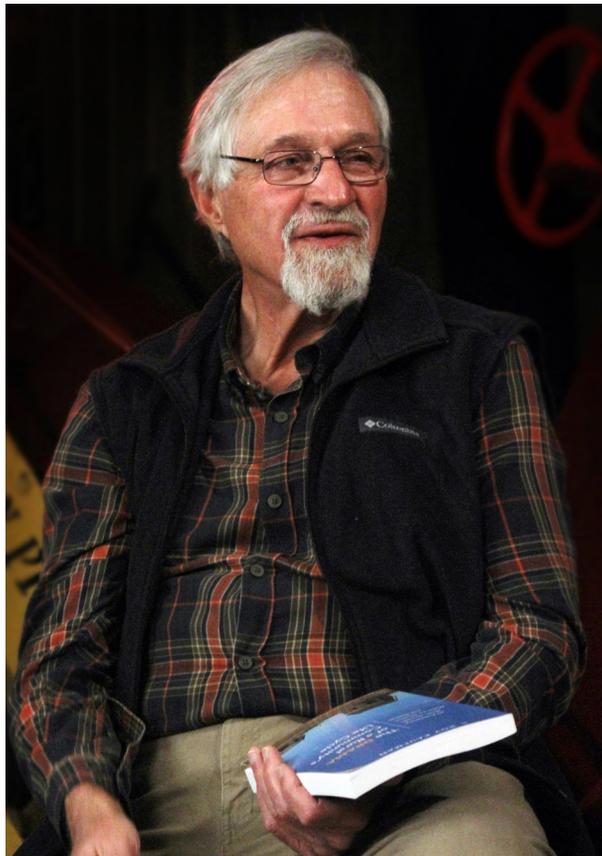
## h e a d l i n e s

## Kaufman guides progress

In the spring of 2012, having recently retired from nearly 40 years as a Mennonite pastor, S. Roy Kaufman agreed to be a part-time curator for HHM&A. After 8½ years, Roy has retired from this position, leaving an indelible mark on this museum and this community.

In his final board report last December, Roy wrote, “I began working for the museum as curator in May 2012, contracted to work up to 15 hours per week, a half time position. As a retired pastor, I confess I knew nothing about being a curator, so I spent the first months researching and learning what my job was. At that point, I think the museum was just beginning to think of itself as a “professional” museum, rather than an informal community collection. Indeed, the cataloguing of artifacts had just begun by Charles Schrag a couple of years earlier. Cataloguing is a process we have worked on continuously since then... [and] I hope that my work and my approach to this job helped the movement toward being a professional, credible museum.”

In 2014, Roy researched and wrote the museum’s “Collection Management Policy” to guide the museum’s processes. He has also spent countless hours researching and documenting information about our artifacts –



*S. Roy Kaufman’s thoughtful and insightful approach has helped HHM&A move into a new era in our mission of honoring and sharing the history and traditions of our community.*

information and stories that have become the basis for many of the more developed displays in our museum – in the Prairie Life gallery, as well as in exhibits such as our general store and the doctor’s office, the J.J. Mendel display, stories about raising small grain and corn, and most recently, the Abraham Kautz exhibit and the dairy

display that we had hoped to unveil for Schmeckfest 2020.

In 2017, as a result of a strategic planning event that involved both the HHM&A board and staff, Roy was asked to write up “The Big Story” of our museum. What exactly is the story we want to share and how do our wide array of artifacts illustrate that story? The extensive 24-page document that he submitted weaves together the many stories we have to tell and will be an important springboard for us as we continue to develop exhibits in the years ahead.

One of Roy’s most recent research projects was to identify and collect information about the many church congregations that have existed in the larger Freeman community over the past almost 150 years. This document will be the basis for the “Faith Traditions Gallery” that is in the planning stages of development. This exhibit will be important as we strive to tell the story of those who have called

this area home, as faith was often one of the settlers’ main priorities and reasons for immigrating to America in the late 1800s.

We are grateful for the 8½ years that Roy has given to HHM&A, and we look forward to his continuing involvement as a volunteer here in the years ahead. Thank you, Roy!

**Heritage Hall Museum & Archives**

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# The Director's Perspective

# Proper honors

Together, we move forward. That is the mantra that keeps running through my head. In the summer of 2017, the Freeman Academy Board decided to reevaluate their relationship with the museum. That August, the HHM&A Board held a strategic planning session that brought up concerns about the relationship to Freeman Academy. A task force representing both entities was formed and together, the options were studied. Both boards grappled with how best to move forward. In November of 2019, both boards recommended that FJC/FA divest HHM&A; the motion was overwhelmingly approved by the FJC/FA Corporation. Since then, HHM&A has moved steadily toward becoming an independent entity.



Marnette (Ortman) Hofer  
Executive Director/  
Archivist

This past December, we received our status as a non-profit organization in the state of South Dakota. Our incorporation meeting was held on January 22, 2021. Papers are being filed to obtain our 501(c)(3) status. This has been a journey, but together, we are moving forward into an exciting future.

The HHM&A Board has been diligent and they deserve our thanks. Please note the article on page 3 and welcome the charter board of the newly-independent HHM&A, whose names are listed below.

While the museum board has worked behind-the-scenes, it is our staff that are the caretakers of this place and see to the day-to-day operations. S. Roy Kaufman, who retired at the end of 2020, was the 10th individual to accept the title of curator of this museum collection. We celebrate his contributions to this organization and wish him well as he moves on (see page one).

There are many others who have also been instrumental in our overall story, and we are grateful for each one, including those who volunteer for just a project or two (see the story on pages 3 and 4).

Together, we move forward.

There are many wonderful things happening here – despite the pandemic – and your support has been and will continue to be important and valued. From the bottom of my heart, *thank you* – we look forward to seeing you in 2021.

Together, we move forward!

Marilyn (Hafner) Hanson of Huron has made several trips to this area seeking information about relatives' burials in a unrecorded cemetery just southwest of Freeman in the Heilbronn community. She recently wrote:

*Many of our ancestors came from Europe (Russia and Germany) during the latter 1800s and settled in and around the Freeman area. Our families came for the freedom to purchase and till the land, raise their families, and the utmost freedom of being able to openly believe and worship our Lord and Saviour.*

*The Christian religion was very important to our families, churches were built and cemeteries were started. Possibly due to the elements, some of the cemetery markers may have settled into the ground, but sadly, some stones and monuments were removed by farmers during tillage.*

*Our families, who were the forerunners for us in many ways, deserve better than this, and realistically, each cemetery should be located, with a monument noting its name, dates, and church member names if available.*

We hope to collect information about the cemeteries in the greater Freeman area. If you have information or photos about any of these lost or abandoned cemeteries or the people that were buried there, please contact HHM&A.

## 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.  
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## HHM&A Board of Directors

Donovan Friesen, chair  
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Cheryl Koch, secretary/treasurer  
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## Staff

Marnette (Ortman) Hofer, executive director/archivist  
Terry Quam, curator  
Brian Skinner, facilities manager  
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## Board provides essential leadership

Our museum traces its roots to the donation of a collection of rocks and minerals to Freeman College back in the winter of 1911-12. But it wasn't until 1976, when the artifact collections of Freeman Jr. College and the Freeman Historical Society were merged as one in the newly-christened Heritage Hall Museum, that a museum board was formed.

The first board had six members, three representing the college, and three representing the historical society, with FJC/FA's school president serving in an ex-officio role. After FJC closed in 1986, board membership was quite fluid, as representatives from area churches volunteered to attend the annual board meeting. It wasn't until 2005 that HHM&A had a full board, a mission statement, and a more formalized approach to governing this organization.

In more recent years, the board has met monthly and has taken an active role in visioning and moving the museum forward. And most recently, the HHM&A board has been under the leadership of Linden Graber.

This past December, Linden completed his third term on the HHM&A board. During his tenure,



*Linden Graber, who has been active at HHM&A for many years, recently completed nine years as a board member.*

many things have changed. Most notably, Linden led the museum through the process of becoming an independent non-profit, after the FJC/FA Corporation voted to divest of the museum in November of 2019.

Only about a dozen individuals have served nine or more years on the museum board. Prior to 2005, they included Raymond Becker, Eldon Berg, Glenn Gering, Cleon Graber, Winfred Haar, Norman Hofer, Edwin Jantzen, Sam Schmidt, and Russell

Waltner. Since 2005, the list has grown to include Kevin Albrecht, Marlan Kaufman, and Kevin Waltner. And now, Linden Graber.

It is interesting to note that only one individual who was part of that very first board in 1976 has also been heavily involved in the museum's recent years. Russell Waltner served on the board for over 20 years, worked as curator/director of the museum for three years, and has been active as a volunteer and invaluable resource.

The other person who gave a significant amount of time and energy to HHM&A was Linden's father, Cleon Graber. Cleon was also part of that very first museum board, serving 15 years in that capacity before becoming the museum's curator/director for the next 12 years.

Between father and son, the Grabers have given 36 years to this organization. It's an amazing contribution and an incredible legacy.

We thank Linden for giving so much to our museum. And we recognize and pay tribute to the nearly 100 individuals who have been part of the museum board at some point over the past 45 years. Without their efforts, we would not be where we are today.

## Graber's extended visit includes volunteering

Volunteers are absolute *gold* for a museum like ours. While we have four employees, everyone is part time, and with a collection as large as ours there are always many tasks to be done.

So when former Freemanite Viki Graber walked into our museum a few months ago and asked how she could help, we were super excited!

Viki lives in Goshen, Ind., but her mother, Virginia, lives in the nursing home at Freeman Regional Hospital. We all know how challenging it has been to visit loved ones during this pandemic. That is why Viki moved back to the area temporarily and took a part-time job at the hospital. She was

able to see her mother – safely – on a regular basis. Although she returned to Indiana at the end of January, this brief stay in Freeman allowed Viki to reconnect with her hometown in a unique way, and she has left a huge impact here at the museum.

When Viki offered to help us, we were thrilled. And because she used to be a professional painter, we tapped her skills by putting her to work on some big projects. For one, we wanted our "new" gas station in the Unruh-Tieszen wing to have an aged stucco look. Not a problem!

The second project we needed help  
*continued on next page*



*Viki Graber shared her painting skills at the museum in December and January.*

# h e a d l i n e s

with was to paint the walls of the first room guests walk into – which had four different colors on its walls! Viki set to work, and the gallery space now has a cohesive look that is much more suitable for telling our story.

Volunteers that can plug into a particular area with their specific skills or interests are invaluable, and we thank Viki for her contributions here. We also invite others to consider joining us. Whether you

have something specific you'd enjoy helping with or are open to learning and helping out as needed, whether it's a one-time stint or a regular commitment, please know we are always looking for assistance.

## Thank You

### To Our 2021 Heritage Hall Museum & Archives Members

Your support enables us to continue developing our museum.

**November 2020-January 2021**

**Platinum**

Dr. Dennis Epp, Freeman  
 Rachael Grant, Los Angeles, Calif.  
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We also received several memorial gifts in recent months and recognize them in May.



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*"A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots."*  
 Marcus Garvey

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.

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