

# *Voice* THE VILLAGE

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**NEW RUSSLÄNDER ACQUISITIONS PG. 3**    **YOUR VILLAGE AWAITS! PG. 2**

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## CONTACT US

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# YOUR VILLAGE AWAITS!

By Gary Dyck, Executive Director



Our village and grounds are ready to welcome you! The Dirk Willems Peace Garden, a new path, 100 more trees, and a fountain in the pond have all been developed in the past two years. In its nearly 60 years of existence, the pond region of the museum grounds has never been developed for visitor use. The Dirk Willems Peace Garden is an amazing outdoor exhibit that shares a story that the world should know. MHV is a museum that has inspiring spaces indoors (such as our new Russländer exhibit) and outdoors (the village and pond). MHV encourages wellbeing for the mind, heart, body, and soul.

Every year we need to fulfill at least two renovations or restorations on our 30+ heritage build-

ings and monuments. In 2021, the Animal Barn and Granary, which is part of 'the farmyard' that young families enjoy, was repainted. In 2022, the Chortitz Housebarn was restored. Both barns are looking gorgeous – they are the prettiest barns on the prairie. In 2023, our main goal is to complete the 'Village Street Renewal' project. The project plan includes scheduled improvements for the Livery Barn Restaurant, Printery, Reimer Store, and the General Store. The total cost for this project is approximately \$110,000. Any donation you contribute today would be greatly appreciated. We are hoping to have a provincial grant that will match your donation for this project. It is time to freshen up our village street for the world to see.

Your village awaits!

## THE VALUE OF INK

By Kaelyn Nickel, Development Coordinator

Have you ever watched ink dry? This is a serious question. If you haven't, let me give you a brief and relatively painless description of the process. A drop of ink will land on paper - it will shimmer and shine and reflect the light around you. While you wait for the ink to dry, you may smell an acidic dusty aroma lingering in the air. Then, ever so slowly, you will watch the droplet lose its rounded shape and sink into the minuscule particles of the paper. The shine will fade, and the paper will be permanently stained with whatever shape you created. I often consider the cost of ink - not the commercial value, but the consequences of wasting words. The production of words once came at a much higher cost.

You may wonder, "Kaelyn, why are you describing the process of ink drying? This may be the dullest thing I have ever read in the Village Voice." Good question. The answer is simple – it is a direct connection to history. While we can trace the existence of ink back thousands of years, our ability to produce printed words was only developed in the 1450s.

Our Printery houses a piece of writing history. While it is not a historic building, the Printery contains a Platen Press that was constructed in 1909 and is still operational. For those who struggle to place events on a timeline – this device was created (not invented) around the same time as the invention of the Ford Model T (1908) and the sinking of the Titanic (1912). The Platen Press is a significant reminder of how condensed history is.

The preservation of artefacts compels us to question what we value. When we showcase an artefact, we choose to say 'this object represents something that we think is important to share'. I argue that the Platen Press demonstrates that the early Mennonite people valued storytelling, curiosity, and their community.

So why worry about some outdated method of printing? It is as simple as this: artefacts remind us of our values. We need community, we pursue curiosity, and we continue to share stories with those around us.

Unfortunately, our Printery is fighting the consequences of time. The foundation is failing, and the Printery is sinking. The need to restore the foundation of the Printery is a top priority in our 'Village Street Renewal' project list.

The Village Street Renewal project aims to refresh and restore several buildings on our Main Street, including the Reimer Store, the Printery, the Livery Barn Restaurant, and the Village Centre. These projects include a variety of upgrades and restorations. The projects are set to begin in the summer of 2023.

I encourage you to consider partnering with us to repair this building. A way that you can support this project is by attending or contributing to our fundraising events. On May 12, we will be hosting our annual Spring Gala, and this year, all proceeds will go towards the restoration of the Printery. We need \$45,000 to kick-start this project. That number is daunting on its own, but with the generous support of the community, we will see the Platen Press operating come next spring and long into the future.



# NEW RUSSLÄNDER ACQUISITIONS

by Kara Suderman, Curatorial Assistant

Since the premiere of The Russländer exhibit in 2019, Mennonite Heritage Village (MHV) has acquired several new artefacts relating to this period in Mennonite history. Many will be on display when the exhibit re-launches this spring, commemorating the one-hundredth anniversary of the Mennonite migration to Canada in the 1920s.

One of the newest additions to MHV's artefact collection is a clock known as the Braun clock. This clock, however, was not originally owned by a Braun family member. The "G.G." at the top is probably the initials of the man who commissioned it, Gerhard Goosen. The exact age of the clock is unknown, but based on the style of the clock face, we can surmise that it was likely made in Russia in the 1840s.



The Braun clock is likely about 180 years old. It hung on the wall of the Braun home near Ste. Elizabeth, MB, until 2022.

This clock was passed down to the oldest son in the family, starting in the 1800s. Gerhard Goosen commissioned it in the 1840s and later passed it down to his daughter Helena. Helena married Jacob Braun and they passed it down to their oldest son. The clock continued down the generational line. In 1925, Johann J. Braun brought it to Canada and established a farm near Ste. Elizabeth with his son Jacob. Jacob's oldest son left the area and did not take over the family farm, so Jacob's younger son, John, inherited the clock along with the farm.

Many Russländer Mennonites brought clocks to Canada when they left Russia in the 1920s. They are both practical and sentimental; clocks could be used to tell time, but they are also beautiful works of art and were a reminder of their homes in Russia. For clocks like this one that had been passed down for generations, they were also a reminder of family and heritage and helped maintain that connection while forging new lives in Canada.

In contrast to the clock is another new addition to MHV's collection, a guitar virtually destroyed by Bolsheviks during the Russian Revolution. Mariechen (Kornelsen) Willms immigrated to Canada in 1925 with her husband, Heinrich F. Willms, and their two oldest children. The guitar is damaged, unplayable, and is large and bulky. It would not pack easily in a suitcase, like other sentimental items such as a Christmas ornament or bracelet. A plaque has been added to the guitar's body, giving us a snapshot of its history, and showing how important this event must have been in Mariechen's life. While we don't know much about her, the fact that she kept the guitar indicates what she valued. By keeping the destroyed guitar, and bringing the unlikely item to Canada with her, the memory of this tragic period of history was preserved and can be used as an example to tell the story of the terrors and hardships Russländer Mennonites faced in the 1920s.

As we prepare the Gerhard Ens Gallery to showcase a new version of The Russländer, we are selecting many new artefacts to display that will help us tell different aspects of this part of the Mennonite story. The exhibit opens May 12, 2023 at the Spring Gala. Tickets can be purchased online or by calling the museum.



This seven-string Russian style guitar has been affixed with a plaque, commemorating the damage inflicted upon it during the Russian Revolution. It is unknown if Mariechen had the plaque made or if it was one of her descendants.

The Russländer exhibit will open to the public on May 13th.

**penn-co**

# “THE PRINTERY” BECOMES THE “STEINBACH POST”

By Andrea Klassen, Senior Curator

Mennonite Heritage Village (MHV) is currently fundraising for a unique restoration project in the village. This project will see the complete restoration of the building known as “the Printery.” If you have walked into the Printery in the last few years, you will have noticed the main issue with the building, which is that the foundation is rotten and failing, causing the floor inside to sag. The building is filled with authentic printing equipment that once belonged to Jacob S. Friesen, or “Dretjcha Friesen” (Printer Friesen) as he was known in Low German, including his original cast iron platen press purchased in 1909 and a granite slab drafting table. This heavy equipment puts a strain on the sagging floor and failing foundation. It needs a solid structure, which is what we are planning to give it.

In addition, the building’s restoration will see the beginning of a transformation for the building, beginning with its name. Currently, it is known by the generic English name “the Printery.” Although this title describes the activity that happens inside the building, it does nothing to draw visitors into the rich history the building represents and the story of Jacob S. Friesen and Die Steinbach Post newspaper that he, and later others like Arnold B. Dyck and then Gerhard and Eugene Derksen, published. Changing the name of the building to the “Steinbach Post” will better reflect this history and draw visitors into a very specific local story of deep significance for the Mennonite community not just in Steinbach, but throughout the Americas.

The history of the Steinbach Post begins with “Dretjcha Friesen,” who purchased the first printing press in the Mennonite East Reserve in 1909. After publishing two short-lived newspapers, he moved his business to Steinbach in 1915 and began Die Steinbach Post, a German-language newspaper for the local Mennonite community. A success for fifty-two years, it ended its run in 1967.

The Post underwent many changes over its history. During the First World War, when German publications were banned in Canada, Friesen published in English. Ownership of the newspaper and the printery changed, too, from Friesen



**Caption:** Jacob S. Friesen standing in the doorway of the printery he founded and out of which he published Die Steinbach Post, ca. 1910. The printery building at MHV is likely a down-scaled replica of this building. **Credit:** Mennonite Heritage Archives, Vol 4836, File 4b

to Arnold B. Dyck in 1923, then to Gerhard Derksen and his son Eugene in 1936. (Interestingly, along with publishing the Post, Gerhard and Eugene went on to publish Steinbach’s first English language newspaper, The Carillon News, in 1946.)

Arguably one of the biggest changes at the Post, however, was its expansion from a local Steinbach newspaper to one of international significance. Starting in 1922, about 8,000 Mennonites began leaving for Mexico and Paraguay in resistance to the new public school legislation introduced in Manitoba in 1916 and in Saskatchewan one year later. Many of these emigrants were Post readers and they took their subscriptions with them. From July 1923, when a letter from a Mennonite in Mexico appeared on the front page, until the Post closed in 1967, each issue contained correspondence from Mennonites in Latin America.

As Mennonites scattered throughout North, Central, and South America over the next decades, a complex web of connections grew between

families and friends. The Post helped foster these translational networks by publishing letters and news from Mennonites spread across great distances. In 1977, another newspaper published in Steinbach, Die Mennonitische Post, took over this role.

The restoration of the “Printery” and its transformation into the “Steinbach Post” will enable MHV to care for this replica heritage building for generations to come, but it also gives us a great opportunity to draw attention to this unique local story with an international connection. If you would like to donate to this exciting project, plan to join us at the Spring Gala as we fundraise to restore this building and re-introduce it as the “Steinbach Post.” You can also donate online (<https://mennoniteheritagevillage.com/event/spring-gala-2-2/>), over the phone (204-326-9661), or in-person at the museum.

## ABOUT THE RUSSLÄNDER EXHIBIT

From 1923 to 1930, over 24,000 Mennonites fled the Soviet Union, having survived years of war, violence, hardship, and trauma. The Russländer commemorates the 100th anniversary of the start of this migration to Canada by exploring the lives and stories of these immigrants to Canada. The exhibit examines the lives of Russländer in the Russian Empire before the Russian Revolution in 1917, the circumstances under which they left the Soviet Union, and the factors that helped to bring them to Canada. The exhibit asks how the history of the Russländer is remembered today through the objects that the immigrants brought to Canada with them and the stories they shared about their lives.



# FROM THE AUXILIARY

By Evelyn Friesen



Tina Bergen received special recognition at our Auxiliary Luncheon in December. She was presented with a dozen roses, and in her honour, the Auxiliary sent money to support an MCC Project to buy a new sewing machine for someone in a Third World country. An ever-faithful volunteer for the past 20 years, Tina has been a regular quilter at the Museum, and since 2009 she has sewn 563 bib-aprons – the style designed by Mennonite Girls Can Cook. The aprons became a popular sale item in the Gift Shop.

When Tina is not at home sewing another apron, she can be found stitching away in the Quilting Room alongside other Village Quilters. You'll find that Raffle Tickets are always available for one of their fanciful creations.



“Pier 21” depicts the comings and goings at Pier 21 in Halifax during the 1920s. The musical performance, with its three-person cast, delighted the audience with its story and Celtic-styled music. With an adapted Immigration Station on stage, the production told a story that would be familiar to numerous Mennonite immigrants who finally escaped untold tribulation caused by the Russian Revolution in the 1920s.

This successful fundraiser was sponsored by the MHV auxiliary and will help support several projects in the Village. Linda Schroeder was provided with an opportunity to express our thanks to Allen Desnoyers, who is the Director of this production.

The Auxiliary served hot dogs and chips at the Winter Carnival in February. Of course, most popular with the youngsters were the home-baked cookies – Schaudt Kuche, Chocolate Chip Cookies and Peanut Butter Cookies – which had been graciously donated by our members.

Linda Schroeder presented a fine Auxiliary report at the museum's Annual General Meeting. Along with an all-around profitable year, we are happy to report that our Auxiliary has continued to grow during the past year and that together we are a group that is committed to helping further the interests of MHV.

Pictured below are the women who were elected and re-elected to form the present Executive Body of the Auxiliary. They are Mary Schmor as Vice President, Frieda Loewen as Secretary, Martha Friesen as Treasurer, and Linda Schroeder as President. This group will lead us as we anticipate a busy, eventful summer season.



# WELCOME SPRING

By Nita Wiebe, Reception

Spring is here and as we look forward to another busy season here at MHV, I am drawn back to some of my favourite memories of Springs past. See if any spark memories of your own!

I remember walking to school and finding a ditch with a very thin layer of ice over the spring melt, and stepping on it just to hear the bright crisp snap of the ice as your rubber boot breaks through. I detect a familiar smell in the air, almost rainy, refreshing an entire room through an open window.

Can you remember the feeling of spring? Feeling the warmth of the sun on your back as you stop to notice a crocus pushing through the snow or tulips erupting from a bare patch of earth.

Notice the buds on grey stalks and branches, emerging one a sunny afternoon. Impossibly green and tender. A surprise every year.

Can you hear the chatter of robins as they build their nests and feed their twittering chicks? The chatter becoming intense and noisy as the

neighbour's cat or the local magpie approaches. I welcome it all. I welcome the taste of spring. Savouring the powdery pink or creamy white of the fruit tree's blossom, it's warm scent or pastel wash promising berries to come.

Welcome, Spring, remind us of the hope of a new season, of a fresh start, another beginning. Welcome!

## UPCOMING AUXILIARY EVENTS

Look for us in the Waffle Booth during special events

Watch us fry Rollkuchen at the Short Order booth

Meet the Village Quilters in the Quilt room

Visit us at the Hayrack Sale this Summer (tentative)

Find us in the gardens

See our upcoming activities on the MHV website

# CELEBRATING EVENTS

By Jenny Froese, Private Events Coordinator

**“Lots of beautiful buildings to use for pictures, a variety of places to choose for ceremony and reception. The food from the restaurant on site, Livery Barn was fantastic. We received so many comments on the venue and food because it was unique and lots of people never knew about it.”**

- Elizabeth K. -

2022 was a year of ups and downs. It was filled with recreating events and rescheduling postponed weddings and celebrations. Looking back, I am so grateful for all the events we were able to host here at MHV. Having families, friends and loved ones come out to the village and create memories for future generations has been a blessing.



During the pandemic, a lot of significant events were forced to cancel, and they had to find other ways to celebrate. We are so grateful to welcome every single group to our beautiful village grounds, where they can gather and celebrate with each other again and enjoy our unique buildings, venues, and aesthetic scenery. This past year was filled with amazing events that brought not only our community together, but also people who travelled across Canada to host their celebrations at MHV. I am excited for events in 2023 and welcome every tradition, culture, and community to Mennonite Heritage Village.



**We loved every second of our experience working with MHV for our wedding. Getting married in 2021 it was very hard to plan with the changing pandemic situation, but MHV was nothing but accommodating for us as we needed to change our plans multiple times to be within the public health guidelines. They answered our questions, let us tour the grounds multiple times, allowed us to rent different pieces they had on site, and they gave us the entire day before to set everything up. Its also an absolutely gorgeous venue, with such a neat historic charm.**

**We had our ceremony by the duck pond and reception in the summer pavilion. At the time we were allowed to have 70 fully vaccinated guests at our wedding, and the summer pavilion easily accommodated for that number of people with room to spare. Also, after our original caterer fell through 2 weeks before our wedding, we contacted Chef Gil at the Livery Barn (the restaurant at MHV) and asked if he could cater. He absolutely knocked it out of the park with a 5-star meal, that our guests are still talking about how good it was! Highly recommend MHV as well as their in-house catering!**

- Taylor A. -

# WINTER IN THE VILLAGE

By Robert Goertzen, Program Manager



Sleigh Rides at the Winter Carnival

racing down the village main street on our new kick sleds. After 4:00pm, the grounds lit up with a coloured light display on the trees in the orchard, around the skating rink, and down the village street. Pedestrians and sleigh riders enjoyed the light tunnel that ran behind the village buildings. The warming room at the rear of the General Store provided a reprieve from cold temperatures and a chance to put on skates near the ice rink.

The Winter Carnival was extended to the full three-day long weekend in February. Inside, children's entertainers, local musicians and kids activities offered a break from the cold Manitoba weather. While outdoors, over 1200 people joined in the fun on the ice rink, with recreational crokicurl, roasted marshmallows at the bonfire and carved a snow block, or enjoyed a sleigh ride. Artist Margrute Krahn offered painting activities for kids and families, mimicking the floor patterns that were on exhibit in the Gerhard Ens Gallery until April 1.

The addition of winter activities to MHV programming has been successful in inviting our community to embrace our Manitoba winters in a peaceful, historical setting. We hope to add more programs over time, which will provide education, recreation, and healthy contemplation opportunities to all who attend. Winter In The Village is here to stay, and we look forward to

seeing our supporters and visitors throughout the year. Thank you for a great winter of fun and connecting.



Potato Stamps

Mennonite Heritage Village launched our new, “Winter In The Village” initiative in 2022. This project was possible because of a one-time grant we received. From December to March, the museum grounds were active, with a colourful light display featured every Friday and Saturday, horse-drawn sleigh rides, free hot chocolate, and the opportunity to skate or snowshoe in the quiet outdoors. Many families spent a Saturday afternoon exploring the grounds on snowshoes or

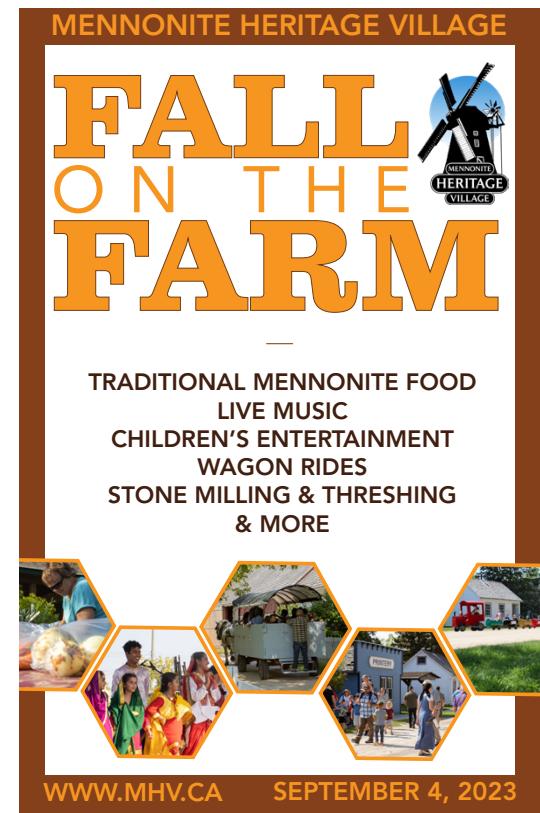


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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Mennonite Heritage Village has a wide array of events that occur throughout the calendar year.

|                    |                                  |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| May 1, 2023        | Outdoor Village Opens            |
| May 9, 2023        | Author Reading Night             |
| May 12, 2023       | Spring Gala Fundraising Banquet  |
| May 13, 2023       | 'The Russländer' Exhibit Opening |
| May 13, 2023       | Manitoba Day                     |
| May 14, 2023       | Mother's Day Lunch Buffet        |
| June 10, 2023      | Tractor Trek                     |
| June 16 - 18, 2023 | Summer in the City               |
| June 18, 2023      | Father's Day Lunch Buffet        |
| July 1, 2023       | RocketRez Canada Day Celebration |
| July 22, 2023      | Heritage Classic Car Show        |
| August 5 - 7, 2023 | Pioneer Days                     |
| August 19, 2023    | Peace Trek                       |
| September 4, 2023  | Fall on the Farm                 |



For a full list of events and information, visit [mhv](http://mhv.ca).

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