

Voices

THE VILLAGE

VOLUME 2 NO. 3 • DECEMBER 2014



LIVERY BARN
RESTAURANT

**MAINTAINING
A VILLAGE** PG 4

FREEDOM 15 PG 8



Agreement #40033605

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Mennonite Heritage Village (Canada) Inc.

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Barry Dyck

CO-EDITORSGilbert Brandt
Natashia Lapeire**CONTRIBUTORS**Barry Dyck
Natashia Lapeire
Jessica McKague
Anne Toews**COVER PHOTO CREDIT**

Joseph Lapeire

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Natashia Lapeire**CHARITY NUMBER**

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HOURSMay, June & September
Monday - Saturday: 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.
* October - April
Monday - Friday: 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
* December
Monday - Friday: 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Saturday: 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

* Outdoor buildings are closed

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HOW TO REACH MHVTelephone 204.326.9661
Toll Free 1.866.280.8741
Email info@mhv.cawww.facebook.com/MHVSteinbachwww.twitter.com/MHVSteinbachwww.mhv.ca

WRAPPING UP

BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BARRY DYCK

We had not planned to publish another edition of Village Voice in 2014. However, as we reflected on some of the significant needs and opportunities that have surfaced this year, we felt our constituency would want to be informed of these circumstances. This supplemental issue will be focusing on those needs and the importance of having them met in a timely manner.

Mennonite Heritage Village is now embarking on Freedom 15, a debt-elimination challenge which will seek to fully pay out our accumulated debt in 2015. We hope that many supporters will see the significance of this opportunity and donate additional dollars toward debt reduction, while also continuing their regular undesignated donations, so as not to jeopardize our operating budget. For more information, please refer to page eight.

A number of key maintenance issues have grabbed our attention this year. Roofs leaking onto valuable artifacts or onto guests eating in our restaurant are not acceptable. Our Village Centre is 24 years old, as is much of the heating and cooling equipment. Some of those items are beginning to call for attention. Additionally, we have many heritage structures that require ongoing maintenance in order to preserve them.

In addition to the articles that direct attention to opportunities for investing in the work of MHV, we will also report on highlights of some of our summer programs. As we reflect on the programs and festivals of this past season, we are grateful to all the people who made MHV their destination and look forward to delivering a new and rich program in 2015.



A YEAR AT A GLANCE

BY ANNE TOEWS

More than 11,000 people attended our festival days this summer but now the summer season at MHV has come to a close. The outdoor village is locked for the season, the restaurant is closed, and the farm animals have gone back to their homes for the winter months. It always creates mixed emotions when things wind down for the winter.

We started off the season with Spring on the Farm and Tractor Show on the May long weekend, Canada Day, Pioneer Days on the August long weekend, and Fall on the Farm on Labour Day.

Over 900 volunteer spots are required to be filled for festival days. Volunteers play a key role in delivering our events, festivals, and celebrations. Thank you to the hundreds of volunteers that helped make these events a success.

We had a successful year in our school program. Angela Neufeld, our Education Program Coordinator, and Blayne Stobbe, the Education Assistant, did a marvelous job of scheduling and organizing the school groups. Thanks for all your hard work!

Around 4,000 students came through the doors this summer for interpretive, guided or self-guided tours, hands-on programs, day camp, and structured programs. The majority of these students also enjoyed horse drawn wagon rides and buying old-fashioned candy in the General Store. Thank you to the donors who have con-

tributed financially to help supplement these programs.

Volunteers are always needed. Have you ever thought of volunteering your time on festival days or with the school programs? Inquire about other areas to help as well. Volunteer applications are always available at our reception desk throughout the year.

A special Volunteer Orientation evening will be announced for April 2015. This is an evening to inform you what MHV is all about and how you can help. Whether you volunteer a lot or a little, it is always helpful and important to aid in the success of MHV.

At the end of the summer season we hosted a Volunteer Appreciation evening to recognize and thank volunteers for their hard work. To coincide with our 50th Anniversary theme this year, we chose the theme "A Year to Celebrate". We paid tribute not only to our current volunteers but reflected back to our past volunteers.

Although some of those volunteers were too elderly to be here, or in some cases had already passed away, we were able to have some of their family members join us. Several of the family members shared stories about their parents or grandparents' volunteer experiences at MHV. Over a hundred people joined us for this celebration evening. Thank you volunteers!





LIVERY BARN RESTAURANT

BY BARRY DYCK



As a world-class museum and tourist destination, Mennonite Heritage Village seeks to provide our guests with tangible experiences in addition to all the information received from our interpretive displays. The tourism trade refers to this as "experiential tourism." From May through September, the Livery Barn Restaurant is a key element in our "experiential" offering. It allows our visitors to taste and smell the uniqueness of the local Mennonite cuisine.

While this restaurant is first and foremost a part of the interpretive experience, it also provides the community with a lunch venue, meeting space and catering ser-

vice. Many locals have discovered the all-you-can-eat Soup-and-Bread Lunch on Thursdays, the Saturday Brunch and the very popular Sunday Buffet. The income generated by the restaurant also provides MHV with some much-needed additional revenue.

Maintaining the building and equipment for a restaurant is not a small thing. Recently the MHV Auxiliary purchased a new dough mixer to replace the very old one that by now took substantial coaxing to get into action. Last summer we struggled with leaks in the restaurant roof and used operating funds to repair at least the lean-to portion on the east side of the

building. The main cedar roof still needs to be replaced, at a cost of about \$20,000. It would be great if we could find those funds immediately and have the roof repaired during the winter months when roofers are often looking for work.

This roof repair is one of the items that will be included in our Community Places grant application. However, this grant requires partnership by other organizations or individuals. In other words, the grant will not provide the total funding for any project. We are currently looking for investors in this project. Contact Barry at 204-326-9661 if you are interested.

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MAINTAINING A VILLAGE

BY BARRY DYCK



Over the last 50 years, the Mennonite Heritage Village has acquired and constructed more than a dozen heritage buildings. Some are original 19th century buildings that have been moved to our site, and others have been constructed to replicate old buildings that might have been found in the original village of Steinbach in the late 1800s. These are wood buildings, most of which have cedar shingles on their roofs, and require ongoing maintenance.

Many of these buildings are not heated, and all stand out in the elements 12 months of the year. They will each probably require a fresh paint job every 6 to 8 years and shingles every 30 to 40 years. Additionally they require repairs to windows, siding and other components as time and weather take their toll.

In addition to these heritage structures, we have our Village Centre, a large contemporary building, which houses our galleries, lab, artifacts storage, offices, meeting rooms, and gift shop. We are so fortunate to have this climate-controlled building for

the exhibition and storage of so many of our artifacts. In order to maintain the climate control, we need to have functioning furnaces, air conditioners and humidifiers for optimum temperature and humidity levels.

Our Village Centre is about 24 years old, as is much of the climate-control equipment. It's becoming painfully obvious now that this equipment needs to be replaced. We have recently been informed that just to replace our humidifiers will cost about \$20,000, and these are not large, complex pieces of equipment. We shudder in anticipation of replacing 6 furnaces and air-conditioners.

None of these represent discretionary expenses; all need to be done. We will need donations and grants over and above our operating budget to fund these. Can you help us? Donations may be sent to MHV at 231 PTH 12 North, Steinbach, MB R5G 1T8 or by donating on-line through our website at www.mhv.ca.





WALDHEIM HOUSE REPAIRS NEEDED

BY JESSICA MCKAGUE

The Waldheim House was built in 1876 by Julius Dyck in the village of Waldheim, near Morden, Manitoba. The oak logs used were cut in the nearby Pembina Valley. The house was constructed by stacking continuous horizontal logs, which were dovetailed at the corners to prevent slippage. Interestingly, one year after its construction the Dyck family moved the house to their new homestead outside the village. Each log was inscribed with a Roman numeral, which assisted in the building's reassembly. These numerals are still visible on the exterior today.

The Waldheim house, moved to the Mennonite Heritage Village in 1962, was one of the first buildings on the museum's grounds. At that time, the house required extensive restoration. The floor was originally earthen so there was some difficulty in moving the building. A temporary foundation of bridge beams had to be constructed on the moving trailer. The cement foundation, which is now also the floor, was poured on the museum grounds. New tamarack logs replaced the foundational oak logs, which had rotted. Hollow reeds for thatching were found at Delta Beach on Lake Manitoba. The green reeds, six feet in length, were harvested with a scythe, tied in sheaves, and stooked to dry. When dry, the sheaves had to be retied, due to shrinkage, and were then hauled to the museum grounds. It took approximately three years to gather enough reeds to thatch the roof.

Much like any home, the years and elements are not kind to wooden and thatched structures, and the historic buildings at the Mennonite Heritage Village need regular restoration. Every year the museum oversees restoration projects on different buildings in the village. In recent years the General Store, the Blumenhof Mennonite School, the Livery Barn Restaurant, and the Lichtenau Church have been recipients of this work. The Waldheim house is reaching that time in its cycle where it requires restoration work. Its current roof is in poor condition and is in need of re-thatching. This disrepair has led to water damage in the walls of the house, including staining and fungus. We have sought out a consultation on these issues from the Manitoba Historic Resources Branch and will receive advice on the best course of action to take to combat the damage.



Original restoration of the Waldheim House.



Current water damage on the exterior walls.



Waldheim House at MHV.



Example of fungi on the interior walls. Picture taken in September 2014.

Did you know?

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Contact us at:

Natashia Lapelre
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PREVENTATIVE CONSERVATION

BY JESSICA MCKAGUE

Preventative conservation is the most efficient way to safeguard a large collection. It is a type of "Preservation." Sometimes further intervention is required for an individual artifact. MHV has undertaken many conservation and restoration projects for artifacts and buildings, either overseeing the projects ourselves or sending away artifacts to be professionally conserved.

Preservation, restoration, and conservation are terms that are commonly used by museums. The terms are not interchangeable and it is useful to understand the difference between them.

Preservation: the act of maintaining an object in its existing condition and slowing down further deterioration.

- The goal of preservation is to preserve the integrity and authenticity of the object
- This is done by controlling temperature, relative humidity, light levels, pests, dust, and other pollutants



Assistant Curator, Jessica working on the restoration of the artifact found at the Blumenhof excavation site.



Restoration: the act of modifying the existing material and structure of an object in order to return it to a known earlier condition.

Restoration could include:

- Removing or covering up signs of wear and use, through actions like painting
- Replacing and or reconstructing missing or worn parts
- Responsible restoration applies minimal intervention

Conservation: the act of safeguarding of objects including:

- Documenting the object in detail
- Researching and cataloguing all information related to the object
- Ensuring all actions are carried out with least possible intervention, often stabilizing objects without changing their material or structure
- Identifying the needs of an object, such as storage, so it is cared for appropriately



PAST CONSERVATION PROJECT

BY JESSICA MCKAGUE



Blumenhof artifact after restoration process.

This child's shoe was unearthed from the archaeological excavation of the Cornelius S. and Sarah Plett household at the former village of Blumenhof, Manitoba. It is one of eighty-six shoes for men, women, and children that were found at the bottom of the house-barn cellar at a depth of 1.5 metres. The reason for their disposal remains a mystery.

The Pletts, along with a number of other families, helped establish the village of Blumenhof in 1875 after moving from the Borosenko Colony, New Russia. In 1884 Cornelius L. Plett Jr., his wife, Helena, and four of their children moved in with the senior Pletts. Though the village was officially disbanded in 1887, the younger Plett family continued to live on the farmstead until about 1906.

The farm eventually became the property of the Loewen family, who allowed excavations, in partnership with the Mennonite Heritage Village, The University of Winnipeg, and The Manitoba Museum, to take place at the site between 2008 and 2012.

When all eighty-six shoes were dug up, they were sopping wet and covered in heavy clay-like soil. When leather is kept wet without access to oxygen it can be perfectly preserved. Many of the shoes were complete, which is amazing for an artifact that has been under farmland for over one hundred years! The question that arose regarding the conservation of these shoes was to either keep them in their wet condition in perpetuity or risk warping, cracking, and worse if they were allowed to dry out. The chemical process of conserving leather was something best undertaken by the Canadian Conservation Institute (CCI) and an application was made. Fortunately, CCI accepted this ambitious project and they are continuing to work on the shoe collection at the date of this publication.

What are the costs of this type of conservation?

Services Undertaken at CCI include: Artifact Analysis and Examination and Conservation and Restoration Treatments. CCI provides this service free of charge for museums, archives, libraries, and historic sites.

The value of this service can be seen by what private collectors must pay:

- the basic hourly rate is \$135/hour (or \$1,000/day for 7.5 hours);
- the overtime rate is \$170/hour, plus cost of any required materials.

All clients, including museums, are responsible for the costs of transporting objects to and from CCI, including adequate crating, shipping, and insurance. Service requests are evaluated against CCI assessment criteria, and since CCI receives more requests than they can fulfill every year, only a few are chosen. Mennonite Heritage Village has benefited from CCI's services a number of times, giving highest priority to artifacts in need of urgent and thorough care, such as the shoes from the archaeological excavation in Blumenhof.





AN ARTIFACT'S ENVIRONMENT

BY JESSICA MCKAGUE

Conservation and restoration are essential processes for preserving damaged artifacts, but the very best and most efficient care a museum can offer its extensive and varied collection is to prevent that damage from happening in the first place. Cautious handling and transportation of artifacts, storage in acid-free containers, and pest control are a few preventative conservation strategies for ensuring that artifacts receive the best care possible. The most important tool, however, in keeping such a diverse collection safe is relative humidity (RH) and temperature.

Relative Humidity measures the current absolute humidity (water content in the air) relative to the maximum saturation at a given temperature. (In other words, it is the current humidity relative to the current temperature)

“The most important tool in keeping such a diverse collection safe is relative humidity (RH) and temperature.”

The Mennonite Heritage Village collection is stored in rooms kept at 47% - 55% RH and 18 – 21° Celsius, as per the recommendation of the Canadian Conservation Institute (CCI). Many museums struggle to maintain a constant RH and temperature, as it can be a costly goal. The benefits of maintaining these levels, however, are significant. Low RH causes organic materials like leather to become dry and brittle. On the opposite end, high RH encourages pests, mould, and mildew on organic materials and causes metal to rust. Fluctuating RH causes organic materials to shrink and swell, resulting in warped wood, lifting veneer, and cracks in oil paintings.

The book, as seen in this photo, was left in in a humid environment before it was donated to the museum. In that setting, mould was free to run rampant through the leather cover and paper pages. Books that are left vulnerable like this attract book lice, which love



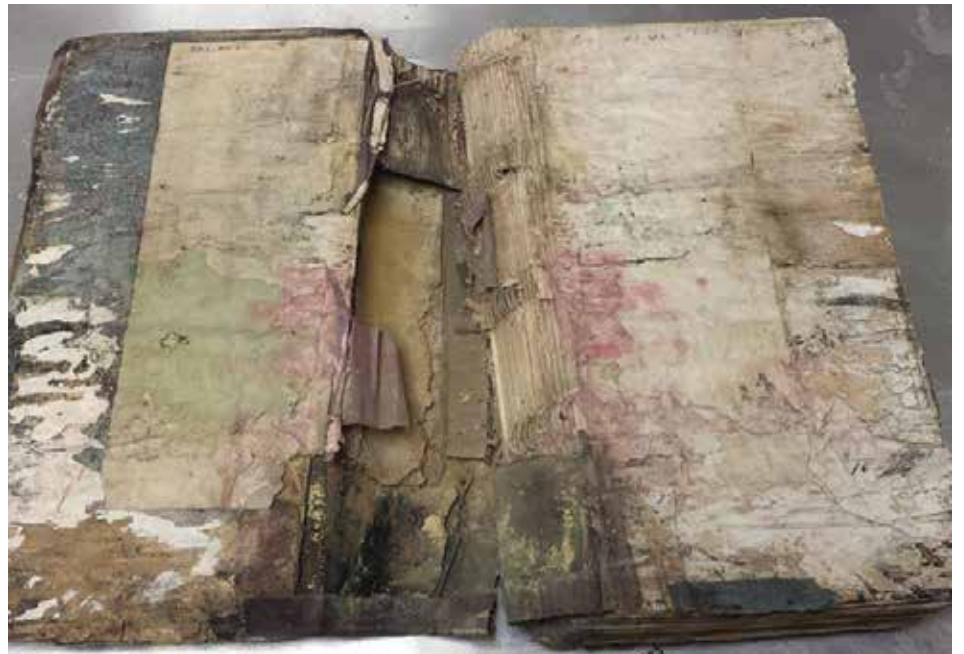
Part of the current MHV archival collection.

to make their home in the damp binding. The damage to this artifact is so extensive that little can be done to physically conserve it. The best the museum can do for this book now is to preserve it in a freezer to prevent further damage and to scan the contents to have them digitally saved.

It is vital for the over 16,000 artifacts that the Mennonite Heritage Village cares for that a stable environment is provided, with constant RH and temperature levels. Unfortunately, our system is aging and will not be able to sustain these levels for long. The humidifiers, furnaces, and air conditioners will all need to be replaced in the upcoming years. Replacing the humidifiers alone is an estimated \$20,000 project. The cost may seem high, but it is minor compared to the irreplaceable artifacts, family heirlooms, and histories that this new system would serve to protect for many years to come.



A ledger showing the effects of improper storage, prior to its donation to the MHV collection. This lack of proper conservation has resulted in widespread mould damage.



Detail of the mould damage on the ledger's inside cover.



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FREEDOM 15

BY BARRY DYCK

Debt Elimination Challenge

Mennonite Heritage Village (MHV) has carried debt during a number of periods in its history, including the present. At times the debt has been the result of facility expansion projects, and at other times it has been the result of operating deficits.

In the recent past, we have focused on controlling operations to prevent additional deficits; restoring facilities with paint, shingles and other repairs; and making MHV a popular and comfortable place to visit. As a result, we have not focused specifically on debt reduction other than working toward operating surpluses which would eventually reduce the debt. We are pleased to report that we have not created further debt in the last five years, operating at a breakeven point each year.

MHV's income is derived from three basic sources: earned income from our four business units, grants, and donations. (see Fig. 1)

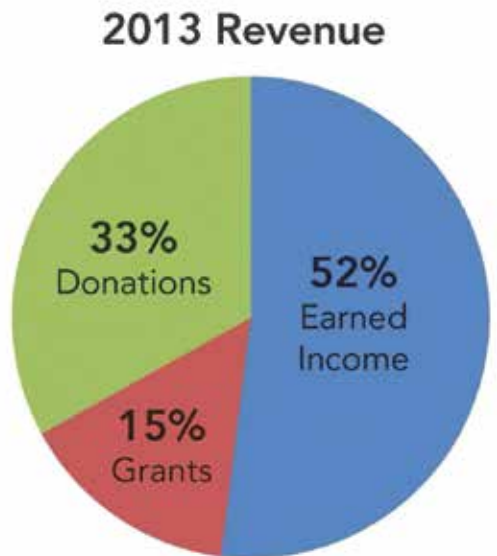


Fig. 1

Currently our debt is in the form of an operating line of credit at the Steinbach Credit Union. Our credit limit is \$600,000 and we usually draw on the entire line at specific times of the year.

Recently one of our supporters has offered to match, dollar-for-dollar, every donation designated for our debt reduction, up to a maximum of \$100,000. This is a very generous offer and an exceptional opportunity for MHV. We believe our constituency will also be excited about this development and will step up to the plate to participate.

We invite all people who value the work of MHV to respond generously. It is important to note that these donations need to be over and above regular donations made toward the operating expenses of the museum. If regular undesignated donations are simply reassigned to the Debt Elimination Program, we may well experience a shortfall in the current year's operations and, as a result, again increase our debt levels. Drop in at MHV to contribute by cheque cash, or credit card, or visit our website (www.mhv.ca) and donate via Canada Helps.

MHV's Mission Statement is "to preserve and exhibit, for present and future generations, the experience and the story of the Russian Mennonites and their contributions to Manitoba." Our communities and our guests will be enriched by these stories of courage, conviction, hardship, determination, victory and faith, and encouraged to remember and learn from them.



Will you partner with us in this important mission?

YES! I'D LIKE TO SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING MENNONITE HERITAGE VILLAGE PROJECT:

- FREEDOM 15
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